CASTRO, THE BLACKS, AND AFRICA

Carlos Moore

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TO

Shawna
Kima
Josy
Mbasia
Marcia

Very little can be understood about Cuba until it is realized how ethnically African a country it is

Robin Blackburn, "Prologue to the Cuban Revolution"

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Carlos Moore's study of the race factor in Cuba's internal history and in the evolution of its foreign policy is a remarkable scholarly endeavor. This is one of the most significant books available on contemporary Cuba. It addresses a classic "non topic" in Cuban history: the race factor within Cuba. It examines a major theme of the past quarter century: Cuban policies toward Africa; and it assesses the significance of the race factor in the formation of those policies. Carlos Moore brings together an enormous amount of information not available anywhere else and explores themes rarely discussed with regard to Cuba, either in or out of that country. He argues his case vigorously.

The tone in this work is vigorous and at times harsh. Its judgments will be unpopular with many defenders and with many opponents of Cuba's revolutionary government. The former will dislike the truth that there is racism in Cuba today; the latter will dislike the truth that there has always been racism in Cuba. So the book will be profoundly unpopular among many Cubans who will deny that racism is a factor in Cuban history, and it will be intensely disliked both by the Cuban government and by many of its enemies who live outside of Cuba.

Moore's central theme is that racism is an inherent part of the history of Cuba, a history shared by the whites who have ruled Cuba before and since the revolutionary victory in 1959, a history for which Cubans both in and outside of Cuba are responsible. His argument suggests that a revolution was warranted in Cuba to address the racial factor, among others, but that the revolution which prevailed was not consistent with the historic past of domination that it has not done so. Instead, like all Cuban governments since independence, the current one acknowledges that racism was a problem under the rule of its predecessors, but not now.

This is not just a scholarly book, however. It is also an angry book by someone who has lived through many of the experiences that inform the work. At times, there are some harsh judgments about individuals, governments, and large groups of people. Readers need not share this anger or these judgments (although, of course, they may) in order to learn from this book. I personally have learned a great deal

from reading it and discussing it with the author. Although I differ both with its tone and with its substance in many places, I am convinced that no one has been so able to unmask this hidden tragedy in Cuban history as Carlos Moore: the denial of racism there and, consequently, the enormous difficulty in confronting it.

It has been a common scholarly and popular argument that slavery in Cuba was not as harsh as in the United States and that race relations in Cuba were easier after the emancipation of the slaves than in the United States. This book, to its great credit, is not interested in the comparative study of such evils. It focuses its full attention on the evil of racism in Cuba, and it shows in some detail that, on its own terms, it is evil enough. Four major themes run through the discussion. Moore gives various weights to them; in discussing his approach, my own agreements and disagreements with him will also surface.[1]

One major theme addresses a historical explanation. The race factor has been present in Cuba since the early days of the Spanish conquest and it remains so today. It shapes the way Cubans think about each other and the manner in which their governors have ruled. Nonetheless, Cuban governments and key elites have sought to deny the existence of racism and have behaved as if the race factor were generally inconsequential. The dominant ideology has been that there are no whites and no Blacks—only Cubans. I strongly agree with Moore that the race factor has been of decisive importance in Cuban history and that its workings led to a hierarchical system of subordination of Blacks. I also agree that a key to understanding the race factor in Cuba begins with focusing on the efforts of so many, especially those in power, to deny that it even exists. This pernicious paternalism has made confronting racism more difficult.

Unlike Moore, and unlike Cuba's revolutionary government, I believe there was a gradual process that, by the mid-twentieth century (after a bloody repression in 1912 and repeated abuses during the 1930s), had blunted the sharpest edges of racism in Cuba and permitted the gradual improvement of the social, economic, and political condition of Blacks. Part of this useful trend developed from the work of people who are not universally popular among Cubans (some would have to be in each other's company): former dictator Fulgencio Batista, himself a mulatto who often tried to "pass for white"; the pre-revolutionary Liberal party; the pre-revolutionary Communist party; and the labor movement led by Lazaro Peña and Eusebio Mujal.

A second major theme addresses an explanation of the structure of the revolutionary regime's power. It argues that Blacks have suffered from the policies of the regime led by President Fidel Castro since the

revolutionary victory in 1959, not necessarily because the regime is anti-Black but because it is authoritarian. A regime that tolerates no formally organized opposition from any quarter and over any significant issue certainly does not tolerate it from Blacks over the race factor. The revolutionary regime has repressed efforts to establish movements in Cuba that seek to focus on the race factor, that seek to bring issues of importance to Blacks to the attention of leaders, that question the overwhelming presence of whites in the leadership, or that simply wish to promote social, cultural, or political associations among Blacks (recurring on specifically Afro-Cuban issues). From this perspective, the revolutionary regime is as harsh on Blacks as it is on any other groups wishing to pursue autonomous and especially oppositional activities in Cuba. I agree fully.

