

DIGITAL ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP AT HARVARD
DASH.HARVARD.EDU

HARVARD LIBRARY

From Reform to Revolution: the Transformation of Cuba's Education System, 1959–62

Citation

Schultz, Rainer Gerold. 2016. From Reform to Revolution: the Transformation of Cuba's Education System, 1959–62. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.

Link

http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:33840702

Terms of use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material (LAA), as set forth at
https://harvardwiki.atlassian.net/wiki/external/NGY5NDE4ZjgzNTc5NDQzMGIzZWZhMGFlOWI2M2EwYTg

Accessibility

https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/digital-accessibility-policy

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. Submit a story

“From Reform to Revolution: The Transformation of Cuba’s Education System, 1959–62”

A dissertation presented

by

Rainer Gerold Schultz

to

The Department of History

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

History

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

September 2016

© 2016 by Rainer Gerold Schultz
All rights reserved.

Dissertation Advisor:
John H. Coatsworth Rainer Gerold Schultz

"From Reform to Revolution:
The Transformation of Cuba's Education System, 1959–62"

Abstract

This thesis examines the transformation of Cuba's educational system from 1959 to 1962 as a case study for the limits of liberal reforms during the Cold War. It explores the birth of the revolutionary state and society, demonstrating that the early revolutionary reforms were inspired by republican traditions and demands of Cuba's 1940 Constitution, including education for all. Enthusiasm and cooperation among Cuba's citizens, civil society, and the government were harnessed by the revolutionary government to build a mobilizing state. The context of Cold War dynamics in 1960–61, not a blueprint for communism, spurred the shift from reform to revolution, from cooperation to expropriation, and to socialism.

Chapter 1 describes the development of a political agenda and the undoing of the old order by purging and decentralizing the state apparatus. Chapter 2 follows the revolutionary dynamics of building a new state and foreshadows emerging conflicts with the Catholic Church and the private sector. Chapter 3 illustrates the liberal moment of the revolution in 1959 by detailing the wide range of open debates on educational reform. Chapter 4 examines textbooks as examples for continuity and change in the transformation of Cuba's educational sector, illustrating the interaction of political change and education. Chapter 5 traces the history of state intervention and regulation of Cuba's private schools up to their expropriation in 1961.

An analysis of the political dynamics in Cuba prior to its socialist era in isolation from the United States (1961–2014) is essential for the understanding of the redefinition of Cuba's socialism today. This study excavates a political culture preceding Cold War polarization. The study is informed by yearlong archival research in Cuba and the United States, as well as by oral histories. It contributes to the history of education and the social history of Latin America's twentieth century by discussing Cuba's answers to universal challenges such as illiteracy, social inequality, rural development, and pedagogical reform. The thesis engages with themes of decolonization, U.S.–Cuban relations, and nationalism through the analysis of foreign influence in Cuba's educational system.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments viii

List of Abbreviations used xi

Introduction 1

1. The Undoing of the Old 17

1.1 The new beginning 19

The early educational goals 21

Rehabilitating public schools 22

Public opinion, the media, and the ministry 23

Revolutionary public relations 24

The first revolutionary laws 25

Communism and education 26

1.2 Defining neutrality in the revolution: *Ley 11* 29

Defending neutrality 32

The religious dimension 37

Protests and solutions 40

1.3 The purges 44

Corruption and purges 45

Purge and politics 47

Purges at the University of Havana 52

1.4 Decentralization and the limits of administrative change 57

Conclusion 60

2. The Building of the New 62

2.1 Nation building: Ten thousand new schools 63

Rural school expansion before 1959 63

The need for schools in 1959 64

Militarized education 67

Financing state expansion 69

Calling for citizens' cooperation 72

Calling for civic consciousness 75

Catholic competition and cooperation 76

Revolutionary Catholics? 79

Human capital as a revolutionary resource 81

Rural school expansion and indoctrination 83

Legislating idealism 85
Putting politics to work 88
Revolutionary rural uplifting 89
2.2 Redemption: The conversion of military barracks into school cities 90
Building the new by destroying the old 92
Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez and the concept of rural school cities 96
Future rural education 98
2.3 Revolutionary literacy 99
The structure of the literacy commission 100
Urging citizens to teach 103
Revolutionary literacy textbooks 104
Teaching literacy in the rebel army 106
Revolutionary textbooks in the rebel army 107
Conclusion 110
3. The Making of Education Policy, 1959 113
3.1 Education debates before the forum 114
Educational debates before 1959 115
Envisioning educational change: The opposition to Batista 117
Bringing education back on the agenda 121
The question of communism 123
3.2 Between reform and revolution: The public forum on education 126
Education for the poor 127
Creating a literate citizenry 130
Education between reform and revolution 133
Educational planning and moral reform 135
Reforming textbooks 138
Reforming teachers' associations 139
Religion, communism, and state control 141
Private schools and civic education 145
Debating private universities 148
Private business and education 149
Educating rural citizens 150
Debating Americanization 153
Biopolitics for the revolution 154
Education toward a colorless, secular modernity? 157

Context: Rising political tensions 160
3.3 The creation of a national school system 161
Catholic competition 165
Enacting reform: Law 680 167
The pedagogy of reform 168
Economic efficiency 170
Teaching and school structures 171
Conclusion 174
4. Teaching the Revolution: The Transformation of Textbooks 176
4.1 Innovation and continuity: Textbooks in 1959–60 178
The progressive school movement in Cuba 180
Reforms in a revolutionary context 182
Feminist revolution or traditional gender roles? 184
Unlearning racism 187
Race-based affirmative action? 188
Anti-discrimination in 1959 189
Educating against racial prejudice 191
Racial imagery in textbooks 192
Books and reading culture: The state, the Church, and the private sector 196
Competition from the Church 200
4.2 From subversion to revolution? A case study in Cuba's geography 202
1955: Subversion or academic freedom? 203
Conflicting views on Cuba's reality 206
U.S. concerns toward revolutionary education 208
Communism or anti-Americanism? 209
Teaching anti-Americanism on television 211
The geopolitical shift 213
Toward a revolutionary geography 214
Becoming a revolutionary academic 216
Revolutionary transformation through geography 219
Rewriting history 222
Increasing ideological control 224
Conclusion 227
5. The Nationalization of Cuba's Private Schools, 1961 229
5.1 Private education at the eve of the revolution 230

The private sector in 1958 231
Brief history of state control of private education 234
Teaching “Cubanidad” 237
Nationalism versus foreign influence 239
U.S. influence 240
Increasing “Cubanidad” 242
Economic and social aspects 245
The class argument 247
Cuba’s private schools in Latin American context 250
5.2 Private schools in revolutionary Cuba, 1959–60 251
Signs of continuity 252
School legislation in 1959–60 254
Early conflicts at schools 257
1960: Rising conflicts 260
Emigration and exile 261
Schools as hotbeds: Revolution and counterrevolution, 1959–61 265
A rising civil war, 1959–61 266
The Catholic Church 267
The United States 269
The student connection 270
5.3 The nationalization of private schools, 1961 272
Nationalizations and Cubanization 273
Violence and education 273
Government interventions 276
The invasion 280
The expropriation 282
The nationalization law 285
5.4 The significance of nationalizations in Cuba 288
Expropriations in republican Cuba 289
Nationalization—a necessity? 291
Contesting interventions 295
The nationalization cycle, 1960–62 296
Historicizing nationalizations 298
Appendix to chapter 5: On the reliability of statistical data 301
Bibliography 305

Acknowledgments

I was fortunate to have studied Cuba's education system not just through history books and libraries but also as a student and teacher in Cuban classrooms. The observations I made in rural classrooms and during conversations with former teachers in Havana helped me to ask better questions about the documents I studied. Parallel to my research, I have become an educator myself who now facilitates learning among Cuban, U.S., and German institutions and students. These experiences have given me valuable practical insights into my theoretical interests and training.

My two original alma maters, Humboldt University of Berlin and Harvard University in Cambridge, made my research and educational experiences in Cuba possible. In Cuba, the University of Havana and many of its dedicated professors and administrators welcomed, guided, and challenged me. Sergio Guerra Vilaboy and Julita Piloto could always be counted upon. The University of Cologne, and Michael Zeuske in particular, allowed me to keep a foot and voice in German academia and to discuss earlier versions of this work. In the reading room of the Cuban National Archive, Michael's arm on my shoulder first opened the doors for me when letters of authorization seemed to go nowhere. During the final stage of this thesis my new employer, Brown University, and especially Kendall Brostuen, granted valuable time and resources that allowed me to finish writing. I am thankful to all of these people.

In Cuba, the Institute for History, Yoel Cordoví Núñez, and Angelina Rojas Blaquier granted me access to their library and archive. Felipe Pérez de la Cruz and Nancy Jiménez Rodríguez facilitated many interviews and shared insights not included in written documents. They also enriched my perspective by allowing me to discuss my findings in a Cuban academic context. Luisa Campos Gallardo and Susana Morejón Martinez at the museum, library, and

archive of the Cuban literacy campaign gave me much more than the diaries and memoirs of the literacy campaign: I felt part of the continued creation of a collective memory of this defining moment of the Cuban revolution that I will have to chronicle in a separate manuscript. At the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Araceli García Carranza and her wonderful staff always knew where to find the manuscripts I was looking for and helped me to be the first foreign scholar to work at the Archive of the National Council for Education and Culture, in its old and new locations. Orlando García Martínez in Cienfuegos helped me reconstruct histories of Cuban schools and educators across the 1959 historical dividing line.

My three advisors at Harvard not only made this thesis possible but helped me become a historian, a better scholar, and a better person, for that matter. Jack Womack taught me to think historically, open-mindedly, and with an unsatisfiable intellectual curiosity. He encouraged me to pursue questions to which we do not yet have answers. *Para mi, sigue siendo el maestro*. John Coatsworth forced me to think institutionally, internationally, and comparatively. His generous support made possible much of my work, and his charming pragmatism always guided me. Jorge Domínguez has been much more than a member of my thesis committee. A true mentor throughout my years at Harvard, he has given me advice and support for matters more important than a thesis. Thanks to him, I have learned the difficult craft of building bridges between the United States and Cuba. Through his example, I developed the perseverance and confidence necessary to maneuver the perilous waters of opaque bureaucracies on both sides of the Florida Straits. To the three of them, I offer my deeply felt gratitude. Much of what I know and have written, and where I now stand, would not have been possible without them.

Upon his arrival at Harvard, Alejandro de la Fuente invited me to a writing group centering on Cuba that helped me reformulate questions and refine my work. It helped me transition back from research, teaching, and administrating to writing. Marial Iglesias Utset, Christine Hatzky, and Lillian Guerra have given me ideas, comments, and courage. Marysa Navarro-Aranguren, the permanent visiting scholar at Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) encouraged me to keep writing and to pay my scholarly debts to my advisors. June Carolyn Erlick helped me in ways too numerous to mention here. Yadira Rivera always rallied me to graduate. The entire team at DRCLAS became a second family and allowed me to grow from a graduate student to a Cuba Fellow and beyond. Several of my research trips to Cuba were expedited by this formidable center for Latin American studies. Other financial support came from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and Harvard University.

My fellow historians Miles Rodríguez, Ingrid Bleynat, Sreemati Mitter, Albert Manke, and Birte Timm have discussed my ideas and doubts with me. They became friends and kindred spirits. Miriam Boyer introduced me to the United States and its academic universe; without her I would not be here. I am forever thankful for the many ways in which she enriched my life. My biological family has always encouraged and often supported me—my sister through her example, my brother through his advice, my father through our conversations, and my mother through her love. Love and much more I have received from my *compañera*, Giselle Odethe García Sanz, and her family, which is now also mine. She has had to listen to most of my frustrations and has helped me not just in writing a dissertation but in leading a life in Cuba.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

Asociación Nacional de Maestros de Escuelas Privadas (ANMEP)
Buró para la Represión de las Actividades Comunistas (BRAC); Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities (under Batista)
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
Colegio de Maestros Agrarios (CMA)
Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales (CNMN)
Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales y Equiparados (CNMNE); National Board for University-Trained Teachers and Their Equivalents
Colegio Nacional de Pedagogos (CNP)
Colegio de Profesores de Inglés No-Universitarios (CPINU)
Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL); (also known as) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (CDRs); Committees for the Defense of the Revolution
Consejo Nacional de Educación y Cultura (CNEC)
David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS), Harvard University
Department for Technical, Cultural, and Material Assistance to the Peasant (DATMCC)
Directorio Revolucionario Estudentil (DRE); Student Revolutionary Directorate
Escuelas de *Instrucción Revolucionaria (EIR*)
Federation of Catholic Colleges (FCC)
Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU)
Federación Nacional de Maestras Católicas (FNMC)
Federación de Sociedades Negras Cubanas (FSNC)
Institute for a National Tourist Industry (INIT)
Institute of Pedagogy and School of Education Teachers (CPMN)
Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (INRA); National Institute for Agrarian Reform
International Cooperation Administration (ICA)
International Monetary Fund (IMF)
Journal of Latin American Studies (JLAS)
Ministerio de Educación (MINED); Ministry of Education
Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios (MINFAR); Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces
Movimiento 26 de julio (M-26-7); 26th of July Movement
National Labor Confederation (CTC)
Organization of American States (OAS); Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA)
Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC); Communist Party of Cuba
Partido Socialista Popular (PSP); People's Socialist Party
Servicio de Inteligencia Militar (SIM); Military Intelligence Service (under Batista)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Union Revolucionaria Comunista (URC); Communist Revolutionary Union

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have reconsidered the origins of the Cuban revolution many times.[1] For a long time, their studies concentrated either on the insurrection period (1952–58) or the communist era (1961–91).[2] Few historians dared to tap into Cuba's post-'59 world because of the difficult access to sources.[3] More recently, a number of research projects on issues such as race or gender have cut across the division line of 1959.[4] But very few detailed studies have focused on the transition period between 1959 and 1962. My study attempts to fill this gap by looking at Cuba's educational sector of that time as a prism through which to understand the revolutionary transformation of the Cuban state and society.

The opportunity for sweeping social change and self-determination that opened up after the collapse of the Batista regime was then most palpable. Enthusiasm was extraordinary and cooperation between Cuba's society at large and the revolutionary government unprecedented. I have chosen to focus on this early period to understand the role this active civic participation played in the subsequent achievements and endurance of the revolution. The early revolutionary dynamic, I argue, was strategically utilized and institutionalized by the revolutionary leadership but not designed as such *ex ante*. It facilitated far-reaching reforms and gave birth to the mobilizing revolutionary state. A fundamental part

---

[1] For two accounts that discuss recent historiography, see Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered*, *Envisioning Cuba* series (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). And Antoni Kapcia, "Does Cuba Fit Yet or Is It Still 'Exceptional'?," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40, no. 4 (2008).

[2] For the insurrection period, see two classic studies: Ramón L. Bonachea and Marta San Martín, *The Cuban Insurrection, 1952–1959* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1974); and Julia Sweig and American Council of Learned Societies, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). The studies from other disciplines, such as sociology, government, and the economics of Cuba's post-'59 communist era, are far too numerous to reference. For an overview see, for example, the various editions of Irving Louis Horowitz and Jaime Suchlicki, *Cuban Communism*, 10th ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001).

[3] But see the well-documented study of Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971*, *Envisioning Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). A classic study from a political science perspective is Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978).

[4] An early example of this is Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, in the *Envisioning Cuba* series. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). For a more recent work, see *Michelle Chase, Revolution within the Revolution: Women and Gender Politics in Cuba, 1952–1962*. *Envisioning Cuba* series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

of this development was Cuba's educational system, as it had the state's best-funded ministry since 1940. The control over education, from primary school through university, was crucial for the moral–political outlook of future citizens as well as for the social and economic development of the Cuban nation in its transition from republic to revolutionary state.

In 1959, unfulfilled ideals of the Cuban republic enshrined in its 1940 Constitution—among them, education for all—were renegotiated. Cuba's diverse problems, such as corruption, a centralized state, foreign dependence, and inequality, were addressed through a combination of republican and more institutional policies with a revolutionary, mobilizing approach. Creative and little-known policies were debated and implemented to address these issues during what I call the revolution's "liberal moment" between January 1959 and July 1960. This was made possible by the absence of organized violence and imperialist interference, I argue. From the summer of 1960, systematic and violent opposition began to change the dynamics and led to more radical measures and increased political control by the Cuban government, including the expropriation of private schools.

Nineteen fifty-nine and part of 1960 were years in which the influences of the United States and the Soviet Union on Cuban affairs were less dominant. During that time the Cuban government took measures to reduce U.S. presence; Soviet dependence and communist influence had not yet become decisive or necessary for the revolutionary leadership. A "third way" seemed possible. By 1962, Cuba's private schools were nationalized and its rural population had begun to be integrated into the revolutionary state by school expansion programs and a nationwide literacy campaign. Politically, Cuba had been cut off from U.S. and most Latin-American relations. The country began a complicated history of collaboration with the Eastern Bloc. The revolution's declared goal became to educate men and women to live in a communist society. By contrast, in November 1959, Minister of Education Armando Hart defined the revolution's objectives differently: "We do not have a preconceived concept of a certain type of man. (. . .) We want to educate [the people] for a democratic society (. . .) where every citizen learns to think for himself." It is this spirit of openness within the revolution that I seek to uncover and contextualize. By examining the dynamics that unfolded between 1959 and 1961, we can gain a better

understanding of the state and society that emerged from the revolution; historical factors that shaped this outcome can be better assessed. The Cold War and the violent context in Cuba shaped the radically different outcome of the early reforms decisively.

Analyzing the political solutions the revolution gave to social problems in precommunist Cuba also informs debates about Cuba's reforms today. Never since 1959 has Cuban history appeared to be so "open." Twenty-five years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ideological framework and available resources of the Cuban state have changed considerably. Some of the problems the government faced in 1959 resurfaced during the crisis of the 1990s. These have included the adequate provision of public goods and certain aspects of education. Cubans are once again working out the roles of the state and private initiatives in their society. The government wants to "update" Cuba's economic and social model; President Raúl Castro has said the errors of the past fifty years have to be corrected. The generalization of the principle of nationalization and state ownership, discussed here, has been mentioned as one such error. The renewed importance of religion in Cuban society and changing state–church relations is reflected in the fact that between 1998 and 2015, all three popes of the Roman Catholic Church have visited the Caribbean island. My work discusses the origins of this state–church conflict in Cuba's Catholic schools. In 2014, moreover, the U.S. government began to redefine its antagonistic relationship with Cuba, which had deteriorated between 1959 and 1961. I describe the era that led to these antagonisms.

By addressing Cuba's educational sector in detail, my study reconsiders the limits of reform in the Cold War era. Departing from traditional narratives, I show that Cuba's early reforms were far more oriented toward democratic institutional principles, based on republican and U.S.-American traditions, than is commonly assumed. Using government documents, statistics, and laws, I describe the paradigm shift from elite urban and private education to basic rural and public education, a shift that helps us understand the transformation of other sectors of Cuban society at the time as well. The unorthodox and radically reformist approach of the revolutionary government affected powerful interests, especially those of foreign and domestic private businesses and of religion—above all, of the Roman Catholic Church. The conflicts that emerged led to further radicalization on all sides. In the context of the Cold War, they

unfolded along communist/anticommunist lines. In 1961 all private and religious schools in Cuba were expropriated and a new national school system began to be implemented. This is where my study ends. Instead of describing the "communist imposition" that followed, I look at the historical roots of long-lingering problems in Cuban society and the early answers the revolution found for them.

The social and political themes underlying educational reform that the Cuban revolution addressed have been of fundamental importance in the history of Latin America's twentieth century and beyond: the expansion of universal education; the inclusion of the underprivileged sectors of society into a literate nation; and the creation of a national education system with civic values, oriented toward economic development as well as the reduction of social and racial inequalities through education. The answers that the Cuban revolution gave to these questions, as well as the resistance and difficulties it encountered, are reconsidered here.

Relevance of Cuba's education today

I also examine revolutionary transformation from the vantage point of education to evaluate the subsequent success of the country's educational system. Cuba's educational transformation has been regarded as the "revolutionary government's most impressive achievement."[5] The importance of education in Cuba can be briefly summarized here, despite several recent problems in the educational sector. In academic year 2013–14 there were more than 10,000 international students from 70 countries enrolled in Cuba's 13 medical schools. Total enrollment in medicine exceeded 85,000 students.[6] Already in 2006, the value of Cuba's exported human services constituted 8.2 billion CUC (Cuban convertible pesos, pegged to the dollar) or 40 percent of Cuba's total export earnings.[7] The origins of this educational

[5] Jorge I. Domínguez, "Cuba since 1959," in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 482.

[6] *Granma* [the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Cuban communist party] (7 September 2013).

[7] "Cuba ups healthcare sector pay, says medical export earnings to rise," *Reuters* (21 March 2014).

expansion go back to the period studied here.[8] But Cuba has long been not just a medical but a more general educational power as a result of its school system. It is estimated that between 1959 and 2009 more than 50,000 mostly third-world students have graduated from Cuban secondary and tertiary schools. By 1985 some 22,000 Cuban teachers had worked abroad.[9] Cuba's recent literacy programs, inspired by the sweeping 1961 campaign, have taught more than 6,000,000 people in 29 countries basic literacy skills.[10] UNESCO studies confirmed Cuba's outstanding achievements in basic education (reading and math skills at the primary level) in a Latin-American comparison.[11] In 2014, a World Bank study found Cuba's education system to be "high-performing" in the Latin-American context, especially in rural areas, and highlighted its "strong emphasis on teamwork and exchange of experience among teachers," lauding also the country's integral teachers' model, first developed in late 1959 and discussed in this work.[12]

Sources and literature

Innovative, archive-based studies on Cuba's post-'59 period seemed near to impossible for a long time. Students outside of Cuba were discouraged from assessing the revolutionary period because of the difficulty of access to sources. Inside Cuba, historians shied away from the era because a critical study and approach seemed equally difficult as long as the historic leadership was still in power. Documents

[8] Julie M. Feinsilver, "Fifty Years of Medical Diplomacy from Idealism to Pragmatism," *Cuban Studies* 41 (2010).

[9] Anne Hickling-Hudson, Jorge Corona Gonzalez, and Rosemary A. Preston, *The Capacity to Share: A Study of Cuba's International Cooperation in Educational Development*, *Postcolonial Studies in Education* series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 19–20.

[10] Bob Boughton and Deborah Durnan, "Cuba's *Yo Sí Puedo*: A Global Literacy Movement," *Postcolonial Directions in Education* 3, no. 2 (2014).

[11] The test was carried out by an independent research organization using an average sample size of circa 4,000 students across the country. Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación, *Primer estudio internacional comparativo sobre lenguaje, matemática y factores asociados en tercero y cuarto grado* (Santiago de Chile: Andros Ltda., 1998). In 2006, outstanding test results in math and Spanish were confirmed by another UNESCO study. UNESCO, Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, *Student Achievement in Latin America and the Caribbean Results of the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE)* (Santiago de Chile 2008).

[12] Barbara Bruns and Javier Luque, *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2014), p. 226.

remained classified, according to Cuban authorities, in part because they feared revelations could be used by Cuba's main enemy, the U.S. government, for its goal of regime change. Cuba still has no general declassification law, but access to some archives and institutions has become easier. For this study I have been able to work in Cuba's national and regional archives, as well as those of the Ministries of Culture and Education, and also in several collections held by libraries, government institutions, and individuals. Some pioneering source-based studies have encouraged others to follow.[13] In the evening of life, it seems, architects and participants of the revolution, as well as their victims and defectors, want their stories to be told. The fact that Eloisa Carrera Varona, wife of the revolution's first Minister of Education, Armando Hart Dávalos, opened their house and personal archive to me is one such example. Going beyond Cuban borders, I have also internationalized my perspective to include voices and visions of those who chose to emigrate or joined the opposition to the revolution in Miami or Washington, DC. I have interviewed students and teachers of public and private schools, both in Cuba and the U.S. This study has also been informed by perspectives from East German observers and consultants who began to be involved in Cuba from late 1960 onward. It is therefore an archive-based, in-depth study of the genealogy of the revolutionary "modus operandi" and the institutionalization of the mobilizing state that evolved out of the revolution from a transnational social-history perspective.

The academic literature on Cuba's educational system is abundant and diverse. Bibliographic reports include hundreds of articles, books, and government publications.[14] Inside Cuba, most accounts of revolutionary and late republican education have been written by influential policy makers, sometimes as memoirs.[15] There are a few historical–critical studies on specific subject matters for the early

[13] The most outstanding example is probably still Piero Gleijese's study on the revolution's foreign policy in Africa, based on unprecedented access to government documents. Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991*. *New Cold War History* series (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

[14] Larry R. Oberg, *Human Services in Postrevolutionary Cuba: An Annotated International Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984). Sheryl L. Lutjens, "Education and the Cuban Revolution: A Selected Bibliography," *Comparative Education Review* 42, no. 2 (1998).

[15] Asela de los Santos Tamayo and Raúl Castro Ruz, *Con visión de futuro: Testimonio sobre la campaña educativa 1958* (Havana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1998). See also Eloisa Carreras Varona, *Armando Hart Dávalos: Un*

revolutionary period[16]; most are chronologies or collections of documents.[17] Source-based and social history–inspired publications, including those on education, can be found for the republican era (1902–58), many resulting from the study group coordinated by historian Yoel Cordoví at Cuba's history institute, the Instituto de Historia de Cuba.[18] For the colonial period there is an authoritative, though mostly descriptive, eight-volume anthology on the history of education.[19] Also noteworthy are the numerous works of differing quality that have been produced at Cuba's various pedagogical schools over the last two decades. Theses with a regional or biographical focus on influential pedagogues, as well as evaluations of textbooks, curricula, or teaching techniques, are often based on documents and interviews rarely accessible to outside academics. Several theses reevaluate the role of private education in Cuba.[20]

Outside of Cuba, studies on the revolution's educational system can be distinguished by different disciplines. Most are of sociological and pedagogical nature; some are travel accounts or ethnographic observations.[21] Since the beginning of the revolution, several influential studies have been published that

---

revolucionario cubano; Apuntes para un esbozo biográfico, *vol. 1 (1930–1965)* (Mexico, DF: Plaza y Valdés S.A. de C.V., 2008).

[16] See, for example, the series edited by historian María del Pilar Díaz Castañón, *Perfiles de la nación*, vol. 2 of 2 vols. *Pensar en Cuba* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2004). See also the most complete and source-based account of the 1961 literacy campaign, by Felipe Pérez Cruz, *La alfabetización en Cuba: Lectura histórica para pensar el presente*. *Historia* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2001).

[17] See the multivolume edition by the former secretary of the Council of Ministers (1959–62), Luis María Buch Rodríguez, for example. Luis María Buch Rodríguez and Reinaldo Suárez Suárez, *Otros pasos del gobierno revolucionario cubano: El fin de la luna de miel*. *Política* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2002).

[18] Yoel Cordoví Núñez, *Magisterio y nacionalismo en las escuelas públicas de Cuba (1899–1920)*. *Historia* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2012).

[19] Enrique Sosa and Alejandrina Penabad Félix, *Historia de la educación en Cuba*, 2nd ed., corrected and augmented, Publicaciones de la Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad (Havana: Ediciones Boloña: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 2001).

[20] See, for example, Lucía and Rafael Martínez, *La escuela privada en Las Tunas de 1935–1958,* thesis option for the M.Ed., Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique José Varona (Las Tunas, 1999); and Isabel García González, *Contribución del movimiento educacional de la escuela privada de primer al segunda enseñanza en el período de 1790 a 1868 al desarrollo de la teoría y la práctica pedagógica cubana*, PhD diss. in pedagogical science, Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique José Varona (Havana, 2005).

[21] Sheryl Lutjens, *The State, Bureaucracy, and the Cuban Schools: Power and Participation*, *Latin American Perspectives* series, no. 17 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Jonathan Kozol, *Children of the Revolution: A*

have shaped subsequent perceptions of education in Cuba.[22] These studies are mostly based on published secondary sources and, if sympathetic to the revolution, include some interviews and observations on the ground as well as selected government statistics.[23] Archivally based, historical–critical monographs that touch upon aspects of Cuba's revolutionary education have only recently begun to be published.[24]

The chapters in detail

My thesis begins in January 1959, with a return to peace after years of violence. As was proper to a revolution, Cuba's revolutionaries wanted to undo the old order.[25] Instead of a program pushing toward communism, I discovered in my research that the early revolutionary period was characterized by the drive to revive republican legacies dating from before Fulgencio Batista's coup in 1952. The first chapter opens by describing the chaotic and contradictory circumstances of early revolutionary governance, where enthusiasm and support for the new government were initially overwhelming. Twenty-eight-year-old Armando Hart was surprised to find himself at the helm of Cuba's entire national educational system. In the absence of a defined program, the first months of 1959 were marked by endless consultations with the educational sector, frequent press conferences, and the government's efforts to assert control. I portray

---

Yankee Teacher in the Cuban Schools (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978); Karen Wald, *Children of Che: Childcare and Education in Cuba* (Palo Alto, CA: Ramparts Press, 1978).

[22] Most influential has been the chapter on the literacy campaign in Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*, *Stanford Studies in Comparative Politics* series, no. 2 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp. 229–61.

[23] See Richard Jolly, "Education," in *Cuba, the Economic and Social Revolution*, ed. Dudley Seers (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1964); Martin Carnoy, Jorge Wertheim, and World Bank, *Cuba: Economic Change and Education Reform 1955–1974*, World Bank Staff Working Paper, no. 317 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1979); and also Samuel Bowles, "Cuban Education and the Revolutionary Ideology," *Harvard Educational Review* 41, no. 4 (1971).

[24] See Anita Casavantes Bradford, *The Revolution Is for the Children: The Politics of Childhood in Havana and Miami, 1959–1962* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); and Denise F. Blum, *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

[25] According to the new revolutionary calendar, 1959 was the Year of the Liberation, 1960 the Year of the Agrarian Reform, and 1961 the Year of Education.

the early government's style and show how Minister Hart had to mediate between pressures both to address more radical measures and to guarantee a degree of institutional continuity.

The chapter then describes the initial revolutionary purges (*depuración*) in Cuba's educational sector. Pressured by revolutionary activists to free Cuba's schools from Batista's influence, the administration began to govern and regulate this process in late January. The instruments developed in this context, with strong popular support for evaluating past behavior, would prove to be important tools in later purges, when loyalty to the revolution, not opposition to Batista, would become the decisive criteria. Protocols from purge commissions, newspaper reports, and interviews that I conducted help reconstruct this search for revolutionary justice. The chapter reveals a picture of the time that differs from traditional accounts: legal procedures were established, plaintiffs involved, and appeals heard and considered. Fired "Batistiano teachers" were given a new chance to reapply for positions in school year 1959–60. This does not mean that injustices did not occur, fateful decisions were not taken, and careers were not destroyed. Revolutionary zealotry was often mixed with personal motives.

Chapter 1's section on *Ley 11* is a case study of the only revolutionary law that was withdrawn and modified due to public protests. Law 11 was intended to help students who had quit their studies in order to fight Batista by penalizing those who *had* continued to study. It backfired and drew criticism from students at Cuba's private schools, as they were most affected by it. The ensuing debates helped to define the right to neutrality in the revolution. I argue that the controversy also reinforced existing divisions between the state and religious education that would have a significant impact on subsequent conflicts. But the positive impact of public protests on government policies, in the absence of organized violence and interference from a then-neutral United States, also hints at the possibility of a radically different outcome that the Cuban revolution and its political culture could have had.

The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the limits of revolutionary reform. Political and administrative decentralization—an old republican demand to counter corruption and revive local dynamics—was first carried out in the Ministry of Education in February of 1959. It was widely lauded across the political spectrum. Yet, as I show, revolutionary realpolitik demanded limits to this reform.

Chapter 2 follows the dynamics in play during the first months of 1959. After the Council of Ministers had issued *Ley 11* to do justice to its fellow revolutionaries and had secured more political control via the purges, the government began to look forward and build a new nation. Fidel Castro announced an ambitious plan to build ten thousand new classrooms in the country to solve the problems of Cuba's illiteracy and teacher unemployment at the same time. This mostly rural education program was part of a national development project to better integrate and empower Cuba's peasant population within the state's rural and industrial development plan, and by extension, into the Cuban nation. In contrast to traditional accounts, I emphasize that the state faced competition in this endeavor from two influential agencies: the Catholic Church and the private sector. Both had an active interest in being part of an expansive education program that would shape half of Cuba's population, which had not attended school before 1959. Church and business wanted to have a say in the citizens' moral and human capital formation, especially as they feared the increase of communist influence within the government.

While rural education programs were obviously not new to Cubans, I argue that two factors distinguished the revolutionary from previous programs: First, many of the persons now in leading positions had lived for two years in impoverished rural areas as guerrilla fighters and had personally experienced the many deprivations faced by Cubans in the countryside. This was one of the reasons to make the 1961 literacy campaign and other rural education programs such a priority. Using budget allocations and legal texts, I discuss a new commitment and willingness to bring about a paradigm shift in government policies from specialized urban to basic rural education. This commitment to rural Cuba is crucial for the understanding of the early revolutionary development plans in general. Second, as Cuban historian Felipe Cruz has argued, the educational work by the revolutionary forces in the mountains of the Sierra de Escambray formed the precursory workshop of the transformations that the guerrilla army, once in power, carried out.[26] In addition to the better-known military side, I emphasize the strong civic aspect of that experience that has been largely neglected in existing historiography: Although the new

[26] Pérez Cruz, *La alfabetización en Cuba*, p. 75.

government began its educational expansion program in a fairly traditional manner, it soon developed new forms of civic–state cooperation that built on and were made possible by the enthusiasm, sense of change, optimism, and feeling of empowerment prevalent at the time. To overcome existing educational deficits, Cuban authorities relied in part on previous experiences, but combined them with the new revolutionary project. By asking citizens and civil society to donate rooms and land to facilitate schooling, a dynamic of cooperation between the state and society unfolded that became an important element of early revolutionary Cuba. The appeal to volunteerism was an embryonic version of the operational code of the "mobilizing state."

The revolutionary government cleverly combined institution-building and state expansion to provide basic public services, such as primary education, with a symbolic representation that bore a powerful influence on the public imagination. Most importantly, it converted military barracks into schools. I show that the Cuban revolutionaries, especially Fidel Castro, followed earlier U.S. policies and adapted them successfully into their political project. Marial Iglesias's observations on Cuba's transition period after independence can be applied to the revolution: The massive restructuring of the public school system and the new demand for school buildings were intended to symbolize the differences between the Batista republic and the new regime, with its promised virtues of education and prosperity.[27] The sixty-nine former military barracks that the government began to transform into school cities in 1959 became a most powerful symbolic representation of a new beginning and gave much legitimacy to the regime. Promises made by Castro in his 1953 "History Will Absolve Me" speech seemed to become reality. In it, he had promised that Cuba's largest military camp, Camp Columbia, "should be converted into a school."[28] Despite the increasingly military character of the revolution, which evolved in reaction to continued internal and external armed opposition, these school cities still form part of the revolution's symbolic capital in Cuba today, and their origins are taught to every Cuban student.

---

[27] Marial Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History of Cuba during the U.S. Occupation, 1898–1902* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[28] Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me: Translation from the Spanish of a Defense Plea by Fidel Castro* (Havana: Cooperativa Obrera de Publicidad, 1960), p. 29.

Chapter 3 discusses at length the public forum on education held in Cuba's capitol building, the Capitolio, in November 1959. This forum was the longest and most important public debate on education in that year. The unpublished multivolume protocol of the two-week forum provides a unique insight into Cuba's educational landscape at the time. Many of the educational system's long-term unresolved challenges that had erupted in the 1930s and 1940s resurfaced here. These difficulties reflected the country's uneven development in general. They included the rural–urban divide, state versus private initiatives, and foreign influence versus nationalism, as well as the need for pedagogical approaches and plans for the future path of national development to be taught at Cuban schools. The debate was all the more important in that it occurred in the absence of a strategic and coordinated governmental approach to long-term educational reform. History was open in 1959. As a delegate at the forum from the University of Santa Clara demanded, the Cuban school that ought to emerge out of this reform should teach "neither bourgeois individualism nor materialist collectivism," but should comprehensively educate its citizens. A "third way" between Soviet communism and U.S. imperial influence appeared to be possible.

Diverging from other scholarly accounts on Cuba in 1959, which focus mostly on the political changes, I discuss the technical, pedagogical, and other social concerns that were on the minds of Cuban teachers and educators: how to overcome Cuba's academic passivity and verbalism, modernize teaching techniques, and reduce racial divides and foreign influence in education. By doing so, I attempt to uncover the pedagogical origins of many of the signature aspects of the revolution that have come to be well known thanks to the pioneering work of other scholars. Julie Bunck's account of a "dramatically changing Cuban culture (. . .) into a flourishing national revolutionary sports consciousness," for example, may show some of the first articulations of this revolutionary awareness of biopolitics (in Michel Foucault's sense of social and political power over life) in the forum at the capitol and the ministerial resolutions that followed.[29] The birth of the caring state and the origins of the "highly supportive school environment" typical of education in socialist Cuba that Martin Carnoy famously studied were first

[29] Julie Marie Bunck, *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

announced here, when Cuba's pedagogues demanded and began to implement a more proactive schooling environment.[30] The revolutionary state's approach to modern media, a more conscious and instrumental usage of television and radio, although existing before, was now put high on the agenda again, not by communists, but progressive pedagogues.

Chapter 4 examines the changes in Cuban textbooks and teaching methods as part of the transformation of Cuba's educational system that occurred between 1959 and 1962. The first part relies on internal sources from Cuba's Ministry of Education to reconstruct the shifting practices in the production of textbooks. The second part is a case study of a Cuban geography book that encapsulates revolutionary teaching methods. The chapter also details U.S. perceptions of these new educational programs, based on declassified government documents.

I show that throughout 1959, political continuity reigned within Cuba's Ministry of Education. A newly formed textbook commission wanted to modernize Cuba's public educational system and render learning more interesting and interactive. I review some of the republican pedagogical traditions to explain the situation in 1959. While improvements were made, the new beginning was also a missed opportunity to overcome previously identified shortcomings in the education of Cuba's future generations. One example is the failure to continue an incipient public debate about race and racism that "facilitated the survival and reproduction of the very racist stereotypes that the revolutionary leadership claimed to oppose," as de la Fuente has argued.[31] The failure to stimulate this debate at schools and to challenge racial representations through the revision of the nation's textbooks was a missed opportunity whose legacy can still be felt today.

---

[30] Martin Carnoy, Amber K. Gove, and Jeffery H. Marshall, *Cuba's Academic Advantage: Why Students in Cuba Do Better in School* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[31] Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, p. 295.

I explain how the government began to create a reading culture and brought education to the countryside so that primary education would not be just a constitutional right but also a social reality.[32] Here again, the state faced competition from the religious and private sectors. I suggest that this competition was also a debate about the legitimacy of providing cultural and educational goods produced in Cuba. I show continuity in that throughout the 1959–60 school year, both republican and revolutionary books were authorized, and they coexisted in Cuba's schools. This was the liberal moment of the revolution. Batista's censorship had been lifted and freedom of expression reestablished. At this point a diversity of visions of Cuba's past, present, and future existed side by side in public debates, the media, and education, including its textbooks.

As I argue, however, not only textbooks were debated but also the country's socioeconomic order. The appropriate description of Cuba's geography and history in a textbook and the ways in which this were taught at school necessarily affected the perception of the U.S. government, military, and business community in Cuba because of the two countries' intimate ties.[33] The United States government was very aware of this issue, as internal documents show, and worried that the revolution's educational initiatives that were critical of the U.S. would have a long-term effect on future generations. Parallel to this, the Cuban Ministry of Education began to promote textbooks that represented a new, revolutionary approach in the fall of 1959. The most important one was Antonio Nuñez-Jiménez's work on Cuba's human geography. It played a key role in the formation of revolutionary consciousness in the educational system after 1959. More than a textbook, Nuñez-Jiménez's work encapsulated and represented a major shift in education from republican toward revolutionary Cuba. The transformation of Cuba's education, however, had to go hand in hand with more practice-oriented forms of learning. As Fidel Castro argued, "geography is something that really cannot be taught in the classroom." I identify this moment as the

[32] Par Kumaraswami, Antoni Kapcia, and Meesha Nehru, *Literary Culture in Cuba: Revolution, Nation-Building and the Book* (Manchester, England and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012).

[33] Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 3rd ed. *The United States and the Americas* series (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

beginning of the ruralization of Cuba's education, preceding later and better-known programs for schools in the countryside.[34] Previously, more traditional efforts of the Ministry of Education to expand rural education had largely failed, as the ministry could not attract a sufficient number of students willing to work under challenging rural conditions. A new, revolutionary approach was needed and is described in this chapter.

Chapter 5 analyzes the events that led to a complete rupture with the republican model as it tackles the question of the nationalization of Cuba's private schools. Was there a previous plan to nationalize them or was this "most radical measure," as the *New York Times* called it, born out of the specific historical circumstances? That is one of the key questions of the chapter. I review political programs of the various forces in opposition to Batista, including a secret communist party memo to examine the party's own attitudes toward state intervention and education both prior to 1959 and thereafter. By historicizing the nationalizations of the revolutionary government, I show that there has been a long tradition of expropriating private property in republican Cuba, beginning with the U.S. military occupation and expropriations at the turn of the century. The state's historical attempts to control and regulate private schools have transcended colonial, republican, and revolutionary classification. Ever since independence from Spain, Cuba's nationalist forces have been concerned about the divisive impact some private schools have had in the desired formation of a national culture, *la Cubanidad*, because of their particularly strong foreign influences and reproduction of social and racial inequalities.

The nationalizations in revolutionary Cuba were carried out in a violent context not often taken into consideration. The expropriation of schools was executed two weeks after the invasion at the Bay of Pigs. Cuba was at war. Seen in hindsight, the state's takeover of this crucial sector for the formation of citizens fits perfectly into the communist strategy employed from 1962 onward to educate new men and women. But the point of this chapter is to contradict a teleological perspective by zooming into the complicated details of 1960 and providing a more nuanced, complex, and open-ended view of the

[34] Max Figueroa Esteva et al., *The Basic Secondary School in the Country: An Educational Innovation in Cuba*. *Experiments and Innovations in Education* series, no. 7 (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1974).

situation. The approach to state intervention was contested at the time. It was, moreover, inseparably tied to powerful international forces that had a significant stake in Cuba's educational sector and that wanted to influence the formation of future generations, especially their leaders, through the country's private schools. The two most important actors in this scenario were the Roman Catholic Church and the U.S. government. Emphasizing historic contingency helps not only to better understand the drastic changes from public–private cooperation in 1959 to expropriation in 1961, but also to rethink public–private partnerships in Cuba today, under very different circumstances. From 1962 on, free from U.S. and other capitalist influences, the Cuban government began to create a communist education system that could build on the nationalized education system that had resulted from the conflicts in 1960–61.

1. THE UNDOING OF THE OLD

Unless Cuba greatly improves her public education system, within a short time, it is impossible to be optimistic about her chances of successful economic development. (. . .) *[N]o ordinary measure can rescue Cuban education from the conditions it has inherited* (. . .) *The mission is convinced that drastic administrative reforms are essential.*

—World Bank, Report on Cuba, 1951

In January of 1959 most Cubans enthusiastically welcomed the young leaders who came to power.[1] The new leadership represented most convincingly the opportunity to build a *Patria Nueva;* one in which the promises of José Martí and Cuba's 1940 Constitution to become a modern, inclusive, and more just republic might finally become a reality. In 1959 Cubans were desperate for a new beginning after three stable yet corrupt administrations, the last of which was aborted by a bloodless military coup in 1952, plus two years of armed conflict and a state of emergency. The revolutionary leadership enjoyed unprecedented support during the first months of their government. This popular backing facilitated the rapid and dramatic changes that began in January of 1959. The Council of Ministers passed 683 laws during the first year of the revolution. Yet, this approval did not translate into blind and uncritical following.

When Batista fled the island, there were longstanding demands and profound problems to solve in every field of Cuban society and politics. Education was no exception—on the contrary. With one out of four adults unable to write their names, half of the country's children not in school, and fewer than one in ten Cubans with education beyond the primary, Cuba was not a modern, literate nation. The country was far from the constitutional promise of mandatory and free primary education for all. Calls for better pay and improved labor conditions on the teachers' side and struggles for accessible and adequate education on the parents' and students' side were demands common to other sectors of society as well. But two factors placed education in a position of special interest during this transition: The classroom was a key

[1] American journalist Lee Lockwood wrote, "No one who was present in Cuba then, whether Cuban or foreigner, and regardless of his present opinion of Castro, could ever forget the spirit of exaltation and hope that permeated the island during the first days of the Revolution. The highway was a 500-mile-long parade route." Lee Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel: An American Journalist's Inside Look at Today's Cuba in Text and Picture* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

site to readjust the moral compass of the new republic and its future citizens, including the nation's future elites. Class attendance was made mandatory and would be made effective for every Cuban child. Adequate and universal schooling had an immediate economic importance, as it was the key institution for the formation of the nation's human capital, a requirement for the country's much-needed economic development.[2]

This chapter opens by describing the atmosphere in early 1959, when the young revolutionaries came to power without a defined program. The strong support and lack of a detailed program is important to understand subsequent developments. This account contradicts traditional narratives that emphasize a defined (communist) agenda from the beginning. A short section discusses the roles of communism and anticommunism at the time. It is a recurring theme throughout the Cuban revolution, and therefore also this dissertation. Accusations of communist influence were raised from very early on and have formed one of the most influential factors in opposing the revolution ever since.

The second part of this chapter discusses a law (*Ley 11*) that was intended to rehabilitate affected revolutionary students and punish others who had remained neutral during the fight against Batista. It backfired and sparked a fascinating debate on the self-understanding of the early revolution and the individuals' right to neutrality in a revolt that would define Cuban politics for a long time to come. The purging that followed, examined in the third section, was meant to cleanse the revolutionary administration of the republican past and to assert political control. This process reveals dynamics of pressures from below and the new regime's need to govern and institutionalize. It shows a respect for the rule of law traditionally not associated with revolutionary change. Decentralization, the topic of the final part of this chapter, describes how this republican ideal was made reality, but at the same time limited by revolutionary *realpolitik* and the need for political control.

[2] For the idea to include investment in labor skills into economic calculations, see Theodore W. Schultz, "Investment in Human Capital," in *Power and Ideology in Education*, ed. Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 313–25.

1.1 The new beginning

We cannot lie. We have not yet delineated a policy for education. We did not believe that we would be given the great responsibility of this ministry when only a few days ago we were still political prisoners.

—Armando Hart, 7 January 1959[3]

On New Year's Eve 1958, future Minister of Education Armando Hart Dávalos was still a prisoner. The twenty-eight-year-old was incarcerated at Cuba's largest prison, El Modelo, on the Isle of Youth, south of Havana province, along with some 400 other members of the civil resistance movement against the Batista dictatorship. Two days later, when President Fulgencio Batista and other top government and military officials had fled Cuba, Hart was flying out of the Isle of Youth on the first plane, "loaded with men and arms." Destination: Camp Columbia, Cuba's largest military garrison at the time, near Havana. From the camp Hart rushed to Santiago de Cuba (which during those early days served briefly as the nation's capital because of its de facto control by the rebel forces) to assist in Manuel Urrutia Lleó's swearing-in as Cuba's new president. Hart went on to meet with Fidel Castro in the central city of Camagüey. "As I approached him and Celia [Sánchez Manduley], I was told they would suggest me as Minister of Education." Armando Hart was unaware of and unprepared for this task during his imprisonment, according to his own testimony.[4] Another potential candidate for Minister of Education would have been Fidel Castro's trusted war comrade Commander Huber Matos, who in fact had experience as a respected teacher. Matos was just as surprised to be assigned the post of military governor in his home province of Camagüey in eastern Cuba.[5]

On Monday, 5 January, Hart started his work for the new revolutionary government. A general strike that had paralyzed the island for the first days of the new year to "assert control" of the

[3] *Diario de la Marina* (8 January 1959): 1–2A.

[4] Eloisa Carreras Varona, interview with the author, Havana, 30 January 2014. Carreras, married to Armando Hart for more than twenty years, has had interviews with the author extensively on this and other related questions.

[5] Huber Matos, *Cómo llegó la noche: [Memorias]*, 1st ed., *Tiempo de memoria* 19 (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2002).

revolutionary forces had come to an end only the night before.[6] While Fidel was still caravaning his way westward toward Havana, along with dozens of bearded *guerrilleros* and thousands of cheering bystanders, and announcing a new beginning, former lawyer Armando Hart stood shaved and attired in a suit in his new office.[7]

But in fact, new was old. It was the former Ministry of Education in Old Havana that would serve as the site for the educational bureaucracy of the new revolutionary government during most of 1959. Even though the new government put a lot of emphasis on symbolic change, this one ministry that was perhaps most notorious for corruption and public scandal began with continuity. Then, on 30 January, the Santiago daily *Sierra Maestra* announced that the Ministry of Education would be installed in Cuba's eastern capital to symbolize change. However, it was a short-lived measure that lasted only as long as Hart's visit, about two weeks. Minister Hart drew most of his advisors from the Santiago area and foresaw that the lion's share of the new government's early obligations would be geographically concentrated in the country's less developed eastern provinces. It was also a symbolic move away from Batista's Havana and into the rebellious east.[8]

During these first days of January 1959, many strategic buildings were still occupied or under the control of militias, "in the good understanding that they [the different departments] cannot take their own

---

[6] Fidel Castro had called for a general strike on 1 January 1959 in the name of the workers' section within the Movimiento 26 de Julio (M-26-7, or 26th of July Movement), a revolutionary organization that he led. After the failed attempt in April 1958, this was an important test to assert and symbolize control over the productive life of the country. The strike was also aimed against General Eulogio Cantillo's military junta, which had been formed at Camp Columbia on 1 January 1959 and had designated Judge Carlos Manuel Piedra as president of Cuba. For pathbreaking new insights into the role of labor in the guerrillas' victory over Batista, see Steve Cushion, *A Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution: How the Working Class Shaped the Guerrillas' Victory* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016).

[7] The caravan, mostly composed of military trucks and tanks, has been described by later dissident and longtime political prisoner Huber Matos as "the most spontaneous, tumultuous party (fiesta), full of happiness, that I have seen in my life," Matos, p. 294.

[8] See Eloisa Carreras Varona, *Armando Hart Dávalos: Un revolucionario cubano; Apuntes para un esbozo biográfico*, *vol. 1 (1930–1965)*, (Mexico, DF: Plaza y Valdés S.A. de C.V., 2008), p. 161. In late August 1960, prior to school year 1960–61 and in preparation for the national literacy campaign of 1961, the ministry's headquarters were moved again to Camp Columbia, which had by then been converted into the "Liberty School City," to symbolize change once again.

initiatives without consulting with the supervisor of the revolutionary 26th of July Movement that has been assigned for this purpose."[9] Despite the omnipresence of olive-drab-uniformed, bearded guerrillas and militia members, the order of the day was "the return to normalcy." Primary schools were expected to reopen on Monday, 12 January, but secondary schools and universities would remain closed and subject to administrative changes before opening their doors again. Despite this, the elite Jesuit Colegio de Belén, for example (from which Fidel Castro had graduated in 1945), announced it would reopen, given that "in the new political situation of Cuba, [the college] encounters the air of liberty."[10]

Meanwhile, Cuban newspapers could hardly keep up with the speed with which changes were taking place. Many dailies printed more than one edition because political meetings and speeches with important announcements were held until well into the night. The weekly *Bohemia*, Cuba's most widely read magazine, published a special Freedom Edition (*Edición de la Libertad*) with a circulation of one million copies for each of the three parts—four times its normal circulation.[11] The normal length of the workday as well as of the daily publications had to be extended to report on all the news and changes that were occurring on an hourly basis. Cuba was in upheaval.

The early educational goals

The new minister of education signaled to the public that an increasing level of control and compliance with the law should be expected from now on. Aside from reviewing the registration process of private

[9] These militias had different origins: Many were sympathizers of the M-26-7; others came from the urban Student Revolutionary Directorate (Directorio Revolucionario Estudentil, or DRE); and some were formed from old veterans' organizations (the Consejo Nacional de Veteranos and Asociación Nacional de Hijos de Veteranos). For details, see Albert Manke, "Die Verteidigung der kubanischen Revolution unter Castro: Ursprünge, Gründung, Organisation und Funktion der *Milicias Nacionales Revolucionarias*" (The Defense of the Cuban Revolution under Castro: Origins, Founding, Organization and Functions of the Revolutionary National Militia), PhD diss., University of Cologne, 2011, esp. pp. 101–5.

[10] *Diario de la Marina* (7 January 1959): 1-A.

[11] A U.S. intelligence report from 1953 stated that *Bohemia* was "read by government officials as well as the masses. It has the most diversified circulation of any Cuban publication." According to that document, the magazine's circulation fluctuated between 180,000 and 300,000 copies weekly. See Govt. Docs., U.S. Department of State, "Data Regarding Most Influential Cuban Periodicals," 5 November 1953, in U.S. State Department Central Files Cuba, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs 1950–1954.

schools under his predecessors, Hart announced several other early measures that his ministry would seek to implement: that private schools would apply the same courses and programs as the "official" (public) schools; that any publication previously approved as a textbook would be revised; that work would commence on the modernization of school materials; and that all current presidents of the educational boards would be replaced with provisional presidents who would be delegates from his ministry. These would be in charge of carrying out a purge of collaborators with the dictatorship. Hart sought to reinstate all pedagogical personnel who had been dismissed earlier for political reasons. "Free teaching job assignments" (versus institutionalized competitive examinations) by Hart's predecessor would be undone and instead, new examination procedures announced. Cost-saving and antibureaucratic measures would include a reduction in administrative personnel as well as in school inspectors. These steps were intended to make more funds available for the building of new schools and the provision of school materials and supplies. Both were now top priorities.

Rehabilitating public schools

The declared goal of his early educational policy was "to elevate the public schools to the level of private schools," Minister Hart explained in March 1959.[12] "If the son of the vice president of the United States, *Señor* Nixon, is going to a public school, we need to find a way that the son of the president of the Republic of Cuba feels proud of going to a public school. But for that we need to transform them accordingly," Hart said in one of his first public speeches.[13] The "rehabilitation of public schools" was a driving force for the early educational reforms in Cuba. The public school system had been built and significantly expanded under U.S. occupation and its subsequent influence, and in 1959 the United States was still the yardstick of comparison for many Cuban reforms.[14] The decline of the public school system

[12] *Diario de la Marina* (1 March 1959): 1-A.

[13] *Educación* 18, no. 1 (January 1959): 8.

[14] Cuban pedagogue and historian Ramiro Guerra affirmed in a 1920 study that "the work undertaken in public instruction during the mandate of General Wood was gigantic, without hyperbole." Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *El*

after its promising first two decades had been a constant theme of debate.[15] The U.S. Foreign Policy Association's report, which in the mid-1930s had found that Cuba had not been able to realize its "democratic ideal of providing education to all its citizens," had described how private schools "compensated up to a certain point for the lack of public education." Children of wealthy families, it said, "are being sent to private schools."[16]

Public opinion, the media, and the ministry

In January of 1959, the *Diario de la Marina* published an editorial, "Applause," in which it lauded the policies of the new revolutionary government "because all these points are in the cement of our ideology."[17] This is remarkable because a U.S. intelligence report described the daily as "a sound, conservative, Catholic, pro-Franco newspaper of serious character." With a circulation of about 30,000, 80 percent of which were subscriptions, it was "widely read by government officials as well as the upper and middle classes, which might be called 'the opinion-forming groups.'" A few days later, another of its editorials called upon readers "to give the fullest possible cooperation" to the revolutionary leaders because "it is especially in the sphere of education where the principle of collective regeneration is located."[18] The approval and support of influential conservative publications such as *Diario de la Marina* were key to building revolutionary hegemony and were an expression of the almost universal support for the new regime at the time. In mid-February, a public opinion survey found that 92 percent were in full

---

General Leonardo Wood y la instruccion publica en Cuba (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959), p. 13. Interestingly, this pro-American study was published in a new edition in 1959.

[15] For details, see Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Rehabilitación de la escuela pública: Un problema vital de Cuba en 1954* (Havana: Impresores P. Fernandez y Cia, 1954).

[16] Raymond Leslie Buell and Foreign Policy Association, *Problems of the New Cuba: Report of the Commission on Cuban Affairs.* Foreign Policy Association, Commission on Cuban Affairs (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1935).

[17] According to the U.S. Embassy, *Diario de la Marina* was the weekly with "the highest reputation in Cuba for factual news representation and general content." Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, "Data Regarding Most Influential Cuban Periodicals."

[18] *Diario de la Marina*, "Un aplauso" (11 January 1959): 4-A.

agreement with the revolutionary government.[19] This was the hegemonic moment of the revolution and an important building block for extraordinary changes to come.

Revolutionary public relations

In a "very animated and affectionate" meeting with the press, Armando Hart sought to define the *modus operandi* of his ministry, especially vis-à-vis the public sphere and Cuban civil society. He did so inside the old Chamber of Representatives, which had been home to the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts in 1929. He told reporters that his ministry "needs the media, as it is the contact with the people. The media reflects and reports what is being done." He asked them to offer constructive criticism and to point out mistakes. As in the era of the guerrilla struggle, the leaders of M-26-7 showed through actions like these their awareness of the public image of its policies. Fidel Castro's remarks in his first public speech in Havana were in a similar vein when he stated, "In times of dictatorship public opinion means nothing, but in times of liberty public opinion is everything."[20] In congruency with this position, Minister Hart passed a resolution that decreed "the periodic holding of public information sessions in this ministry and in each of its provincial departments."[21]

The government's new approach was published and welcomed in Cuba's teachers' journal, *Educación*. The professional organizations felt encouraged and invited to participate in the formulation of the new educational policy. In the public information sessions, the ministry would "accommodate suggestions for studies that it carries out (. . .) and the participants will comprehend the problems of

[19] Gutierrez Serrano, "Survey nacional: El pueblo opina sobre el gobierno de la revolución," *Bohemia* 51, no. 8 (22 February 1959): 76–81, 105. This was the first comprehensive survey held in Cuba since the coup in 1952. It distinguished race, age, occupation, and province, and revealed variations across these categories. Generally, the more white, male, affluent, and urban the person surveyed, the higher the (relative) dissatisfaction with government measures, even though there were some exceptions, as in Havana, with an approval rate for the government of "only" 84.64 percent (overall approval rate: 91.85 percent). Among women and blacks, the number of respondents "not knowing" was twice and four times as high, respectively (ibid.: 78).

[20] Fidel Castro, "Discurso," 8 January 1959.

[21] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación (MINED). Resolución Ministerial 7702 (11 February 1959), Archive of MINED, Fondo Resoluciones.

education they are interested in and to which they may contribute with projects and ideas that will be received and processed in accordance with the purpose of the revolutionary government."[22] The creation of schools and enlistment of voluntary teachers were the two examples most cited by Cubans as positive change in the early education policies.[23]

The first revolutionary laws

Shortly after being appointed Minister of Education, Armando Hart promulgated several laws that would alter the character of the educational system in Cuba. All in all, during 1959, 48 educational laws were issued by the Council of Ministers. These would fall typically into one of three categories: creation of new administrative departments, reregulation of (administrative) procedures, or budgets for new government projects. The new state budget law (Law number 6 from 12 January 1959) funded education generously. For the fiscal trimester January through March of 1959, Hart's ministry was given 3.5 million pesos (plus 0.7 million for universities) as part of the ordinary budget. Out of a total of 30 million pesos in the extraordinary budget, education (including culture at the time) was assigned 15 out of a total of 55 million pesos. These numbers show the importance given to education in the "New Cuba."[24]

The revolution's early educational policy was not part of a preexisting program or manual. Among educators, policy makers, and public intellectuals there was a general consensus to expand basic education to include literacy efforts for the entire population, to modernize and decentralize the existing educational programs, and to reduce corruption and raise teachers' salaries, especially in the countryside. Another item on the agenda was to review the government administration in order to purge Batista's collaborators and do justice to the regime's victims. Guiding references were the "Moncada program,"

[22] *Educación*, no. 3 (March 1959): 9–10.

[23] Gutierrez Serrano, "Survey nacional."

[24] The second biggest expenditure was for the judiciary with 2.9 million pesos, then defense with 2.9 million pesos. Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes* (vol. 1, 1959) Law 6 (state budget law), 12 January 1959, pp. 26–27.

based on Fidel Castro's defense speech from his trial after the failed rebel attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953; the republican Constitution of 1940; and many reform proposals from pedagogues and public intellectuals. In January 1959, there was no set policy, as Armando Hart admitted.

Communism and education

In the wider national and international political arena, meanwhile, comments and speculations were made about Cuba's future political alliances and foreign influences. These sentiments grew even though Cuban communists had been part of the government coalition in 1940–44, and were "pillars of the establishment and skilled parliamentarians," gaining one out of ten votes in the nation's capital in Cuba's last multiparty election in 1948.[25] With more than 50,000 registered members, some 100,000 sympathizers, and more than 150,000 voters, it was also "one of the electorally more successful communist parties in Latin America."[26] Despite this, communist ideas began to be portrayed and perceived as antidemocratic, anti-Cuban, and foreign-dominated. Cuban communists had been an important part of its civil society and state politics before 1959, and especially in 1938–44, during World War II. They had begun to be outlawed, purged, and persecuted from the late 1940s onward, when shifting Cold War alliances and ideologies created an anticommunist fervor (especially among the conservative and middle–upper classes) that was very much present in the political climate of early revolutionary Cuba in 1959. Suspicion of communist influence became a constant theme in all sectors of society, but especially in government, labor, military, and to a lesser degree, education. In the early 1950s, the Cuban government had begun to increase its anticommunist activities, reflecting hemispheric policies of the time. Especially after the Ninth International Meeting of American States in Bogotá in

[25] Jorge I. Domínguez, "Past the Poof Moment: Cuba's Future Political Parties" (unpublished manuscript made available to the author).

[26] Ibid. The numbers are taken from U.S. intelligence estimates, based on information from Cuban informants. The estimates are described as "conservative." After the criminalization of the People's Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista Popular*, or PSP), the number of officially registered party members obviously decreased considerably. See Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series, "Dispatch From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State," no. 90, Havana, 24 July 1958, in *FRUS 1958–60*, vol. 6, p. 160).

1948, and with the Cuban government's close cooperation at the time with the U.S. government, there was an increased awareness of communist influence in education in Cuba. But as the Cuban ambassador to the United States, Aureliano Fernández Concheso, explained to Harvey R. Wellman at the State Department in Washington, just a day before Castro attacked the military barracks in eastern Cuba in July 1953, there would be "difficulties in eliminating communists from education, particularly from teaching in public schools."[27] The reason for this was, according to Concheso, that while some communists were well known, most were not. Concheso reported that the Cuban law would need to define "illegal activities" more specifically, but he assured Wellman that the law would "provide that a communist cannot be a member or officer of a labor union."[28] After he had studied U.S. anticommunist legislation, Concheso promised Wellman "he would explore while in Cuba the possibility of the anticommunist law which has been under consideration"—even if it could not be of the same pattern as the U.S. law.[29]

Law Decree 1170 of 6 October 1953 then focused mostly on the "intermeddling of international communism" in Cuba, which it declared unlawful. One year later, a new law went much further and effectively implemented politically motivated discrimination as it declared "the development of communist activity in any of its manifestations (. . .) incompatible with public service."[30] This mandate proved to be just as vague as later accusations of communist doings, since it did not specify the nature and content of "communist activity." It served as a formidable tool for control and criminalization of unwanted political actions from Cuba's Left during the Batista years. In conjunction with media campaigns, it created a political climate of anticommunist fears that continued to exert its ideological influence after 1959.

---

[27] Wellman was at the Office of Middle American Affairs of the State Department in Washington, DC, at the time. Concheso's wife, Zolia Mulet y Proenza, became Minister of Education from 1954–58, while Wellman was appointed as the last counselor for political affairs of the U.S. Embassy in Cuba in September 1960.

[28] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series. "Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador Concheso," 25 July 1953.

[29] Ibid. Concheso was planning to depart to Cuba on 27 July 1953 for a monthlong vacation, as "he had been invited by President Batista to accompany the Batista family to Varadero," according to Wellman.

[30] *Gaceta oficial.* Law Decree 1456 (3 June 1954), in no. 128 (4 June 1954).

While Fidel Castro was announcing the reorganization of Cuba's armed forces in January 1959 after having battled them for more than two years, Commander Camilo Cienfuegos, chief of the armed forces at the time, was rejecting accusations of communist influence: "There is no communism in the revolutionary [armed] forces."[31] Castro, in striving to increase Cuba's self-determination and reduce foreign influence, asked the United States to withdraw its thirty-one military advisors from the Batista era because the U.S. military mission "has not taught anything of value."[32] This was an early example of diminishing U.S. influence in Cuba.

It would not take long until several members of the government were also accused of being communists, including Fidel Castro himself. Aside from denials of his own,[33] even influential intellectuals such as Jorge Mañach defended Castro from such accusations.[34] Foreign politicians and intelligentsia, mostly from the U.S. and Spain, as the two most important states with exile communities from Cuba, feared that Castro might be a communist. Cuba's communist party, on the other hand, claimed he was a "member of the revolutionary unity." The early denials of communist sympathies by members of the cabinet themselves catered to the profound anticommunist sentiments that Cuba's educated class cultivated at the time.

---

[31] *Diario de la Marina* (10 January 1959): 1-A. On details of how filmmakers and movie debates sympathetic to the communist party (PSP) gained influence in early educational and cultural programs of the rebel army, see Guerra, *Visions of Power*, pp. 80–82. In his memoir, Camilo Cienfuegos's friend and war comrade, Commander Huber Matos, points out the increasing communist influence at several instances. In October 1959 he resigned for that reason and because of the lack of a clear political program and direction for the revolution. Yet, neither in his letter of renunciation nor in his memoirs does he provide evidence for this claim of communist subversion during this early period other than the well-known references to Ernesto ("Che") Guevara and Raúl Castro as communists. See Matos, *Cómo llegó la noche,* esp. "La conjura comunista," pp. 325–37.

[32] *Diario de la Marina* (10 January 1959): 1-A.

[33] "'Yo no soy comunista,' reiteró Fidel Castro—el comunismo no tiene nada que hacer aquí," *Diario de la Marina* (24 January 1959): 1-A.

[34] Jorge Mañach, "Fidel Castro no es comunista" ["Fidel Castro is not a communist"]. *Diario de la Marina* (11 January 1959): 1-A. In the article, Mañach declares Fidel to be a "democratic *martiano*": "His ideas are those of Martí, of course, applied to our times but within a strict democratic scheme" (ibid.: 2-A).

1.2 Defining neutrality in the revolution: *Ley 11*

Minister Hart's first speech at the former plenary of the chamber of representatives, the *hemiciclio,* on 7 January began with a minute of silence. "It is very emotional for us to be here," he said to the assembled public, government delegates, media representatives, and a high-level delegation that included Cuba's new president, Manuel Urrutia Lleó; the rector of the University of Havana, Clemente Inclán; and several university deans. "[W]hat comes to mind are the images of all the comrades who fell along the way." Before talking about the goals of education more broadly, Hart made it clear that "To them [the fallen comrades] we owe our presence, because of them we are here, and for them we will work."[35] By doing so, he expressed the loyalties and priorities of his government at that time, merely ten days after the last military battle in Santa Clara. But Cuba's Minister of Education took advantage of the dramatic moment and declared the forward-looking, long-term perspective of this revolution: "We're not working here only for ourselves and this generation, but for the perdurability of the revolutionary ideals, for which we fought with sacrifice and blood."[36]

The first controversial law on education issued by Cuba's Council of Ministers was *Ley 11* (Law 11) on the "Nullification of Academic Titles and Extinction of Private Universities."[37] Law 11 invalidated all academic titles issued after 30 November 1956—the day of the scheduled landing of the boat *Granma* in eastern Cuba for the beginning of the armed insurrection against the Batista government.[38] Celebrated as revolutionary justice on the one hand, decried as an attack on Catholic universities on the other, Law 11 was the first law of the revolutionary government to spark enduring public protests in Cuba. It was also the first to be officially modified, only five weeks later. Over that time, some fundamental patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the revolutionary process were publicly debated and mechanisms of

[35] *Educación* 18, no. 1 (January 1959): 5.

[36] Ibid.

[37] The very first law on education, Law Number 8, had temporarily suspended secondary education. See *Gaceta oficial*, "Suspensión del curso de enseñanza secundaria," in no. 3 (14 January 1959): 30–31.

[38] Ibid.: 36–40.

governance redefined. At stake was the definition of acceptable behavior during a revolution. Political mechanisms to accommodate public protest against revolutionary policies were then first developed. I argue that the debate on this law was a showcase for the learning process of the new revolutionary government. The decree was guided by the impulse to do justice to all students who had quit their studies in order to fight Batista. But the implications, the punishment of all students who were not politically active, converted this law into a major point of contention. Since the law affected mostly those in Catholic and private schools, religious and class matters became an important part of the public discussion.

From November 1956 on, active members of the revolutionary movements, especially the M-26-7, had had to operate clandestinely and had no longer been able to hold official functions. Cuba's largest and most important university, La Universidad de la Habana, had already shut down for normal operations and effectively remained closed, with some brief interruptions, until 1959. The decision to close the university had been taken by the university council, an autonomous university board, not the government. The Batista government, on the contrary, in its attempt to achieve and display normalcy, had constantly pressured the university to reopen. But as Professor Adriano G. Carmona y Romay explained in a letter to the dean of his faculty of social sciences and public law in May 1958, in anticipation of the university council vote on whether or not to resume classes, in a country "in the midst of a civil war, with society justly alarmed, the press censored, and constitutional guarantees suspended (. . .) in addition to a constant threat to professors, students, and employees," it was advisable to resume normal academic activities only when circumstances would permit. At several points since its first closure on 29 October 1956, the university council had met to debate whether it was safe to reopen or not.[39] Cuba's private universities—Candler College, Universidad Católica Santo Tomás de Villanueva, Social Católica San Juan de Bautista de la Salle, Masónica, and Colegio de Belén—as well as most other private (and public) schools, stayed open. One reason for this was economic. While the public universities were assigned a

[39] "Carta de Adriano G. Carmona y Romay, profesor titular de la Cátedra B al Decano de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Derecho Público," in Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Fondo de Manuscritos Marinello, Documento 50, 30 May 1958.

guaranteed state budget that secured salaries for all employees even if no classes were held, private institutions largely relied on tuition fees.[40]

Many of the leading figures of the opposition to Batista had been university students. The closure of Cuba's largest university had helped the cause of the revolution enormously, as 18,000 students were thrown "into the vortex of national politics."[41] The visible leadership and urban part of the resistance movement came primarily from a middle-class and highly educated background. The majority of the guerrilla fighters, in contrast, were of rural background and often illiterate.[42] Ley 11 was the first law that caused organized and visible forms of protest by those affected. These protests included the first concerted actions by parts of the Catholic clergy against a possible threat to its interests, namely an attack on religion by secular and communist forces.

After the flight of Batista, the revolutionary government wanted to restore order and reinstate "a normal rhythm of life in the country" that had been made impossible "by the illegitimate government" and the armed violence against it. Law 16 of 16 January 1959 targeted "goods that could be products of embezzlement" (*bienes que puedan ser producto de malversación*). Law 11 had been argued on similar grounds: It had sought to invalidate "misappropriated academic titles." Studying during a revolution seemed "unjust and a privilege," it stated. Such continued study also undermined a revolutionary authority that had called all Cubans to action in the fight against Batista. Moreover, uninterrupted study was seen as an insult to the sacrifice by those students who had died in their fight against the dictatorship. Law 11, then, was also a form of honoring the dead, as Hart had recalled in his speech, "because of

[40] For academic year 1958–59, the state budget for the University of Havana alone was 2.75 million pesos, but only about one tenth, or 0.3 million pesos, would come from registration fees; see University of Havana, *Boletín oficial* 26, Extra 1 (1 April 1959), p. 2. Many private educational institutions had no outside source of income, no endowment, and as Ruston Academy was, were "operated solely with the income from tuition." James D. Baker, *Ruston: From Dreams to Reality* ([Miami] n.p., 2007), p. 44.

[41] Suchlicki, *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro and Beyond* (Washington, DC, 2002), p. 129.

[42] According to Carmen Gómez, a former private teacher in Havana who became one of the first teachers to work as a literacy worker in the rebel army in 1959, there was never a detailed study carried out to determine the numbers of illiterates among their troops. A common and plausible estimate was 80 percent. Carmen Gómez, interview with the author, Havana (30 January 2014).

[those who had sacrificed] we are here, and for them we will work."[43] Article 2 of Law 11 even postulated the closure of all "officialized universities" (*universidades oficializadas*) except for the three major public institutions in Havana, Las Villas, and Oriente; there were others that had been recognized only by local but not central authorities in the 1950s, and there were doubts about their legality.[44] Law 11's retroactive character was explained "for reasons of social utility" (*utilidad social*), constituting as a "national necessity the equality in sacrifice of all university professionals."[45] Compensation was ruled out on the grounds that "the inevitable and profoundly moral sacrifice that this law brings about cannot be measured in monetary terms."[46]

Defending neutrality

The first reactions to Law 11 came from the most affected, namely the Catholic universities San Tomás de Villanueva,[47] San Juan Bautista de La Salle, and the electromechanical school of the Belén college, also called "Universidad Obrera de Belén," more akin to a community college or technical school. These universities felt more impact because of their size—Belén and Villanueva had about 1,500 students each. Unlike state universities, they had continued to award titles and diplomas.

---

[43] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes del gobierno provisional de la revolución I, 1o al 31 de enero de 1959*, 4th ed., Editorial Lex (Havana 1959), p. 36. All citations in this section are from this law, unless otherwise stated.

[44] This did not refer to private universities as such, as Hart made clear in a press statement a few days later. Instead, it applied to the universities in Holguín or Camagüey that had been created based on Law 15 of 30 December 1950, which had allowed for the creation of private universities but had failed to be officially recognized by the Ministry of Education. "Aclaran no se han suprimido las universidades privadas," *Diario de la Marina* (14 January 1959): 1-A.

[45] *Ley 11*, in Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y Leyes*, p. 39.

[46] Ibid., p. 39–40.

[47] The university, founded in 1946 by the Italian-born and U.S.-educated Father Lorenzo Spiralli, with thirty-four students, was only fully recognized by Ministerial Resolution 1672 (10 September 1953). It was given the title "Catholic" university by Pope Pius the 12th in 1957. In 1959, Villanueva had 1,500 students. See Leonel A. de Cuesta, "Evocación de Villanueva," in *Otro lunes: Revista hispanoamericana de cultura* 5, no. 20 (September 2011). Villanueva's academic credits were recognized by U.S. universities, such as MIT and Princeton, according to the *Diario de la Marina* (15 January 1959): 1-A. For more details on Villanueva, see also Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva and Edward James McCarthy, *Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva: Contribución a la historia de sus diez primeros años* (Havana, 1956).

Yet, in a carefully worded article published in *Diario de la Marina*, former Villanueva professor of psychology Santiago Choca explained how classes at his university had also been suspended. For example, he pointed out that throughout the time of the failed April 1958 strike, twelve professors had stopped working and renounced their positions or fled into exile, and that student members of M-26-7 and also the Catholic University Youth (Juventud Universitaria Católica, or JUC) had been active at Villanueva. In Choca's view, punishing the students was counterproductive. Instead, the circumstances of the time needed to be taken into consideration. The behavior of the administrators, especially rector John Kelly, should be seen in this light. The question was whether the rector's decision to continue to enforce the obligation to study in times of civil war and suspended constitutional rights was the right decision. It clearly discouraged others from taking action. "I was afraid of the consequences my resignation could have," Choca confessed.[48]

Conversely, there were also protests and public pronouncements in favor of Law 11, mostly by students who had been actively involved in the resistance or directly affected by the suspension of classes at the University of Havana. In a full-page advertisement, students Omar Fernández and Juan Menchaca, "representing the Association of Medical Students" of the University of Havana, in great detail advocated a comprehensive university reform that would include the suspension of titles issued after November 1956, and welcomed Law 11 enthusiastically.[49] Activities supporting the legislation were also held at the University of Las Villas. The National Association of Pedagogues (Colegio Nacional de Pedagogos) called for support of the law.[50] Overall though, negative reactions to Law 11 were far stronger and more visible.

---

[48] Santiago Choca, "El problema de la Universidad Cátolica de Villanueva," *Revolución* (28 February 1959): 2.

[49] "Ahora o nunca: Planteamiento para la reorganización universitaria," *Diario de la Marina* (25 January 1959): 6-B; 8-B.

[50] "Respaldan estudiantes de Las Villas Ley 11," *Revolución* (9 March 1959): 12. See also "Piden los pedagogos que se cumpla la Ley 11," *Revolución* (6 March 1959): 6.

One day after the publication of the new mandate, a joint statement by private universities and colleges explained how they had worked for the "education and formation of future citizens" in accordance with the law.[51] "Studying was never a crime," the *Diario de la Marina* stated in an editorial.[52] To assume that everyone would take up a weapon was "absurd," even if one thought that was the right thing to do at the time. "Those who continued to hold a book in their hand because their parents told them to, or for any other circumstance, were not betraying anyone." "What is it exactly that should be punished?" the declaration asked. The answer was a defense of neutrality within a revolution—a revolution to which it was worth appealing: "To pretend that everyone would act in the same way, without nuances in the manner of thinking or being able to defend their own ideas, should not be part of a revolution that aspires to be noble, elevated, better."[53]

In addition to the moral appeal to the revolution as a welcome process of change, the statement touched on two fundamental notions: the concept of education and the role and responsibility of the individual in society. For a university to continue to hold classes is complying with its educational mission. This might "not be the way certain ultraradical elements would like to understand," the editorial polemicized against sectors of the government, but surely it was "the way the philosophy of education interprets it."[54]

The following day, a declaration by students from Villanueva and La Salle argued for the rights of being students "even without being revolutionaries," just as the majority of the working population continued to receive their salaries if they were neutral. One should not be punished or disadvantaged for neutrality. But Cuba's Catholics remained in the discursive territory of the revolution: They constructed

[51] "La Universidad Católica de Villanueva, como otras universidades privadas, ha estado laborando por la educación y formación de ciudadanos útiles al futuro, al amparo y cumplimiento de los dos requisitos de la ley de la República," *Diario de la Marina* (14 January 1959): 1-A.

