

the people, come into positions of leadership and nonetheless believe themselves capable of really identifying with the ordinary man."<sup>49</sup>

Until 1953, Castro had never experienced any sort of concrete relationship of intellectual, social, or racial equality with black Cubans either collectively or as individuals. After 1953, with his growing fame as the potential redeemer of Cuba's oppressed workers, peasants, and Blacks, people whose universe he had never even attempted to fathom, such an eventuality naturally became all the less likely. His approach to those sectors was therefore devoid of any concrete sense of equality, particularly as it concerned Black Cuba.

"To understand Fidel Castro's attitude to the racial question," Carlos Franqui said, "we must grasp something very important about his personality and outlook in general. Fidel has never dealt with anybody as an equal. He had always had subordinates. The peasants, workers, servants, women, and Blacks, who worked on his family's estate were not his equals. Fidel has always had subordinates whether growing up as a child in his finca [estate]; as a youth in the Jesuit schools, as an adult at the university, and as a political and military leader in the Sierra Maestra. Fidel Castro has never entertained relations of equality with the basic oppressed sectors of the society in which he grew up: Blacks, women, workers and peasants." (ibid.).

On the racial issue, Castro's position was easy to understand, Franqui believed. "He is not a discriminator on the basis of skin color. He simply does not grasp what being Black has meant to black people. Moreover, Fidel has never been in a position of concrete equality with Blacks, he has never dealt with any black person as an equal" (ibid.). Castro's attitude, Franqui asserted, was "a strictly paternalistic one. He does not understand the internal world of Blacks any more than he does that of women, peasants or workers. His perception of relations between Blacks and whites is profoundly paternalistic. Add to this his thoroughly Spanish outlook on all things, his Spanish orientation in matters of culture, and you will have a picture of Fidel Castro's peculiar approach to the racial question. All of this is embedded in his two major speeches on the racial issue in March 1959, the first announcing the end of discriminatory practices in recreational, educational, public and labor centers, and the second back pedaling on the wider issues of the racial problem, which is one of the most essential issues in Cuban history" (ibid.).

As a first-generation Hispanic Cuban who grew up in an exclusively white, Catholic and Hispanic social and psycho-cultural environ-

ment, Fidel Castro had never come to terms with, nor been influenced by Cuba's profound Africanity. At the time of Moncada and thereafter, Castro's attitude towards the racial question, it can be safely said, remained within the traditional framework of the assimilationist Latin variant of race relations and its heavy emphasis on "protective" benevolent paternalism. Nor could it be said that Castro experienced any more of a personal attachment to Cuba's popular culture after 1953 than he might have had before then. Both before and after Moncada, Castro's psycho-cultural world was exclusively steeped in the traditions and assumptions of the Catholic-Hispanic universe. There is no evidence to suggest that either before or after 1953 he cultivated an attachment to, or understanding of, the Afro-Cuban culture.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, as some analysts have shown, the chief spokesmen of middle-class nationalism in Cuba have been first-generation<sup>50</sup> white Cubans. Of all Cuban whites, first-generation Hispanic Cubans would seem to be the most attached to Euro-Mediterranean traditions, and the least influenced by the home-grown cultures of Cuba. One may reasonably expect such political spokesmen, regardless of their radicalism, to be the least likely to challenge, let alone reject, Cuba's official Euro-Hispanic power structure and profile.