A third theme is surely the most controversial. The revolutionary regime might be called negrophobic. On cultural and ideological grounds, it is repressive of the culture of Blacks in Cuba. It has sought to extirpate Afro-Cuban religions, by fighting them directly or by seeking to transform them into artistic folklore. It denigrates traditional Afro-Cuban culture as barbaric. It accords no standing—other than as an academic curiosity—to African and Afro-Cuban languages in Cuba. It takes no deliberate actions to include Blacks in positions of authority, permitting the racism long ingrained in the society to keep Blacks in subordinate positions. Most crucially, it is more repressive toward Afro-Cuban religions than toward Roman Catholicism. It is also more repressive toward social, cultural, or intellectual groupings organized around Afro-Cuban issues than around other issues. It considers the associational expression of Afro-Cuban concerns and grievances especially unacceptable culturally, where the regime is radically integrationist, and ideologically, where it does not accept ethno-cultural variations in the homogeneous society it wants to build.

There is reason for ambivalence in assessing this theme. It is correct that the regime has been quite harsh in this way. It is also correct that it has focused on specific beliefs and practices that happen to be especially prevalent among, and significant for, Blacks in Cuba in the social, cultural, religious, and political spheres. I do not think it is correct that the regime is deliberately and consciously anti-Black, nor that it and its leaders are unusually more racist than has been the norm in the country's history. Why, then, is the result so tragic, oppressive, and disturbing?

One hypothesis is that the regime's apparent negrophobia at home results from the combination of the cultural burdens of the past with the authoritarian powers of the present and the peculiarities of

Marxism-Leninism on ethno-racial questions. Cuba's current rulers, like its past rulers, have sought to deny racism and to promote cultural assimilation, often with benevolent intentions—even if Blacks, as a result of both policies, are consigned to the bottom of the social stratification pyramid and deprived of their cultural traditions. Past rulers lacked the full powers needed to implement their policy preferences. With regard to the race factor, this incapacity resulted in much pluralism that permitted the flourishing of Afro-Cuban religions and the germination of Afro-Cuban politics and intellectual life. Cuba's current rulers have the power to impose their preferences and rely on an ideology that considers ethno-cultural variations superstructural phenomena to be overcome. It is this extraordinary combination of the past and the present that has had some negrophobic outcomes, damnable on their own terms, even though, in my judgment, they do not result from deliberately negrophobic intentions or policies.

The fourth theme of the discussion is the most consistent with the revolutionary regime's official policy: there have been improvements in the conditions of life for Blacks in Cuba since the Revolution. Moore accepts this, although he does not dwell on it. The revolutionary government abolished the vestiges of legal race discrimination, that did not amount to much, but it was still right. Moreover, because Blacks had been disproportionately concentrated at the bottom of Cuba's social stratification, government policies that sought to teach the illiterate, improve the health of the indigent, ensure a minimum caloric intake against hunger, and provide jobs for all, were bound to benefit Blacks disproportionately. These things have happened, to the Cuban government's credit, and Blacks have indeed benefited.

However, Blacks benefitted because they were poor, and not because they were Black. Apart from the modest steps required to dismantle what remained of legal race discrimination, the Cuban government has not had explicitly "pro-Black" or "affirmative action" policies. And, at the top of the regime, those who rule are still white. This does not deny to the Cuban government the credit it deserves for improving the lot of the poor, but it underlines yet again how difficult it is for this regime to be conscious of the problem of being Black in Cuba and of the legitimate and enduring question of the meaning of Afro-Cuban traditions in Cuba. I think that Carlos Moore would share my criticism of the limits of the Cuban government's policies in this regard.

This book's publication is a milestone in the history of Cuba. It should launch a long-overdue discussion about a central issue in that country's history—a country that has made the world, and especially Africa, an arena for its international activities. It will be a painful discussion because the subject itself is so. It should dispel myths about Cuba and about its revolution, which might enable the country and even the regime, were it to face up forthrightly to the issues raised here, to become the better for it. For those who are neither Cubans nor revolutionaries, the book will shed much light on the intricacies of the race factor in a society and for a government that are surrounded by and enmeshed in it but barely conscious of it. Never before has an author delved so thoroughly into the subject of race in the Cuban experience. This is, in short, a book that explores how a people and a revolution have worked hard to ignore a central fact they should have addressed long ago.