[52] *Diario de la Marina* (15 January 1959): 1-A.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

legitimacy based on the revolutionary credentials of private universities and their students: "Didn't the students support clandestine activities? Didn't the students contribute money to the revolution?," the declaration asked.[55] Some students, the text argued, had continued to study and had joined the opposition only during the very last days of 1958. Such was the case of Ramón Pérez, Julián Martínez, José Ignacio Martí, and Javier Calva. "They were all students of Villanueva until the last moment, in which, when the fatherland asked for it, they sacrificed their lives for the liberty of our Cuba."[56] While neutrality as a right was defended, the revolutionary credentials among private schools were also displayed.

On 17 January, "students of Villanueva" sent a formal petition to the president of the republic, Manuel Urrutia Lleó, asking that Law 11 be "revised and modified." The students pointed out that the law unfairly discriminated against students while not affecting other sectors of society that had also continued their normal duties. The law was, moreover, retroactive. Retroactive laws were allowed under Article 22 of the Constitution only for reasons of "social utility" and "national necessity." The dispute about Law 11 then touched upon the interpretation of Cuba's sovereignty.[57] According to the petition, the time lost by students active in the resistance could not be recovered, and thus equality before the law should be established by "positive means." Negative, punitive measures would be against the spirit of social harmony. Furthermore, "any intervention of the state in the regime of private education" would represent a "dangerous interference," contrary to the Constitution.[58] The petition suggested instead a revision of the

[55] *Diario de la Marina* (16 January 1959): 1-A.

[56] "Protestan de la anulación alumnos de universidades," in ibid.: 1–2A.

[57] The "Fundamental Law" (*Ley fundamental*) constituted the legal basis of the Cuban Republic after its promulgation on 7 February 1959, and until the new socialist Constitution of 1976. The Fundamental Law differs from the 1940 Constitution mostly in that the "legislative body" had been dissolved and was replaced by the Council of Ministers. Interestingly, though, Law 21 of the same section on the individual rights in both legal texts was changed: The Cuban Constitution from 1940 granted that laws could be applied retroactively, but only if they were to the favor of the accused, except in cases of public employees who had taken advantage of their positions, or those of electoral fraud. The revolutionary constitutional text went a step further: Public employees accused of wrongdoing could now be treated with the new revolutionary laws. See "Ley fundamental de la república," in Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes*, p. 13).

[58] *Diario de la Marina* (17 January 1959): 1-A, 20-A.

academic titles on a case-by-case basis.[59] The "constructive purposes" of the revolution were deemed incompatible with the punitive and discriminatory character of the law. A positive identification with the revolution encouraged the affected students to appeal to the sense of justice of the revolutionary leaders. But divisions between public and private universities continued.

A protest note by the Federation of University Students (Federación Estudiantíl Universitaria, or FEU) welcomed Law 11 "by [the] former comrade of student struggles and today's Minister of Education" as a "measure of revolutionary justice." With "indignation" the FEU remembered how other universities had become enemies of the ideals that the brave students of the University of Havana had defended against a "terrorist regime." Instead of fighting, they had continued to operate "with complete indifference" to the tragic moment through which Cuba had gone.[60]

Less than a week after the law's promulgation, the government reacted to increasing public pressure and created a commission "to study the problems of the university" related to Law 11.[61] This commission consisted of seven members: four designated by the Ministry of Education and the others from the three main public universities in Havana, Santa Clara, and Santiago de Cuba. After deliberation with all involved parties, a report with recommendations was expected within thirty days.[62]

During this period many more protests followed; newspaper editorials, letters by student organizations, opinion pieces, and reports on protest activities such as public demonstrations were published. It was announced that a live television debate would take place on 19 January 1959 on the "nullification of grades and degrees of private universities." In that debate, professors of the Universities

[59] Similarly, Law 10 allowed both workers and entrepreneurs to appeal any regulation by the Ministry of Labor between 4 April 1958 (shortly before the failed general strike) and 31 December 1958 at the Court for Constitutional and Social Rights. These cases would be reviewed on an individual basis. *Ley numero 10 de 13 de enero de 1959*, "Recursos contra resoluciones dictadas desde abril 1958 a 31 de diciembre de 1958," in Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes*, vol. 1, pp. 32–36.

[60] "Posición de la FEU," *Diario de la Marina* (16 January 1959): 2A.

[61] *Diario de la Marina* (18 January 1959): 1-A.

[62] "Veinte y cinco preguntas al Dr. Armando Hart, Ministro de Educación," *Bohemia* 51, no. 8 (22 February 1959): 41.

of Havana and Villanueva discussed the issues with a representative of the student organization FEU and a lawyer who was involved in the legal defense of students affected by the law. Three more of these televised discussions followed. Public debates with opposing views were another sign of the liberal momentum and revolutionary hegemony.

The Havana Lawyers' Guild (Colegio de Abogados de la Habana) presented to the government commission a legal study that defended the validity of academic titles issued by private universities, since representatives of the state universities presided over the tribunals for the degrees.[63] Cuba's foremost national heroe, José Martí, was invoked on television. A "student committee of graduates from private universities" pointed out that the "father of our independence" had continued his studies in literature and graduated as a lawyer while Cuba was undergoing the struggles of the Ten Years War.[64] If Martí as the "intellectual author" of the Moncada attacks (Fidel Castro) had continued to study during war, this was a serious matter. It compelled a reconsideration of the law and its ideological reconfiguration. This powerful rhetorical figure of Cuba's national hero continuing to study in the midst of Cuba's independence war was subsequently used in most debates.

The religious dimension

The role religion would play in education of a revolutionary society added an additional important layer to the debate on Law 11. The government had not yet defined a new position on religion, but during the first weeks of 1959 there were few signs that it would change significantly. Public statements by high government representatives indicated continuity and a commitment to religious education. Fidel Castro had said, "In my view, without religion there cannot be a complete formation of citizens."[65] With a Catholic-educated leader of the revolution and several priests such as fathers Lucas Iruretagoyena, Ángel

[63] "Los afectuados por la Ley 11 formulan unas declaraciones," *Diario de la Marina* (23 January 1959): 1-A.

[64] *Diario de la Marina* (23 January 1959): 2-A.

[65] "A mi modo de ver (. . .) sin religión no hay formación completa del ciudadano," *Diario de la Marina* (8 January 1959): 1-A.

Rivas Canepas, and Félix Félix actively involved in the guerrilla movement, there seemed to be little reason for concern.[66] At the same time there were some mixed signals. Santiago's Archbishop Enrique Pérez Serrantes's first circular after the flight of Batista, entitled "New Life" (*Vida nueva*), was read out in all the churches of eastern Cuba during the first week of January. It included nine policy points, the first and most important of which was the government's obligation to form and educate children "in the Christian die" (*el troquel cristiano*).[67] The third archbishop's letter, on 13 February 1959, focused entirely on "Private Education" (*La enseñanza privada*).[68] In it, Serrantes did not mention Law 11 by name, but noted a "serious danger for our universities, especially Villanueva," which had been recognized and supported by the Vatican. To his mind, a "war against all Catholic schools" had already begun. This war, according to Serrantes, was led by "the enemies of private education"—by communism.

From the Catholic clergy's point of view there were at least two crucial issues in early 1959. One was an opportunity, the other a risk. The opportunity was to increase its influence at this moment of moral reconfiguration of the Cuban republic by expanding religious education into public schools, and especially the new schools that would be founded, whether private or public. The risk was that certain measures by the new government could also limit and curtail the practice of religious education. This applied to Law 11.

Some Catholics, such as Faustino Hart Pérez, reproached the archbishop for his circular. Serrantes was accused of heating up old complaints (*viejas querellas*). Others applauded the archbishop for his bravery. Two weeks after the dispatch, on 18 February, U.S. consul Park Wollman cabled from Santiago to recently appointed U.S. ambassador Philip Bonsal in Havana that "Catholic organizations

---

[66] "El barbudo fraile a quien un ciclón llevó a la Sierra," *La Quincena: Una respuesta cristiana a los problemas de Hoy* 5, nos. 1–2 (January 1959): 4–7.

[67] Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, *La voz de la iglesia en Cuba* (Mexico, DF: Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, A.C., 1995). pp. 53–60, here: p. 57.

[68] The archbishop's second letter, from 29 January, discussed revolutionary justice and the punishment of former *batistianos.* Serrantes asked Fidel Castro to reduce sanctions, but he also recognized the legitimacy of the death penalty in this context.

begin efforts against communism and anticlericalism." According to Wollman this seemed to be "a concerted effort on the part of the Church to combat some real or imagined tendencies of the revolutionary authorities in Oriente."[69] The Jesuit school Colegio de Dolores in Santiago de Cuba, where Fidel Castro had been a student from January of 1938 until 1942, was the first to take action.[70] The colegio called together the parents of their students to alert them of the revolutionary measures against the Church. Graziella Bravo, wife of Daniel Bacardí, then president of the Chamber of Commerce in Santiago, remembers, "We couldn't believe this. It sounded like propaganda from Batista. The immense majority of us parents sympathized with the revolution (. . .). Moreover, nobody gave evidence of anything."[71] A few days later a "Manifesto of Catholic Institutions" was published in the *Diario de la Marina* defending freedom of religion, private and Catholic schools, and the teaching of religion "without limitations," among other things. The manifesto was a reaction to fears caused by Law 11. This was an early expression of Catholic opposition to the government. The government meanwhile sought to separate the debate on Law 11 from larger issues of state intervention, private education, and the role of religion. At a press conference in early March, Hart "pronounced himself energetically against those people who tried to link Law 11 with other issues." He referred to the *Bohemia* survey, according to which only 6 percent of Cubans were against the law, in his view proving that the majority of them were either in favor or not interested in these disputes.[72]

---

[69] Ignacio Uría, *Iglesia y revolución en Cuba*: *Ensayos*. *Ediciones Encuentro Historia* (Madrid: Encuentro Ediciones, 2011), p. 299.

[70] Fidel Castro and Katiuska Blanco, *La victoria estratégica* (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2010), pp. xvi–xxi.

[71] Interview with Graziela Bravo, in Uria*, Iglesia y revolución,* pp. 298–99.

[72] "Hart ante *La Prensa*," in *Revolución* (5 March 1959): 1, 14.

Protests and solutions

Cuba's main university in Havana remained closed. Students held meetings and marches to advance their different agendas, including Law 11. On 22 February a delegation from several faculties, led by FEU president José Puente Blanco, took to the Civic Square (*Plaza Cívica,* later Revolutionary Square), where Fidel Castro was presiding over a meeting by the Council of Ministers. Upon the students' arrival, Castro interrupted the meeting for more than an hour to explain the "agonizing efforts" the council was undertaking "to bring forward without delay the program of the revolution." Talking to the students, Castro forecasted the way in which the government would modify Law 11. "The students seemed to be satisfied by the premier's words."[73] That night Armando Hart held a meeting with the directors of some the most important private schools, including director John J. Kelly of Villanueva. Shortly after the conflicts on Law 11, John Kelly was asked to resign because of his U.S. citizenship, even though he was a naturalized Cuban citizen.[74] A compromise was worked out among the various directors of private schools, including rectors Carlos Pérez of Candler College, *Señor* Grande of La Salle, Mario Alfonso of the Masónica, and Rev. Daniel Baldor de la Vega of Belén.

The suggested solution did "not satisfy fully the aspirations" of the private school rectors, since they hoped to have Law 11 revoked instead of modified. Even so, the group considered the solution "a transcendental measure."[75] Only John Kelly from Villanueva dissented. He defended his prior position in favor of a case-by-case investigation (*investigación casuistíca*) instead of generalized sanctions against

[73] "Solucionado el problema de la aplicación de la Ley 11," *Revolución* (23 February 1959): 10.

[74] Kelly was replaced by Cuban priest Eduardo Tomás Boza Masdival, who in March 1960 would become Havana's auxiliary bishop. Born the son of Irish immigrants in 1915 in DuBois, Pennsylvania, Kelly had attended local parochial schools and become a priest in 1942; he had received an M.A. degree from the Catholic University of America. He had become a surrogate working with Father Lorenzo Espiralli (also previously educated in Pennsylvania) in Havana in 1943. In 1948 Kelly had obtained a PhD in Artes y Letras at the University of Havana. He had been named rector of Villanueva University in 1950 after the new law on private universities (previously mentioned) stipulated that rectors had to be graduates of a Cuban university. See Leonel A. de Cuesta, "Evocación de Villanueva," in *Otro lunes: Revista hispanoamericana de cultura* 5, no. 20 (September 2011).

[75] *Revolución* (23 February 1959): 10.

students.[76] José I. Rivero, editor-in-chief of the conservative *Diario de la Marina,* defended Minister Hart, in whom "we recognize the best intentions." In Rivero's view, the compromise did not undo what he perceived to be at the root of the problem and the cause for division among Cuban students: the intention to punish students for a nonexistent crime, that of continuing to study.[77] Thus public pressure and protests continued. The University of Villanueva convened a major gathering against Law 11 on its campus, attended by more than five thousand people, including students of the five other major private universities and many Catholic schools. Students and professors of different universities gave speeches for more than two hours. Professor José Ignacio Rasco, who spoke on behalf of the faculty of Villanueva, reminded the assembled academic crowd that the origins of the law were "obscure," since no government official had taken responsibility for it. Even Fidel Castro, whom Rasco described as "a just man with [his finger on] the pulse of public opinion," had admitted in a meeting with representatives of Villanueva that this law would not have passed "had he been at the Council of Ministers."[78] Fidel Castro officially assumed the function of prime minister only on 14 February 1959.

On 29 May 1959, a compromise was put into a new legal form and presented as a law (Number 350/59). For some scholars, the fact that this law was reversed and modified meant "a unique case of normative rectification of the Cuban revolution."[79] The government had reacted to public pressure. As an "obligation of any democratic government," the modified law stated that "a pertinent investigation" had been undertaken, reviewing the different "objections and solicitations." As a result it found worrisome

[76] *Diario de la Marina* (22 February 1959): 1–2A.

[77] José I. Rivero, "Comentarios," in *Diario de la Marina* (26 February 1959): 1-A.

[78] "La opinión pública está vivamente interesada en la reforma de la Ley núm. 11," *Diario de la Marina* (28 February 1959): 2-A.

[79] Ignacio Uría, *Iglesia y revolución en Cuba*, p. 300, n. 106. See also Sarahy González Mosquera, "Las leyes revolucionarias: Legalidad *versus* subversión?," in *Éditos inéditos: Documentos olvidados de la historia de Cuba*, ed. María del Pilar Díaz Castañón (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2005).

cases in the "status and spirit of the private universities," but also students "with noble patriotism at private universities who worked for the revolution."[80]

The government decided to modify Law 11 in reaction to the mounting protests and pressure. Instead of nullifying all academic titles of the students at private universities, the new law suspended their "professional activities" (*su ejercicio profesional*) for up to two years. In order to do justice to the majority of Cuba's students from public universities who had not been able to continue their studies, this law sought to level career options of private and public schools (*una nivelación cronológica*).[81] A graduate in education from the summer of 1958 would not be employed as a teacher until the summer of 1959 or even 1960.

As a result of the law and the investigations to which it had led, the private university "José Martí" recognized under Batista was closed down because of "grave academic frauds, many benefiting prominent representatives of the tyranny."[82] The status of the small public universities of Camagüey, Holguín, and Pinar del Río, all legalized between 1957 and 1958, were nullified because of their closeness to the Batista regime, as well as for "technical reasons." According to Hart, these universities had objected to the expansion of professional programs suggested by his government. His ministry would now consider opening "technical universities" in their place.[83] However, to avoid collective punishment and renewed protests, a commission of the Ministry of Education would review the validity of academic titles issued by the involved institutions on a case-by-case basis.

Not just universities but also high schools were affected by Law 11. A resolution invalidated all exams for secondary (and higher) education that were carried out during the ongoing school year, which had begun in November 1958. As the teachers' journal *Educación* explained to its readers, the goal of this

[80] Law 350, 29 May 1959, pp. 113–14.

[81] Ibid., Article 4, p. 114.

[82] Ibid., p. 113.

[83] *Diario de la Marina* (22 February 1959): 1–2A.

measure was to promote "equality of opportunity to those youngsters who for political or revolutionary reasons (. . .) could not register or enter classes."[84]

The modification of Law 11 was a direct reaction to protests. It showed a dynamic interaction between the revolutionary government and parts of civil society at the beginning of the revolution. The modified law resonated with viewpoints laid out in the editorials of the *Diario de la Marina*. The justification of revisions, though, hinged on the fact that Cubans at private and religious educational institutions had also played an active role during the revolutionary process. The revisions were not based on the importance of continued academic work during the insurrection, but recognized the students' contribution to the revolutionary cause in the forms of propaganda, financial means, and other support. Private university students who gave their young lives "in defense of Cuba's liberty" were mentioned by name. Some private and religious institutions honored such students; for example, the Jesuit college of Belén even created a "martyrs' corner" on its campus several months later to commemorate seven students who "gave their blood for Cuba."[85] While the students negatively affected by Law 11 obtained a partial victory by the official reversal of outright nullification of their academic titles, they gained their point mostly by showing their revolutionary credentials, not because a right to neutrality was explicitly recognized.

The dispute about Law 11 was a central lesson for the government and Cuba's civil society. The new regime learned to react to protests and demands, create commissions, hold hearings, and accommodate requests, and it decided to find more individualized solutions instead of indiscriminately punishing some while defending the interests of its core constituency, the pre-1959 revolutionaries. The students, faculty, and staffs of private universities, by the same token, were able to use protests, critiques, public debates, and other means to defend their interests and successfully challenge a governmental position. The law's revision in turn had a positive influence on the perception of the government in these young people's minds. Within the Catholic Church, though, some began to see an enemy in the new

[84] *Educación* 18, no. 1 (January 1959): 34.

[85] *Ecos de Bélen: Revista del Colegio de Bélen*, *curso* 1959–1960, p. 31.

regime and a threat to the Church's interests and activities. These critical perceptions had historical origins in republican Cuba. Law 11 thus encapsulated some of the important conflicts in Cuban society. Initially, the differences between private and public schools became part of the debate not because of their religious or social aspects, but because of their different institutional roles during the Batista regime. There were individuals on both sides—that is, collaborators and revolutionaries. The government needed to identify more effectively who had participated on which side. To this end, an evaluation of previous behavior had to be made, and a purge of Batista collaborators.

1.3 The purges

Cuba is living through a moment of radical transformation. The actions of our youth have shaken up the very foundation of our nationhood. (. . .) *We need to purge the very foundation, cut out the roots and not the branches.* (. . .) *By 'purge' we mean getting rid of the motives and causes that made us live the wrong way.*

—José I. Rivero, director, *Diario de la Marina,* January 1959[86]

The new revolutionary government promised to do away with the problems of the old regime. Bringing "revolutionary justice" to the people meant fighting against corruption and collaboration with Batista. These were the two most important aspects of the purge that began parallel to the debate on Law 11 in January 1959. The government and zealous revolutionary activists started to identify public officials suspected of having acted "immorally" either by enriching themselves illegally or actively supporting the dictatorship. "Administrative cleansing" was also applied to education. One goal of this was to secure political loyalties and punish former political opponents. Similar purges had happened throughout Cuba's history, most notably during the previous two "big ruptures," after Cuba's independence from Spain and in the aftermath of the 1933 revolution that had followed the overthrow of President Machado.

[86] *Diario de la Marina* (14 January 1959): A-1.

This early purge process, unlike later instances such as the 1962 university reform, is little known. Still, it is important to understand for the assertion of early revolutionary influence in the nation's administrative apparatus. Moreover, the themes revealed in these evaluation commissions show that political concerns did not necessarily dominate the debates. Often, pedagogical and social concerns were aired. They help us to better understand the concerns of Cuban pedagogues at the time and how they subsequently defined the reforms to come.

Corruption and purges

Corruption in the Ministry of Education was well known. The influential weekly *Bohemia* ran a series of articles in the late 1940s in which it exposed the widespread practice. Former Minister of Education Aureliano Sánchez Arango reported to the Cuban senate in election year 1948 that within four months, some 1,315 new teachers' appointments had been made by the central government (of which only 3 percent were in rural areas). Some teaching jobs, according to the minister, had been obtained by the applicants' paying prices ranging from 500 to 2,000 pesos to government officials.[87] These numbers indicate the levels of political patronage and corruption prevalent in Cuban education in the 1940s and 1950s. Since government-appointed teachers were state employees who were tenured for life whether teaching or not, they often subcontracted less-qualified interim teachers to fulfill their duties for a much smaller part of their monthly salary, which officially averaged 100 pesos for primary and 200 pesos for secondary schools. For the World Bank, "it was the misfortune of Cuba—and especially of Cuba's children—that much of the educational investment which the Cuban people were able and willing to make was wasted." In the bank's analysis, this was the result of "unstable administration, poor planning, political patronage, and maladministration of funds."[88] Corruption in education was especially suitable for

[87] Sánchez Arango, quoted in Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Report on Cuba: Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 426.

[88] Ibid., p. 405.

moral agitation because it affected children. Instead of illicit enrichment, taxpayers' money could be used for the improvement of classrooms or school materials.

The radical purge that the conservative *Diario de la Marina* called for was argued on moral grounds. It targeted opportunists who had taken personal advantage of others, and by doing so also acted against the "interests of the nation." As the director of a widely read newspaper, José I. Rivero knew how to express popular concerns. It was significant that he thought the problem of corruption and moral decay in Cuba could not be solved by punishing or firing individuals. "Not the branches had to be cut," but the roots taken out. Cuba would have to confront and change the conditions that allowed corruption to exist. The fact that even conservative dailies were calling for radical reforms indicates once more the government's widespread support for far-reaching and drastic institutional reorganization.

Corruption in Cuba was widespread because many participated and reproduced the practice. According to Louis Pérez, graft, bribery, and embezzlement "served as the medium for political exchange"; they permitted Cubans to accumulate capital in a capital-scarce environment and allowed public administrators to create lucrative possibilities. "Corruption developed into a pervasive presence in Cuban life," Pérez judged.[89] According to Jorge Domínguez, "Cuba did not necessarily have more corruption than other countries, though it certainly had a great deal." But Domínguez thinks that this had "become a viable, potent, and disruptive political issue by the 1940s."[90]

Corruption was also combated in republican Cuba. Former senator Eduardo Chibás of the Auténtico party had cofounded a new political party in 1947, *el Partido del Pueblo Cubano—Ortodóxo* (the Party of the Cuban People—Orthodox), or simply *Ortodóxo*. The appended "orthodox" implied that it represented the true interests of the Cuban people. Chibás had made a party symbol of a broom to sweep corruption from public and political life. His slogan was "Shame against Money" (*Vergüenza*

[89] Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed., *Latin American Histories Index*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 163–64.

[90] Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 113.

contra Dinero). Chibás was a mentor of Fidel Castro, who had become a member and candidate of his party. Castro and Chibás had both been graduates from Belén and Havana University Law School. When Chibás committed suicide in 1951, it had involved a corruption case with Minister of Education Aureliano Sánchez Arango. In 1948 Arango had himself, when new in office, exposed malfeasance. Government corruption appeared to be an eternal problem.

The scorn toward profiteering in public finance was so ingrained, the need to take radical measures against it so urgent, that in early February 1959 Armando Hart announced the government would create a commission of accountability that "once and for all" would guarantee the impossibility of fraud. In a live radio show, the prerevolutionary *Universidad del Aire,* Hart talked about a law that would apply the death penalty to any public officer who used public funds for private benefit:[91] "We think that in Cuba, with three officials executed it will suffice that in the future no other functionary will need to be punished."[92] The law was not enacted the way Hart had envisioned, but its public discussion revealed the deep-seated hatred toward corruption. Even the death penalty seemed acceptable as a step to end graft—in a revolutionary way. It was also an expression of the government mentality that had been formed during a guerrilla war. In a U.S.-based survey in Cuba in the spring of 1960, respondents identified "honesty in government" as the second most important theme after the agrarian reform when asked what they considered the best aspects of life in Cuba at the time.[93]

Purge and politics

Administrative efforts within the Ministry of Education were also made to ensure that no former Batista collaborator would remain in office. For that purpose, a purge was initiated that targeted schools, universities, and the Ministry of Education at all levels. This process of administrative cleansing in early

[91] "La pena de muerte al funcionario público malversador," *Revolución* (3 February 1959): 2.

[92] "Veinte y cinco preguntas al Dr. Armando Hart, Ministro de Educación," *Bohemia* 51, no. 8 (22 February 1959): 40.

[93] Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, pp. 113–14.

revolutionary Cuba has not been given attention in academic studies of this time period. Initially, there was no national law that regulated this process in a uniform manner. First, initiatives were often taken by newly formed revolutionary committees at the various educational institutions. These activists sought to separate collaborators from their workplaces. Then, Minister Hart began to "govern" the purge process by issuing several resolutions from late January onward. One resolution (7310 of 29 January 1959) dismissed administrators and teachers as well as other employees if they had participated in the November 1958 elections as candidates, delegates, or members of election committees. Resolution 7311 (also 29 January 1959) rehabilitated teachers that had been dismissed during the "tyranny" for "revolutionary or civic reasons" (*por motivos revolucionarios o cívicos*)—that is, for being involved in the armed or legal opposition against Batista. Further resolutions (such as 7701, 12 February 1959) negated all teaching appointments in secondary schools made after the new hiring law of 1951, since most of them would have needed Batista's approval. Some procedures were subsequently regulated at the level of the Council of Ministers, such as Law 277 from 23 April 1959, which established norms for the purge at the University of Havana. The law suspended previous legislation for a period of ninety days to expedite this process.[94]

The daily *Revolución* explained to its readers some of the recent purges in Cuba's educational sector, as the initiatives had taken contradictory forms. Cuba's Ministry of Education wanted to fire all teachers, professors, administrative staff, and ministry employees who had participated in the elections of 1958, as well as those who had replaced teachers whom the government had fired before 1959. Both the elections and the replacements were seen as conscious decisions against the revolutionary process that had helped the Batista regime. Teachers dismissed for their opposition to Batista, on the other hand, should be reinstated.[95] These formal criteria were relatively easy to verify.[96] By February, revolutionary

[94] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes del gobierno provisional de la revolución,* "*Suspensión de la Ley Docente para la depuración en la Universidad de la Habana,*" Ley 277 (23 April 1959).

[95] *Revolución* (2 February 1959): 7.

[96] The November 1958 elections, in which Batista's candidate, Andrés Rivero Aguero of the Coalición Progresista Nacional won 70 percent of the votes, were widely considered fraudulent. Instead of strengthening the Batista

committees had been formed at many schools, institutes, and universities, often by persons involved in the opposition to Batista.[97] These committees pressured the government from below and demanded a more active stance by the Ministry of Education, calling for a more comprehensive purge. The committees targeted collaborators of the Batista regime beyond the elections of 1958, or the regime's beneficiaries, such as replacement teachers, who often received their jobs without qualifying exams.

In some cases revolutionary committees also asked authorities to act on other matters. At Havana's Teachers' School, for example, one such committee demanded nullification of the qualifying exams from the preceding year. The demand was based on technical grounds. For the ongoing school year of 1958–59, some 700 new students in the field of teaching had been admitted, even though there was capacity for only 425.[98] The committee accused former director of the school Isolina Díaz, as well as several professors, of having sold admission recommendation letters to the school, according to parents and former alumni.[99]

Cuba's National Association of Certified School Teachers and Their Equivalents (Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales y Equiparados) published in its journal *Educación* a series of articles related to the purge prior to the organization's general elections in April. Dean Leslie Rodríguez announced the creation of a National Purge Commission (Comisión Depuradora Nacional), composed of

---

regime, they undermined its legitimacy even further. The Ortodóxo party had abstained from participating, and the M-26-7 had issued a revolutionary law (No. 2) calling to boycott the elections. According to this law, those running for office could receive punishments ranging from ten years of prison to the death penalty. Of the 2,870,678 registered voters in Cuba in 1958, only 608,154, or less than 25 percent, went to one of the 8,521 polling stations throughout the country to vote on 3 November 1958. See *Diario de la Marina* (1 and 20 November 1958), and Ramón L. Bonachea and Marta San Martín, *The Cuban Insurrection, 1952–1959* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1974).

[97] Nancy Jiménez, interview with the author (Havana, 13 July 2014). Jiménez had been involved in the formation of these committees at the Teachers' School (Escuela Normal) in Havana, where she was a student prior to 1959 and worked as a fund-raiser for the M-26-7. Because of her activities and thus nonattendance at school, she had faced several disciplinary measures, but no direct political persecution or repression.

[98] *Revolución* (3 February 1959): 15.

[99] *Revolución* (23 February 1959): 10.

provincial delegates.[100] Detailed guidelines would have to be developed for the evaluation, but the sanctions would be limited to civil, not criminal law. That is, the defendant might be suspended from the school if found "guilty of collaboration with the tyranny in violation of the ethical code in social aspects," but s/he would not be sent to prison.[101] Similar actions of "self-evaluation" were taken by most other professional organizations. The School of Journalism, for instance, announced in early March that the purge committee for student matters chaired by student Pedro Leyva would start hearings of a defendant. To make it a "just and impartial purification," legal advice and plaintiffs could be consulted. Apart from the students, fifteen professors of that school were faced with charges as well.[102] While the formation of purge committees at many educational institutions was slow, the trials of suspected war criminals and perpetrators of capital crimes were not.[103] But pressure was exerted on the government "from below" in both cases to take more radical measures.

Armando Hart reacted to mounting pressure to dismiss more teachers during his first trip to Santiago de Cuba in early February. He gave a comprehensive speech on recent and future measures by his ministry. Thousands of teachers attended the event inside and outside a Santiago theater, many of them veterans of the opposition to Batista in Oriente province. Some of the attendees had lost family members or close friends during the armed uprising and the government repression that followed. They now demanded justice and wanted to see those punished who had supported the old regime.

Hart acknowledged their demands for swifter revolutionary justice: "There is agitation on the way to continue with the purge." But he suggested a slower, more careful and integrative approach, "so that

---

[100] *Educación*, no. 3 (3 March 1959): 12.

[101] "Depuran a maestros colaboracionistas," *Revolución* (3 March 1959): 13.

[102] "Depurarán alumnos que están matriculados," *Revolución* (5 March 1959): 8.

[103] See Michelle Chase, "The Trials: Violence and Justice in the Aftermath of the Cuban Revolution," in Greg Grandin and G.M. Joseph, *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War*, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 163–99. Chase claims that the early "legitimacy [of the M-26-7 and revolutionary government] was consolidated through the trials and executions of former *batistianos*, in that they eliminated opponents, exposed and dramatized previous crimes, and by doing so juxtaposed revolutionary justice with dictatorial terror which resonated with a general discourse of morality and finally because it channeled popular demands for justice and vengeance" (p. 164). For the educational sector, though less dramatized and publicized, the trials fulfilled a similar function.

the affected will not feel offended but rather redirected and convinced of their errors." But he also assured the agitated masses that the administration would continue its course: "The purpose of Fidel Castro and the government is that we are being radical—and we are." But his goal, less than a month after Law 11 and the subsequent protests and opposition, was to minimize potential antagonisms and opposition. Thus, instead of firing the four hundred teachers who had been freely assigned by Batista's last Minister of Education, the ministry allowed them to continue to work as interim teachers until a new process of "rigorous qualifying exams" (*riguroso escalafón*) could be begun for school year 1959–60, starting in August.[104]

As a minister, Hart had to mediate among different political interests. The next day at a press conference, he was asked about the fate of recently fired teachers and employees of his ministry. The minister expressed his "preoccupation as a human being" about this situation, since many of them were "fathers of families with many years on the job." Conversely, he said these were the results of a provision of "the revolutionary movement by which we all have to abide."[105]

One way out was to create new jobs. Thanks to the ample financial means of the "revolutionary budget," new jobs would become available in school year 1959–60. Not only the currently unemployed but the teachers who had been appointed by Batista could also apply for these positions. The goal was to create a less competitive and hostile work environment, a new beginning. This was a significant step when unemployment was by far the biggest concern of Cubans.[106]

Minister Hart claimed that no desire of prosecution or hostility drove the purge policy.[107] Only those with "well-known and notorious ties to the previous regime" would be separated from their public

---

[104] *Revolución* (9 February 1959): 18.

[105] *Diario de la Marina* (10 February 1959):1–2A.

[106] In a survey section asking "Is there something the government hasn't done yet and should be doing as soon as possible?," the answer "Create jobs, more jobs" received 30 points. No other answer received more than 10 points. "El primer survey después de la tiranía," *Bohemia* 51, no. 8 (22 February 1959): 80.

[107] *Bohemia* 51, no. 8 (22 February 1959): 40.

functions. Hart explained how his ministry initially was filled by "trusted persons" until a new law for civil service and an administrative program could be created.[108] Hiring "trusted persons" was a widespread practice in the new revolutionary government. Because of the ties formed during the guerrilla war, many members of M-26-7 became part of the administration and brought with them a certain "guerrilla mentality" into many government offices. In the case of the Ministry of Education, most of Hart's closest early advisors were longtime teachers and pedagogues. Hart later explained that the Universidad de Oriente in Santiago de Cuba became the most important site of influence for his policies and personnel decisions because of the intimate ties he had held there before the revolution. This "initial core of specialists helped to forge the leadership of the ministry of education and were those in charge of creating the programs set out to transform Cuban education."[109]

Purges at the University of Havana

The evaluation at the University of Havana, with more than 20,000 students, professors, and employees and by far Cuba's largest education center, was the most complicated of all. Many different interests collided there. It was the alma mater of most government members, including Fidel Castro and Armando Hart, along with many other figures of the opposition to Batista who had not been part of the M-26-7. Many students, and some professors, who had left their classrooms to fight in the revolution now returned. They wanted to make sure that all those who in one way or another had defended the old regime would not remain at the university. It began with the questioning of faculty and administration. Students felt empowered, as many of them had helped to bring down Batista, and several members of the new government were only a few years older. But scrutiny went beyond the attitude toward the previous regime and included academic and other practices.

---

[108] Ibid.

[109] Eloisa Carreras Varona, *Armando Hart Dávalos: Un revolucionario cubano; apuntes para un esbozo biográfico,* vol. 1 (Mexico, DF: Editorial Plaza y Valdés, S.A. de C.V., 2008), pp. 126–27.

When students "assaulted in a revolutionary manner the government of the Alma Mater" in early February, it was "without doubt the most sensational act since the rebellion's victory," announced *Bohemia* in a special report.[110] Fearing that their moral aspirations (*anhelos moralizadores*) could be frustrated once again, as in the aftermath of the 1933 revolution, students took over the schools and designated "revolutionary deans."[111] The university council then published a list with guidelines for the evaluation. Persons appointed directly by President Batista (*políticos de confianza*), as defined in Article 107 of the 1940 Constitution—mostly ministers, ambassadors, and secretaries of provincial and municipal administrations, including even their advisors and direct staff—as well as persons who had "participated in activities of the deposed regime in a way that is unworthy of the university concept," and those who had "collaborated with the repressive apparatus" or had "made public manifestations to defend the Batista regime" would be dismissed from the university.[112]

In many ways the university guidelines were similar to the purge schemes at Cuba's primary and secondary schools, except that the university council itself would have more interpretative authority as to what exactly was meant by the "university concept." This was of course disputed. For Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU) leaders Omar Fernández and José Puente Blanco, everyone who participated in the 1954 and 1958 elections should also be ousted—people such as former president Ramón Grau San Martín or 1958 presidential candidate Carlos Márquez Sterling. Both were university professors. The young revolutionaries could not understand how their university would continue to pay salaries to notorious *batistianos* of this sort.

---

[110] *Bohemia*, no. 7 (15 February 1959): 70.

[111] After the 1933 revolution, the Comité de Estudiantes Universitarios had fought not only for the autonomy of the university but also to evaluate and raise academic and teaching standards. The Teaching Law (*Ley docente*) of 1937 reversed many of the changes that had been advanced by student action and reproduced the earlier status quo; Disposition No. 5 recognized only decisions made by the faculty. For more details, see Carmen Almodóvar Muñoz and Olga Cabrera, *Las luchas estudiantiles universitarias, 1923–1934*, *Nuestra historia* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 151.

[112] *Bohemia*, no. 7 (15 February 1959): 70.

The events at the university immediately received ample coverage in the nation's media and created pressure on the different departments at the university to act. In a witch-hunt atmosphere, day after day, lists from different schools emerged with names of professors who should be purged. The university council, for its part, also pressured individuals to resign.[113] At the Pedagogical Faculty, for example, Dean José M. Gutiérrez, Vice-Dean Fernández de Guevara, and Secretary Ricardo Mestre Llano all resigned in mid-March from their administrative positions in the faculty.[114] On 16 January, the university council had already decided to appoint a commission "with the objective to determine, in the shortest amount of time possible, the norms with which (. . .) the purge should be carried out." The commission consisted of three deans, among them Raúl Roa for the faculty of social sciences and public law, and the general secretary of the university. Another commission was to be organized among university professors and the student representatives to study the "problem of the reform (. . .) of the University of Havana."[115] The examination of pre-'59 behavior was regulated by legal procedures, not blind vengeance.

A formal procedure to evaluate personnel was established in April 1959 by the university council. It stated that the "civic, educative, and administrative purge (*purificación*) of professors, students, functionaries, and employees" would be carried out at each school within the university by a tribunal composed of three professors elected by the faculty, two students elected by the student association, and in addition, "in every case, a student designated by said association will be the plaintiff." The decision of this tribunal could be appealed at a mixed commission created by the university council and headed by rector Clemente Inclán.[116] Within ten days after charges were brought forward, a preliminary

[113] *Bohemia*, no. 7 (15 February 1959): 70.

[114] Universidad de la Habana, "Reunión del 19 de marzo de 1959," *Boletin oficial* 26 (24 March 1959): 665.

[115] Ibid.: 22.

[116] Universidad de la Habana, "Depuración cívica, docente y administrativa de profesores, estudiantes, funcionarios y empleados," *Boletin oficial universitario* 26, no. 5 (15 May 1959): 170.

investigation should indicate whether or not there was evidence to proceed. Most cases were carried out between April and June of 1959.

The documents that I reviewed from the commissions at different schools revealed that in many cases the commission actually exonerated the defendant. In some instances, the investigation led to surprising results. The purge committee at the medical school, for example, had sentenced Dr. Mariano Mateo Díaz y Díaz by unanimous vote on 30 April 1959 to a one-year suspension of professional activities and his salary. He appealed this verdict and during the investigation that followed it was revealed that his "ties to the tyranny" not only did not exist—they had been assumed because he had worked at the Police Hospital in Havana, in addition to being a professor—but he had actually belonged to the underground cell "MQF 91*"* of the civil resistance movement. Thus with the verdict of 20 August 1959, he was exonerated of all accusations.[117] This was a fairly typical case. The pre-'59 political struggles were complex and contradictory, and doing justice to them was an extraordinary challenge.

Other investigations I reviewed gave more evidence of ordered procedures in which the defendant was often acquitted, but other wrongdoings were discovered. The Comisión Mixta Depuradora (Joint Purge/Purification Commission), decided after initial investigations that the accusations made by José Venegas Valdespino against Angela Elvira Díaz Vallina, professor at the School of Pedagogy, for "improper moral conduct" had been "without foundation." Even more, it was found that Díaz had shown "a revolutionary and rebellious attitude" against the deposed dictator (*una postura revolucionaria y de rebeldía*). A subsequent appeal by Venegas was denied because no violation of formal rules was found.[118] In another case, student leader Pedro Luis Boitel and others accused Professor Augusto Condóm Sastre of insufficient pedagogical capacity. In an initial resolution of the purge commission at the School of Engineering, Professor Condóm was found guilty and suspended from teaching and his salary for one year. Both sides appealed and more witnesses were heard, among them students and other professors.

[117] Universidad de la Habana, "Comisión mixta depuradora," 20 August 1959, in Archivo de la Universidad de la Habana.

[118] Ibid.

After the hearing, it was determined that professor Condóm had given more than the required 75 percent minimum of scheduled classes, as established by the university, and that he was able to prove the necessary pedagogical qualifications for his teaching.[119]

Dr. Andrés Blanco Ferreiro was exonerated from corruption charges brought against him by three students from the Pedagogical Faculty. Blanco was accused of unlawfully charging students extra fees for attending the faculty's Extension School. It was found that Blanco had, in fact, voted against the introduction of that fee at a faculty meeting. The commission also stated that the accusation was motivated by the plaintiff's "aspiration to obtain a higher salary" for his own position at the University Sports Club, of which Dr. Blanco was president at the time. The commission judged that this pay raise request was denied "for lack of funds" and not because of "arbitrariness," as claimed by students.[120] In addition to professors, fifteen students from the Pedagogical Faculty were also confronted with charges.[121]

The discussion of these cases shows how students felt empowered to voice grievances not only against fellow students and employees, but above all, against professors who had associated with the Batista government in one way or another. They also complained about academic shortcomings, including absence or incompetence of professors. Elements of personal revenge, career advancement, and jealousy inevitably played into the process of revolutionary justice, too. The initial fervor to expose and sanction Batista collaborators came from opposition activists. Revolutionary committees were formed as "bottom-up initiatives." At the University of Havana, the tensions created a state of emergency that prevailed for several weeks, well into the summer of 1959. Resolutions by the Ministry of Education then institutionalized the procedures of administrative cleansing, and often reversed or remedied earlier sanctions. The evidence reviewed here suggests that the investigations were fairly orderly, that legal defense and appeals existed and were used, and that most defendants accepted the final verdicts. Testimony and personnel files reveal important insights into the inner dynamics of Cuba's educational

[119] Ibid., pp. 11–13.

[120] Ibid., p. 14.

[121] Universidad de la Habana, *Boletin oficial* 26, no. 7, 15 June 1959, p. 371.

institutions. The purges were carried out during the first months of the revolution, when support for radical reforms was strong and the desire to correct errors from the past was great. One such desire was to revive the republican ideal to decentralize the political structure of the state, and by doing so, to root out a basis for corruption and maldistribution of funds.

1.4 Decentralization and the limits of administrative change

In its report on Cuba in 1950, the World Bank asked "why the present system is inadequate." "Overcentralization" was the first part of the answer. "Nearly everything depends on Havana. (. . .) Local initiative and adaptation of school programs to local needs tend to be discouraged by such centralization."[122] The promise to decentralize the Ministry of Education had been made repeatedly throughout republican Cuba, for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, its ever more centralized character had made the system prone to widespread corruption. Local and regional innovations had stalled because most initiatives, and all hiring and firing confirmations, had ultimately been left to the bureaucratic and corrupt ministry personnel in the capital. This section describes how the revolutionary Ministry of Education was the first to implement the longstanding republican demand to decentralize and gained much legitimacy by doing so, but at the same time, it limited the effect of this measure by the continued need for administrative and political control at the national level.

Before the revolution, Cuba's public school system was operated by the Ministry of Education and headed by a cabinet minister. A superintendent appointed by the minister served at each of the six provinces. These were subdivided administratively into 126 municipalities (counties) equaling the number of school districts. The schools were supervised by a board of education whose three members were appointed by the minister at the suggestion of the provincial superintendent. At the birth of the Cuban republic in 1902, these municipalities had been even more subdivided into 895 subdistricts of 500–1000

[122] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Report on Cuba*, p. 423. The commission was told even "the salary checks for school personnel in Oriente come from Havana in a plane sent by the Ministry of Education each month." Ibid.

inhabitants, each of which had elected a representative to the school board. In fact, the very first election in postcolonial Cuba was for these local boards of education.[123] However, this practice had been abolished after the second U.S. intervention (1906–9).

Up until 1959 there was no civil-service career system to offer professional security and adequate pay. According to the World Bank, "salaries are such that some of the best have to do other part-time work." The system did not offer adequate rewards or opportunities for honest, committed civil service. This explained why the Ministry of Education "was such a focus of patronage and why even the outright purchase of appointments occurred."[124] The 1940 Constitution stipulated in Article 52 that the budget for education "should not be less than that of any other ministry." In times of relative prosperity, as in the late 1940s, "this laudable principle made the Ministry of Education a principal focus of patronage and of graft."[125] Whereas employees of the ministry responsible for designing and enforcing educational policies and overseeing employment of teachers were untenured and thus prone to corruption, teachers received life tenure and full salary, "whether teaching or not." This was an outcome of the profound economic and political crisis that had followed the Great Depression in Cuba. In the 1930s, the full school day, a common practice and legal requirement in Cuba up to that point, had been abandoned so that teachers could earn an extra income, since their reduced and often delayed paychecks did not suffice to make a living. The social mobilizations of the 1930s had involved many teachers, and as a result, the 1940 Constitution had guaranteed a fixed salary to all public teachers.

Decentralization Law 76 from 13 February 1959 was "revolutionary" not only because it was written in three weeks, but because it delegated a variety of functions from the national level back to the

---

[123] Guerra y Sánchez, *El General Leonardo Wood,* p. 18. For details on the nascent political structure of Cuba's republic, see Latvia Gaspe Álvarez, *La colonia en los cimientos de la república (1899–1908)*, *Historia* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2009).

[124] Ibid.

[125] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Report on Cuba*, p. 425. For the fiscal year of 1950–51, the budget of the Ministry of Education (MINED) was established as 50 million pesos.

provincial and municipal level.[126] The most important function was the creation of departments of education on the municipal and provincial level, thus delegating powers, funds, and responsibility back from the capital to the regions. The old system of provincial superintendents and councils of education was dissolved. This had the political benefit for the revolutionary government that the administration in Cuba's provinces could be replaced, and thus it became more loyal to the revolution.

Education was the first area of decentralization in Cuba's political system that the Council of Ministers legislatively enacted. Like other revolutionary laws, this was presented in an effort to undo the legacy of the old republic: "It is of an urgency that cannot further be delayed, to lessen the destructive effects that the hypertrophic centralized administration the Cuban republic has been suffering from for many years," read the opening paragraph of the law. It was the revolutionary government's "firm goal" to "restructure and organize [the public administration] in a rational and effective way." By doing so, it was carrying out the "will of its citizens" (*el sentir de la ciudadanía*).[127]

Due to its "extraordinary importance," the law was printed in its entirety in the *Diario de la Marina*.[128] The *Diario* "congratulate[d] (. . .) the government of the republic because it finally has begun the process of decentralization." Minister of Education Armando Hart traveled to Santiago de Cuba to discuss the law at a press conference, giving the decentralization efforts symbolic meaning. Whereas Havana symbolized the old republic of Batista, with its corruption and hypercentralization, the rural province of Oriente was considered the cradle of rebellion, change, and renewal. From now on, was the message, more attention and resources would be given to the rest of the country. The law was couched in nationalist terms, building on the spirit of Cuba's 1940 Constitution. According to the *Diario,* it would be "one of the first and most decisive services to our nationality to decentralize."[129]

---

[126] Hart appointed a new personal assistant, Dr. Cleto A. Guzmán, on 20 January 1959 to study the administrative structure of the ministry; *Diario de la Marina* (21 January 1959): 10-A.

[127] Law 76, p. 81.

[128] *Diario de la Marina* (21 February 1959): 1–2A.

[129] "La descentralización: Una vieja esperanza que se realiza," *Diario de la Marina* (21 February 1959): 4-A.

Decentralization Law 76 created municipal departments of education. Each consisted of a director, a secretary, and technical inspectors, as well as other technical and administrative personnel according to the needs of the location. These would have full faculties to "organize, supervise, and administer the educational services of the state in its respective territory," in agreement with the basic norms established by the provincial department.[130] Article 13 established that the hiring, promoting, and firing of teachers would now also be at the municipal level. Article 20 conceded the right to authorize private schools to these municipal departments. The law was universally welcomed, and local departments of education were soon created.

While the Decentralization Law was an expression of the government's new territorial and administrative thinking, it also limited participatory and democratic practices. Law 76 was not a return to early twentieth-century democratic traditions, where local boards of education were elected. Instead, the directors and subdirectors of the provincial departments of education would be assigned by the minister, and these directors would supervise the local hiring. There was continuity in the top-down approach, as it concerned direction and general policy lines. But other hiring and budget allocation decisions, even the authorization of local private schools, would no longer be dependent on Havana.

Conclusion

During the first weeks of revolutionary Cuba, despite continuities, the undoing of the old had begun. In education this meant changing administrative rules, such as decentralization, and recovering early republican traditions. These measures were widely applauded. The purges showed that revolutionary justice meant reviewing and judging the behavior of teachers, administrators, and students. Those found guilty of wrongdoing according to the new political and moral standards, which were themselves debated and redefined, were suspended or dismissed from their positions. The scrutiny in Cuba's schools also brought to light, partly unintentionally, educational practices that would inspire further educational

---

[130] Law 76, pp. 84–85.

reforms. In this context, purge procedures were developed that enjoyed ample support because of the unpopularity of the late Batista regime. These mechanisms laid the foundations for later purges in an environment of building socialism after 1961.

As in other forms of revolutionary justice, the procedures applied in these evaluations were questioned and redefined. The government moved away from outright collective punishment toward a procedure based on case-by-case studies for the purges and civil sanctions for misconduct. International outrage in response to the early circuslike tribunals against suspected war criminals led to a modification of the trials, although not to an end of the death penalty. Protests against Law 11 were more successful. That mandate was the first act of revolutionary justice by the new government that backfired. Adversely affected by it, an alliance of private and religious schools emerged that began to see the government more critically. The government, on the other hand, learned to develop a more gradual approach. It incorporated criticism and demands. The ensuing debate about Law 11 revolved around what it meant to be a revolutionary and how to treat nonrevolutionaries. It also showed that government decisions could be criticized, challenged, and modified during these first months of general enthusiasm and absence of violence. At the same time, the debate also foreshadowed new lines of conflict of the state with the Church and private sectors that would only intensify over the months to come.

2. THE BUILDING OF THE NEW

It is of utmost importance to recognize that the supreme interests of the Cuban people in what concerns popular education and the problems that face us today are in dimensions not less grave and imperative than in 1900–1901.

—Ramiro Guerra, 1954[1]

Dear little schoolfellows: This ceremony today, in the new era that we live in our fatherland (. . .) *is the most important one of all. Because of the strength of its symbolism, because it is another promise turned reality.*

—Raúl Castro, Opening Ceremony of School City *Ciudad Libertad*, September 1959[2]

The revolutionary government began to build a new educational system in Cuba. It did so after it had secured more control of the state apparatus during the first months of 1959. As described in chapter 1, the government achieved this in part by purging collaborators of the Batista regime, decentralizing the old bureaucracy, and reassigning important administrative posts. While the first chapter looked backward, describing the ways in which the government sought to undo injustices of the past, such as corruption, collaboration with the old regime, or simply keeping schools open while a civil war ravaged the country, this chapter looks forward. It follows the dynamics that were in play during the first months of 1959, detailing the proactive efforts of the government to build something new: new schools, a new form of literacy, and a new civic consciousness.

The revolutionary government began to develop a rural education program as part of a national development project to integrate and enfranchise Cuba's peasant population more actively. This was tied to the agrarian reform. In this endeavor, the state faced competition from two influential agencies: the Catholic Church and the private sector. I discuss the commitment and willingness, first of the revolutionary leadership and then of vast sectors of the population, to bring about a paradigm shift in government policies from specialized urban to basic rural education, based on state budgets and legal texts. This commitment to rural Cuba is crucial for the understanding of the early revolutionary development plans in general. The dynamic of cooperation between the state and society described here

[1] Ramiro Guerra y Sanchez, *Fundacion del sistema de escuela pública de Cuba 1900–1901* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1954), pp. 113–41, here p. 33.

[2] *Diario de la Marina* (15 January 1959): 1-A, 16-A.

became an important element of early revolutionary Cuba. It was built initially on the voluntary contributions of Cuban citizens to a political goal shared by most: educating Cuba's children. But the government appeal to volunteerism was institutionalized and became an embryonic version of the operational code of the "mobilizing state." The second section shows the conversion of military barracks into schools. The new regime cleverly combined their institution-building and state expansion to provide basic public services, such as primary education, with a symbolic representation that bore a powerful influence on the public imagination. The school expansion that began in early 1959 under Fidel Castro and Armando Hart was a deliberate state policy of "nation building," as it had a dual focus: on extending the physical infrastructure of education to actually bring every Cuban child into a classroom, and on changing the content and ways in which citizens learned about their country, which was now in the midst of a revolution.

2.1 Nation building: Ten thousand new schools

Rural school expansion before 1959

Two major periods of educational expansion in Cuba had occurred prior to the 1959 revolution. The first was under U.S. military occupation (1898–1902) and the subsequent presidency of Tomás Estrada Palma (1902–6), and extended into the second U.S. occupation under Charles Magoon (1906–9). During this foundational decade of the Cuban republic, hundreds of schools were built, teacher-training programs were established, and administrative reforms were enacted. Much of this happened with help, guidance, and influence from the United States. The second important national education program evolved in reaction to the political and economic crises of the 1930s, under the leadership of General Batista. Starting in 1936, a massive civic–military rural education program sought to educate Cuba's rural population by having military officers become teachers and by providing more schooling spaces and educational materials, financed by an extraordinary tax on sugar production.[3] Since then, and throughout

[3] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Patronato administrativo de las escuelas rurales cívico-militares, "Memoria Anual" (Havana,1938).

the first half of the twentieth century, there had been various government initiatives to expand education and raise consciousness about educational shortcomings.

However, none of these programs solved Cuba's worsening educational crisis, especially in the countryside. As Ramiro Guerra stated somewhat dramatically, Cuba's educational problems in the 1950s were almost as grave as they had been at independence. After the 1943 census had alarmed the government with increased illiteracy rates, a "citizens' campaign" was launched. But unlike the national literacy campaign of 1961, this campaign was designed as an "individual literacy act." Thirty thousand copies of a new textbook were printed and distributed without charge, yet no measurable effects resulted from it. The director for education and propaganda in the Ministry of Agriculture, Osvaldo Valdés de la Paz, criticized the approach of this government-sponsored adult learning program in 1944: "It would have been better to mobilize the more than ten thousand teachers that are unemployed in Cuba and entrust them with the noble and sacred task to reduce illiteracy to a minimum (. . .)."[4] This mobilizing approach was one that the revolutionary government would later choose.

The need for schools in 1959

In 1959, new schools needed to be built *en masse* in order to overcome the educational shortcomings of the Cuban republic. Cuba's 1953 census showed that only about one in two (48.52 percent), or 707,472 school-age children between the ages of five and fourteen, were registered for school.[5] The other half of Cuba's population grew up without formal education. This mass of potential students, Havana's former president of the Educational Board, Ciro Espinosa, wrote in 1950, "lacks the possibilities to attend public

[4] Osvaldo Valdés de la Paz, *Guía para enseñar a leer, escribir y contar a los adultos* (Havana, 1944).

[5] Ramiro Guerra y Sanchez, *Rehabilitación de la escuela pública: Un problema vital de Cuba en 1954* (Havana; Impresores P. Fernandez y Cia, 1954), p. 128. This number does not take into account students attending classes only irregularly. The average number of students officially attending classes in 1953 stood at 73 percent—of those registered—which brings the actual number of Cuban students receiving regular education down to far less than 50 percent.

schools because the state cannot (. . .) attend adequately to the current educational demands."[6] Cuba's private school system meanwhile flourished and provided basic education to an increasing number of students. Some 98,724 students, or 6.77 percent of school-age children, attended private primary schools. This number represented an almost 10-percent increase from the previous census of 1943 and 13 percent of all registered students. As the Truslow Commission had pointed out in its report to the World Bank in 1950, the inadequate situation of Cuban public schools was "reflected in a disproportionate increase of private school enrollment."[7] Castro's government sought to reverse this trend by greatly expanding Cuba's public education.

The government estimated that some 10,000 additional classrooms were needed if all school-age Cubans were to attend class. It was principally rural Cuba that needed investments. The maldistribution of schools becomes obvious when Cuba's capital is compared to the eastern provinces. Whereas Havana was home to only 19 percent of all school-age children in 1943—a year before Fidel Castro graduated from Colegio Belén—it claimed 37 percent of all students attending classes. Oriente province, on the other hand, contained more than one-third of Cuba's students, but had less than 20 percent attendance.[8] As U.S. sociologist Lowry Nelson reported in his extensive study of rural Cuba, based on the testimony of many families he interviewed, "The government does not remember that there are inhabitants in this place, except during elections." Families in the county of San Blas, Camagüey province, told Nelson that they lived "incommunicado, separated completely from the rest of the Republic. There is no mail. We are without communication because of lack of roads and public attention."[9]

---

[6] Ciro Espinosa wrote not only as a worried pedagogue but also as a statesman: "Without school there is no nation-building," in ibid., p. 139.

[7] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Report on Cuba: Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 404.

[8] Lowry Nelson, *Rural Cuba* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950), p. 229.

[9] Ibid., p. 215.

Educational expansion, in addition to the agrarian and urban reforms of early 1959, became one of the government's foremost priorities. Whereas the agrarian reform aimed at diversification and productivity increase through redistribution, the urban reform sought to lower living costs, especially for tenants. By also building new schools rapidly and efficiently, the state aimed to meet demands of Cuban families and in turn increase its legitimacy as a revolutionary government. The construction and inauguration of new schools became widely publicized events, intended to create the image of a government that cared for its citizens and delivered on political promises.[10] By doing this on a massive scale, the revolutionary government also sought to distinguish itself from previous administrations. Despite similarly large educational budgets, preceding governments had never succeeded in fully solving the problems of Cuba's education. The numbers of schools and actual enrollment, as well as class attendance, fell far short of the constitutional promise to guarantee primary education to every Cuban child. Worse still, the quality of classes, the actual hours spent in classrooms, and enrollment as well as attendance figures relative to population had declined since 1930.[11] While Cuba had been at the forefront of literacy rates in Latin America during the first three decades of the twentieth century, it had failed to build on this advantage and by the 1950s had fallen behind.[12] In the aftermath of the 1930 economic depression and the political turmoil following the overthrow of President Gerardo Machado in 1933, the former widely held practice of full-day classes (*doble sesión*) had been abandoned in the nation's public schools as many teachers sought employment elsewhere. Cuba would only begin to reverse these tendencies in 1959.

---

[10] Fidel Castro's 1953 speech "History will Absolve Me," as well as the 1957 *Sierra Manifesto*—both foundational texts for a political program in a post-Batista era—made references to the need for higher literacy rates and teacher salaries, and reforming Cuba's educational system. Fidel Castro, *La Historia Me Absolverá: Autodefensa de Fidel Castro ante el tribunal de urgencia de Santiago de Cuba el 16 de octubre de 1953*, Ediciones Populares (Havana: Impr. Nacional de Cuba, 1961), p. 42. See also "Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement," in Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdés, *Cuba in Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), p. 133.

[11] This was a tendency already observed by Lowry in 1943; "School attendance is extremely low for a country that has made marked advances in other aspects of its culture. In fact (. . .) the country is retrogressing in this respect (. . .)." Nelson, *Rural Cuba*, p. 227.

[12] UNESCO, "La situacion educativa en America latina: La enseñanza primaria; Estado, problemas, perspectivas" (1960), p. 62, p. 163. See also UNESCO, *World Survey of Education* (Paris: UNESCO, 1955).

Militarized education

The construction of new schools and reparation of the old that began in early 1959 was initially not exclusively in the hands of the Ministry of Education. Many initiatives came from the Ministry of National Defense that had grown out of the rebel army and the now-dissolved Cuban Armed Forces.[13] The Council of Ministers created seven departments within the Ministry of Defense in early February of 1959 by way of Law 100. Two departments had outright educational purposes: the Department for Technical and Cultural Assistance to Farmers (DATMCC), and the Department for the Organization and Administration of School Cities (DOACE), many of which were former military barracks.[14] These departments were transferred to the authorities of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform (INRA) after its creation, which followed the first agrarian reform law on 17 May 1959.[15]

The transfer of parts of the official education program to the Ministry of Defense indicates the parallel power structures and continued influence of the rebel army during these early months of the revolution. To use the military to carry out educational missions because of the state apparatus's inability to do so was not, however, an entirely new concept. In February 1936, during the aftermath of the social and political revolution of 1933, President José A. Barnet y Vinageras and his Secretary for Public Instruction, Leonardo Anaya Murillo, had created an ample system of "rural civic–military schools." The program's mission was to provide basic primary education to Cuba's impoverished, especially rural, population. Political mobilization and social disruption provoked by the depression was especially strong

[13] The Ministry of National Defense ceased to exist in October 1959, when the new Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR), was founded. Throughout the text I translate the names of Cuban institutions into English and provide the official Spanish acronyms used for them in Cuba, referring to them thereafter by their acronyms. A list of abbreviations precedes the main corpus of the thesis.

[14] "Creación de departamentos de asistencia educacional y técnica en las fuerzas del ejercito rebelde" (Law 100, 23 February 1959), in Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclámas y leyes del gobierno provisional de la revolución,* 2nd. ed. (Havana; Editorial Lex, 1959), vol. 3, pp. 94–95.

[15] That month alone, the Ministry of Defense received one million pesos for the construction and administration of school cities (Law 342, 28 February 1959), ibid., vol. 7, pp. 177–81.

in these areas.[16] The program was run by the chief of the army, Fulgencio Batista, and lasted until 1940, when it was reintegrated into the reformed Ministry of Education.[17]

Law 100, which created the educative missions within Cuba's military, is an extraordinarily interesting legal document. It explains and justifies the government's commitment to the rural population explicitly as a result of its members' experiences during the earlier guerrilla struggle: "The rebel army struggled, fought, and shared the destiny of the peasants; it identified with them morally, socially, economically, and politically (. . .)." According to the law, the rebels had "made a promise on the battlefield" to push forward "the agrarian reform and other revolutionary laws that complement it." Nothing better than public instruction "and the hurry with which it is being carried out" would "guarantee the sentiments of social justice and freedom of the revolutionary government." Creating tasks for citizenship was considered "a safe means to maintain revolutionary morale, reaffirming the civic and not militarist vocation of the rebel army."[18] Rapid and visible expansion of public instruction, the attempted shift from military to civic morality, and an active revolutionary orientation were the stated principles to guide this undertaking.

The law did not explain why the rebel army and not the Ministry of Education should carry out this mission. At least two reasons seem plausible: One may have been an attempt to guide a transition from the military to a civil purpose for the former rebel fighters, most of whom were still in uniform five weeks after the end of military battles; another may have been the assumption that rebels who had lived among the rural population for several months would more effectively carry out a rapid and "organic" educative mission than the bureaucracy of Havana's ministry. A third consideration is of course that of political control; whereas much of the rebel army was under the influence of M-26-7, the state apparatus was not.

---

[16] Barry Carr, "Mill Occupations and Soviets: The Mobilisation of Sugar Workers in Cuba 1917–1933," *Journal of Latin American Studies* (JLAS) 28, no. 1 (1996): 9–10.

[17] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Cívico-militares, Patronato administrativo de las escuelas rurales, "Memoria Anual," pp. 9–10.

[18] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclámas y leyes*, vol. 3, pp. 177–81.

One major task for this new educational department became the conversion of military barracks into school cities. Creation of smaller schools attached to newly formed cooperatives as part of the agrarian reform process—officially launched in May 1959—constituted a second important educational measure led by the armed forces. Commander Raúl Castro was put in charge of appointing the personnel and providing spaces and materials for the newly created departments.[19] Various ministries, including those of education, public works, health, and agriculture, were each to send a delegate as an advisor to the minister of defense. The revolutionary government was legally bound to provide "the necessary credits" for the school expansion program. In this, it excelled.

Financing state expansion

Throughout 1959, Cuba's Ministry of Education received several extraordinary credits from the Council of Ministers to repair old and construct new schools. Altogether, during the first half of 1959 alone, the government gave 6.5 million pesos as extraordinary credits solely for the construction of new schools. The funds for these programs usually were expected to derive from additional revenues stemming from the "Honesty Stimulation Tax Law" of 2 February 1959 (*Estímulo a la honestidad del contribuyente frente al Estado*), and thus were closely tied to the legitimacy of the new government and the willingness of citizens to cooperate with it. This law stipulated that those who had certain unpaid taxes before 31 December 1958 would be exonerated (*condonado*) or their debt reduced, with little or no late fee applied.[20] This campaign "took advantage of revolutionary euphoria" and led to a "feeling of guilt" in

[19] Article 4 of Law 100, in ibid., vol. 3, p. 95. On 11 January 1959, Raúl Castro began to preside over the old Joint Chiefs of Staff; on 2 February of that year he was named deputy chief of the combined land, maritime, and air forces (Commander Camilo Cienfuegos being chief); on 13 February Raúl became General Commander of the rebel army—a position that replaced the old Joint Chiefs of Staff. On 16 October 1959, when Law 599 dissolved the former Ministry of National Defense and Law 600 created the new Ministry of Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR), Raúl Castro became its first minister. Juan Sánchez Rodríguez, "Breve historia del MINFAR"; see website: http://www.cubadefensa.cu/?q=historia-minfar

[20] For taxes owed for years 1956 and 1957, an additional sixty-day period was granted for payment, at a 50-percent tax reduction rate. For 1958 there were no reductions, but the government waived any penalties for late payment Law 40, 2 February 1959.

some Cuban entrepreneurs on account of their previous behavior.[21] The tax law led to a windfall of additional revenues in 1959, conservatively estimated at 100 million pesos. This in turn aided government spending of some 500 million pesos for the fiscal year of 1959, and 300 million pesos for 1960. These extraordinary expenditures were the material basis for revolutionary hegemony.

At the same time, an attempt was made to reduce personnel and administrative costs and to reallocate budgetary spending to the construction of school infrastructure and materials. Three new primary schools that opened in the city of Havana, for instance, were financed through the reassignment of "excessive administration costs of previous municipal budgets," as the Catholic journal *La Quincena* reported in October 1959. Each school had a cost of 21,500 pesos, and provided education for 815 students.[22]

In prerevolutionary Cuba, a considerable part of the costs of school operations had been from rents, since many public school buildings were leased from private owners. They were often in unsuitable conditions for educational purposes. This practice, already in place during colonial times, was much criticized, but only in part reversed by the U.S. military administration.[23] Of the 7,430 *casas–escuelas* (schools located in single houses, often built for residential purposes) that were officially registered in

---

[21] Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas, ed., *Un estudio sobre Cuba: Colonia, república, experimento socialista; Estructura económica, desarrollo institucional, socialismo y regresión*. (Coral Gables, FL.; University of Miami Press, 1963), pp. 1340–41.

[22] *La Quincena* 5, no. 18 (30 September 1959): 14.

[23] Acting Commissioner of Public Schools Matthew E. Hanna wrote in his "Report of the Public Schools of the Island of Cuba, February 22, 1901,"

> At the present time practically all the school houses of the Island are private buildings that are rented from the owners by the State. In many cases the rent paid is excessive. Naturally these houses are not suited for school purposes. (...) Steps should be taken to begin the erection of public school buildings at the earliest possible moment and to continue the same as rapidly as the revenues will permit.

Govt. Docs., Cuba, Secretaría de Instrucción Pública, *Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Island of Cuba fo*r 1900– (Havana; [s.n.], 1902), p. 28.

Cuba in school year 1954–55, some 2,317 schools, or about one-third, were "rented" by the state. This amounted to more than 806,000 pesos annually in rental costs for school buildings alone.[24]

In accordance with Law 127 of 6 March 1959, in that month 730,000 pesos were given for the construction of school centers in Pinar del Río and Santa Cruz del Norte (in Havana province); Juan Gualberto Gómez (in Matanzas); and Antilla, Baire, Guantánamo, and Manzanillo (all in Oriente province). Law 118 of 3 March provided 300,000 pesos for unspecified schools.[25] Through Law 136 of 10 March 1959, 380,000 pesos were assigned to the construction of school centers in Jiguaní, Bayamo, and Caimanera (all in Oriente province). Law 191 of 31 March 1959 allotted another 480,000 pesos for centers in San Luis and Santiago de Cuba (both in Oriente province); and for Santo Domingo, and San Antonio de las Vueltas (both in Las Villas province). On May 15, the government passed Law 332, which designated 2.7 million pesos for the construction of nine new school centers: two (La Coloma and Consolación del Norte) in Pinar del Rio; one in Batabanó, Havana province; one in Los Arabos, Matanzas; two (Santa Isabel de las Lajas and Calabazar de Sagua) in Las Villas; one in the City of Camagüey; and one each in Niquero and Victoria de las Tunas, in Oriente province. The Ministry of National Defense received another one million pesos later that month (Law 342 of 28 May 1959) for schools to be built in cooperation with the Ministry of Educación (MINED) and the Ministry of Construction (Hacienda).

To put these new expenditures into perspective, 30.5 million pesos were available in the ordinary budget for the first trimester of 1959 (January–March), of which one-third was intended for public debts.[26] From this amount, the Ministry of Education received the largest part, worth 3.5 million pesos.[27]

---

[24] Calculations by the author, based on Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación (MINED), *Estadística de la enseñanza oficial y privada: Curso escolar 1954–55*, p. 62. Occasionally, public schools were even evicted from buildings when they weren't able to pay the rent. In April 1948, some 400 students from Escuela No. 2 in Oriente province, municipality of Palma Soriano, were forced to leave their building. Other public schools stopped their classes in protest; *Hoy* (2 April 1948): 5.

[25] All laws cited in this paragraph are quoted from Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclámas y leyes,* 1959, various volumes.

[26] The distinction between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" budgets and credits had been drawn already during the first republican legislature of 1902. Such distinctions had also existed in a similar form under Spanish rule. Yet, it was especially after the economic crisis of the 1930s that the significance of extraordinary budgets grew

In the extraordinary budget of 55 million pesos in the hands of Minister of Finance, Rufo López Fresquet, education was granted an even larger share with 15 million pesos, or more than 25 percent.[28] These budget numbers show that the revolution's early educational expansion was one of its most important and prioritized programs.

Calling for citizens' cooperation

"We need land for schools," read an advertisement that appeared on 20 March 1959 in Cuban newspapers (Figure 2-1).



Figure 2-1

The need for donations of land for schools is depicted on a poster that a schoolboy holds in his hand. Unlike later government campaigns, no uniformed or armed citizens are portrayed, but rather carefree civilian children. The boy appears to be of white, middle-class, rural Cuban background, symbolized by the sombrero on his head. A light-skinned girl in a skirt with a doll in her hand accompanies him. *Revolución* (20 March 1959): 6.

---

considerably, in part because of less predictable revenues and in part because these special[?] budgets faced less parliamentary scrutiny. As a consequence, they became more prone to discretionary use by individuals. For the first legal distinction between ordinary and extraordinary budgets, see Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Colección legislativa de la isla de Cuba: Recopilación de todas las disposiciones publicadas en la 'Gaceta de la Habana,' Año 1902*, vol. 1 (Havana: Establecimiento Tipográfico Teniente Rey 23, 1905).

[27] The second-largest government budget was that of Judicial Power, with three million pesos, followed by National Defense. See Law 6 (12 January 1959), Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclámas y leyes,* pp. 25–28.

[28] Expenditures for education were followed by "pensions, subventions, and subsidiaries" (7.5 million pesos), "government" (4.5 million pesos), and "public works" (3.5 million pesos). See Law 6, 12 January 1959, in *Colección legislativa de la isla de Cuba,* pp. 586–89.

The text states that the Ministries of Education and Public Works would start building schools in municipalities that donated land parcels of an area measuring at least 100 by 150 meters. This was considered the minimum space at the time to guarantee modern school buildings with adequately hygienic conditions and free space for physical and patriotic exercises. Even the large amounts of money for education-related government spending did not suffice for the ambitious plans of the revolutionary government. To save costs when building a new school, the government had started a campaign to motivate citizens to donate real estate for that purpose. The campaign bore its fruits: as the journal for Cuban pedagogues, *Educación,* announced that month, seven land parcels in the provinces of Havana and Oriente had already been donated.[29]

Soon thereafter, the construction of the first schools commenced. In June 1959, advertising began for a public bidding process for private business to participate in the buildings' construction. The advertisement stated that as many schools as necessary, according to the most recent census of 1953, would be built. José Alberto Naranjo, the provincial commissioner of Havana, published a call for an "emergency mini-bidding" for the building of new rural schools on behalf of the provincial revolutionary government. The process began in five municipalities near the Cuban capital: Madruga, Aguacate, Jaruco, Melena de Sur, and San Nicolás de Bari. Altogether, 63 schools were planned at this point for the province of Havana alone. More public announcements for other districts followed.[30] In 1959 it was the revolutionary state that stimulated and cooperated with Cuba's private sector to build a robust public education program.

But even the news of the ongoing construction processes did not seem to fully satisfy the government. "Open your door to me!" pleaded a new campaign by MINED that started one month later, in April 1959 (Figure 2-2).

[29] The numbers are based on a report to the Minister of Public Works by its General Director for Architecture, Enrique Gutierrez, in *Educación* 18, no. 3 (March 1959): 9.

[30] *Revolución* (1 June 1959): 4.



Figure 2-2
Written in the first person, the appeal to the newspapers' readership was made by a young schoolboy, again portrayed with a sombrero. The campaign, using language evoking that of religious texts, was meant to appeal to the readers' sense of national solidarity and dedication to education (*Revolución*, 22 April 1959, p. 13).

This time the ministry asked for more than just land donations. Minister Hart called upon the Cuban people to open up the doors to their businesses, warehouses, and private homes, so that instruction for Cuban children could start immediately and would not have to wait for the completion of the construction process. The campaign message was delivered in direct, simple, and personal language. "Anywhere where a teacher and thirty students fit, we can found a school." The spaces donated would be converted into "temples" for students who sought education and "the road to the light" (*camino a la luz*). In what would become a common figure of revolutionary rhetoric, the state and revolution had already

fused into a single entity, a political subject, as evidenced by the government-paid advertisement's promise "Let the revolution fill it [the school space] with desks and schoolbooks."[31]

The new regime's decision to expand education quickly and at all costs by temporarily using private spaces demonstrates both the political importance of this task and the improvised and experimental character of early educational policies. School supplies such as books, pencils, and notebooks were produced more easily and quickly, but building new schools would obviously need a longer time. And "the revolution" was impatient. "There is not enough time, Cuban," the advertisement warned.

Calling for civic consciousness

Parallel to this government campaign, another case was made for "activating" citizens. This time, Cubans were asked to participate and become an active in the revolutionary process: "We call upon the civic consciousness; now we can open FIVE THOUSAND SCHOOLS," the daily *Revolución* read. "Every Cuban has to find a site. And they have to do this now, without losing time, without delaying the enthusiasm."[32] As the official organ of the M-26-7, the newspaper maintained a sense of urgency; this was a historic moment that had to be seized. The revolutionary leaders sought to build upon the general mood of fervor and the will to change in issues that were important to Cuban society at the time. As historian Luis Pérez put it, this initial joy of Cubans in early 1959 "had to do with a sense of achievement (. . .) to have fulfilled the promise of their past," to finally build a nation for all.[33]

Now it was no longer enough to merely show zeal "and spend time eulogizing the revolutionary laws," according to *Revolución*. Instead, "citizens should contribute with their organized force" to every constructive measure of the government. This mouthpiece of the M-26-7 called upon responsible

[31] "Anuncio," Ministerio de Educación, *Revolución* (22 April 1959) 13.

[32] "Escuelas Campesinas," *Revolución* (29 April 1959): 1, 13.

[33] Louis A. Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History: Meanings and Purpose of the Past* (2013), p. 237.

individuals in every municipality now to "roam through their zones, mobilize their cells, and obtain the active cooperation of their neighbors." The text also called upon the more traditional sectors of civil society to act, as this historic moment was "a beautiful opportunity for the Rotarians and Lions who, with so much effort, have seconded the noble causes to mobilize their delegations all over the island (. . .)."[34] At the time, there were 128 Lions Clubs in Cuba, roughly equivalent to the number of municipalities. In early 1959, many members of the government, including Prime Minister Castro and Minister Hart, held talks on contemporary political issues at these bulwarks of republican civil society.[35] Cuban versions of U.S.-inspired associations coexisted with the revolutionary organizations, such as the cells of M-26-7 that had emerged during the armed struggle of the 1950s. In their parallel existences, they were both willing to cooperate with government initiatives in education.

Catholic competition and cooperation

While the secular state pursued the expansion of the educational infrastructure in Cuba's society, the Ministry of Education was not the only institution that believed the creation of new schools would be a necessary step to "rehabilitate" the Cuban educational system. Competition came from different sides. The Catholic organization *Legión de Cristo,* founded in Mexico in 1941 and subsequently expanding into Cuba, ran an advertisement campaign to create 500 "Christian schools" (Figure 2-3). The young group argued that "the triumph of the real revolution" resided in the "recognized norms of the Christian moral order." Parallel to the government campaign, the legion aimed at "a revolution of habits, of the social environment, and the aspirations with which the citizen of tomorrow shall grow up." For the *Legión de Cristo,* the evil to be overcome was rooted not just in illiteracy but also in the "claws of atheism" (*las garras del ateismo*).[36] The message was that Christianity, not the revolution, was the key to Cuba's future.

[34] "Escuelas Campesinas," *Revolución* (29 April 1959): 1, 13.

[35] See, for example, Fidel Castro's speech at the Havana Rotary Club on 15 January 1959, or Armando Hart's talk at the Club de Leones (Lions Club) in Havana on 14 February 1959.

[36] *Diario de la Marina* (1 March 1959): 4-D.



Figure 2-3
An advertisement of the Catholic congregation *Legión de Cristo,* published in the daily *Diario de la Marina* to promote 500 "common Christian schools" as "the key to Cuba's future" (1 March 1959, p. 4-D).

The new government's position was to allow private religious education, but to strictly enforce the republican, laic character of public education. Yet, by carrying out a massive campaign for the construction of public schools that targeted the active enrollment of half of Cuba's rural school-age population, a fundamental question about the moral foundations for these future citizens arose. With the advent of a new government, many of whose members had a significant religious affiliation, hopes for a renewal and expansion of Christian influence were high among ecclesiastical authorities during the political–cultural reconfiguration of Cuba that followed the collapse of the Batista regime.[37] In addition to Communists and Freemasons, especially the Protestant Churches feared an imposition of Catholicism as

[37] See the detailed description of the role of Protestants and also Catholics in the opposition movement to Batista in Marcos Antonio Ramos, *Panorama del protestantismo en Cuba: La presencia de los protestantes o evangélicos en la historia de Cuba desde la colonización española hasta la revolución* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Caribe, 1986), pp. 495–507.

the new "official religion" to be taught in all public schools. Whereas Cuba's Protestant community was estimated at a little more than a quarter of a million, with 845 churches, the official number of Catholics stood at almost 80 percent of population. At the time, 223 foreign missionaries (most from Canada and the United States), in addition to 1,053 Cubans worked in Protestant missions or churches. [38] Yet, the high percentage of Catholics reflects mostly baptisms and self-proclaimed official affiliation for statistical purposes. Regional studies in the late 1950s have shown that almost nine out of ten Cubans did not attend church.[39] According to Jorge Domínguez, "[d]espite some symbolic identification with the Catholic church, the beliefs and behavior of the Cubans were secular (. . .)."[40] Of what might have been the most important religious practice on the island, Afro-Cuban syncretism or *santería*, there are no official statistics, and the different branches and sects were far less organized and thus less politically influential than the Christian churches. Institutionally, santería had little influence in the process of educational expansion.

