

modifying behavior patterns in the key 'private' areas of the color-class system."²²

Essentially, Castro's speeches reconfirmed two permanent features of his approach to race relations: a commitment to an integrationist stance steeped in white liberal paternalism and a firm refusal to allow the racial question to escape that framework. In other words, it was out of the question for Blacks themselves to define the content of their own oppression, or define the terms of their ethnic emancipation. David North seems to have grasped that situation when he wrote that "in those two speeches in the early months of 1959 Fidel Castro not only identified the aspirations of his movement in relation to domestic racial discrimination but also established the limits beyond which it could not go. Henceforth he referred to the color problem in his speeches only in passing and implying that, with the campaign to end discrimination in workplaces and social centers completed, there was little if anything that remained to be done."²³

In other words, the government was intent on banning discrimination based on race or color, while racism itself could remain a sort of discretionary ethical question. Implicit in this policy was that Cuba's new white leadership tacitly condoned white supremacy but frowned on racial segregation.

At no time between March 1959 and the Third Congress of the Cuban Communist party in February 1986, twenty-seven years later, did Castro or any of his top lieutenants attempt to open Cuba's racial Pandora's box again. Rather, from that point on, the Castro leadership would resist and even repress attempts by black dissenters to force the issue into the open.²⁴ When Fidel approached the racial question in 1959,²⁵ remarked a Haitian Communist, "his words were received enthusiastically. It would have befitted the situation to have pursued that theme further. . . . What made him come to a halt while in such a good position?"²⁶ An overview of Fidel Castro's racial attitudes before he came to power is in order to give even a tentative answer to this question.

3 CASTRO'S EARLY ATTITUDES ON RACE

Fought with a predominantly black army, as photographs from the period show, the 1895-1898 independence war against Spain was led by the intellectual radical wing of the nascent Hispanic Cuban middle class. Its symbolic chief was the brilliant nationalist, José Martí, but when the United States intervened in the war, power within the independence movement shifted to the most reactionary sectors of the white creole bourgeoisie. It was this class that inherited command of the neocolonial republic. When the nationalistic black middle class formed its own political party (Partido Independiente de Color, or PIC) and rose in revolt in May 1912, several thousand Afro-Cubans were massacred and lynched throughout the island in the highest blood-letting in centuries. A blanket of silence has covered that event ever since.

The radical wing of the Hispanic Cuban middle class was to reappear forcefully on the political scene as the intellectual vanguard of the aborted 1933 revolution. Antonio Guterres Holmes appeared then as the immediate successor to Martí's anti-imperialist position. And just as Martí had been, Guterres was killed fighting for the ideals of national independence and social reconstruction. Both Martí and Guterres had seen American imperialism as the chief enemy. Both were first-generation Hispanic Cubans.

Although quenched by then-Colonel Batista's successful political tactics in 1933, the revolution was rekindled in 1952 by Batista's second coup. Again, the Hispanic Cuban middle class found its jefe in a charismatic, nationalistic, first-generation Hispanic Cuban intellectual whose personal outlook, personality, and political style have been the basis of Cuban internal and foreign policy since 1959.

The Redeemer Complex

Just forty years after the abolition of slavery in Cuba, and fourteen years after the savage crushing in 1912 of the black insurrection led by the Partido Independiente de Color, Fidel Castro Ruz was born in the predominantly black and most populous Cuban province of