Moore's discussion of Cuban policy toward Africa from 1959 onwards likewise fills an important scholarly void. Most scholars who have described and analyzed this policy have focused on the period after 1975, because that is when the major interventions in Angola and in Ethiopia occurred and when the scope of Cuban policy in Africa became large and visible. Moore's work, in contrast, teaches a climax in 1972, when three major events coincided: Fidel Castro's first trip to Africa, Cuba's establishment of diplomatic and other relations with black English-speaking Caribbean countries, and Cuba's formal entrance into the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Thus, 1972 proved to be a turning point in Cuban history, setting the stage for several key Cuban policies in the years to come. Moore argues implicitly that the subsequent unfolding of events in Angola, Ethiopia, and elsewhere are but the consequences of a policy whose roots had been set much earlier. His task is to shed light on that important earlier time.

Moore's first conclusion needs stressing: the subject of a Cuban policy toward Africa does exist. Cuba's Africa policy in the 1960s was not that of a Soviet proxy, or puppet, or surrogate, or appendage. Cuba's Africa policy, above all, was made in Havana. It is not Moore's subject to examine all the intricacies of Soviet-Cuban relations in those years, but he shows the conflicts between those two governments, their jealousies, and their difficulty in collaborating on many policies for most of the 1960s. However, Moore also shows the construction of an effective Soviet-Cuban alliance by the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s—a pattern consistent with other trends in Soviet-Cuban relations.

If Soviet dictates do not explain the origins and evolution of Cuban policy toward Africa, what, then, does? The first answer is strategy.

The Cuban government, and especially Fidel Castro, looked for opportunities abroad to protect the influence of the Cuban revolution and to combat the United States and its allies. The search for opportunities is a central feature of Cuba's Africa policy and the surest guide through the maze of conspiracies, commitments, and deals made over the years. This opportunistic approach was also bold. Cuba deployed forces to help Algeria in its war with Morocco in 1963. Cuba deployed forces, led personally by Ernesto Che Guevara, to help insurgents in the Congo (later renamed Zaire) fight against the Leopoldville government. Cuba made and broke deals with insurgents, such as Pierre Mulele, or government leaders, depending on changing circumstances. Some Cuban forces protected the governments of the Congo (Brazzaville) and of Guinea, other Cuban forces trained insurgents to fight against Portugal's colonial empire. Beyond Moore's argument, the recounting of these intricate, important, and little-known events is itself a fascinating account.

Moore insists that there was more to Cuban policy in Africa, however. One ideological dimension, which overlapped the strategic orientation, was solidarity with revolutionary states and movements seen as compatible with Cuba's vision of the "good future." But a more significant ideological dimension, in Moore's judgment, is the race factor.

The impact of race on Cuban foreign policy, according to Moore, is not simple. Some black Cuban intellectuals, such as Walterio Carbonell, argued as early as 1959 for an Afrocentric Cuban foreign policy to defend the Revolution against its enemies abroad and to root it in the experience of Cuba's own black people. These ideas probably caught the imagination of the leadership. In fact, Fidel Castro over the years has increasingly made reference to the history Cuba shares with many African countries through the slave trade. He has been conscious of the internal uses of Cuban demography as well as the international uses of Cuban foreign policy. Africans, he may have thought shrewdly, would welcome advisers and troops from a partly black country; black Cubans, especially numerous among Cuban troops, would fight in wars overseas to support black governments. Moore shows the Cuban government's manipulation of racial symbols both in Africa and in Cuba to build support for Cuban government policies.

Moore insists that an additional reason for Cuba's entry into Africa was paternalism and disdain for the capacity of African leaders, governments, and movements to build their own future. Cuba would show them how to make and consolidate revolutions in the face of imperialist enemies. This controversial assertion is drawn from many speeches and interviews and cannot easily be dismissed. It is one of the more troubling features of the story.

Strategy, ideology, and possible prejudice are combined in the person of Fidel Castro, who is the decisive actor in the drama that unfolds in the pages of this book. Che Guevara also played an important supporting role, as did an increasing number of other Cuban leaders as Cuba's Africa policy became more complex.

The domestic dimension of Cuba's Africa policy is equally complex in its effects. On the one hand, Moore shows that some Cuban Blacks who identified with the revolutionary government rose rapidly through the ranks of government and Party and took charge of the implementation of important aspects of Cuba's Africa policy. On the other hand, Moore also shows that the Cuban government did not change most of its internal policies on matters of race even as it became more involved in Africa. The Cuban government remained intolerant of the independent expression of cultural and political ideas and behavior by Cuban Blacks. An independent Africa abroad did not make for an independent, albeit meta-phorical, Africa at home.