In February 1959, a manifesto circulated through Cuba's radio and press that "interpreted the sentiments of half a million evangelicals" demanding that Cuba, as a laic state, could not have an official religion, nor could public buildings be used for religious ceremonies.[41] A few days earlier, a public Catholic mass had taken place at the state-financed University of Havana. Protestant authorities who had been key supporters during the insurrection immediately asked Fidel Castro for an explanation when they saw reports that the government planned to provide religious education in public schools. During a

---

[38] Ibid., p. 134. The author cites the 1960 Protestant Missions in Latin America survey published by the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association with 266,000 affiliates. However, because of highly divergent procedures used for recording Ramos estimates the numbers to be closer to 300,000, Ibid., p. 135.

[39] Universidad Central de Las Villas, Escuela de Pedagogía, *La educación rural en Las Villas: Bases para la redacción de unos cursos de estudios*, Nuevo plan de publicaciones, 15. (Santa Clara, Cuba; Departamento de Relaciones Culturales Escuela de Pedagogía, 1959), p. 180.

[40] Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 471.

[41] Manuel Fernández, *Religión y revolución en Cuba: Veinticinco años de lucha ateísta*. *Colección Realidades* (Miami: Saeta Ediciones, 1984), p. 48.

subsequent meeting with Protestants and the press, Castro explained that only in religious schools and institutions would such education be allowed.[42]

Revolutionary Catholics?

Since the teaching of Christian morality in schools financed and controlled by the state had encountered organized resistance and seemed increasingly impossible to achieve, Catholic institutions began to construct alternative spaces for instruction. In November 1959 the Acción Social Franciscana opened the new Colegio San Antonio in the Havana suburb of Miramar, "for the benefit of the poor." The Acción Social Franciscana was a women's organization affiliated with the national sanctuary of San Antonio, located in Havana's upper-class neighborhood of Miramar. In February 1960, the Instituto Social Pío XII was inaugurated with the assistance of several of Cuba's bishops, under the auspices of the Catholic University of Villanueva and its promoter, Father Salvador de Cistierna, who was also a professor of economics at that university. The institute's two-year study plan included the social doctrine of the church, labor relations, and even the study of communism. It moreover sought to teach agrarian reform and cooperativism.[43]

These and other initiatives were expressions of the traditions of social thought within the Cuban Catholic Church and of certain intellectuals within this group who intended to cooperate with the revolutionary government and exert influence on social reforms. When the archbishop of Havana, Evelio Díaz, praised the agrarian reform in mid-1959 as "noble in its purpose" and "in the spirit and sense of Christian social justice," Fidel Castro commended this cooperative stance two weeks later.[44] During a live

[42] Raúl Fernández Ceballos et al., *Neue Kirche in Neuer Welt: Studien zum kubanischen Protestantismus* (Berlin: Union-Verlag, 1968), p. 74.
[43] Fernández, *Religión y revolución en Cuba: Veinticinco años de lucha ateísta*, p. 52.

[44] Monsignor Evelio Díaz, "La iglesia Católica y la nueva Cuba" (31 May 1959), cited in ibid., pp. 38–39.

television appearance, Castro recognized that "with these declarations the Cuban church has put itself in a truly revolutionary position; it is the most revolutionary Catholic Church in the social sphere."[45]

Other examples of this collaborative and socially oriented attitude were apparent in the Second Week of Social Studies and Young Christians for Priests and Religious People, held in November of 1959. Themes of this meeting included the social panorama of Cuba, formation of labor leaders, and cooperatives, among others.[46] The congress of the Federation of Catholic Colleges (FCC), held in Havana in August 1959, declared its willingness to "cooperate with the reform plans of our educational system." The 500 delegates from 270 different Catholic institutions promised to "support the policy of national integration carried out by the revolutionary government."[47] These groups were concerned about communist and "materialist" influences in the new revolutionary government, but regarded many of its reform policies with sympathy and tried to maintain a degree of influence through dialogue and cooperation. As an expression of this attitude, the congress ended with the offer of 800 stipends (*becas*) to children of revolutionary fighters or victims of the war to attend the costly Catholic schools. According to the Catholic journal *La Quincena*, "many of the principles of the revolution overlap with the evangelical spirit." Social leveling (*nivelación social*), communitarianism, and administrative honesty were given as examples.[48] The generosity of the ecclesiastical authorities can also be considered a smart strategic move to integrate several hundred families of committed and influential revolutionary fighters into the network of prestigious Catholic schools and colleges, access to which would otherwise have been beyond their financial means. In 1959 the revolutionary government and the sectors of the Catholic Church cooperated in meaningful ways to expand cooperation.

---

[45] Fidel Castro, "Comparencia en televisión," 13 June 1959, in Fernández, *Religion y revolución* p. 41.

[46] *La Quincena* 5, no. 21-22 (30 November 1959): 54, 61.

[47] *La Quincena* 5, no. 15 (15 August 1959): 32–33.

[48] *Ibid*., 38.

Human capital as a revolutionary resource

By mid-1959, building more schoolrooms for Cuban children had become a national priority. Educational expansion was a goal not only for hierarchical institutions such as the military, the church(es), and the state, but also for ordinary Cuban citizens. The school and fiscal year that had begun under President Batista and come to an end under Prime Minister Castro was finalized with relative success; government approval rates remained extraordinarily high, the end of the armed conflict meant a return to peace and new opportunities, the economy grew, and Cuba's business community was confident. Four out of five (78 percent) of Cubans surveyed for *Bohemia* thought the government was doing "everything perfectly well" (with an interesting "low" of 66 percent in Havana), and another twelve percent agreed with "some exceptions." In an extra survey of Cuba's leading business community, Pepín Bosch, president of Bacardí Ron, said, "our goal has to be that all Cubans enjoy more well-being [*bienestar*], health, and education (. . . .) the government has the opportunity to reach this goal and we have to have confidence (. . .)." Julio Lobo, one of Cuba's wealthiest men at the time and majority share-holder of eleven sugar mills, Galbán Lobo Trading Co, the Banco Financiero, and the Unión de Azucareros Insurance Company, among other firms, was similarly confident: "Now that the nation has freed itself from dishonesty and government corruption, we are confident about reaching a new era of prosperity."[49] Not just religious organizations, but also the private sector cooperated with the government and was confident in its future.

Nevertheless, if the government wanted to live up to its promises to make the constitutional right of education a national reality as quickly as possible, much more work needed to be done. The administration's plans for school expansion were ambitious as the needs were great. Resources, although available, were nevertheless limited. As Fidel Castro put it in late August, "We currently don't have the

[49] See "El pueblo opina sobre el gobierno revolucionario y la reforma agraria," *Bohemia* 51, no. 25, Supp. 8 (21 June 1959); and "Como ve Usted el panorama económico de Cuba? Una encuesta de *Bohemia*," *Bohemia* 51, no. 14 (5 April 1959): 48, 51.

resources to offer all the educational services that the country needs."[50] As a consequence, the government also sought to "unleash other productive forces"—increased voluntary cooperation and contributions by the Cuban population. Relying solely on professional, paid, "institutionalized," and "traditional" forms of policy making would have meant a slower and more gradual process. The general disposition to cooperate with the government was widespread, and there was little opposition to this political goal because building schools and sending more students to class were widely appealing.

The 1958–59 school year ended with the construction of new classrooms and schools all over the island, especially during the summer of 1959. This expansion was based on the prior month's budgetary patchwork, the result of a combination of "extraordinary credits" and voluntary contributions by Cuban citizens. But the new government thought in dimensions greater than these. Throughout 1959, studies and school surveys were carried out that confirmed previous estimates and determined the need for some ten thousand additional classrooms. The surveys showed that for a rural school-age population (ages six to fourteen at the time) of 782,200, there were 5,596 schools or classrooms (*aulas*) that provided educational services for only some 279,000 students. The government thus calculated that in order to offer education to the remaining 503,000 students unenrolled or unable to attend primary schools, approximately ten thousand new classrooms were necessary. To this end, Law 561 of 15 September 1959 stipulated the "creation of ten thousand classrooms of basic education by the Ministry of Education."[51]

Execution of this major state-building project was to begin immediately, starting with the new school year in September of 1959. The Council of Ministers granted a credit of four million pesos for this purpose. However, that amount would only allow for half of the envisioned schools, according to government calculations for the costs of their construction and operation, including teachers' salaries. To overcome these budgetary and institutional constraints, Castro suggested the exploitation of a new resource: voluntary labor and sacrificing salaries. This new, "revolutionary" policy approach was

[50] Fidel Castro, *Discurso*, 27 August 1959.
[51] "Creación de diez mil aulas de enseñanza común por el Ministerio de de Educación," Law 561 (15 September 1959) in Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes,* vol. 10, pp. 219–23.

enshrined in Law 561. At the first national conference of rural schoolteachers in late August of 1959, Castro presented his plan. This was the birth of the mobilizing state.

Rural school expansion and indoctrination

The idea was "to convert the capacities that we can count on and the enthusiasm we can build upon into a national resource." The purpose of the rural schoolteachers' congress was to find a viable solution for the educational challenges in rural Cuba that would take into consideration the economic necessities of agricultural laborers. It was organized by the Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales, Cuba's official teachers' association, and brought together 397 delegates from all 126 municipalities of Cuba. To facilitate their participation, Castro ordered the postponement of exams (*las oposiciones*) and hiring for Cuba's schoolteachers, which were to be held at the same time as the congress, thereby underlining the political importance of the rural education program. It was also an early sign of a new government style that would sacrifice institutional procedures for more immediate political purposes. As a result, thousands of teachers were able to participate in the opening ceremony, according to firsthand reports.[52] The congress was held at the Technological School "José Martí" on the outskirts of Havana, ironically the site where former president Batista had created the headquarters and training center for his civic–military rural education program that had begun in 1936.

The opening ceremony at the theater of the National Labor Confederation (CTC), in the municipality of Centro Habana, was attended by minister Armando Hart, several of his subsecretaries, and commander Huber Matos, a former teacher. Several new state agencies involved in educational policies at the time were represented at the conference, including the recently created agrarian reform institute INRA and its department for rural education; the cultural department of the rebel army; and certain noneducational agricultural organizations, such as the tobacco farmers; in addition to the Ministries of Education and Defense. Altogether, some twenty-six different institutions sent 153

[52] *Magisterio de Cuba, organo oficia* 1, no. 3 (15 September 1959): 1.

additional delegates to the event.[53] The congress ran for four days and debates were divided into six different thematic panels on the most pressing problems facing rural education and their possible solutions.[54] A commission was created to work with the Ministry of Education to assure the implementation of the congress's results.

The "essential objective of education today is to cooperate with the noble goals of the agrarian reform," stated the congress's final declaration. The Agrarian Reform Law of May 1959 was aimed at curtailing large landholdings, the *latifundios*, and promoting agrarian development and diversification. It restricted all real estate holdings to one thousand acres, with some exceptions for land dedicated to sugar, rice, and livestock, which were allowed up to 3,300 acres. All other large holdings would be nationalized, according to the law, and compensated with twenty-year bonds bearing an annual interest rate of 4.5 percent, based on property value as declared for tax purposes. This socialization process resulted in land titles for thousands of rural workers, even if, as Jorge Domínguez has shown, only about one-third of all land socialized between 1959 and 1961 was actually a result of the Agrarian Reform Act. Other political measures contributed to this process of redistribution, and almost one sixth was donated voluntarily.[55]

In order to support the land reform, schools were expected to carry out "plans for civic and political–revolutionary divulgation, information, and indoctrination to the community and to organize talks about cooperativism." Political talks and debates about the revolution were held beginning in early 1959 in many institutions, including schools, private and public. These new measures, however, were to be more "instrumental" and had a more propagandistic nature. The new rural educators were to "elevate" Cuba's rural populace and familiarize it with the necessary cultural instruments and knowledge for

[53] Ibid.

[54] The conference's panels consisted of the following themes: the rural school deficit and proposals for its solution; the rural school and agrarian reform; the rural school teacher; the administrative and pedagogical character of the rural school; graduation and courses of study; and the promotion system for students to upper educational levels.

[55] Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, p. 171.

revolutionary development. The declared goal was to convert all farmers (*campesinos*) into functional readers and "political indoctrination should be a primordial part of the educational process."[56]

Legislating idealism

Fidel Castro wanted to make use of the existing but underemployed teaching force in Cuba without having the resources to pay for it adequately. Teaching in "underdeveloped" rural Cuba was unpopular among most teachers. The insufficient physical infrastructure, which meant few modern comforts and low hygiene standards in the countryside, was one of the reasons why most teachers sought appointments elsewhere, near urban areas. An alternative was to seek an official teaching appointment but then subcontract another teacher for part of the salary. This practice of sinecures was called *botellerismo* in republican Cuba, though it was commonly more associated with political favoritism for government jobs, subsidies, or other forms of payments.[57] Attempts during the republican era to stimulate rural teaching by providing additional pay for certain locations showed very limited results.[58] As a consequence, many trained teachers were unemployed in their profession and preferred to seek alternative sources of income in urban areas. An unquantifiable number of trained teachers worked in the informal education sector; improvised classrooms, often in residential houses, went unrecognized (and thus not surveyed) by the state but helped numerous rural families teach their children basic literacy skills.[59]

Many Cuban educators had responded to early calls from the revolutionary government and the rebel army to volunteer for the newly created educational departments within the Ministry of Defense.

---

[56] "Acuerdos y conclusiones del I. Congreso de Educación Rural," *Magisterio de Cuba: Organo oficial* 1, no. 3, supp. B (15 September 1959).

[57] Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, p. 94. Domínguez cites Cuba's Ministry of Education as the "chief source" of corruption, especially during the 1940s.

[58] Ibid., 94.

[59] Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas, ed., *Un estudio sobre Cuba: Colonia, república, experimento socialista; Estructura económica, desarrollo institucional, socialismo y regresión* (Coral Gables, FL; University of Miami Press, 1963).

The general euphoria of the first months of 1959 and the attention that the guerrilla war had directed to rural (and especially eastern) Cuba were conducive to this disposition. Nevertheless, partly because these initiatives were carried out mostly outside and parallel to the traditional state structures and thus were only to a small degree financed by government, the results were limited. Some 1,800 teachers had participated in basic educational programs organized through the Ministry of Defense until mid-1959, according to Fidel Castro. At the rural teachers' conference in August, Castro admitted, "we weren't able to channel this enthusiasm." At the same time, the Ministry of Education had begun to expand its rural education program through new credits for school construction. This institution-building process led to an "incorrect position," an "insecurity," and an "error" that "did not make use of the resources of the nation," according to Castro. It was led by "the desire to substitute volunteerism with a more systematic approach by the ministry." For Castro, the fact that there was not enough money in the government budget did not prevent him from planning an expansive, and also expensive, education program. It would be built on credit paid for by the teachers. The plan rested on the idea that the revolution's development program of land reform and industrialization would lead to future sustained economic growth and revenues that would eventually translate into more prosperity for the general population, and thus justify these investments in education at this early point. The idea was not to have teachers work for free, but to start with a modest payment of sixty pesos a month and then increase their income gradually by twenty pesos per year until the full national threshold of 200 pesos was reached.[60] As a basis of comparison, according to a government study of 1958, almost two-thirds of Cuba's economically active population (62 percent) was making less than 75 pesos a month; for women, this number was even higher (71 percent).[61] Seen

[60] This somewhat arbitrary threshold might have had its origin in Castro's defense speech in which he predicted, "no teacher shall earn less than 200 pesos," and secondary school teachers "no less than 350 pesos." Castro, *La historia me absolverá: Autodefensa de Fidel Castro ante el tribunal de urgencia de Santiago de Cuba el 16 de octubre de 1953*, Havana: Radio Habana, 1953, p. 42.

[61] Consejo Nacional de Economía, "El Empleo, el sub-empleo y el desempleo en Cuba, 1958," in Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas, ed. *Un estudio sobre Cuba*, p. 813.

from this perspective, a 60-peso starting salary was not an unusually low income.[62] This might explain the considerable interest in this government offer, one that combined an idealistic appeal—to be part of a new national project that aimed at educating all Cubans—with material compensation provided by the state.

As in earlier government calls for voluntary donations of land or access to private buildings for educational purposes, Castro warned, "the revolution is not supported by applause and enthusiasm." National liberation, he explained to the rural teachers in his remarks, "cannot be achieved without sacrifice." He proposed to create employment for twice the number of teachers that the budget held resources for at that moment. This would be achieved by cutting wages in half: "I want to suggest to the teachers of Cuba to build ten thousand schools with the same resources we have for five thousand."

"TEN THOUSAND SCHOOLS WILL BE BUILT," *Revolución's* front page thundered triumphantly the next day. "All teachers will be employed" was the subtitle. With an estimated number of about eleven thousand unemployed teachers (and twice as many employed), and the projected creation of ten thousand new teaching jobs, it was expected that "the problem of unemployment for teachers will be solved for the next couple of years." The low salary was mentioned and explained in the article but not discussed further.[63] The newly launched official organ of Cuban teachers, *El Magisterio Nacional,* described Castro's speech as "a challenge, a cordial invitation but severe," one that was "charged with implications for all sectors in Cuba, professional and labor."[64] Three days later, *Revolución* reported that 7,353 teachers, all from Havana, had already signed up for the required examinations to be held at the Teachers' School for these newly announced jobs.[65]

---

[62] The official average monthly salary of Cuban teachers in 1943 was just below 80 pesos: 79 pesos for white teachers, and 77 pesos for "colored" teachers, according to the 1943 census; cited in Nelson, *Rural Cuba*, p. 233.
[63] *Revolución* (29 August 1959): 1, 18.

[64] *Magisterio de Cuba, organo oficial* 1, no. 3 (15 September 1959): 1.

[65] *Revolución* (31 August 1959): 1–2.

Putting politics to work

Only two weeks were needed to convert the conference's proposals into order. Once the general law on building ten thousand new classrooms was issued, ministerial resolutions specified the priorities and geographical distribution of where to begin with the assignment of new classrooms and teachers. As an expression of the political decision to prioritize rural, and especially eastern Cuba, of the 900 urban schools, half were allotted to Oriente province alone (440 schools); the three western provinces of Pinar del Río, Havana, and Matanzas combined received less than one-third (17, 198, and 21 schools, respectively).[66] In accordance with Decentralization Law 76 of February 1959, the resolution asked the municipal directors of education to decide, in cooperation with their provincial superiors, on the exact location of the schools "in places where they are most necessary." Previous government measures had similarly prioritized eastern Cuba.[67]

Just a few days before the beginning of the new school year, on 26 August 1959, President Osvaldo Dortícos Torrado, Minister of Education Armando Hart, and other representatives of national and city governments inaugurated five primary schools in Havana. An investment of circa 12,000 pesos had been made for each of the five schools of six classrooms each, with a maximum of twenty-five students per classroom. All bore the names of fallen rebels and were decorated with murals dedicated to the revolution by Cuban painter Orlando S. Suárez, a student of the communist Mexican painter Diego Rivera. This visual representation of the armed struggle for Cuba's liberty in public spaces was part of the process of creating a new collective memory in which the anti-Batista episode would only be the

[66] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación (MINED), Resolución Ministerial RM 03406 (9 October 1959), Archivo del MINED, Fondo Leyes y Resoluciones.

[67] A resolution of July 1959 determined that out of the 3,000 new rural classrooms that were to be built, almost two-thirds (1,856 classrooms) were to be in the province of Oriente: 471 in Las Villas and 339 in Camagüey. Only one-tenth were to be in the three western provinces: 209 in Pinar del Rio, 88 in Matanzas, and 27 in Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, Ministerial Resolution 17878, 27 July 1959, in Fondo leyes y resoluciones, MINED Documentation Center.

culmination of a historic lineage that began in 1868.[68] During his inaugural speech, city commissioner José Llanusa promised to have 31 more schools operating at the beginning of the school year.

Law 561 also announced the hiring of 4,000 teachers for the school year of 1959–60, in both rural and urban areas. This was to be financed by the 4,000,000-peso budget assigned for the purpose earlier by the Council of Ministers. The hiring for these new schools was guided by the norms established by each of the educational departments on the municipal level, to which Law 76 had transferred that authority. Law 561 now stipulated what Fidel Castro had announced at the rural teachers' conference, including the yearly salary increase of twenty pesos. Until a threshold of one hundred twenty pesos monthly income was reached, these newly hired teachers would be allowed to use Cuba's public transport between their residences and workplaces free of cost as an incentive to work in more remote areas, an idea already mentioned in Castro's 1953 defense speech. In addition, fees would be waived for any teachers receiving additional training at pedagogical schools or public universities.

Revolutionary rural uplifting

Overcoming the lack of sufficient classrooms as "the principal cause of illiteracy" was considered "the only effective means" of achieving the goal of universal literacy by the Cuban government in 1959. The prevailing emphasis on institutional expansion up to the summer of that year would be markedly different from the massive campaign to overcome the problem of illiteracy only two years later, during the National Literacy Campaign. Even so, from this point on, one can observe the first attempts to go beyond established norms and expectations. In order to obtain the commitment and sacrifice of Cuba's teachers, the regime held publicized events and assemblies, such as the openings of new schools and the conversions of military barracks.

The government considered "the necessity to eradicate illiteracy" a question of "utmost national interest." The underlying logic in emphasizing rural Cuba was that basic education was the prerequisite

[68] For more details on the creation of a "revolutionary collective memory," see Rainer Schultz, "On the Pedagogical Origins of a New Collective Memory." Unpublished conference paper, Yale University, International Conference *The Revolution Remembered*, 3–4 October 2014.

"to elevate the living conditions of the rural masses." This process of "revolutionary uplifting" accompanied the agrarian reform process that the government had begun in May 1959 so as to "rehabilitate our hitherto forgotten rural masses" in economic, cultural, and social terms. This, in turn, was a prerequisite for the long-term goal of Cuba's industrialization, according to the government's logic. In other words, the rural education program was part of a national development project that sought to integrate Cuba's peasant population more actively and instrumentally into the state's rural and industrial development plan. To this end, the revolutionary government continued what the rebels had begun in eastern Cuba earlier: to "awaken" and mobilize Cuba's rural masses and to integrate them into new state projects.

Various forms of "citizen activation" for the goals of cultural progress and economic development first evolved in this context and would become important tools in the *modus operandi* of the revolutionary government in years to come. The method was based initially on building legitimacy and support for the government that rested on its fulfillment of promises of social justice and equality, such as the right to education, which had long been part of republican struggles. Another important measure used by the government to affirm its legitimacy was the highly symbolic conversion of military barracks into schools.

2.2 Redemption: The conversion of military barracks into school cities

"Columbia has to disappear," Fidel Castro told the press on 12 January 1959 when he visited Cuba's biggest military barrack, in the municipality of Mariano, just outside Havana.[69] It was the first time that the idea to convert a military camp into a school city was announced as a government policy. Even though Castro's request became a headline the next day, the majority of newspaper reports discussed a

[69] Camp Columbia owed its name to the fact that most of the soldiers who helped building this military camp at the beginning of the U.S. military occupation in late 1898 had come from the District of Columbia in the United States. Afterward, the camp was modernized and amplified into a military area (*ciudad militar*), in which several republican presidents, from Tomás Estrada Palma to Fulgencio Batista, held a residence.

different theme, as journalists were more interested in the question of war prisoners.[70] Less than two weeks after the final military battles, the fates of Cuba's soldiers—their treatment and trials—were more important to Cuba's public. The same day Castro made his statement about the future of Camp Columbia, seventy-one executions of suspected and/or convicted war criminals in military camps were reported from eastern Cuba.[71]

According to Castro, the conversion of Camp Columbia was not necessarily his initiative. "I have taken on this attitude interpreting the will of my comrades from the rebel army," the thirty-two-year-old said to the press. In his view, the military barracks had to disappear in order to "wipe out any vestiges of the Batista tyranny," which had brought "so much pain to the Cuban family." The initial idea to convert military institutions to civic and social uses, however, had already been announced in Fidel Castro's speech in self-defense, "History Will Absolve Me." In this text, Fidel Castro suggested that Camp Columbia should be converted into a school, hosting "ten thousand orphans" instead of soldiers, as reparation for "the children whose parents might have been killed by the army." The camp had a capacity for approximately ten thousand men.

Historian Marial Iglesias Utset has studied the "metaphors of change" during the transition period from a Spanish-dominated colony to the new Cuban republic, when the country was first occupied and profoundly influenced by the United States. She considers the conversion of barracks into schools administered by the U.S. military under General Leonard Wood "[o]ne of this period's most representative alterations of physical structures for symbolic reasons."[72] In her view, these measures filled a double need: They responded to "the demand for school buildings generated by the massive project of restructuring the public school system" and also served the "symbolic purpose of emphasizing the differences between the Spanish colonization (. . .) and the new regime of supposed "liberties and

[70] "Quedará convertida en Columbia en una gran ciudad escolar," *Diario de la Marina* (13 January 1959): 1-A.

[71] "Informan desde Santiago de Cuba numerosas ejecuciones," *Diario de la Marina* (13 January 1959): 1-A. This number, according to the *Diario*, was given to journalists by "revolutionary officials," without verification.

[72] Nelson, *Rural Cuba*, p. 233.

civilizing virtues."[73] In reports and self-representation of the time, the U.S. administration emphasized only the practical purpose of this project. In his public report, Governor-General Wood mentioned that "a number of state buildings that were used principally as quarters for troops have been placed in good repair, remodeled and fitted up for school purposes." This was because, as commissioner for public schools Matthew Hanna had affirmed in late 1900, "a few months ago there were no public schools in the Island that were the property of the State."[74]

Sixty years later, Cuba's revolutionary government sought to visualize a new beginning by destroying the military symbols of power on which the administrations of General Batista had relied and to replace them with civic institutions of education and social welfare. Ironically though, both regimes, the republican and the revolutionary, had come into being by military force, and would have to rely on a repressive state apparatus against subsequent political opposition.[75]

Building the new by destroying the old

Repression had been widespread during the Batista regime, especially in the final months, when armed resistance had increased. For the new regime, therefore, no institution was more suitable to symbolize change than the military. This held true even if most urban violence prior to 1959 had involved police and "special forces" rather than the military per se. It might explain why the very first building demolished by the new government in March 1959 was not a military one but the former Bureau of Investigation (*Buró de Investigaciones*) of Cuba's National Police, located at the Almendares river in the city of Havana. The Buró de Investigaciones had been operated jointly by the army and the police and had cooperated closely

[73] Marial Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History of Cuba during the U.S. Occupation, 1898–1902* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 16.

[74] Matthew E. Hanna, "Report of the Public Schools of the Island of Cuba," in U.S. Army, Dept. of Cuba (Leonard Wood), *Annual Report of Major General Leonard Wood, U.S.V., Commanding Division of Cuba*, ed. (Havana, 1901), p. 27.

[75] Several of the private schools that would be nationalized in 1961 were later converted into institutions for military, defense, or intelligence purposes. Perhaps the most prominent example was the Jesuit school of Belén, where Fidel Castro had studied and which later became a military academy, the Instituto Técnico Militar.

with the military intelligence service (SIM), as well as the Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities (BRAC).[76] According to the *Diario de la Marina,* this had been "one of the most horrendous pages" of the republican history and the building's demolition "symbolizes the new era of justice."[77] Justice—"revolutionary justice"—was now brought to the Cuban people in various ways. In addition to socioeconomic reforms aimed at poverty reduction through redistribution, and an honest government that would hold corrupt officials responsible, there were trials of suspected (war) criminals in the military and security apparatus, as well as the purging process in the state apparatus, especially in education. These measures helped to legitimize and secure the new regime. They also created new and potential enemies of the revolution.

Chronicling the events at the time for Cuba's most popular weekly, *Bohemia*, Mario Llerena praised the project of converting garrisons into schools as "such a pretty idea," even if the author did not consider it to be "particularly original," referring to the aforementioned practice of the U.S. military administration.[78] Even if critical of some government policies, Llerena agreed that there had not been a place in Cuba where the "insolent masonry" (*mampostería insolente*) of the garrisons had not stood out and imposed itself on the Cuban citizenry. In his view, however, Batista and Camp Columbia were only expressions and effects of Cuba's "political misfortune" and not its cause, and he implied that the destruction of symbols would not change the causes of the problems. In his influential articles in

[76] The SIM had received training from the FBI and other U.S.-financed build-up programs since World War II. The BRAC was founded in 1955, after a visit of CIA director Allen Dulles to Cuba. See Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 61.

[77] "Demuelen el edificio de Buro de Investigaciones," *Diario de la Marina* (20 March 1959), supplemento.

[78] The author, Rafael Mario Ramón Llerena, was born in 1913 in Placetas, Villa Clara province. He became involved in the armed opposition to President Machado after 1930. Llerena graduated from the University of Havana in 1947, then emigrated to the United States, where he attended Princeton Theological Seminary, intending to become a Christian minister, then taught Spanish at Duke University. In 1952 he returned to Cuba and became involved in the opposition to Batista. Llerena joined the M-26-7 and, as an experienced writer, became responsible for one of the movement's programmatic texts (*Nuestra Razón*), as well as being the M-26-7 representative of the opposition "committee in exile" in Miami in October 1957 (although he resigned from the movement before 1959 for ideological differences). In 1960 Llerena would flee the island. Mario Llerena, *The Unsuspected Revolution: The Birth and Rise of Castroism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 31–33 and 45–51.

Bohemia, Llerena contributed to a narrative in formation, that of moral redemption.[79] This narrative called for a combination of structural changes for the new Cuba, with an emphasis on education and moral values. Batista, in his view, had simply been "morally and intellectually illiterate."[80]

Cuba's first military institution that was transformed into educational space was the former barracks of the navy in the municipality of Caimanera, near the naval base of Guantánamo in Oriente province. Before January 1959, the rebel army had already used the barracks provisionally for schooling purposes after their being abandoned by the Batista army when it lost control over the area. Since the public school of Caimanera had been too small for the town's needs, the rebel army had decided to use the larger installation of the barracks for educational purposes. Between January and April 1959, adaptations were made by local initiatives: "The local citizens of Caimanera carried out this transformation," according to *Revolución*. Without any glamorous festivities or government announcements, the new school began to serve 484 students in the morning sessions; during the afternoons, special English courses were held; and in the evenings, some 230 adults received literacy classes.[81] Local initiatives such as the one in Caimanera often inspired and preceded political initiatives at the national level.

In September of 1959, Camp Columbia was inaugurated as the first official school city, Ciudad Escolar Libertad. In a televised festivity, President Osvaldo Dorticós, Prime Minister Fidel Castro, Minister of Education Armando Hart, and Minister of the Armed Forces Raúl Castro, among others, attended and spoke at this event. The inauguration served as the official opening of the first "revolutionary" school year, 1959–60. It brought together some 40,000 students, for the first time from both public and private schools of the municipalities of Havana and Mariano, where Camp Columbia was located.

---

[79] For a full version of the argument about moral redemption, see Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971*. *Envisioning Cuba* series (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

[80] "La palabra de orden: Del cuartel a la escuela,**"** *Bohemia* 6 (8 February 1959): 37.

[81] "Convierten en centro escolar antiguo cuartel de la marina," *Revolución* (4 February 1959): 2.

Soon after the inauguration of Ciudad Escolar Libertad, the conversion of other military barracks followed. Altogether, some 69 military installations were adapted to become school complexes.[82] The city of Camagüey was next, in November 1959. The transformation of a military barracks into a school city started to become an almost routine, yet highly symbolic and publicized event. Several days before a new inauguration took place, full-page advertisements by the Ministry of Education were printed in the Cuban press (Figure 2-4).



Figure 2-4
A newspaper advertisement by the Ministry of Education announces the inauguration of former military barracks as a school city. Military buildings were depicted as part of the past, with young, uniformed white schoolchildren symbolically taking over the building. *Hoy* (27 November 1959): 7).

The media spurred mobilization of the local population for the inauguration. In most of these acts, high-level government representatives presided over the program in addition to other military or political leaders, often from the respective province where the inauguration was held. Speakers stressed the new services that would be provided by the government to ordinary people. Future students assembled at these public acts *en masse*. Yet, what appears to be a new populist campaign by the revolutionary leaders

[82] Eloisa Carreras Varona, *Armando Hart Dávalos: Un revolucionario cubano; Apuntes para un esbozo biográfico,* vol. 1 (Mexico, DF; Editorial Plaza y Valdés, S.A. de C.V., 2008), p. 179.

actually built on practices from republican Cuba where often even for the inauguration of a smaller secondary or primary rural school, an entourage of political figures were part of the publicized inauguration events. In 1959, though, these public and symbolic acts were embedded in a context of a social, political and economic transformation that helped render the perception of a successful revolution more palpable.

Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez and the concept of rural school cities

The concept of "school cities," especially for rural areas, had been advocated by experts in education at the time, such as historian and pedagogue Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez.[83] In April of 1959, he published a series of articles, mostly in *Bohemia*, to discuss and promote the school city system. In a comparison Guerra had made in 1954 to the transition-era of his country fifty years earlier, he warned about the moral–political implications of neglecting Cuba's rural population: "[I]t is of utmost importance to recognize that the supreme interests of the Cuban people in what concerns popular education face us today in dimensions not less grave and imperative than in 1900–1901."[84]

Sixty years later, the situation had become serious again. Population growth, combined with an insufficient strengthening of public infrastructure, volatile state budgets due to an economy largely built on monocultural agriculture (sugar plantations), and highly dependent on one country (the United States), and a state with considerable levels of corruption, had led to "retrogression" in public education. As stated earlier, half of Cuba's children did not attend school.

Many of the rural schools on the island consisted of a single *aula,* or classroom, in which children of diverse ages often learned together in an overcrowded and unsuitable environment. The idea of a larger institution that could offer more specialized education in more appropriate conditions seemed reasonable in this situation. Based on Guerra's lifelong experience with the Cuban school system, especially in rural

[83] Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, a former rural schoolteacher himself, had been named director of Havana's Teacher School (*Escuela Normal*) in 1915, and superintendent of Cuba's schools in 1926.

[84] Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Rehabilitación de la escuela pública: Un problema vital de Cuba en 1954* (Havana: Impresores P. Fernandez y Cia, 1954), p. 4.

areas, as well as his knowledge of international organizations and practices in other states, he strongly advocated modernization for the rural school system. In his view, the major advantages of large rural school centers were political, pedagogical, and also economical. Offering *de facto* full and accessible primary education to every Cuban child was part of a democratic ideal of equal opportunity. Guerra considered this ideal a reality in most of the island's urban areas, but not in rural Cuba.

In the 1950s, almost half of the population (43 percent) still lived in the countryside, where illiteracy stood at 41 percent, and only one out of three school-age children attended any class at all.[85] Economically, Guerra argued, building schools in rural areas would be more cost-effective because of the differences between rural and urban property prices. In times of affordable motorized vehicles and improved road systems, moreover, the transport of children to these school centers would be conceivable, if coordinated by the state. In fact, as Guerra showed, collective transport to an improvised school had occasionally been self-organized by some more affluent peasant families. Improved hygienic conditions at larger school facilities would also reduce public health costs.[86] Using larger plots of land for school purposes would "allow dedication of part of [the area] to certain agricultural activities" useful for teachers, students, and their parents.

Guerra made his school policy recommendations drawing explicitly on the expertise he had gained during his visits to the United States earlier in the century. He had been one of the circa 1,200 Cuban teachers at the Harvard summer school in 1900, and since 1915 he had maintained close contact with the U.S. Bureau of Education and its commissioner of education, Philander P. Claxton. "The basic principle of a democratic education," Guerra's article from April 1959 stated, "is not an ideal that cannot be reached. Two countries of the Americas apply it in an integral way: Canada and the United States. This

---

[85] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Oficina Nacional de los Censos Demográfico y Electoral, *Cifras preliminares obtenidas en los censos de población, electoral y de viviendas de 1953* (Havana: Imp. y Alm. de Papel "La Habañera," 1954), pp. 73, 70, 143.

[86] The World Bank report on Cuba for the 1950s estimated "that between 80 percent and 90 percent of the children in rural areas are infested by intestinal parasites (. . .). This is due to a widespread ignorance of even elementary sanitation (. . .)." Guerra y Sánchez, *Fundacion del sistema de escuelas públicas de Cuba 1900–1901*, p. 441.

principle is also applied in Cuba (. . .) although not in the rural part (. . . .) [B]ut today it could also be done in Cuba (. . .)."[87] This is yet another example of how early revolutionary policies carried out ideas that had been born in republican Cuba, under U.S. influence.

Future rural education

Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez advocated the construction and evolution of larger and more concentrated rural educational institutions. The conversion of military barracks, which were often located near urban settings, became the first major project the government developed with this purpose. Despite its revolutionary symbolism the usage of these existing institutions was still a more traditional approach. The creation of new and major rural educational sites, especially for the training of teachers in a "rural and revolutionary spirit" followed only later, such as the school for voluntary teachers in Minas del Frío, in the eastern Sierra Maestra mountains. These schools had different characteristics, as they were built from scratch instead of by transforming already extant buildings, and they were often located in remote areas of mountain ranges that had been involved in the guerrilla struggle. These sites, such as the school city "Camilo Cienfuegos" in Oriente province, inaugurated in July 1960 and with a capacity of 20,000 students, were also built with the explicit purpose of allowing adolescents to relive and be educated in the spirit and mentality of the guerrilla experience.[88]

But the advocacy for large-scale school complexes did not remain uncontested, even within the government. During a 1959 official inauguration of newly built schools in Havana, the director of Havana's Educational Department, Asela de los Santos, who had worked as an educator in close

[87] "Igualdad de posibilidades de educación primaria para todos los niños de Cuba," *Bohemia*, no. 15 (12 April 1959).

[88] In the latter half of the 1960s a new concept, rural boarding schools (*escuelas al campo*), was first introduced at an experimental stage and then implemented nationwide after 1970 (as *escuelas* en el *campo*). These schools were built on ideas laid out by Ramiro Guerra but were also substantially modified. Students were separated from their families. Agricultural work, as advocated by Guerra, became not only a supplemental and pedagogical tool but was made an integral part of Cuban communist education with the intention of autofinancing the schools. They were dismantled only in 2008, when Raúl Castro became president of Cuba, in order to reduce educational spending and to bring students closer to their families again. See "Una experiencia de pedagogia revolucionaria: La escuela en el campo," *Educación* 1, no. 1 (April–June 1971): 11–24.

cooperation with Raúl Castro's Second Front, expressed an active preference for "small schools with a family-like setting" rather than "big schools that resemble military barracks."[89]

But the need for more schools and classrooms was pressing at the eve of revolution, and it became an explicit policy of the government to prioritize, expand, and ameliorate the public school system, with an emphasis on rural areas. It was then not only the power of symbolism that triggered the decision to give military installations a new purpose, but also the physical need for additional educational spaces. The revolutionary government cleverly combined institution-building and state expansion to provide basic public services, such as primary education, with a symbolic representation that bore a powerful influence on the public imagination: "Schools instead of the military" was the message. Building on an example that the U.S. military administration had set in Cuba during its occupation at the beginning of the century, the rebel fighters elevated this practice to a national policy that would have a prominent place in the Cuban media.

In addition to being seen as new schools temporarily using private spaces for educational purposes, these major state-owned installations were conceived of as a formidable opportunity to rapidly educate thousands of Cubans. Many Cuban adults had hitherto never learned to read and write at all. The revolutionary government was already reaching out to this part of society during the first months of 1959, creating a new, revolutionary literacy.

2.3 Revolutionary literacy

Cuba's educational transformation, the "revolutionary government's most impressive achievement" (Jorge Domínguez), would be first and foremost built on the massive 1961 National Literacy Campaign.[90] Less known is that the revolutionary government had sought to tackle the problem of widespread illiteracy in a variety of ways from early 1959 onward, but with limited success. It is important to look at

[89] *Revolución* (27 August 1959): 2.
[90] Jorge I. Domínguez, "Cuba since 1959," in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 120.

these early initiatives to understand and historicize the success of the 1961 campaign. Literacy and basic educational work started in the rebel army, continuing a practice of the guerrilla period (December 1956–December 1958), especially in the strongholds of the M-26-7 in eastern Cuba. Following the collapse of the old regime and the establishment of the new Cuban state, these experiences were expanded with state support across the nation. Cuban historian Felipe Pérez de la Cruz argues that the educational work of the Second Front "was the precursory workshop of the transformations that the guerrilla army, once in power, carried out."[91] In addition to this important military side, however, there was a strong civic aspect that has been largely neglected in the existing historiography and that deserves more attention. It is on this side that the government initially sought—and achieved—cooperation with all sectors of Cuban society, including businesses, private schools, and the Catholic Church. The revolution's early literacy work built on republican traditions of teaching, civic morality, and nationalist ideas.

The structure of the literacy commission

Minister of Education Armando Hart had created the National Commission for Literacy and Fundamental Education in early January 1959. As Fidel Castro explained a few months later, "the first steps we made, even before forming part of the Council of Ministers, were related to education."[92] The ministerial resolution that created the commission read, "It is the duty of the government of the republic to remedy by all means the pitiful results of past sloth that has left the country with an elevated number of illiterates." Hart's new revolutionary ministry attempted to create an "ample literacy campaign" for both rural and urban areas. The commission established for the campaign was to work with the Department for Technical and Cultural Assistance to Farmers (DATMCC), within the rebel army, as well as advise the ongoing distinct and barely coordinated literacy efforts inside the rebel army and the navy themselves. To

[91] Felipe Pérez Cruz, *La alfabetización en Cuba: Lectura histórica para pensar el presente*, *Historia* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2001), p. 75.

[92] Fidel Castro, speech (*Discurso*), 27 August 1959. Castro did not assume a formal government position until 16 February 1959, when he succeeded José Miró Cardona after his resignation as prime minister of Cuba.

this end, the ministry sought cooperation with Cuba's teaching institutions, such as the Institute of Pedagogy and School of Education Teachers (CPMN), as well as with "every citizen favorably disposed to cooperate with this effort of popular divulgation."[93]

A comprehensive organizational structure, from the national to the municipal level, was put in place by this very first commission. This structure would later be replicated and further refined (with submunicipal divisions) for the National Literacy Campaign of 1961. But already in these first commissions the politically assigned representatives outnumbered the persons chosen by the professional organizations. The board of the commission was composed of five people: three designated by Minister Hart, one by the CPMN, and one by the National Board for University-Trained Teachers and their Equivalents (CNMNE). Commissions at the provincial level were founded with one person assigned by the ministry and the two others from the two professional organizations. These provincial commissions in turn created municipal bodies, composed of one person appointed by the provincial representative of MINED, one doctor of pedagogy designated by the CPMN, and a teacher chosen by the CNMNE. It was at the municipal level where the plan to organize and lead literacy and fundamental education campaigns in urban areas came into action. For the rural areas, these commissions would "advise and cooperate" with DATMCC "and all other institutions that will be created in the future to this end," anticipating that the institutional design of this program and subsequent educational work were likely to change, thus reflecting the experimental character of the Cuban government policy at the time.

Presbyterian priest Raúl Fernández Ceballos became the literacy commission's first director. He had been actively involved in the opposition to Batista.[94] The Presbyterian church had remained active in

[93] See Govt. Docs., Cuba, Resolución Ministerial 08056, 3 January 1959, in Fondo Resoluciónes Ministeriales, MINED Documentation Center. This resolution has not been cited by any other publication on literacy work in Cuba that I have been able to consult. The date draws attention, as 3 January was even before Armando Hart's formal appointment as minister. It might, however, have been dated retroactively or erroneously.

[94] As executive secretary of the protestant churches in Cuba, Ceballos took part in the biweekly meetings of the Joint Committee of Cuban Civic Institutions, and in this role he became responsible for the contacts with the M-26-7. Ceballos had studied at the Princeton Theological Seminary and maintained good relations with the U.S. embassy in Havana before 1959, according to his own account. Fernández Ceballos et al., *Neue Kirche in Neuer Welt: Studien zum kubanischen Protestantismus*, p. 58.

and committed to different educational missions in Cuba after the revolution.[95] Scores of teachers and ordinary citizens volunteered to teach fellow Cubans basic reading and writing skills. In the city of Holguín, an initiative was started to teach and feed uneducated poor school-age children. Lalita Curbelo, a teacher at the nearby Maceo sugar mill, began to give classes inside an "old building, right across the park of this great city." Members of the local community came to help, provided food and cooked meals for the children, and donated materials of all sorts. Voluntary teachers joined the cause and soon thereafter, some seventy children were hosted at a house named *La Casona*, reported the journal of Cuban teachers, *El Magisterio de Cuba*. The Casona initiative was supported by the municipal authorities and the Department for Public Assistance, but more actively by citizens, especially female volunteers, and donations. "[W]omen from the village cook, wash, iron, cure, secure, clean, and sew (. . . .) [A] car stops by to donate some produce, the ranchers bring beef (. . .)." The local movie theater offered a free screening for uniformed students.[96] Citizens' initiatives to advance education initiatives like that of La Casona were not isolated incidents, even if most are not chronicled in documents. Material support came from both the government and civil society. Donating school materials, providing business space for classes, and even offering basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothes, or voluntary labor, as in the case of La Casona, were common practices. These early experiences of civic–state cooperation served as an important experimental lesson upon which the 1961 campaign would build.

[95] In February 1959, for example, the Presbyterian church received a major donation of 100,000 dollars from its U.S. Council of Missions to compensate for war damages on the island. Most of this money was invested in eastern Cuba under the guidance of the priest Martín Añorga. In 1960, the Presbyterians developed a five-year plan of proselytizing and literacy work and began to organize rural congregations and develop educational radio programs. See Caridad Massón Sena, *La iglesia presbiteriana de Cuba: Una contextualización de la fe (1959–1968)*. Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana "Juan Marinello" (Havana, 2004). See pp. 2, 4, and 8–10 of the downloadable document: http://168.96.200.17/ar/libros/cuba/marin/religion.doc

[96] "La Casona de Holguín," *El Magisterio de Cuba: Organo oficial* 1, no. 1 (15 July 1959): 5.

Urging citizens to teach

In February 1959, a new "urgent literacy plan" *(plan urgente de alfabetización)* was decreed by a ministerial resolution that has not received scholarly attention.[97] This comes as a surprise, as some of the guiding principles of the educational policy over the next two years were first expressed in this early government document. Universal literacy was to become the foremost priority of the revolution, according to this record, because of the government's commitment to "cultural development" and to furthering the "integral planning of education" as part of the short-, mid-, and long-term goals of the revolution. To achieve "the full mobilization of human resources," reaching out not only to students and teachers but also to "industrialists, business people, workers, and professionals, as well as to the civil and military authorities of the revolutionary government" was recommended. Moreover, the contribution of "civic, religious, professional, labor, industrial, and commercial entities" was expected to play an important role. This was a broad appeal to all sectors of the stratified society that the revolution had inherited from its republican past. Capitalist entrepreneurs and religious organizations were explicitly asked to participate in this endeavor to educate illiterate Cubans.

The resolution ordered the general director of primary education, the general superintendent for schools, and the ministry's special delegate for census and statistics to establish literacy commissions at national, provincial, and municipal levels—within ten days. According to Minister Hart, existing public evening schools were to be incorporated into this "movement," as well as private and technical schools with the capacity for it. Later in 1959, every evening school on the island would be required to dedicate at least one of its rooms to the teaching of basic literacy. Experienced teachers had to be prepared by specialized personnel from the Education Ministry for this purpose. The central offices of the campaign were located at the Cultural Center, the institution that later would be converted into Casa de las Américas, in Vedado, Havana.

[97] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, "Declara iniciado el plan urgente de alfabetización en Cuba y constitución de la Comisión Nacional, las Comisiones Provinciales y Municipales en todo el país," Resolución Ministerial 013734 (11 February 1959), in Fondo Resoluciones Ministeriales, MINED Documentation Center.

In mid-March, a newspaper report estimated that about 2,500 teachers and 1,250 locations were needed for the ongoing literacy work. Hart again exhorted the active cooperation of civic organizations and the media to reach out to their illiterate fellow citizens. This repeated call only a few weeks later seems to indicate that participation levels had remained below expectations.[98] In addition to the problem of recruiting teachers and literacy workers, the commission also faced the challenge of providing adequate teaching materials with which to work.

Revolutionary literacy textbooks

During these first months of 1959, more traditional approaches, both in pedagogical terms and teaching materials, remained predominant in the approach to Cuba's illiterates. The first postrevolutionary textbook for adults, "I Learn To Read and Write" (*Aprendo a leer y escribir)* was printed in mid-1959. The book was presented as a joint publication of the author, María Luisa Soler Acosta, the "Revolutionary Government of Havana," and the DATMCC, as well as two designers from the private industry, Miguel Fleitas and Roberto Fandiño. The book used "eclectic methods," according to Soler Acosta, as it remained "within the old realms of pedagogy." Moving from the concrete to the abstract, but also working backward from the word to the syllable, and making use of whole sentences from the outset were all part of the book's methodology. It had short, simple texts and illustrations especially emphasized the idea of unity—of class and race—in a new, "independent and free" Cuba.[99]

"The Cuban people are white people, black people—the mulatto is Cuban!" read one lesson accompanied by a drawing of two Cubans standing arm-in-arm—a light-skinned man and a dark-skinned one, walking along a palm-lined alley toward the arc of "Independence and Happiness" (Figure 2-5).

[98] *Diario de la Marina* (15 March 1959): 2-A.

[99] María Luisa Soler Acosta, *Aprendo a leer y escribir: Ensayo para el aprendizaje de lectura–escritura para los adultos* Ministerio de Defensa, Departamento de Asistencia Técnica, Material y Cultural al Campesino (Havana: Sección de Cultura, Ediciones y Publicidad, 1959). All citations in the paragraph are from this book and only the page numbers are given in the main text.



Figure 2-5
A page from Cuba's first literacy book, produced and published in 1959, emphasizing the unity among Cuban people across ethnic and social divisions, walking toward "Independence and Happiness"—promises of early revolutionary Cuba. María Luisa Soler Acosta, *Aprendo a leer y escribir: Ensayo para el aprendizaje de lectura-escritura para los adultos* (Havana: 1959), p. 43.

Other examples also underlined the idea of unity: "The people of all races, if they have one common goal, are invincible"; "to proceed together is the most important thing" (*Andar unidos—eso es lo primero!*, both on p. 26); "class unity" (p. 31); and "the worker is a faithful ally of the peasant" (p. 32). Other themes included agrarian reform within the realm of a market economy ("The peasant dreamed of being the owner of his land," p. 30); rural education ("The teachers went into the mountains. There will be thousands of teachers! There will be thousands of schools for the countryside!" p. 34); modernization and hygiene ("The hut has been abolished. There will be houses built, not huts, that's what sanitation requires," p. 37); as well as national development and independence ("The Cuban cheese is our cheese. We want the economy to be freed," p. 57, and "the foreigner who does not exploit us is our brother," p. 59).

This successful early collaboration of governmental, civic, and military entities and institutions for a common purpose—in this case to provide textbooks for basic education—would eventually be applied to other political goals. This is discernible in the textbooks that were prepared for the 1961 campaign. At this time, private, prestigious publishing houses such as Libreria-Editorial Minerva took pride in supporting the educational efforts of the rebel army. In March 1959, in the conservative Catholic *Diario de la Marina,* the firm paid for an advertisement entitled "We are helping the education campaign of the rebel army," and it announced prices and titles for its new educational book series.[100]

Teaching literacy in the rebel army

The initiative to educate was also taken up by leading individuals in some institutions who had been involved in the guerrilla struggle. Such was the case at the Ministry of Agriculture, where minister Humberto Sorí Marín announced the creation of a school for the troops who had been under his mandate as a commander of the rebel army and who were now employed at his ministry. Sorí Marín had been a Catholic lawyer and member of the Partido Auténtico. He joined the M-26-7 in 1957 and became "general attorney" for the guerrillas. He helped drafting many of the revolutionary laws before 1959. After that year, he also presided over some of the important war crime trials.[101] At this point, Sorí Marín was concerned about the "level of education and culture" (*el nivel de cultura*) of the troops. The organization of the courses was put into the hands of Manuel Artime Buesa and Emilio Martínez Venegas, both members of the "José Martí" column that had fought in the Sierra Maestra under the command of Sorí Marín.[102] Classes were held in the plenary hall of the Ministry of Agriculture, located on the famous avenue of La Rampa, in Havana's Vedado neighborhood.[103]

---

[100] "Estamos ayudando a la campaña de culturización del Ejercito Rebelde," *Diario de la Marina* (1 March 1959): 6-D.

[101] Shortly after the agrarian reform law (the initial text of which he had helped to draft) was signed in May 1959, Sorí Marín resigned. Opposed to communist influence, he conspired against the government, fled Cuba, and returned briefly before the Bay of Pigs invasion in March 1961. He became involved in the armed opposition to bring down the Castro government, but was arrested and executed in May 1961.

[102] Manuel Artime would later play a leading role in the Bay of Pigs invasion on CIA payroll.

Meanwhile, in the main hall of what was still Camp Columbia in Mariano, just outside the city of Havana, the first literacy course for former rebel fighters was inaugurated on 12 February 1959. The commander of that camp, Camilo Cienfuegos, and the head of the Ministry of Defense, Raúl Castro, spoke to a crowd of young soldiers assembled in uniform. In press photos, the rebel fighters are shown with rifles in their hands as they attend the talks. It was civic education for armed rebels. Some two hundred teachers started to work at the military barracks to provide basic education up to the sixth grade for all members of the rebel army.[104]

According to Carmen Gómez, a teacher in these courses from early on, the selection of the instructors was informal and on an ad-hoc basis, relying often on preexisting contacts with the resistance movement. Adequate teaching material was one of the foremost challenges, more so because the students were young adults who sought to acquire reading skills in a moment of great historical and political change. Carmen Gómez, a former interim private-school teacher at the Colegio La Luz in Havana, became part of a team that developed basic teaching materials in preparation for these courses in April 1959 at the rebel army's Department for Culture and Education. According to Gómez, the new materials drew heavily on Cuba's close connection to UNESCO at the time.[105]

Revolutionary textbooks in the rebel army

The Castro-led guerrillas had already organized educational work during the armed struggle. This included the operation of regular rural schools in guerrilla-controlled areas starting in late 1958 on the one hand, and "revolutionary instruction" with basic literacy training for rebel fighters on the other. Created in

---

[103] "Facilitarán la enseñanza a las tropas revolucionarias," *Diario de la Marina* (18 January 1959): 8-A.

[104] "Iniciada la alfabetización del Ejercito Rebelde," *Diario de la Marina* (13 February 1959), supp.

[105] Carmen Gómez, interview with the author in Havana, 30 January 2014. Gómez had graduated from the University of Havana in 1951 with a degree in Philosophy and Letters and was a president of the student association at her school. According to Gómez, she was offered this job because in the 1950s her husband, Humberto Ramos, had been the attorney for PSP member Alfredo Guevara, the later founder of the Instituto *Cubano* del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC).

August 1958, the Department for Education within the Second Eastern Front "Frank País," headed by Raúl Castro, had been one of the most active groups, with some five hundred schools under its mandate, though most of them were small, rural classrooms.[106] These schools often simply continued to be operated by their former teachers within the rebel-controlled areas.

The first textbook edited by the National Department of Culture of the rebel army, printed in early 1959, was entitled *Course on Revolutionary Orientation*. It made reference to a different guerrilla experience related to education, the experience from which this book had come. In November 1958 in Tumbasiete, a hideout of the Second Front near the Sierra Cristal mountain range in eastern Cuba, the first school for teachers of the rebel army was founded. Three courses were held at the time, with a total of ninety-two students. The classes consisted mostly of debates about the progress and future of the revolution. Many of the participants became revolutionary teachers and propaganda workers of the Second Front during the last weeks of the war against Batista "to diffuse the program of the revolution," following the order of their commander, Raúl Castro "to convert rebels into conscious revolutionaries." Now that the war was over, the book declared, the educative mission of the rebel army became "more peremptory, decisive." For this purpose the book was written: The rebel fighters were expected to know more about the objectives of the revolution, its history, and geography, in order to "defend its sovereignty."

This first official textbook of the rebel army defined the recent Cuban revolution as the fulfillment of the two previous revolts (in 1895 and 1933) because those "could not completely reach their goals." The "revolution for independence" (1895–98) had brought liberty from Spain, but "could not prevent the North American military intervention and the powerful economic interests of the United States from gaining control of our economy." The 1933 revolution succeeded in "toppling [President] Machado and abrogating the Platt Amendment," in addition to advancing a number of rights for "workers,

[106] Marta R. Rojas, "El Segundo Frente Oriental 'Frank País': Un estado rebelde modelo," in *Bohemia*, no. 29 (19 July 1959): 42–47, 114–15. See also Asela de los Santos Tamayo and Raúl Castro Ruz, *Con visión de futuro: Testimonio sobre la campaña educativa 1958* (Havana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1998). Asela de los Santos was chief of the Education Department in the rebel army.

professionals, students, and other sectors," but stopped short of touching the foreign ownership of the economy and dominance of large landholding structures, the *latifundio*.[107] The 1959 revolution, in contrast, was portrayed as "reaping the most profound aspirations of liberty," not only of Cuba but other revolutions, of which it was a continuation. Examples were not communist revolutions in China or Russia, but rather revolutions in Mexico, Bolivia, and Guatemala. Cuba's revolution was deemed "nationalist" and "patriotic," one that had "evolved with the specific characteristics of our nation," developed its own revolutionary army, and "eradicated the political group in power."

At the same time, an international projection of the Cuban revolution was already anticipated: "(. . .) the importance of our success is not limited to the Cuban coastlines but is reflected in other peoples." This movement sought "full independence and sovereignty" through economic development, to be achieved with land reform and industrialization. The revolution aimed at overcoming the "dominance of foreign monopolies" through a development strategy with national resources "in national hands." The future government of Cuba ought to be patriotic and nationalistic. The revolution ought to be democratic, not only respecting the freedoms of association, press, opinion, and religion, but expanding them, with an emphasis on social and labor rights. An explicit goal was to overcome and eliminate inequality based on race, gender, or other categories: "Especially harmful for the progress of Cuba has been the exclusion or limitation of one-third of the Cuban population, which is black."[108]

No exact authorship for this textbook is given. The ideology and political ideas appear to be a blend of the programs of the Ortodoxo Party, the M-26-7, and Cuba's communist party of the 1940s. There are, however, no explicitly communist ideas in these educational materials or practices. Neither references to the communist bloc nor proposals to overcome Cuba's market economy were part of these texts. Rather, it was the prevalence of ideas about national development, reduction of foreign dependence,

[107] "IV. ¿Qué es revolución?" in Soler Acosta, *Aprendo a leer y escribir*, p. 70.

[108] Ejercito Rebelde, ed. *Curso de orientación revolucionaria* (Havana: Departamento de Cultura del Ejercito Rebelde, 1959).

and sovereignty over natural resources, which were common in post-World War economic and political thinking, that characterized the early 1959 publications.

Whereas most regular Cuban schools continued to operate with prerevolutionary textbooks for some time to come, it was at these newly established educational missions, both in the rebel army and in the various literacy commissions, where newly designed teaching materials were first developed and applied. These were expressions of an institutional dualism in 1959, a continuity of the old order and the development of the new one. The educational missions reflected the broader political–economic and cultural projections that the revolutionary movement articulated at the time. "Raising consciousness" and explaining the reasons for the need for radical change were both part of this project. In this sense, the widely held notion of the new literacy teachers as missionaries "bringing enlightenment" (*llevando la luz)* acquired a new meaning. The new Cuban citizen was expected to be not just literate in an abstract or "neutral" sense, but politically literate in a revolutionary way as well.

Conclusion

The new government policies outlined in this chapter sought to overcome existing educational deficits by integrating popular demands, such as more schools, into their ambitious state-building project. To this end, Cuban authorities relied in part on previous experiences but combined them with the new revolutionary project. After the first months in power, the administration shifted from a more traditional and institutional policy approach to one that relied more on mobilization, sacrifice, and political commitment. The dedication expected of Cuban citizens was portrayed as an integral part of a new national project, one that included the fulfillment of every Cuban's constitutional right to basic education. As a result, the expansion of basic infrastructure and investment in human capital dramatically increased the revolution's prestige and legitimacy. Yet, the costs were considerable. Great amounts of the state budget were needed to finance these ambitious programs in education. Even so, the available financial resources did not suffice. This was the moment when Fidel Castro's idea to rely on "unexploited human

resources" was born, an early form of Guevara's "voluntary labor" concept, a building block for communist consciousness. It was an idea that would have a long life in the Cuban revolution.

Going beyond a traditional narrative of modernization and state expansion in Latin America of the 1950s and '60s, in which education would also play an important role, there were three other important dynamics in Cuba. First, the proliferation of state-funded public schools grew in competition, cooperation, and sometimes confrontation, with private, and especially religious, education. Second, by asking individual citizens and civil society at large to donate rooms and land to expedite the schooling and construction process, a dynamic of cooperation between the state and society unfolded that became an important element of early revolutionary Cuba. This combined effort was built initially on the voluntary contributions of Cuban citizens to a political goal that was shared by most. Third, the expectation of a political commitment by Cuba's teachers to forsake income in order to bring about this educational expansion, couched in terms of national solidarity, signaled a new stage of sacrifices to come. The appeal to volunteerism was an embryonic version of the operational code of the "mobilizing state" that emerged out of the Cuban revolution.

Despite the materially and symbolically important conversion of military barracks into school cities and the political rhetoric about the end of a public military presence in Cuba, the rebel army in fact played an important role in revolutionary Cuba's educational transformation. Many former fighters attended classes while combatants, not civilians, and new textbooks were written so that they could defend the revolution not only with arms but also with arguments. It was here, too, and not just at the level of "high politics," that the meaning and direction of the revolution were redefined and further developed. Finally, many of Cuba's early rural educational programs were carried out in conjunction with the rebel army and the newly created department for cultural assistance within the armed forces.

When the first revolutionary school year began in mid-September 1959, Cuba's educational landscape was already being transformed. This change was driven mostly by a desire to expand, improve, and modernize Cuba's educational system. At the same time, the administration succeeded in weaving a different political and civic morality into the new educational institutions, as the new revolutionary

literature on literacy showed. Some government measures had encountered resistance, such as Law 11, which invalidated prerevolutionary diplomas, but most counted on widespread, active, and voluntary support, including support for the educational efforts within the military by Cuba's private businesses. New forms of civic–state cooperation were born and nurtured by the enthusiasm, sense of change, optimism, and feeling of empowerment at the time. Yet, up to this point, it was mostly a patchwork of ideas, resolutions, and initiatives that lacked a coherent, long-term strategy. As Minister Hart had admitted in January, "we don't have, as of yet, a program developed for Cuba's education."

Now was the time to develop one. The Ministry of Education announced it would hold a major conference in November 1959 on how to reform Cuba's education. All parties involved were invited to present and discuss their visions of the future. In times when criticism and powerful groups' opposition to the agrarian reform and other government measures had increased, Cuba's *Capitolio* was preparing to host the largest and longest public debate on educational reform in the country's history to debate the future of its education.

3. THE MAKING OF EDUCATION POLICY, 1959

> *– What would you do, Pericles, if you were to govern Athens, in order to make your people be leaders and shining examples for Hellenistic Greece?*
> *– A Great Reform.*
> *– Of what?*
> *– First, of those who govern, then, of those who teach, and finally, of the people.*
>
> —Editorial, *Diario de la Marina*, February 1959[1]

The year 1959 was one of profound political changes, experiments, and decisive debates in revolutionary Cuba. This holds true for society at large, and education more specifically. In November, a two-week hearing convened by Minister of Education Armando Hart took place in Havana to publicly discuss the future path of the country's educational system. Its intention was to form and legitimize a new legal framework for Cuba's system of education. This chapter provides a panorama of the proposals brought forward in the context of this reform, culminating in the public forum and its subsequent new education law. These proposals are of importance to understand the pressing issues for a reform of Cuba's education system at the time. In addition, the public debate held toward the end of the first year of the revolution proved to be a turning point in Cuba's educational policies. Whereas up to and including this moment, forums, consultations, and media reporting enriched the public debate and showed the wide spectrum of interests, priorities, and possibilities, soon afterward the conceptual playing field would be narrowed, closed or completely reconfigured.

This shift cannot be explained without the broader context of increasing tensions and a process of radicalization both within and outside of Cuba. Yet, the convocation of a formal dialogue between the government and civil society in November 1959 was reflective of an integrative and cooperative approach by the Ministry of Education. This approach formed part of the hegemony-building strategy of the early revolutionary government that attempted to integrate a wide array of opinions and positions while it simultaneously polarized, alienated, and excluded traditional political agencies. The new leadership advanced a political project to address unresolved problems based on the radical nationalist reformism of

[1] Editorial, "*El Diario* fija ideas para una reforma educacional," *Diario de la Marina* (1 February 1959): 1-A.

the M-26-7, as well as liberal ideas of republican traditions of modernization and citizenship. It was also increasingly influenced by radical ideas of social justice advocated by communist forces and the unusual, charismatic, and ever more autocratic leadership of Fidel Castro.

3.1 Education debates before the forum

The rapid and profound changes that began in January 1959 put the need to reform Cuba's educational system back on the national political agenda. Shortcomings in education had, of course, not been absent from public debates before 1959. On the contrary, the press continuously criticized corruption and other scandalous problems. In 1959 many dailies, weeklies, and specialized journals published editorials throughout the year to emphasize problems that needed to be addressed.[2] Lively discussions were held occasionally on television and radio, and some of Cuba's leading intellectuals and politicians intervened with concerns and reform proposals.[3] Many of the country's pedagogical associations, such as those of Catholic schools, private schools, and the rural teachers' association, held congresses in the summer of 1959 to debate their positions and demands. This sudden increased visibility of education within the public discourse may appear surprising, given that the topic had not been on the top of the political agenda during the preceding years. And yet, as this section will show, pressure for pedagogical reform had been continuous, but legal action in Cuba's late republic had been missing.

---

[2] See, for example, Medardo Vitier, "Vida académica y otros temas," *Diario de la Marina* (14 January 1959): 4-A; "Religión y libertad de enseñanza" (editorial), *Diario de la Marina* (19 February 1959): 4-A; Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, "Estado de la enseñanza primaria en 1956–1957 (I & II)" *Diario de la Marina* (11 and 17 March 1959): 4-A; "Sobre la reforma de la enseñanza" (editorial), *Diario de la Marina* (10 November 1959): 4-A; Mario Llerena, "La crisis de la universidad y su reforma," *Bohemia* no. 9 (1 March 1959): 31, 117–18; Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, "Igualdad de educación primaria para todos los niños en Cuba, *Bohemia* no. 15 (12 April 1959): 37, 147; Mario Llerena, "Plan de estruturación de enseñanza," *Bohemia* no. 17 (26 April 1959): 50–52, 101, 120; Mario Llerena, "Cuba necesita tecnicos y profesionales cultos," *Bohemia* no. 23 (7 June 1959): 48–49, 115; Emma Pérez, "Debemos hablar de la reforma agraria y de la reforma de la enseñanza," *Bohemia* no. 23 (7 June 1959): 58–60, 90–92; Mario Llerena, "No solo mejores escuelas, también mejores maestros," *Bohemia* no. 27 (5 June 1959): 37–38, 112; Sara Pastora Fernández, "La reforma de la segunda enseñanza," *La Quincena* 5, no. 3 (February 1959): 4–5, 63; Sara Pastora Fernández, "En torno a la reforma educacional," *La Quincena* 5, no. 7 (April 1959): 12–13, 56; and Andres Aranda, "Alfabetización: Raudal de esperanzas para la Cuba nueva," *La Quincena* 5, no. 11 (June 1959): 6–7, 62–64.

[3] See, for example, "Debate público sobre universidades privadas," *Canal* 12 (19 January 1959); "Hart ante la Prensa," *CMQ-TV* (5 March 1959).

Educational debates before 1959

The political struggle over the implementation of legislation that followed the 1940 Constitution included education but after the furor ebbed in 1944–45, the debate on educational reform did not receive a new major impulse until 1959. By the 1950s the National Council for Education and Culture, or Consejo Nacional de Educación y Cultura (CNEC), which had been created by Article 59 of Cuba's 1940 Constitution to "foster, guide, and control educational, scientific, and artistic activities of the nation," had ceased to exist "due to a lack of attention by the government that is supposed to facilitate its work and consult with it to receive its recommendations."[4]

The two presidential administrations of Auténtico party leaders Ramón Grau San Martín (1944–48) and Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948–52) had brought some expansion and limited changes to Cuba's educational landscape; most importantly, legislation that allowed for an expansion of the university system, including private universities, in 1950, as well as general growth of private educational institutions and some specialized public schools (as, e.g., the Institute for Sports in 1948, and the School for Journalism in 1942, among other technical and specialized schools).[5] Yet, despite this tendency to consolidate secondary education and strengthen the private sector, the decade between the two censuses of 1943 and 1953 was not only one of increasing corruption but also one of "retrogression," as the World Bank observed in 1950, as reflected in indices of overall literacy, class attendance, and graduation rates. In fact, the alarming data for public and basic education of the preliminary results of the 1953 census compelled longtime educator and historian Ramiro Guerra to publish his collected essays in an influential book, *The Rehabilitation of the Public School,* which would have a considerable impact in the early

[4] Mercedes García Tudurí, *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia,* ed. Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez [et al.], vol. 10 10 of 10 vols., *Historia de la nación cubana* (Havana: Editorial Historia de la Nación Cubana, 1952), pp. 55–147, 89.

[5] For details on educational achievements during the Batista administrations, see his retrospective: Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, *Piedras y leyes*, 1st ed. (Mexico: Ediciones Botas, 1961). For the Grau San Martín administration, see Emma Pérez, *La política educacional del Dr. Grau San Martín* (Havana: Impresores: Ucar García, 1948), published just a few weeks before the 1948 elections.

reforms of 1959, as discussed earlier.[6] In methodological terms, many Cuban pedagogues advocated more active forms of learning, namely an overhaul of teaching plans and textbooks, commonly known as la *Escuela Nueva*.[7] In 1944 the Council of School Superintendents recommended more active learning. The results were very limited, however, on account of a lack of funding for practical education purposes, including laboratories and the like, as well as the fact that most public schools operated only on a half-day basis (*sesión única*). At the Universidad de Oriente in Santiago de Cuba, Herminio Almendros Ibáñez, a Spanish-born pedagogue who had worked as school inspector in republican Spain and later fled to Cuba, published his doctoral thesis at the on school inspection and the need to professionalize educational personnel. He worked at Cuba's Ministry of Education (MINED) before being fired by President Batista in 1952. In 1959, Minister Hart would name Alemendros as one of his advisors and initially made him responsible for rural education.[8]

During the years that followed Batista's coup in March 1952, the opposition movement, in addition to government officials, criticized a variety of problems inherent to the system of education. In a series of speeches in 1956 and 1957, held mostly at private schools, Minister of Education Aurelio Fernández Concheso addressed the "urgent needs for an integral education reform" without, however, making specific proposals.[9] The 1940 Constitution had established, in its transitory provisions (Title 5) that congress had to "vote on a comprehensive education reform law within no more than three legislature periods." But it did not. And at the end of the third legislative period, Batista's coup d'état ended the

---

[6] Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Rehabilitación de la escuela pública: Un problema vital de Cuba en 1954* (Havana: Impresores P. Fernandez y Cia, 1954). See chapter 2, section 2.2 for more details.

[7] See, especially, A.M. Aguayo, *Didáctica de la Escuela Nueva*, 2nd ed., corrected and augmented (Havana: Cultural S.A., 1937). as well as, *La Democracia y su defensa por la educación* (Havana: Cultural, 1941). See also José F. Martínez y Díaz, *Historia de la educación pública en Cuba desde el descubrimiento hasta nuestros días y causas de su fracaso* (Pinar del Río: Imprenta La Casa Villalba, 1943).

[8] Herminio Almendros Ibáñez, *La inspección escolar: Exposición crítica de su proceso en Cuba y sugestiones para una readaptación posible* (Santiago de Cuba: Universidad de Oriente Departamento de Extensión y Relaciones Culturales, 1952).

[9] Aurelio Fernández Concheso, *El problema educacional cubano* (Havana: Ediciones del Instituto Cívico Militar, 1956), p. 113.

parliamentary options to address these issues. The failure of the republican institutions to provide the much-needed and constitutionally mandated reform gave revolutionary change after 1959 more legitimacy.

Andrés Rivero Agüero, who had been Minister of Education from 1952 to 1954, debated on the topic of Cuba's school system in the televised electoral program *Cuba Primero* in September 1958, as a candidate for the November 1958 elections. During the program, Rivero Agüero criticized the lack of schools and complained about the politicization of public universities.[10] The former minister of education stated that as many as 9,387 additional schools were needed for the country—the number Armando Hart used for his "ten thousand new classrooms" initiative in 1959, discussed earlier.

Envisioning educational change: The opposition to Batista

By and large, education was not a decisive issue for the dominant political forces, inside or outside the government. For example, in the fourteen chapters of its extensive party program, *Fundamentos del Socialismo en Cuba*, the communist Partido Socialista Popular (PSP, or People's Socialist Party) included only some scattered and unsystematic references to education. The only general mentions of education in the revised edition of the 1943 text from December 1959 were to "end illiteracy" and to "extend and raise the general level of culture and education."[11] In a chapter entirely dedicated to racial discrimination, the party strategist and author of the book, Blas Roca, emphasized that higher education in particular created "additional difficulties" for blacks.[12]

The key concerns of the opposition forces, as evidenced in their political pronouncements, were the toppling of President Batista, the restoration of Cuba's 1940 Constitution, the creation of an "honest

[10] *Información* (24 September 1958): A-5, cited in Ramón de Armas, Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, and Ana Cairo Ballester, *Historia de la Universidad de la Habana*, in *Historia de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1984), p. 632.

[11] Blas Roca Calderío, *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba*, corrected ed. (Havana: Ediciones Populares, 1960), p. 147.

[12] Ibid., p. 97.

government," and economic development through agrarian reform and increased social justice. Among the opposition forces, Fidel Castro in 1953 emphasized the need for "an integral reform of the educational system," along with the other transformative policies he envisioned for a post-Batista era. Citing José Martí, Castro envisioned a "well-educated people" and advocated an education system that would concede more space and importance to rural life. Having been educated in rural schools in Oriente Province, first by a public school teacher, then in the Colegio La Salle, and later in the urban elite Jesuit school Belén in Havana, the twenty-seven-year-old Castro argued in court that Cuba's education was based on an urban system, even though nearly half the population still lived in the countryside.[13] As teachers were "miserably underpaid," their salaries should be raised to 200 pesos per month for primary and 350 pesos for secondary teachers, to be financed by more socially oriented fiscal policies.[14] Article 52 of Cuba's 1940 Constitution had promised to pay a one-millionth part of the state budget to every teacher. Had this been made a reality, a teacher's income would have been about 75 pesos—much below Castro's demands ten years later, but above the de-facto pay in the crisis-ridden 1930s.[15] During the two years that Fidel Castro spent in prison, he had reflected and written frequently on the purpose and forms of education, as evidenced in many letters. In one of these letters to his younger sister Augustina, for example, he had emphasized the value of competition, fraternal spirit among students, and necessity of respect for teachers. He also valued "the traditional forms of teaching" at her Colegio de Cristo for their

[13] See his retrospective observations on schooling: Fidel Castro and Katiuska Blanco, *La victoria estratégica* (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2010), xviii–xix.

[14] Fidel Castro, *La historia me absolverá: Autodefensa de Fidel Castro ante el tribunal de urgencia de Santiago de Cuba el 16 de octubre de 1953*, *Ediciones Populares* series (Havana: Impr. Nacional de Cuba, 1961), p. 42.

[15] The official state budget under President Federico Laredo Bru in 1940 was 75.9 million pesos. See Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas, ed., *Un estudio sobre Cuba; Colonia, república, experimento socialista; Estructura económica, desarrollo institucional, socialismo y regresión* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1963), p. 588. It was the Asocación de Educadores Cubanos that lobbied for the inclusion of this unusual right during the constitutional assembly. Journalism professor Soto Paz defended the need for this proposition because a previous minimum wage law of 75 pesos had not been enforced. Alfonso Bernal del Riesgo, *Cuestiones futuras de la enseñanza cubana* (Havana: Editorial selecta, 1944), 172.

"practical purpose" and constant dedication to the full development of the human being.[16] Much of Fidel Castro's pedagogical philosophy was shaped by his own experience in Catholic schools with their emphasis on character development, as well his subsequent time in prison, during which he developed parts of his political strategy.

The more extensive opposition manifesto (also known as *Nuestra Razón*), which was one of the few programmatic texts of the M-26-7, featured education as one of the important fields the revolution would have to transform because Cuba "cannot have a fatherland without consciousness, or democracy without citizens." The text was circulated mostly outside of Cuba by the M-26-7 propaganda directorate, but it also received blessing from within. In a letter that future minister of education Armando Hart wrote to the author of the manifesto, Hart said, "We believe it to be an interpretation of the political thinking of the movement, although (. . .) it needs further elaboration."[17] The manifesto was primarily concerned with moral and civic education as part of the struggle for national independence as the "long-term strategy" for a new Cuba, while "insurrection or political action" was the "immediate or short-range tactic."[18] This emphasis on civic education and national consciousness is important to keep in mind when considering the reforms that were to come.

The M-26-7's program manifesto, however, also emphasized the need to increase and improve vocational and technical education in Cuba to stimulate economic development.[19] A later political program of the M-26-7, the *Sierra Maestro Manifesto,* advocated an "immediate initiation of an intensive campaign against illiteracy and for civic education" as a programmatic requirement for the anticipated

[16] Fidel Castro, "Carta a Srta. Augustina Castro, septiembre 25 de 1953," 1953, unpublished document, private archive of Jonathan Hansen, Cambridge, MA.

[17] The program was written in the summer of 1956 and officially endorsed by the M-26-7 leadership in Cuba in October, but was not published until June 1957 in Mexico. Mario Llerena, *The Unsuspected Revolution: The Birth and Rise of Castroism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 130.

[18] Quoted from ibid., p. 294. Llerena was the principal author of the M-26-7 program written in Mexico.

[19] 26th of July Movement, "Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement," in *Cuba in Revolution*, ed. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdés (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), p. 113–41, here, p. 33.

provisional government after a successful revolution.[20] This document was cosigned by Fidel Castro and the Ortodóxo party leaders Felipe Pazos and Raúl Chibas, published in *Bohemia* in July 1957, and widely distributed within Cuba. These three elements—the emphasis on civic education, vocational–technical training, and basic literacy skills—formed the foundation of the reform program in 1959.

Until the demise of the Batista regime, there were no further programmatic pronouncements by the major opposition forces, partly because most opposition decided to boycott the 1958 elections. Armando Hart, then member of the national directorate of M-26-7, stated in several internal letters from the underground that a more elaborate and detailed political program was in the making and would be published—but it never was.[21] To a large degree, this was surely due to the violent situation at the time. Scholars and some historical actors have also suggested that the absence of such a program was a conscious, tactical decision to maintain as broad a coalition as possible.[22]

In the first published national survey of the revolution, printed in late February 1959, "educational matters" still lagged 2.5 points behind other themes that the population identified as "important" and "well-executed" by the new government, such as "revolutionary justice" (39 points), "economic reforms" (38 points), "reinstating freedom" (30 points), and "government administration" (18 points).[23]

---

[20] Documented in Fidel Castro, Rolando E. Bonachea, and Nelson P. Valdés, *Revolutionary Struggle: Selected Works of Fidel Castro* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), p. 343–48, here p. 47.

[21] On 17 December 1957, Hart wrote to Mario Llerena and the exile directorate, "Documents defining our political, social, and economic line, signed by Fidel on behalf of the Dirección Nacional, are going to be published soon." However, they never were. Llerena, *The Unsuspected Revolution*, p. 130.

[22] Ibid., pp. 188, 91. Samuel Farber, an anti-Batista student activist in the 1950s in Cuba, and later a prolific scholar in the U.S. writes, "Fidel Castro succeeded in homogenizing the revolutionary leadership and ranks without a full disclosure of his political agenda"; Samuel Farber, *Cuba since the Revolution of 1959: A Critical Assessment* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2011), p. 13. This implies that a previously elaborated alternative political agenda existed. No documented case has been made to prove this hypothesis.

[23] Raúl Gutierrez Serano, "Survey nacional: El pueblo cubano opina sobre el gobierno de la revolución," *Bohemia* (22 February 1959). Since several themes could be named by those surveyed, the total points exceed 100.

Bringing education back on the agenda

In January 1959, once the Batista government was out of power and out of the country, education became an important part of the process of change. It affected every current and future Cuban citizen. An adequate form of socialization needed to be in tune with the larger project of political change and moral redemption that began to unfold, since the balance of power had shifted with the collapse of the old regime. Education was clearly recognized as a key tool for ideological influence and control, as *Diario de la Marina* editorialists had expressed it. The struggle over the content, form, and direction of this new education policy began in January. It was intimately tied to the overall course of the revolution, which is why education and the revolution must be analyzed in their mutual relations. In addition to the political, civic, and moral dimensions, there was a social one: a demand and an obligation to provide educational opportunities to vast, previously excluded segments of the Cuban population. Finally, an economic imperative required a more adequate and comprehensive integration and preparation of Cuba's human resources for the nation's development. As the World Bank concluded its extensive report some years earlier, "technical training is inadequate for modern needs."[24] These and other factors shaped the policy proposals that were debated throughout 1959.

Even so, the former opposition, now in power, still lacked a detailed political program of educational reform. Minister Hart admitted in early January 1959 that he did not have a comprehensive reform strategy for Cuba's educational sector.[25] The public debates on education then occurred throughout 1959 in the absence of a strategic and coordinated government approach to long-term educational reform. Three major factors expedited these debates: First, the end of censorship, civil war, and the suspension of constitutional rights allowed public debate to flourish. Second, certain government initiatives—above all the early literacy efforts, but also the construction of schools in combination with revisions of the state budget for education—signaled possibilities and commitment to reform. As late as

[24] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Report on Cuba: Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 6.

[25] "Anuncian medidas de repercusión en el ramo educativo," *Diario de la Marina* (8 January 1959): 1–2A.

December 1959, after the public forum, the conservative Catholic daily *Diario de la Marina* praised the government for its drive to educate all Cubans and affirmed that these measures "forge consensus" and that "the majority of citizens" favored them.[26] Third, the absence of a well-developed, detailed reform program raised hopes that Cuban pedagogues would gain influence in shaping the future of Cuba's schools. In fact, many of the Cuban educational system's long-unresolved challenges that had erupted in the 1930s and 1940s came to a climax between 1959 and 1961.

Almost a year after the collapse of the old regime, Cuba was still "in the throes of a genuine social revolution," one that cut "very deeply into the political, social, and economic structure," as U.S. ambassador Philip W. Bonsal reported.[27] Many far-reaching socioeconomic reforms had been enacted, most importantly, the agrarian reform. The year 1959 was therefore also one of "legislative explosion" that codified this transformation. That year 691 laws were issued, as the daily *Revolución* proudly announced in its New Year's edition for 1960, and fifty of them were related to education.[28] This number had only been matched by the revolutionary government of President Grau in 1933.[29] Many of the other comprehensive changes in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres that had gained momentum since January 1959 were inherently linked to education. The agrarian reform institute INRA, for instance, created a special education department that provided facilities near farms and sugar mills.

Whereas elections on the national political level were soon postponed indefinitely, the elections of representatives at schools and universities were first demanded and then begun as early as February of

[26] Cesar García Pons, "Escuelas en las viejas fortalezas," *Diario de la Marina* (6 December 1959): 4–A.

[27] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, "Memorandum of Conversation, June 20, 1959," Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files. Cuba, 1955–59, Internal Affairs, Decimal Numbers 737, 837, and 937.

[28] *Revolución* (30 December 1959), *Edición especial*, p. 1. Numbers for educational laws derive from my own calculations, based on all published laws in the *Gaceta oficial*.

[29] Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 203.

1959.[30] This practice revived democratic traditions that had been first introduced under U.S. occupation in 1900, only to be neglected again a few years later. Education was also recognized as a primary tool to advance the country's development as well as to strengthen its political culture. Patriotism, industrialization, civic culture, and economic diversification were portrayed as tied to a modern and comprehensive education system.

The question of communism

Warnings about communist influence in Cuba's government turned subsequent events into self-fulfilling prophecy. Up to the fall of 1959, the participation of communists in the Castro government was much below that of the early 1940s, when President Batista had named three communist ministers and tolerated increasing communist influence in Cuba's labor unions. Meeting with U.S. ambassador Bonsal in September, Castro admitted to "local support of communists because it helps him politically and in labor circles." Otherwise, he tried to steer clear of ideological exclusion from either side of the Cold War, as evidenced by his "stated conviction that Cuba (. . .) is breaking new ground in social and economic theory and does not need to involve itself unduly in struggles between ideologies."[31] But with rumors increasing about a growing communist influence, the Cuban revolution was soon considered unsuitable for U.S. objectives in the context of the Cold War. Adding evidence to rumor, in July, Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) sympathizer Osvaldo Dorticós, who had been a former personal secretary of PSP leader Juan Marinello, replaced liberal president Manuel Urrutia.

From November 1959 onward, a policy memorandum approved by President Eisenhower sought a wholesale shift in U.S. policy toward Cuba. It determined that "all actions and policies of the United States Government should be designed to encourage within Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America

[30] See "Señalan la fecha para la elección de los maestros," *Revolución* (14 March 1959): 6; "Demandan elecciones en el magisterio de la Habana," *Revolución* (10 February 1959): 2; and "Serán hoy las elecciones de los pedagogos," *Diario de la Marina* (7 May 1959): 1.
[31] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, "Memorandum of Conversation [between Ambassador Bonsal and Fidel Castro]," June 20, 1959.

opposition (. . .) to the Castro regime"—this just two weeks before the forum on education.[32] The U.S. intelligence community began to look for "contacts for possible future use" with "elements outside, and inside, Cuba," according to CIA Director Allen Dulles, in order to prepare and strengthen an opposition. It would, of course, take time for this to translate into concrete action that would also affect Cuban schools. But the groundwork for this scenario was laid during the first year of the revolution, as the new government began to carry out its reforms. Anticipating adverse affects of this subversive strategy, the policy memorandum advised secrecy: "[I]n achieving this objective, the United States should avoid giving the impression of direct pressure or intervention against Castro (. . .) [i]n view of the special sensitivity of Latin America to United States 'intervention.'"[33]

This policy decision by the U.S. government to support opposition to the revolution by all means possible would have a profound impact on all aspects of Cuban society for a long time to come. Cuba was intimately tied to its northern neighbor, not only by commerce, trade, and investments, but also in culture and education, through official cooperation as well as personal contact among individuals via emigration and a vibrant diaspora. All of these areas and contact zones would be affected as the U.S. government decided to use them for a political goal. The Cuban government followed that example and politicized civil society further, including the purpose of education.

In addition to these "desktop decisions," some exiled Cubans began to take matters into their own hands and started armed attacks on Cuba, bombing industrial facilities and civilian social spaces from October 1959 onward.[34] These violent attacks led to increased security measures, vigilance, and curtailing of civil liberties, including a reintroduction of the infamous "revolutionary tribunals," as well as the death penalty. In response to the renewed disorder, the Cuban military was reorganized under Raúl Castro, and

---

[32] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*), "Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President," 5 November 1959, in *FRUS*, *1958–1960*, vol. 6, Cuba Document 387.

[33] Cited in Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 105.

[34] Ibid., p. 103.

militias were organized on a national level. From April onward, various local militias were formed in which high school and university students often played roles.[35] This led Louis Pérez to conclude that by the fall of 1959, the revolution seemed to have "reached the limits of what it could accomplish through collaboration with liberals and countenance from the U.S."[36]

The reforms in Cuba's educational sector provide evidence for Pérez's general argument about the limits of liberal reformism in the context of the Cold War, but they also offer an alternative periodization for this process. Six months after the agrarian reform, several "moderate" ministers had resigned from their positions or were forced out of office.[37] Some did so over complaints of increasing communist influence, as cadres of the communist PSP started to fill up mid-level positions, especially in the military, labor, and the agrarian reform institute, INRA. Nonetheless, the government and Prime Minister Castro had not yet announced a major policy shift or sketched out a more detailed political program for the future. In fact, the very absence of a definite political program or ideology was a subject of concern, debate, and speculation, not only in Cuba generally or the outside world, but even within the educational forum. Despite contradictory and even violent developments in some areas, the revolution, while alienating some, continued to provide hope and generate enthusiasm for many. The broad interest and participation in the forum on the future of Cuba's schooling was but one expression of this general mood prevailing in late 1959. It can be read as an attempt to further forge a consensus on the direction of the nation's education system, as *Diario de la Marina* editorialists had suggested.

---

[35] For a detailed study on the origins of the militias, see Albert Manke, *El pueblo cubano en armas: Die revolutionären Nationalmilizen und die Verteidigung der kubanischen Revolution von 1959*, *Historamericana* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 2014). The creation of the notorious neighborhood watch committees, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, or CDRs, occurred only a full year later, in late September 1960.

[36] Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed., *Latin American Histories Index* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 245.

[37] Reinaldo Suárez Suárez, "Articulación del primer gabinete revolucionario," in *1959: Una rebelión contra las oligarquías y los dogmas revolucionarios* (Panama City: Ruth Casa Editorial, 2009). See also Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, p. 246.

3.2 Between reform and revolution: The public forum on education

The public forum on education reform was the longest and most important of the debates on education in 1959. It lasted two weeks and was held at the national capitol building, the Capitolio Nacional, the former site of the Cuban Congress, from 9–23 November 1959. The unpublished protocol of the forum provides a unique insight into Cuba's educational landscape at the time. The debate was all the more important because it occurred in the absence of a strategic and coordinated government approach to long-term educational reform and reflected the existing tensions between reform and revolution. Similar public forums for other key policy areas such as the agrarian reform, the juridical reform, and the overhaul of the tax system had also been held at the capitol during that year.[38] Convened by the Ministry of Education, the country's educational sectors—including religious and private schools, as well as parents' associations, from kindergarten through university levels—were invited to send delegates and express their views on the future of Cuba's schooling. In November 1959, the educational goals of the revolutionary government resembled more of a liberal and reform-oriented promise of modernity.

President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado and Minister of Education Hart inaugurated the forum on the evening of 9 November 1959. The event was broadcast live on national radio. Prime Minister Castro did not participate in the forum or publicly comment on it. Instead of outlining the government position, Hart wanted his remarks to "describe the reality" of the country's current system of education. Future "guidelines and organizational structure" of Cuba's schools would have to build on this government narrative and on the suggestions made during the forum.[39]

Throughout the year, several separate meetings had been held between the ministry and different professional organizations to discuss and elaborate an agenda.[40] Now other advocacy groups in society,

[38] "Forum sobre reforma tributaria será televisada," *Diario de la Marina* (27 August 1959): 15-A; "Clausura mañana el forum sobre la reforma judicial," *Diario de la Marina* (13 November 1959): 1.

[39] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," (Havana: Sección de Impresión del Capitolio Nacional, 1959), vol. 1, p. 2.

[40] See, for example, "Convocan a los factores de la enseñanza privada: Tratarán de los propósitos del gobierno y la reforma; Habrá una información pública," *Diario de la Marina* (7 March 1959): 1.

such as the Club Atenas (a renowned organization for people of African descent) and representatives of Cuba's business community, also participated in the forum. In daily thematic sessions, delegates presented their viewpoints, followed by a general discussion. Some of the debates were broadcast live on radio; media coverage of the event was detailed and extensive.

Education for the poor

Minister Hart set the tone of the forum's discussion: "Cuba's current education system is a tragedy." He echoed an evolving public discourse that demonized the past. "Those of us who have had the privilege of enjoying secondary education in this country are an insignificant minority." Prior to 1959, there had been just 30,000 students enrolled in secondary schools, out of a population of almost six million people. Adding to this sense of privilege was the fact that, at the time, Cuba had five times more private secondary than public schools.[41] The number of Cubans who held a *bachillerato*, equivalent to a U.S. high school degree (twelve years of schooling), stood below 2 percent, according to the 1953 census.[42] Hart talked about 800,000 Cuban children without schools and one million illiterate people in his country. This "tragedy" was the most urgent and important problem facing Cuba's education. He demanded a structural shift: Resources should be taken away from more privileged, urban, and specialized education, and rural and fundamental education should be prioritized.

Hart identified the origins of the problem both in political and economic terms. His predecessors in government were to be blamed: "[T]he education system has proved to be incapable of providing the

---

[41] According to official numbers from the Cuban Ministry of Education, in school year 1953–54, there were 30,076 students in Cuba's secondary schools, including 21 public and 108 private. UNESCO, *La situacion educativa en America Latina: La enseñanza primaria: Estado, problemas, perspectivas* (1960): p. 62.

[42] "Población total de 6 años y más según último grado o año aprobado," in Govt. Docs., Cuba, Censo de 1953, Tabla 34, Instituto de Demografía y Censos (Cuba), *Censo de población y viviendas, 1981: La población cubana en 1953 y 1981: Reprocesamiento del censo de 1953 según la actual división político-administrativa aprobada en 1976 y su comparación con el censo de 1981* (Havana: Comité Estatal de Estadísticas Instituto de Demografía y Censos, 1984), p. 72.

most basic educational services."[43] His government, he said, was confronted with a choice: continuity, or to "confront matters in a serious way," which would "necessarily bring inconveniences" and resistance. Hart cited a drastic reduction in numbers of school inspectors so as to pay for more teachers and the reinstatement of the full school-day (*la doble sesión*) in public schools as two examples of his policy that had faced criticism and resistance.[44] When the full school-day was first announced in March, professional organizations welcomed the idea in general, but said this would only be feasible once teachers' salaries were raised and school conditions improved, as many classes were held in the same location at alternate times.[45] Six months later, during school year 1959–60, thousands of teachers were still exempt from working a full day.[46]

The revolution's early reforms were gradual. But Hart wanted the audience to understand that the government policies were not oriented to the short-term and circumstantial, but rather were made to last. He expected sacrifices and support from teachers and students alike to build a more comprehensive educational model for the future. In fact, the reform law resulting from the forum would contain a passage describing "propaganda for the reform." It stated that "obtaining sympathy for the implementation of the real reform required in a democracy" should be achieved through "a plan that tends to produce a change in the mental attitude."[47] Hart sought legitimacy for his approach not so much by appealing to older citizens, still educated under and in part responsible for the old regime, but to the

[43] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 1, p. 4 in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*, 12 vols. (Havana: Sección de Impresión del Capitolio Nacional, 1959).

[44] See, for example, "Objetan la doble sesión los profesionales de la docencia," *Diario de la Marina* (10 October 1959): 1-A.

[45] "Apoyan maestros la doble sesión," *Revolución* (2 March 1959).

[46] "No afectará por ahora a más de 2 mil educadores la doble sesión escolar," *Diario de la Marina* (20 October 1959).

[47] "Bases y normas legales reguladoras de la reforma integral de la enseñanza," in Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes,* vol. 13 (*1o a 31 de diciembre de 1959*) (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959), pp. 103–70, here pp. 13–14.

young: “Even if we don’t disdain the affection of our contemporaries, we prefer the affection of the children of our contemporaries. We prefer the applause of history.”[48]

Anticipating criticism from the educational specialists invited to the forum, the minister acknowledged that the reform could not be limited to the problems of basic education and literacy. Curriculum reform, modernized technical education, a better student–teacher ratio and improved relations between them, more discipline, and a pedagogical reorientation would all have to be addressed. Despite all of this, Hart prioritized the policy shift from the urban to the rural, from the more specialized to the basic forms of instruction. To that end he invoked national hero José Martí.[49] So deep was the identification with the idealized rural population after two years of guerrilla struggle that the extension of Cuba’s education system into rural areas was portrayed as “a question of life or death.”[50] In his inaugural speech of the forum, Hart presented himself as a messenger of the poor; the Cuban farmers, *los guajiros*; the urban unemployed; and the precariously paid workers. In his view, it was in these sectors where the “motor, the human force of this historic moment lay.”[51]

Throughout 1959, Hart had traveled intensively through Cuba, especially in the provinces of Oriente, Camagüey, Pinar del Río, and Matanzas, to visit school districts, attend meetings with local school communities, and receive delegations from many different pedagogical associations to gain a sense

---

[48] For a well-informed recent study on the ways in which the Cuban government sought to gain legitimacy through policies especially geared toward children, see Anita Casavantes Bradford, *The Revolution Is for the Children: The Politics of Childhood in Havana and Miami, 1959–1962* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

[49] See Martí’s moralizing and practical reflections on the need for a reformed and expanded rural education. These writings were collected and published in several editions throughout the republican era and again after 1959. Martí stated, “Las ciudades son la mente de las naciones; pero su corazón, donde se agolpa, y de donde se reparte la sangre, está en los campos. (. . .) Pues nada menos proponemos que la religión nueva y los sacerdotes nuevos (. . . .) El mundo está en cambio. (. . .) La religion no ha desaparecido, sino que se ha transformado.” José Martí, Félix Lizaso, and Cuba, Dirección de Cultura, *Educación: Publicaciones de la secretaría de educación, dirección de cultura*. *Cuadernos de Cultura* 3 (Havana: Talleres de Cultural S.A., 1935), pp. 65–66.

[50] Govt. Docs., Cuba, “Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza.,” vol. 1, p. 9, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[51] Ibid., vol. 1: 11.

of their most urgent needs.[52] He also held many conversations with private school representatives, such as the Asociación Nacional de Maestros de Escuelas Privadas (ANMEP), that informed the government agenda. The ANMEP defended their members' "legitimate right" to provide "lucrative education services," but also asked for regulations and government protections in the payment and pension system of teachers—a demand that had been unresolved for more than two decades.[53]

Creating a literate citizenry

Cuba's president, Osvaldo Dorticós, inscribed literacy into the national discourse of liberation.[54] "There will be no freedom in Cuba as long as there is one illiterate adult or child." By doing so, Dorticós echoed Hart's words about the forum's orientation toward the poor and their attaining basic literacy. While there might be many other pressing issues concerning the modernization and improvement of Cuba's existing schools, the most urgent need was to integrate one-fourth of the population into the community of a literate nation, according to the Cuban president.

Dorticós told the audience in the capitol and Cubans listening to the radio the story of illiterate fighters of the rebel army when they had triumphantly arrived in Havana. These men, who had "helped to free Cuba from tyranny," had traveled to the capital in early January. During these encounters between mostly rural, bearded men—*los barbudos*—and Havana's population, part of the female middle class had lined up in the streets to "celebrate the liberators." It was not just gender, class, and the rural–urban divide

[52] For an overview of Hart's travel itinerary, activities, and meetings throughout 1959, see the detailed chronology in Carreras Varona, *Armando Hart Dávalo*, pp. 221–47.

[53] See, for example, reports by Oscar F. Rego, "Demandan maestros privados la reforma integral docente," *Revolución* (5 March 1959): 8.

[54] Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado was born in 1919 into a wealthy family in Cienfuegos, as a descendant of the business magnate Tomás Terry. He graduated from the University of Havana in 1941 with a law degree, became a member of the communist PSP, and worked temporarily with the PSP's general secretary, Juan Marinello. As the *comodoro* of the Cienfuegos Yacht Club and partner in a prestigious law firm, he also maintained important ties to the business community. He became active in the civil resistance movement opposing Batista. Dorticós was arrested in 1958 and fled to Mexico before returning to Cuba in January 1959. There he started to work as minister of revolutionary laws and helped draft the agrarian reform law. On 17 July 1959, after the resignation of President Manuel Urrutia Lleó, he was named president of Cuba by the Council of Ministers.

that met on the sidewalks of Havana during those days, but also illiteracy and education. While the illiteracy rate in Cuba's capital was just below 7 percent, one-half of Cubans in the countryside were unable to read or write their own names.[55] A moment of shame emerged when rural underdevelopment met with urban practices. Capturing historic moments like the march of the victorious guerrilla fighters into Havana with cameras and autographs rendered visible the educational divide prevailing in Cuba at the time. Even though this rural–urban and gender division was obviously also racialized, this additional divide was not at the foreground of the president's speech (Figures 3-1 and 3-2).



Figure 3-1
Thirteen-year-old white Sonia Certilla teaches Afro- Cuban rebel fighter Eduardo Santoyo how to write his name two days after the guerrilla caravan had reached Havana. *Diario de la Marina* (10 January 1959, suppl.).

[55] Cuba, Instituto de Demografía y Censos, *Censo de población y viviendas, 1981: La población cubana en 1953 y 1981: Reprocesamiento del censo de 1953 según la actual división político-administrativa aprobada en 1976 y su comparación con el censo de 1981* (Havana: Comité Estatal de Estadísticas, Instituto de Demografía y Censos, 1984), p. 73.



Figure 3-2
Images of apparently urban middle-class women receiving the mostly rural male and very young rebel fighters in Havana, exchanging country-style sombreros for urban baseball caps. *Diario de la Marina* (9 January 1959, suppl.).

Dorticós expected to find gendered empathy with these illiterate fellow countrymen among his educated urban audience in Cuba's capitol.[56] He sought to convert these generally held feelings of sympathy toward "the liberators" into symbolic capital and commitment to bringing rudimentary education and financial resources into the Cuban countryside. Dorticós wanted to give rural Cubans the dignity of writing their names and participating in a modern, literate culture. But more than an altruistic and one-time act of charity toward the rural poor, this approach was couched in terms of a developmental rhetoric of the nation as such. The long-term result of this process of social change and rural uplifting that began with the comprehensive educational reform would eventually lead to a "highly educated and prosperous Cuba," the president promised his fellow citizens.[57]

[56] For the roles of women within the guerrillas, and especially during the freedom caravan, see Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 30-32.

[57] *Diario de la Marina* (10 November 1959): 1–2A.

Education between reform and revolution

The government proposals by Minister Hart and President Dorticós on reverting priorities and shifting expenditures to the rural sector were not met with unequivocal approval. Doctor Rolando Espinosa from the Colegio de Doctores en Pedagogía, for example, suggested that a referendum should be held to ask the Cuban population whether it was willing to contribute to educational expansion plans through a tax increase. To raise taxes for a special government program would not have been an entirely new approach. Batista's civic–military rural education program in 1936 had been financed through such a tax on sugar production. The novelty would have been to submit such a proposal for public approval. This did not happen, even though the first tax reform in the spring of 1959 was considered moderate and "sensible" in the view of U.S. diplomat in Havana Wayne Smith, and even Cuba's entrepreneurs generally lauded it, as the reform meant more transparency and efficiency.[58] In 1959, the government's repertory to finance education programs consisted of cost-saving measures, redistribution, and voluntary contributions or pay cuts rather than targeted tax increases.

Espinosa also raised principal concerns about the approach of the government, joining voices with other participants at the forum. He disapproved of the vagueness of the government proposal for education reform. Instead, Espinosa declared, "it would have been much better if the ministry had developed a draft project and then circulated this to Cuba's educational institutions so that they can give their assessment and make proposals." It is not entirely clear why this was not done for the new education reform law, since the government had circulated reform proposals in some of the other public forums it had held in 1959. José Salazar from the School of Journalism thought that the time between the forum and Hart's announced policy speech a few days later was "exceedingly short" to proclaim a new government policy based on the forum's input.[59] Espinosa, moreover, warned against premature and untested major

[58] As one businessman put it to Smith, "under Batista we sometimes paid no tax at all, but we were constantly being hit up for bribes." Wayne S. Smith, *The Closest of Enemies: A Personal and Diplomatic Account of U.S.–Cuban Relations since 1957*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987).

[59] Baldomero Expósito Rodriguez, Lidia Dávila Montes, and Alejandrino Borroto Mora, *Apuntes del movimiento de los trabajadores de la educación 1899–1961* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1985), pp. 95, 118.

policy changes. Instead, there should be more experimental and gradual change.[60] Some delegates clearly felt that, despite this public consultation, there was a parallel and more discreet form of policy making that would only partially and selectively build on the input from professional organizations, given the time constraint.

The forum was also a debate about a revolutionary versus a simply reformist approach to Cuba's problems. The Spanish UNESCO director in Cuba, José Blat Gimeno, agreed with his Cuban colleagues that this was the moment for major change in Cuba's school system. Blat Gimeno had held conversations with Minister Hart just before the forum, on 22 October.[61] During his public appearance, the UN representative said he was relieved to see that the current trend in Cuba, and in Latin America more broadly, was moving away from partial and improvised reforms toward a more integrative view of comprehensive planning of the educational and economic needs of each country.[62] At the same time, Gimeno's intervention in the Cuban debate aimed at instilling moderation into the revolutionary impetus: "We should not forget," he warned, "that there is already a system, a building, one that is inhabited. It would be dangerous to enter thoughtlessly, trying to demolish it with a pickaxe in order to begin anew or start from scratch."

UNESCO representative Gimeno, moreover, admonished against "outside interventionism" that could "deform or instrumentalize" the system of education. He perceived a threat arising from political interference in education. Neither was the director of the international body a fan of "transplanting educational systems from other countries."[63] Instead, the specificities of each national context should be taken very seriously in every major educational reform. The question of international education reform

---

[60] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 11, p. 13, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[61] Carreras Varona, *Armando Hart Dávalos,* p. 244.

[62] International Institute for Educational Planning, *Los problemas y la estrategia del planeamiento de la educación: La experiencia de América Latina* (Paris: UNESCO, 1965), p. 61. The international study shows that the vast majority of Latin American nations had started to establish "planning services for education" in 1959.

[63] Ibid.

advice was a delicate one in Cuba. The Cuban republic had relied heavily on foreign, mostly U.S., advice and cooperation between 1899 and 1959. Two major U.S. studies, the first by the Foreign Policy Association in the 1930s and the second by the World Bank in the 1950s, had recommended far-reaching changes that had led to nationalist backlashes.[64] At the time of the forum and well into 1960, several U.S. consultants and advisors were stationed in Cuba, especially at the Central University of Las Villas.[65] Cuba's Ministry of Education, for its part, sent specialists to the U.S. and other countries to study certain aspects of their respective schooling systems.

Educational planning and moral reform

During the first session of the education forum, Professor Calixto Suárez of the School of Education at the University of Havana provided a history of Cuba's education since independence. Contrasting concurrent simplistic views, Suárez emphasized the significant advances that had been made since independence from Spain, thanks to Alexis E. Frye, the first superintendent of Cuban public schools. Frye, a Harvard Law School graduate, was appointed to this role by U.S. Military Governor Leonard Wood in December 1899.[66] Given that from the point of departure the system had lacked adequate books, buildings, and trained teachers, a "great school had been born." In Suárez's view, though, it was due to Cuba's late independence that the island had missed the "great education movement initiated by North American pedagogues" in the late nineteenth century and therefore had lagged behind continental and international pedagogical trends ever since. The different reforms and study plans implemented in Cuba

[64] See Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Report on Cuba: Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951); Foreign Policy Association, *Problems of the New Cuba: Report of the Commission on Cuban Affairs* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1935); and Luciano R. Martínez y Echemendia and Marvin Summers Pittman, *Dictamen sobre el informe emitido por el Professor Marvin S. Pittman acerca del estado de la educación en Cuba* (Havana: Tipos, Molina y cía., 1933).

[65] International Cooperation Administration, "Report of Progress in Teacher Education, June 6, 1960" (National Archives: Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948–1961, RG 469).

[66] For an excellent study of the role of Harvard graduate Alexis Frye, see Edward Douglass Fitchen, "Alexis Everett Frye and the Organization of Cuban Education, 1899–1901," PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1970.

between 1900 and 1940 were mere "patchwork," he felt. Study plans had been changed seven times since the beginning of the century (in 1901, 1914, 1921, 1922, 1926, 1940, and for the last time in 1944).[67] Now, he said, the Cuban revolution faced a "unique historic opportunity" to reform the education system in a comprehensive way because of the "high ideals it defends" as well as "the great trust the revolution enjoys among the public."[68] The key element for progress that Suárez identified was the scientific planning of education—"universally recognized as a central part of modern societies." Latin America was one of the first developing regions that employed educational planning, actively promoted by international organizations such as UNESCO, CEPAL, and the OEA.[69] Since 1956, several conferences had been held and educational planning had been integrated into other nations' legislation, as it was in Cuba in 1960.[70]

Súarez stressed that contemporary societies were more "complex, competitive, and changing" than ever before. The family and religion, two primary traditional sources of socialization (*culturización*), were "in crisis."[71] Similarly, Alfonso Bernal del Riesgo, professor of psychology and child development at the University of Havana, lamented the "crisis of the Cuban family" and its impact on Cuba's youth, which was more and more attracted to gangs and gangsterism.[72] According to historian Jaime Suchlicki,

---

[67] UNESCO, *La situacion educativa en America Latina: La enseñanza primaria: Estado, problemas, perspectivas*, p. 58.

[68] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 2, p. 15, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional.*

[69] These three acronyms stand for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL, also called the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, or ECLAC); and the Organización de los Estados Americans (OEA, also called the Organization of American States, or OAS).

[70] UNESCO, Raymond F. Lyons, ed., *Los problemas y la estrategia del planeamiento de la educación: La experiencia de América Latina*. (Liège: UNESCO, El Instituto Internacional de Planeamiento de la Educación, 1965).

[71] The term *culturización* refers to a more complex process of educative institutional socialization that also encompasses the notion of cultural influences.

[72] Alfonso Bernal del Riesgo, born in Havana in 1902, was a Cuban pedagogue and founding father of psychology in Cuba. He studied at the Jesuit Colegio Belén and at the public Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza in Havana. In 1923, Bernal del Riesgo obtained a doctorate in civil law from the University of Havana. Cofounder of the communist party in 1925, he was exiled in 1931–33 to Vienna, where he became a student of Alfred Adler. In the 1940s and

the increasing violence of armed urban gangs since the 1940s had a "widespread influence on university life" and even affected grades and exams.[73] As if to validate Bernal del Riesgo's claims, the next day Cuban police arrested twelve youngsters who had vandalized schools and theaters in the capital.[74]

Suárez suggested that "the press, radio, television, cinemas, and other indirect means of socialization" had gained more influence than the traditional institutions in the formation of individuals. Cuba at the time had four television stations, half a million television sets, and nearly a million radio receivers, or the equivalent of one for every household in 1959.[75] Because the mostly private media in Cuba "lacked regulation, political control, and direction," these influences were "mostly negative." He therefore emphasized the need to analyze the changing nature of these formative institutions from church and family to schools and media. Conclusions from such a study should be part of a comprehensive education agenda. A new revolutionary media approach was implemented by 1960. Pushing the revolutionary state to take more active influence in ethical matters to avoid and reverse the widely lamented "moral decay" in Cuban society of the 1950s can be seen as an early expression of the "puritanical attitude in the matter of morals" that Lowry Nelson has identified for the early revolutionary policies more broadly.[76] As Louis Pérez has shown, many of the reforms of 1959 were "devised and

---

1950s, he advanced the study and instutionalization of psychology in Cuba, and was especially interested in child development. He was also president of Cuba's Educational Association.

[73] Jaime Suchlicki, *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920–1968* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1969), pp. 123–25.

[74] *Diario de la Marina* (13 November 1959): 1-A.

[75] Lowry Nelson, *Cuba: The Measure of a Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 148. See also Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971), pp. 1163–64. The last prerevolutionary census from 1953 counted 1,257,124 housing units in the nation. See Cuba, Oficina Nacional de los Censos Demográfico y Electoral, *Cifras preliminares obtenidas en los censos de población, electoral y de viviendas de 1953* (Havana: Imp. y Alm. de Papel "La Habanera," 1954), p. 13.

[76] Nelson, *Cuba: The Measure of a Revolution*, p. 185.

implemented not by radicals, but by liberals, Protestants, and graduates of U.S. schools, who, in fact, carried the moral of North American value systems."[77]

Ana Cabrera López, from the Colegio Nacional de Profesores Universitarios de Francés, situated the various reform proposals within a new historic and political context: "Cuba is undergoing a revolution." She asked, "Where is the Cuban revolution headed politically?" but decided to leave this question rhetorical and unanswered. Instead, Cabrera López called upon her fellow pedagogues to help develop an educational structure that corresponded to the "interests of the nation."[78] When pressured during the debate to comment on the direction of "the political projection of this humanist revolution," she admitted that the Cuban state had "not yet delineated a norm or structure for the future." Yet to her, and apparently to the audience, since no questioning of her interpretation is recorded, it must have seemed obvious that "an expansion of democratic practices" would be the outcome of the revolution. "[E]verybody knows that."[79]

Reforming textbooks

Leslie Rodríguez, president of the Colegio de Maestros Normales y Equiparados (CMNE) teachers' college and member of the M-26-7 before 1959, argued vehemently for a strengthening of patriotic values within schools. However, he stopped short of advocating a uniform or nationalized system: He stated that textbooks "do not have to be alike" in different schools. They should, however, all be revised and approved by a technical commission of the ministry for their adequacy and veracity, Rodríguez

[77] Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture.* H. Eugene and Lillian Youngs Lehman series. (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1999), p. 487. See also Michelle Chase, *Revolution within the Revolution: Women and Gender Politics in Cuba, 1952–1962*, especially "The Destruction and Salvation of the Cuban Family, 1959–1962." *Envisioning Cuba* series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

[78] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 4, p. 15, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[79] Ibid., vol. 4, p. 23. On the question of the ideological outlook of the revolution in 1959 and its various perceptions and interpretations, see also Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971*, *Envisioning Cuba* series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), especially chapter 1, on the birth of the Fidelista state.

recommended.[80] During a press conference in March 1959, Minister Hart had announced the creation of a commission to revise textbooks.[81] Among the nine members of the initial commission were both distinguished and more junior academics, and one of the latter was Antonio Núñez Jiménez, a young geographer "generally reported to be procommunist," according to a cable from the U.S. embassy, as well as to historian José Elías Entralgo Vallina.[82] But for the 1959–60 school year, all previously approved textbooks were reauthorized, providing an interesting example of continuity within the second year of the revolution.[83] In June 1959, a full-page advertisement by the Cuban publishing house Publicaciones Culturales, S.A., expressed its gratitude to the government for having purchased thousands of prerevolutionary textbooks, many of which had been praised by Library of Congress, *Life Magazine,* and other U.S. entities for their "distinguished pedagogical value."[84]

Reforming teachers' associations

El Colegio Nacional de Pedagogos (CNP), one of Cuba's teachers' institutes, wanted a "total reform of teachers and professors" to overcome "academism." To that end, the CNP sought to promote a more vital, active, and relevant school model, one that "stimulates research and creativity." The prevalence of dull academic teaching and memorization was so widespread in Cuba that the newly founded Universidad de Oriente in Santiago de Cuba, for example, made "verbalism and passivism in teaching" (*verbalismo y*

[80] Leslie Rodríguez Aquilera, born in Santiago de Cuba in 1930, studied at the teachers' school of that city, the Escuela Normal de Maestros de Oriente, along with Frank País and other future leaders of the opposition movement against Batista. He graduated in 1951 and taught in a rural school in Baracoa, then Oriente province, until 1958, when he was ordered to move to Havana as part of his work for M-26-7. See website at: http://www.sindicatoeducacion.cu/Leslie Fundador.htm

[81] "Tiene que haber una sola política educacional, dijo el Dr. Hart, ante *La Prensa*," *Diario de la Marina* (6 March 1959): 1-2A.

[82] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *FRUS*, "Despatch from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State 'Growth of Communism in Cuba'" (*FRUS*, 14 April 1959).

[83] *Diario de la Marina* (6 March 1959): 1-A. See also Cuba, Resolución Ministerial 00080, 1 July 1960, in *Fondo Resoluciones Ministeriales*, MINED Documentation Center.

[84] "El gobierno revolucionario y la educación popular," *Diario de la Marina* (21 June 1959).

pasivismo en la enseñanza) a matter of "serious misconduct" that could be punished by suspension from teaching and salary for up to two years.[85] In order to change this, Cuba's current teachers needed "to be massively indoctrinated" to make them familiar with the new pedagogical practices and techniques.[86] Pedagogue Leslie Rodríguez identified the most serious and urgent problem as being the reform of the various teachers' institutes and the schools of education, since they were responsible for the formation of future teachers who would educate Cuba's generations to come.

Prior to 1959, there had been numerous and often short-lived pedagogical organizations with various professional and political purposes. Most such groups were structured by the type of school or subject of teaching (English teachers, technical schools, kindergartens, and so on), the members' degrees or titles of qualification (university degree, teachers' school, and many other equivalents), and/or regional scope (municipal, provincial, or national). Because the regulations for schools and teaching requirements had changed so often throughout the various republican administrations, the number and variety of pedagogical associations was vast. The elected Batista government (1940–44) had made it mandatory for active teachers to be affiliated with such a professional institution.

In the context of the rising anticommunist policies of the 1950s, especially after the attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953 and the ensuing criminalization of the communist party, left-leaning pedagogues had been increasingly discriminated against and pushed out of their positions. Law number 1456 from June 1954 had declared "public service incompatible with communist activities in any form." Under Minister of Education Andrés Rivero Agüero, a purge of leftist teachers had occurred in 1954. Many of the affected teachers regrouped in the newly founded Union Magistral.[87] In January 1959, the members of this group returned to their different professional pedagogical organizations, and struggles

[85] Universidad de Oriente (Santiago de Cuba), *Ley y estatutos de la Universidad De Oriente* (Santiago de Cuba: Departamento de relaciones culturales, 1950), Articulo 113, p. 32.

[86] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 4, pp. 28–29, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional.*

[87] Expósito Rodriguez, Dávila Montes, and Borroto Mora, *[T]rabajadores de educación en Cuba*, pp. 95, 118.

over their internal hegemony and orientation began. Because of the tremendous appeal of the revolution at the time, most pedagogical associations supported government policies in general, even if they also voiced criticism toward specific measures. In many of these traditional organizations, so-called revolutionary committees were formed.[88] Young activists from the anti-Batista struggle and the urban resistance movement by and large led these committees. These activists enjoyed prestige for their political work, which often had involved imprisonment or other forms of repression during the final years of the Batista era. In addition, they counted on institutional support "from above" because of their liaisons with revolutionary government entities that helped consolidate their positions and influence *vis-à-vis* more established and often older colleagues in these professional organizations, many of whom had remained more passive in the anti-Batista struggle.[89] This infighting within professional organizations during the first year of the revolution formed an important part of the early reconfiguration of civil society and the transformation of political culture in Cuba that has not yet been studied sufficiently.

Religion, communism, and state control

Cuba's communists were not represented formally as a political organization at the education forum in November 1959. Instead, they communicated their position in a series of editorials written by thirty-two-year-old PSP member Lionel Soto.[90] These editorials contextualized the education reform as part of the broader process of revolutionary change. Most importantly for the party that sought to represent Cuba's working class, they proposed that the education system needed to open up and integrate the "popular

[88] See, for example, the description for the Colegio Municipal de Maestros Normales y Equiparados in "¿Debe el maestro participar en la política de la nación?," *Revolución* (2 March 1959): 9.

[89] Interview by the author with Limbiana Jiménez Rodríguez (former M-26-7 activist and student in Havana's teacher's school, the Escuela Normal in 1958), Havana, 10 January 2015.

[90] Lionel Soto Prieto was born in Havana in 1927, and later studied at the University of Havana, where he came in touch with political groups opposing Batista. He obtained a doctorate in *Filosofia y Letras* and became a member of the Socialist Youth. He was imprisoned at the Isle of Pines, along with future minister of education Armando Hart, for his activities against Batista in 1958. In December 1960, Soto became the director of the newly founded Schools for Revolutionary Instruction (Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria, or EIR). See Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*; and Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*, *Stanford Studies in Comparative Politics* series, 2 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp. 229–61, esp. p. 251, n. 1.

sectors"—workers, peasants, and "the impoverished population." In that sense, Hart's rhetoric at the forum overlapped with that of the communists. At the time, though, transforming elite institutions into more widely and easily accessible forums was not only a communist idea. Some of Cuba's most distinguished intellectuals, such as the writer José Lezama Lima, artist and writer Samuel Feijóo, and sculptor Rita Longa, had proposed similar metamorphoses. In a letter to Armando Hart, they offered their collaboration with the new government along with many other members of the intelligentsia. These intellectuals, for instance, suggested transforming Cuba's Center for Advanced Studies, or Centro de Altos Estudios, founded in 1955, into the Center for Free Education, Centro de Enseñanza Libre. At this new institution, courses should be given free of charge and a popular library would be created to make Cuban, American, and world classics available and accessible to the general reader.[91] Initiatives such as these gave birth to the idea of the legendary 100,000 copies of *Don Quijote* and other classics printed and sold at highly subsidized prices in early 1960.[92]

But Cuba's communists were also more strategic and instrumental to this process of change. The reform should not just create more opportunities, they urged, but also end the privileges of private education as well as a "falsely understood autonomy of the university."[93] Strategically, the most important point for Cuba's communists was to craft a single system of reform encompassing all levels of education, from kindergarten to the university, because "those who want several separate reforms in reality do not want a reform at all." Cuba's communists sensed the unique historic opportunity to advance as many structural changes as possible, given that potential resistance would be minimal at this time of continued strong support for the revolutionary government. This approach of seizing a historic opportunity to

---

[91] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Carta a Armando Hart, La Habana, 12 January 1959," Archivo Central del Ministerio de Cultura, Fondo del Consejo Nacional de Cultura, 1959.

[92] Pamela María Smorkaloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba: A Social History of Print Culture, 1830s–1990s*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 5, 1935. *Latin American Studies*, vol. 10 (New York: Garland Pub., 1997), p. 146.

[93] On the question and history of the university reform and autonomy, see Eusebio Mujal-León and University of Miami, Research Institute for Cuban Studies, *The Cuban University under the Revolution* (Coral Gables, FL: Institute of Interamerican Studies, Graduate School of International Studies, 1988); and Armas, Torres-Cuevas, and Cairo Ballester, *Historia de la Universidad de la Habana*.

maximize political gains is what party strategist Carlos Rafael Rodríguez explained afterward as being the new government's approach to an earlier key policy, agrarian reform.[94] The revolutionary government approach was one of many strategic decisions informed by an analysis of power relations, potential resistance, and long-term development interests. Its reasoning about the land reform can also be applied to education. Potential identification with its development plans or resistance to them would vary by social status and ideological orientation. Objection to a more coordinated, planned, and controlled system of education was likely to arise from the more autonomous and privileged private schools.

The debates over the future of Cuba's education evolved along partisan political divisions that went back to the Constitutional Assembly of 1939–40 and beyond. These divides originated in classic cleavages of the liberal age of Latin American modernity. At the core were three issues: religion, education, and the state. Especially debated were the right to religious education and the role of religion and state in regulating education—above all, private education. Just preceding the forum, in a dispute carried out in newspaper editorials between the communist daily *Noticias de Hoy* and the conservative daily *Avance*, editorialist Valentin Arenas criticized some of revolutionary government's previous initiatives. He specifically denounced the decentralization law from February 1959 and its modification in June of that year as communist-inspired. Arenas claimed that the law introduced by Minister Hart was identical to a legal motion that the Union Revolucionaria Comunista (URC)[95] had presented to the Constitutional Assembly of 1940. These laws, according to Arenas, were intended to suffocate and ultimately destroy Cuba's private and religious education. Interestingly, Arenas appealed to Prime

[94] The initial plan and discussions for that reform foresaw the massive issuance of individual, small-scale land titles for unproductive land from expropriated *latifundios* in order to "create a social basis for the fight against the internal and international enemies of the revolution." But the "enormous energy and overwhelming support of the revolution (. . .) allowed the revolutionary power (. . .) to adopt much more radical measures." These more dramatic steps consisted of distributing land titles only to squatters, those "already established on land." The majority of the holdings would be transferred to the state for large-scale production units. A new law prohibited land squatting in February 1959, and anyone accused of it would automatically forfeit the right to any future land titles. See Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, *Cuba en el tránsito al socialismo, 1959–1963; Lenin y la cuestión colonial*, 1st ed., *Sociología y política* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1978), pp. 120–21. See also Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa*, "Ley Num. 87 de 20 de Febrero de 1959, Prohibición de ocupar tierras ilegalmente," vol. 3, pp. 137–39.

[95] The Cuban communist party had adopted the name Union Revolucionaria Comunista (URC) during the Popular Front policy of collaboration, following the Communist International's Seventh Congress in 1935.

Minister Fidel Castro as his former classmate at the Jesuit school of Belén to undo and prevent further communist infiltration. At the time, Fidel Castro was still seen by many as a mediator between forces perceived to be more communist-leaning, such as his brother Raúl Castro and Ernesto Guevara, and more liberal forces. Cuba's communists immediately reacted to this accusation. Juan Marinello, who had been a delegate to the Constitutional Assembly for the URC, wrote an article that decried the "divisionist and anticommunist attack" of Arenas, whose "real intention" was to protect the "privileges of the elitist private schools." Former senator Marinello admitted that the same spirit did indeed move both legal texts. "It would be absurd to deny that both texts (. . .) overlap in important ways (. . .) as they both have the same objective: that the entire Cuban education system, public and private, should respond effectively to the norms of a democratic state."[96]

In addition to the question of access to education and equal opportunities, there was also the goal of political education and raising conciousness. The country's youth needed to be politicized, as the government had the "task to truly orient and reorient Cuba's children and youth." Every student should be inculcated with the teaching of Cubanness (*cubanía*), whereby "the real history of our fatherland and national values" would be taught along with "love for heroism and a revolutionary moral."[97] This demand was built on Article 51 of the Cuban constitution, which required all education, public and private, to be "guided by the spirit of Cubanness" and to "create consciousness for the love of the fatherland, its democratic institutions, and for those people who fought for one another." But in 1959, while the regulations, teaching plans, and textbooks were being redefined and rewritten, a different emphasis could be placed upon the meaning of these words: *Cubanness* was to be redefined. The debates at the forum were also interpretations of the 1940 Constitution, its application to a new historic context, and a new definition of what it meant to be Cuban.

[96] Juan Marinello, "Católicos no, contrarevolucionarios," *Noticias de Hoy* (15 November 1959):1, 10.

[97] *Hoy* (1 November 1959): 2.

Private schools and civic education

The role of private schools in Cuba's educational system had been a controversial topic ever since the birth of the republic in 1902. During the first years of Cuba's decolonization, the debates centered mostly on nationalist as opposed to social factors relating to private schools. Many of their teachers were recent Spanish immigrants, and their Cubanness and loyalty to the Cuban nation were often questioned by Cuban politicans, many of whom were veterans of the wars of independence. Mostly religious schools opened their doors to Cuban students during the next two decades, after a brief but solid investment in public education under the first U.S. occupation, which had ended formally in 1902. Following the economic crisis of the late 1920s, the ensuing political turmoil, and the extended closure of public schools in the early 1930s, the boom of more commercially oriented private schools began. Large numbers of these schools were founded by U.S. citizens and by Cubans who had lived or studied in the U.S., or were at least influenced in their design by North American schools.

At the forum of 1959, the question of private schools was debated in various sessions and contexts. One concern of nationalist forces was the "correct" orientation of these schools. Because only one out of five secondary schools in Cuba was public in 1959, the ruling elite of the Cuban state and society was fundamentally educated in private institutions. Along with the change of the administrative and political personnel that began in January 1959, the new government began to watch more closely over these influential institutions, where knowledge was promulgated and conduct and opinions were shaped. The importance of this task was recognized by conservative forces, as the editorialists of *Diario de la Marina* made clear by recommending a three-step reform: of those who governed; of those who taught; and of the people. The government carried out the *Diario*'s recommendation in its own way.

The need to influence and control elite institutions was also made public during a talk by Hart at Cuba's Lions Club in Havana. At this elite institution, Hart emphasized the need to provide the "men who will then govern the country" with a better "civic education," one including more knowledge about the country's "political, social, and economic situation and needs." In his view, it was precisely the lack of moral and civic education—not just "for the minority governing the country," but also for those in leading

positions in the economy and culture—that had led Cuba into the crisis that the revolution was now trying to overcome. The concern for a more solid civic education program that would uphold moral values, protect against corruption, and advance national interests, both in public and private schools, was one shared across the political spectrum. In 1958, the exiled Cuban writer Jorge Mañach diagnosed the "lack of civic education," in addition to economic insufficiencies and corruption, as one of the main reasons for "Cuba's tragedy."[98] Minister Hart sought support for his approach to implementing a new civic education program in all schools by playing the national card. He advocated a better-planned, more coordinated, and unified educational system in which the guidelines for private schools "cannot be very different from those of the public schools" because there "cannot be two types of Cubans." The widely accepted perception that the rampant corruption had something to do with political culture helped the government garner support for strengthening and redefining civic education. Government dialogues in elite spaces, such as the Lion's Club, and the fact that most members of the revolutionary government were alumni of elite private schools further increased the credibility and legitimacy of the initial reform proposals, even if they affected those schools.

At the forum, not only was the future role of private schools in a new Cuba discussed, but its performance in the past was also scrutinized. During the final years of the Batista administration private education—especially secondary and higher—was favored over the more directly politicized public institutions. Now, in 1959, a certain prejudice against these private institutions reigned in public debates. Private school delegates were on the defensive. Alberto Abreu from the Asociación de Maestros de Escuelas Privadas therefore suggested a balanced view to tackle the question. As in the case of pedagogical associations, there were great numbers of diverse interests within the private education sector that had formed professional organizations, many of which were established after the 1940 Constitution.[99]

---

[98] *Bohemia,* Jorge Mañach, "El drama de Cuba" (January 1959): 6–9, 163.

[99] See the numerous examples of pedagogical organizations in Govt. Docs., Cuba, National Archive, Fondo de Asociaciones*,* for details. There was, for example, a Federación de Maestros Privados as well as an Asocación de Maestros Privados, separately organized on the national and provincial levels, and often on the municipal/county level as well.

The private school in Cuba, Abreu argued at the forum, was "neither the way its detractors pretend it is, nor is it as its most passionate defenders present it." Instead, Abreu suggested, private schools reflected the deficiencies of past educational policies. Abreu agreed that the sector he represented was rightly seen as dominated by for-profit companies, but added, "Cuba's private schools are both businesses and cultural centers."[100] To mitigate obvious social differences within the educational system, Abreu proposed expanding the nation's stipend system so that low-income families could also send their children to private schools. This was a moderate position also defended by Jorge Mañach and other delegates during the Constitutional Assembly of 1940, against competing suggestions that would have made sufficient state funding for secondary and higher education mandatory.[101]

An unnamed representative from Cuba's evangelical schools denied that private schools were designed for profit, simply "because schools are a very bad business." Instead, this delegate argued that such institutions were serving the country's national interests by "helping Cuba to become a stronger nation." In an interesting twist to the more commonly held position of shielding private schools from interference by the state, the protestant representative argued that because of their common goal, these schools could not be alien to state institutions, their inspection, or other control exerted by the state over schools.[102] At this point, for-profit interests could still be publicly discussed and defended as "legitimate," but this capitalist discourse was soon increasingly questioned. It would give way to a rhetoric that emphasized the social dimensions of private education, its class and "exploitative character," and its effect on reproducing social inequalities. Offering more stipends to the poor would no longer suffice in revolutionary Cuba.

---

[100] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 1, pp. 33–34 in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[101] Cuba, *Diario de sesiones de la convención constituyente* (1940), vol. 2, no. 45, Sesión 45 (22 May 1940).

[102] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 5, p. 34, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional.*

Debating private universities

Some public university representatives lobbied for a more libertarian approach to private education: "More freedom *for* the schools, and more freedom *in* the schools." Delegates considered this the "humanist revolution without ideology." José Favole Giraudi, dean of the School of Philosophy at the Central University of Las Villas, wanted Cuban schools to emerge out of this reform to promote neither "bourgeois individualism nor materialist collectivism," but rather the formation of citizens with an integrative education. Giraudi also spoke out against a "conflating conformism" and for the right of private schools to exist and thrive.[103]

A Catholic university delegate expressed concerns about the government's attitude toward the existence of private universities. "Painful recent experiences," probably referring to the closure of some small private universities in early 1959, such as the Universidad Nacional José Martí, reminded everyone that the coexistence of private and public universities came at the price of a "high level of vigilance by the Ministry of Education" to determine whether or not private universities complied with the goals of higher education in Cuba. Psychology professor José Ignacio Lasaga from Villanueva University lectured the audience that "all advanced countries in the world—except those that live in socialist regimes of totalitarian nature—have private universities." Because if he was anticipating a communist turn in Cuba, Lasaga identified exceptions, even in the communist bloc, such as the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland. In his view, the example for the future of Cuba's universities ought to come from the Unites States: "More than 1,268 universities in the U.S. are private," was the *Diario de la Marina's* headline the next day, citing Lasaga's speech at length. The *Diario* praised how "the federal or local governments practically do not intervene in their business at all."[104]

The forum debated the role of the state, and autonomy at the university level. To avoid increasing tensions between public and private universities, Lasaga suggested the creation of a new institution that

[103] Ibid., vol. 5: 38.

[104] *Diario de la Marina* (12 November 1959): 1-A.

would allow the periodic exchange of ideas between public and private universities for a "reasonable level of planning."[105] Antonio Villaverde y Escarra from the University of La Salle emphasized the "enormous contributions of private institutions to Cuba's development and the spirit of liberty that now reigned in Cuba" as the guiding principle of the formation of future citizens in his university.[106] Private universities made their case at the forum and contributed constructive suggestions for the reform of Cuba's educational sector.

Private business and education

In addition to classic defenses of private school interests, new initiatives to promote education in Cuba were also launched at the forum. Julio Lobo, one of Cuba's wealthiest entrepreneurs at the time, had started a fund-raising project for Cuba's rural schools, El Patronato Pro-Escuela Rural Cubana. Founded just a month before the forum, this enterprise had already succeeded in raising 60,000 pesos for the acquisition of materials for rural schools. The board of the patronage counted among its members the executives of influential corporations such as the Galbán Lobo Company, the Cuban Banking Association, the National Association of Industrialists, and the Cuban Rotary and Lion Clubs. The purpose of the project, according to Lobo's representative Raúl Alvarez de Corral, was no less revolutionary and encompassing than that of the government: It sought to "transform the mental attitude of all social classes and make them conscious of the grave responsibility [to educate fellow citizens]."

Like other private and non–state initiatives, such as Legión de Cristo's creation of 500 Christian schools, this project was sanctioned to operate in Cuba's first year of the revolution and competed with the state over the provision of public services and constitutional rights, such as education. The strategic difference in Lobo's project was that he wanted to keep the initiative to expand education within the private and not the state sector. Asked by student representatives of the Federación Estudiantil

[105] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 1, p. 22, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[106] Ibid., vol. 2: 5–6.

Universitaria (FEU) during the forum if this "honorable undertaking" should not also apply to urban schools, Alvarez replied, "Of course it should. We cannot leave this to the state."[107] The preference for the private sector versus the state echoed concerns about the politicized nature of Cuba's educational system, especially at its higher levels. In this sense, the controversy over private and public schools in Cuba was also symptomatic of the ongoing reorientation from private to public administration of services in society at large.

Educating rural citizens

Delegates proposed the innovation and expansion of careers and disciplines in Cuba's higher education system. These new disciplines were envisioned as part of the "admirable expansion and democratization of the revolution that now included much larger parts of Cuba's population." Naval, fishing, and piloting schools—even one for social well-being (*facultad de bienestar social*) and one for the study of public opinion—should be created, according to Luis Torres Vilche, a professor from the recently abolished University of Cienfuegos. His proposal caused considerable debate, even if the idea to expand and diversify university education, deemphasize the humanities, and increase applied sciences and engineering was widely welcomed.[108] Sofia Nuñez of the Asociación de Escuelas Cubanas objected that although these were excellent ideas, no teaching personnel would be prepared to work on these subjects.

In the ensuing discussion on the creation of new disciplines and the adaptation of curricula, the Colegio de Maestros Agrarios (CMA) was consulted as to whether or not agricultural sciences should be included as early as in the mandatory primary education. For the agrarian teachers' representative, Faustino Pérez Díaz, this was not just a practical question but also one that related to the formation of citizens. "For the new citizenry to be created," Pérez lectured in a manner reminiscent of Martí, "love for

[107] Ibid., vol. 2: 8.

[108] The University of Cienfuegos was an extension of the National Masonic University in Havana (*Universidad Masónica Nacional*), which had received government recognition in 1957. In January 1959 it had been dissolved as part of Law 11 because of its "irregularities" and allegedly close ties to the Batista government. See Armas, Torres-Cuevas, and Cairo Ballester, *Historia de la Universidad de la Habana*, p. 632.

the land" (*el amor a la tierra*) should be inculcated from early childhood onward. Cuba's teachers were enthusiastic to teach in a new way and "to do revolutionary work," but for him, the current teaching plans were an impediment. "Down with the teaching plans" was Pérez's logical conclusion, which was met with much applause in the Capitolio.[109] The audience's reaction also gives a sense of the prevailing attitude at the time. Radical change and a distance from practices and institutions of the past were on many people's minds. Minister Hart had to mediate between these more radical pressures and demands, such as those of agrarian teacher Faustino Pérez to abolish existing teaching plans altogether, and those of more conservative forces, such as UNESCO representative Blat, who warned against destroying or radically altering existing structures. Hart described a similar situation during his first visit to Santiago de Cuba, where he admitted to the large audience of educators that there was dissatisfaction and "agitation about the course of the purging process (. . . .) We know that there are revolutionary students and teachers who are impatient about the speed of the purging process." But merely three weeks after Law 11, Hart explained that the government had chosen a "gradual and responsible" approach in order not to provoke the affected, but to "guide and try to convince them of their mistakes."[110] This conciliatory approach was surely a reaction to the widespread protests. But it also reflects the integrative approach to persuade rather than punish part of the educated class, of which the public forum was another example.

Rural education was intrinsically related to the question of basic literacy training. As Ms. Sanabria from the Federación Nacional de Maestras Católicas (FNMC) put it, "the success of the agrarian reform depends on the success of the educational reform." The literacy programs in the countryside should enable every adult to become "a true functional literate," empowering them to expand their knowledge and "raise not only cattle but also their living standards."[111]

---

[109] Ibid., p. 630.

[110] "Primeras fotos de la visita de Hart a Santiago de Cuba," *Revolución* (9 February 1959): 1, 18.

[111] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 5, p. 41, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional.*

The government had launched efforts to eradicate illiteracy in January 1959, but these measures had led to limited results by the end of the year. Six months after its creation, some 800 teachers had followed the commission's call to "be a good Cuban, combat illiteracy" and attended orientation courses for basic literacy work in Matanza province.[112] Showcasing revolutionary credentials, representatives of the Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales y Equiparados (CNMNE) publicly emphasized that their organization had been cooperating with the Ministry of Education ever since the first literacy commission was created, but suggested it was time to evaluate and revise the experiences accumulated thus far. The government's literacy efforts lacked coordination, according to CNMNE delegate Rodríguez. He recommended a more comprehensive and "better-planned" approach. Moreover, rural teachers should not be seen as mere neutral pedagogues but "carriers of a doctrine." Teachers should be constantly updated about the revolution's plans and projects. Rural teachers were expected to cooperate with the agrarian reform institute and "mobilize in the community."[113] This suggestion was well received and complemented by many additional proposals. It would also be reflected in the education programs developed for rural areas, and especially by the national literacy program in 1961.

An unidentified delegate from the Federación Nacional de Maestras Católicas (FNMC) made concrete proposals for the eradication of illiteracy. Her federation had held a first national convention dedicated entirely to the question of rural education in July 1959. Adjusting the school calendar to rural necessities would help improve class attendance, the Catholic delegate argued. During Cuba's coffee harvest between September and December, schools in mountainous areas were usually deserted, she observed, and "It would therefore be just to let the school year in these zones begin in January." In addition, radio programs and other modern media should be used to improve outreach in isolated areas. The media could also serve to "publicize the revolutionary policies," the Catholic teacher suggested.[114]

---

[112] "Combaten el analfabetismo en Cuba," *Revolución* (6 August 1959): 3.

[113] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 2, p. 21, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[114] Ibid., vol. 4, p. 31.

These debates and active contributions helped form the origins of the rural education program that were tied to the new government's larger program of development. This approach had first been advocated by various and very different groups, such as the Catholic school teachers. For example, after the national congress of the Confederación de Colegios Cubanos Católicos three months before the forum, their general secretary, Marino Pérez Durán, had reaffirmed her confederation's will to "voluntarily cooperate with the ministry of education."[115] To cast these reform programs retroactively as enforced communist indoctrination from the outset misrepresents this early history and makes it impossible to understand the broad appeal of these education initiatives, with their unprecedented levels of participation and relative success.

Debating Americanization

Cuba's new civic formation was also addressed in specific questions, such as the appropriate ages for learning a foreign language and for exposure to civic education. Delegate Espinosa argued that only in secondary schools, once the students had developed "sufficient mental capacities and interests as adolescents"—at age twelve and beyond—should subjects such as civic education be taught. Based on schooling statistics provided by Minister Hart, this proposal would imply that fewer than one out of ten Cubans would be familiarized with the political system and democratic practices in a systematic way. Paulino Pérez Salas from the Colegio de Profesores de Inglés no Universitarios (CPINU) argued against this position. He suggested that students at ten years of age, from fourth grade on, would have "adequate intellectual capacities" to learn another language. Pérez argued for such an early age for learning English by invoking Fidel Castro: "If our prime minister had dominated English with sufficient fluency (. . .) when he attended the program *Meet the Press* in the United States (. . .) [in April 1959] to express all that he felt, much more could have been said." Others saw the omnipresence of English in Cuban schools

[115] "Quedó clausurado el congreso de colegios católicos en que se trataron importantes problemas," *Avance* (6 August 1959): 1.

much more critically. "I am worried about bilingualism and what it does to a child of the first or second grade," explained Leslie Rodríguez from the Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales (CNMN).[116]

This debate was not just about a "neutral language," but also about cultural and political values carried and expressed in linguistic terms. Several of the private schools in Cuba offered bilingual education in English and Spanish. Sometimes, as in the case of the American Central School on the Isle of Pines, these schools would apply for and receive direct U.S. government funding for the "value as a builder of good-will among the Cuban population" so that "Americans are looked to for guidance and leadership."[117] Rodríguez moreover complained that much teaching material at Cuba's schools was produced in the United States, and it propagated an American way of life unsuitable for Cuban society: "[T]hese texts pose the happiness and greatness of an American family in a propagandistic way." Ruston Academy, first founded in Havana in 1920 as a school for expatriates, quickly grew into a bilingual academy with a multinational student body. It was considered the premier U.S.-American school in Latin America. In the ensuing debate at the forum, English teacher Pérez recognized that most of the learning materials were produced in the United States due to a lack of adequate production capacity in Cuba. He lamented the very low number of Cuban academics able to produce teaching materials in a professional manner. The elaboration of new textbooks, especially in areas such as history, geography, and civic education, would become a primary concern of the government in the following year.

Biopolitics for the revolution

The education forum included not only discussions on early childhood development, but also suggestions to improve and expand adult learning and physical education. The creation of a special department for adult education within the Ministry of Education (MINED) was suggested by a delegate from the

[116] Gov't Doc's, Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 5, p. 45, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[117] Govt. Docs., U.S. National Archives, Office of Inter-American Affairs, "Assistance to the American Central School in the Island of Pines: Proposed Project for the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, 17 September 1943" (RG 229, Box 424, 1943).

Federación Nacional de Maestras Católicas (FNMC). This department would study and guide the use of free time for educational purposes "scientifically," in order to engage more adults in a culture of learning.[118] A recent long-term study of more than 1,500 families in Las Villas province had found that half of those families did not possess a single book in their households.[119] Creating a reading culture among adult Cubans became part of the broader educational mission, symbolized by the highly state-subsidized production of classic literature. The expansion of education was aimed not only at learning but also at cultural transformation in a broader material sense.

In addition to providing more teaching material and spaces for education, the educational expansion that was envisioned included the training and production of healthy Cuban bodies to be educated at Cuban schools. The nation's sports teachers claimed that the ambitious projects of the revolution relied on a population capable of carrying out "the great transformation the country was going through," with its different facets such as the agrarian reform, the industrialization program, and new vocational schools. To that end, Pedro Ferrera from the Colegio de Profesores no Universitarios de Educación Física was convinced that "the biological potential" of Cuba's population needed to be improved. Julio Callejas Dávalos from the Colegio Nacional de Profesores de Educación Física Universitarios concurred: Expanding physical education programs would make men, women, and children "stronger, healthier, and more energetic." Sport would also enhance basic civic capacity to cooperate and compete. Strengthening physical ability increases the "strength, vitality, and coordination" that are required to "carry out daily work (. . .) and to have additional energy for personal and social problems."[120] Sports teachers made their case using contemporary pedagogical theories that emphasized

---

[118] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 4, p. 15, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[119] Universidad Central de Las Villas, Escuela de Pedagogía, *La educación rural en Las Villas: Bases para la redacción de unos cursos de estudios*, in *Nuevo Plan de Publicaciones* (Santa Clara, Cuba: Departamento de Relaciones Culturales Escuela de Pedagogía, 1959), p. 15.

[120] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 5, pp. 7–8, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

the utility of physical fitness for the formation of citizens, to develop individuality, cooperation, and aptitude for work. They also advanced their own professional interests by combining these aims with the goals of the revolution. By doing so, sports became an important part of the revolutionary education project, which wanted not just mental but also physical education, and not only in private schools where sports facilities tended to be abundant, but also in most public schools. The emphasis on sports as a right for everyone and a government goal for the consolidation of a healthier population was also a common theme in Fidel Castro's speeches throughout 1959. The focus, though, shifted from a more integrative approach—"we will build sports facilities in public schools where the white and black boys will play together"—to one that criticized the past for its discriminatory practices and elite character.[121]

Julie Bunck argued that the government "succeeded in dramatically changing Cuban culture (. . .) into a flourishing national revolutionary sports consciousness" in which the government controlled "much of the leisure time of children, students, and workers."[122] These are the pedagogical origins of this transformation. Delegate Ferrera suggested incorporating physical education into the curriculum of the regular teachers' training programs so that teachers could offer more diverse and interesting activities to the students.[123] A ministerial resolution based on these suggestions established a new curriculum for Cuba's teaching schools before the year's end. This would include physical education from the first year on.[124] The budget assigned to the Ministry of Education's Sports Department was increased sixfold, from 120,000 pesos to 750,000.[125]

---

[121] Fidel Castro and Mario José Torres de Diego, *Fidel y el deporte: Selección de pensamientos 1959–2006* (Havana: Editorial Deportes, 2006), pp. 22–23.

[122] Julie Marie Bunck, *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 186.

[123] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 5, p. 15, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

[124] *Revolución* (31 December 1959): 1–2.

[125] *Revolución*, "Edición Especial" (30 December 1959): 5.

Education toward a colorless, secular modernity?

The contention on how best to educate Cuba's future citizens was obviously also racial. Antonio Ponce de León, professor at the School of Science at the University of Havana, thought it was necessary to "unearth the primitive beliefs" remaining in Cuba so as to overcome racism. "African reminiscences" would be the first thing Ponce de León claimed that he would fight if he were black, which (he felt it necessary to add) he "would not be ashamed of." African-influenced performances of "Changó, Yemayá, or other public dances" made him "feel sick," Ponce confessed to the audience.[126] No questioning or critiques of these views are recorded in the transcripts. A secular, "colorless" modernity that rejected and excluded African heritage seemed to him the most adequate way to overcome discrimination in its racial, political, and religious forms. He advocated a whitening of Cuba's socialization.

Instead of building on Cuba's diverse heritage, which included the African, Ponce de León sought to build and strengthen Cubans' patriotism by defending its "natural resources." Shifting from race to imperialism in his speech, he saw *Cubanidad* impaired by Spanish and American influences, especially through the presence of powerful foreign companies on the island. Cuba should develop its national consciousness by focusing on its own history and resources, and by amplifying its knowledge of Cuba's "great men" (*gran hombres*). In a mixture of racial prejudice, positivist belief in scientific progress, and defense of traditional Euro-centric moral values, the science professor suggested developing respect and love for the family. The family, as the nucleus of society, would be an efficient remedy against the moral decay in contemporary Cuba, which was expressed in the "vicious influences of gambling, drugs, and vulgar spirituality."

A few days later, Juan Jiménez Pastrana spoke on behalf of Club Atenas, a civic and cultural organization of people of African descent.[127] In his speech, he interpreted the "moral degradation" Ponce

[126] Changó and Yemayá are religious deities of Yoruba and certain other African religions, as well as Cuban *santería.*

[127] Jímenez had worked in public schools in Havana between 1930 and 1960 and had obtained a doctorate in pedagogy from the University of Havana in 1937. He was an active member of professional pedagogical organizations and a frequent writer for different publications, among them *El Mundo, El País, Noticias de Hoy, Bohemia,* and *Enseñanza Primaria*.

de Leon had referred to as a class issue: "Illiteracy, superstition, and vices in their different forms and dimensions center around the most humble social classes." Differing from communist interpretations that denounced an active will in the acts of discrimination against blacks, Jiménez identified the "lack of equal opportunities among citizens" as one of the causes for existing inequality. This general analysis applies especially to education because of a lack of *Cubanidad* in the general outlook of the pedagogical design. "Our educational system began as a pedagogical colony of Spain and has become a badly administrated colony of the United States."

In order to achieve unity among the "great Cuban family" it would be necessary to overcome "a mentality that is based on racial, sexual, and religious discrimination." Without referring directly to Ponce de León's "scientific" racism, Jiménez also advocated a scientific approach to the planning of education and teacher training. At the same time, he warned that it wouldn't be enough to overcome illiteracy in a merely technical manner. Instead, Jiménez wanted an educational reform that would create a new form of "citizenship without prejudice."[128]

When pushed by FEU delegate Juan López Benavides as to whether or not he thought additional legislative action would be required to reach this goal, Jiménez remained vague. Whereas the communist party still advocated antiracist legal action in late 1959, with the creation of an educative institute for such purpose, Jiménez was more indirect. In its programmatic text, *Fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba,* which was published in a revised edition in early 1960, the party seemed to recommend affirmative action by asserting "a well-determined and positive policy that aims at the integration of blacks [del negro] into all activities." For Jiménez, "the [education] reform could contemplate not precisely laws but revolutionary guidelines (. . .) to eradicate the problem of racial discrimination definitively." The communist party, which had asked Jiménez to be a candidate in 1940 on their antiracist platform, anticipated that the fight against "racial discrimination in our country, and especially racial prejudices that

---

[128] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 11, pp. 16–20, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*.

nourish it" would be "long and complex." These prejudices would "not disappear in a day or weeks."[129] As Alejandro de la Fuente has shown, the "leaders of the party defended the need to approve an antidiscrimination law (. . .) through 1960."[130]

Jiménez confirmed that, particularly in private schools and universities, Cubans were still "separated because of their color and because of economic means." Other delegates objected. David Pérez, delegate of the Escuelas Privadas Comerciales, admitted that there was an "economic discrimination," but denied that racial factors were involved. "[O]ur schools have always been open to all Cubans," he claimed. What could have evolved into an interesting and revealing debate on racial realities and projections for Cuban schools was limited by time constraints to a general debate at this public forum. Racial inequality was not an explicit theme on the agenda, but was made part of the debate by representatives of different educational organizations.[131]

During two weeks, dozens of delegates would openly argue many problems and solutions for Cuba's education system. Some of these proposals, such as a renewed emphasis on civic education and physical education, would become parts of the new education reform law, whereas others were neglected. Despite rising political tensions outside the forum in the Capitolio, the open debate among ample representation of Cuban society seemed to bring the ideal of a more inclusive nation closer to reality. Referring to the controversy over expanding educational opportunities and the reduction of discrimination of the 1940s, Club Atenas's delegate Jiménez expressed the view that "we were then fighting for exactly the school that we now hope this reform will bring about."

---

[129] Roca Calderío, *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba*, p. 104. The program was first published in 1943 and was since revised in several editions. The cited text is dated to 21 December 1959 by its author, the PSP Secretary General Blas Roca, and 100,000 copies were printed and disseminated in early 1960.

[130] Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, *Envisioning Cuba* and *Index*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 280.

[131] Afro-Cuban advocate Juan Jiménez Pastrana, who made racial discrimination part of a public debate in late 1959, became a member of the textbook revision commission that was relaunched by Minister Hart in the summer of 1960.

Despite all, no draft law or final declarations came out of this forum. As Minister Hart would explain during his education speech in Santiago de Cuba just ten days later, the stipulations of the new law were to be based partly on recommendations and proposals brought forward during the education forum. But this would be the case only when the ministry deemed them "adequate for the philosophy and objectives of revolutionary education."[132] In the context of increasing tensions in Cuban society, the definition of what was adequate and necessary for the revolution would be interpreted in increasingly narrow and politicized terms. Yet, the frequent consultation of the government with different sectors of society and the many debates throughout 1959, culminating in this public forum, showcased the vibrant, participatory facets of the revolution. The circumspection and nontransparency with which these proposals were put into law, however, foreshadowed a different side of the revolutionary *modus operandi*. A tremendous opportunity for democratic–pluralist reforms with massive support would be affected by a new international context.

Context: Rising political tensions

While education reform proposals were widely debated in all parts of society throughout the year, other dynamics increasingly affected and complicated the character of these debates. In fact, the educational forum in late 1959 took place in the midst of increasing political tensions and a process of redefinition within revolutionary Cuba. A "critical threshold was passed in the autumn of 1959," according to historian Louis Pérez. One might add that this threshold was passed not only in Cuba, but also in the United States. In July 1959 the discussion "to replace Castro" had already been prepared by the U.S. government because of his "statist and nationalist orientation" and the risk this stance posed if other Latin American nations were to emulate it, according to Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs

[132] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación (MINED), *Mensaje educacional al pueblo de Cuba* (Havana: n.a., 1960), 56–57.

Roy R. Rubottom, Jr.[133] At first, a position of wait-and-see prevailed in Washington—one that was also advocated by the new U.S. ambassador in Havana, Philip Bonsal.[134] Yet pressures on the U.S. government increased, especially after the agrarian reform of May 1959, which affected considerable U.S. business interests. Even though less than two years later, the U.S. government would itself promote agrarian reform and "attack (. . .) archaic land tenure structures" as part of the Alliance for Progress, at this point, and in the way the reform was carried out in Cuba, it was unacceptable.[135] Some of the early measures by the Cuban government affected powerful interests and caused strong reactions. Schools were not affected directly, but the evolving political climate shaped perceptions and reactions and thus reshaped potential avenues of reform and cooperation.

3.3 The creation of a national school system

On 30 November, Armando Hart talked about the current state and future outline of Cuba's educational system. This speech, dubbed a *mensaje educacional*, or "educational message," has since become a foundational text in education that is still part of the curricula at Cuba's pedagogical institutes today.[136] In it, Hart outlines the ideals of future education in Cuba, as well as some concrete measures. The reform process would be continuous and permanent, reflecting the rapid changes in modern societies, and in Cuba more specifically. Cuba's new school system would have to be built "slowly and carefully," yet also

---

[133] Govt. Docs., U.S. Government, Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*) series, "Memorandum of Discussion at the Department of State—Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 8 January 1960" (Washington, DC: 1960), pp. 731–34.

[134] For the most detailed discussion of the evolution of this policy, see Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution*, especially chapter 4, "Watching and Waiting: The Eisenhower Administration," pp. 82–109.

[135] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, "Preliminary Formulations of the Alliance for Progress," *The Department of State Bulletin* 44, no. 1136 (1961).

[136] Interviews by the author with various professors at Cuba's prime teacher formation center, the Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique J. Varona, Havana, October 2011.

"planned down to the most minor details." Whereas some of the measures in 1959 had been spontaneous and immediate "to do justice to the victims," a likely reference to Law 11 and the administrative purging process, from now on there would be a more coordinated and integrative approach.

While Hart was speaking in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba's Catholics were mobilizing for the first National Catholic Congress in Havana, and the government was calling on the population in the east to commemorate the anniversary of the Santiago uprising and the planned *Granma* landing of that day. Activities throughout the day were dedicated to the memory of the failed armed uprising. Church bells rang in the eastern provinces at noon and, with the exception of some restaurants and smaller stores, all normal activities were stopped. Trains "loaded with rural workers" from nearby cities such as Manzanillo arrived in Santiago.[137] Just like in Havana, where Cuba's Catholic community held a giant open-air Mass at the civic square, a cold front brought rain to Santiago de Cuba that day, too. Fidel Castro, who had attended some of the ecclesiastical events in Havana, found it impossible to land in Santiago because of the weather conditions and had to be rerouted, causing considerable delays in the planned activities. Some 300,000 people assembled outside the city's public high school, the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza in Avenida Garzón that day. Due to the insufficient and improvised infrastructure, people fainted, panic broke out, and several times the speakers were interrupted because of technical difficulties. At some point during his speech, Castro said, "[I]t is virtually impossible to hold a speech here under these conditions. (. . .) This is one of the problems the revolution hasn't been able to solve yet, the problem of the mass meetings, of the speakers, the technical problems."[138]

Armando Hart was able to deliver his talk on education. It was even transmitted on radio and received broad coverage in the media the following day. *Diario de la Marina* reported in a neutral tone and emphasized the merging of the different types of public primary schools and teachers into one "national school," *la escuela nacional,* as the main change in the structure of Cuba's education system.