Nonetheless, the results of Cuba's Africa policies have been impressive. Cuba's presence has spread throughout the African continent. There has not been much opposition within Cuba to the support for African revolutionary states and movements. Cuba's insurgent allies in the Portuguese colonies eventually came to power. The presence and availability of Cuban troops has become a major power factor on that continent. In fact, Cuba is at least as significant as the more conventionally defined non-African major powers in Africa.

"Little Cuba," to use a phrase cited often in this book, plays war drums heard clearly and with effect across the oceans and throughout the lands of Africa. It is tragic that other drums that might sing within Cuba of the cultural, political, and religious expression of Afro-Cubans do not vibrate so freely and so joyously. That is the twin drama of the race factor in Cuba's own history and in its foreign policy—a drama painfully, articulately, and powerfully presented in the pages of this book.

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NOTE

1. I have addressed some of these themes in my writings. *Insurrection or Loyalty: The Breakdown of the Spanish American Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

1900) deals in part with the race factor in Cuba as a crucial movement in the early nineteenth century. Cuba: *Order and Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) considers in part the condition of Blacks before and after the Revolution. See also my "Racial and Ethnic Relations in the Cuban Armed Forces: A Neglected Topic," *Armed Forces and Society* 2(1) 273-290 (February 1976)

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modifying behavior patterns in the key 'private' areas of the color-class system."[18]

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 Booth 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."[19]

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.[20] When Fidel approached the racial question in 1959, 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 who's in such a good position?"[21] 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 criollo 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 biggest 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 Guiteras Holmes appeared then as the immediate successor to Martí's anti-imperialist position. And just as Martí had been, Guiteras was killed fighting for the ideals of national independence and social reconstruction. Both Martí and Guiteras 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 role 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

Oriente. "I was born to a family of affluent landowners, considered to be rich in that area and treated as such," he stated in a private interview. "I lived surrounded by the sort of privileges that are those of the son of a landowner, given attention by everyone, pampered and treated differently by everyone. In a sense, I grew accustomed to living in a manner that was different from that of my boyhood playmates."[2] His boyhood heroes were great soldiers: Napoleon, Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal[3] and, like most Cuban youths of that era, Tarzan.[4] In a more direct way, "Africa" was peripherally present in the daily sight of black fieldhands, household servants, and *macheteros* [sugar cane cutters], laboring on the Manacas estate owned by the Castro family.

Manacas was located in the municipality of Biran, in the Mayarí region. Virtually an all white Hispanic enclave in a chiefly black province, Mayarí was an anomaly. The Castro estate employed several hundred laborers, mostly impoverished black Haitian *macheteros*. In the 1950s these workers were producing 18,000 tons of sugar cane per year for the nearby sugar mills.[5] Conditions had not changed much for these *macheteros* since the slave period, which had ended only four decades earlier. The semi-feudal, paternalistic characters of master/laborer and white/black relations at Manacas profoundly influenced Fidel Castro's later views on political and racial relations.[6]

His father, Angel Castro, had come to Cuba as a soldier with the Spanish expeditionary forces to combat the revolutionary *mambí* army of ex-slaves, led by such legendary black generals as Antonio Maceo, Quintín Banderas, Guillermo Moncada, and José Maceo. Despite his bitterness at Spain's defeat, Angel Castro returned to Cuba. Like thousands of other Spaniards, he was enticed by the *blanqueamiento* [whitening] policy of Cuba's new rulers, which offered land and facilities to any foreigner who was white. Angel Castro was reputedly an inveterate hater of the Blacks and a stern, if not brutal, disciplinarian.[7] "When he first started as a planter in Mayarí," recalled a friend of the Castro family, "his favorite pastime was shooting at Negroes as if they were so many rabbits. He terrorized the whole area."[8]

A Sense of Mission

From early youth to university, Fidel Castro's schooling took place in exclusive segregated institutions, including Jesuit boarding schools to which only the sons of the white and rich had access.[9] As Hugh Thomas notes, "The Jesuit education made a strong impression on Castro. . . . One school contemporary commented: 'The Jesuits were training him to be the white hope of the right.'"[10] Castro's deep nostalgia for the long, rigorous years of Jesuit tutelage would surface years later in interviews.[11]