---

[137] "Conmemoraron en Santiago los hechos del 30 de noviembre," *Diario de la Marina* (1 December 1959).

[138] Fidel Castro, "Discurso pronunciado en la Avenida Garzón de Santiago de Cuba, el 30 de noviembre de 1959." See http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1959/esp/f301159e.html

Belén alumnus Valentín Arenas, on the other hand, berated Hart's speech in the daily *Avance* in emotional and political terms. This time, Arenas compared the idea of "subduing" schools under the "superior interests of the state" not to the policies of Cuba's communists, but to those of German fascists. "This idea, if it is not the same, resembles a lot that of Adolf Hitler."[139]

Far from fascist ideas, the philosophy presented in the *mensaje educacional* was characterized by progressive democratic pedagogical reform ideas. The Cuban pedagogical philosophy's point of departure was that education should be centered on the learning child. It stated, "The child should be studied more psychologically." Education should reflect Cuba's popular culture, for "when the culture is cut from its roots in the subaltern soul it becomes purely academic, feeble and inorganic."[140] The nation's school system would therefore have to be more "firmly rooted in popular culture and the social and cultural environment in which it is embedded."[141]

The planned reform was driven by political and economic motivations. The goal was to include and prepare a growing number of Cuba's population for technical and administrative tasks, as Hart had announced at Havana's Lions Club in March 1959, as well as to facilitate solid education in public schools. This technical request echoed reform proposals by the World Bank and reveals the liberal side of this reform. Conversely, the government sought to forge a strong national community, a new Cubanness, with a common civic consciousness representing the nationalist and political driving forces also in play. To that end, Cuba's public primary schools would be renamed and unified into "national schools," as they were expected to serve the interests of the nation.

"Specialized education" and teacher training for subjects such as sports, English, music, arts, and the like would be reduced to save costs and provide resources for basic education for all, instead of a

---

[139] Valentín Arenas, "Educación democrática, sí," *Avance* (4 December 1959): 12.

[140] Armando Hart Dávalos, Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, and Cuba, Ministerio de Educación (MINED). *Mensaje educacional al pueblo de Cuba* (Havana: Departamento de Relaciones Públicas del Ministerio de Educación, 1960), pp. 33, 35.

[141] In early 1960, a linguistic survey was carried out to study the use of language among Cuba's rural population. See Felipe Pérez Cruz, *La alfabetización en Cuba: Lectura histórica para pensar el presente*, *Historia* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2001), p. 217.

more expensive, specialized education for a minority. Hart presented his policy plans not only in economic but also in legalistic terms: These measures would allow Cuba to realize the promises of the 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 ("Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages") and of Cuba's 1940 Constitution, Article 48 of which declared primary education to be free when offered by the state. The announcement of greatly expanded basic education foreshadowed a practice that would be applied in other areas as well: the orientation toward the masses, or *la masificación*. *Masificación* meant granting access to services previously limited or unavailable to large parts of the population by either opening up more exclusive spaces, such as beaches and social clubs, or by redistributing state funds and shifting priorities from quality to quantity, from secondary to primary, from specialized to basic education.

In relation to the debate on the adequate age for civic education, the government planned to establish nine years of mandatory schooling in the long run. Six years of primary education in which the "pillars of nationhood" would be learned would be followed by at least three years of basic secondary education, aimed at providing some rudimentary vocational training. By abolishing entrance exams to secondary education, the hurdle to continuing after primary school would be lowered. English would only be taught after primary school.

The official philosophy of education also reflected the kind of moral and civic learning that would be expected in Cuba's schools. In what might be considered the first expression of Guevara's later concept of the new man, Hart asked, "[W]hat kind of man do we want to emerge from this revolution? What kind of person should be representing us?" In contrast to practices of ideological supervision that emerged later, at this point the answer was, "We do not have a preconceived concept of a certain type of man. (. . .) We want to educate for a democratic society (. . .) where every citizen learns to think for himself." Even individualist and almost antiauthoritarian influences were discernible in his speech, which could explain why this has been defended as a foundational text for Cuban pedagogues over time. "We

seek a man who is prepared to adapt to his individual and changing nature for the rest of his life. (. . .) We want a man upon whom one cannot impose a destiny."[142]

Nevertheless, the former national coordinator of M-26-7 also expected a loyal political commitment to the revolution, since "the revolution has to be defended not only with arms." It was also "the duty to seriously prepare oneself for the knowledge of the country and leadership of the nation." This reference to a more vigilant and militant education, both figuratively and literally, mirrored the violent origins of some of the education practices of the guerrilla movement, as well as the context of late 1959, in which armed resistance and sabotage were on the rise again. It also foreshadowed a concept of ideological purity that would gain strength over months to come in the midst of violent confrontations, culminating in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Hart declared "ideological confusion" to be a "powerful weapon in the hands of the dominant groups to maintain their privileges." He wanted Cuba's future education to prepare people "capable of stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing the progress of the revolution."[143]

Catholic competition

Shortly after the forum on education in November, Cuba's Catholic Church, which had been critical of some of the early reforms, mobilized its constituency on a massive scale for the first National Catholic Congress. Parallel to Hart's speech in Santiago de Cuba, the congress was held in Havana, with the participation of close to one million people. Pope John XXIII sent a special message to this congress. One week later, the Pope emphasized the primary right of the Church to educate. According to the head of the Roman Catholic Church, this right ranked "along with the right of the family, *before* that of the state"

[142] For Hart's diverse and non-Marxist intellectual formation, see Carreras Varona, *Armando Hart Dávalo*, esp. pp. 33–119; and Rafael Rojas, "El joven Hart y el comunismo," *Libros del crepúsculo* (2014): http://www.librosdelcrepusculo.net/2014/11/el-joven-hart-y-el-comunismo.html

[143] Hart Dávalos, Dorticós Torrado, and Cuba, MINED, *Mensaje educacional al pueblo de Cuba*, p. 57.

(emphasis added).[144] In his message to the "international office of Catholic education," which was holding a major conference in Belgium at the time, John XXIII reiterated the papal message of Pope Pius XI, "Divini illius Magistri." In that text, which had a strong influence on Cuba's Catholic Action movement of the 1940s, the Catholic Church had proclaimed indisputable superiority in all matters of education. Article 23 had stated,

> [I]t is the inalienable right as well as the indispensable duty of the Church to watch over the entire education of her children, in all institutions, public or private, not merely in regard to the religious instruction there given, but in regard to every other branch of learning.

Hart, in contrast, explicitly emphasized the right of private education and *patria potestad*, that is, the prerogative of parents to choose the most adequate school for their children. He also acknowledged explicitly the "important contributions" private schools made to the nation's great work in education. However, implicitly referring to Catholic and conservative forces that had criticized certain government policies, especially concerning religious education, Hart defended the state's authority to interfere in child education in the name of Cuba's young: "[N]obody has the right to deny a government [the right to] to guide the educational system that has done so much for the children."[145] Cuba's education reforms stood in direct dialogue and competition with the Catholic Church (Figure 3-3). One result of this pressure was the explicit recognition of religious education and schools.

---

[144] See "Proclama el derecho de la Iglesia, a la enseñanza, El Papa," *Diario de la Marina* (31 December 1959): 1-A; and Roman Catholic Church, ed., "Divini Illius Magistri" (Vatican, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1939).

[145] Hart Dávalos, Dorticós Torrado, and Cuba, Ministerio de Educación. *Mensaje educacional al pueblo de Cuba*, p. 118. "[E]l Estado reconoce así mismo como en toda democracia, el principio de la libertad de enseñanza; es decir, el derecho que tienen los padres a eligir para sus hijos el centro de enseñanza, público o privado, que esté más de acuerdo con su criterio. (. . .) En consecuencia, el Estado cubano estima que la educación privada desempeña una importante función en la magna obra de la educación del país."



Figure 3-3
A full-page advertisement by the coed, mixed-race Catholic School of Corazón de Jesús (at the outskirts of Havana) asks for donations. The text reads, "It is not a question of luck. In order for the children not to get 'these ideas . . .' [*esas ideas*—referring to radical thoughts and communist influence] that you are so afraid of, it is essential that they be educated Catholically." *Diario de la Marina* (4 December 1959).

Enacting reform: Law 680

Three weeks after Hart's speech in Santiago and in its last meeting of the year, Cuba's Council of Ministers issued the new comprehensive law on educational reform on 21 December 1959. Nothing short of a "total reform of education" was announced in *Revolución* for the "Integral Reform Law of Education in Cuba" (Law 680).[146] A legal document of sixty-seven pages divided into six chapters, the law was a foundational text outlining the government's pedagogical philosophy and institutional design for Cuba's school system. It created one nationwide school structure from preprimary to preuniversity level, applying

[146] *Revolución* (22 December 1959): 1.

this structure also to the private education sector. It dissolved or renamed some previously existing titles, schools, and professions. The law sought to update and modernize teaching approaches within Cuban schools continously and to tie education more closely to the nation's development agenda. Pedagogical tools were to be more finely tuned and based on more sophisticated and scientific information. It also fostered democratic values and practices in Cuban schools. For this to be successful, it counted on "the real cooperation of the Cuban people—its political leaders, public opinion, teachers, students, heads of families, [and] the cultural and civic organizations (. . .)," in recognition that reforms that were merely decreed would be "sterile."[147]

The pedagogy of reform

The stated overall goal of the Law 680 reform was the "full and integral development of the human being." Schooling was to provide children with a vision of the world, its facts, and values, as well as a socially active and applied concept and "an adequate orientation of life and the pursuit of happiness."[148] The formation of a "national as well as American consciousness," a "democratic ideal," and a "comprehension of international relations" was a declared a major goal for education. To develop such national consciousness, the text argued that the primary school needed to make children understand Cuba's social and physical conditions, its problems and challenges, the conservation of its natural resources, and the contribution of the agrarian reform to national sovereignty. In addition, it should provide them with an understanding of the country's institutions and the sacrifices made to achieve political and economic liberty.[149]

[147] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes,* "Bases y normas legales reguladoras de la reforma integral de la enseñanza en Cuba" (Law 680, 23 December 1959), pp. 103–70, here p. 112. All subsequent references to this law are cited from this document.

[148] Ibid., pp. 111–12.

[149] Ibid., pp. 115–17.

The "democratic ideal" figured prominently in the revolutionary law. The achievement of a "democracy based on a humanist philosophy that holds human dignity and human rights among its highest values is the highest aspiration of the primary school." To this end, the students were to learn about the significance of democracy and practice it in their daily lives, to develop a "sense of civic responsibility and democratic citizenship," and to achieve a "life free of prejudice, with the capacity to cooperate with fellow citizens, and with honesty in all aspects of life."

The "American consciousness" was to be formed by making students understand that Latin-American nations faced similar problems and therefore had to learn to cooperate in order to achieve full political sovereignty and economic development. Cuba's "national hero," José Martí, was depicted as "ideologically one of the great creators of the American consciousness." International comprehension, on the other hand, required "destroying stereotypes and prejudice" and explaining differences "without renouncing national values." As a specific example, Cuba's children should know about the existence of the United Nations and UNESCO, their functions and objectives."[150] Law 680 and its spirit were not an embryonic version of communist indoctrination, but echoed liberal traditions and pedagogical innovations advocated by many Cuban pedagogues at the time.

Cuba's future education was to be taken out of the classrooms as part of a more active learning approach. Organizations for the "training of civic virtues and the promotion of moral consciousness and citizenship" were to be created. The recently established student councils in Cuba's schools would fulfill part of this function. To assure the "formation of correct study and work methods and habits," there were to be mandatory sessions of directed activities during the regular school day. The appreciation of artistic values would be increased by the creation of special spaces where music and the arts, but also manual labor and sports, could be practiced. Regulations prior to the law required every secondary school to form a student association to "improve the cultural life of the students" and to assure "a more effective functioning of the school." These were part of the nascent revolutionary mass organizations. Members

[150] Ibid., pp. 118–19.

and representatives would be elected; no political criteria for them were indicated in this decree. Their only requirement was to have regular academic standing and not to have received any grave disciplinary sanctions since January 1959.[151] Law 680 put a strong emphasis on democratic and civic values, as well as on concrete and mandatory exercises to form these new habits of Cuban national consciousness. Whereas this had been a common and active practice at some schools, civic education would now have a more structured, national, and also mandatory character.

Economic efficiency

Unlike later, idealistic revolutionary measures where economic aspects were subordinated to political goals, this law emphasized economic efficiency. The preamble casts Cuba's prerevolutionary educational policy as "chaotic" and molded on "personal interests." Previous administrations had authorized more than 5,700 "specialized teachers," or one-third of all employed public school teachers (18,433), without their having any basic education or literacy training skills. The reasons for this practice lay in the prerevolutionary hiring process. Teachers of the core curriculum for primary schools, *maestros normales*, who graduated from a more rigid and formalized training program, had to go through qualifying exams and a selection process, *las oposiciones*, to be offered positions. "Specialized teachers," on the other hand, could be hired directly at the recommendation of provincial superintendents who were approved by the minister of education, and this had become increasingly common in the 1950s. The combined administrative costs of specialized teachers had risen to fourteen million pesos annually, according to the law.[152] Their costs were disproportionally higher than those of basic teachers. Whereas the formation of a *maestro normal* cost the state 1,050 pesos, that of a graduate of the sports school stood at 10,000 pesos.

The new law sought to concentrate investment in basic education, teachers, and educational facilities capable of absorbing the large number of illiterate and unenrolled Cuban children. This was a paradigm shift. The government sought a model of "teacher formation centers with a uniform professional

[151] "Normas para las asociaciones de estudiantes," *Diario de la Marina* (2 December 1959): 1-B.

[152] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa*, p. 106.

structure," so that newly emerging teachers would be capable of teaching "all activities that are part of the elementary learning process" in any primary school. Special schools for teacher formation would be created in rural areas, linked to the developing zones created by the Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA). All Cuban schools were to be divided into a uniform structure of preprimary (ages 3–5), primary school (6 years' duration), basic secondary school (3 years' duration), upper secondary school (3 more years' duration), and university/higher education.

In an interesting contrast to other revolutionary policies, in which budgets and numbers seemed to matter less, this new reform law was very much concerned and sought legitimacy through efficiency and fiscal discipline. This was, of course, also a reaction to the well-known patterns of corruption in the republican education system and its inefficiency, given the relatively large prerevolutionary budgets in education. The law also put Cuba's system into a regional context. The nation's basic secondary education costs were given as 300 pesos per student per year—three times the Latin American average. Similarly, the hours worked by Cuban teachers in public schools had fallen from 800 per year at the beginning of the republic to 365 in 1958—far less than their colleagues in other Latin American countries. This was largely due to the abandonment of the full school day in the 1930s. The government now wanted Cuban teachers to work longer once again and to offer classes throughout the day.[153] Law 680 aspired to recoup Cuba's leading position in education in a Latin American context and to extend educational services to the entire population.

Teaching and school structures

Cuba's new educational policy would draw more heavily on modern "sociological, pedagogical, and scientific" tools, such as "psychological exams, tests, comprehensive school registries, interviews, and case studies."[154] Insufficient school buildings, inadequate technical personnel, and little knowledge of the

[153] *Diario de la Marina* (1 December 1959): 1-2A.

[154] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa*, p. 113.

psychological and socioeconomic situation of Cuba's youth, plus the scarcity of statistical data in general, had affected Cuba's educational landscape prior to 1959, according to the law.[155]

Future schooling should furthermore not be restricted to the intellect but encompass "feelings, affection, and character-building as well as habits." Special importance was given to the primary school as the only institution that would, in the foreseeable future, have all of Cuba's children and future citizens under its influence. A special section of the mandate also announced the revision and expansion of preprimary education, to be provided by the state, since before 1959 only a few charity orphanages had existed. This daycare program would cause a similarly strong reaction in conservative sectors and especially the Catholic Church, unleashing another battle over the right to childhood education.[156]

A more proactive schooling environment was first pronounced here. "When the family is not in the position to give satisfactory solutions to the multiple biological, psychological, and social problems of the offspring, then the educational institutions that the society has created are obliged to facilitate such provision."[157] These measures can be considered as the origins of the evolving "highly supportive school environment" in socialist Cuba that Martin Carnoy views as facilitated by a "hierarchical, centralized government bureaucracy."[158]

The category of "specialized teachers," such as English, music, or arts teachers, at the primary level was abolished by Article 14 of the law. There would be only one form of primary teachers, *el maestro primario*, or *la maestra primaria*. These teachers would be retrained to impart basic education, in addition to their specialties. Every municipal school division was to have at least one basic secondary

---

[155] Ibid., p. 109.

[156] "The Destruction and Salvation of the Cuban Family, 1959–1962," in Michelle Chase, "Revolution in the Family." New York University (New York, 2015).

[157] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa*, p. 114.

[158] Martin Carnoy, Amber K. Gove, and Jeffery H. Marshall, *Cuba's Academic Advantage: Why Students in Cuba Do Better in School* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 2–8.

school—grades seven to nine. In its attempt to increase vocational training, these *secundarias básicas* would offer a "utilitarian approach" for every student to "prepare him/her economically for life."[159]

To overcome the much-criticized passivity of students in Cuba's verbalist and memorizing educational culture, the traditional final exam was to be abolished. Instead, other forms of more continuous learning—and teaching—evaluations would be introduced, particularly emphasizing "the development of critical thinking." New study plans had to be elaborated to "respond to the socioeconomic realities of the country" in correspondence with the child's "abilities, emotional balance, and the cultivation of spirituality."[160]

Finally, Article 46 of Law 680 explicitly authorized private schools to offer religious education. At the same time, the state now required all private institutions to adjust their "teaching personnel, study plans, and general norms and methods" to those of the public school system. These schools would, moreover, be subject to the same forms of inspection and supervision by the state as their public equivalents (Articles 46 and 47). The demands for the *Escuela Cubana en Cuba Libre* of the 1940s were made reality.

Cuba's Integral Education Reform Law was built on the agenda and priorities of the government, as well as on proposals laid out by other participants in the debate. It sought ongoing change that emphasized democratic, modern, and more active forms of learning and teaching. The law redistributed resources from urban to rural areas and from specialized to basic education. It regulated private schools to create a more uniform national and "revolutionary" culture. The law also brought the policy initiative back from civil society to the state. In fact, the educational forum discussed here was the last time the traditional republican civil society would have an open dialogue with the government on major reform issues in education. Law 680 laid the groundwork for a new, uniform national school system that radically altered the previously existing republican structure. In this sense, it was also the deathblow to a diverse, specialized, partly successful, but also uneven, scarcely coordinated, and highly corrupt

[159] Ibid., p. 138.

[160] Ibid., pp. 134–35.

administrative system that had allowed outstanding elite education in some urban centers (especially Havana), but had left a poor record of rural and rudimentary education.

Conclusion

Toward the end of its first year in power, the new government of Cuba had convened civil society at the former site of the parliament. It listened to the many concerns and visions of Cuban pedagogues. Shortly thereafter, the minister of education traveled to the stronghold of the revolution in eastern Cuba during the days that the Catholic Church dominated Havana's public sphere with its national congress. Armando Hart chose to present his plans on expanding and reforming Cuba's school system in the more impoverished and rebellious part of Cuba, parallel to the Catholic convention in the richest part of the island. In doing so, he accepted and defied the challenge of the Church over the primacy of children's education in Cuba. On 21 December 1959, three days before Christmas Eve, the Council of Ministers officially sanctioned a new approach to educational reform.

Politically, Law 680 was a compromise. While it legalized demands of progressive pedagogical forces and Cuba's communists from the 1930s and 1940s to increase state control of private education, as well as to simplify, survey, and plan the country's educational system, it also explicitly recognized the right of private schools and the practice of religious education. However, while permitting their continued operation on a private and for-profit basis, these schools were now required to assimilate to Cuba's public system or, as it came to be called, the national school system. Although subsequent regulation did not yet impose detailed content, and it left choices and autonomy (within limits) for textbooks, exams, and exercises, it was clearly the end of the more *laissez-faire* approach of previous administrations. The new regime streamlined the educational system and created a uniform structure for *all* Cuban schools, private and state-run. The implementation of this law was, of course, not uniform, immediate, or without resistance. But it certainly tied the new teachers' formation and education programs more explicitly to the changes brought about by the revolution. By doing so, the groundwork was laid for a system that could

later be used in a more instrumental, restrictive, and politicized manner in the context of growing tensions and mistrust.

Cuba's forum on education was also the last major event in which the organizations and associations of Cuba's prerevolutionary republic participated and expressed their opinions publicly, including disagreements about government policies and approaches. Debates and critiques continued thereafter, but they were carried out in different forms and spaces. In 1960, these differences became increasingly overshadowed by the dominant political cleavages of the Cold War, as the tensions inside and outside of Cuba intensified. These differences also had to be reflected in Cuba's teaching materials and textbooks.

4. Teaching the Revolution: The Transformation of Textbooks

On 5 March 1959, Minister of Education Armando Hart appeared on the popular evening television show *Ante la Prensa.* He was especially worried about Cuba's moral and civic education, and the ways in which students learned about their history, environment, and role in society. The twenty-eight-year-old explained that civic education should be taught from first grade on, "through example, the way children learn from their parents."

A new generation of school books and teachers were needed that could embody these examples. Many schoolteachers welcomed Minister Hart's announcement as a chance to revise, update, and produce new learning materials. Textbooks were "full of errors and lacunae," Havana's schoolteachers reported.[1] Hart announced the creation of a new commission to revise textbooks for school year 1959–60.[2] The commission, officially created by the Ministry of Education in July 1959, recommended authorizing all previously approved books.[3] Given the revolutionary changes in many other areas of society, the authorization to reprint republican-era schoolbooks provides an interesting example of continuity expanding into the second year of the revolution.[4]

In 1959 and throughout school year 1959–60, a reform impetus that sought change within continuity, not total rupture, dominated in the Ministry of Education and Cuba's pedagogical associations, as reflected in the approach of the textbook commission, described in the first part of this chapter. The commission's objective was to modernize the nation's education system and render learning more

---

[1] "En estudio la creación de centenares de aulas," *Noticias de Hoy* (15 March 1959).

[2] "Tiene que haber una sola política educacional, dijo el Dr. Hart, *Ante La Prensa*," *Diario de la Marina* (6 March 1959): 1–2A.

[3] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación (MINED), "Autorización para las escuelas públicas y privadas de la república durante el curso escolar 1959–60 de los libros de texto aprobada por la disuelta junta de superintendentes," in Resolución Ministerial 034590 (Havana: 26 August 1959).

[4] Some new textbooks were produced primarily for basic literacy skills and revolutionary orientation within the rebel army and other newly created institutions, such as the various literacy commissions. Literacy books, edited and promoted by an education department within the rebel army, included María Luisa Soler Acosta, *Aprendo a leer y escribir: Ensayo para el aprendizaje de lectura–escritura para los adultos* (Havana: Ministerio de Defensa. Departamento de Asistencia Técnica, Material y Cultural al Campesinado. Sección de Cultura, Ediciones y Publicidad, 1959). For more advanced-level readers, there was Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, *Manual de capacitación cívica* (Havana: Departamento de Instrucción, 1960).

interesting and interactive. Reform-minded pedagogues had diagnosed and lamented a lack of direction in the country's education for many years. They wanted to create a more direct interaction between students and the society in which the schools operated. At first, within the ministry's commission, few of the social and political aspects that became part of the transformations of Cuban society were referenced at all. Like the educational reform law itself, the commission was committed to republican ideals of democracy, solidarity, and *Cubanidad* (Cubanness), but its concerns remained mostly technical, not political. Some issues, such as the awareness of racial inequalities, were barely mentioned in the renewal of Cuba's pedagogical program, even though Prime Minister Castro explicitly related them to education.

Parallel to this technical reform of Cuba's textbooks, however, there was an impulse to raise consciousness and change the mentalities of Cuban students, which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. This was articulated most consistently and vehemently by Education Minister Hart and Prime Minister Castro, but the goal was shared by large sectors of Cuba's public intellectuals and pedagogues. Hart and Castro wanted to educate children in a way that would be consistent with the social, political, and cultural visions to which they aspired and for which they had fought. However, these ideas themselves had not been spelled out clearly. There was no blueprint or party program for Cuba's revolution. Instead, the reform agenda developed as time progressed and was modified in reaction to the consequences of some of the early government policies and the greater political context in which they evolved. As former Secretary of Public Instruction Jorge Mañach put it in a 1959 essay on educational reform, "societies are not being created; they form themselves and are being transformed under given circumstances."[5] This lack of an identifiable ideology in 1959 was part of the revolution's attractiveness for many, but was also a concern for others.

In the fall of 1959, the Ministry of Education began to promote textbooks that represented a new, revolutionary approach. Throughout the 1959–60 school year, both republican and revolutionary books were authorized, and they coexisted in Cuba's schools. This was the liberal momentum of the revolution,

[5] Jorge Mañach, "La educación para la sociedad: Ante la reforma de la enseñanza," *Bohemia* 51, no. 46 (15 November 1959).

in the sense that censorship had been lifted, freedom of expression was reestablished, and various visions of Cuba's past, present, and future coexisted in public debates, the media, and education, including textbooks. In the summer of 1960 this balance shifted again. Pedagogical and political criteria changed in response to rising violence and organized opposition to the revolution in the context of Cuba's geopolitical transformation. As a result, government control tightened over educational texts.

4.1 Innovation and continuity: Textbooks in 1959–60

The decision to reauthorize all Batista-era textbooks as well as the selection of members to work for the new commission indicated continuity, not a revolutionary break. Among the nine members Armando Hart designated for the commission were not only distinguished but also some more junior academics. Some had been revising textbooks during the Batista era; geographer and historian Pedro Cañas Abril was one of them.[6] Cañas Abril, born in 1902, was an influential geographer whose area of specialization was the Sierra Maestra mountains. During the 1950s, he was the director of Santiago de Cuba's public secondary school, el Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza. He then became dean of the School of Science and Philosophy at the newly founded university, la Universidad de Oriente, which in that decade became a hotspot for critics and opponents of Batista. In 1959, Hart made Cañas Abril the superintendent of secondary schools and director for educational planning. Historian and pedagogue José Elías Entralgo Vallina became another senior member for the textbook commission who had no active affiliation to the M-26-7. Born in 1903, he had been a professor of history at the University of Havana since 1934 and had published more than 150 articles on issues of slavery and religion, as well as economic and intellectual history. But like others in the group, Entralgo Vallina could show other political credentials in addition to his academic merits. He had been an opponent to the Machado presidency in 1930. The one person Hart chose who had a more revolutionary background was the young geographer Antonio Nuñez Jimenez, whose *Geografía*

[6] Cañas Abril had been the president of the commission in charge of reforming the history programs in Cuba's secondary schools in 1956–57. Sergio Aguirre, Benito Llanes, and Roberto M. González had also also part of that commission. Fernando Portuondo, *Historia de Cuba*, 6th ed. (Havana: Editorial Minerva, 1957), p. 4.

de Cuba had been censored in 1955. Despite the censorship, Nuñez Jimenez continued to work as a professor of geography at the Central University "Marta Abreu" in Las Villas. He had been a member of Cuba's Geographic Society since 1953 and a member of the U.S. Speleological Society since 1956. Overall, the commission was composed of distinguished academics of republican Cuba.

It took the commission one year to create and issue a new model for the evaluation of textbooks in the primary schools. The guidelines were finally sanctioned by a ministerial resolution in July 1960.[7] The revision was comprehensive. Fifty-four questions were raised, mostly of a pedagogical and technical nature. The type of textbook that the commission envisioned for Cuba's future schools was guided by a reform approach reflecting republican pedagogical concerns. It centered on the idea of stimulating individual activity and the students' relation to their community. Materials were supposed to support active learning, deemphasize memorizing and testing, and encourage outdoor activities and practical learning. Questions included "[Does the text seek the] stimulation of student activities and activities within Cuban communities? (. . .) [D]oes it teach students to think and work for themselves? (. . .) [D]oes it include projects and ideas? (. . .) [D]oes it help develop individual creativity?" The questionnaire was in tune with the general education reform law of December 1959.

The approach mirrored broader trends in pedagogical innovation at the time. Since 1944, when Cuba's Council of Superintendents for Public Schools had last changed the study plans and orientations, education had been expected to be "rational, intuitive, and experimental." Ana Echegoyen, an influential professor of pedagogical methodology at the University of Havana in the 1940s and '50s had declared, "learning needs to be active." Echegoyen was a member of a commission to reorganize primary education following the 1940 Constitution and was editor of a multivolume series for the training and orientation of schoolteachers, shaping generations of Cuban pedagogues.[8] In it she summarized the objectives of Cuba's

[7] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, Resolución Ministerial 00080, "Modelo para la evaluación de textos escolares primarios," ed. Departamento de Planificación Educacional (1 July 1960). In Fondo Resoluciones Ministeriales, MINED Documentation Center.

[8] Ana Echegoyen de Cañizares and Calixto Suárez Gómez, *La unidad de trabajo y el programa: Una guía para la aplicación de los cursos de estudios* (Havana: Cultural, 1945).

recently reformed republican study plans: "Cuba's schools do not impose one type of didactical method on all teachers but declare that the tendency leans toward the progressive school."[9]

The progressive school movement in Cuba

The reformist pedagogical movement dubbed *la Escuela Nueva* in Cuba (literally, "the new school," but closest to the school reform movement in the U.S.), also called *la Escuela Activa* ("active school"), or the *Escuela Progresiva* ("progressive school"), was built on a critique of the traditional school. It focused on the child and childhood development, promoting active, cooperative, and experimental learning. Education was conceived of as a key area of social development and democratic practices. The school reform movement had multiple origins, advocates, and periods of influence, from the Swiss Adolphe Ferrière (1879–1960) and Jean Piaget (1896–1980), to the French Célestin Freinet (1896–1966), and the American John Dewey (1859–1952) in the United States, among others. Several distinguished pedagogues of the Cuban republic were influenced by these approaches or actively promoted them.[10] Their works were often discussed and cited in Cuban pedagogical journals.[11] It had been in 1945 that Ana Echegoyen declared "the tendency toward the progressive school" to be the dominant approach in Cuba.[12]

Textbooks and reading materials were subject to revision and criticism as part of the progressive school reforms. A book still constituted the "principal means for the transmission of knowledge," according to Cuba's perhaps most influential pedagogue, Alfredo Aguayo, even though he also recognized the increasing importance of modern auxiliary means, such as radio and film—something the

---

[9] Ibid., p. 2.

[10] Herminio Almendros, a Spanish reform pedagogue who had been member of the Spanish republican Council for the New Unified School in 1936, had translated Freinet's work into Spanish and become a close friend of the Freinet family. In 1939 Almendros fled to Cuba. He earned a doctorate from the University of Santiago de Cuba in 1952. Almendros worked as an educative assessor for the Batista government, before leaving the country in a UNESCO mission. In 1959, Hart made him one of his principal advisors.

[11] See Jorge Mañach, *Dewey y el pensamiento americano*, *Cuadernos Taurus* series, 20 (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1959).

[12] Echegoyen de Cañizares and Suárez, *La unidad de trabajo y el programa*, p. 2.

revolutionary government would later discover for itself. Aguayo pressed for a renewal of the form and usages of schoolbooks. He wanted stimulating books "that provoke[d] the child to become active."[13]

Medardo Vitier, a distinguished Cuban philosopher and pedagogue who had also been Interim Secretary of Public Instruction in the 1930s, acknowledged that "almost all contemporary pedagogy centers on the character formation of the child and adolescent." But even more attention should be given to content than to form. For Vitier, whose writings were republished in 1959, "the orientation of the youth, concerning the choice of behavior" should be a primary concern. An adequate social environment and public administration ought to be part of a national education policy, since the school is "part of the social structure."[14] This integrative approach to education reform, targeting not just pedagogy but also social reforms and a supportive school environment, would influence Cuba's educational model for a long time. For Ana Echegoyen, "the most important problem education faces today" was its lack of direction.[15] In particular, the teaching of history, civic education, and Cuban literature needed "clear orientations for the paths of this generation."[16]

Like Vitier, Aguayo conceived of certain core subjects as necessary for the formation of a national community and consciousness. The teaching of geography "nourished and strengthened love for the fatherland." Geography books therefore should be active, illustrated, and used as guides and travel books rather than simply as textbooks for the purpose of memorizing, as they had been previously.[17] His writings and teachings had helped form Cuba's republican teachers and, by extension, the reform approach of the early revolution.

---

[13] A.M. Aguayo, *Didáctica de la Escuela Nueva*, 2nd ed., corrected and augmented (Havana: Cultural S.A., 1937), p. 167.

[14] Medardo Vitier Guanche, "La enseñanza y la cohesión cubana," in *Los mejores ensayistas cubanos*, ed. Salvador Bueno (Havana: Organización Continental de los Festivales del Libro, 1959).

[15] Echegoyen de Cañizares and Suárez, *La unidad de trabajo y el program*, p. 8.

[16] Vitier Guanche, "La enseñanza y la cohesión cubana," p. 72.

[17] Aguayo, *Didáctica de la escuela nueva*, p. 212.

Aguayo held contradictory views about the purpose of teaching history. He found that history was "not useful as an example or lesson," and should not be used as "lessons to teach loyalty or patriotism." Interpreted in the context of his time and his other writings, this was less an antinationalistic statement than a cautious approach to the instrumentality of national history in times of fascism. Aguayo read German and was a close follower of German pedagogical development under Hitler. Writing in 1940, he was convinced that history should be "an instrument to assure international peace."[18] He thought that an adequate education "in a fraternal spirit of comprehension" required books that "are written, or at least revised or censored" (*expurgado*) by competent authorities.[19] In other words, state control, revision, and censorship of certain pedagogical and political writings were accepted practices among Cuba's most distinguished pedagogues of the republic.

Reforms in a revolutionary context

Principles enshrined in Cuba's 1940 Constitution—prepared under the circumstances of the Second World War and the Civil War in Spain (from which came Cuba's largest group of immigrants)—were present in the 1959 reform concerns. Article 51 of the 1940 Constitution read, "All education, public and private, is inspired by a spirit of Cubanness [*Cubanidad*] and human solidarity, aimed at forming the consciousness of the students' love for their fatherland, its democratic institutions, and all those that fought for one or the other." Inculcating these notions of solidarity and international peace also resonated in the guidelines for Cuba's future textbooks. Cuba's postrevolutionary education was expected to "foster human conviviality among the Cuban communities and the rest of the world," according to the 1959

[18] Ibid., pp. 239, 252.

[19] Ibid.

commission.[20] The revolutionary government wanted to revive the republican spirit of the 1940 Constitution.

In addition to human solidarity, the revolutionary government sought to strengthen and redefine patriotism, democracy, and heroic examples. According to government views in 1959, patriotism had been compromised and deformed by an incomplete decolonization from Spanish influences and new forms of foreign domination from the U.S.A. New heroes and martyrs had come out of the anti-Batista revolution who now should enter the nation's pantheon. The high level of corruption, Batista's coups, and electoral farces had discredited Cuba's late republic. When Fulgencio Batista ended the republican democracy with his 1952 military coup, the lack of civic consciousness and citizen involvement in public affairs—required to preempt or undo a coup—had been associated with a hollow civic education, "an accumulated deficit of public education," as Jorge Mañach put it in 1953.[21] He pointed to the negligence of civic education as a primary cause for "Cuba's drama," the nation's incapacity to fulfill its ideals of true independence and democracy.[22] Civic education had become the "soul of the citizen" in training books for Cuban teachers during the three elected administrations that followed the 1940 Constitution. It was closely tied to "the existence of democracy."[23] As such, these traditions should now be revived in revolutionary Cuba.

Specific political concepts, such as a multiparty democracy, or a socialist society or citizenry, were not a consideration of the 1959 reform commission. Future learning materials at schools were, however, to be synchronized with the broader vision of the country's educational goals. Question 36 of the commission's questionnaire asked, "does [the text] comply with the objectives of education of the

---

[20] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, Resolución Ministerial 00080, "Modelo para la evaluación de textos escolares primarios," ed. Departamento de Planificación Educacional (1 July 1960). In Fondo Resoluciones Ministeriales, MINED Documentation Center.

[21] Jorge Mañach, "Significación del centenario martiano," *Revista Lyceum,* vol. 9, no. 33–34 (February–May 1953).

[22] "El drama de Cuba," *Bohemia*, "Edición de la Libertad" (January 1959).

[23] Mercedes García Tudurí, Francisco Domenech, Manuel de Zayas, et al. *Civica: Por profesores de la asignatura en el instituto de segunda enseñanza de la Habana*. (Havana: Casa Lorié, 1947), pp. 35, 43.

present times?" The open-ended question was a concern common to the evaluation of learning materials while seeking to avoid antiquated practices. Yet, in its broad, undefined formulation, "the objectives of education" could also serve as an open door to a more instrumental and politicized approach to teaching. Agrarian reform, diversification of agriculture, and foreign commerce had long been topics included in Cuba's public discourse and they were now part of government policies. Question 3 inquired whether the content was based on "experiences, interests, and needs of vital importance for Cuban students." As Cuba's external relations and the socioeconomic structure of the country changed radically through agrarian and urban reforms, and a new U.S. policy formed toward the island, matters of "vital importance" were also beginning to be redefined. For the reform pedagogues in 1959–60, however, these political concerns were a minor priority, representing only 2 out of 54 questions. Politics did not outweigh pedagogy in this early reform commission.

Cuba's progressive school movement, and therefore also the 1959 reformers in Hart's textbook commission, sought modern, readable, short, illustrative, and didactic texts for Cuba's students. To that end, the design, representation, illustration, comprehensibility, and adequacy for age and gender were scrutinized. "Are there sufficient illustrations?" was one concern; "is it beautiful and appealing to the senses?" was another. The commission was worried whether Cuba's future textbooks would echo and thus adequately represent gender differences: "[D]oes [the text] adapt to the sexual differences in the corresponding books?"

Feminist revolution or traditional gender roles?

Gendered role models were common practices at Cuban schools. Echegoyen's teachers' guidebook routinely distinguished exercises and games oriented to train gender-specific habits. There were two different sections on "becoming a useful and valued member of the family"—one for boys, another for girls. Girls, for example, had to learn how to use, take care of, and wear gender-adequate clothes.[24]

[24] See Work Unit 8, "Our home," in Echegoyen de Cañizares and Suárez Gómez, *La unidad de trabajo y el programa*, pp. 321–33.

Whereas coeducation was common practice in public schools, most private and especially Catholic schools remained segregated by gender. In 1949, Cuba had 95 primary Catholic schools for girls, 25 for boys, and only 7 coeducational, according to the Federation of Catholic Schools. At the secondary level, gender segregation was even stricter: Out of a total of 44 Catholic schools, only 2 were allowed to teach girls and boys together.[25] Ecclesiastical authorities continued to reject mixed education.

Private schools attracted enrollment by marking and thus reproducing social differences, and gender was one of them. The all-female Queens School in Havana's affluent Miramar neighborhood, for instance, offered parents an "indispensable education for any woman." Subjects mandated by the state curriculum were taught in the mornings. During lunch—"always under supervision"—young girls would learn the necessary "social and urban etiquette, in a refined atmosphere with discrete music."[26] Private schools began teaching social skills in the afternoon, whereas Cuban public schools had not been able to sustain the full school day since the economic crisis of 1929; they ended at noon. Many parents blamed this much-shortened school day for a decline in morals and social orientation of their children because they spent a good deal of time without supervision. This became an important reason for parents to send their children to private schools. In addition to domestic manners, deemed "indispensable" by all-female schools such as Queens, the subjects of English, French, ballet, and the appreciation of music and art formed part of upper-middle-class private education.[27] Most private schools practiced gender roles in part through gender segregation. Public schools in revolutionary Cuba were expected to help reproduce gender

---

[25] Mercedes García Tudurí, *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia, 55–147*, ed. Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez [et al.], vol. 10 of 10 vols., in *Historia de la nación cubana* (Havana: Editorial Historia de la Nación Cubana, 1952), p. 139.

[26] "Anuncio, Queens School," *Diario de la Marina* (10 September 1959): 9-A.

[27] In 1918, the first public school for domestic manners was founded in Havana by the Cuban teacher Angela Landa, who had attended Harvard's summer school in 1900 and was inspired by similar French education experiments. In response to the general decline in public education, these female-oriented education programs became much more important in the private school sector. Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

identities, at least in theory, and Cuba's leading pedagogues decided that textbooks were required to adequately differentiate gender roles.

There is little evidence in public debate or pedagogical journals at the time that traditional gender roles were directly challenged in Cuba's schools at the beginning of the revolution in 1959. The Havana-based Lyceum, founded in 1929, had been doing so to some extent however, and continued to promote the integration of women into education, culture, and professional activities after 1959. It was the most influential civic organization that promoted women's issues through a variety of philanthropic activities, such as hurricane relief, literacy work, campaigns for the consumption of Cuban products, and writing contests. In 1933, a Social Assistance Section began to promote adult education, rehabilitation for female prisoners, and job assistance—initiatives that had been pursued in cooperation with the University of Havana since 1943.[28] Their bimonthly journal, *Revista Lyceum*, was an important site for Cuban feminist debate and activities. In it, there was an analysis by communist writer Mirta Aguirre about the necessity of separate-gender education, which was also endorsed by José Martí. "Girls should learn the same as boys, so that they can talk to them as friends when they become older," Martí had written in his famous *Edad de oro*. But Aguirre stated that Martí had a "vision of feminine education [that was conceived] more for the man than for the woman, as a complementary existence to his."[29] Martí had claimed that women should learn the labors that "are natural to their beautiful gender but without taking away their noble gracefulness and enchantment, the public presence of their feminine qualities." While pointing out Martí's views, which in today's terms would be considered sexist for ascribing certain "natural qualities" to women and recommending a female education for the advantage of the man, Aguirre was careful also to defend the positive aspects of Martí's pedagogical reflections, for he indeed advocated female education.

[28] Vicentina Antuña, "El Lyceum," *Revista Lyceum* 11, no. 37 (February 1954).

[29] Mirta Aguirre, "La edad de oro y las ideas martianas sobre educación infantil," *Revista Lyceum* 9, no. 33–34 (February–May 1953): 55.

Maria Luisa Dolz (1854–1928), Cuba's founding figure of feminism, had long lobbied for the right of women to education as a necessary part of their emancipation. But she also maintained a traditional gender division. Dolz was convinced that the new Cuba would need a more active incorporation of "the woman's soul." Proper education of mothers as "the natural mentors of all men" was necessary, since "schools are nothing more than the extension of domestic life."[30] This traditional and structural approach to women's integration and equal opportunities prevailed in Cuba's public debate during 1959. Gendered roles in public and private life were rarely questioned in Cuba, or elsewhere at the time, and were not made an explicit part of educational innovation in that year.[31]

Unlearning racism

Rethinking Cuba's racial relations was equally absent in the commission to reform Cuba's new learning materials. This is all the more surprising as, unlike in the case of gender inequality, Prime Minister Castro had called repeatedly for campaigns to overcome racial inequality and prejudice, including in education, in early 1959. Castro considered the "fight against prejudices" as "one of the most difficult that any government can face." In March 1959, he was unusually candid, acknowledging on Cuban television that the problem of racism was endemic in his country. "[T]here are people who go to church and they are racists; there are people who call themselves revolutionaries and they are racists; there are good people who are racists; and there are educated people who are racists."[32] Castro perceived racism to be fundamentally "a problem of education." Education reproduced racial prejudice but could also be used to

[30] María Luisa Dolz y Arango, *La liberación de la mujer cubana por la educación: Homenaje de la ciudad de la Habana en el centenario de su nacimiento, 1854—4 de octubre—1954* (Havana: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad, 1955), pp. 90–95. Under the auspices of social scientist Raúl Roa, the director of the Department of Culture within the Ministry of Education led by Aureliano Sánchez Arango (1948–52), an important series of Cuban reform texts was published that included the topic of education and women.

[31] Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba*.

[32] "Quizás el más difícil de todos los problemas: la discriminación racial. Comparencia en el Canal 12 de televisión, 25 Marzo 1959," in Fidel Castro and Instituto de Historia del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, *El Pensamiento De Fidel Castro: Selección Temática* (Havana: Editorial Política, 1983), pp. 395–98.

overcome it. To Castro it seemed logical that children could not "develop egalitarian and fraternal habits" if they were separated at schools as white and black Cubans.[33]

Race-based affirmative action?

Cuba's schools were racially desegregated in law as early as 1878, when the colonial government opened public schools to children of color.[34] Despite this, racial divisions continued and likely increased as the country's vastly expanding private schools continued to be "virtually segregated" by race.[35] Since Cuba's independence, there had been several attempts to reduce racial barriers in Cuban society, including in education. In 1909, the Independent Party of Color (Partido Independiente de Color, or PIC), founded by Afro-Cuban War of Independence veterans, criticized private schools because of their white-racist practices. However, in 1910 a legal amendment (the *Ley Morúa*) had made political representation based on any race or class identity illegal, rendering Afro-Cuban lobbying for antiracist policies virtually impossible. The government's draconic reaction to armed protests by PIC sympathizers following the criminalization of the party in 1912 (some 3,000 Afro-Cubans had been killed) had ended the possibility of race-based policies barring discrimination against Afro-Cubans for decades. It had also left a deep scar in the country's, and especially the Afro-Cubans', collective memory. But these racial inequalities and conflicts between white and black citizens were not taught at school.

---

[33] This thinking was influenced by his personal history. Fidel Castro himself had experienced very different educational settings. To start, he attended a public preschool in Birán in northeastern Cuba, where in his own memories everyone was "very, very poor," then he enjoyed a more exclusive Jesuit education, first in Santiago de Cuba, and then in a secondary school in Havana. But as the son of a newly rich yet isolated Spanish-born farmer in rural Cuba, he has claimed to have "never acquired a bourgeois culture" that set him apart. At the same time, nevertheless, Fidel's parents prohibited him from mingling with black children of Haitian descent "for health reasons," giving evidence of the widely held racial and social prejudices in Cuban society at the time. Fidel Castro and Ignacio Ramonet, *Cien horas con Fidel*, 3rd ed., including various of Ramonet's questions for the French edition. (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2006), p. 79.

[34] In 1863 and 1871, special regulation required the creation of separate schools, *escuelas incompletas,* for "boys and girls of color," with the objective that they "receive primary education directed essentially toward moral and religious education," in José Esteban Liras, *Resumen de la legislación de primera enseñanza vigente en la isla de Cuba* (Havana: Imp. "La Propagandista," 1895), p. 15.

[35] Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, *Envisioning Cuba* series. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 143.

In republican Cuban schools, teachers were asked to discuss with their students "the noble purpose of *Ley Morúa*" and how "experience has shown that the harmonious union between whites and blacks in Cuba" is possible.[36] As part of the institutionalization and legal reforms that followed the political mobilizations of the 1930s, a Cuban Federation of Black Societies, la Federación de Sociedades Negras Cubanas (FSNC), was organized under the leadership of Serafín Portuondo Linares. He was the son of a PIC cofounder and a veteran of Cuba's Army of Liberation. The FSNC brought together 205 different groups with recreational and educational purposes.[37] The federation began to work closely with the Cuban communist party (which was still allowed at the time) and helped to introduce several legal proposals to the Cuban congress in the 1940s to take specific action against white racial discrimination toward blacks and to advance Afro-Cuban interests. Even so, the communist party focused mostly on the class character of Cuba's private educational system, of which racial discrimination was only one—if important—aspect. The party sought to penalize discrimination, but more importantly, it wanted to increase funding for public education so that social mobility would not remain a privilege of graduates from private schools or of children from affluent families.

In a press conference in July 1959, Castro had explained that the government had decided not to employ any legal action to overcome racism since "coercion (. . .) sometimes can be counterproductive." Instead, racial prejudices ought to be fought with "arguments, persuasion, and education."[38]

Anti-discrimination in 1959

The government began to desegregate racial spaces after Fidel's speech on 22 March 1959, which emphasized racial inequalities. Beaches and parks were made public, or their dimensions were redesigned

[36] Echegoyen de Cañizares and Suarez, *La unidad de trabajo y el programa,* p. 424.

[37] Serafín Portuondo Linares, *Los independientes de color: Historia del partido independiente de color*, 2nd. ed., corrected and improved. (Havana: Editorial Caminos, 2002), pp. vii–x.

[38] Fidel Castro, "La persuasión: El medio principal de lucha contra el prejuicio racial Conferencia de Prensa en el hotel Habana Hilton, 27 Julio 1959," in Castro and Instituto de Historia del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, *El pensamiento de Fidel Castro: Selección Temática*, pp. 409–10.

to make them more accessible.[39] But public pressure about racial exclusion was not only exerted by black members of the rebel army, who were barred access to hotels or restaurants, or by civic organizations such as Club Atenas, which had long lobbied for racial inclusion. There were also fears and concerns expressed by white Cubans of all classes. The discriminatory practices of exclusive private spaces were difficult to tackle without open confrontation. In private companies, new labor laws gave unions the right to influence up to half of all new hiring. In the public sector, however, the government was able to apply nondiscriminatory hiring policies. Even before the revolution, Cuba had had a relatively high number of government employees—estimated at 185,000 out of a total of circa 1.8 million actively employed.[40] This number of public employees grew further through the nationalizations in 1959 and 1960, but without any legislation that could effectively penalize them, racist practices—even among public employees—remained without legal consequences.[41] A new labor law in January 1960 required all new hiring to be approved by the appropriate commission of the Ministry of Labor, exemplifying an increasing and more effective state influence.

This structural approach to problems of inequality in race and gender focused on the alteration of socioeconomic conditions. In some cases, desegregation provided access to previously exclusive places. But on a large scale this happened only when private spaces of recreation and culture that had been

[39] Fuente, *A Nation for All,* pp. 266–70.

[40] Numbers for public employees are based on Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed., *Latin American Histories Index* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 227. Numbers on the overall employment situation taken from the 1956–57 labor census, cited in Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas, *Un estudio sobre Cuba: Colonia, república, experimento socialista; Estructura económica, desarrollo institucional, socialismo y regresión*, ed. Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1963), p. 1616.

[41] Since February 1959, Cuba's legal system had officially been based on the so-called *Ley Fundamental*, which was an adaptation of the 1940 Constitution that conferred all legislative powers of the Cuban Congress to the Council of Ministers in the provisional government. Article 20 declared any "discrimination based on sex, race, gender, color, or class" illegal and punishable. The article was complemented by the usual qualification, that "the law establishes the sanctions" that violators of this principle would face. Yet, like many other laws referred to in the 1940 Constitution, they were never enacted. Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa* 1*, Proclámas y leyes del gobierno provisional de la revolución: 1 a 28 de febrero de 1959*, 5th ed. (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1960), p. 13.

racially exclusive began to be nationalized in 1960. In education, this did not happen until the summer of 1961. In neither case were racist practices the driving force behind the expropriation.

Educating against racial prejudice

In addition to creating more access and opportunities, above all in workplaces, Fidel Castro proposed a "national campaign" to raise consciousness about the racial problem. Three days after his 22 March speech on racism had caused strong reactions, he chose a conciliatory tone on television: "We will invite everyone to develop a greater friendship between people of one color and another." In a Jesuit spirit, Castro suggested to do this "with love" and to avoid hate and divisions. "We propose to educate ourselves and to destroy the stereotype that has been created throughout centuries." The Martí-inspired idea of racial harmony and unity dominated the discourse and was happily adopted by government and private entities (Figure 4-1). But as a Jesuit student turned *guerrillero*, Castro also conceived of the campaign against racism as just "another battle" that had to be won.[42]

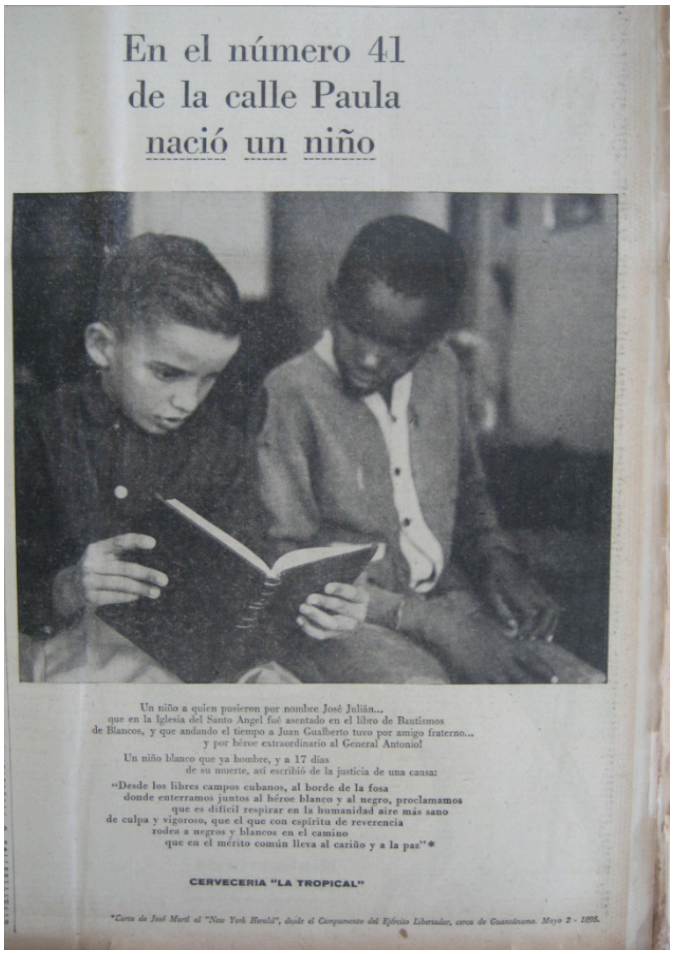


Figure 4-1
Inspired by Castro's campaign to educate against racism, Cuba's famous brewery *La Tropical* ran an advertisement in newspapers, featuring a poem by José Martí on racial harmony, written in 1895. It is illustrated by two Cuban boys—white and black—reading together from a schoolbook.

[42] "Contra los prejuicios raciales o religiosos, por la unidad entre los cubanos," *Canal 12* (25 March 1959), in Castro and Instituto de Historia del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, *El pensamiento de Fidel Castro*, p. 570.

Throughout 1959, a variety of lectures and events were organized on the issue of racial discrimination at the university, at Cuba's association for the United Nations, and through the Cultural Department at Cuba's Ministry of Education. The ministry sponsored activities in late 1959 aimed at making racial inequalities visible, while at the same time calling for racial harmony and unity. At the nation's most important art museum, El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, a photo exhibition—*Cuba*: *One Country, Indivisible; Themes of Interest on Racial Integration*—was put on display in November and December of 1959. It showed a selection of photographs chosen from a contest that Havana's teachers' college had launched. Different pedagogical organizations picked up on the theme.[43] (Figure 4-2)

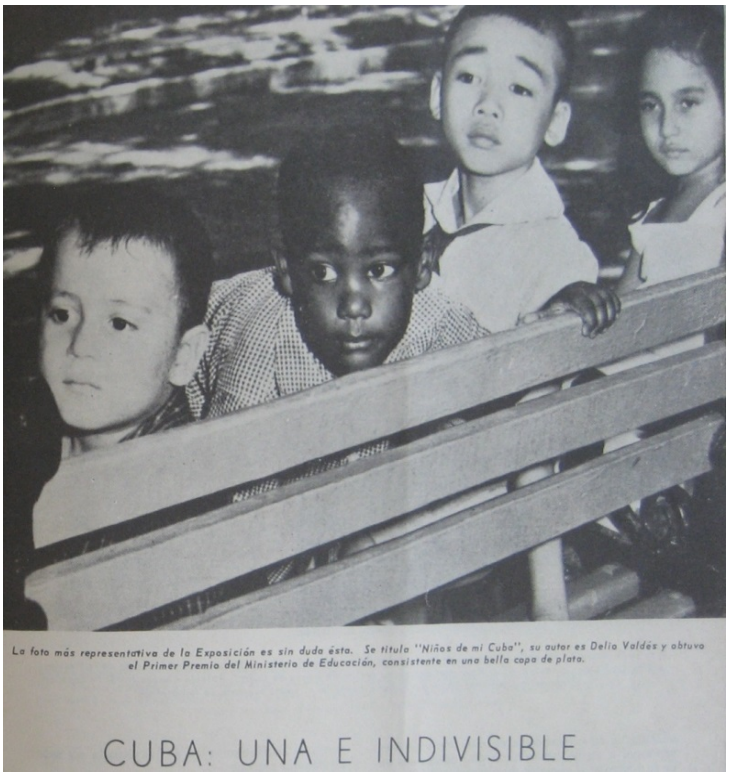


Figure 4-2
The first-prize photo, titled *Children of My Cuba*, by Delia Valdés, at the MINED-sponsored photo competition, displayed at Cuba's National Art Museum in late 1959. Visualizing inclusion—racial and gender—in Cuba's new schools was a goal of the government-launched campaign against prejudices.

Racial imagery in textbooks

Schoolbooks continued to portray Cuba's population of African descent in traditional and negative ways as "primitive" and without agency. Two of the most influential textbooks shaping children's ideas about

[43] Rafaela Chacón Nardi, "Cuba: Una e indivisible," *Pedagogo: Órgano oficial del Colegio Nacional de Pedagogos* 1. *Nueva Epoca*, no. 1 (1959).

the racial and ethnic aspects of Cuba's population in schools, the geography books by Antonio Nuñez Jiménez and Leví Marrero, varied little in their presentation of facts about race. Both reported the standard information about origins, migration patterns, and numbers in Cuba's ethnic composition. Marrero wrote in much more detail about the regional variations within the origins of the estimated one million Africans originally sold as slaves to Cuba.[44] Nuñez Jiménez was less specific: "[T]he negro came from primitive places."[45] Nuñez Jiménez's book was illustrated with many ethnic photos—most taken by the author—that depicted, among others, Cuban Indians. In a subsection on "Human Geography and Politics," he portrayed "typical" rural activities such as peasants playing dominoes or rural women washing clothes.[46] There was little differentiation of cultural or religious practices in either book. "Precultural elements" from African tribes mixed with Cuban culture and contributed "new voices, rhythms, and primitive religious beliefs," Nuñez Jiménez found.[47] Leví Marrero recognized African contributions to Cuban culture, but characterized them as "primitive." For Marrero, of Jewish descent, Cuba's religion was Catholic. He recognized the presence of Jewish synagogues in Cuba, but did not mention African religious practices.[48]

The two books differed significantly in their judgments of the information presented. Nuñez Jiménez used moral statements to influence students when describing the working conditions of slaves as "terribly unjust." He wrote in "simple language" as he sought an easy understanding, following "modern pedagogical tendencies." In his preface, the author explained, "racial discrimination" was not only "stupid

[44] Leví Marrero, *Geografía de Cuba*, 3rd ed. (Havana: Editorial Selecta O'Reilly, 1957), p. 147.

[45] Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba (adaptada al nuevo programa revolucionario de bachillerato)*, 2nd ed. (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959), p. 183.

[46] Ibid., pp. 174–83.

[47] Ibid., p. 202.

[48] Marrero, *Geografía de Cuba*, pp. 388–89.

and antipatriotic," but it also "lacked any sense in a republic forged by the libertarian brotherhood of whites, blacks, and also Asians."[49] In that he echoed the dominant republican rhetoric of racial harmony.

Leví Marrero's description of slavery and its consequences differed slightly. In his account, Cuban slavery was "considered more benign" compared to slavery in other societies. In addition, the circa 130,000 Chinese workers brought to Cuba after the abolition of the slave trade in the late 1840s had "a better disposition than the Africans for responsible work." In his view, the institution of slavery was abolished when the "most representative figures" of the Cuban nation "denounced and combatted slavery." Afro-Cuban agency is absent in this description.[50] While Marrero showed no moral or political judgment on slavery or racism, he did express one with other themes. This rendered his self-proclaimed neutral and "objective" description doubtful. He presented the exodus of young and qualified Cubans to the United States, for example, as "especially lamentable," for it revealed an "inadequate political economy."[51]

Marrero and Nuñez Jiménez's geography books represented two different accounts and approaches to Cuban society, including slavery and its consequences. While Marrero wrote from a distanced perspective, giving agency to Cuba's elite, Nuñez Jiménez discussed and condemned the existence of racism, only to warn against collective action that could threaten revolutionary unity. By doing so, he reproduced republican enmities against race-based action in a new context.

The failure to continue an incipient public debate about race and racism "facilitated the survival and reproduction of the very racist stereotypes that the revolutionary leadership claimed to oppose," as de la Fuente has argued. The failure to stimulate this debate at schools and to challenge racial representations

[49] Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba (adaptada al nuevo programa revolucionario de bachillerato)*, pp. 7, 183.

[50] Marrero, *Geografía de Cuba*, pp. 147–48.

[51] Ibid., p. 163.

through the revision of Cuba's textbooks was another missed opportunity.[52] As a result, Cuban textbooks remained blind to white racism for years to come.

On New Year's Day 1960, Fidel Castro hosted a glamorous banquet at the Hilton Havana Hotel for invitees of Cuba's new Institute for a National Tourist Industry (INIT). This happened against a background of deteriorating relations with the United States, a decline in tourism and revenues stemming from it, and the very critical image of the Cuban revolution that was rampant in U.S. media. (Cuba's weekly *Bohemia* called it the "vomiting of international media on the Cuban revolution" in December 1959.)[53] Castro wanted to present the image of a new and better Cuba to the guests. Directed especially toward those from the United States, he informed them—in English—that his government's campaign had already been successful: "[W]e can say that the problem of racial discrimination no longer exists in Cuba. You may convince yourself by going to any area that you want. That we have achieved through dialogue, by us talking to the people of Cuba."[54] Some of the invitees, especially from the racially still legally segregated United States, seemed to agree with Castro. "The elimination of discrimination and segregation in Cuba (. . .) is a big step forward in the Americas," John H. Sengstacke, publisher of the *Chicago Daily,* told Cuban reporters. Castro took this statement a step further and declared racial equality to be part of a new definition of democracy: "No country can really call itself democratic as long as it maintains racial discrimination." Revolutionary Cuba, in other words, had already become more democratic than the United States.[55]

---

[52] Fuente, *A Nation for All*, p. 295.

[53] Paquito Cao, "Como debemos prepararnos si invaden a Cuba," *Bohemia* 51, no. 52 (27 December 1959): 52.

[54] Marta Rojas, "A Cuba pueden venir todos los hombres y mujeres del mundo sin discriminación"—Dr. Fidel Castro," *Bohemia* 52, no. 2 (10 January 1960).

[55] Ibid.: 54.

Books and reading culture: The state, the Church, and the private sector

Race was a concern in Cuban schools and in a society that could have been revolutionized, but was mostly reproduced in traditional ways. But whereas the textbook commission attempted to resuscitate republican values of pedagogical improvement and innovation that had been considered lost or unfulfilled, the government also worried about the social aspects of the teaching materials. It worried about providing not just more modern and attractive books, but also about making them widely accessible. As part of its policy to improve public education and expand educational outreach, the new regime sought to ameliorate the material conditions in Cuba's public, and especially rural, schools. One important aspect of this was the availability of learning materials.

In June 1959, a full-page advertisement by the Cuban editorial house Publicaciones Culturales, S.A., expressed its gratitude to the government for having subsidized textbooks printed during the Batista era for the upcoming school year. In the prevailing spirit of public–private cooperation during Cuba's first year of revolution, Publicaciones Culturales generously offered to sell all schoolbooks to the Ministry of Education at production costs for the supply in public schools, and even offered a 10-percent share of their profits to the government.[56] The opening ceremony for school year 1959–60 also showcased the successful public–private collaboration. On 14 September 1959, some 35,000 students and teachers from Havana's public and private schools were brought to Ciudad Libertad, the military camp converted to school city, on the outskirts of Havana. Companies such as Omnibus Metropolitanos and Club Bancario provided the transportation, without charge, while other private entities donated generously for the success of the event. Cuban manufacturers provided ice cream, candy, and soft drinks "in great quantities." The Ministry of Education printed a special edition of José Martí's *Versos sencillos*, a poetry collection he wrote in U.S. exile, and distributed paper Cuban flags to every attendee.[57]

---

[56] The private publishing house held exclusive copyrights over the schoolbooks, which obliged the government to pay for a reprint of previous editions according to the company's terms. See "El gobierno revolucionario y la educación popular," *Diario de la Marina* (21 June 1959).

[57] "'Son Ustedes los que tienen que hacer la revolución: Para eso tienen que estudiar'—F. Castro," *Diario de la Marina* (15 September 1959).

In the summer of 1959, the president of the Cuban Book Institute (Instituto Cubano del Libro, or ICL), Florentino Prieto, announced a substantial reduction in retail prices for the nation's schoolbooks. Costs would be lowered by 25 percent for primary schools and 35 percent for secondary schools.[58] Government subsidies were a means to ease access to otherwise hard-to-get learning materials for students at public schools. Rural students were most affected by the costs and lack of accessibility of schoolbooks. A 1959 study of 26,000 children in the central province of Las Villas found that the average Cuban student owned fewer than two (1.8) books on average, for a total of fifteen different subjects throughout six years of primary schooling. The largest number of books in students' possession were in reading Spanish (*lectura*) with 46 percent, followed by math, with 14 percent. History, agriculture, and geography accounted for only 5 percent of all available books reported.[59]

By printing books in greater quantities and intervening by providing subsidies, the government sought to change this situation and bring education to the countryside so that primary education would not be just a constitutional right but also a social reality. The government was not alone in this endeavor. The Church and Cuba's private sector also felt a need to intervene and position themselves as legitimate providers of cultural and educational goods. They, too, competed for popular sympathies and legitimacy in rural Cuba. In conjunction with the government policies, the private sector aimed at improving the rural students' material well-being and improved reading habits.

Facing increased government activity in the fields of culture and education, Cuba's private sector did not remain passive. In September 1959, the Galbán Lobo Trading Co., S.A., "in coordination with the Ministry of Education," created a foundation for the country's rural schools, the Patronato Pro-Escuela Rural. Its vice president, business magnate Juan Pujol, succeeded in collecting 70,000 Cuban pesos—the

---

[58] "El gobierno revolucionario y la educación popular," *Diario de la Marina* (21 June 1959).

[59] Universidad Central de Las Villas, Escuela de Pedagogía, *La educación rural en Las Villas: Bases para la redacción de unos cursos de estudios*, *Nuevo Plan de Publicaciones*, 15 (Santa Clara, Cuba: Departamento de Relaciones Culturales Escuela de Pedagogía, 1959), pp. 133–34.

peso at the time being equivalent to the U.S. dollar—in five months.[60] During the Public Forum on Educational Reform in November 1959, a representative of this *Patronato* announced an expansion of private initiative into other areas of education, convinced that this cannot be left to the state. [61] The emphasis on and confidence in the private sector to help solve Cuba's social problems had been typical in the 1950s. For some, it should have continued that way. Others, including officials in the new government, blamed previous policies as being responsible for some of Cuba's deplorable conditions, especially in the countryside, and thought to change the approach. Batista's basic premises had included a "liberal international trade policy, friendly disposition to foreign direct investment, and a policy of noninterference," even if his development policy, including his Two Year Plan (1953–55) and the Economic and Social Development Plan (1955–58) had been influenced by Keynesianism.[62] In 1956, the U.S. Department of Commerce had published a guide for U.S. investors in Cuba, confirming "the general [friendly] attitude of the Cuban Government and people, both toward private initiative and toward foreign participation in the country's economic development."[63] In 1959, under the anti-Batista government, this initiative shifted back to the state. Early economic advisors to the revolutionary government recommended a more active role of the state, with industrialization substituting for importation, and economic planning to build the necessary social and material infrastructure for development. Two key figures in this were Central Bank president Felipe Pazos and, to even a greater extent, the Mexican director of the Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL) in Havana, Juan Noyola Vásquez,

[60] "Adquiere pupitres para la escuela rural un patronato," *Diario de la Marina* (1 April 1959): 8-B.

[61] Govt. Docs., Cuba, "Información pública sobre la reforma de la enseñanza," vol. 2, p. 8, in *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional*, 12 vols. (Havana: Sección de Impresión del Capitolio Nacional, 1959).

[62] Michael Patrick McGuigan, "Fulgencio Batista's Economic Policies, 1952–58," PhD diss. in history, University of Miami, 2012, p. 287.

[63] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign Commerce, American Republics Division, *Investment in Cuba: Basic Information for United States Businessmen* (Washington, DC: 1956), p. 4. See also McGuigan, "Fulgencio Batista's Economic Policies, 1952–58."

who worked closely with Ernesto Guevara as Pazos's successor from late 1959 onward.[64] Whereas during the first year a spirit of public–private partnership had dominated, this balance began to shift, as in 1960, for example, toward the state-subsidized private enterprise for social necessities such as schoolbooks.

By March 1959, Cuba's Ministry of Education had created a new national press, the Imprenta Nacional, to expedite access to reading materials. This institution was initially "a case of unresourced good intentions," for it lacked equipment and infrastructure and instead relied on private presses for actual production.[65] Despite the public–private collaboration in 1959, private companies sensed a shift from the private to the public sector in the new government's priorities to address Cuba's social needs, including education. In a New Year's survey among Cuban opinion leaders in 1960, Emeterio Padrón, president of Cuba's National Association of Industrialists, criticized "the government's undefined position vis-à-vis private enterprise." He thought, however, that overall, "the accomplishments of the revolutionary government are positive." Padrón lauded several reforms, among them the agrarian, urban, and tax reforms, as important contributions to the country's development and economic growth. He recognized the right of the state to intervene in certain key sectors of "high national interest," but hoped the state would limit itself, protect private enterprise, and "avoid competition with it."[66]

---

[64] Juan Noyola Vásquez graduated in 1949 from the Centros de Estudios Sociales del Colegio de Mexico with a thesis on "Desequilibrio fundamental y fomento ecónomico en México." He worked for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC, and for CEPAL in Chile in the 1950s, before being sent to Cuba in January 1959. In October 1960, CEPAL was forced to close its mission in Havana due to pressures from the Organization of American States (OAS). Noyola sent his resignation letter to Director Raúl Prebisch, but continued to work for the Cuban government until his early death in October 1962. Juan F. Noyola, *La economía cubana en los primeros años de la revolución y otros ensayos*, 1st ed., *Economía y demografía* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1978).

For Pazo's early articulation of Cuba's future economic development, where he argues for a "modification of Cuba's foreign commercial relations" and an increased role of the state, see Felipe Pazos, *Influencia de la escuela de ciencias económicas en el desarrollo económico del país; Discurso de apertura del año académico 1955–1956* (Santiago de Cuba: Universidad de Oriente, 1955), p. 14.

[65] Par Kumaraswami, Antoni Kapcia, and Meesha Nehru, *Literary Culture in Cuba: Revolution, Nation-Building and the Book* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 65.

[66] José Luis Masso and Bernardo Viera Trejo, "Que opina Usted del primer año del gobierno revolucionario? Encuesta anual de *Bohemia*," *Bohemia* 52, no. 1 (3 January 1960).

Competition from the Church

Religious organizations, especially Cuba's Catholic Church, formed the second important group of agents in this partnership and competition with state initiatives in education. Various religious groups had earlier carried out literacy and basic education programs in rural Cuba, and continued to do so in 1959. It was a Presbyterian minister, Raúl Fernández Ceballos, who was designated the first revolutionary literacy commission's director in February 1959 by Minister Hart. Concerns and competition between Catholicism and communism were evident from the beginning of the revolution.[67]

In preparation for Catholic Student Day in March 1960, the *Diario de la Marina* called on Catholic students to donate books for the recently government-created rural libraries. The Catholic Student Youth Organization (Juventud Estudiantil Católica, or JEC) had asked the Ministry of Education for recommendations of books it could collect. Among the titles were *Robinson Crusoe*, *Treasure Island*, a book on Abraham Lincoln, *Don Quixote*, and José Martí's *La edad de oro*. These books were put on sale for subsidized prices at local bookstores.

Schoolbooks by Cuban authors, such as Leví Marrero's *Geografía de Cuba,* were also included.[68] On 12 March, more than 30,000 Catholic students marched through the streets of Havana, from the Presidential Palace to the Martí Monument at the Parque Central, "reaffirming their religious beliefs." A public Mass near the presidential palace was held. The books, purchased individually by each of the students, were collected by JEC representatives and sent off to other provinces.[69]

This religious ceremony in Cuban public spaces fifteen months into the revolution is evidence of the continued claim by the Catholic Church of mobilizing and distributing goods in conjunction with the

[67] The Catholic biweekly *La Quincena* described these tensions in a report about the 4,000 rebel army members under Guevara's command at La Cabaña fortress. Although "the rebels show[ed] an extraordinary religious hunger" as many were baptized, and even more learned the catechism from Catholic priests at the Cabaña, the rebels simultaneously "and without the slightest scruple read the communist daily *Hoy*." See (Padre) María Errasti, "Dios en La Cabaña de medianoche: Como mueren los fusilados en La Cabaña. Exclusivo," *La Quincena,* vol. 5, no. 4 (February 1959): 36.

[68] "Misa de campaña y desfile a martí de alumnos Católicos," *Diario de la Marina* (4 March 1960).

[69] "Día del Estudiante Católico en La Habana," *Diario de la Marina,* Supp. (13 March 1959).

state. Four months after Cuba's first National Catholic Congress in late November had attracted several hundred thousand believers to Havana's Civic Square (later Revolutionary Square) and just weeks after the first Soviet exhibit in Havana, the Church showed increased activity and visibility in Cuba's society, especially in its educational landscape. Like the private sector, the Church did not want to leave social policy to the state alone, much less to a revolutionary government that became increasingly radical and influenced by secular and atheist forces critical of the United States and sympathetic to communism.

By bringing education and books to the country's rural poor, Cuba's Catholic hierarchy also acted in accord with guidelines and principles of the Fourth Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) in November 1959: "[I]n order to prevent the youth from [following] Marxist doctrines it is mandatory to impart (. . .) the Christian doctrine of the church in primary and secondary schools and complement this by approaching the most humble classes (. . .)." Catholic authorities feared communist infiltration, especially in education, and warned directors of secondary schools and universities "to be vigilant in order to prevent penetration."[70]

The initiative to provide books to Cuba's "most humble classes" was an act of charity, carried out with enthusiasm and altruism by significant parts of Cuba's Catholic youth and in partial cooperation with Cuba's Ministry of Education. At the same time, it was designed as a political measure to prevent government indoctrination of rural Cubans through the distribution and teaching of texts that ran contrary to Catholic tenets. Throughout 1959 and parts of 1960, the government and parts of the Church continued to cooperate in various educational projects with the state. But like private–public partnerships, the relationship between the state and the Church became increasingly antagonistic in 1960. One of the reasons Cuba's Catholic Church and parts of the business community became wary of the revolutionary government was its increasingly radical approach to addressing social issues by transforming the nation's economic and social structure. The ideas for this transformation were based on a variety of influences and

[70] Conclusions from the Fourth Meeting of Latin American Bishops in Bogotá, Colombia, in November 1959, were reprinted in "Nadie puede ser buen Católico y a la vez verdadero socialista," *Diario de la Marina* (1 May 1960): 1-A.

sources, and the texts taught at Cuban schools and universities played an important role in the formation of revolutionary consciousness. One of the most influential of these texts was a geography book.

4.2 From subversion to revolution? A case study in Cuba's geography

Probably no book had a greater impact on the revolutionary leadership and its understanding of Cuba's socioeconomic environment than Antonio Núñez Jiménez's *Geografía de Cuba*. Written as a textbook for Cuba's secondary schools, the first edition was published in July 1954 but was soon prohibited by the Batista government. The text was read in the revolutionaries' Mexican exile, and it became mandatory reading for the study circles of imprisoned revolutionaries at the Presidio Modelo on the Isle of Pines, as well as in the guerrilla war.[71] The book was one of the three books that Commander Ernesto ("Che") Guevara asked for while in the Sierra Maestra.[72] Published a year after the Moncada attacks, the book with its more than 400 pages was among the most comprehensive and updated of those available on contemporary Cuba. It included preliminary data from the 1953 census that evidenced immense social disparities in the country, in addition to fifteen years of research by the author, much of it exploration in the field. It was the "most notable publication" showing the "human and economic geography of our country," declared the Cuban Geographic Society at the time.[73] Most importantly, though, it was an influential book for a generation of young radicals who sought to overthrow the Batista government and to implement a reform program to make Cuba's 1940 Constitution a social reality.

Núñez-Jiménez was not just a geographer of "excellent technical formation," the U.S.-educated Jorge Mañach wrote. He was also young and, like the other revolutionaries,"as a young man he is

[71] Peter Hulme, *Cuba's Wild East: A Literary Geography of Oriente*, American Tropics (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 429–30.

[72] Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1997), p. 222. Guevara later made the geographer part of his column in preparation for the attack on Santa Clara, where Nuñez Jiménez taught at the university.

[73] Cited in Jorge Mañach, "Carta sobre un libro ocupado," *Diario de la Marina* (10 February 1959): 4-A.

passionate about his ideas, "whose radical tone is evident."[74] Núñez-Jiménez's work on Cuba's human geography played a key role in the formation of revolutionary consciousness in Cuba's education system after 1959. First, the book was used inside the rebel army—both before and after coming to power. Then, from 1959 on, the Ministry of Education used the book as a model for revolutionary scholarship and teaching. Initially in competition with more traditional texts, it would be assigned in Cuban schools and rural education programs that would begin in the summer of 1960.

1955: Subversion or academic freedom

Geografía de Cuba was first published in August 1954, a year after the Moncada attacks.[75] Shortly after its publication, Minister of Education José López Isa received "justified denunciations" that the book contained communist propaganda. One such denunciation likely came from President Fulgencio Batista himself. Batista described the incident in his memoirs:

> Because of the little time the use of power left for us our [sic] wife assumed the major part of the responsibility to guide our children.[76] We used to talk to them in their rooms (. . .). The conversation usually touched on their grades at school at some point while we browsed through their books. One Friday—we remember this well—we discovered a *Geography of Cuba* that somebody had brought to them that day. We opened it with curiosity. We were surprised by some of the photographs and certain expressions. Textbook? (. . .) We gave the book to an entrepreneur friend. It was a communist pamphlet! We did not know the author. He was an unknown person at the time, an obscure character. Later he would become notorious for his criminal acts, his relentless cruelty and his numerous trips behind the iron curtain. (. . .) Not one uplifting photo. Shrewd incitement of the youth and peasants to Communism. When referring to the history of the relations to the United States, in addition to falsifying it, he also insulted the friendly nation.[77]

---

[74] Jorge Mañach, "Las ideas de la enseñanza," *Diario de la Marina* (11 Febuary 1959): 4-A.

[75] *[La] Correspondencia,* "*Geografía de Cuba* adaptadada al programa oficial de bachilerato, por el Doctor Antonio Núñez Jiménez. Havana 1954," *La Correspondencia* (14 August 1954).

[76] In his memoir, Fulgencio Batista used the royal "we" when referring to himself as an individual.

[77] Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, *Piedras y leyes*, 1st ed. (Mexico: Ediciones Botas, 1961), pp. 100–101. In a 1959 evaluation of Núñez Jiménez's book for its "anti-American aspects," the U.S. Embassy in Havana explained that it was "picked up and destroyed" because the author was not "sufficiently adulatory of Batista and his government for the 'many contributions' it had made to the country."

Three aspects are especially remarkable in these memoirs: the personal interest Batista took as president in textbooks and their pedagogical aspects ("not one uplifting photo"); the fact that Cuba's president was especially worried about the image of the United States; and his alertness about communist influences in Cuba. Reacting to the denunciation, Minister of Education José López Isa created a commission to review the book. The commission consisted of Havana-based secondary schoolteacher Heliodoro Vitier, Juan F. Moreno Gómez, and Alberto Andino Porro, a veteran government functionary. The commission's report found the book had "noxious effects on the Cuban student" (*efectos nocivos*). Citing anticommunist legislation that criminalized "communist propaganda," López Isa prohibited the use or consultation of Núñez Jiménez's geography book.[78] A later report on his book prepared by the U.S. embassy in Havana asserted that it was censored for different reasons: "There was no portion of the 1954 edition at all laudatory much less any panegyric for Batista; hence the book was banished to the flames."[79] The government ordered the military police to confiscate the book from the press, schools, and libraries, and to destroy it. Batista explained that *Geografía de Cuba* was "burned like a heretic book in an act of faith."[80] Cuba's president took pride in protecting his country from the "viruses" of anti-Americanism and communism, and dedicated almost two pages in his 1961 memoirs to this episode.

A wave of public protests followed that purge. The Cuban Federation of University Students (Federación Estudiantil Universitaria, or FEU) and several prominent intellectuals, such as Jorge Mañach and José Pardo Llada, denounced the government's action.[81] Pardo Llada was one of Cuba's most influential radio commentators in the 1940s and '50s, a friend of Fidel Castro and of Eduardo Chibás (Castro's mentor, as well as founder and leader of the *Ortodóxo* party) during Castro's *Ortodóxo* period

[78] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, Resolución Ministerial 07594, ed. Superintendencia General de Segunda Enseñanza (Havana: 9 March 1955). The anticommunist legislation included two law decrees: 1456 (3 June 1954) and 1975 (27 January 1955).

[79] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *FRUS 1958–1960,* "Examination of the Anti-American Aspects of *Geografía de Cuba*" (1959). *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series (Washington, DC: 1959).

[80] Batista y Zaldívar, *Piedras y leyes*, p. 101.

[81] Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU), "Quema el servicio de inteligencia militar la edición del libro 'Geografía de Cuba' del Doctor Antonio Nuñez Jiménez," ed. Cuban Heritage Collection (1954).

of 1948–51. When the military confiscated the text, Pardo Llada felt "motivated to reread the book." He criticized the censorship during one of his popular radio shows. Pardo Llada admitted that the book "emphasized nationalist principles," but could not detect "anything subversive or directed against our government."[82]

Jorge Mañach took up the issue at a more fundamental level in a series of editorials in the *Diario de la Marina*. Following the confiscation, he published the private correspondence he held with Núñez Jiménez and Luis G. Mendoza, an "entrepreneurial friend," likely the same one to whom Batista had referred.[83] Mendoza criticized Batista for ordering the destruction of the book, but agreed that the text was "inadequate" for Cuba's schools because of its dangerous effects on the minds of young Cubans and that it should not have been authorized. The entrepreneur found it especially irresponsible for propagating an agrarian reform to "children whose character is in formation." He shared the pedagogically typical views of the time that children's and adolescents' education was of primordial importance to molding their consciousness and forming behaviors. Therefore, creating sympathy for agrarian reform could not be taught at schools. To Mendoza, this was tantamount to subversion: "As long as we do not change our constitution and adopt a socialist system of living, the free distribution of land to peasants is against the republican regime."

Mañach criticized the Batista government for not having a "good concept of what is really subversive." He reminded the readers of the *Diario de la Marina* that as an Interim Secretary for Public Instruction in 1934, he himself upheld academic freedom even "when many schools were converted into mini-soviets."[84] Only sectarian propaganda to subvert and "threaten the social–political and constitutional

---

[82] José Pardo Llada, "Pardo Llada—micrófono," *Diario Nacional* (21 January 1955): 1.

[83] Guillermo Jiménez, *Los propietarios de Cuba 1958*, *Economía* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2006), pp. 363–65.

[84] In September 1933, thirty-six sugar mills were occupied because the Cuban communist party at the time had called for the creation of soviets. By mid-November, though, these "embryonic soviets" had all disappeared. For the "soviet" aspect in Cuba's 1933 revolution, see Barry Carr, "Mill Occupations and Soviets: The Mobilisation of Sugar Workers in Cuba 1917–1933," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996): 140–44.

order that the people gave themselves" had to be prevented. Since Cuba's 1940 Constitution explicitly recognized agrarian reform, Núñez Jiménez's book could hardly be considered subversive.

Mañach defended the tradition of liberalism in Batista's Cuba. As a liberal democracy, the state had to tolerate diverging ideas and opinions and uphold freedom of expression. Education, Mañach argued, relied on two things: "information, and the interpretation of information." Students should have access to various interpretations. He admitted that Núñez Jiménez's interpretation was "passionate" and at times "radical," but his book contained an impressive amount of information, to which Cuba's students should have access.

Even so, the context in which the book was published rendered the proposal of land reform and communist propaganda almost synonymous, and therefore dangerous. When Fidel Castro justified his attack on the Cuban state and military in July 1953, he promised "redistribution of land with compensation by the state" as the second revolutionary law he would implement.[85] Batista's decision to suspend constitutional rights and to enact anticommunist legislation was also a reaction to this violent approach to redistribution. In Cuba's regional context, too, agrarian reform seemed subversive: Guatemala's democratically elected reform government under Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown in July 1954—the same month Núñez-Jiménez's book came off the press.

Conflicting views on Cuba's reality

Núñez Jiménez wrote extensively about the social conditions in Cuba. Official study plans in republican schools where he taught required teachers to portray the "misery" of Cubans that had been caused by Spanish colonialists and to contrast it to the "humanitarian efforts of the Americans."[86] Núñez Jiménez instead chose to showcase the misery he had seen in contemporary Cuba. One chapter depicted the southern part of the Isle of Pines, where an American entrepreneur, Dayton Hedges, kept uncultivated

[85] Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me* (Havana: Impreso por Cooperativa Obrera de Publicidad, 1960), p. 36.

[86] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, Junta de Superintendentes de Escuelas de Cuba, *Plan y cursos de estudios para las escuelas primarias elementales urbanas* (Havana: P. Fernández y Cia., 1944), p. 404.

land, opposed social infrastructure, and expropriated rural workers, according to the author's account, based on interviews with the local populace.[87] Mendoza, in his letter to Mañach after the confiscation of the book, claimed the opposite. He took the entrepreneur's perspective. Mendoza knew Dayton Hedges, and thought that the U.S. businessman had developed "a model social project," like so many other Americans who "have brought foreign capital to develop industries" in Cuba.[88] The Cuban state had to teach its children "respect" for the Americans, Mendoza argued, because "nobody else has done more for the people of Cuba (. . . .) [T]hey came here to help and liberate us (. . . ,) brought us on the right path (. . . ,) and saved us from anarchy so many times (. . .)."[89] Mendoza accused the geographer of being a demagogue suffering from "North American phobia" [*norteamericanofobia*].[90]

In his reply, Núñez Jiménez explained that he "loved the American people as much as any other." Still, he could not "applaud in the Cuban pages of my book the intervention of the United States (. . .). It does not make me happy that the natural resources, the land, and the greatest wealth are foreign property."[91] It was not just geography, but also history and the country's socioeconomic order that was being debated. The appropriate description of Cuba's geography and history in a textbook and the ways in which this should be taught at school necessarily affected the perception of the U.S. government, military, and business community in Cuba because of the two countries' intimate ties. For some, this role had been positive. It would therefore be imperative to inculcate this view into the populace and to prevent anyone from claiming differently. For others, the U.S. presence in Cuba was perceived more critically, and it was

---

[87] Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1954).

[88] Mañach, "Las ideas de la enseñanza," *Diario de la Marina* (11 Febuary 1959): 4-A.

[89] Mañach, "Carta sobre un libro ocupado," *Diario de la Marina* (10 February 1959): 4-A.

[90] For the history of U.S. presence on the Island of Pines (since 1978 renamed the Island of Youth), see Jane McManus, *Cuba's Island of Dreams: Voices from the Isle of Pines and Youth* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000). For its economic relations with the U.S., see Morton D. Winsberg, "Costs, Tariffs, Prices and Nationalization: The Rise and Decline of the American Grapefruit Industry on the Isle of Pines, Cuba," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 20, no. 5 (1961).

[91] Jorge Mañach, "El autor se defiende," *Diario de la Marina* (12 February 1955): 4-A.

just as necessary to write and teach about it. In 1955, the latter view was considered subversive and was therefore criminalized. By 1959, it had become the government's view.

U.S. concerns toward revolutionary education

Geografía de Cuba was reedited in an expanded edition and recommended for usage at all Cuban schools in the fall of 1959. In February 1960, the U.S. Embassy in Havana provided a detailed report on the Anti-American aspects in the two editions (1954 and 1959) of Núñez Jiménez's geography text to Washington, DC.[92] The analyst was alarmed by revisions of the 1959 edition that strengthened notions critical of the United States. New themes included a different interpretation of the U.S. role in Cuba's War of Independence and the origins of the republic (with the Platt Amendment), national resources, and development strategies, as well as a critique of international capitalism more broadly. A speech given by Fidel Castro at Havana's Rotary Club in January 1959 was now printed in full. It had been Castro's attempt to convince Cuba's national bourgeoisie to change its views on their republican past. One of his statements read, "Cuba was not free because when another country reserves the right to intervene in the internal affairs, that country is not sovereign." He also proposed a third way for the revolution in a polarized world: "I am not a communist and neither do I sell myself out to the North Americans or receive orders from them."[93]

A chapter on natural resources in the first edition of *Geografía de Cuba* had previously stated that national industrialization had been held back because of foreign interests that had controlled the economy, as well as "American opposition." The revolutionary 1959 edition now described how the new government started to correct this situation, specifically through the agrarian reform.[94] The law was

[92] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *FRUS 1958–1960,* "Examination of the Anti-American Aspects of *Geografía de Cuba*" (1959).

[93] Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba,* 2nd ed. (1959).

[94] Ibid., p. 196.

printed in its entirety and the structure and functioning of INRA were explained in detail.[95] New tables were included to document the profits of U.S. companies. The didactical purpose, according to the U.S. Embassy report, was to show students "that profits accrue to the benefits of the companies and stockholders and not the people of the country." The report on his book concluded that Núñez Jiménez had "taken a free-swinging attack against 'the imperialist monopolies' of the United States; in other words, against the U.S. and its free enterprise." Nevertheless, in the context of severing U.S.–Cuban relations in 1960, the diplomats thought *Geografía de Cuba* to be "less vitriolic than the present mass of journalistic output of revolutionary organs," such as Carlos Franqui's daily *Revolución* or the communist *Noticias de Hoy*.[96]

Communism or anti-Americanism?

U.S. authorities worried about an increasingly critical attitude of the Cuban revolutionaries toward their government from early on.[97] In October 1959, just before the Díaz Lanz and Huber Matos affair,[98] the State Department expressed dissatisfaction with the intelligence it received from Cuba and asked for a better analysis of the situation. Daniel M. Braddock, first secretary of the U.S. Embassy, later complained to Washington that he needed better advice, since he could not adequately distinguish "between manifestations of communism and of nationalism" in Cuba's revolution.[99] A new team was sent to Havana to gain a better understanding of the ideological outlook of the Cuban revolution. On 18 October,

---

[95] Ibid.

[96] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *FRUS 1958–1960,* "Examination of the Anti-American Aspects of *Geografía de Cuba*" (1959).

[97] For a good discussion on Anti-Americanism in Latin America, see Alan L. McPherson, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), especially the chapter on "Cuba 1959: Revolutionary Anti-Americanism and U.S. Panic," pp. 38–77.

[98] Díaz Lanz and Huber Matos were two influential commanders of the rebel army who resigned over alleged communist influence in the revolution, which led to the creation of the militia and the reorganization of Cuba's military.

[99] A.V. Fursenko and Timothy J. Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), p. 43.

Carlos Hall, chief of the Latin American Division of the national Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), was sent to Havana.[100] From then on, several extensive reports were filed with a special interest in growing communist influence and anti-Americanism. "[T]he embassy staff (. . .) was not supposed to know that the insistent requests for information were tied to an impending presidential decision of covert operations against Castro."[101]

A comprehensive twenty-eight-page report on "communist infiltration" in Cuba's government was filed in February 1960, when Soviet Vice Premier Anastas Mikoyan came to Havana to open the Soviet industrial exhibit.[102] The text concluded that the "Cuban Revolutionary Government has been heavily penetrated by communists and their sympathizers." Whether or not members of the administration were actual communists was "not basic," since Castro's "top leaders (. . .) are willing and active instruments of international Communism."[103] Communists were said to "have infiltrated strategic positions within the Ministry of Education" although Minister Hart was exempted from this accusation and described as just "a radically inclined young member of the Castro leadership." Evidence of infiltration presented in the report included historian Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring's involvement in "rewriting primary textbooks."[104] Leuchsenring had worked as a consultant for Cuba's Ministry of Education under several previous administrations and was Havana's city historian uninterruptedly from 1935 until his death in 1964.[105]

The assessments by the U.S. intelligence community of communist influence within the Cuban government were not without consequences. U.S. authorities was already highly alarmed by Castro's reforms that affected private business and the revolutionary government's critical stance on U.S. foreign

---

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] U.S. National Archive, "Communist Infiltration and Influence in Cuba," Department of State, Inter-American Affairs (23 February 1960).

[103] Ibid., p. 28.

[104] Ibid., p. 15.

[105] http://www.cubaliteraria.cu/monografia/grupo_minorista/emilioroig.html

policy that challenged the country's hegemony in the hemisphere. In addition, influential individuals had increased their pressure on the administration "to do something about Cuba." Still, though, in 1959 no coherent policy to confront the revolutionary government had been developed. While there were some voices that pushed for a more confrontational course, based on similar experiences in Guatemala and elsewhere, others cautioned against any drastic measures, since this would only fuel Cuba's nationalism. In January 1960, the Acting Public Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy in Havana, George A. Rylance, reported that there had been no changes in textbooks or study plans in a survey on the effects of Cuba's educational reforms for private schools.[106] That is, while new textbooks such as Núñez Jiménez's revolutionary edition of *Geografia de Cuba* were then in print, republican-era schoolbooks still continued to be used in Cuban schools.

Teaching anti-Americanism on television

The U.S. intelligence community continued to worry that the government's education initiatives that were critical of the U.S. would have a long-term effect on future generations. In April 1960, the U.S. Embassy reported that Cuba's Ministry of Education was "stepping up its educational offering to the Cuban people through the medium of TV." A daily segment of thirty minutes would cover a variety of educational topics—from culture and music to arithmetic and history. The Embassy found most of these subjects to be "of a normal scholastic nature and (. . .) praiseworthy enough."[107] But the history class was reason for concern for Public Affairs Officer John Williams. History for fifth and sixth grade—the two last years of mandatory schooling—was to be broadcast on Friday afternoons. Williams knew "which direction this propaganda will take" based on the themes and readings announced for the history course. Among the

[106] Rylance assessed the impact of the recent education reform laws on private and American schools for a report by interviewing most directors of the important private schools. Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State (George Rylance), "Principal Changes in the Structure of the Cuban Educational System Brought About by the Educational Reform (20 January 1960)," Cuba 1960–January 1963, Internal Affairs, Reel 36.

[107] U.S. National Archive, "Program of Education of TV Sponsored by the Ministry of Education, 25 April 1960." Confidential U.S. State Department central files, Cuba, 1960–January 1963 (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America).

titles of the classes were traditional liberal topics, such as "How the Cuban tobacco growers in the eighteenth century defended their freedom to trade." Others indicated a different view on U.S.–Cuban relations and the island's history: "When and why Cuba was a North American colony," and "Why many Cubans from the earliest times of the republic lost the capacity to govern themselves." Preparatory activities for these classes suggested "to investigate the administrative conduct of North American intervention forces in Cuba" and the "the origins of *botella*, the illicit enrichment under the aid of public power." Clearly, a much more critical view of U.S.–Cuban relations was among the pedagogical goals of these classes produced for Cuban television. But the reevaluation of Cuba's past went hand in hand with many other themes, such as corruption, free trade, and self-government, that had long been central issues in Cuba's national history.

The readings recommended for these classes indicated republican continuity, rather than a revolutionary rupture. To U.S. officials, however, they indicated propaganda and further proof of the revolution's communist tendency. Most texts, in point of fact, were official republican schoolbooks and not revolutionary propaganda. Among those that were more traditional were Fernando Portuondo del Prado's *History of Cuba*, which had been authorized uninterruptedly as a textbook at Cuba's schools since its first edition in 1941, and Herminio Portell Vilá's *History of Cuba in Its Relations with the United States*.[108] Only certain materials were new, such as a speech by Minister of Commerce Raúl Cepero Bonilla during the opening of the Soviet exhibit in Cuba.

These programs indicated a new pedagogical–political direction that Cuba's Ministry of Education was taking in 1960. It was part of the "transformation of Cuba's commercial television in 1959–60" and the beginning of the newly created television system.[109] This direction resembled the debates of some years before on the outlook of Núñez Jiménez's geography book after its early

[108] Herminio Portell-Vilá, *Historia de Cuba en sus relaciones con los Estados Unidos y España*, vol. 3, 1st ed. Biblioteca de Historia, Filosofía y Sociología (Havana: J. Montero, 1938).

[109] For more details, see Yeidy M. Rivero, *Broadcasting Modernity: Cuban Commercial Television, 1950–1960* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 129–76.

censorship. Now Cuba's government wanted to change the citizens' view of the nation's history and the role the U.S. played in it: from benevolence to limiting the country's sovereignty and development. Against the background of the times, this new approach to history was a reason for U.S. concern.

In August 1960, the Ministry of Education built on the previous education programs on television and created an "Educational Mission for Radio and Television."[110] According to the resolution that created this commission, it was "necessary to formalize and systematize" the previous efforts to render Cuba's educational services more effective. The government estimated there were some 400,000 homes with television sets—80,000 in rural areas—that were regularly used by half of the island's adult population. Radio coverage was even greater: 900,000 homes possessed a radio transmitter, potentially reaching 90 percent of Cuba's adult population "of all ages and social classes." This was a formidable means of communication, education, and indoctrination that had previously been underexploited. It was absolutely necessary, the ministry stated, to "use all these media to continue and improve the education and orientation of Cuba's teachers, students, parents, and the general population—that is, the public opinion of the nation about the measures, reforms, and activities that the Ministry of Education undertakes." The official functions of this new commission were to plan, coordinate, and produce regular programs aimed at increasing adult literacy rates, basic education, and vocational and revolutionary orientation, as well as to spread information about cultural programs. Writer Alejo Carpentier y Valmont became responsible for cultural advice; the Afro-Cuban reform pedagogue and professor of mathematics Dulce María Escalona was named advisor for education.

The geopolitical shift

A month after the Soviet–Cuban trade agreement in February 1960 and Fidel Castro's response to the explosion of the Belgian ship *La Coubre,* loaded with weapons in Havana's harbor, on 4 March 1960, U.S.–Cuban relations came to their lowest point. Whereas previously a significant part of the

[110] "Resolución Ministerial 13,789: Se crea la comisión educacional para radio y televisión," *Revolución* (27 August 1960).

administration had still been hopeful of exerting influence on Castro's government, now the balance had shifted. On 15 March 1960, a special group for covert operations within the CIA met with President Eisenhower, and a formal yet secret decision to overthrow the Cuban government was made two days later. The decision included an action plan to recruit and train an exile force to invade Cuba, and to build and support an opposition force to carry out sabotage on the island. But President Eisenhower first wanted "American public opinion and Free World public opinion" behind such an invasion scenario.[111] This public opinion campaign to change the perception of the Cuban revolution had already begun. In March 1960, an editorial in *Life* magazine had begun to prepare the American public opinion for "a new approach of U.S. policy toward Cuba," as "economic pressure will probably not change Castro's foreign policy."[112]

As the Cuban government felt increasingly threatened by its northern neighbor, it started to take preventive measures to protect the revolution militarily, economically, and ideologically from the summer of 1960 onward. Militarily, the Cuban government began to purchase weapons from the East after it could no longer buy them from the West. Economically, the country began to diversify its foreign commercial relations and reduce dependency on the U.S. market. The Cuban–Soviet trade agreement in February 1960 was one important part of this strategy. Unfortunately, it also provided the decisive impetus within the U.S. administration to turn its policy more hostile toward the Cuban revolution. Ideologically, Castro's regime increased its control and adjusted the criteria for an adequate orientation of Cuba's youth and public opinion. And along with the evolution of a more vigilant state, a new revolutionary orientation in Cuba's educational system began.

Toward a revolutionary geography

On 19 October 1959, a "modest reception" had been held at the private publisher Editorial Lex in Havana to celebrate the second edition of Antonio Núñez-Jiménez's *Geografía de Cuba*, which had just come off

[111] Cited in Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, pp. 47, 52.

[112] *Life* magazine, "What To Do about Castro: Editorial," *Life* 45, no. 13: 35. Three weeks earlier, President Eisenhower had already decided what to do about Castro.

the press.[113] Armando Hart welcomed the publication as the first example of a new generation of textbooks. Some of Cuba's most influential people celebrated the book launch: Pedro Miret Prieto, Cuba's Minister of Agriculture; Raúl Castro, minister for the Revolutionary Armed Forces; Alfredo Yabur Maluf, Minister of Justice; Camilo Cienfuegos Gorriarán, chief of the rebel army; and several other high-ranking members of the armed forces all gathered there. Also present were Cuban writer and Batista-critic Jorge Mañach, plus Juan José Arévalo, Guatemala's first democratically elected president (1945–51), who was visiting Cuba with an interest in its land reform and social progress. For Arévalo, it was reassuring to see that a man of the "intellectual caliber" of Núñez-Jiménez was in charge of a land reform similar to the one he had helped prepare in his own country. For the Guatemalan, theory and practice now seemed to be combined in Cuba. For Jorge Mañach, the reprint of a previously censored schoolbook symbolized the reestablishment of liberty in Cuba. The book he had defended under Batista was now back in Cuban schools, along with alternative versions of Cuba's history and geography that the revolutionary textbook commission had authorized, such as Leví Marrero's geography book.[114]

It was "the first work that is truly up to our revolutionary ideals," Minister of Education Hart had stated in the book's preface, "The example of this geography."[115] More than just a textbook, the work encapsulated and represented a shift in models of education from republican to revolutionary Cuba. Hart valued the book not just for its "scientific rigorousness" but also as exemplary of a "combatant mentality."[116] Hart argued that before the revolution, Cuba's youth necessarily had to be "skeptical about the country's 'intellectuals'" who "did not feel the drama" in Cuba to which Jorge Mañach had referred.[117] The difference between it and other geography texts was the combination of the description of

[113] "Aparece la segunda edición de la obra recogida de Núñez Jiménez," *Revolución* (20 October 1959): 3.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba (adaptada al nuevo programa revolucionario de bachillerato)*, p. 5.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Jorge Mañach, "El drama de Cuba," *Bohemia*, "Edición de la Libertad," January 1959.

Cuba's physical and *human* landscapes. "Professor Jiménez highlighted the *latifundio*, and therefore the reason for misery; he explained our natural resources and revealed the proprietors; this was enough to distinguish his work as revolutionary." Reading the book, Fidel Castro remembered, was "like an awakening, it raised consciousness; it makes people see with clarity a variety of facts and truths."[118]

Becoming a revolutionary academic

The author, Antonio Núñez Jiménez, had been born in 1923 in Alquízar, a suburb outside Havana. He developed an early interest in Cuba's environment, especially in caves. At the age of seventeen he founded Cuba's Speleological Society; three years later he was elected as a member of Cuba's Society for Natural History and its Geographic Society. As a student of humble origins in the 1940s, he had made a living in temporary jobs for the ministry of public works, at the national commission for propaganda and defense, and at a photo company. These experiences informed his later activities. He illustrated his books with photos taken during his explorations, and developed administrative ambitions for geographic transformations on a grand scale. During the 1940s, he was influenced by the critical thinking of his academic mentors, Cuban geographers Salvador Massip and Sara Ysalgué as a student at the University of Havana. Massip had studied at Columbia University, and as an active opponent to Machado, went into exile in Mexico and lived there during the Cardenás agrarian reforms. He became the first full-time geography professor at the University of Havana and introduced the subject of economic geography. He had a profound impact on Núñez Jiménez's outlook.

In addition to these theoretical influences, Núñez Jiménez described his own down-to-earth approach to his geography. He had covered "on foot, with my knapsack on my back, the entirety of the Cuban archipelago."[119] Several of his important findings on indigenous culture and archeology were published at the time. In 1951, he began to intervene in public debates with policy proposals, initially for

[118] Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *Así es mi país: Geografía de Cuba para los niños*, 1st ed. (Havana: Impr. Nacional de Cuba, 1961), p. iv.
[119] Mañach, "El autor se defiende."

the improvement of the environment.[120] In addition to experiencing and learning about Cuba's natural diversity and its challenges first-hand, he also got to know the "human misery" that he sought to overcome. During a television appearance in late 1959, the young geographer explained to moderator Jorge Mañach, "I had intensively lived all the things I said in the book, all that terrible reality of peasant life. They were truths I had seen, that I had felt."[121]

After earning his doctorate in 1951 from the University of Havana, Núñez Jiménez first became a professor at one of Havana's public secondary schools, el Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza in Vedado, where he wrote the first edition of *Geografía de Cuba*. He then started teaching as an auxiliary professor of geography at the University of Havana. In January 1955, when the book was censored and confiscated by the government, the author went underground. "For a teacher," Núñez Jímenez wrote in 1955 in a letter to his friend Jorge Mañach, while hiding from Batista's military police, "the highest duty is to always tell the truth even if this brings you into prison or purges you from your teaching position."[122] The unnamed authors of the U.S. Embassy report on his book later expressed admiration for "the stands he took in the 'Batista edition' toward specific vested interests," especially latifundios and monocultural crops.[123] This commitment and disposition to sacrifice was part of what attracted the revolutionary leadership to the geographer. Armando Hart wrote in the preface to the 1959 edition, "only those can get to the truth who are capable of feeling it with their own life (. . .) only those who, like Socrates, are willing to die for their truth."[124]

Despite the censorship of his book and several arrests, Núñez Jiménez obtained a professorship for regional geography and geomorphology at the Central University of Las Villas in 1955 through a

---

[120] See, for example, "Transformaremos la naturaleza de Cuba en beneficio de sus ciudadanos, Carteles, La Habana 17 Junio 1951," reprinted in Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *Cuba con la mochila al hombro*, Ediciones Unión: Reportajes (Havana: Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 1963), pp. 347–51.

[121] Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *La liberación de las islas* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959), p. 319.

[122] Mañach, "El autor se defiende."

[123] Govt. Docs., Dept. of State, "Examination of the anti-American aspects of geografía de Cuba."

[124] Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba (adaptada)*, p. 5.

competitive selection process, *las oposiciones*. During his time in Santa Clara, he published a series of political commentaries under a pseudonym in the local daily, *El Villareño*.[125] During most of the rebellion against Batista, Antonio Núñez Jímenez continued his professional life at the university. Unlike the University of Havana, the Central University in Santa Clara had remained open during most of the armed uprising since late 1956. In December 1958, Núñez Jiménez and his wife, Lupe Velis, cooperated with the M-26-7 guerrillas.[126] Commander Guevara made the geographer responsible for topographic services, hence Núñez Jiménez's military title of captain (*capitán).*

Within a few weeks, Núñez Jiménez gained the confidence of both Fidel and Raúl Castro, became part of the inner circle of the Cuban government, and was invited to the informal planning meetings in Tarará, a beach east of Havana.[127] In May 1959, Fidel Castro named Núñez Jiménez the executive director of Cuba's newly formed agrarian reform institute INRA (and himself president of it). By April 1959, Núñez Jiménez began to appear on the radar of U.S. intelligence. The American embassy reported Núñez Jiménez "to be procommunist."[128] At this early point, however, the label likely relies on ousted President Batista's judgment of Núñez Jiménez as a communist agitator, which he in turn based on military intelligence of questionable origins.[129]

---

[125] María del Pilar Díaz Castañón, *Perfiles de la nación*, vol. 2 of 2 vols. *Pensar en Cuba* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2004).

[126] On 27 December 1958, Núñez Jiménez cooperated with Guevara in preparation for his attack on the army's final offensive against the rebels. According to Núñez Jiménez's memoirs and Che biographer Jon Lee Anderson, the geographer showed the troops a secret path through the university to get his troops undiscovered from Placetas into Santa Clara. He was named chief of topographical services and military links. Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, p. 365.

[127] Castro and Ramonet, *Cien horas con Fidel*, p. 277.

[128] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*) series, "Despatch from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State 'Growth of Communism in Cuba'" (14 April 1959).

[129] Batista y Zaldívar, *Piedras y leyes*, pp. 100–101. Salvador Díaz-Verson, Cuba's chief of the national police and of military intelligence (1948–52), claims that Núñez Jiménez had been a youth informant for the Soviet Embassy in Havana since diplomatic relations with Cuba were reestablished in 1943 but that he remained inactive, "reserved for the future." Díaz-Verson's account is highly questionable. He asserts that any documentation for his claims was destroyed in 1959. Hugh Thomas contradicts this. According to Thomas, Guevara ordered Núñez Jiménez to inspect the anticommunist research bureau (BRAC) and transfer documentation to the Cabaña fortress of which Guevara was in charge. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: the Pursuit of Freedom* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971), p. 1079. Núñez Jiménez himself reported in December 1959 that he had photographed and read the BRAC documents. This

Revolutionary transformation through geography

For Fidel Castro, Núñez-Jiménez's major contribution "was not only scientific work, it was also human work, and above all it was revolutionary work."[130] In the author's 1959 preface, "Toward a Revolutionary Geography," Núñez Jiménez wrote: "[w]e live in times of a new geography in action that combats erosion, pushes reforestation, opens up the mountains for progress, and incorporates its regions into life and civilization."[131] Castro emphasized the practical orientation of this new geography as "human geography." During a speech to commemorate the Speological Society that Núñez Jiménez had founded twenty years earlier, the prime minister remarked, "a cave is not only useful from a touristic point of view, or an economic point of view, a cave is also useful from a military point of view."[132]

New forms of writing geography had to go hand-in-hand with more practically oriented forms of learning "because geography is something that really cannot be taught in the classroom." Instead, it ought to be taught in its own terrain: Students should "learn about rivers, in the river, about mountains, in the mountains."[133] This was the embryonic version of Cuba's ruralization of education. Just as the urban-educated student Núñez Jiménez had developed his social and environmental consciousness by traveling for fifteen years across the island, so could Cuba's future generations.

---

indicates that the documentation was not destroyed, or at least not entirely. The geographer explained during a live television interview with Jorge Mañach in December 1959 that even Mañach was classified as an "agent of the Kremlin." Núñez Jiménez and Cuba, *La liberación de las islas*, p. 418.

[130] Núñez Jiménez, *Así es mi país*, p. v.

[131] Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba (adaptada)*, p. 8.

[132] "Discurso de Fidel Castro en la Academia de Ciencias de la Habana, 15 Enero 1960, Vigésimo Aniversario de la fundación de la Sociedad Espeleológica de Cuba," Núñez Jiménez, *Así es mi país,* p. vii. Castro used this geographic knowledge for strategic purposes in March 1960, when he approached Soviet envoy Alexander Alexeev in Havana to seek a supply of Soviet small arms and ammunition. He asked the Soviet agent to tell Khrushchev, "[W]e have here many caves and all are unoccupied. Thus can all that [weaponry] we need be unloaded." Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, p. 42.

[133] Núñez Jiménez, *Así es mi país: Geografía de Cuba para los niños*, p. iii.

The mythical stature of the Sierra Maestra mountains in Cuba's history and their role during various liberation struggles has been highlighted by several authors.[134] Núñez Jiménez was one of the first to connect this to the guerrilla strategy of Fidel Castro's M-26-7. His essay *Así es la Sierra Maestra* ("This is the Sierra Maestra") with its subsection "The Sierra Maestra as an arsenal for the Liberation Army" was published in *Bohemia* on 30 December 1956, a month after the *Granma* sea expedition had landed in Cuba.[135] A subsequent article called "The Sierra Maestra in the history of Cuba" was submitted to *Bohemia* but banned.[136] From 1959 onward, the historical significance of the Sierra Maestra would be taught through textbooks and become an experience for the transformation of the mentalities of Cuban students.

The increased emphasis on direct rural education experiences began with a pilot project for the rebel army in early 1959 that made climbing Cuba's highest mountain, El Pico Turquino, a requirement.[137] Raúl Castro considered the rural experience as part of revolutionary identity. In May 1959 he claimed, "he who has not climbed the Pico Turquino at least four times, in the worst conditions, and even barefoot, as we did, cannot call himself a rebel." Rural field trips, especially to Cuba's eastern mountains, which were considered the cradle of revolutionary consciousness, became part of student organizations' activities. In April 1960, thousands of students applied for the voluntary teacher-training program that entailed being sent for several months into the mountains in order to be "in touch with nature" and understand, through their own experience, "the sacrifices of the guerrillas" as well as rural living conditions.[138] These teachers were expected to start taking positions in the newly created rural

---

[134] For an excellent overview from a literary perspective, see Hulme, *Cuba's Wild East: A Literary Geography of Oriente*, especially chapter 7.

[135] The articles were later reprinted in Núñez Jiménez, *Cuba con la mochila al hombro*. According to the author, the article had "an evident revolutionary informative character," p. 124.

[136] Hulme, *Cuba's Wild East*, p. 314.

[137] *Verde olivo* 1 (11 May 1959): 2. By 1960, climbing the Turquino ten times became a graduation requirement for members of the rebel army.

[138] "Graduación de maestros voluntarios," *Verde Olivo* 2, no. 26 (5 September 1959): 67–68.

schools and to teach in mountainous areas where no school could be built at any time soon. Fidel Castro explained the significance of this program upon the return of recently trained students from the Sierra Maestro to Havana. Part of the educational goal was "to understand the soul of the *campesino*, his necessities, and his purity." This was a two-way approach: One was to provide urban adolescents who had grown up in a morally decadent capitalist society with an opportunity to adjust their values through direct experience. The other was an opportunity for a revolutionary government to influence the mindsets of Cuban *campesinos,* which in Castro's view were similar to those of children: "virgin minds, predestined to get lost without a hand that knew how to mold them."[139] Along with it, the government sought to "bring illumination of culture and progress" to rural Cuba as a precondition for the rural development that Núñez Jiménez suggested in his book. Nuñez Jiménez and Fidel Castro later traveled several times into the Sierra Maestra together to explore the region's potential for development.[140]

Earlier, more traditional efforts of the Ministry of Education to expand rural education had largely failed, as the ministry could not attract a sufficient number of students willing to work under challenging rural conditions. A dramatically new approach was needed. For Fidel this was a "problem of mentality," a difficulty of young people who grew up in the city to adapt to a rural life. Many deserted early. He compared the desertion rate of the first rural teachers' program to his own guerrilla experience, where he had told newly arrived volunteers, "Half of you will go back, 90 percent, maybe even all of you." Indeed, of the 5,000 students who had initially signed up for the *maestro voluntario* qualification tests, only 1,500 graduated.[141]

The contrast with traditional programs became obvious, too, in the resentment many traditionally trained teachers in Havana felt toward the new generation when they returned. These clashes were expressions of a fomenting cultural revolution, similar to that brought by the bearded guerrillas in olive-

[139] Fidel Castro, speech, 29 August 1960.

[140] Antonio Núñez Jiménez, "El Pico Turquino," *INRA* 1, no. 1 (1960): 10–23.

[141] "Entregará Fidel diplomas a maestros voluntarios," *Revolución* (27 August 1960): 1, 8.

drab fatigues who ran state affairs in 1959 next to accomplished and traditionally trained public service officers dressed in suits and ties. One exiled teacher described why he would not even greet the new rural teachers: "I'm very sorry, my degree cost me a lot of hard work and sweat, and all you had to do was climb a mountain."[142] The differences were not just ideological but also economic. Whereas previous training programs lasted two to four years, had to be paid for, and graduation came without guarantee of subsequent employment, the new courses were rudimentary, free of cost, and short-term. They were aimed at sending motivated student-teachers who were willing to work under harsh conditions to rural environments in order to improve basic literacy skills. Loyalty and commitment to the revolution were expected in return, and a teaching position was offered as a reward.

New textbooks were needed for such a transformative project, not those lauded by *Life* magazine. "We still have a lot of texts in our schools that are written with the old mentality, and some even include the lies from the past," Fidel Castro complained in late August 1960. Cuba's leader of the revolution was convinced that new books were needed for a new era "in tune with the great conquests of the revolution." These texts would have to be written and distributed quickly.[143]

Rewriting history

Two days after Fidel Castro had emphasized the need for new textbooks for Cuba's new generation of rural teachers, his brother Raúl picked up the same theme at a plenary session of unionized sugar workers at the CTC's assembly hall Lazaro Peña. He denounced the "deformation of textbooks."[144] He read passages from Leví Marrero's geography and another unnamed history book "how the North Americans came to bring about Cuba's independence" and "how the U.S. Congress helped Cuba to become free." Raúl explained he did not mind that this was taught in American schools, but he thought it was "very bad

[142] Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. and Concepción García, "Exiled Teachers and the Cuban Revolution," *Cuban Studies / Estudios Cubanos* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 6.

[143] Fidel Castro, *Discurso*, 29 August 1960.

[144] The following passages are based on Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *En marcha con Fidel—1960*, vol. 47, *Cuba: La naturaleza y el hombre* (Havana: Fundación de la Naturaleza y el Hombre 1998), pp. 236–42.

that these lies, in these times are being taught to our children at school." An aroused audience of hundreds of angry workers wanted to hear names of the authors responsible for these lines and see them punished. Cuba's Minister of the Armed Forces was about to disclose them. But Núñez Jiménez, sitting next to him, whispered to Castro, "I ask you to not give them any names. One author made a mistake but is an honest person, the revolution can convince him of his wrongdoing, the other has a very important position in an international organization and it would create a complicated situation." This intervention suggests two important aspects of revolutionary dynamics at the time: the idea of reeducation that part of the leadership believed in—the author could "be convinced of his wrongdoing"—and the awareness of the international damage that domestic issues could cause. Raúl complied. "We will not mention any names," he told a disappointed audience, "but will point out the errors."

The morning after this public denunciation of "deformed" schoolbooks, Núñez Jiménez received two visitors in his office at INRA's headquarters: Fidel Castro and Armando Hart. Together they told the geographer, "After yesterday's events, there is no other way but to create new textbooks with the greatest urgency." Núñez Jiménez was told he would have to write a new book on the geography of Cuba and Latin America, in addition to a new history book on Cuba—"in 15 days." He would be freed from his administrative work at INRA, given a beach house outside Havana, a typewriter, and a secretary. The geographer complained about this unrealistic deadline and convinced Castro and Hart that he could write a single new book on geography for Cuba's primary schools that could replace the one by Leví Marrero. Historians Hortensia Pichardo, Alicia y Berta Ugidos, Clara Olazabál, and his former teacher, Sara Isalgué de Massip, collaborated with him. The book, *Así es mi país* ("This Is My Country"), was printed in early 1961 by Cuba's new nationalized press, the Imprenta Nacional. Unlike in early 1959, the National Press now counted on the facilities of several expropriated Cuban newspapers, such as *Diario de la Marina*, *El País*, *Excelsior,* and the print house *Omega*. The outcome was a much simpler textbook adapted for primary school students (Figure 4-3).[145]

[145] Antonio Núñez Jimenez, *Geografía de Cuba para los niños*: *Así es mi país* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional, 1961).



Figure 4-3. The cover and first pages of the newly written textbook for Cuban primary schools, *Así es mi país*. The cover features the iconic, mountainous rebel stronghold of the Sierra Maestra on the title page and an inset image of Cuban caves from the author's formative experiences. The subsequent pages show a map of some of the decisive battles of the rebellion against Batista. Reference is also made to urban resistance.



Increasing ideological control

Parallel to the production and dissemination of new revolutionary textbooks, the government increased its effective control of the content and viewpoints of textbooks used in Cuban schools. To that end, Armando

Hart changed the composition of the commission to include "truly revolutionary intellectuals" after the U.S.–Cuban clash in the summer of 1960.[146] The commission for textbook revisions of the Ministry of Education evaluated a book of Cuban and world geography by Leví Marrero.[147] The report, signed by Ministry of Education administrator Marta Santos Tomás, argued that the book needed "serious modifications both for its political views on certain nations and for newly available data of great importance." The analysis implied that certain revisions would permit the text to be published again. The commission suggested naming Soviet contributions, such as Sputnik satellite photos. Conversely, the report was in open disagreement with the theoretical premises of the author, especially the neoclassical development approach put forth in the book: "It is a false theory in conflict with contemporary reality, in which financial capital and its revenues have been one of the major impediments to true development of most countries." In Marrero's treatment of the Soviet Union, the analysts suggested that the author "tends to propagate the same calamities that the Yankee State Department has disseminated throughout the world." Marrero discussed the political system of the Soviet Union with "the common insults, such as the lack of individual freedom, a ferocious dictatorship, [and] lack of the freedoms of press and religion." The recommendation was simple: "This entire paragraph needs to be omitted."

The report on Marrero's book was a guideline to rewrite textbooks. The new texts would have to be in accordance with radically changed criteria for the appropriateness of such learning materials for Cuba's future generations. The appropriateness of textbooks, only hinted at by the earlier textbook commission, was now spelled out in a new geopolitical context. Negative images of Cuba's new ally, the Soviet Union, were to be omitted in Cuban schoolbooks from now on, and classic economic theories should not be praised or presented uncritically. The critique reflected a new ideological and practical–political outlook that had shifted from the U.S. to Cuba's new economic and political allies in the East. Cuba's revolutionary educators were as much concerned about the mental and ideological health of their

[146] Núñez Jiménez, *En marcha con Fidel—1960*, pp. 240–41.

[147] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, "Informe del comité de revisión, Texto: Viajemos por el mundo, Autor: Editor: Cultural, S.A.," in Fondo de Antonio Núñez Jímenez, Folleto 105 (n.d., c. August 1960).

future citizens as their republican predecessors. Unlike the first textbook commission in 1959, however, this new commission from the fall of 1960 decided it would not publish Leví Marrero's geography book "for the damage it could cause in the student's mind." It would "lead the student to adapt certain reactionary theories of imperialism." The minds of Cuban children were at risk, and it was the state's responsibility to prevent their deformation.

The pedagogical justification for revisions and censorship in Cuba's schoolbooks in the fall of 1960 resembled those of 1955, only under reverse ideological signs. In November 1960, the Ministry of Education issued a new resolution that regulated future textbook revisions. The resolution was short and instrumental: "The expressed revision will be adjusted to a rigorous scientific and technical criteria on the one hand and adjusted to the principal projections of the Cuban revolution on the other (. . .)."[148] What these projections were to be was not spelled out. Previous references to the 1940 Constitution and its aspirations had now disappeared. The revolution had stopped looking backward and begun to look forward. The resolution brought the publication of any pedagogical text under the direct authority of the Ministry of Education. According to the resolution, members of the commission had to be "trusted," and would be designated by the Minister of Education. The purpose was "to avoid the publishing of any work of little educational or cultural value (. . .) or books that might be inadequate for any other reason."[149] No text would be approved if rejected by this commission.[150] Government control over the content of learning materials was tightened. By November 1960, when the Cuban press began to report about an imminent invasion, the liberal momentum of the revolution had given way to revolutionary vigilance.

---

[148] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, Law 614, "*Creación del comité revisión de obras que edite el MINED*" (1 November 1960), *Leyes XXVI*, p. 80.

[149] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, "Creación de comité de revisión de obras que edite el Ministerio de Educación. Resolución Ministerial Num 614 de 1 de Noviembre de 1960," in *Folletos de divulgación legislativa. Proclamas y leyes del gobierno provisional de la revolución, 1 a 31 de octubre enero de 1960* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1960).

[150] "Ley 614," p.81.

Conclusion

Civic education, history, and geography were the main subjects through which the struggle over the meaning of Cuba's history and future unfolded. The debates on Law 11 and the Public Forum on Education in previous chapters showed that the ends and means of this transformation were widely discussed and contested. Two powerful competitors challenged the revolutionary state in the struggle over the control of children's minds: Cuba's Catholic Church and the country's private sector. Both had an interest in counteracting an increasingly radical-left government that enjoyed enormous support among the population to become all-powerful. The expansion of free secular public education undermined their very constituency. Cuba's radical transformations raised fears about communist, anti-American, and anti-Catholic influence within the government. Until the summer of 1960, this was a minority position, yet very articulate one, especially among Cuba's upper class. An international survey of 1,000 interviewees across the island in May 1960 found that a total of 11 percent mentioned "the danger of or trend toward Communism" as a concern; 5 percent at the lowest socioeconomic class and about four times as many, or 19 percent, of the upper class. Other concerns were related to security, welfare, employment, and other socioeconomic matters. Only 2 percent criticized anti-American aspects of Cuba's policy at the time.[151] But as opposition to Cuba's government from both inside and outside the island became more consistent, organized, and militant throughout 1960, the spaces to debate and teach different visions that had opened up in January 1959 were narrowed again. In less than two years, between the autumn of 1959 and the spring of 1961, tensions were exacerbated, and all sides became more militant in pursuing their agendas. In education, the result was a return to a more restrictive, instrumental, and politicized approach. In the summer of 1960, a new "revolutionary textbook commission" began to censor school materials representing views contrary to the new policies of the revolution, such as Leví Marrero's *Geografía de Cuba*. Against the backdrop of the Cold War and the shifting role of the U.S. government from ally to enemy, Cuba's geopolitical premises in education were reversed between mid-1960 and mid-1961.

[151] Institute for International Social Research and Lloyd A. Free, *Attitudes of the Cuban People toward the Castro Regime in the Late Spring of 1960* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979).

Before 1959, lobbying for agrarian reform or sympathizing with the Soviet Union in Cuban schools had been criminalized. After the ouster of Batista, during school year 1959–60, no restrictions were imposed. By July 1960, however, when President Eisenhower cut the Cuban sugar quota in reaction to Cuba's nationalizations and began to actively support armed opposition to the revolution, it became increasingly suspicious in Cuban society (including its schools) to be uncritical of the United States. Once the island was invaded with the support of the U.S. military in April 1961, the U.S.A. took on the role of a hostile state. This had to be taught in Cuban classrooms; the U.S. could no longer be a model for Cuban educators. Textbooks were no longer imported from the West but from the new allies in the East; Cuba's educators no longer went to study in the United States but instead traveled to Eastern Europe. In this context, parts of Cuba's private education system ceased to collaborate with the government and instead began to conspire against it.

5. THE NATIONALIZATION OF CUBA'S PRIVATE SCHOOLS, 1961

It reminded us, once again, how highly the revolutionary government and he himself [Fidel Castro] *thought of the private school, and the key function it has for our society*

—Aurelio Baldor, director and owner of Colegio Baldor, March 1959[1]

(. . .) *And because of that we announce that the revolutionary government will decree a law nationalizing the private schools* (long applause)

—Fidel Castro, May Day, 1961[2]

After the collapse of the old regime, Cuba's schools, including those that were private, reopened their doors quickly. The purges that followed have been described in chapter 1. Cuba's revolutionary education policy evolved throughout 1959 in interaction with the country's educators and civil society, as chapter 3 has detailed. Minister Hart admitted in January 1959 that the new government did not have a detailed plan to carry out its educational policy because the guerrillas-turned-government had simply not had time to prepare for running the country that soon. Only strategic goals had been spelled out. Cuba's revolutionary government wanted to achieve a literate nation and effective schooling for everyone very rapidly. These objectives did not contradict the existence or even cooperation with private schools, as key programmatic statements of the forces in opposition to Batista, analyzed in this chapter, show. Despite certain criticism, there was no principled opposition to the private sector. And yet, in May 1961, Prime Minister Castro announced the nationalization of Cuba's private schools. How can this be explained? This chapter reconstructs the shift from cooperation to expropriation, from reform to revolution. Emphasis is given to the political context and the increasing radicalization, triggered by the revolutionary reforms in the nation.

Throughout 1959 and into 1960, a climate of cooperation between the state and the private sector reigned for the most part in Cuba, as previously discussed. This chapter focuses more on their differences and the emerging conflicts. It opens with a panorama of the private school sector in 1958–59. A review of

[1] *Prensa Libre*, 3 May 1959.

[2] Fidel Castro, *Discurso*, 1 May 1961.

the history of state control of private education shows that the attempt to increase state control had been common practice throughout the republic. Early announcements to expand public education and new legislation by the revolutionary government, already described, foreshadowed a stricter and more effective control of private schools by the state. In 1959 and early 1960 these measures were mostly accepted and not seen as a revolutionary onslaught on Cuba's institutions, even if such modifications restricted some of their autonomy, as reactions from school directors and U.S. diplomats show, reviewed in section two of this chapter.

Private schools, their students, and their teachers were important actors in the transformation of Cuba's society. This social transformation gained new momentum in 1960. Students and others began to use their schools as spaces of opposition. Influential international institutions, most importantly the Catholic Church and the U.S. government, directly intervened in this conflict and were instrumental in shaping its outcome, detailed in the second part of this chapter. Within the context of the Cold War, the course of peaceful coexistence quickly turned into violent confrontation. The third part of the chapter describes the expropriations of private schools in detail and concludes with a reflection on the role of nationalization in Cuba's history and its importance for the revolutionary transformation of Cuban society that followed.

5.1 Private education at the eve of the revolution

On the eve of the revolution, Cuba's private educational sector was significant and thriving. Cuba's finest, best-equipped, and most modern schools were private. More than one in three Cuban students at the secondary level went to a private school.[3] In 1957 there were 859 officially recognized private schools, some of them with several thousand students enrolled. Cuba's Catholic University Santo Tomás de

[3] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Hacienda, Dirección General de Estadística, *Anuario estadístico de Cuba 1957* (Havana 1958), pp. 579–83.

Villanueva, established in 1946, boasted that in 1958 it had 651 new students that year alone.[4] The business volume of private education prior to its expropriation was estimated at 35 million pesos, almost half of the budget of the Ministry of Education, which stood at 75 million pesos in 1958.[5] In republican Cuba, representatives of private schools were also used to having considerable influence and political leverage. Carlos Pérez Duran, director of the Methodist Candler College, with some 1,800 students, and former president of an association representing 800 private schools, told U.S. diplomats he felt that his "own personal influence can dominate a rather large school area making it impractical and unfeasible for the Government to molest them."

The private sector in 1958

Available statistics on private education before the revolution show a tendency toward growth. The demand for schools, especially in the secondary and tertiary sector, was increasing in the 1950s. Public schools and universities were more affected by the political turmoil of the late 1950s and the Batista administration had a more business-friendly approach and made the authorization of private schools easier. The number of Cuba's private school teachers and students increased by almost 10 percent in only two years after Batista came to power in 1952.[6] A similarly steep rise is apparent for the number of junior high schools (grades seven through nine): 1953–54 began with 776 secondary private schools, and by

[4] Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva, "Anuario," ed. Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva (Havana 1958).

[5] The estimate derives from Raúl Ferrer, Director of Adult Education in Cuba's Ministry of Education, based on social security statistics for Cuba's private teachers. Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Educación (MINED) and Raúl Ferrer, "Ley de nacionalización de la enseñanza" in *Alfabetización, nacionalización de la enseñanza*. Realizaciones de la Revolución (Havana 1961), pp. 47–71. The World Bank estimated the volume of private education at 10 million pesos in 1950, before a significant growth of the sector. Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Report on Cuba: Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 433. Numbers for the ministry's 1958 budget are from C. Paul Roberts, Mukhtar Hamour, and University of California Los Angeles, Latin American Center, *Cuba 1968*: *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*. *Supplement* 1. Latin American Center University of California (Los Angeles 1970).

[6] Whereas in school year 1953–54 there were 4,047 teachers and 98,376 students in private primary schools, by 1955–56 these numbers had risen to 4,370 teachers and 106,579 students. See Cuba, Ministerio de Hacienda, Dirección General de Estadística, *Estadística, Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 1957*, pp. 564–65.

school year 1955–56 there were already 859 schools. Of these, almost one third, or 259, were Catholic, 73 Protestant, one Hebrew, and 526 laic.[7] The country's senior high schools (grades 10 through 12) had the highest proportion of private ownership. In 1957 Cuba had 21 public institutes for upper secondary education, with some 108 affiliated study houses (*casas de estudio*), and 162 private schools incorporated across the country. Of the 35,746 students enrolled in senior high schools, 13,489 were registered at private schools.[8]

At the higher educational levels, social selection prevailed at all levels. Gender distribution was fairly equal across the private and public schools; no racial criteria are given in these education statistics. Only the 1943 census differentiated students by race (but not by public or private school). It listed five times as many white professors (3,271), including those in secondary and higher education, as black professors (600). At the primary level the ratio was 3 to 1, or 15,658 white teachers to 4,368 black teachers.[9] Whereas at all other school levels, from kindergarten through secondary education, women by far outnumbered men in both student and teacher populations, at the tertiary level this gender balance was inverted at both public and private universities. The ratio of male to female professors was 5:1 at public universities and 4:1 at private universities. For students, the male-to-female ratio was 6:4 at public universities and 7:3 at private institutions.[10]

Cuba's 1940 Constitution had recognized the need and allowed for new public and private universities (article 54) and conferred their regulation to future legislation. In 1946 the first Catholic university had been opened in Mariano, outside Havana, by a U.S. branch of the Augustinian order. A law had finally been passed in December 1950 to regulate additional public and private universities. The Batista government had later granted university status to various private colleges. The most important and

---

[7] Ibid., pp. 579–83.

[8] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, *Estadisticas de los Centros Secundarios: Curso 1956 a 1957* (Havana: Superintendencia General de la Segunda Enseñanza 1957), pp. 8–9, 45.

[9] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Dirección General del Censo, Junta Nacional del Censo, *Censo de 1943* (Havana: P. Fernández y Cía. S. en C. Impresores, 1945), p. 1112.

[10] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas*, Estadística, Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 1957*, p. 588.

only one with a full university campus was the Catholic University of Santo Tomás de Villanueva. Most others had grown out of private schools into specialized branches that had received authorization by the government to issue university diplomas. Most of these schools received university status between 1956 and 1958, when 18,000 University of Havana students were no longer able to attend classes because of the armed uprising against Batista. These were: Universidad Nacional José Martí and Universidad Masónica (both laic), Universidad Candler (protestant), and Universidad La Salle and Colegio de Belén (both Catholic). There had been three major public universities—those of Havana, Oriente (Santiago de Cuba), and Las Villas (Santa Clara). Smaller, less-known institutes with university status, were in Occidente (Universidad Rafael Morales y González in Pinar del Rio); in the cities of Holguin (Universidad Norte de Oriente) and Camagüey (Universidad Agramonte); and in Las Villas province (Universidad de Cienfuegos). A state-supported stipend system had been constitutionally required, but with an overall budget of 200,000 pesos—less than 10 pesos per student—for all education levels, insufficient. The social background of university students thus tended to be of the middle and upper classes, with virtually no chance of upward mobility for rural and lower-class Cubans.[11] Tuition fees at public universities of 30 pesos per semester (plus various fees for lab use, diploma, and so on) had been quite moderate, but had still been a considerable expenditure for most, and prevented many from attending.[12]

The tendency toward growth in private higher education became obvious in the 1950s. In academic year 1955–56, the last year before the uprising, some 220 university professors were already working for the private sector, and three times as many, or 755 professors, at public universities. The trend for private education had also long been spurred by the political turmoil and gangsterism prevalent

[11] Eusebio Mujal-León and University of Miami, Research Institute for Cuban Studies, *The Cuban University under the Revolution* (Coral Gables, FL: Institute of Interamerican Studies Graduate School of International Studies, 1988), pp. 14–15.

[12] Universidad de La Habana, "Universidad de La Habana: Presupuesto," *Boletín Oficial Universitario* 27, extra no. 7.

at the University of Havana and other public institutions between the 1930s and 1950s.[13] In 1958 presidential candidate and former Minister of Education Andrés Rivero Agüero pledged to promote legislation that would privatize all higher education when he became president on the Cuban television program *Cuba Primero*.[14] He was convinced that this would be a better solution to Cuba's educational problems than relying on public institutions. The revolutionary government's policy would reverse these trends—first slowly, then swiftly.

Brief history of state control of private education

The tensions between private schools and the state in Cuba can be traced back at least to Cuba's first public school law of 1842.[15] In it, the colonial state reiterated its right to "oversee and control" private schools, including the behavior and moral standards of teachers.[16] Ever since, the Cuban state has repeatedly defined the operational code and requirements for schools, in theory for both the public and the private. In practice, however, the outcome has depended on the one hand on legislation to support these rules and the will and capacity of state organs to enforce them, while on the other side the private sector tried to protect its autonomy and interests. Throughout history, the Cuban state has been able to inspect and correct noncompliance to varying degrees. Usually at times of heightened political tensions (e.g., Cuba's nineteenth-century wars of independence, the military occupations of 1898–1902 and 1906–9, the

[13] See Raúl Aguiar Rodríguez, *El bonchismo y el gangsterismo en Cuba*, *Política* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2000); and Jaime Suchlicki, *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920–1968* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1969), p. 123.

[14] *Información, La Habana* (24 September 1958): A-5, cited in Ramón de Armas, Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, and Ana Cairo Ballester, *Historia de la Universidad de La Habana*, *Historia de Cuba* series (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1984), p. 632.

[15] The most complete, though somewhat schematic, overview of education in colonial Cuba is the eight-volume work by Enrique Sosa and Alejandrina Penabad Félix, *Historia de la educación en Cuba*, 2nd ed., corrected and augmented, Publicaciones de la Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad (Havana: Ediciones Boloña: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 2001). For Catholic education, see also Teresa Fernández Soneira, *Cuba: Historia de la educación Católica, 1582–1961*, *Colección Félix Varela*, 2 (Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal, 1997).

[16] Lisandro Otero Masdeu et al., *Código escolar,* 2nd ed. (Havana: Talleres Tipográficos de Carasa y Ca., S. en C., 1941), p. 428.

revolution of 1933, and the revolution of 1959), the state has increased its vigilance, often cracking down on schools and their activities, both public and private.

The state regulation of schools had long provided guidelines for the conditions, even including the hygiene, of schools, teachers, and students.[17] It had stipulated the requirements for the training and certification of teachers, as well as the acceptable and recommended pedagogical practices. Perhaps most importantly, the school laws had also determined the courses, study plans, and overall purpose of education. Since the 1860s, Cuba's nationalist educators such as statesman and historian José Antonio Saco had emphasized the idea of "the propagation and inculcation of ideas and sentiments that constitute the national spirit by means of education." In colonial and postcolonial Cuba, the nationalist impulse had given special emphasis to (Cuban) literature, geography, national history (*historia patria*), and civic education.[18]

Under the first U.S. military occupation, school commissioner Matthew Hanna established the principle of equality between public and private schools. This was part of Military Order 368 from 1900, which would define Cuba's postcolonial school system for years to come. After two years of overseeing Cuban schools, however, and of "private schools multiplying" freely, Hanna strongly advocated in a report to military governor Leonard Wood in 1902 to increase state control over private schools and their practices and, in cases of noncompliance, to shut them down.[19] Wood himself wrote, "the general tendency is to abandon [private schools] and send the children to the public schools." But he also stated

[17] For an excellent source-based overview from a Foucault-inspired perspective, see Yoel Cordoví Núñez, *Magisterio y nacionalismo en las escuelas públicas de Cuba (1899–1920)*.

[18] Otero Masdeu et al., *Código escolar*, p. 432. For a very good overview on these topics, see the unpublished work by Laurie Ann Johnston, "Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre: Themes in the history of primary and secondary education in Cuba, 1899–1958," PhD diss., University College London (London 1997).

[19] Govt. Docs., U.S. Army, Dept. of Cuba, and Leonard Wood, eds. (Hanna, Matthew E.), "Report of the Public Schools of the Island of Cuba," in *Annual Report of Major General Leonard Wood, U.S.V., Commanding Division of Cuba* (Havana: 1901).

that his government "always encouraged the private schools," as it would be "impossible, for some time to come, to take care of all children in the state schools.[20] This turned out to be prophetic.

Cuba's first republican constitution of 1901, in effect from 1902, guaranteed academic freedom and made the opening and operation of private schools relatively easy, as the need for additional schools was great. Article 31 explained, "any person may learn or teach freely any science, art, or profession and establish and maintain institutions for education and instruction" (*establecimientos de educación y enseñanza*).[21] Pre-1940 legislation permitted untrained adults to teach children at the primary level as long as the provincial superintendent "attested" to the would-be instructors' pedagogical capacity, a practice common in other countries at the time, too. Individual education in private houses was also a common and accepted practice.[22] For decades, legislation reflected private schools' interests and had a laissez-faire approach. A regulation for private school inspection enshrined this principle: "Every director or teacher of a private school may use for his teaching the textbooks that he considers appropriate (*que tenga por conveniente*), be it or not one that has been approved for public schools by the Board of Superintendents. And in no case will the school inspector make any recommendation whatsoever."[23]

Shortly after the second U.S. intervention, in July 1909, another decree by the Secretary for Public Instruction and Fine Arts reiterated the requirement for private schools to seek government authorization, keep school records, and submit regular reports. Since Cuba's 1901 constitution had mandated the attendance of primary school for children ages six to fourteen, parents were now required to inform government authorities about the enrollment and attendance of their children and could theoretically be fined for noncompliance. Moreover, textbooks and study plans were developed to

---

[20] Leonard Wood, "The Military Government of Cuba," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 21 (1903): 15.

[21] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Convención Constituyente 1900–1901, *Constitución de la República de Cuba* (Havana: Impr. de Rambla y Bouza, 1901). For a good overview of regulatory changes in republican Cuba's education system, see García Tudurí, *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia*, pp. 55–147, here p. 10.

[22] *Reglamento general de instrucción primaria* (1922), Article 504 and Decree 301, March 1926, in Otero Masdeu et al., *Código escolar.*

[23] Circular 228, "Regulación para la inspección de las escuelas privadas," 30 April 30 1926, in ibid.

strengthen patriotic feelings in the young nation, where a considerable number of teachers were Spanish-born or had come as missionaries from the United States.

In 1926, though, a new decree sought to increase state control over private schools yet again because not much of the previous legislation had become reality. This was part of President Gerardo Machado y Morales's first term in office (1925–29), an era of relative prosperity which enabled him to begin an ambitious public work program with a stronger state. Machado, of Cuba's Liberal Party, was famously determined to make Cuba the "Switzerland of the Americas." The ruling for Cuba's schools was issued to complement the comprehensive 300-page general education law from 1922. To justify the new regulation, Cuban legislators stated that private schools had not complied with the laws. Complaints about the noncompliance of private schools, "in different times and different forms, in the press, politics, and corporations of civic character," were abundant.[24]

Teaching "Cubanidad"

A first debate about the lack of nationalist orientation in Cuba's schools and the need to change this had been sparked by published reports of school inspector Ismael Clark in 1915. Clark wrote about observations he had made around the country, describing "anational" (*anacionalista*) schools "that consist of not teaching anything that relates to Cuba," and an ongoing process of decubanization (*descubanización*) at some schools, with outright hostility toward the Cuban nation itself, while others lacked instruction in anything pro-Cuban.[25] For parents, social distinction, in addition to separating their children socially, racially, or by gender, was another important reason to send their children to private schools. By doing so, they prevented national integration, Clark argued. News reports such as this were common at the time and give a vivid image of the public–private school segregation: The Colegio Sagrado Corazón de Jesús in Santiago de Cuba "resisted admitting a girl that had previously been at a

[24] "Decreto 301 de marzo 1926 para escuelas privadas," in ibid.

[25] Arturo Montori, "Reglamentación de las escuelas privadas," *Cuba Contemporánea* 14, no. 3 (1917): 213–15; ibid.

public school out of fear it might contaminate its students." Students protested, demonstrating a political awareness about the social distinctions prevalent at public and private schools.[26]

Influenced by these reports, Cuban intellectual and representative Fernando Ortiz of the Liberal Party drafted a new educational law for the Cuban Congress in 1917. His proposal sought "the development of patriotic feelings among Cuban children." Ortiz wanted to strengthen the state, saying that "the teaching profession, and especially at the primary level, should be controlled by the state."[27] His proposal was rejected. Nonetheless, republicans had understood the need for universal education as a critical means of forming loyal and productive citizens. Less than two decades after Spain's loss of Cuba, it was unlikely that those who had fought against Cuba's independence or favored annexation would teach principles of *Cubanidad,* or Cubanness. Given the century-long direct Spanish domination and the more recent U.S. impact on Cuba's education, the theme of foreign influence was undoubtedly important for Cuban educators. State control of private institutions was vital to create nationalist values. For historian Louis Pérez, the very notion of *Cubanidad* had been defined in the nineteenth century as being anti-Spanish, and in the twentieth century it meant to be anti-American.

The country's legal framework, and more importantly its implementation, remained lenient toward private education, despite some important changes in the 1940 Constitution. This protection from state interference was an effect of the various struggles for school and university autonomy, the result of a weak, underfinanced bureaucracy, especially in the 1930s, and a product of outright resistance from private schools to outside interference. As a result, the Social Defense Code of 1938 punished any government official or school inspector who overstepped his authority vis-à-vis the private school with a

[26] León Primelles, *Crónica cubana, 1919–1922: Menocal y la Liga Nacional* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1957), p. 268.

[27] Fernando Ortiz Fernández, *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre* ([Havana] n.p.: c. 1941), p. 123. This book is a documentation of a public event held in Havana in May of 1941 in defense of public education and in favor of an increased state control of private education in which hundreds of delegates from teachers associations, including from private schools, labor unions, intellectuals, masons and other parts of civil society participated.

prison term of six months to two years.[28] The revolutionary government would later reverse this approach, threatening private-school teachers with punishment in case of noncompliance with legislation.

Nationalism versus foreign influence

At the time, state regulation of private schools was a contested issue not only in Cuba, but also in the United States.[29] Unlike Cuba, in the United States education was not centrally regulated. Twenty-eight U.S. states required the teaching of special subjects that included the Constitution, civics, "patriotism," citizenship, and self-government in all schools. Instruction in foreign languages was prohibited before the eighth grade. Twenty-four states had regulations for regular private-school inspections, yet only eleven had specific regulations for teacher training and certificates. Religion was also a contested issue in American private schools, as forty states had constitutional provisions to avoid "sectarian" purposes in their schools.[30]

In Cuba, concerns about undesired foreign influence, and more specifically, Americanization, had a long history. They were not unique to republican or revolutionary Cuban nationalists. Spanish colonial authorities had been similarly concerned about the undermining of national—at the time to be understood as Spanish—values through exposure of young Cubans to foreign influences at school age. In the late nineteenth century, some 50,000–100,000 Cubans traveled to the U.S. annually, and 2,000 Cuban students were already enrolled in U.S. educational institutions in the mid-nineteenth century. [31] As Spanish Governor General José G. de la Concha had put it in his memoir, sending children abroad,

---

[28] Article 200, *Código de defensa social*, October 1938, cited in García Tudurí, *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia*, pp. 133.

[29] A compendium of legislation concerning public control of private schools found that 1.5 million Americans attended private primary schools (out of a total of 20 million at primary schools) and spent an average of 131 million U.S. dollars in doing so. Of the 913 colleges and universities existing across the country in 1924, 769 were private. Lester MacLean Wilson, *Summary of Legislation Concerning Public Control of Private Schools and the Teaching of Religion in Public Schools in the United States* (New York: American group Institute of Pacific relations, 1927), pp. 2–3.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, p. 34.

especially to the United States, constituted a "grave damage to ties of family and nationality and with no less harm to [their] country they generally come back with new habits, ideas, and dangerous affectations."[32]

After Cuba's independence, students continued to study abroad, especially in the United States. Gilbert K. Harroun, president of the Cuban Educational Association, an organization that had promoted Cuban studies in the United States since 1899, believed it would take "a thousand children yearly (. . .) to gain in one half of the hundred years [that] which otherwise [it] will take us to Americanize this place."[33] The concern about dangerous foreign ideas has been a constant theme in Cuba's educational history from colonialism through the republic to the Cuban revolution of 1959.

U.S. influence

In the twentieth century, Cuban nationalists had become concerned not only about the often foreign-dominated Catholic schools—mostly Spanish, although there was a considerable number of French and Mexican-founded *colegios* as well—but increasingly about the new, American-oriented private and commercial schools. The United States had funded or subsidized several private schools, such as Ruston Academy, the American Central School at Island of Pines, and the Universidad Villanueva, directly. The objectives of these subsidies were explicitly political. As U.S. public affairs officer in Havana, Jacob Canter cabled to the State Department in 1952 that "the indoctrination of Cuban children in the principle of democracy and the knowledge and understanding these children obtain of the U.S. while attending a school like Ruston are perhaps the most effective means of shaping Cuban opinion in the future."[34] Business schools with U.S. curricula, spoken English, and North American extracurricular activities

[32] José Gutierrez de la Concha y de Irigoyen, *Habana: Memorias sobre el estado político, gobierno y administración de la isla de Cuba* (Madrid: J. Trujillo, 1853), p. 63.

[33] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, p. 406. See also William Thomas Kelly, "The Confluence of Pedagogy and Colonial Ideology: Philanthropic Nation-Building and the Cuban Educational Association, 1899–1901." Unpublished M.A. thesis in social sciences, University of Chicago (Chicago 2011).

[34] Cited in Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, p. 401.

flourished, especially in late republican Cuba. Many of the extracurricular activities practiced at these schools, such as baseball, were also a cultural affirmation of new values that became part of a Cuban identity that sought distance to colonial Spanish influences.

Some of these schools had considerable enrollments, as evident in the Havana Business Academy, which alone had 3,000 students. In 1946, some 585 Cuban students at the primary and secondary levels were enrolled in U.S. schools for temporary studies; ten years later, this number had doubled. At the university level in 1944–45, 314 Cubans students were enrolled at U.S. universities—far more than those of any other Latin American nation except Mexico.[35] Private schools with an American curriculum and U.S. teachers and students, such as Candler College, Phillips School, Ruston Academy, Merici Academy, or American Dominican, offered students the possibility to pursue further qualification in the United States. In 1959 Ruston Academy had 600 students enrolled, of whom 40 percent were U.S. citizens, according to its director, James Baker. That year, Candler College sent 60 students—40 Americans and 20 Cubans—to enroll in U.S. schools.[36] In the mid-twentieth century, "the most relevant educational levels for economic mobility became secondary and tertiary education."[37]

Alejandro de la Fuente explained that the access to private schools was particularly important "because they were major avenues of social ascent. Their infrastructure, curricula, foreign contacts and social–racial exclusiveness were all symbols of high-quality education."[38] With only 3.5 percent of Cubans having a high-school degree, the debate about private and public secondary education was also a

[35] See Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, *Anuario estadistíco escolar* 92; *idem*, *Anuario estadistíco escolar*; and Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, pp. 406–8.

[36] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, "American Educational Facilities in Havana" (26 August 1960), Cuba 1960–January 1963, Internal Affairs, Reel 36.

[37] Fernando Reimers, "Education and Social Progress," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America*, ed. John H. Coatsworth (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 438.

[38] Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, *Envisioning Cuba* series (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 146.

debate about "who would become the country's future leaders, and who would control their education."[39] Once relations with the United States were strained and then broken, the U.S.-friendly orientation of these schools became a serious reason of concern for the revolutionary leadership. When the U.S. government decided to combat the revolution, their continued existence was deemed unacceptable by the Cuban government.

Increasing "Cubanidad"

In Cuba's private schools, the teachers and textbooks had remained little regulated in practice until the 1940s. Private schools had been required by law to carry out the same exams as their public-school equivalent, but had often held additional exams and used other teaching materials, especially in the growing number of bilingual and foreign-curricula schools. School calendars and general orientation had not been strictly controlled except for national holidays and some symbolic patriotic exercises. Only in 1960 would the revolutionary government decree a new academic and "patriotic" calendar.[40]

In the crisis-ridden 1930s and 1940s, Cuba's nationalists had promoted the increase in hiring of Cuban teachers instead of foreigners, following the dictates of the 50-percent law of 1934, which required at least 50 percent of all employees to be Cuban. As a result, the 1943 census listed just one-tenth of all professors (university and secondary education) as non-Cuban (595 versus 4,466 Cubans) and only 632 foreign versus 19,758 Cuban primary teachers.[41] María Corominas de Hernández, Cuban pedagogue and former director of the Havana's Teachers' School, argued in an International Women's Day speech in 1936 for the increased hiring of Cuban teachers instead of "foreign, little-qualified, and religious teachers." The speech was subsequently published in Cuba's most prestigious journal at the time, the

[39] Laurie Ann Johnston, "Cuban Nationalism and Responses to Private Education in Cuba, 1902–1958," in *Ideologues and Ideologies in Latin America*, ed. Will Fowler, *Contributions in Latin American Studies*, no. 9 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 40.

[40] Rainer Schultz, "On the Pedagogical Origins of a New Collective Memory," unpublished conference paper, Yale University, International Conference: *The Revolution Remembered*, 3–4 October 2014.

[41] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Dirección General del Censo, Junta Nacional del Censo, *Censo de 1943*, p. 1112.

Revista bimestre cubana. As the term *nacionalización* in the title of the article suggests, nationalization at the time was tantamount to the increase of Cuban presence, in this case, in the country's schools.

Corominas demanded standardized qualifications for teachers, Cuban nationality, and secular education as a requirement. In private schools, "love of god is preached and practiced, not of fatherland and community," she argued.[42] Corominas founded her own private school, Colegio Corominas, and repeated her critique in 1941: Many of the religious schools "employ[ed] teachers without certificates (. . .) ha[d] no supervision, use[d] foreign texts," and in many ways worked to "maintain a colonial status in education, immune to pedagogical reforms."[43] The stricter requirements existing at public schools for teacher certifications from Cuban institutions meant that private schools would be more likely to hire foreigners.

In Cuba's Constitution of 1940, which reflected the profound social struggles in the 1930s, the state asserted its power to control private education. The constitutional debate on education transformed itself into "a battle to define nationalism in Cuba."[44] Many of Ortiz's 1917 proposals were integrated into the Constitution. For example, article 51 required "all education, public or private, [be] inspired by the spirit of *Cubanidad* and human solidarity." Article 47 established the duty of the state to control educational institutions through its inspectors, but conferred the specific regulation of it to further legislation and the National Council for Education and Culture, the Consejo Nacional de Educación y Cultura or CNEC.[45] The CNEC was created by article 59 of the 1940 Constitution to "foster, guide, and

[42] María Corimina de Hernández, "La nacionalización de la enseñanza en Cuba," *Revista bimestre cubana* 37 (1936).

[43] Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre: Trabajos, acuerdos y adhesiones de una campaña cívica y cultural* (Havana: Cárdenas y Compañia, 1941), pp. 79–82.

[44] Laurie Ann Johnston, "Cuban Nationalism and Responses to Private Education in Cuba, 1902–1958," in Will Fowler, ed., *Ideologues and Ideologies in Latin America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 38.

[45] The number of school inspectors before the revolution increased to over 1,300, with oversight of just some 30,000 teachers altogether. Contrary to expectations, the number of inspectors after 1959 was at first reduced by one third.

control educational, scientific, and artistic activities of the nation." However, as Fernando Ortiz observed, the corresponding legislation was weak and punitive measures to enforce the law were nonexistent.[46]

Communist senator Juan Marinello, minister without portfolio under Batista's 1940–44 presidency, was elected as a member of the commission on private schools in the newly created CNEC. As such, he attempted to enact a series of legal motions that sought to increase control over private schools and to enact legislation against discrimination on racial and other grounds.[47] Yet, due to parliamentary inactivity, the necessary quorum to hold a vote was often not met; the CNEC remained inactive due to the lack of funding, status, and infrastructure.[48] By the 1950s the CNEC had ceased to exist "due to a lack of attention by the government that [was] supposed to facilitate its work and consult work with its recommendations."[49]

As a member of the Cuban senate for the communist party, then named Partido Unión Revolucionaria Comunista, Juan Marinello introduced further legal drafts that would maintain private and religious education but create enforceable regulation for violations. Some points of dispute had been the forms and limits of religious education, and the origins and orientation of textbooks, teachers, and school directors. In times of Fascism, World War, Soviet communism, and Spanish *Falangismo*, the communist initiative in Spain's former colony sparked major debates in Cuban newspapers and civil society, where school legislation became overshadowed by and entangled with broader political, religious, and ideological issues.[50] A movement called *Por la Patria y por la Escuela* was founded on 21 May 1941, in defense of private and religious education and the right of parents to choose their children's schools

---

[46] Ortiz Fernández, *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre*, pp. 122–44.

[47] For more information, see the various legal propositions and reports in Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Colección Cubana, Fondo manuscrito Juan Marinello.

[48] "Por qué no se reune el consejo de educación?," *El Mundo* (22 April 1945): 6.

[49] García Tudurí, *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia*, p. 89.

[50] Consuelo Naranjo Orovio, *Cuba, Otro escenario de lucha: La guerra civil y el exilio republicano español, Colección tierra nueva e cielo nuevo*, 24 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Centro de Estudios Históricos Departamento de Historia de América, 1988).

(*patria potestad*).[51] A week later, progressive and nationalist forces baptized their association Por la Escuela Cubana en Cuba Libre.[52] Dozens of newspaper articles and editorials reflected the different viewpoints; thousands of citizens took to the streets. Several public informational meetings were held in which demands were heard to legally enforce a comprehensive survey of private schools. Broader political concerns and context, such Falangismo, communism, and Catholicism, sparked and framed the debates on education in the 1940s. When Marinello presented his legislation to the senate in late 1944, it was defeated by an alliance led by Catholic and conservative forces that sought to protect the family and religious education from more state interference.[53] The growing concern of Cuban nationalists about the orientation of private schools during the 1940s in times of fascism and shifting geopolitical alliances was also related to the growth of private schools in Cuba at the time.

Economic and social aspects

The increase of private schools stood in contrast to the economic decline of the late 1920s. From 1898 through 1925, many prestigious religious schools were established, often by foreign orders.[54] After the 1933 revolution, and especially following the legal changes and economic recovery of the 1940s, many private and vocational schools opened for business.[55] The lack of reliable funding for public schools and their employees was affected by the shrinking state budget, given the volatile structure of an export economy largely dependent upon a single commodity, sugar. In 1936, for example, Secretary of Public Instruction Leonardo Anaya Murillo opened 15 new public high schools, partly to "avoid student mobilizations," but the schools lacked buildings, and the "government was without resources to pay for

[51] Ortiz Fernández, in *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre.*

[52] Katia Figueredo Cabrera, "La polémica educacional de los años 40 en Cuba." *Temas*, no. 56 (2008): 189.

[53] Ibid.: 190.

[54] Teresa Fernández Soneira, *Cuba: Historia de la educación católica*, 1582–1961 (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997), pp. 1582–1961.

[55] García Tudurí, *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia*, p. 138.

the teachers and school materials."[56] Statistically the school situation improved, with more schools per capita, but in reality, effective operation was often not guaranteed.

Economic recovery in the context of war began in the early 1940s and has been reflected in educational budgets ever since. Before Cuba joined in the Second World War in 1941, the educational budget had stood at 11.5 million pesos, but it doubled two years later and reached 50 million pesos by 1945. When President Carlos Prío Socarrás came to power in 1948, an astonishing 78 million pesos were assigned to the Ministry of Education.[57] The 1940 constitutional mandate to fund the Ministry of Education no less than any other ministry resulted in a numerically impressive budget for schooling in the 1940s and 1950s, totaling nearly one-fourth of all budgetary appropriations.

However, "the educational system has failed to produce results commensurate with the degree of official sanction which it has received," the U.S. government observed in a 1956 report on investment opportunities in Cuba.[58] In a comparison of Latin American nations, Cuba ranked only twelfth in school enrollment and class attendance—with one out of two school-age Cubans not in school—yet it had the highest educational expenditure relative to national income.[59] Reports attributed these failures largely to undue centralization, lack of local responsibility, political and discontinuous administration, poor distribution of teachers and schools, and abuses of the teacher tenure system.

The World Bank observed similar tendencies during its extended field visit to Cuba in 1950. It saw overcrowded public schoolrooms, some with as many as 120 pupils, and found conditions in many public schools "deplorable." An official Cuban educator explained that landlords often profited from renting out space to the state: "When a building is no longer fit for people to live in, it is turned into a

---

[56] Fernando Portuondo, *Historia de Cuba*, 6th ed. (Havana: Editorial Minerva, 1957), p. 291.

[57] Numbers are according to Cuba's Finance Ministry, cited in Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission*, p. 432.

[58] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign Commerce, American Republics Division, *Investment in Cuba: Basic Information for United States Businessmen* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Foreign Commerce, 1956), pp. 180–81.

[59] Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 28.

school."[60] Lowry Nelson emphasized the rural–urban divide, and especially the Havana-focused development. In his extensive study on rural Cuba in the 1940s he concluded, "The generalization appears justified that the farther removed the area is from Havana, the worse the school situation appears to be."[61] Half of Cuba's private schools were located in Havana. Urban–rural divides highlighted Cuba's uneven modernity. In consequence, there was a growing lack of trust and quite often a sheer impossibility for parents to send their children to public schools, especially in more rustic areas. This "general lack of confidence in the public schools" that the World Bank observed was "reflected in a disproportionate increase of private school enrollment," and according to the bank, had a strong "tendency to increase social class divisions."[62]

The class argument

Awareness of the class-based character of Cuba's educational system grew in the 1950s as a result of various studies—academic and policy-inspired, both Cuban and international. Their findings confirmed a rising social inequality, reflected and reproduced through unequal educational opportunities in Cuba's public and private schools. The World Bank, too, warned of rising social divisions in Cuban society in 1951 because of unequal access to education in the private and public sectors.

In 1955, the school of education at the recently founded Universidad Central Las Villas in Santa Clara launched a survey of living conditions in the area, with the aim of bringing about educational changes. The study was initiated and supervised by Paul G. Adams, a U.S. advisor on higher education to the Cuban government. Adams worked for the U.S. Operations Mission to Cuba, part of Point IV of the International Cooperation Administration established between the Eisenhower and Batista administrations. Las Villas was chosen as the "most diversified province and therefore representative for

[60] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), pp. 417.

[61] Lowry Nelson, *Rural Cuba* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950), p. 238.

[62] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Findings and Recommendations,* p. 404.

all of Cuba." Participating in the questionnaire were 924 teachers, who interviewed 1,675 families. The study argued that the state's chronic lack of attention to public schools had led parents and teachers to look for solutions outside. Its conclusions and recommendations to improve public education to counter these tendencies seemed to be a blueprint for the revolutionary government's program would be implemented between 1959 and 1961. The survey recommended making better use of audiovisual materials, such as radio, television, and cinema; enforcing existing regulations to improve class assistance; organizing a literacy campaign using modern technology; employing the armed forces to test and supervise school assistance; creating school cities; arranging for free transportation for students and teachers, as well as free meals at schools; making teachers live in their school districts to improve social relations with the school community; raising teachers' salaries; and increasing the number of visits by school inspectors. The study also emphasized the necessity to edit new textbooks adapted to rural realities, given that "the scarcity of textbooks in rural schools" was "one of the most serious problems."[63]

That U.S. advisors on the island were concerned about social conditions, especially in rural Cuba, and that they recommended reforms very similar to those later implemented by the Castro government indicate the early reformist approach argued in previous chapters. Adams had started to work in Cuba as part of an International Cooperation Administration (ICA) grant in teacher training and had conducted several seminars and courses in research and teaching methods. He continued to do so during the revolution and was only withdrawn in May of 1960, "when political conditions prevailing on the campus of Universidad Central de Las Villas necessitated his recall."[64]

Cuba's communist party, the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP), did not put special emphasis on the class character of private education before the revolution, at least not in a programmatically prominent

[63] Universidad Central de Las Villas, Escuela de Pedagogía, *La educación rural en Las Villas: Bases para la redacción de unos cursos de estudios, nuevo plan de publicaciones*, no. 15 (Santa Clara, Cuba: Departamento de Relaciones Culturales Escuela de Pedagogía, 1959), pp. 198–204.

[64] U.S. National Archives, International Cooperation Administration (ICA) and Frank Arrington, "Education Report January–March 1960." General Records of Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948–1961, Mission to Cuba, Record Group 469, Box 8 (6 April 1960).

way. Their key text, *Fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba*, first published in 1943 and reedited in 1959, was primarily concerned with illiteracy and aimed at elevating a "progressive national culture." The PSP also found that secondary and higher education (although not specifically private institutions) discriminated against Afro-Cubans "deliberately."[65]

Another study, conducted in 1959 at the Universidad Católica de Santo Tomás de Villanueva, analyzed the sociological background of private and public school students. It gave additional evidence to the much-assumed class character of Cuba's school system. The study, a doctoral thesis at the university's School of Education, found *no* students of upper or upper-middle-class background at Cuban public schools, and 79 percent of attendees at those schools identifying themselves as being of lower class. At private schools, on the other hand, the upper classes represented 12 and 37 percent, respectively, of the student bodies, and only 9 percent of students identified themselves as being of lower class.[66]

Cuba's republican education system had had an undeniably class-based nature, most obviously reflected in the social divisions between public and private schools. During the 1950s, Cuba's academia, Catholic institutions, and foreign policy advisors brought awareness of this class matter to Cuban political circles both inside and outside the government. As mentioned before, Batista's chosen successor, Andrés Rivero Agüero, announced he would privatize Cuba's education further, believing in the superiority of the private model, given the poor state of public education in 1958. Others, including the World Bank, sought a solution to the inequality problem in the strengthening of the public schools. This became the government's position in 1959.

---

[65] Blas Roca, *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba* (1961), corrected ed. (Havana: Ediciones Populares, 1961), p. 94.

[66] Violeta Cabrera Viera, *Estudio sociologico comparativo entre la escuela nacional y la privada* (Villanueva: Universidad Católica de Santo Tomas de Villanueva, 1960), *Gráfica* 8, annex. Forty-two percent identified as "lower middle class" at private schools, and 21 at public schools identified with that category, ibid.

Cuba's private schools in Latin American context

The access to and financing of schools, along with their regulation and orientation, remained a constant point of debate throughout the Cuban republic. The United States shared the liberal premise that all citizens should have access to primary education and that the state had a responsibility to provide that service. Cuba's society, like others that were "modernizing," had an interest in developing national identity and preparing human resources to increase the productivity of the country's labor force. But because much of Cuba's economy up until the revolution was still based on unskilled labor in agriculture, the commitment and necessity to expand rural education were limited.

Some of the major differences between progressive and conservative forces in Latin American cultures have centered around different ideas as to who should receive education and how, the duration and financing of compulsory education, and who would attend other levels of education and for what purpose. These questions had been raised in the debates of Cuba's 1940 Constitutional Assembly, as already described. Fernando M. Reimers has identified two competing tendencies: a progressive movement that wants schools to build an inclusive and democratic social order, and a conservative one for whom the purpose of schools is to support a more authoritarian and exclusionary social structure.[67]

In some ways, Cuba differed from other Latin American nations in its quest for a national education system and the building of an e*stado docente,* or "teaching state." Cuba had only slowly begun in the twentieth century to challenge the dominance of the Church in the conduct of education. It had started expanding public education under military occupation. While the presence of foreign, and often European, advisors was common practice in the expansion of Latin American public school systems in the nineteenth century, Cuba differed in that regard because of its colonial status at the time. In the twentieth century, the United States helped creating a public school system but avoided major conflicts over religious education because of the resistance from Catholics and Spanish elites, as well as new protestant orders. As military governor Wood had said, he had "continued to encourage private

[67] Fernando Reimers, "Education and Social Progress," vol. 2 in *The Cambridge Economic History* of *Latin America,* ed. V. Bulmer Thomas, J. Coatsworth, and R. Cortés Conde (Cambridge, England and New York, 2006).

education." As superintendent of Cuba's schools, Harvard graduate Alexis Frye had organized a public school system under U.S. occupation which, according to state-sanctioned history books, in its essence was "conserved in Cuba" "with only slight variations" until the 1950s.[68]

No decisive new reforms to increase state control of private education were enacted in the remaining years leading up to the revolution, although several legal propositions were introduced. The Cuban republic since 1902 had remained a state with laic education at public schools up until 1959. Religious education was not subsidized by the state and legislation for private schools existed but was not always enforced. With a new beginning in 1959 all sides hoped to increase influence on Cuba's education system.

The antagonistic tendencies in Latin America's educational development models in the twentieth century—the elite-based, socially exclusive model and an alternative, more integrative and expansive approach—were also present in Cuba. A classic study on elites in Latin America has argued that the education reform movement sought to narrow "the separation between the classes" by developing a universal, comprehensive, and accessible school system.[69] This was part of the World Bank's recommendation for Cuba in the 1950s. It was also what the revolutionary government did: It expanded public education, including secondary schooling, with the goal to make it universal and worked especially toward the integration of the lower classes. In that endeavor, some conflicts with private schools seemed unavoidable.

5. 2 Private schools in revolutionary Cuba, 1959–60

This section analyzes the ways in which new legislation enacted by the revolutionary government affected private education and some of the conflicts that emerged. Early legislation in 1959 was not intended to prohibit private education. On the contrary, most legal texts explicitly confirmed the people's right to

[68] Portuondo, *Historia de Cuba*, p. 583.

[69] Aldo Solari, "Secondary Education and the Development of Elites," in *Elites in Latin America*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset and Aldo E. Solari (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 457.

choose private schooling. At the same time, however, by implementing legislation with effective instruments to control and punish noncompliance with various aspects of school laws, private interests were affected. This led to reactions critical of the government, which over time evolved into private institutions' open opposition to the government, which is the second focus of this section.

Analytically, we can distinguish three types of conflict between Cuba's private schools and the revolutionary government. First, there were openly political animosities based on differing views on the roles of religion and state in society, communist influence in politics, Cuba's relations to other countries, and the like. Second, there was discord about legislation affecting private schools in their income, status, or interests, such as the new regulations on the inspection of schools, pricing, availability of alternative public schools, or other economic or political reforms that had an impact on the private school constituency. Third, there were technical or administrative disputes within the schools, often originating before 1959, including labor conflicts, salary disputes, and student–teacher relations and status. In reality, however, these distinctions were not clear-cut and the reasons for ill feeling were often mixed, becoming overshadowed by escalating political and ideological divisions.

Signs of continuity

In 1959 private schools initially continued to expand, as did direct foreign investment and foreign (including U.S.) advisory elements in Cuba's educational system.[70] In May 1959, an agreement for technical assistance between U.S. institutions and the University of Santa Clara was signed. "The goals of the Cuba program in education have not changed during this quarter," an internal report of the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) read. The lead advisor, Dr. Paul Adams, conducted courses and seminars for rural teachers and school supervisors in Cuba.[71]

[70] United States investment flow in Cuba ranked second in Latin America in 1959, with a net value of circa 70 million U.S. dollars. Eric N. Baklanoff, *Expropriation of U.S. Investments in Cuba, Mexico, and Chile*, *Praeger Special Studies in International Economics and Development* series (New York: Praeger, 1975), pp. 27–28.

[71] U.S. National Archives, International Cooperation Administration (ICA) and Donald G. Curry, "Education Report April–June 1959," General Records of Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948–1961 (1 July 1959).

But already during the revolution's first year, momentum shifted from the private to the public sector through substantial and effective reallocation of public resources. Total government expenditures for education almost doubled between 1958 and 1961: From 75.5 million pesos during the year before the revolution, they rose to 143.2 million pesos for fiscal year 1961.[72] Per-student spending almost quadrupled from 11.4 pesos in 1958 to 38.1 pesos in 1962.[73] The revolutionary government inverted the priorities of previous public–private policies. Whereas the pre- to immediate postwar era (1936–48) witnessed a public policy with a considerable degree of state intervention, during the 1950s more emphasis was given to direct foreign investment and private initiative. In contrast, the revolutionary cabinet of 1959, and not just the more radical rebels within it, believed in both a model of state development with redistributive policies to counter some of the extreme inequalities of a "primacy of Cuban public and private capital," and in a strong public sector with economic planning.[74] Economic planning and the expansion of public infrastructure based on technical advice by expert commissions resonated with the program of the Ortodóxo party to which several cabinet members, including Prime Minister Castro, had belonged or for which they had worked.[75] Schooling and educational policy were major parts of this approach, as Minister Hart had declared the expansion of the public schools a priority.

---

[72] C. Paul Roberts, Mukhtar Hamour, and University of California Los Angeles, *Latin American Center, Cuba 1968: Supplement to the Statistical Abstract of Latin America* (Los Angeles: Latin American Center University of California, 1970), p. 88. For 1960 there are no complete budget numbers available. For the first semester of that year (January–July), the government allocated 55 million pesos in its ordinary budget to education; see Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas, *Un estudio sobre Cuba: Colonia, república, experimento socialista; Estructura económica, desarrollo institucional, socialismo y regresión*, ed. Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas ([Coral Gables, FL]: University of Miami Press, 1963), pp. 1349–50.

[73] Richard Jolly, "Education," in *Cuba, the Economic and Social Revolution*, ed. Dudley Seers (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 183.

[74] Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 3rd ed. (New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 63.

[75] "Program doctrinal del partido Ortodóxo" (1947), in Partido del Pueblo Cubano (Ortodóxos), Doctrina del Partido Ortodóxo: Independencia económica, libertad política, justicia social (Havana: P. Fernández [1951?]), pp. 7–17.

In 1959 rumors began to circulate that the new government might nationalize companies providing public services.[76] The Batista opposition in the 1950s had shown sympathies for this approach, and some directors of private schools feared such measures might include their businesses. However, repeated assurances by leading members of the cabinet, including Fidel Castro, a Belén graduate, and Minister of Education Armando Hart, a Candler graduate, dissipated these fears. The fact that most members of the early 1959 cabinet were graduates of prominent private schools gave this position additional credibility.[77]

School legislation in 1959–60

The most important change in Cuba's educational system during the first two years of the new regime was the reform law of December 1959, discussed at length in chapter 3. Some laws affecting private education had passed before that time. In April 1959, for example, the government reacted to common complaints that schoolbooks and materials were too costly for most Cuban families. In line with other popular reforms that reduced rent and public utility rates, the government lowered prices for textbooks by 25–35 percent of market prices as of 1 January 1959. Law 479 of July in that same year also prohibited the sale of any other learning materials inside Cuban schools, whether public or private. The law defined the "exclusive function" of schools to be teaching, not sales. The reduction of prices was achieved in part by getting rid of the additional profit margins applied onto sales within educational establishments. Any infringement of this new law could be punished by temporary or permanent removal from employment. The law's introductory paragraph justified this new measure with the "constant complaints of Cuban families about the excessive costs of textbooks." Simultaneously, and little noticed by contemporary

[76] "No será nacionalizada ninguna compañía de servicios públicos, pero tendrán que atacar con la ley," *Diario de la Marina* (8 January 1959).

[77] In a conversation with the U.S. Embassy, director of Candler College Carlos Pérez Duran stated as one of the reasons why the government would not do anything against private schools that Minister Hart "had been educated at his denomination's school in Matanzas (. . .) and been hidden by Candler teachers." Govt. Docs., U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy, Havana (26 August 1960), "American Educational Facilities in Havana," Cuba 1960–January 1963. Internal Affairs, Reel 36.

reporting, law 479 expanded and reiterated the government's authority over private schools by making it binding to seek government approval for "fundamental" learning materials, such as mandatory textbooks. The Cuban press reported that the Council of Ministers had approved the law, but it was not given much attention because several other important laws were announced the same day.[78] The law also prohibited the common practice of distributing or selling (unauthorized) mimeographed talks and class notes, another manifestation of the government's policy to undo the "commodification" of education. Instead, all *mandatory* textbooks would have to be authorized by the Ministry of Education, although the same measure reiterated "absolute freedom of choice" for all additional readings.[79] This law indicated two different approaches by the revolutionary government: First, it increased control over private schools by making inspection more frequent and by providing effective legislation to punish noncompliance with the law. Prior to 1959, the most common forms of control were the state-administered exams at private schools at the end of the school year. Second, by intervening in the pricing system of private textbook suppliers, the government forcefully carried out a practice of redistribution that benefited the poor and diminished business revenues in a manner similar to other reforms of the time.

The Education Reform Law 680 of December 1959 required private high schools to operate under a system analogous to the public one: "Any secondary private school that seeks official recognition has to adjust to the organization of the public secondary school system as it relates to [the school's] teachers, study plans, methods and general norms."[80] At the same time, article 46 reemphasized the right of all private schools to teach religion.

A lengthy report from the U.S. Embassy in Havana discussed the most important changes to the educational landscape in the revolution's first year, culminating in the general reform law and its potential

---

[78] *Diario de la Marina* (30 July 1959): 1-A.

[79] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes,* "Ley Num. 479 de 29 julio de 1959: Reducción en el precio de libros de texto de 1a y 2a enseñanza y normas para su venta," pp. 254–58.

[80] Govt. Docs., Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa, Proclamas y leyes,* "Ley 680" (23 December 1959). Vol. 13*, 1o a 31 de diciembre de 1959* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959).

effects on private education.[81] Acting public affairs officer George Rylance summarized the overall approach of the revolutionary government as the attempt "to reduce illiteracy at any cost and to put classrooms, teachers, and basic education courses within the reach of everybody." Rylance found Castro's policy aim "acceptable and defensible" but advised to await its "shaking-down period" to determine strengths and weaknesses. At the time of the report, in late January 1960, continuities by far outweighed changes. For instance, no changes in textbooks or programs were reported by private school directors to the US diplomat.

The foremost important change was to break up secondary schools and the more academically oriented *bachilleratos*, which included five years of secondary schooling, into two separate sets of three-year programs. From then on, upon completion of primary school, Cuban students would first attend *secundaria basica* (junior high school), a prevocational period to identify talents and interests. After junior high, a student had different options: secondary high school (*preuniversitaria*), technical, commercial, arts, or teacher training. The U.S. diplomats found this to be "patterned somewhat on the U.S. 6/3/3 plan." Mandatory schooling through the sixth grade was reaffirmed, and the government contemplated extending this period for three more years of schooling as soon as conditions would allow.

The other crucial change of Law 680 was to abandon specialized teaching at the primary level for courses such as arts, English, music, and other areas. Instead, all teachers would be trained to teach basic subjects in order to cope with the expected enrollment increase. These newly formed "integral teachers," *maestros integrales*, would have to be graduates from a newly founded primary school teachers' institution, or *Escuela de maestros primarios*. Previously, no English had been taught at Cuban public primary schools, except for some voluntary evening classes. At many private schools, on the other hand, studying English was common practice, especially at those that were bilingual. A decree in October 1959 changed this. Private schools offering an American type of curriculum, either separately or in conjunction with a Cuban course of study, "experienced some trepidations as to their continued freedom if operation,"

[81] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State (George Rylance), "Principal Changes in the Structure of the Cuban Educational System Brought About by the Educational Reform (20 January 1960)," Cuba 1960–January 1963, Internal Affairs, Reel 36.

the report found. If they were expected to comply strictly with the regulation, these schools would have to double their school day, first teaching the Cuban curriculum, then the American.

Inspections by the Ministry of Education were now more frequent in private schools than before. Nevertheless, a year after the triumph of the revolution it was "the consensus of the directors of the schools involved (. . .) that a loose construction of the law [might] be made in their case allowing them to teach some subjects (. . .) in English." The school directors did anticipate "no problem in the junior or senior high" level. Private schools, "chiefly religious and American," were now inscribed in the Ministry of Education. This inscription had the effect of an "official recognition," as Rylance noted approvingly.[82]

Early conflicts at schools

Conflicts were already emerging at some of Cuba's private educational establishments in 1959. Not all were related to the revolution, but rather, were ongoing and unresolved labor disputes. Havana's Colegio Baldor, for example, had faced strikes by a group of teachers and prolonged activism by students, teachers, and parents. Baldor was one of Cuba's largest, as well as most prestigious and modern private schools with more than 3,000 students, ranging from kindergarten to commercial school.[83] In early February 1959, teachers asked for higher salaries. As a result, director and owner of the school Aurelio Baldor threatened to dismiss them. The teachers went on strike. This in turn brought students and affluent parents into action who, facing these conflicts at their costly school, asked for uninterrupted classes and timely degrees. First, subsecretary of the Ministry of Labor César Gómez mediated in February between the school's teachers and its administration. Teachers pledged to return to their classrooms and "improve their relations with the school." Director Baldor withdrew complaints about striking teachers that had been submitted earlier to the Ministry of Labor and promised to review the demand to raise salaries.[84]

[82] Ibid.

[83] Colegio Baldor, "Memoria Curso 1956–57," ed. Colegio Baldor (Havana 1957).

[84] "Solucionado el conflicto en Baldor," *Diario de la Marina* (12 February 1959).

In April, however, the conflict erupted again because none of the demands had been met. Students started to occupy the principal building of Baldor and asked its director to fire the teachers who had demanded better pay. The Ministry of Education designated María del Carmen Nuñez Berro, director of the public high school in La Vibora, Havana, to which the Colegio Baldor was incorporated, as a mediator. She met with parents, students, and teachers. Several weeks later, a high-level meeting of Fidel Castro, Armando Hart, and Aurelio Baldor brought a solution to the discord. During the meeting, Fidel Castro praised private schools for their cooperation with the revolutionary government in their preparation of future citizens and expressed hope that this "harmonious relationship" would endure. Aurelio Baldor arranged for a pay raise and the striking teachers were offered to work for the Ministry of Education to ease tensions at the college and guarantee a normal functioning.[85] For the conservative Catholic daily *Diario de la Marina,* the solution of this conflict was "beyond doubt" a personal triumph for Fidel Castro, who "once again showed his undisputable leadership qualities for the nation and will to solve conflicts."[86]

Not all conflicts at private schools were politically motivated and not all government interventions were to the disadvantage of private schools, as the Baldor example shows. Rather, much of the prerevolutionary regulatory legislation remained the same. No minimum wages were implemented, for example; neither did the government automatically interfere in schools' internal conflicts. On the contrary, often members of private institutions, from both the capital and labor sides, called for government mediation. The revolutionary regime displayed more sympathies for labor while also guaranteeing that the nation's normal functioning, including that of private institutions' "educating citizens," was not seriously affected.

From its onset, students discussed the profound political transformation that Cuba's revolution represented for them at events at schools, including private occasions. In early 1959, this happened mostly

[85] "Solución definitiva al conflicto del Colegio Baldor: Reanudan clases," *Prensa Libre* (3 May 1959).

[86] "Reanudará el lunes próximo las clases el Colegio Baldor," *Diario de la Marina* (15 May 1959).

at the initiative of teachers, students, or alumni of the schools who were invited for talks and were often involved in politics. Students at private schools discussed matters of policy and different opinions. At Ruston Academy, for example, Cuban intellectual Jorge Mañach was invited to a seminar series on contemporary themes to speak with students about the course of the revolution.[87]

Student Julio Pita, class of 1963 at Ruston Academy, remembers the politicized debates in late 1960:

> [T]o our surprise a new course had been instituted. It was a political forum in which issues associated with the socio–political changes in Cuba were to be discussed. This weekly class was run and directed by the students in each class. To this date I do not know whether this was an official directive by the government to attempt to indoctrinate the youth in all schools. If this was the intent it certainly did not work within the classrooms at Ruston. What transpired were open and at times heated discussions on the changes that were occurring in Cuba. We discussed openly the lack of freedoms that were already being instituted. In my class the majority of us were in strong opposition to the government but a few defended the measures being taken.[88]

Student councils were established by Law 559 of September 1959 and were further regulated in a new resolution of February 1960. Their purpose was to "stimulate in every student the will to expose in all liberty his opinions (. . .) and to practice parliamentary procedures (. . .) proper to a democratic society." Recommended activities for a student council, guided by a teacher, were to discuss social and racial discrimination, socioeconomic realities, and educational reform, among other themes.[89] Exiled teachers later described students as "thinking about themselves and what they could do a great deal more than had been in prerevolutionary schools." Racial problems, for instance, "became an issue for many teachers in the classroom for the first time."[90] These open debates and encouragement of democratic

---

[87] Uva de Aragón, former student of Ruston Academy in Havana, interview with the author, Miami, 8 June 2013.

[88] Julio C. Pita, class of 1963, "My last semester at Ruston," in James D. Baker, *Ruston: From Dreams to Reality* ([Miami] n.p.: Ruston-Baker Educational Institution, 2007), pp. 117–18.

[89] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, Resolución Ministerial 07492/60 (15 February 1960), in Archivo del MINED, Fondo Resoluciones.

[90] Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., and Concepción García, "Exiled Teachers and the Cuban Revolution/Maestros exilados y la revolución cubana," *Cuban Studies* 13, no. 1 (1983): 6.

exercises at schools to educate future citizens formed part of the liberal momentum I identify in the early revolutionary Cuba of 1959 and 1960.

1960: Rising conflicts

As late as June 1960, the U.S. Embassy expected further continuity and no unusual interruptions in Cuba's private educational system: "Private schools with American type curriculum will open on scheduled date. Consensus is that these schools will be allowed to operate English language instruction with no interference. (. . .) Teacher supply adequate for school needs," the embassy reported to the Department of State from Havana.[91]

One week after this report was filed, the Cuban government took over U.S. oil refineries. This measure sparked a cycle of retaliatory actions by the U.S. and Cuban governments that changed the course of the revolution, the role of U.S. policy, Cuban–U.S. relations, and, in the midst of it, the role of private schools. When Eisenhower was granted authority to cut Cuba's sugar quota on 6 July, in the context of that year's national presidential election conventions, the *New York Times* editorial stated, "the die is cast and there is no question that the United States, Cuba, and Latin America are entering a new era."[92] On 15 August 1960, the State Department asked the embassy in Havana for a report on the schooling options for children of embassy personnel, given the possibility of "imminent intervention of schools," as well as the families' potential evacuation.[93]

The U.S.–Cuban relations deteriorated significantly and lastingly between February 1960 and January 1961, when diplomatic relations were formally ended.[94] Already in June 1959 the U.S.

---

[91] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, U.S. Embassy, Havana (John Williams), "Embassy Dispatch 1916 (30 June 1960)," Cuba 1960–January 1963. Internal Affairs. Reel 36.

[92] *New York Times*, 8 July 1960: 20.

[93] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, U.S. Embassy, Havana (Philip Bonsal), "Telegram from Embassy to Secretary of State (15 August 1960)," Cuba 1960–January 1963, Internal Affairs. Reel 36.

[94] Numerous publications can be consulted for the details of this decisive era: For a merely chronological overview, see Jane Franklin, *Cuba and the United States: A Chronological History* (Melbourne, Australia and New York: Ocean Press, 1997). For an official chronology from the U.S. viewpoint, see Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, *Events*

government had protested formally against the terms of Cuba's agrarian reform. In January 1960, when the Agrarian Reform Institute (Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria, or INRA) began to expropriate significant amounts of foreign-owned land, including 35,000 acres of the United Fruit Company, added pressure was put on the U.S. government to change its Cuba policy. That month, President Eisenhower had asked for congressional permission to reduce the island's sugar quota. In February 1960, Cuba hosted Soviet Vice Premier Anastas Mikoyan in Havana and signed commercial and trade agreements. In March the Belgian ship *La Coubre,* which had been loaded with weapons, exploded in Havana's harbor. More than 75 people had died, and 200 were seriously wounded. In an angry speech, Fidel Castro expressed the suspicion that this was "a premeditated attempt to deprive us of the possibility to get weapons," implying U.S. sabotage and bringing U.S.–Cuban relations to their lowest point yet.

This indirect public accusation ended the period of waiting within the U.S. administration. Whereas a significant part of the administration had still hoped to exert influence on Castro's government, now the balance shifted. In March, President Eisenhower approved secret plans to replace Cuba's government. In May, Cuba and the Soviet Union reestablished diplomatic relations and Cuba began to import Soviet crude oil. When the U.S.- and British-owned companies there refused to refine it, the Cuban government enacted its first nationalization law, as detailed in section 3 of this chapter. The ensuing shift in U.S.–Cuban relations had a significant impact on Cuban's everyday life and many of the affected began to opt for exile.

Emigration and exile

Emigration became an important factor in the conflict over private schools. The defection of much of Cuba's educated class both undermined and helped the consolidation of the revolution. The early exodus (1959–62) consisted of "highly educated" Cubans "in the professional occupations."[95] Their departure

---

in United States–Cuban Relations: A Chronology, 1957–1963 (Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1963). For a detailed, documented history, see Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republi*c, esp. pp. 114–32.

[95] Juan M. Clark, "The Exodus from Revolutionary Cuba (1959–1974): A Sociological Analysis," PhD diss., University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 1975, p. 249.

from Cuba created difficulties in various sectors of the Cuban economy, many of strategic importance. The U.S. Department of Education estimated that half of those who had been teachers in Cuba in 1959 had left the island by the 1970s—five times as many as those in other fields who left in the overall emigration, which comprised one out of ten Cubans.[96] This contributed to a teacher shortage in Cuba that would not be overcome until after 1970.

The exodus of Cuba's educated class also produced serious financial problems for private schools where most of their children had been enrolled. In a survey prepared by the U.S. Embassy in August 1960, most private schools reported enrollment losses of up to 50 percent. The "most serious problem" for James Baker, director of Ruston Academy, was not political but financial, the embassy cabled to Washington. Instead of 600 students, only 400 had paid their fees, Baker said at the time. Later he would write that enrollment went down to 150 in school year 1960–61.[97] Cathedral School principal Bessy Casas reported a 40-percent loss of U.S. students at her school. Mother Thomas, superior of the Ursuline nuns at the Merici Academy, anticipated only 350 students enrolling in school year 1960–61, compared to 600 the year before.[98]

After an initial exodus of some 3,000 persons closely affiliated with the Batista government in early 1959, most Cubans who fled the revolution were from "the upper social strata."[99] In a study among exiled teachers, less than 5 percent came from a lower-class background. All others were considered upper or middle class.[100] Altogether, about 225,300 Cubans came to the U.S. between 1959 and 1962.[101]

---

[96] Govt. Docs., U.S. Office of Education and Rolland G. Paulston, *The Educational System of Cuba*, *Education around the World* series ([Washington, DC]: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1976), p. 3.

[97] Baker, *Ruston: From Dreams to Reality*.

[98] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, "American Educational Facilities in Havana" (26 August 1960) and "Telegram from Embassy to Secretary of State" (15 August 1960), Cuba 1960–January 1963, Internal Affairs, Reel 36.

[99] Clark, "The Exodus from Revolutionary Cuba (1959–1974), pp. 77–78.

[100] Provenzo, "Exiled Teachers and the Cuban Revolution/Maestros exilados y la revolución cubana," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 1–15.

This number included some 14,000 unaccompanied children as part of Operation Peter Pan. That operation, a joint effort by individuals within the Cuban and U.S. Catholic Church, together with U.S. government agencies, sought to protect children from communist indoctrination.[102]

Once numbers of displaced Cubans had arrived in the U.S., a comprehensive program for them was set up, designed by presidential envoy Tracy Voorhees, who had previously worked with Hungarian refugees. The Cuban Refugee Emergency Center opened in December 1960 in Miami with almost 400 full-time employees, funded with some four million dollars from President Eisenhower's contingency plan in June 1961. According to Susan Eckstein, "Washington initially turned the first emigrés into poster people for the virtues of capitalism and democracy over communism," with Cubans becoming "the most privileged immigrant group" in the United States. Cubans were exempted from country entry quotas then in effect; they received subsidies, and were offered benefits to facilitate their adaptation, all of which incited further emigration.

A special program to retrain Cuban professionals began, and more than 1,000 of the exiled teachers were employed as Spanish instructors at U.S. high schools. In a manner reminiscent of reeducation programs in revolutionary Cuba, most teachers were employed after only one year of training.[103] Emigré teachers also formed organizations to remain connected to Cuba.

In August 1962, for example, exiled educators came together in Miami to found the Cruzada Educativa Cubana, or Cuban Educational Crusade (CEC). Founding member María Gómez Carbonell had been among the first female representatives in the Cuban senate (1936–44) and a minister without portfolio under Batista in 1958.

---

[101] Susan Eckstein, *The Immigrant Divide: How Cuban Americans Changed the U.S. and Their Homeland* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 12.

[102] For details, see Casavantes Bradford, *The Revolution Is for the Children*, and Ramón Torreira Crespo and José Buajasán Marrawi, *Operación Peter Pan: Un caso de guerra psicológica contra Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Política, 2000).

[103] Clark, "The Exodus from Revolutionary Cuba (1959–1974)," p. 120.

"Reinforcing *Cubanidad"* became "an obsession for many emigrés," writes Cristina Diaz, who names the Cruzada as "one of the best known cultural organizations" that "served to rally, inform, and entertain the community."[104] In addition to identity politics and community entertainment, the Cruzada also had more ambitious political goals. The CIA listed the group as one of the 415 organizations in its counterrevolutionary handbook that in one way or another were determined "to contribute (. . .) to the liberation of their country."[105]

In its "Message to the Cuban People" (resembling the name of Minister Hart's programmatic speech in 1960), the central executive body of the Cruzada declared its purpose to "measure the dimensions of the tragedy and prepare for the moment of return to the enslaved island." It prepared study plans and manuals, focusing on history and geography. The Cruzada promised to bring back Christianity and democracy to Cuban schools. While expecting "total war between International Communism and the Legion of Democracy" in Cuba, the organization went on to recruit delegates in every state of the U.S. and every country in the Americas to advance its cause and carry out a "wise propaganda" campaign.[106] The Cruzada group would remain active observers in correspondence with teachers on the island, as well as actors in Cuba's transnational educational landscape for years to come.[107]

The exile of Cuba's teachers often began internally, with resignations at the university, teachers' schools, and private schools, followed later by emigration. Many of the older educators had difficulties adapting to the revolutionary changes in society, often led by men and women in their twenties and

---

[104] García, *Havana USA*, p. 90.

[105] Govt. Docs., U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Richard Helms), "Counter-Revolutionary Handbook (10 October 1962) Index of Leading Personalities and Organizations," JFK Presidential Library, Papers of Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General Papers (Washington, DC[?] 1962).

[106] María Gómez Carbonell, "Cruzada Educativa, Inc.: Reglas generales a que deberá ceñirse la tarea encomendada por el ejecutivo central de 'Cruzada educativa cubana' a sus delegaciones en America" (Miami: University of Miami, Cuban Heritage Collection 1964).

[107] The Cruzada and some of its successor organizations have published widely on the state of Cuba's educational system and given advice to various U.S. governments on how to reform a postrevolutionary educational system in Cuba. For more recent publications, see Comité de Estudios para la Reforma Educacional en Cuba, *La educación en Cuba: Pasado, presente y futuro,* 1st ed. (United States: Endowment for Cuban American Studies, 1993).

thirties who had sometimes gained considerable influence as traditional lines of authority were redefined. Exiled teachers reported a new vigilance by students and administrators of private and public schools, which increased with the rise of counterrevolutionary violence in 1960 and 1961. For many exiles, the 1961 nationalization and the literacy campaign of that year became major reasons to leave their country, followed by the increasingly communist orientation of the education system.[108]

Conversely, the exodus of the educated class also facilitated the consolidation of a new class of intellectuals and a revolutionary educational system with different values, goals, and methods. In addition to the reeducation of older intellectuals and the promotion and integration of new teachers through the literacy campaign, stipend systems, and new rural teacher-training programs, emigration was one of the most important factors for revolutionary consolidation and the implementation of a communist education system after 1961.[109]

Schools as hotbeds: Revolution and counterrevolution, 1959–61

Whereas private schools were more likely to turn against the new order, thousands of militias were formed in Cuba to carry out and defend the revolution, including at universities and public schools. The first revolutionary student militias (known as the *Milicias mambisas universitarias*) were organized at the University of Santiago as early as April 1959, and then more systematically and on a national level beginning in October 1959.[110] *Estudio, Trabajo, Fusil* ("Study, Work, Rifle") became a slogan to mobilize students to defend the revolution. Students at the more elitist private schools, by contrast, tended to be more critical of the government. Government reforms negatively affected their families' wealth, especially after the 1960 expropriations. Two other factors influenced adolescents in their attitudes toward

[108] Provenzo, "Exiled Teachers and the Cuban Revolution/*Maestros exilados y la revolución cubana,*" p. 11.

[109] N.S. Kolesnikov, *Cuba: Educación popular y preparación de los cuadros nacionales, 1959–1982* (Moscow: Editorial Progreso, 1983), p. 171.

[110] For details on the génesis of the militia in Cuba, see Albert Manke, *El pueblo cubano en armas: Die Revolutionären Nationalmilizen und die Verteidigung der kubanischen Revolution von 1959*, *Historamericana* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 2014).

the revolution: the revolutionary government's increase in rules and requirements, which provoked rebellious reactions from adolescents; and government officials' statements critical of the Catholic Church, which offended their religious beliefs.

The schools having more students with these predispositions became important recruitment bases for counterrevolutionary groups. The Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil, or Revolutionary Student Directorate (DRE), for example, was founded by Catholic university students Tony García Crews and Alberto Mueller, among others. The DRE became "one of the most dynamic and popular" opposition groups and, according to some of its members, showed its presence at all Cuban universities and recruited "hundreds of high-school students" as well. The DRE's public debut was a nonviolent protest organized during the visit of Soviet Vice Premier Anastasias Mikoyan in February 1960. After February, and in the midst of the geopolitical transformation during the summer of 1960, protests, strikes, and other activities against government measures and the state's new ties to the communist world were on the rise. Soon these activities would involve violence.[111]

A rising civil war, 1959–61

Drastic measures of the revolutionary government, including the expropriations of private schools, cannot be understood without assessing the widespread and organized violence in 1960–61. Acts of sabotage against revolutionary Cuba from the outside by air and sea had been carried out since November 1959. These attacks were aimed at destroying agricultural and industrial facilities. They were mostly executed by Cuban exiles, departing from U.S. soil. United States government officials were aware of them, and

[111] The DRE's leadership grew out of Catholic academic organizations like the Catholic University Group, the Agrupación Católica Universitaria (ACU). The DRE grew out of the Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria (MRR), a U.S.-sponsored group that later "received considerable amounts of arms through its contacts inside the CIA." See Enrique G. Encinosa, *Cuba en guerra: Historia de la oposición anti-Castrista 1959–1993* (Miami, FL.: Endowment for Cuban American Studies, 1994), pp. 30–34.

after repeated complaints from the Cuban government, some attempts were made to stop them.[112] From the summer of 1960 onward, sabotage and terrorism were also on the rise inside of Cuba, especially in urban areas. "Every night, detonations went off (. . .) in Havana and other cities [. . .], there was destruction of government property, attacks of arson on buildings, blackouts, slogans on the walls." Especially at the beginning, in late 1960 and early 1961, the churches and religious sects reportedly played an important role in this armed resistance to the revolution. The Catholic Movement *30 de Noviembre* (named after the beginning of a planned uprising in Santiago de Cuba in 1956 to express identification with anti-Batista struggle) claimed that it used church and school infrastructure for its activities. In one case, it used "the basement of a church to hide more than a ton of chemicals" to fabricate incendiary bombs.[113]

The Catholic Church

The leadership of the Catholic Church in Cuba, after a brief early period of sympathy toward the revolution that included a tacit approval of the May 1959 agrarian reform, soon became one of the government's main critics. Over time, religious leaders and teachers provided ideological and symbolic justifications for ordinary Cubans to join the fight against the Castro regime and the threat of communism. Attempts by part of the Catholic clergy to pursue a different line, critical of Soviet communism and atheism but not in opposition to the Cuban government, found little tolerance. Franciscan Ignacio Biaín took this more conciliatory line editorially in the Catholic Church's most popular magazine, the biweekly *La Quincena,* until he was removed from his position and forced into silence by his superiors in mid-1960.[114] Cuban churches, like its schools, were frequented by both

[112] For a first-hand memoir of one of the pilots who flew over Cuba to drop bombs, see Eduardo Whitehouse in ibid., p. 37. For a detailed and source-based discussion of different U.S. agencies' awareness, complicity, and critiques in regard to the matter, see Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, esp. pp. 111–12.

[113] Encinosa, *Cuba en guerra*, p. 66.

[114] Spanish-born Ignacio Biaín Moyua (1909–1963), who had come to Cuba at the age of twenty-four in 1933, had been affiliated with Cuba's Catholic youth organizations and was very concerned about the precarious conditions of

sympathizers and critics of the revolution. Reports of clashes between believers who supported and those who opposed the revolution, as well as more silent forms of disapproval or withdrawal from religious ceremonies during that period, are frequent. In Santiago de Cuba, as an illustration, church attendees began to sing the national anthem when a priest named Escala (no first name given) read the anticommunist pastoral letter (*circular*) "Roma o Moscú" ("Rome or Moscow") for a second time. Discussion and chaos broke out, and many believers walked out of Mass.[115]

From 1959 onward the ecclesiastical hierarchy, most notably Cuba's bishops, denounced the rising communist influence and sympathies within the government in a series of editorials, publications, and especially ecclesiastical sermons and documents. Bishops also intervened politically and made pronouncements on a variety of government measures.

An exact date is hard to determine, but from the summer of 1960 on, the Catholic hierarchy stopped being just a critic and became one of the principal opponents of the government that started to mobilize its constituency. Since Cuban attendance at Mass was very low, one of the main ways to spread influence was via the Catholic schools—more than 250 of them across the country. In the circular "Roma o Moscú" mentioned above, Santiago's Archbishop Enrique Pérez Serantes called upon all Catholics to "work, as good soldiers of Christ" against the "mortal virus" of communism. The circular was widely and repeatedly read in Cuban churches. In it, Pérez Serrantes argued that the fight against communism could not be won militarily alone. He acknowledged the United States' efforts to "detain the military threat" of the ideology, but claimed that without the Christian, moral, and ideological "flank," "this battle [would] be lost." He argued that the laic public schools and the practice of divorce were "powerful arms" that had

---

the country's working class. A friend of Jorge Mañach and José Lezama Lima, he became the editor-in-chief of *La Quincena* in 1955 and remained critical of Batista. Ignacio Uría, *Iglesia y revolución en Cuba: Ensayos*, *Ediciones Encuentro Historia* series (Madrid: Encuentro Ediciones, 2011), p. 226.

[115] "Rechaza la Masa Católica otro intento contrarevolucionario," *Revolución* (14 November 1959).

been given into the hands of the state and had fundamentally "weaken[ed] the nation." These "arms" had to be recovered.[116]

Pérez Serantes had been a "promoter" of the movements of Catholic schools in Oriente Province "to organize against secularism and communism," from February 1959 onward, according to observations by U.S. Consul Park Wollam in Santiago de Cuba.[117] Santiago's archbishop had also been an outspoken critic of the Batista regime and intervened after Fidel Castro's detention in July 1953 to save his life. He thought to have the moral authority to influence the course of the revolution.

Students, teachers, and Catholic church leaders began to voice opposition and organize protest against a revolution that they perceived to be increasingly communist-oriented. Protests and actions became more violent in the second half of 1960. Initially often local and spontaneous, such activities became increasingly organized and coordinated. Parts of the Catholic hierarchy and some Catholic schools played an important role in these orchestrated activities. Starting in the summer of 1960, oppositional Cuban individuals and newly formed organizations had also begun to receive encouragement, advice, and material support from the outside.

The United States

Outside of Cuba, a plan to spur another regime change had been in the making since November 1959, led by CIA director Allen Dulles in consultation with a special group on covert action of the National Security Council. On 16 March 1960, a formal program of covert action against the Castro regime was submitted to President Eisenhower and approved by him a day later. The stated purpose of the plan was "to bring about the replacement of the Castro regime with one more devoted to the true interests of the

[116] Enrique Pérez Serrantes, "Roma o Moscú," in *La voz de la Iglesia en Cuba: 100 documentos episcopales*, ed. Catholic Church, Conferencia Episcopal Cubana, Secretariado General. (Mexico, D.F.: Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, 1995).

[117] Dispatch from 18 February 1959, cited in Uría, *Iglesia y revolución en Cuba*, p. 298.

Cuban people and more acceptable to the U.S. in such a manner as to avoid any appearance of U.S. intervention."[118]

As part of this plan, the CIA called for "means of mass communication to the Cuban people so that [a] powerful propaganda offensive can be initiated in the name of the declared opposition." Cuba's conservative newspapers, such as *Avance* or *Diario de la Marina*, whose publications had been taken over and then suppressed by the government by mid-1960, were now financed from outside of Cuba and distributed on the island clandestinely as part of the covert action program.[119] However, the "major voice of opposition" would be "at least one 'gray' U.S.-controlled [radio] station (. . .) on Swan Island." (Swan Island, 95 miles east of the coast of Honduras, was 1.2 square miles in size).[120]

The student connection

On 26 October 1960, Juan Manuel Salvat Roque of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria (ACU) called upon all Cuban students to strike. The following day, former Catholic student Alfredo Mueller Quintana, cousin of the city of Cienfuego's bishop, Alfredo Mueller San Martín, declared "war" on radio SWAN: "end the tyranny of Fidel Castro; let's fight to liberate our country. Prepare yourself and your school (. . .)." The strike was announced for 14 November, to commemorate the death of Porfirio Remberto Ramírez Ruiz, a former Catholic student leader of the University Students' Association Federation (Federación Estudiantil Universitaria, or FEU) at the Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas. He had joined the armed resistance, become second-in-command of the CIA-funded Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria (MRR), and been captured by the militia and sentenced to death by a

[118] "Program of Covert Action against the Castro regime," reprinted in Jon Elliston, *Psywar on Cuba: The Declassified History of U.S. Anti-Castro Propaganda, 40 Years of the Cuban Revolution; 1959–99* (Melbourne, Australia and New York: Ocean Press, 1999), pp. 15–16.

[119] "Tab B Propaganda," reprinted in ibid., p. 17. See also Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, p. 117.

[120] For details on the propaganda program, see also the autobiography of the CIA agent responsible for it: David Atlee Phillips, *The Night Watch*, 1st ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1977).

revolutionary tribunal.[121] The strike was only partially successful, as "responsible Roman Catholic leaders" thought organization and planning was "inadequate" and because the "Government [might] have learned of plans," according to a confidential U.S. Embassy cable from Havana.[122]

After the failed strike, on 27 November 1960, during his radio program *Por Cuba y para Cuba,* former Cuban prime minister (1948–50) Manuel Antonio "Tony" de Varona announced that Castro would nationalize all private schools, prohibit religion, and take children from the custody of their parents. This was part of the Peter Pan operation mentioned earlier, which had brought 14,000 unaccompanied children to the U.S. within two years.

Shortly after the failed strike, Fidel Castro explained the government's position in the situation. During a student rally on 27 November he declared, "we will not mess with [*no nos metemos*] the private schools." In Castro's view, private schools were facing problems because public schooling had become more readily available, and because the government reforms had diminished private schools' revenues. In addition, the "privileged class" was affected by these reforms, and many of the private academies' clients had abandoned Cuba. Yet instead of giving up their business, he felt these schools had "tripled their provocations" with the goal of discrediting the revolutionary government when it shut them down. "The revolutionary government will not close these schools," Castro said, but he also warned that they could not act with impunity.[123] Students had begun to form revolutionary committees at many schools from January 1959 on, initially to denounce Batista's collaborators, then to report others who criticized or opposed government policies. In Armando Hart's view, the clashes within Cuban schools between pro- and counterrevolutionary forces were a logical consequence of the broader socioeconomic

[121] Torreira Crespo and Buajasán Marrawi, *Operación Peter Pan*, p. 27.

[122] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, Embassy, Havana, "Embtel 2145" (15 November 1960), *FRUS 1961–63,* Cuba 1960–January 1963, Internal Affairs, Reel 36; and *idem* (Braddock), "Embtel 2173 (15 November 1960)," Reel 25.
[123] Fidel Castro, *Discurso*, 17 November 1961.

transformations at that time: "[T]he ideological battle (. . .) has the school as its stage—public schools, but above all, the private schools.[124]

By 1961 Cuba's private schools had become a major site of political confrontation between sympathizers and opponents of the revolution. In March 1961 Fidel Castro spoke of a "class war of the revolution," that "can be observed above all by the attitude of students at private schools."[125]

At the beginning of school year 1960–61, most private media that had opposed the regime had been seized by the government, and political parties except for the communist PSP remained outlawed. Private schools were thus among the few remaining sites outside of full government control and where ideological and political debates were taking place. A struggle for the minds of Cuba's future citizens was taking place there. Sometimes content-driven but often openly confrontational and denunciatory, the confrontations at Cuba's private schools also turned increasingly violent.

5.3 The nationalization of private schools, 1961

In January 1961, the United States and Cuba broke their diplomatic relations, key sectors of the economy had been nationalized, and violence against the revolution was steadily increasing. But Cuba's private schools had not been touched by the government yet. Why not? This last part of the chapter seeks to give an answer to this question by first narrating the events that led to the expropriation in May 1961. The second part reflects on the role of nationalizations in Cuba's republican and early revolutionary periods. I show that despite a republican history of government intervention for development purposes, the takeover of private schools in 1961 had not been well prepared and was characterized by exceptions. The context of the invasion and the literacy campaign allowed this massive takeover to happen and unfold without the interruption and resistance it would have faced under different circumstances.

[124] "Más que tolerante ha sido la revolución," *Revolución* (2 March 1961).

[125] Fidel Castro, *Discurso*, 27 March 1961.

Nationalizations and Cubanization

Analytically, different terms have been used and changed their meanings over time to describe similar actions relevant to the expropriation or nationalization of Cuba's private schools. *Cubanization* and *nationalization* have usually referred to the transfer of a property, say a school, or a practice, say the employment of teachers, to the advantage of the Cuban nation. Differences exist in the methods applied to achieve this goal, whether voluntarily or by coercion, and in the political understanding of what forms of ownership best serve the interests of the nation: private/corporate, public/state, or collective/cooperative. Up until 1960, nationalization did not necessarily mean the transfer of (foreign) private property to the Cuban state, but could also be the legal transfer of ownership from a foreign company or person to a Cuban person or company. As earlier mentioned, cubanization and nationalization could also refer to an increase in the Cuban presence within the labor or teaching force, or a reduction in foreign influence otherwise, as in textbooks, curricula, language training, and the like. The revolution's sweeping nationalization laws from 1960 drew on republican legal traditions. Preceding administrations had expropriated private goods, provided the reasons for those seizures and their subsequent public utility were stated and compensation for those affected was offered.

Violence and education

In September 1960, at the UN General Assembly, Fidel Castro announced the launching of a yearlong campaign to fight illiteracy in Cuba. The year 1961 would be *el Año de la Educación*, the Year of Education.[126] The goal was to eradicate illiteracy—estimated at 24 percent of the population—within one year. While the government began preparing for the literacy campaign in the second half of 1960, other sectors in Cuban society were intensifying their opposition to the revolution. In mid-1960, several groups within Cuba shifted their strategies from legal means to illegal, from nonviolent opposition to violent. Starting in the summer of 1960, the Eisenhower administration "began to militarily help some Cuban

[126] The previous year, 1959, had been termed *el Año de Liberación*, the Year of Liberation, and 1960 was dubbed *el Año de Reforma Agraria*, the Year of Agrarian Reform.

groups, providing arms and technical advice."[127] From this point on, Cuba's militant opposition groups could be, and many were, supported, encouraged, and financed by U.S. government agencies to fight the government. Cuban counterintelligence began to infiltrate and collect detailed information on these groups. This would later lead to a point at which, according to Castro, "our people, the revolutionaries, were heading nearly all of those counterrevolutionary organizations."[128] In June 1960, various armed opposition factions signed a pact in Mexico to form the Frente Revolucionario Democrático, or Revolutionary Democratic Front. But it was not until late 1960 that U.S. support became "abundant," according to interviews with members of the groups.[129] By the end of 1960 there were armed guerrilla groups in all of Cuba's six provinces, totaling approximately 800 men, under a unified central command in Las Villas Province.[130]

On New Year's Day 1961, Cuba's national literacy campaign was officially launched. Four days later, the first literacy worker, eighteen-year-old Afro-Cuban Conrado Benítez, was assassinated by counterrevolutionary forces in the Escambray mountains. Violence now spread into schools and revolutionary education outside the classroom. In March, students interrupted an assembly of 2,500 young rebels in Holguín who were preparing for literacy campaign activities, shouting "down with books, down with Fidel, long live the priests."[131]

At some Catholic schools, meanwhile, prorevolutionary students denounced teachers who condemned the literacy campaign, while counterrevolutionary teachers and administrators tried to oust revolutionary activists. At many private schools, rebel committees were formed to denounce "counterrevolutionary" activities between 1959 and 1961. At the Colegio Marista in the Havana suburb of

[127] Encinosa, *Cuba en guerra*, p. 51.

[128] Fidel Castro and Frei Betto, *Fidel and Religion: Castro Talks on Revolution and Religion with Frei Betto* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 193.

[129] Encinosa, *Cuba en guerra*, p. 38.

[130] Ibid., p. 47.

[131] "Los estudiantes frente a las maniobras de los falangistas," *Verde Olivo* 2, no. 13 (2 April 1961): 48–49.

La Vibora, parents, teachers, and employees of the school formed a committee to fight "anti-Christian (. . .) campaigns," and were defending a prorevolutionary Catholicism. At Colegio Baldor, students asked the schools' directorate to define its position vis-à-vis the increasing violence in the country. Neutrality was complicity in this context, they argued. At Colegio La Salle, upgraded to university status since November 1958, a revolutionary student committee was formed in March 1961. The committee denounced university director Manuel Bernabé Gabriel, who vilified the ongoing literacy campaign as one of "corruption and prostitution" because many women returned pregnant, according to the committee.[132] Bernabé, like many of the more prominent of the 700 priests in Cuba at the time, was among the most outspoken critics of the revolution at Cuba's private schools. Like so many of the others, he had been born outside the island (they were mostly from Spain or Mexico) and had lived through church–state conflicts before.[133]

Belén's electromechanical school became another site of confrontation between pro- and counterrevolutionary forces. In his inaugural speech for academic year 1960–61, the school's director, Silvio González, was very explicit about his aversion to the presence of any elements affiliated or sympathizing with the government apparatus. He personally began to check classes for prorevolutionary activities, and according to students of the school, held long antigovernment tirades. Some professors, such as the Jesuit teacher Cofreces, ridiculed government actions and mocked firing squads in the classroom.[134] In February 1961, the Jesuit teachers organized a strike. Out of the 400 remaining students

[132] "Contrarevolución en la Academica La Salle," *Revolución* (18 March 1961). Bernabé was born in Puebla, Mexico, in 1908. As a student of the Colegio San Borja, he had faced persecution by the Mexican government and fled to Cuba, where he had started to teach in different parochial schools before being named director of the Academia de La Salle in 1946.

[133] For Mexico's conflict between the church and the state, involving education, see Jean A. Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People between Church and State, 1926–1929*, *Cambridge Latin American Studies*, no. 24 (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and also Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

[134] Julian Iglesias, "Jovenes patriotas salvan una escuela," *Verde Olivo* 2, no. 8.

at this private school, only a minority participated; in reaction to the planned strike, a revolutionary student committee had been formed to prevent it.

Students held meetings throughout the school years, "first to get to know each other, then to coordinate activities, independently of school structures." From the students' viewpoint, it was the school administration's strategy to sabotage their own center so that there could be no benefit for the revolutionary state. When representatives of the Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA) asked the school directorate for assistance with electric motors, the directors prohibited any such aid. Classes in auto mechanics, radio and television, and refrigeration were canceled and soon thereafter, materials and machines disappeared from the property. Students then decided to take over the school, occupied the building, and informed the Ministry of Education about it, expecting sympathy and support. Classes started to be self-organized, given by older students and some sympathizing teachers. The students received moral and material support from nearby schools such as Ciudad Libertad and José B. Alemán, as well as from bus drivers, the Young Rebel's Association, and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR).[135]

Student action, the occupation of campuses, and self-organization for educational or broader social and political concerns became common practice across campuses and nations throughout the twentieth century. In revolutionary Cuba, such actions gained a special dynamic as the government was in accord with the demands of revolutionary students inside private schools and used them as their allies.

Government interventions

The government was aware of the influence that teachers, school directors, and other intellectuals exerted on young people's minds. Throughout 1960, however, Fidel Castro seemed to believe that Cuba's youth could be protected from counterrevolutionary agitation by their own revolutionary actions. In that year, no general punitive government measures were taken against private schools. After a bomb was put into a

[135] Ibid.

school in February 1961, though, Castro announced that new steps might have to be taken to stop the dangerous mix of counterrevolutionary ideology and violence.

On 28 February 1961, a bomb explosion at the Noble Academy in Havana's suburb of La Vibora injured nine students, some critically.[136] The perpetrators were two students of that school. During a public ceremony outside the damaged academy the following day, an agitated crowd demanded their execution. Minister Hart instead blamed those who carried out counterrevolutionary campaigns inside private institutions for responsibility in creating the "circumstances and atmosphere" for these acts of violence. A student speaking on behalf of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution explained how revolutionary students had asked for the expulsion of seven "counterrevolutionary students" for their violent behavior prior to the attack. The school administration had dismissed their demands but now asked Armando Hart for his ministry's intervention at the Noble Academy, given that they had lost control of the situation. The Ministry of Education had received similar requests from other private schools, stemming from the "tremendous pressure by the revolutionary youth."[137] A report from the U.S. Embassy remarked that confrontations between pro- and counterrevolutionary activists "served often as a prelude to intervention."[138] Two weeks later, another bomb went off at Colegio Baldor.

Castro used an assembly of Cuba's newly founded Young Rebels' Association to speak on the government's reactions to violence at schools. The rebels again demanded the death penalty for the teenagers who had planted the bomb in the Noble Academy. Castro defended the adolescents against the shouts of "firing squad" from the agitated youth. Like Minister Hart, instead of targeting the young perpetrators, the prime minister wanted to go after the intellectual authors—those spreading "the spirit of counterrevolution (. . .) in the young people's hearts and minds." He blamed his own government for allowing this to happen, for being too tolerant. But since the U.S. had broken its diplomatic relations with

[136] "Niñas heridas por una bomba," *Revolución* (1 March 1961).

[137] "Culpables del crimen los curas falangistas," *Revolución* (2 March 1961).

[138] Govt. Docs., U.S. Dept. of State, Embassy, Havana, "Embtel 2145" (15 November 1960).

Cuba in January, the government feared further isolation at the meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the summer of 1961 if they took more radical measures against the private schools. Castro did not want to give world opinion the opportunity to exploit another limitation of liberties by the revolution.

During this speech on 27 March 1961, Castro redefined academic freedom in Cuba. three months before his speech "Palabras a los Intelectuales," or "Words to the Intellectuals" ("within the revolution everything, against it nothing") reinterpreted artistic freedom for the nation. "Academic freedom, yes," Castro affirmed but added, "to be socially useful, to be helpful to your neighbor, to be useful to your country. Academic freedom to teach young people to become counterrevolutionary? No." Castro's statement was both an early act of censorship and the revolutionary government's application of Article 31, the constitutional mandate to protect the nation's "social harmony and public order" in times of systematic violence. If the counterrevolutionary activities to influence young people continued, Castro warned, "the revolution will not waver in taking the pertinent measures," publicly announcing legal and political consequences that would target Catholic schools for the first time. This announcement required his government to develop a plan and prepare for legal action.

In mid-March 1961, the Ministry of Education issued a resolution to increase control and advice for secondary schools. The fifteen-page resolution also included a section for possible interventions, should the tense situation not abate. The document created a commission of inspectors to "guide, supervise, and evaluate" high schools, "offer training courses for teachers," "take care of decent human relations" at the school, and "intervene with the institution in case this is requested by superiors," among other tasks.[139] The resolution reacted to many previous cases of conflicts at schools and established an administrative structure for subsequent intervention. It was signed on 14 March by Armando Hart, the day he began a two-month visit to socialist countries with the intention to "sign cultural agreements and deepen the existing relations" with them. Prime Minister Fidel Castro became Interim Minister of

[139] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, "Resolución Ministerial 747/61" (14 March 1961), Archivo del MINED, Fondo Resoluciones.

Education during the "Year of Education" to oversee the ongoing literacy campaign.[140] It was Castro, not Armando Hart, who prepared and would oversee the intervention in Cuba's private schools.

Before leaving Cuba for Eastern Europe, in an interview, Hart reflected on the government's approach to private education. He recalled that his ministry had tried "with revolutionary infantilism" (*infantilismo revolucionario*) to intervene in private colleges via Law 11 in January 1959 and that this was met with furious protests at the time. He had been called back by Prime Minister Castro because "[that] policy was wrong at the time and under the circumstances." According to Hart, one could not "give a pretext for conflicts with private religious schools or with religious feelings or the feelings of the students or professors."[141] In his opinion, government intervention in private property could not be decreed arbitrarily. Instead, it had to be perceived and understood as necessary and adequate by the majority of the population. "It is necessary for the people to understand clearly any policy that in a given moment we have to apply (. . .). It can never be provoked by our action."

In the less violent year of 1959, Castro had explained how the government had decided not to employ legal action to overcome existing political problems such as racism in society because "coercion (. . .) sometimes can be counterproductive." He advocated instead to fight with "arguments, persuasion, and education."[142] In March 1961, the government prepared to shift from persuasion to coercion.

In 1961 the bombs at private schools, put there by the institutions' own students, had a profound impact on public perceptions of the conflicts at those schools. As a former law student, Hart was aware of the republican legal traditions for expropriation, and also of the need to explain and justify the necessity of such measures. He applied that knowledge in a revolutionary context.

---

[140] "Fidel Castro, el mejor ministro de educación," *Revolución* (15 March 1961).

[141] *Revolución* (2 March 1961): 2.

[142] Fidel Castro, "La persuasión: El medio principal de lucha contra el prejuicio racial; Conferencia de prensa en el hotel Habana Hilton, 27 Julio 1959," in Fidel Castro and Instituto de Historia del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, *El pensamiento de Fidel Castro: Selección temática* (Havana: Editorial Política, 1983), pp. 409–10.

This modus operandi coincided with Castro's similar interpretation of the tense situation facing private schools in March 1961: "We believe that we have fulfilled our duty in the line we followed up to this point. The people had more than two years to learn and understand."[143] Castro signaled that the government was preparing measures to counter the violence. The designation of school-inspector commissions that would also have the authority to intervene in secondary schools was the key instrument.

The invasion

Drawing on its successful experience with the recent coup in Guatemala,[144] the U.S. government had been working to recruit and train a large-scale invasion force of Cuban exiles since the summer of 1960. By November 1960, the Cuban press started to report on invasion plans and prepared its citizens for war.[145] Urban opposition groups acted in coordination with the emerging rural guerrillas fight along the invasion forces. Individuals and groups within Cuba who called for resistance to the island's government were now considered political enemies in collaboration with a foreign power; their acts were treated as treason. If their actions involved violence the death penalty could, and often was, applied. The government felt under siege, and its responses became more drastic and radical.[146]

In mid-April, the prediction of an invasion that had served to justify many government restrictions on Cuban citizens was fulfilled: an armed force of Cuban exiles, with limited support from the U.S. military, landed in Cuba's Bay of Pigs. Faced with this invasion, Cuban authorities arrested oppositionists, dissidents, and anyone who was perceived as such. Estimates are that 100,000 people were arrested or taken into custody during the incursion, including members of the clergy, some of whom had

[143] *Revolución* (27 March 1961).

[144] For a first-hand account of the man who was in charge of propaganda in Guatemala and Cuba, see Phillips, *The Night Watch*.

[145] "Preparan más mercenarios para la agresión a cuba," *Hoy* (26 November 1960).

[146] Castro later justified the government repression: "[W]hen those activities become violent and are linked to sabotage, bombs, and other CIA activities (. . .) plus U.S. attacks and economic blockades that force the country to defend itself—there is no choice." Castro and Betto, *Fidel and Religion: Castro Talks on Revolution and Religion with Frei Betto*, p. 188.

taught at religious schools and been accused of aiding the invaders. Among them was Eduardo Tomás Boza-Masvidal, a former director of the Universidad Católica Santo Tomás de Villanueva and auxiliary bishop of Havana since March 1960.[147] The Catholic order of San Juan de Bautista, with eleven schools across the island and a university that had 110 priests and clergy, was another victim of the government raid.[148]

As Louis Pérez put it, "under siege at home, under attack from abroad, the government moved quickly to eliminate all opposition. The Bay of Pigs brought matters to a climax."[149] Industrialization Minister Ernesto Guevara thanked Americans shortly afterward for the invasion. According to his conversation with White House aide Richard Goodwin at the OAS meeting in Punta del Este in August of that year, the Cuban government's "hold had been a bit shaky but the invasion allowed the leadership to consolidate most of the major elements of the country around Fidel."[150]

When Castro announced the nationalization of private schools two weeks after the invasion and its rapid defeat, there was no effective resistance to that measure. A joint CIA–State Department report on the failed invasion concluded, "every key national figure in Cuban society, with the notable exception of the Catholic hierarchy, is by now either a dedicated supporter of communism and the Castro regime or a noncommunist so deeply committed to the regime as to be unlikely to turn against it."[151] Taking possession of the Catholic Church's schools became an important factor in this outcome. The expropriation of the Catholic schools and the first expulsion of more than 130 priests on May 14, 1959

---

[147] "Presos Boza Masvidal y otro cura falangista," *Revolución* (19 April 1961). Boza-Masvidal remained in this position as auxiliary bishop until his expulsion, along with 130 other priests and religious leaders, following violent incidents during the Cuban saint's Caridad de Cobre procession in September 1961. They departed from Cuba on the steamship *Covadonga* to Spain.

[148] Andrés Valdespino, "El exilio de los hermanos de La Salle." See the downloadable article: http://delasallealumni.org/nuestroseducadores/HermanosDelaSalle-Exilio.pdf

[149] Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed., *Latin American Histories Index*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 252.

[150] Cited in William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), p. 45.

[151] Cited in Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, p. 172.

following the invasion meant, from the perspective of the opposition, "that the resistance began to lose one of its most important support networks."[152]

The expropriation

It was in this context, on May Day 1961, that Fidel Castro announced the nationalization of Cuba's private schools. During this speech he also reiterated the socialist character of the revolution, first pronounced two weeks earlier. The revolution was still based on the principles of the 1940 Constitution, "which had never become reality," Castro claimed, but the country by now had "already left behind this constitution" and instead would soon have a "socialist constitution."[153] Castro blamed the United States for this: "If this is a socialist regime it is not our fault" but that of "the aggressive policy of the U.S. government" that had culminated in the recent invasion. Castro announced that his government would issue a law "nationalizing the private schools in the next couple of days." He repeated the ideas of previous speeches: Foreign priests had "inculcated young people's minds with counterrevolutionary poison (. . .), fomented terrorist mentalities and hate against the revolution" in Cuba's religious schools to a degree that became unacceptable. Castro said all private schools would be nationalized, not just the Catholic schools, to avoid discrimination among different religions. Only very small, mostly rural, schools would be exempted. He admitted that many private institutions would be unjustly affected by this measure, as many private laic and religious schools had shown a "very different behavior." But from now on, it would be the state's responsibility to "offer cost-free education to all its citizens," and this could only be achieved with a national public educational system.

The morning after Castro's speech, and a month before the law had officially been decreed, militias started to occupy the buildings of private schools in the capital. The daily *Revolución* reported that private schools were being intervened with across the island—some occupied by militias, while

[152] Enrique Encinosa, *Cuba en guerra*, p. 66.

[153] Fidel Castro, *Discurso* (1 May 1959).

others had already been assigned a special government envoy for the intervention, *un interventor*.[154] Similar stories of provincial educational boards designating *interventores* appeared in the press throughout the following days and weeks.

The revolutionary press presented statements by some teachers and even directors of private schools in favor of the nationalization. Other studies have documented how the expropriation of small businesses often demoralized the owners—even those who might have had general sympathies toward the goals of the revolution—as their lifelong investments were taken away by state functionaries.[155] Revolutionary organizations "welcomed" the measure, among them the National Syndicate of Education Workers and student committees of several Catholic schools, such Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and the Miramar Academy.[156] Juan Cancio López, founder and proprietor of the Colegio Academia Cancio in Las Villas Province, for example, "wanted it to be known" that he "supported the nationalization" as a necessary measure to counteract the continued violence and attacks against the revolution with which he identified. Another teacher described how she thought turning over her school to the revolution would help children of all economic backgrounds to attend that school.[157] In some cases, Cuban administrators of private schools, at times with a more sympathetic attitude toward the revolution, had replaced the owners or previous directors before the nationalization decree. This was true, for instance, at Ruston Academy, whose founding director, James Baker, had left Cuba when the U.S. broke off relations on 3 January 1961. Cuban Mario Iglesias had been appointed the school's assistant director before that time

[154] "Interventores en escuelas privadas," *Revolución* (8 May 1961); "Nombrados interventores en los colegios en Santa Clara," *Hoy* (7 May 1959).

[155] José Antonio Vidal Rodríguez, "Los procesos nacionalizadores durante la revolución cubana según los testimonios de los inmigrantes gallegos en la isla: 1959–1968," *Anuario Americanista Europeo*, no. 3 (2005).

[156] "Termina el clero falangista su actuación desorientadora," *Revolución* (4 May 1959).

[157] "Interventores en escuelas privadas," *Revolución* (8 May 1961).

and directed the school for the remaining 150 Cuban students in 1961 until the government takeover in May.[158]

Memoirs of student Leo (Polo) Nuñez, class of 1961 at Ruston Academy, describe vividly the atmosphere from the perspective of an affluent student following Castro's announcements to nationalize schools, only two weeks after the invasion:

> During the night of Sunday, April 30, 1961, Castro had launched one of his endless tirades on television. In it, he announced with sound and fury that as of next morning all private schools in Cuba would be nationalized. (. . .) I had watched all those events with anger and fear. The failure of Bay of Pigs; (. . .) the wiping-out of the underground movement in Havana (. . .). Next morning, Monday, May 1, I woke-up early; I had decided to go to Ruston. Upon arriving, we did not enter the driveway, but parked the car on the street in front of the flag poles. I got out and walked approaching the militia-man sitting, *metralleta* [a machine gun] on his lap, in front of the closed doors. I asked him if I could go in. He answered that this now belonged to the people and that I could if I had any business inside. A little bothered and nervous I replied that I had been a student in the school (. . .) he nodded. As I paced along the covered walkway, I saw Dr. Mario Iglesias [the recently appointed Cuban school director] (. . .). He was clearly concerned, 'What are you doing here?' he asked in an agitated tone of voice. (. . .) I stated that I was there to help them in any way I could and added that perhaps he might want me to take out a document or an important memo of the school . . . He interrupted me, 'Polo, how can you be so naïve? All the school entrances are secured by *milicianos*. In fact once in, you cannot go out until the *interventor* arrives and we find out what is going to happen to us and to the school. (. . .) I opened the door without even giving any thanks to Dr. Iglesias; got out in a hurry, crossed the short grassy area and got inside the car. I then looked one last time at the façade. Memories raced through my mind (. . .).[159]

The government appointed officials to "intervene" in the school buildings, and Cuba's militias controlled access to them. Some professors continued to give classes to their students by taking them to their homes and "illegally teaching them" after the nationalization.[160] The immediate consequences of the nationalization for students were limited because regular classes had ended early, in April, instead of

---

[158] There had been 750 students at Ruston at the end of school year 1959–60; Baker, *Ruston, from Dreams to Reality*.

[159] Leo (Polo) Nuñez, class of 1961, "My last day Ruston," in ibid., p. 111.

[160] Provenzo, "Exiled Teachers and the Cuban Revolution/*Maestros exilados y la revolución cubana*," p. 8.

June–July.[161] Already in February a ministerial resolution had modified the academic calendar for secondary education to "facilitate the active and prompt participation" in the literacy campaign.

The nationalization law

The law to nationalize Cuba's private schools officially was issued on 6 June.[162] As Castro had predicted, international media broke the news immediately. The *New York Times* reported on its front page that this measure was "one of the most radical adopted by the Castro regime."[163] The first section of the law reiterated republican legal traditions and declared education as a basic duty of the state. Article 1 declared education "public and free of costs" for everyone. The goal was to create a "unitary education system that serves the cultural, technical, and social development of the nation." This first part of its text could be interpreted as the forced fulfillment of the republican promise in the 1940 Constitution, which had made primary education a right, but not a reality, for all.

The following paragraphs, however, struck a very different tone. A month after the first public identification of Cuba's revolution as "socialist," the law declared certain realities to be in "contradiction with the cardinal ideas of our Socialist Revolution," as expressed in the Declaration of Havana from September 1960. This nationalization law was likely the first explicitly socialist legal text of the Cuban revolution. The Declaration, a reaction to the OAS declaration of August 1960, which had condemned "the attempts of the Sino–Soviet powers to make use of the (. . .) situation of any American state," had proclaimed the rights to education, health care, jobs, and dignity, as well as the "end of exploitation" as an obligation of the state to fulfill. The law encapsulates the shift from reform to revolution—the beginning of a new era. The first part of the text still reflects the republican ideals of universal and accessible

[161] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, "Resolución 172/61" (2 January 1961), MINED Archive, Fondo Leyes y Resoluciones.

[162] *Nacionalización general y gratuita de la enseñanza* (S/N), vol. 33, in Government Documents, Cuba, *Folletos de divulgación legislativa*; *Proclámas y leyes del gobierno provisional de la revolución (1 a 30 de Junio de 1961),* 2nd ed. (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1961). Subsequent references to the law are taken from this source.

[163] "Cuba Takes Over School Facilities," *New York Times* (8 June 1961).

education for all. The second part declares that only a socialist state education can and should effectively make this a reality.

The nationalization law mentions "exploitation" of teachers and employees at private schools by their owners—a class argument—as a primary reason for the expropriation. Private schools, moreover, contributed to "class division" through their exclusive access for the "privileged classes" (*clases acomodadas*). This was followed by a political argument to stop the "counterrevolutionary propaganda," which had a "damaging effect on the intellectual, moral, and political formation of the child."

A resolution from late June listed for the first time all schools that were to be nationalized and incorporated into Cuba's public school system.[164] Altogether, 770 institutions were expropriated, spread out over Cuba's six provinces. There were 14 in Pinar del Río province, 217 in the city of Havana, 242 in Havana province, 62 in Matanzas province, 80 in Las Villas province, 53 in Camagüey province, and 102 in Oriente province. All privately owned establishments, including their goods, rights, and stocks, would be ascribed to the state. The provincial directors of the educational departments were given a free hand to carry out "the indispensable change of teaching, administrative, and subaltern personnel," to be ratified by the minister of education. All private employees would continue to receive their salaries through a special fund that was created by the law and built on the confiscated funds of the schools.[165] A subsequent resolution emphasized the need to "conserve integrally the scholastic patrimony" of each school.[166] This was a stipulation that was not respected for a very long time, as several private school complexes were given entirely different purposes.

In September 1961, another resolution exempted hundreds of schools from being nationalized to guarantee teaching and lower administrative costs in those places once the literacy campaign would be

---

[164] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, "Resolución Ministerial 1548/61 (29 June 1961)," MINED Archive, Fondo Resoluciones y Leyes. To my knowledge, I am the first to report these numbers in detail, based on government documents previously unseen by other scholars.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, "Resolución Ministerial 1645/61" (7 July 1961). MINED Archive, Fondo Resoluciones.

over. In Havana alone, 102 private schools were exempted due to their number of students and teachers, or because of other "special conditions," and after having been examined and approved by provincial education boards.[167] After the nationalization of private schools, the government made a series of announcements to dissipate fears that other small and medium-sized Cuban business would also be expropriated. In a televised speech in early June, Raúl Castro, who was Minister of the Armed Forces at that time, declared, "the revolution has no interest in nationalizing or socializing these small companies, the petty trade . . . because [it] has more than enough obligations with the bigger centers of production."[168] The exception in the law nationalizing schools was an expression of this concern.

In early September the government postponed the beginning of school year 1961–62 to 3 January 1962. As a result, it had more time to prepare for the new administration of this important private sector. The reason for this decision was the lack of sufficient literacy workers who were actually involved in the campaign, as reported at a national meeting in August 1961. Out of 267,851 literacy workers identified by 30 August 1961 (and half a million announced originally), only 178,122 were indeed teaching.[169] Minister of Education Armando Hart decided it would be necessary to free all primary school teachers from their normal obligations to enable and force their participation in the literacy work, since primary teachers were deemed "extraordinarily important." In 1961, the eradication of illiteracy had been declared the most important goal for that year. Cuba's officially enrolled primary school population in school year 1961–62 was numbered at 1,166,880.[170] As one of the ministry's resolutions declared, these students "could perfectly well be attended by (. . .) assistance plans, followed by an intensive course with minimum programs" for the months to come. The ministry postponed classes for half a year and authorized "the

[167] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, "Resolución Ministerial 2154/61" (21 September 1961), MINED Archive, Fondo Resoluciones.

[168] "Arriba el trabajo y la dirección colectiva: Raúl," *Revolución* (5 June 1961).

[169] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, Sección Estadística, "Congreso nacional de alfabetización: Datos hasta agosto 1961," Archivo de la Campaña Nacional de Alfabetización.

[170] Susan Schroeder, *Cuba: A Handbook of Historical Statistics*. *A Reference Publication in International Historical Statistics* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1982), p. 127.

creation of some kind of assistance plan" (*algún tipo de plan asistencial*).[171] If the nationalization of private schools had been a long-thought-out measure, it surely left the execution completely unprepared.

5.4 The significance of nationalizations in Cuba

Cuba's nationalizations during 1960–61 constituted the largest uncompensated seizure of U.S. investments in the twentieth century. This partly explains the strong reaction of U.S. administrations to the revolution—even though President Eisenhower had made the decision for regime change in Cuba months before the nationalization cycle of the summer of 1960. Yet, given the significance, it is all the more surprising that almost no detailed studies of the various forms of nationalization in Cuba exist.[172] By the end of 1959, the book value of direct investments by U.S. companies in Cuba (net assets) approached a billion dollars. The island's relatively small economy ranked second in the value of that year's direct U.S. investments in Latin America (after Venezuela) and comprised almost 20 percent of all of U.S. investments in Latin America.[173] United States subsidiaries in Cuba employed an estimated 160,000 persons in 1957.[174] Following the Second World War, "Cuba's investment climate was one of the most favorable in Latin America" for private business interests. Profits, interest, and other payments could be freely remitted abroad—until 1959. But even in 1959, the U.S. business investments flow still accounted for 75 million dollars.[175] While schools were generally not directly U.S.-owned, the U.S.A.'s presence

---

[171] Govt. Docs., Cuba, MINED, "Resolución Ministerial 2068/61" (7 September 1961), Archivo del MINED, Fondo de Resoluciones.

[172] Several Cuban history books, of course, refer to expropriations in general. See, e.g., Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA 1978), pp. 147–48; and Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, pp. 247–50. See also Schoultz, who in *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic* narrates details of the U.S. reactions to nationalization (pp. 118–21); and Baklanoff, whose E*xpropriation of U.S. Investments in Cuba, Mexico, and Chile* gives an overview of the development in Cuba without referring to education (pp. 12–34). Also see Cuban historian Felipe Pérez Cruz, *La alfabetización en Cuba: Lectura histórica para pensar el presente* (Havana, 2001), who refers to the confrontation between Catholic institutions and the government in his study on the literacy campaign (pp. 168–72).

[173] Baklanoff, *Expropriation of U.S. Investments in Cuba, Mexico, and Chile*, p. 27.

[174] Ibid., p. 25.

[175] Ibid.

was nevertheless important: influential schools (such as Ruston Academy, Central School, and Villanueva University) were founded or directed by its citizens, and/or received U.S. government subsidies; various schools employed teachers and enrolled students from the U.S.; numerous schools, especially those of a business and commercial nature, were oriented toward or inspired by the U.S. educational system.[176] Some 8,000 teachers worked at private schools in 1959, and many more employees were involved in the private education business.

This section analyzes historic precedents to the revolutionary expropriations. Were they necessary or even intended? By historicizing the nationalizations, one is able to think about alternative arrangements between public and private arrangements to meet social needs, such as education, both in the past and potentially in the future.

Expropriations in republican Cuba

The politico–legal origins of the expropriation practice can be found during Cuba's first military occupation by the United States. Military Order 34 of 7 February 1902 was initially limited to the confiscation of goods related to the development of railroads.[177] During the second U.S. military occupation, Provisional Governor Charles Magoon expanded this law in 1907 to include "any work or service of public utility by any ministry of the government."[178] A subsequent government compendium of legislation, orientation, and rules issued in 1921 sought to establish binding practices for future expropriations. Orlando Frye, Secretary of the Ministry of Public Works at the time, emphasized the need to include an "ample report about the necessity, utility, and purpose that will be given to the goods" that

---

[176] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, pp. 400–409.

[177] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Negociado de Cuentas y Bienes, Expropriación Forzosa, *Compra directa o arendamiento de bienes inmuebles: Legislación, instrucciones y reglas* (Havana: Imprenta y Papelería de Rambla, Bouza y C., 1921), p. 3.

[178] Ibid.

would be acquired by the government.[179] In June 1945 an "Office for Expropriation and Compensation" was created during a second wave of state expansion that followed the nationalist period of the late 1930s and the war–postwar economic boom. The new expropriations' legitimacy stemmed from Article 24 of the 1940 Constitution, which rendered confiscation legal under certain circumstances: if ordered by "competent judicial authority and for a cause justified by public utility of social interest." One decisive requirement, not fulfilled by the 1960 nationalizations, was the "mandatory *prior* payment of the proper indemnification in cash, in the amount judicially determined" (emphasis added). Utility and compensation of expropriated goods would be determined by a judge in case of a dispute between the owner and the government. The same held true for the calculation of compensation rates. In a government-sponsored publication from Cuba's 1947 Ministry of Public Works proudly illustrated goods and properties worth almost five million pesos that it had seized in order to realize development projects in the national interest. (Figures 5-1 and 5-2) This included several hundred thousand pesos paid for the creation of new secondary schools throughout the country.[180]

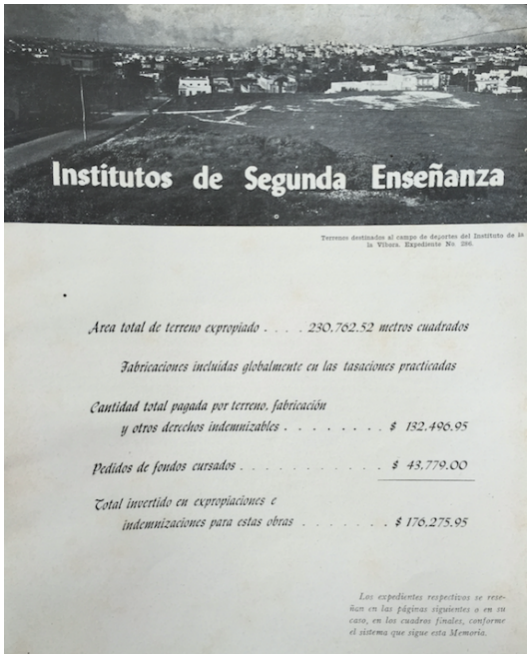


Figure 5-1
Expropriation and Indemnization for the Building of Public Schools. Cuban government publication, 1947.

[179] Ibid., p. 25.

[180] Govt. Docs., Cuba, Ministerio de Obras Públicas, *Expropriaciones e indemnizaciones* (Havana 1947), pp. 9, 197.



Figure 5-2
"Revolutionary intervention and expropriation" of a U.S.-owned oil refinery, thanking the United States for providing a reason to expropriate them. *Revolución* (9 July 1961): 12.

Nationalization—a necessity?

Whether Cuba's state socialism, of which the nationalized education system became an important part, had constituted an *a priori* goal of the forces opposing Batista or whether it was the result of a subsequent political development in the context of the Cold War is a much debated question.[181] Key programmatic texts prior to 1959 are analyzed here to discern their visions of the role of private education and attitudes towards nationalization in general in post-Batista Cuba.

No political party or group before the revolution had advocated the seizure of private schools. Most opposition forces that came to power after 1959 wanted to expand and improve cost-free public education

[181] For a useful summary of the different positions within the scholarship, see Samuel Farber, *Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill, NC 2006), as well as Antoni Kapcia, "Does Cuba Fit Yet or Is It Still 'Exceptional'?" *Journal of Latin American Studies* (*JLAS*), vol. 40, part 4 (November 2008): 627–51.

and increase state regulation for private schools, primarily for nationalistic reasons. Some groups advocated an increased Cuban, though not necessarily state, control in other areas of society, most prominently in landholdings and public utilities, many of which had been in foreign hands. The motivation was mostly nationalist, not socialist. Even the communist party thought in 1943 that the development of a "strong national bourgeoisie" would be its "only" path to development—in cooperation with the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Ortodóxo party, to which Fidel Castro had belonged during that time, had been in favor of the takeover of public utilities as part of its political platform for Cuba's last open election preceding the revolution, in 1948. The takeover of public utilities, many of which were owned by U.S. companies, was a recurrent theme in the 1950s.

In his programmatic defense speech of 1953, Fidel Castro had envisioned a return to constitutional democracy and a strong state capable of redistribution, social justice, and economic development and diversification. Among other measures, Castro proposed to lower rents, raise certain taxes, and build a strong public infrastructure. The only form of expropriation that was explicitly mentioned (Revolutionary Law Number 2) was related to land reform and included compensation for those affected by it.[182] Castro's greatest concerns in education were the adequate payment and training of teachers because they were "the soul of learning." He announced that "a revolutionary government would undertake the integral reform of the education system," an unfulfilled constitutional requirement, "bringing it in line with the foregoing projects based on the idea of educating those generations who will live in a happy land." Castro also criticized Cuba's educational system as urban-biased and not paying attention to rural living conditions and necessities.[183]

[182] Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me*, p. 36.

[183] Ibid., p. 42.

The *Sierra Manifesto* of July 1957, signed by Fidel Castro, Raúl Chibás, and Félipe Pazos, referred to the need for a literacy campaign and more effective civic education.[184] It was written after Castro and others had been exposed to rural illiteracy for several months. In his February 1958 text "Why We Fight," written for the U.S. magazine *The Coronet*, Castro reiterated the idea of a literacy campaign, this time combining it with education in agriculture and sanitation techniques. He emphasized that he had "no plans for the expropriation or nationalization of foreign investments here." He even dismissed earlier ideas about government ownership for public utilities because "I personally have come to feel that nationalization is, at best, a cumbersome instrument. It does not seem to make the state any stronger, yet it enfeebles private enterprise." Because rapid industrialization was his foremost goal, he stated that "foreign investments will always be welcome and secure here."[185]

Fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba can be seen as the official position of Cuba's communist party (the PSP), first formulated by its general secretary, Blas Roca, in 1943, then revised in 1959 and published again in modified revolutionary editions in 1960 and 1961.[186] After 1959, the text became the most important Cuban/Spanish text in the formation of revolutionary consciousness, in addition to Castro's "History Will Absolve Me."[187] The communist party in its 1943 program urged the "cooperation with private forces for the superior national interest of defense" in times of war.[188] Strategically, the party thought "complete national liberation" to be possible only by means of the "nationalization of banks,

---

[184] 26th of July Movement, "Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement," in *Cuba in Revolution*, ed. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdés (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972).

[185] Fidel Castro, "Why We Fight," *Coronet* (February 1958): 84–85.

[186] The revolutionary edition had 14 instead of 13 chapters, and 225 versus 155 pages. Most importantly, the chapter on "Necessity of Social Change and the Instruments for Its Implementation" was rewritten as "The Historic Necessity of the January Revolution"; the "National Unity" chapter was omitted, and instead, two chapters on "National Development and Economic Independence" and "Socialism" were added. See Francisco (Blas Roca) Calderío, *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba* (Havana: Editorial "Páginas," 1943) and *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba* (1961).

[187] Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*, *Stanford Studies in Comparative Politics*, 2 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 108.

[188] (Roca) Calderío, *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba* (1943), p. 105.

railways, mines, the big companies, and *latifundios* [large estates] from the hands of foreign capitalists in favor of a strong national industry."[189] Though again, at the time this did not necessarily mean state ownership. In the 1961 edition of *Fundamentos* (the book was revised in December 1959), the PSP declared that Cuba's "national liberation and agrarian" revolution demanded "the necessity and inevitability of socialism," given "the current development of capitalism."[190] Education was barely mentioned in the text. The 1943 edition had mentioned an educational campaign that would be needed to overcome racial discrimination, as well as the necessity for expansion of national culture over the entire island. Schools would be built all over the country, and popular editions of Cuban and world literature disseminated, including that of such diverse writers as José Martí, Julio Antonio Mella, Miguel Cervantes, William Shakespeare, Joseph Stalin, Leo Tolstoy, and Benjamin Franklin.[191] Up until 1959, there had been no open or public debate on nationalization as a systematic state expropriation of entire industries or service sectors.

With exception of the May 1959 land reform and the early confiscation of "unlawful" properties by Batista's collaborators, there had not been any major expropriations until the summer of 1960. The agrarian reform was written into the 1940 Constitution, had been announced previously, and was motivated by the ideals of social justice and increased economic efficiency. It also had a compensation model similar to those of U.S.-administered land reforms such as the one in Japan after World War II, even if some of the terms were disputed.[192] All subsequent expropriations, by contrast, would be much more radical, justified as politico–economic necessity in reaction to sabotage or to defend national sovereignty in times of domestic or foreign attack.

---

[189] Ibid., p. 127.

[190] (Roca) Calderío, Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba (1961), p. 113.

[191] (Roca) Calderío, *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba* (1943), p. 153.

[192] For details on the reform and reactions by those affected, especially U.S. investors and policy makers, see Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, pp. 93–100.

Contesting interventions

An internal strategic memorandum from Cuba's communist party leadership criticized the revolutionary government's approach to expropriations severely. It is undated, but given the content, must have been written in October 1960.[193] State intervention, it declared, had initially been applied to avoid sabotage, solve labor disputes, or avoid significant layoffs, as in the tourist industry, but had now become a generalized tool of expropriation, carried out randomly "almost without any distinction" or strategic orientation. This "has created an incomprehensible situation." Whereas the biggest Cuban railway company, Ferrocarriles Consolidados, which covered half of the island and was of "strategic importance" and "most likely linked to North American imperialist interests" remained untouched, small local bus companies with "a handful of old buses" had been taken over and run by the state, the memo observed. This policy was criticized as "dangerous and erroneous," for it created enormous costs for the state and a general fear among small-scale proprietors and producers, whom the party saw as potential allies and supporters of the revolution, of workers and peasants. Arguing against "leftist extremism," this alliance had to be maintained at all costs to confront the common and main enemy, U.S. imperialist interests and their local allies among the bourgeoisie in key sectors, such as sugar and banking.

The debate about the scope of government intervention and nationalization was a debate about Cuba's economic and political future. Cuba's communists did not see a wholesale takeover of all private activities as a prerequisite for socialism. On a programmatic level, the party argued, "it is not true that we necessarily have to expropriate these companies to create socialism." Instead, a mixed economy with "private–state property" that encouraged voluntary cooperatives could emerge, one that merely prohibited "wage labor." The memo argued for the expropriation of Cuban banks in addition to foreign banks, as this was seen as a strategic sector. However, the party was against generalized interventions because they were too costly, both economically and politically. Dispossessing the Cuban bourgeoisie would also send

[193] Secretariado del Partido Socialista Popular, "Consideraciones sobre la politica de forzar las intervenciones," Archivo del Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (INRA), Fondo Nuñez Jiménez (1960?).

out the wrong signal to Latin American countries at a time when the "United States is desperately trying to isolate us from Latin America."[194]

The nationalization cycle, 1960–62

A recent Cuban study refers to the nationalizations between 1959 and 1962 as the defining and "transcendental moment of the revolutionary process." The change had begun with the Agrarian Reform Law in May 1959, "the key for future development of the country," especially because of its much-overlooked, and at the time very controversial, cooperative form. This was followed by the government's intervention and expropriation of foreign-owned industries and banks between July and October 1960. These nationalizations essentially concluded a cycle that would define the Cuban revolution. In late 1960, "the fundamental means of production" were in the hands of the Cuban state: significant portions of the agricultural land, sugar and mining industries, foreign-owned banks, and public services. Two other important nationalizations were carried out by the revolutionary government before the 1968 "Revolutionary Offensive," which expropriated most remaining private businesses: the nationalization of the educational system in 1961, and of Cuba's commerce in January 1962 (Law 1076), which affected 5,500 establishments—1,900 of them in Havana alone.[195]

Nationalization Law 851 was the first important one of its kind in 1960, targeting U.S. oil refineries, which had refused to process Soviet crude oil, and it followed previous Cuban legal precedents. The first two resolutions based on this law that actually intervened in foreign companies were those of 6 August 1960 (affecting sugar, oil, telephone, and electric companies) and 17 September 1960 (affecting banks). These were aimed exclusively at U.S.-owned property, in retaliation for the economic sanctions imposed on Cuba by the U.S. government. The 26 targeted companies were moreover branded by the law

[194] Ibid., p. 10.

[195] Joel Sosa, Carmen Díaz, Aurea Verónica Rodríguez, and Carmen Rodríguez, "Las Nacionalizaciones: Acto de soberanía e indepencia, 102–126," *Cuadernos cubanos de historia*, no. 3 (2004).

as "typical examples of exploitative monopolies."[196] The Cuban government emphasized the "historic responsibility" it faced when it was "forced" to take these measures. The resolution had the practical purpose of limiting "further damage" and guaranteeing continued production.[197] It also provided the state a new regulatory tool for a new era, an era that would recover Cuba's national resources, described in the law as an "obligation for the Latin American people," for whom the revolution from now on would be an "inspiring example."

The third resolution, on 24 October 1960, took on all remaining U.S. commercial and industrial companies as a "residue of financial capital in our country." Up until this point, nationalizations targeted foreign, and almost exclusively U.S., property. But ten days beforehand, on 13 October 1960, another expropriation measure (Law 890) was passed by the Council of Ministers, targeting Cuban companies. Examples of sabotage, underinvestment, flight of capital and human resources, labor conflicts, and management sabotage were given as justifications.

This law foreshadowed yet another stage of development for the revolution. The government would not only expropriate or "Cubanize" foreign-owned industries but also nationalize or socialize—that is, transfer to state ownership and administration—major private investments of nation scope. "Full economic development of the nation" was the revolution's declared goal, based on planning and the control of the basic industries. The private sector was expected to cooperate, rationalize, and increase production. Companies that "did not or will never" fulfill these goals would need to be nationalized, the resolution explained. Law 890 detailed a long list of Cuban companies that were to be taken over and regrouped into commercial and industrial clusters under ministerial administration. The law targeted only relatively large companies, as the government had become mindful not to antagonize the majority of Cubans in small businesses or self-employed activities. Nonetheless, it engendered a practice of

---

[196] Olga Miranda Bravo, *Las nacionalizaciones cubanas, los tribunales norteamericanos y la enmienda Hickenlooper* (Havana: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1971).

[197] Former engineer at the Shell refinery Tony González, for example, placed a plastic bomb at the company in August 1960, causing a blaze that lasted several days, with estimated damage of multiple millions of dollars. Encinosa, *Cuba en guerra*, p. 38.

government interventions and expropriations that would persist between 1960 and 1962. This practice was contested, not only by the affected but also within government circles, as the party memo has shown. The nationalization of Cuba's private education was a crucial part of this contested transformation of Cuba's economic, political, and social structures that subsequently defined the revolution.

Historicizing nationalizations

Jorge Domínguez argued that the decision to nationalize cannot be explained if seen only as a U.S.–Cuban conflict. Yet, neither is it possible to explain the decision without that emerging confrontation. Cuban entrepreneurs were closely tied to the United States and "could certainly be presumed to oppose government policies," Domínguez observed. This chapter provides additional evidence on the educational sector, supporting his findings.[198] A review of the opposition party programs shows that there was no prior blueprint for a state-administered economy and society. After 1959, the practice of government intervention, already common before the revolution, became more frequent and politicized. Initially expropriations were limited to Cuba's most important sector, the sugar industry. From 1960 on, they targeted other strategic sectors. This happened in an increasingly violent context in which a powerful opposition to the government had formed and begun to act. Internal differences emerged within sectors of the Cuban government: The communist party argued for a strategic, long-term, and eventually socialist perspective; other revolutionaries acted more spontaneously and with political motivation to protect the country from sabotage.

In 1959 the revolutionary government decided that Cuba's educational system, which was largely influenced by the United States and Spanish Catholicism, had to be radically reformed. At first this was in cooperation with private schools, and under the supervision of the state. But when opposition turned violent in 1960, state intervention turned into expropriation. Evidence suggests that the decision to nationalize Cuba's schools was strongly influenced by the violent historical context of 1960–61.

[198] Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 147.

However, once the decision was made, nationalization was embedded and integrated into a new strategy: to provide uniform and state-administered education. It became part of the effort to build a new society with a newly educated populace. The struggle to materialize republican ideals of universal education for all Cubans resulted in a socialist orientation, political indoctrination, and control, seen against a background of invasion, hemispheric isolation, and the Cold War. In this context—that is after, not before the nationalizations—the Cuban government opted to cooperate more fully with the socialist world. Some politicians did this out of conviction, others out of necessity.

Subsequent programmatic statements by Cuba's past and current leaders, Fidel and Raúl Castro, have inspired counterfactual historical thinking. Such statements, however, help address the central question that this chapter attempts to explain: the nationalization of private schools in Cuba, and whether or not these nationalizations were a consciously planned process or a political decision made within specific historic circumstances that could be reversed under different circumstances.

In 2011 Raúl Castro declared, "We have the obligation of correcting the errors we have made over the last five decades." One of these errors he considered to be the hypercentralized state model. He suggested that moving away from a command economy and total state control to a mixed economy that allowed for private and cooperative actors as well as market mechanisms was not tantamount to abandoning the principles of socialism but rather a reinterpretation under new circumstances. "The classics of Marxism–Leninism (. . .) determined (. . .) that the state (. . .) should maintain ownership over the fundamental means of production," he stated. "We generalized this principle into an absolute concept and subordinated almost the entire economy under state ownership."[199]

Fidel Castro reflected more specifically on the nationalization of private schools in an official interview with Frei Betto, a well-known Brazilian Catholic priest of the Dominican order in the mid-1980s. The text helped significantly to improve Church–state relations in Cuba. In it, Castro considered alternative outcomes of the conflict narrated in this chapter that could have allowed the public–private

[199] Raúl Castro, *Discurso*, 16 April 2011. The text is available at this website: http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/rauldiscursos/2011/esp/r160411e.html

cooperation of 1959 to continue: "If it hadn't been for those disputes, we wouldn't have had any need to nationalize those schools (. . .) perhaps there would have been healthful [sic] competition between those schools and ours. (. . .) I am not saying, stating, or suggesting that private schools must necessarily be nationalized (. . .) far from being dogmatic about the need to nationalize the private schools, I can even view them as contribution by certain sectors to the country's economy."[200] Obviously, retrospective interviews have to be treated with caution. This was not necessarily Fidel Castro's viewpoint when he announced the nationalization on 1 May 1961. The available evidence, including public statements by Castro weeks before the announcement as well as internal documents discussed in this chapter, however, suggest that a decisive factor for the expropriation of private schools was in fact the violent context of the time, which included active participation of teachers and students at Catholic schools. Since then, conditions have changed significantly in Cuba. The country's revolutionary education system has shown impressive results over time. Since the economic crisis of the 1990s, however, the conditions of public schools in Cuba unfortunately often resemble those criticized by Castro before 1959.

[200] Castro and Betto, *Fidel and Religion,* p. 188.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 5: ON THE RELIABILITY OF STATISTICAL DATA

Like other, broader educational statistics of the time, reports on the exact dimensions of Cuba's private education sector prior to the revolution vary considerably and are often imprecise. They have seldom been subject to academic scrutiny. This has been partly due to a lack of sources and government information, not just since the revolution but also before. The World Bank found in 1951 that "Over the years, educational statistics in Cuba have been incomplete and unreliable."[201] Especially at the primary level and in rural Cuba, many schools were not officially recognized or authorized by the government. Such schools, however, were sometimes and to varying degrees included in estimates by different institutions or authors. For school year 1944–45, for example, Cuba's then newly formed Office for the Inspection of Private Schools counted 518 authorized private schools in Cuba's six provinces, and 117 unauthorized.[202] United States historian Louis Pérez has stated that there were some 90,000 unregistered schools.[203] Though this number seems too high, one has to bear in mind that these were often private *aulas*—simple classrooms or halls—in rural settings. Often such a "school" would be at the home of an instructor, rarely a teacher by training, and sometimes accommodating only one or two children.

On the fiftieth anniversary of Cuba's independence, an official ten-volume anthology that relied on "direct data from the authorities" admitted that there were "some 200 schools without authorization."[204] The World Bank made the "survey[ing] of existing schools and children

---

[201] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission*, p. 410.

[202] Government Documents, Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, *Anuario estadistíco escolar* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1946), p. 81.

[203] Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, p. 400.

[204] Mercedes García Tudurí, *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia, 55–147*, ed. Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez et al., vol. 10 of 10 vols., *Historia de la nación cubana* (Havana: Editorial Historia de la Nación Cubana, 1952), p. 144.

numbers" an explicit recommendation to the Cuban government.[205] In 1959 the revolutionary government decreed that private schools had to be authorized by the Ministry of Education or be closed.

The reliability of Cuban statistics since the revolution has been questioned and debated repeatedly in scholarship outside the island. The lack of adequate statistical data has also been recognized and criticized by the Cuban government itself.[206] In 1969, Cuban scholar-in-exile Carmelo Mesa-Lago discussed this issue systematically in relation to socioeconomic statistics. He found there were two opposite views prevailing on the reliability of socialist statistics: one that "most socialist data are fairly reliable, due to the fact that inconsistencies would be revealed by cross checks." The other view held that "statistics from socialist countries should be taken with extreme caution" as they "primarily constitute an ideological tool in the international politico-economic struggle." The general tendency of other communist countries in the 1960s in which "ideologically committed political leaders occupying key posts have gradually been replaced by technocrats who give more emphasis to pure science" was not true for Cuba, Mesa-Lago found. In his view, this was a logical consequence of U.S. policy, "the polarization induced by a hostile power so close to [Cuba's] shore."[207] Even so, Mesa-Lago showed that the statistical data up until 1962–63, and especially through 1960, had been much less affected than later on. Up until 1960, yearly statistical data was still published by Cuba's National Bank, and it continued in other forms under the Central Planning Council (the Junta Central de Planificación, or JUCEPLAN),

---

[205] Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba, *Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission*, pp. 410, 439.

[206] In 1961, when the first four-year plan for educational purposes was developed, the authors admitted that statistical information was "deficient" and that "no adequate statistics of private education existed at the time of their nationalization." Government Documents, Ministerio de Educación del Gobierno Revolucionario, Dirección de Economía, *Plan de actividades educativas* (Havana 1964).

[207] Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Availability and Reliability of Stastistics in Socialist Cuba (Part One)," *Latin American Research Review* 4, no. 1 (1969): 54.

founded in March 1960, until a new method of accounting and reporting was implemented between 1963 and 1965.

A later review of Cuba's education indicators inspired by earlier debates found that "most of the official statistics reported by UNESCO about Cuba are reliable." The authors cross-checked educational statistics with Cuban media reports, speeches and interviews with Cuban officials, both from the island and defectors, and reports by "independent observers" who had visited Cuba.[208] The authors believed that there was a more instrumental and explicitly political approach of socialist states to statistical data: "Marxist societies such as Cuba (. . .) consider ideas weapons in the class struggle."[209] But as Lisandro Pérez points out in his review of pre- and postrevolutionary census data in Cuba, "one basic fact has never changed: population censuses are undertaken by political entities with politico–administrative goals." Therefore, political context matters and is discussed here.[210] Cuba's 1953 census, for example, reported an illiteracy rate of 23.6 percent, an improvement by 5.1 percent from the previous one in 1943. Yet, as the U.S. Bureau of Foreign Commerce warned investors at the time, the literacy test employed for this census "consisted merely in asking if the person interviewed could read and write in any language," taking answers at face value without verification, and thus gave a "far less accurate picture of the educational level."[211] The criteria applied during the 1961 literacy campaign were more comprehensive: literacy workers assessed reading, writing, and basic comprehension

[208] The article also found that "some official statistics are plainly unreliable" and there was a "selective tendency to exaggerate real achievements." Benigno and Roberto T. Vichot Aguirre, "The Reliability of Cuba's Educational Statistics," *Comparative Education Review* 42, no. 2 (1998): 138.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Lisandro Pérez, "The Political Contexts of Cuban Population Censuses, 1899–1981," *Latin American Research Review* 19, no. 2 (1984): 143.

[211] Govt. Docs., U.S. Bureau of Foreign Commerce, American Republics Division, *Investment in Cuba: Basic Information for United States Businessmen* (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Commerce Bureau of Foreign Commerce, 1956), p. 181.

skills.[212] Wherever possible, I have cross-checked available statistics: government publications; data provided by leading figures in Cuba's education, such as Fidel Castro or Armando Hart; press reports; numbers given by defecting government officials or exiled scholars; and subsequent academic research.

[212] During the census in preparation for the literacy campaign, auxiliary state agencies such as banks, and telegraph or post offices reported obviously illiterate persons to the campaign's statistical department, according to UNESCO observers; see UNESCO, *Métodos y medios utilizados en Cuba para la supresión del analfabetismo* (Havana: Editora Pedagógico 1965), pp. 28–30.

CONCLUSION

The Cuban revolution was not made for education. Instead, the toppling of President Batista, moral redemption, reestablishing democracy, and carrying out the ideals of the 1940 Constitution were the foremost goals of Cuba's revolutionaries. But many of these objectives and early revolutionary policies—improving rural living conditions, developing the economy, reducing foreign influence, and creating a strong national culture, *Cubanidad*—were closely tied to education. Cuba's republican history, strongly shaped by the United States, reveals how Cuban pedagogues and administrations have long addressed these complex issues in diverse ways. Foreign influence in Cuba's educational system, especially in private and religious schools, has been a concern of Cuban nationalists since the nineteenth century in their endeavors to educate citizens in a distinctively Cuban spirit. Attempts to increase control over the private sector and create a nationally coordinated educational system have provoked political debates and clashes at various points in history, not just after 1959.

Impressive progress in the school system, especially during the first three decades of the twentieth century, catapulted Cuba into the ranks of the most educated republics of the former Spanish empire. However, the 1929 world economic crisis hit Cuba hard. It led to a serious economic decline, sustained political mobilization, and a revolution in 1933. The 1940 Constitution that followed promised new social rights to the island's mobilized citizenry. Yet most of these remained merely nominal rights and not realities—among them the right to education for all. This situation was the backdrop to educational reforms in 1959. Despite Batista's rural military education program in the 1930s and the selected expansion of schooling in the 1940s, the overall trend was one of retrogression, as the World Bank attested in its comprehensive report in 1950. Cuba's unequal development continued during the economic take-off of the 1940s and 1950s. There still existed an abysmal rural–urban divide, along with a national economic dependence on one crop (sugar) and one country, the United States—despite attempts and limited progress at uplifting and diversifying. While Havana had some of Latin America's finest private schools and illiteracy rates of only 7 percent, rural Cuba remained underdeveloped. One-half of

Cubans in the countryside were unable to write their names, half of the country's school-age population did not attend school, and one-quarter of all Cubans were illiterate in 1953.

During and after the Second World War, rising demand and prices for Cuba's sugar led to windfall revenues, inflated state budgets, and along with these, dazzling corruption, especially in education—by then Cuba's best-funded ministry. An impressive expansion of private and especially urban private schools at all levels occurred in the 1950s, further spurred by the Batista administration. This trend reproduced and deepened preexisting inequalities. I show how studies of these realities created social awareness among political forces in the 1950s, shaped political consciousness, and influenced subsequent revolutionary legislation. The guerrillas' exposure to the country's poor rural living conditions fostered the revolutionaries' allegiance to the rural populace and their drive to better it, including providing basic education and literacy programs, as my analysis of legal texts and political documents shows.

When the former opponents of Batista came to power in 1959, the policy trend of the 1950s with its emphasis on urban, private, and more specialized education was reversed. Rural and basic education were given preference, with the goal of making universal schooling a reality. During the revolution's first year, pressing problems, such as the inadequate numbers of rural schools and teachers, were addressed in a fairly traditional manner. Surveys were carried out, ministerial resolutions issued, budgets for new school construction raised, and public bidding for private construction firms held. My research shows that despite these general goals of educational expansion, no detailed plans or reform program existed in January of 1959 when President Batista was ousted and the revolutionaries came to power.

This lack of a political agenda makes the year 1959 especially interesting and is the reason why chapters 1 through 3 focus entirely on this first year of the revolution. The absence of organized and violent internal opposition or imperial interference during that year allowed for the unfolding of pluralistic debates and policies that are little known and that deserve more attention. After years of violence, an atmosphere of enthusiasm, opportunities, and a sense of a new beginning dominated the Cuban political landscape in 1959. Cubans donated land and buildings voluntarily to help making more

schools available. The government's legitimacy was further increased by a conscious policy to symbolize change and to distance the new regime from the republican past by converting military barracks into school cities. But even this signature program of the revolution, celebrated in Cuba to the present day, was in fact not new but built on practices that the U.S. military had first applied when taking over the island from Spanish colonial authorities.

Massive public spending programs, discussed in chapter 2, expedited the expansion of the revolutionary state. This was catalyzed by unprecedented domestic social support for the revolutionary government in 1959. The government's commitment to provide, *de facto,* every Cuban child with six years of schooling was shared by most citizens. Chapter 2 shows how the practice of early voluntary cooperation was effectively institutionalized, becoming part of the government's policy of citizen mobilization. I argue that only the legitimacy of the early revolutionary regime and its dedication to widely shared goals such as universal education for children made it possible to codify practices of voluntary donations, labor, and other forms of civic participation. These mobilization strategies would later be applied for the achievement of very different political goals as well, and were a defining practice of the "mobilizing state."

The government then began a new, revolutionary, way to rapidly expand Cuba's education. Parallel institutions to the state were created and citizens were called upon to sacrifice for a greater good. But many of these early measures were in fact not entirely new. What distinguished them from similar experiences in republican Cuba was their scope and urgency. Sixty-nine military barracks were converted into educational centers during the first three years; the government began to build 10,000 new classrooms in 1959; hundreds of volunteer teachers were sent to the mountainous rural areas in 1960; and 100,000 students participated as teachers in the national literacy campaign in 1961. The new government's nationalistic and systematic approach, as well as the degree to which the educational program was imbued with a new civic culture and political and moral values, is what made this revolutionary reform era different from earlier attempts.

Throughout 1959, ample debates with Cuban pedagogues took place, helping define the reform agenda. Initially, mostly topics of pedagogical concerns, the strengthening of democratic practices, and the modernization of teaching methods dominated the debates. This liberal moment of the revolution is best exemplified in the two-week education forum held publicly in November 1959, as detailed in chapter 3. The political control of textbook contents, which had been imposed by the Batista government some years earlier, was lifted. During this liberal phase that lasted until the summer of 1960, republican-era geography books coexisted in Cuban classrooms side by side with newly edited revolutionary texts. By the creation of a new national school system, legislated in late 1959 after a broad and open debate, the new government sought to foster a democratic citizenry and a modern and literate nation. At the same time, some of the early legislation led to disputes and foreshadowed conflicts as an effective public and laic education system collided with the interests of religious and for-profit schools. The public forum at the end of the first year of the revolution was held during a turning point in Cuba's educational policies. It was the last *major* event in which the organizations of Cuba's prerevolutionary republic participated and expressed their opinions openly. One reason for this was that, even as the forum was taking place, President Eisenhower was preparing a dramatic shift in U.S. policy toward Cuba. The new strategy, aimed at containing and rolling back a revolution perceived as increasingly radical and communist-influenced, required that all actions and policies in relation to the island should be designed to encourage opposition to the Castro regime. This decision by the U.S. government to support opposition to the revolution by all means had a profound and lasting impact on all aspects of Cuban society for a long time to come. Among other things, it increased the political connotations of education in Cuba. By beginning to subordinate all policies to this goal of opposition, the U.S. government contributed significantly to the early reconfiguration of Cuba's civil society and the transformation of political culture in Cuba. From the Cuban government's point of view, in the context of increasingly violent attacks from inside and outside the island, education became another bulwark from which to defend the revolution in mid-1960: *Estudio, Trabajo, Fusil*—"Study, Work, Rifle"—was made an official slogan.

Chapter 4 describes how initial openness was restricted again in the context of rising violence and deteriorating relations with the United States during the summer of 1960. New criteria for the revision of textbooks were introduced. The United States ceased to be a model for Cuban schools and pedagogues and began to be perceived very critically by the nation's pedagogues and politicians. This new reality began to be reflected in its teaching materials and became a matter of serious concern in Washington, as classified documents from U.S. diplomats reveal. From 1961 on, and especially after the U.S.-sponsored invasion in April of that year, the United States became an enemy. Emigration and exile, especially of the educated class, further complicated Cuba's educational landscape: Private schools lost their constituency and became sites of an important ideological and social struggle during 1960–61. This struggle was an expression of the broader sociopolitical transformation within Cuban society. On the other side, the exodus of the educated class facilitated the integration of newly trained teachers and a revolutionary intelligentsia that would be more loyal to the new government. In the third year of the Castro regime in 1961, education minister Hart began to travel extensively to socialist countries and to receive delegations and advisors from the communist world. But the periodization in this thesis makes clear that Soviet influence followed the nationalization of private schools and did not precede or encourage it.

The fifth and final chapter, on nationalization, discusses the ways in which the violent circumstances of 1960–61 contributed decisively to the government's decision to expropriate Cuba's significant private schools in May 1961. It shows that no prior blueprint for their nationalization existed. I suggest that the nationalizations between 1959 and 1962 have to be analyzed in their specific historic context. Traditions of expropriations for national development projects had existed in Cuba since the U.S. military occupation in 1900. Since 1940, even Cuba's communists had limited their calls to simply an increase in Cuban ownership of the national economy, not expropriations, in order spur economic growth. This was far from a demand for a state monopoly on all economic and social activities. Archival documents reveal that in 1960, Cuban communists actually criticized the government's approach of widespread state interventions and expropriations.

More recent debates by Cuban communist leaders Fidel and Raúl Castro indicate a revision of the historically fateful decision to render all public services state-run and -owned. A revival of private educational activities in Cuba since 1990, and their partial legalization since 2010 in a new geopolitical context, encourage the rethinking of the relationship between the state and private sector to provide basic services such as education in sufficient quality and quantity. My study historicizes and contextualizes the political dynamics between 1959 and 1962 that transformed Cuba's educational landscape for decades. In 1992, the Soviet Union collapsed. That year, Cuba modified its atheistic constitution and redefined its relation with the Catholic church; since 2011, an ongoing process of "updating Cuba's model" has encouraged the rethinking of socialism in Cuba; and in 2015, the United States reestablished diplomatic relations with the socialist republic. Never since 1959 has history seemed as open as it became in 2015.

PERIODICALS REFERENCED:

Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science
Avance (newspaper)
Bohemia (weekly magazine)
Boletín Oficial (Universidad de la Habana)
[La] Correspondencia (newspaper)
Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos (journal)
Diario de la Marina (newspaper)
Ecos de Bélen: Revista del Colegio de Bélen, curso 1959–1960
Educación (journal)
Gaceta Oficial (official government serial)
Granma (official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee)
Hoy (newspaper)
Información, La Habana (newspaper)
Life magazine
[El] Magisterio de Cuba: Organo oficial (newspaper)
[El] Mundo (newspaper)
Noticias de Hoy (newspaper)
Otro Lunes: Revista hispanoamericana de cultura
Pedagogo: Órgano oficial del Colegio Nacional de Pedagogos (journal)
Prensa Libre (newspaper)
[La] Quincena (newspaper)
Reuters (news)
Revista Bimestre Cubana
Revista Lyceum (journal)
Revolución (newspaper)
Temas (journal)
Verde Olivo (journal)

ARCHIVES REFERENCED:

Cuba:
Archivo de la Campaña Nacional de Alfabetización

Archivo Central del Ministerio de Cultura
Fondo del Consejo Nacional de Cultura

Archivo Nacional, Havana:
Fondo Asociaciones
Fondo Secretaría de la Presidencia

Archivo de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana:
Fondo General del Ministerio de Cultura
Fondo Manuscritos Juan Marinello

Crónicas (Archivo Personal de Armando Hart)
Actas

Cienfuegos, Archivo Municipal
Fondo Escuelas Privadas

Fundación Antonio Nuñez Jiménez
Fondo Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (INRA)

Instituto de Historia de Cuba
Fondo Materiales de Enseñanza

Ministerio de Educación (MINED), Archivo
Fondo Resoluciones

Museo de la Alfabetización
Fondo Sección de Propaganda
Fondo Sección de Estadísticas

Universidad de la Habana
Fondo Expedientes
Fondo Comisión Depuradora

U.S.:
Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, Miami, FL:
Cruzada Educativa Collection
Cuban Pamphlet Collection

National Archives and Records Administration
Washington, DC:

General Records, Department of State, Record Group 59

General Records, Office of Inter-American Affairs, Record Group 229

General Records, U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948–1961
Record Group 469

President's Office Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts
Papers of Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General Papers

U.S. Dept. of State, Confidential U.S. State Dept. Central Files, Cuba, 1960–January 1963

Germany:
Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der Parteien und Massenorganisationen (SAPMO) (Foundation Archives of Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives)
Ministry for Education Collection
Ministry for Foreign Relations Collection
Politburo Collection

Cuba:
Cuba. Censo de 1953, Tabla 34, Instituto de Demografía y Censos. *Censo de población y viviendas, 1981: La población cubana en 1953 y 1981; Reprocesamiento del censo de 1953 según la actual división político-administrativa aprobada en 1976 y su comparación con el censo de 1981*. Havana: Comité Estatal de Estadísticas Instituto de Demografía y Censos, 1984.

———. Cívico-militares, Patronato administrativo de las escuelas rurales. "Memoria Anual." Havana, 1938, p. v.

———. *Colección legislativa de la isla de Cuba: Recopilación de todas las disposiciones publicadas en la 'Gaceta de la Habana,' Año 1902*. Vol. 1. Havana: Establecimiento Tipográfico Teniente Rey 23, 1905.

———. Convención Constituyente 1900–1901. *Constitución de la República de Cuba*. Havana: Impr. de Rambla y Bouza, 1901.

———. *Delegación del Gobierno en el Capitolio Nacional.* 12 vols. Havana: Sección de Impresión del Capitolio Nacional, 1959.

———. Departamento de Cultura del Ejercito Rebelde. Ejercito Rebelde, ed. *Curso de orientación revolucionaria*. Havana: 1959.

———. *Diario de sesiones de la convención constituyente* (1940). Vol. 2, no. 45. *Sesión 45, 22.5.1940*. 22 May 1940.

———. Dirección General del Censo, Junta Nacional del Censo. *Censo de 1943* (Havana: P. Fernández y Cía. S. en C. Impresores, 1945), p. 1112.

———. *Folletos de divulgación legislativa. Proclamas y leyes del gobierno provisional de la revolución.* Various volumes, as cited in notes. Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959–1961.

———. Instituto de Demografía y Censos. *Censo de población y viviendas, 1981: La población cubana en 1953 y 1981: Reprocesamiento del censo de 1953 según la actual división político-administrativa aprobada en 1976 y su comparación con el censo de 1981.* Havana: Comité Estatal de Estadísticas, Instituto de Demografía y Censos, 1984.

———. Ministerio de Defensa. Departamento de Asistencia Técnica, Material y Cultural al Campesino. (Soler Acosta, María Luisa.) *Aprendo a leer y escribir: Ensayo para el aprendizaje de lectura–escritura para los adultos.* Havana: Sección de Cultura, Ediciones y Publicidad, 1959.

———. Ministerio de Educación (MINED), ed. (Raúl Ferrer). "Ley de nacionalización de la enseñanza." In *Alfabetización, nacionalización de la enseñanza*. Realizaciones de la Revolución. Havana 1961, pp. 47–71.

———. MINED, ed. (Armando Hart Dávalos and Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado). *Mensaje educacional al pueblo de Cuba*. Havana: Departamento de Relaciones Públicas del Ministerio de Educación, 1960.

———. MINED. Junta de Superintendentes de Escuelas de Cuba. *Plan y cursos de estudios para las escuelas primarias elementales urbanas*. Havana: P. Fernández y Cia., 1944.

Cuba. Ministerio de Educación del Gobierno Revolucionario. Dirección de Economía. *Plan de actividades educativas*. Havana 1964.

———. Ministerio de Hacienda, Dirección General de Estadística. *Anuario estadístico de Cuba 1957*. Havana 1958.

———. Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, *Manual de capacitación cívica*. Havana: Departamento de Instrucción, 1960.

———. Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Negociado de Cuentas y Bienes, Expropriación Forzosa. *Compra directa o arendamiento de bienes inmuebles: Legislación, instrucciones y reglas*. Havana: Imprenta y Papelería de Rambla, Bouza y C., 1921.

———. Ministerio de Obras Públicas. *Expropriaciones e indemnizaciones*. Havana 1947.

———. Oficina Nacional de los Censos Demográfico y Electoral, *Cifras preliminares obtenidas en los censos de población, electoral y de viviendas de 1953*. Havana: Imp. y Alm. de Papel "La Habañera," 1954.

———. Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas*. Estadística, Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 1957.*

———. Patronato administrativo de las escuelas rurales cívico-militares. "Memoria Anual." Havana,1938.

———. Secretaría de Instrucción Pública. *Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Island of Cuba*. Vol. 1900–. [Havana] n.p., 1902.

U.S.:
———. U.S. Bureau of Foreign Commerce, American Republics Division. *Investment in Cuba: Basic Information for United States Businessmen*. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign Commerce, 1956.

———. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Richard Helms). "Counter-Revolutionary Handbook (10 October 1962) Index of Leading Personalities and Organizations." JFK Presidential Library, Papers of Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General Papers.

———. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign Commerce, American Republics Division. *Investment in Cuba: Basic Information for United States Businessmen*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Foreign Commerce, 1956.

———. Dept. of State. Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files. Cuba, 1950–1954, 1955–59, 1960–January 1963) Internal Affairs. Various files, as cited in notes.

———. "Preliminary Formulations of the Alliance for Progress," *The Department of State Bulletin* 44, no. 1136 (1961).

———. *Events in United States–Cuban Relations: A Chronology, 1957–1963*. Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1963.

U.S. Dept. of State (continued), *FRUS (Foreign Relations of the United States)* series. Various records, as cited in notes, from *FRUS 1958–1960* and *FRUS 1961–63*.

U.S. Office of Education (Rolland G. Paulston). *The Educational System of Cuba*, *Education around the World* series. [Washington, DC]: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1976.

———. "Report of the Public Schools of the Island of Cuba." In *Annual Report of Major General Leonard Wood, U.S.V., Commanding Division of Cuba*. Havana, 1901.

UNESCO:

UNESCO. *World Survey of Education*. Paris: UNESCO, 1955.

———. *La situacion educativa en America latina: La ensenanza primaria; Estado, problemas, perspectivas*. (1960).

———. *Métodos y medios utilizados en Cuba para la supresión del analfabetismo.* Havana: Editora Pedagógico 1965.

———. Raymond F. Lyons, ed. *Los problemas y la estrategia del planeamiento de la educación: La experiencia de América Latina*. Liège: UNESCO, El Instituto Internacional de Planeamiento de la Educación, 1965.

———. Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Student Achievement in Latin America and the Caribbean Results of the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE)*. Santiago de Chile, 2008.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF GENERAL (NONGOVERNMENTAL) DOCUMENTS

26th of July Movement. "Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement." In *Cuba in Revolution*. Ed. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdés. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972.

———. the *Sierra Maestro Manifesto.* In Castro, Fidel, Rolando E. Bonachea, and Nelson P. Valdés, *Revolutionary Struggle; Selected Works of Fidel Castro* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), p. 343–48.

Aguiar Rodríguez, Raúl. *El bonchismo y el gangsterismo en Cuba*. *Política* series. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2000.

Aguirre, Mirta. "La edad de oro y las ideas martianas sobre educación infantil." *Revista Lyceum* 9, nos. 33–34 (February–May 1953): 55.

Aguayo, Alfredo Miguel. *Didáctica de la escuela nueva*. 2nd ed., corrected and augmented.Havana: Cultural S.A., 1937.

———. *La democracia y su defensa por la educación* (Havana: Cultural, 1941).

Almendros Ibáñez, Herminio. *La inspección escolar: Exposición crítica de su proceso en Cuba y sugestiones para una readaptación posible* (Santiago de Cuba: Universidad de Oriente, Departamento de Extensión y Relaciones Culturales, 1952).

Almodóvar Muñoz, Carmen, and Olga Cabrera. *Las luchas estudiantiles universitarias, 1923–1934*. *Nuestra Historia* series. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975.

Anderson, Jon Lee. *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*. 1st ed. New York: Grove Press, 1997.

Antuña, Vicentina. "El Lyceum." *Revista Lyceum* 11, no. 37 (February 1954).

Armas, Ramón de, Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, and Ana Cairo Ballester. *Historia de la Universidad de la Habana*. In *Historia de Cuba*. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1984.

Baker, James D. *Ruston: From Dreams to Reality.* Ruston-Baker Educational Institution. [Miami] N.p. 2007.

Baklanoff, Eric N. *Expropriation of U.S. Investments in Cuba, Mexico, and Chile*. *Praeger Special Studies in International Economics and Development* series. New York: Praeger, 1975.

Batista y Zaldívar, Fulgencio. *Piedras y leyes*, 1st ed. Mexico: Ediciones Botas, 1961.

Bernal del Riesgo, Alfonso. *Cuestiones futuras de la enseñanza cubana*. Havana: Editorial selecta, 1944.

Blas Roca, *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba*, Corrected ed. Havana: Ediciones Populares, 1961.

Blum, Denise F. *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen*, 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.

Bonachea, Ramón L., and Marta San Martín. *The Cuban Insurrection, 1952–1959*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1974.

Bonachea, Rolando E., and Nelson P. Valdés. *Cuba in Revolution*. Garden City, NY; Anchor Books, 1972.

Boughton, Bob, and Deborah Durnan. "Cuba's *Yo Sí Puedo*: A Global Literacy Movement." *Postcolonial Directions in Education* 3, no. 2 (2014).

Bowles, Samuel. "Cuban Education and the Revolutionary Ideology." *Harvard Educational Review* 41, no. 4 (1971).

Bruns, Barbara, and Javier Luque. *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2014.

Buch Rodríguez, Luis María, and Reinaldo Suárez Suárez. *Otros pasos del gobierno revolucionario cubano: El fin de la luna de miel*. *Política* series. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2002.

Buell, Raymond Leslie, and Foreign Policy Association. *Problems of the New Cuba; Report of the Commission on Cuban Affairs*. Foreign Policy Association. Commission on Cuban Affairs. New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1935.

Bunck, Julie Marie. *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

Cabrera Viera, Violeta. *Estudio sociologico comparativo entre la escuela nacional y la privada*. Villanueva: Universidad Católica de Santo Tomas de Villanueva, 1960.

Calderío, Francisco (Blas Roca). *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba* (Havana: Editorial "Páginas" 1943.

———. *Los fundamentos del socialismo en Cuba*. Revised ed. [Havana]: 1961.

Carnoy, Martin, Jorge Wertheim, and World Bank. *Cuba: Economic Change and Education Reform 1955–1974*. World Bank Staff Working Paper no. 317. Washington, DC: World Bank, 1979.

Carnoy, Martin, Amber K. Gove, and Jeffery H. Marshall. *Cuba's Academic Advantage: Why Students in Cuba Do Better in School*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Carr, Barry. "Mill Occupations and Soviets: The Mobilisation of Sugar Workers in Cuba 1917–1933." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996): 9–10.

Carreras Varona, Eloisa. *Armando Hart Dávalos: Un revolucionario cubano; Apuntes para un esbozo biográfico*, *vol. 1 (1930–1965)*. Mexico, DF: Plaza y Valdés S.A. de C.V., 2008.

Casavantes Bradford, Anita. *The Revolution Is for the Children: The Politics of Childhood in Havana and Miami, 1959–1962*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Castro Ruz, Fidel Alejandro. "Carta a Srta. Augustina Castro, septiembre 25 de 1953." 1953.

———. "Why We Fight." *Coronet* (February 1958): 84–85.

———. "Discursos." All citations of Fidel Castro's speeches, unless otherwise noted, are taken from this website: http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/

———. "Discurso de Fidel Castro en la Academia de Ciencias de la Habana, 15 Enero 1960, Vigésimo Aniversario de la fundación de la Sociedad Espelológica de Cuba." In Núñez Jiménez, *Así es mi país: Geografía de Cuba para los niños*, p. vii.

———. *History Will Absolve Me*. Havana: Impreso por Cooperativa Obrera de Publicidad, 1960.

———. *La historia me absolverá: Autodefensa de Fidel Castro ante el tribunal de urgencia de Santiago de Cuba el 16 de octubre de 1953*. *Ediciones Populares* series. Havana: Impr. Nacional de Cuba, 1961.

——— and Frei Betto. *Fidel and Religion: Castro Talks on Revolution and Religion with Frei Betto*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

———, Rolando E. Bonachea, and Nelson P. Valdés. *Revolutionary Struggle: Selected Works of Fidel Castro*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972.

——— and Instituto de Historia del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba. *El pensamiento de Fidel Castro: Selección Temática*. Havana: Editorial Política, 1983.

——— and Ignacio Ramonet. *Cien horas con Fidel*. 3rd ed., including various of Ramonet's questions for the French edition. Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2006.

——— and Mario José Torres de Diego. *Fidel y el deporte: Selección de pensamientos 1959–2006*. Havana: Editorial Deportes, 2006.

———, and Katiuska Blanco. *La victoria estratégica*. Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2010.

Céspedes, Miguel A. *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre: Trabajos, acuerdos y adhesiones de una campaña cívica y cultural*. Havana: Cárdenas y Compañia, 1941.

Chacón Nardi, Rafaela. "Cuba: Una e indivisible." *Pedagogo: Organo Oficial del Colegio Nacional de Pedagogos* 1. *Nueva Epoca*, no. 1 (1959).

Chase, Michelle. "The Trials: Violence and Justice in the Aftermath of the Cuban Revolution." In Grandin and Joseph. *A Century of Revolution*, pp. 163–99.

———. *Revolution within the Revolution: Women and Gender Politics in Cuba, 1952–1962*. *Envisioning Cuba* series. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Clark, Juan M. "The Exodus from Revolutionary Cuba (1959–1974): A Sociological Analysis." PhD diss., University of Florida. Gainesville, FL 1975.

CMQ-TV. "Hart ante la Prensa." (5 March 1959).

Colegio Baldor. "Memoria Curso 1956–57." Ed. Colegio Baldor. Havana 1957.

Comité de Estudios para la Reforma Educacional en Cuba. *La educación en Cuba: Pasado, presente y futuro*. 1st ed. United States: Endowment for Cuban American Studies, 1993.

Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba. *La voz de la iglesia en Cuba*. Mexico, DF: Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, A.C., 1995.

Cordoví Núñez, Yoel. *Magisterio y nacionalismo en las escuelas públicas de Cuba (1899–1920)*. *Historia* series. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2012.

Corimina de Hernández, María. "La nacionalización de la enseñanza en Cuba." *Revista bimestre cubana* 37 (1936).

Cuesta, Leonel A. de. "Evocación de Villanueva." In *Otro lunes: Revista hispanoamericana de cultura* 5, no. 20. September 2011.

Cushion, Steve. *A Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution: How the Working Class Shaped the Guerrillas' Victory*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016.

Díaz, Evelio (Monsignor). "La iglesia Católica y la nueva Cuba" (31 May 1959). in Fernández, *Religión y revolución en Cuba.*

Díaz Castañón, María del Pilar. *Perfiles de la nación*. Vol. 2 of 2 vols. *Pensar en Cuba* series. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2004.

Dolz y Arango, María Luisa. *La liberación de la mujer cubana por la educación: Homenaje de la ciudad de la Habana en el centenario de su nacimiento, 1854 de octubre—1954* (Havana: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad, 1955).

Domínguez, Jorge I. "Past the Poof Moment: Cuba's Future Political Parties" (unpublished manuscript made available to the author, Cambridge, MA).

———. *Cuba: Order and Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978.

———. "Cuba since 1959." In *Cuba: A Short History*. Ed. Leslie Bethell. Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Echegoyen de Cañizares, Ana, and Calixto Suárez Gómez. *La unidad de trabajo y el programa: Una guía para la aplicación de los cursos de estudios*. Havana: Cultural, 1945.

Eckstein, Susan. *The Immigrant Divide: How Cuban Americans Changed the U.S. and Their Homeland*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Economic and Technical Mission to Cuba. *Report on Cuba: Findings and Recommendations of an Economic and Technical Mission*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951.

Elliston, Jon. *Psywar on Cuba: The Declassified History of U.S. Anti-Castro Propaganda, 40 Years of the Cuban Revolution; 1959–99*. Melbourne, Australia and New York: Ocean Press, 1999.

Encinosa, Enrique G. *Cuba en guerra: Historia de la oposición anti-Castrista 1959–1993*. Miami, FL.: Endowment for Cuban American Studies, 1994.

Expósito Rodriguez, Baldomero, Lidia Dávila Montes, and Alejandrino Borroto Mora. *Apuntes del movimiento de los trabajadores de la educación 1899–1961*. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1985.

Fagen, Richard R. *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba*. *Stanford Studies in Comparative Politics* series, no. 2. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969.

Farber, Samuel. *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered*. *Envisioning Cuba* series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Feinsilver, Julie M. "Fifty Years of Medical Diplomacy from Idealism to Pragmatism." *Cuban Studies* 41 (2010).

Fernández, Manuel. *Religión y revolución en Cuba: Veinticinco años de lucha ateísta*. *Colección Realidades*. Miami: Saeta Ediciones, 1984.

Fernández Ceballos, Raúl, et al. *Neue Kirche in Neuer Welt: Studien zum kubanischen Protestantismus* (Berlin: Union-Verlag, 1968).

Fernández Concheso, Aurelio. *El problema educacional cubano*. Habana: Ediciones del Instituto Cívico Militar, 1956.

Fernández Soneira, Teresa. *Cuba: Historia de la educación católica*, 1582–1961. *Colección Félix Varela*, 2. Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997.

Figueredo Cabrera, Katia. “La polemica educacional de los años 40 en Cuba.” *Temas*, no. 56 (2008): 190.

Figueroa Esteva, Max, et al. *The Basic Secondary School in the Country: An Educational Innovation in Cuba*. *Experiments and Innovations in Education* series, no. 7. Paris: UNESCO Press, 1974.

Fitchen, Edward Douglass. “Alexis Everett Frye and the Organization of Cuban Education, 1899–1901.” PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1970.

Foreign Policy Association. *Problems of the New Cuba: Report of the Commission on Cuban Affairs*. New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1935.

Fowler, Will, ed. *Ideologues and Ideologies in Latin America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Franklin, Jane. *Cuba and the United States: A Chronological History*. Melbourne, Australia and New York: Ocean Press, 1997.

Fuente, Alejandro de la. *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*. In *Envisioning Cuba* series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Fursenko, A.V., and Timothy J. Naftali. *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

García, María Cristina. *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959–1994*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.

García González, Isabel. *Contribución del movimiento educacional de la escuela privada de primer al segunda enseñanza en el período de 1790 a 1868 al desarrollo de la teoría y la práctica pedagógica cubana*. PhD diss. in pedagogical science, Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique José Varona. Havana 2005.

García Tudurí, Mercedes. *La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia.* Ed. Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez [et al.]. Vol. 10, pp. 55–147. In *Historia de la Nación Cubana*. 10 vols. Havana: Editorial Historia de la Nación Cubana, 1952.

———, Francisco Domenech, Manuel de Zayas, et al. *Civica. Por profesores de la asignatura en el instituto de segunda enseñanza de la Habana*. (Havana: Casa Lorié, 1947).

Gaspe Álvarez, Latvia. *La colonia en los cimientos de la república (1899–1908)*. *Historia* series. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2009.

Gleijeses, Piero. *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991*. *New Cold War History* series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Gómez Carbonell, María. “Cruzada Educativa, Inc.: Reglas generales a que deberá ceñirse la tarea encomendada por el ejecutivo central de ‘Cruzada educativa cubana’ a sus delegaciones en America.” University of Miami. Miami: 1964.

Grandin, Greg, and G.M. Joseph. *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America’s Long Cold War*. American Encounters/Global Interactions. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

Grupo Cubano de Investigaciones Económicas, ed. *Un estudio sobre Cuba: Colonia, república, experimento socialista; Estructura económica, desarrollo institucional, socialismo y regresión*. Coral Gables, FL; University of Miami Press, 1963.

Guerra, Lillian. *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971*. *Envisioning Cuba* series. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Guerra y Sánchez, Ramiro. *Fundación del sistema de escuelas públicas de Cuba 1900–1901*. Havana: Editorial Lex, 1954.

———. *Rehabilitación de la escuela pública: Un problema vital de Cuba en 1954*. Havana: Impresores P. Fernandez y Cia, 1954.

———. *El General Leonardo Wood y la instruccion publica en Cuba*. Havana: 1959.

Gutierrez de la Concha y de Irigoyen, José. *Habana: Memorias sobre el estado político, gobierno y administración de la isla de Cuba* (Madrid: J. Trujillo, 1853).

Gutierrez Serrano, Raúl. "Survey nacional: El pueblo cubano opina sobre el gobierno de la revolución." *Bohemia* 51, no. 8 (22 February 1959): 76–81, 105.

Hickling-Hudson, Anne, Jorge Corona Gonzalez, and Rosemary A. Preston. *The Capacity to Share: A Study of Cuba's International Cooperation in Educational Development*. *Postcolonial Studies in Education* series. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Horowitz, Irving Louis, and Jaime Suchlicki. *Cuban Communism*, 10th ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001.

Hulme, Peter. *Cuba's Wild East: A Literary Geography of Oriente*, American Tropics (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

Iglesias Utset, Marial. *A Cultural History of Cuba during the U.S. Occupation, 1898–1902*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Institute for International Social Research and Lloyd A. Free. *Attitudes of the Cuban People toward the Castro Regime in the Late Spring of 1960*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979.

International Institute for Educational Planning. *Los problemas y la estrategia del planeamiento de la educación: La experiencia de América latina*. Paris: UNESCO, 1965.

Jiménez, Guillermo. *Los propietarios de Cuba 1958*. *Economía* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2006).

Johnston, Laurie Ann. "Cuban nationalism and responses to private education in Cuba, 1902–1958." In Fowler, *Ideologues and Ideologies in Latin America* (1997).

———. "Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre: Themes in the history of primary and secondary education in Cuba, 1899–1958." PhD diss., University College London. London 1997.

Jolly, Richard. “Education.” In *Cuba, the Economic and Social Revolution*, ed. Dudley Seers. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1964.

Kapcia, Antoni. “Does Cuba Fit Yet or Is It Still ‘Exceptional’?” *Journal of Latin American Studies (JLAS)* 40, no. 4 (2008): 627–50.

Kelly, William Thomas. “The Confluence of Pedagogy and Colonial Ideology: Philanthropic Nation-Building and the Cuban Educational Association, 1899–1901.” Unpublished M.A. thesis in social sciences, University of Chicago. Chicago 2011.

Kolesnikov, N.S. *Cuba: Educación popular y preparación de los cuadros nacionales, 1959–1982*. Moscow: Editorial Progreso, 1983.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Children of the Revolution: A Yankee Teacher in the Cuban Schools.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1978.

Kumaraswami, Par, Antoni Kapcia, and Meesha Nehru. *Literary Culture in Cuba: Revolution, Nation-Building and the Book*. Manchester, England and New York: Manchester University Press, 2012.

Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación. *Primer estudio internacional comparativo sobre lenguaje, matemática y factores asociados en tercero y cuarto grado*. Santiago de Chile: Andros Ltda., 1998.

LeoGrande, William M., and Peter Kornbluh. *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Llerena, Mario. *The Unsuspected Revolution: The Birth and Rise of Castroism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Lockwood, Lee. *Castro’s Cuba, Cuba’s Fidel: An American Journalist’s Inside Look at Today’s Cuba in Text and Picture*. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

Lutjens, Sheryl L. *The State, Bureaucracy, and the Cuban Schools: Power and Participation*, Latin American Perspectives Series; No. 17. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

———. “Education and the Cuban Revolution: A Selected Bibliography.” *Comparative Education Review* 42, no. 2 (1998).

Mañach, Jorge. “Significación del centenario martiano.” *Revista Lyceum,* vol. 9, no. 33–34, February–May 1953.

Manke, Albert. “Die Verteidigung der kubanischen Revolution unter Castro: Ursprünge, Gründung, Organisation und Funktion der *Milicias nacionales revolucionarias*, 1959–1961.” PhD thesis, Iberian and Latin American History, University of Cologne, 2011.

———. *El pueblo cubano en armas: Die Revolutionären Nationalmilizen und die Verteidigung der kubanischen Revolution von 1959*. *Historamericana* 35 (Stuttgart: Heinz, 2014).

Marrero, Leví. *Geografía de Cuba*, 3rd ed. Havana: Editorial Selecta O’Reilly, 1957.

Martí, José, Félix Lizaso, and Cuba, Dirección de Cultura. *Educación: Publicaciones de la secretaría de educación, dirección de cultura*. *Cuadernos de Cultura* 3. Havana: Talleres de Cultural S.A., 1935.

Martínez, Lucía and Rafael. "La escuela privada en Las Tunas de 1935–1958." Thesis for the scientific degree of Master of Education, Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique José Varona. Las Tunas, 1999.

Martínez y Díaz, José F. *Historia de la educación pública en Cuba desde el descubrimiento hasta nuestros días y causas de su fracaso*. Pinar del Río: Imprenta La Casa Villalba, 1943.

Martínez y Echemendia, Luciano R., and Marvin Summers Pittman. *Dictamen sobre el informe emitido por el Professor Marvin S. Pittman acerca del estado de la educación en Cuba*. Havana: Tipos. Molina y cía., 1933.

Massón Sena, Caridad. *La iglesia presbiteriana de Cuba: Una contextualización de la fe (1959–1968)*. Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana "Juan Marinello." Havana: 2004.

Matos, Huber. *Cómo llegó la noche. Memorias* series. 1st ed., *Tiempo de memoria* 19. Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2002.

McGuigan, Michael Patrick. "Fulgencio Batista's Economic Policies, 1952–58." PhD diss. in history, University of Miami, 2012.

McManus, Jane. *Cuba's Island of Dreams: Voices from the Isle of Pines and Youth*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000.

McPherson, Alan L. *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Mesa-Lago, Carmelo. "Availability and Reliability of Stastistics in Socialist Cuba (Part One)." *Latin American Research Review* 4, no. 1 (1969).

Meyer, Jean A. *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People between Church and State, 1926–1929*. *Cambridge Latin American Studies*, no. 24. Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Miranda Bravo, Olga. *Las nacionalizaciones cubanas, los tribunales norteamericanos y la enmienda Hickenlooper.* Havana: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1971.

Montori, Arturo. "Reglamentación de las escuelas privadas." *Cuba Contemporánea* 14, no. 3 (1917).

Mosquera, Sarahy González. "Las Leyes Revolucionarias: Legalidad *Versus* Subversión?" In *Éditos inéditos: Documentos olvidados de la historia de Cuba*. Ed. María del Pilar Díaz Castañón. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2005.

Mujal-León, Eusebio, and University of Miami, Research Institute for Cuban Studies. *The Cuban University under the Revolution*. Coral Gables, FL: Institute of Interamerican Studies, Graduate School of International Studies, 1988.

Naranjo Orovio, Consuelo. *Cuba, Otro escenario de lucha: La guerra civil y el exilio republicano español. Colección tierra nueva e cielo nuevo*, 24. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Centro de Estudios Históricos Departamento de Historia de América, 1988.

Nelson, Lowry. *Rural Cuba*. Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1950.

———. *Cuba: The Measure of a Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972.

Noyola, Juan F. *La economía cubana en los primeros años de la revolución y otros ensayos*, 1st ed., *Economía y demografía* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1978).

Núñez Jiménez, Antonio. *Geografía de Cuba (adaptada al nuevo programa revolucionario de bachillerato)*, 2nd ed. Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959.

———. *La liberación de las islas*. Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959.

———. "El Pico Turquino," *INRA* 1, no. 1 (1960): 10–23.

———. *Así es mi país: Geografía de Cuba para los niños*. 1st ed.. Havana: Impr. Nacional de Cuba, 1961.

———. *Cuba con la mochila al hombro*. Ediciones Unión: Reportajes. Havana: Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 1963.

———. *En marcha con Fidel—1960*. Vol. 47, *Cuba: La naturaleza y el hombre*. Havana: Fundación de la Naturaleza y el Hombre 1998.

Oberg, Larry R. *Human Services in Postrevolutionary Cuba: An Annotated International Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984.

Ortiz Fernández, Fernando. *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre*. [Havana] n.p.: c. 1941.

Otero Masdeu, Lisandro, et al. *Código escolar*. 2nd ed. Havana: Talleres Tipográficos de Carasa y Ca., S. en C., 1941.

Pardo Llada, José. "Pardo Llada—micrófono." *Diario Nacional* (21 January 1955): 1.

Partido del Pueblo Cubano (Ortodóxos). "Program doctrinal del partido Ortodóxo" (1947). In *Partido del Pueblo Cubano (Ortodóxos), Doctrina del Partido Ortodóxo: Independencia económica, libertad política, justicia social*. Havana: P. Fernández [1951?].

Pazos, Felipe. *Influencia de la escuela de ciencias económicas en el desarrollo económico del país: Discurso de apertura del año académico 1955–1956*. Santiago de Cuba: Universidad de Oriente, 1955.

Pérez, Emma. *La política educacional del Dr. Grau San Martín* (Havana: Impresores: Ucar García, 1948).

Pérez, Lisandro. "The Political Contexts of Cuban Population Censuses, 1899–1981." *Latin American Research Review* 19, no. 2 (1984).

Pérez, Louis A. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* (1999). *H. Eugene and Lillian Youngs Lehman* series. Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1999.

———. *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 3rd ed. *The United States and the Americas* series. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

———. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. *Latin American Histories Index*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

———. *The Structure of Cuban History: Meanings and Purpose of the Past*. Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 2013.

Pérez Cruz, Felipe. *La alfabetización en Cuba: Lectura histórica para pensar el presente*. *Historia* series. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2001.

Pérez Serrantes, Enrique. "Roma o Moscú." In *La voz de la Iglesia en Cuba: 100 documentos episcopales*, ed. Catholic Church, Conferencia Episcopal Cubana, Secretariado General. Mexico, D.F.: Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, 1995.

Pérez-Stable, Marifeli. *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*. 3rd ed. New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Phillips, David Atlee. *The Night Watch*, 1st ed. New York: Atheneum, 1977.

Portell-Vilá, Herminio. *Historia de Cuba en sus relaciones con los Estados Unidos y España*. Vol. 3. 1st ed. Biblioteca de Historia, Filosofía y Sociología. Havana: J. Montero, 1938.

Portuondo, Fernando. *Historia de Cuba*, 6th ed. (Havana: Editorial Minerva, 1957).

Portuondo Linares, Serafín. *Los independientes de color: Historia del partido independiente de color*. 2nd. ed., corrected and improved. Havana: Editorial Caminos, 2002.

Primelles, León. *Crónica cubana, 1919–1922: Menocal y la Liga Nacional* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1957)

Provenzo, Eugene F., Jr., and Concepción García. "Exiled Teachers and the Cuban Revolution/*Maestros exilados y la revolución cubana*." *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 6.

Rafael Rodríguez, Carlos. *Cuba en el tránsito al socialismo, 1959–1963; Lenin y la cuestión colonial*. 1st ed. *Sociología y política*. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1978.

Ramos, Marcos Antonio. *Panorama del protestantismo en Cuba: La presencia de los protestantes o evangélicos en la historia de Cuba desde la colonización española hasta la revolución*. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Caribe, 1986, pp. 495–507.

Reimers, Fernando. "Education and Social Progress." Vol. 2 in *The Cambridge Economic History* of *Latin America.* Eds. V. Bulmer Thomas, J. Coatsworth, and R. Cortés Conde. Cambridge, England and New York, 2006.

Rivero, Yeidy M. *Broadcasting Modernity: Cuban Commercial Television, 1950–1960*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2015.

Roberts, C. Paul, Mukhtar Hamour, and University of California Los Angeles, Latin American Center. *Cuba 1968*: *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*. *Supplement* 1. Latin American Center University of California. Los Angeles 1970.

Roig de Leuchsenring, Emilio. *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre: Trabajos, acuerdos y adhesiones de una campaña cívica y cultural*. Havana: Cárdenas y Compañia, 1941.

Rojas, Rafael. "El joven Hart y el comunismo," *Libros del crepúsculo* (2014): http://www.librosdelcrepusculo.net/2014/11/el-joven-hart-y-el-comunismo.html

Roman Catholic Church, ed. "Divini Illius Magistri." Vatican, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1939.

Sánchez Rodríguez, Juan. "Breve historia del MINFAR." See website at http://www.cubadefensa.cu/?q=historia-minfar

Santos Tamayo, Asela de los, and Raúl Castro Ruz. *Con visión de futuro: Testimonio sobre la campaña educativa 1958*. Havana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1998.

Schoultz, Lars. *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Schroeder, Susan. *Cuba: A Handbook of Historical Statistics*. *A Reference Publication in International Historical Statistics*. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1982.

Schultz, Rainer. "On the Pedagogical Origins of a New Collective Memory." Unpublished conference paper, Yale University, International Conference: *The Revolution Remembered*, 3–4 October 2014.

Schultz, Theodore W. "Investment in Human Capital." In *Power and Ideology in Education*, ed. Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey. New York, 1977, pp. 313–25.

Smith, Lois M., and Alfred Padula. *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Smith, Wayne S. *The Closest of Enemies: A Personal and Diplomatic Account of U.S.–Cuban Relations since 1957*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.

Smorkaloff, Pamela María. *Readers and Writers in Cuba: A Social History of Print Culture, 1830s–1990s*. *Garland Reference Library of the Humanities*, 5, 1935. *Latin American Studies*, vol. 10 (New York: Garland Pub., 1997).

Solari, Aldo. "Secondary Education and the Development of Elites." In Seymour Martin Lipset and Aldo E. Solari, eds. *Elites in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Sosa, Enrique, and Alejandrina Penabad Félix. *Historia de la educación en Cuba*. 2nd ed., corrected and augmented. Publicaciones de la Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad. Havana: Ediciones Boloña: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 2001.

Sosa, Joel, Carmen Díaz, Aurea Verónica Rodríguez, and Carmen Rodríguez. "Las Nacionalizaciones: Acto de soberanía e indepencia, 102–126." *Cuadernos cubanos de historia*, no. 3 (2004).

Suárez Suárez, Reinaldo. "Articulación del primer gabinete revolucionario." In *1959: Una rebelión contra las oligarquías y los dogmas revolucionarios*. Panama City: Ruth Casa Editorial, 2009.

Suchlicki, Jaime. *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920–1968* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1969).

———. *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro and Beyond*. Washington, DC 2002.

Sweig, Julia, and American Council of Learned Societies. *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Thomas, Hugh. *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971).

Torreira Crespo, Ramón, and José Buajasán Marrawi. *Operación Peter Pan: Un caso de guerra psicológica contra Cuba*. Havana: Editorial Política, 2000.

Universidad Central de Las Villas, Escuela de Pedagogía. *La educación rural en Las Villas: Bases para la redacción de unos cursos de estudios*. *Nuevo plan de publicaciones*, 15. Santa Clara, Cuba: Departamento de Relaciones Culturales Escuela de Pedagogía, 1959.

Universidad de la Habana. *Boletin Oficial Universitario*. Issues as cited.

Universidad de Oriente (Santiago de Cuba), *Ley y estatutos de la Universidad de Oriente* (Santiago de Cuba: Departamento de relaciones culturales, 1950).

Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva (Edward James McCarthy). *Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva: Contribución a la historia de sus diez primeros años*. Havana 1956.

Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva. "Anuario." Ed. Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva. Havana 1958.

Uría, Ignacio. *Iglesia y revolución en Cuba*: *Ensayos*. *Ediciones Encuentro Historia*. Madrid: Encuentro Ediciones, 2011.

Valdés de la Paz, Osvaldo. *Guía para enseñar a leer, escribir y contar a los adultos.* Havana, 1944.

Valdespino, Andrés. "El exilio de los hermanos de La Salle." See the downloadable article: http://delasallealumni.org/nuestroseducadores/HermanosDelaSalle-Exilio.pdf

Vaughan, Mary K. *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

Vichot Aguirre, Benigno and Roberto T. "The Reliability of Cuba's Educational Statistics." *Comparative Education Review* 42, no. 2 (1998).

Vidal Rodríguez, José Antonio. "Los procesos nacionalizadores durante la revolución cubana según los testimonios de los inmigrantes gallegos en la isla: 1959–1968." *Anuario Americanista Europeo*, no. 3 (2005).

Vitier Guanche, Medardo. "La enseñanza y la cohesión cubana." In *Los mejores ensayistas cubanos*. Ed. Salvador Bueno. Havana: Organización Continental de los Festivales del Libro, 1959.

Wald, Karen. *Children of Che: Childcare and Education in Cuba*. Palo Alto, CA: Ramparts Press, 1978.

Wilson, Lester MacLean. *Summary of Legislation Concerning Public Control of Private Schools and the Teaching of Religion in Public Schools in the United States*. New York: American group Institute of Pacific relations, 1927.

Winsberg, Morton D. "Costs, Tariffs, Prices and Nationalization: The Rise and Decline of the American Grapefruit Industry on the Isle of Pines, Cuba." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 20, no. 5 (1961).

Wood, Leonard. "The Military Government of Cuba." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 21 (1903).