A sense of mission and personal predestination evolved with the self-control and austerity inculcated into Castro by his Spanish Jesuit mentors. The messianic twist in Castro's character has been described as "one of the most striking features of his personality, along with his belief that political leadership is his vocation."[12] Castro himself, looking back on his political career, once candidly explained, "Taking into account the circumstances of not having been born into a family of politicians, nor having grown up in a politicized milieu, I was nonetheless capable of a great revolutionary learning and able to play a revolutionary role in a relatively short time. Such would have been impossible of an individual who lacked a special calling."[13]

Long before coming to power, therefore, Castro was convinced that he was born with a mission and acted accordingly.[14] Reliable accounts by intimate friends, long time political associates, biographers, and political analysts all stress to various degrees Castro's overwhelming will to power and near obsessive messianic self-image.[15] Thomas observes, "He revelled in action and in crowds and sometimes seemed to regard politics, even violence, as hunting carried on by other means. . . ."[16]

The Bid for Power

Castro's first serious quest for leadership came in 1945 when he entered the world of political gangsterism that was the University of Havana in the late 1940s and early 1950s. His *personalismo* and heroic, macho conception of politics is evidenced by his account of how he clashed with the "action groups" at the university.[17] Castro's successful bid for political leadership of the University of Havana, a beehive of political agitation and the pivotal base of national political power since the 1930s, finally led him into the reformist, nationalistic Ortodoxo party. Having become a successful lawyer and dramatic orator, he already enjoyed the reputation of a *hueso duro* [tough bone] at the time when the party's charismatic, theatrical, and honest leader, Dr. Eddy Chibás, publicly committed suicide in August 1951. Castro immediately took steps to slip into Chibás' empty boots. "[With] the death of Chibás," he said, "the party was left without a leader. . . . Already I was working with the fervent passion

of a revolutionary. For the first time, I conceived a strategy for the revolutionary seizure of power."[14] Castro's strategy for achieving power by electoral means was temporarily thwarted by an event that was to halt the democratic process in Cuba indefinitely.

On March 10, 1952, just three months ahead of the scheduled national elections, Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar pulled off his second military coup. At the time, Ortodoxo lawyer Fidel Castro Ruz had been feverishly campaigning for a seat in Congress. As he later stated, "When the coup d'etat . . . took place, everything changed radically. My idea then became, not to organize a movement, but to try to unite all the different forces against Batista. . . . At that time, yes, I was thinking of organizing it and directing it myself" (ibid.).

The first step was an armed assault on the army barracks of Moncada and Bayamo in Oriente province on July 26, 1953, during the yearly Afro-Cuban carnival. The date had been purposely chosen to coincide with that festivity. "The Moncada conspirators originally numbered 165 men. . . . Composed mainly of young Ortodoxo militants, the group was predominantly white, it was made up mainly of white collar employees, workers, and vendors, most of whom had but a limited education. . . . In addition, the Moncadistas were bound to Fidel by personal rather than organizational ties. Indeed, even though the attack was to be made in the name of the Ortodoxo Party, Moncada was purely Fidel's personal venture."[15] The attempt failed, but the incident transformed Castro into a national hero.

The daring nature of the attack reflected Castro's profoundly elitist conception of politics. Edward Gonzalez suggests that not only desperate political ambition and reckless machista courage but also a racist underestimation of his opposition were the basis for Castro's bravado, and his failure, at Moncada. "The expectation that a small, select band of revolutionaries could storm and seize a one-thousand-man garrison with a minimum of struggle," Gonzalez observed, "also suggests a contemptuous view toward Batista's army that was reminiscent of the attitude held by the 1930 generation toward the lowly born mulatto dictator. Indeed, like his predecessors before him, Fidel may well have underestimated the extent to which many in the regular army continued to identify with Batista on the basis of social and racial considerations. Approximately one-third of the officers in the Cuban army at the time were probably of Afro-Cuban descent, while the noncommissioned and enlisted ranks presumably comprised a still larger percentage. This proportion may have been even greater at Moncada, since the garrison was located in Oriente, which contained the heaviest concentration of Cuba's Negro and mulatto population. Hence, many Moncada soldiers evidently saw the fidelista attack as an 'enterprise of the whites,' which strengthened their resolve to fight and to carry out savage reprisals against these white assailants" (ibid., 82–83).[16]

Feelings of loyalty to a "non-white" dictator on the part of his black officers and soldiers caused what proved to be a major setback for Castro. The fate of those Blacks who had joined the attack against Moncada graphically illustrates the fact that, even prior to Castro's accession, Blacks were expected to be grateful for any advantages handed down by a paternalistic government. The penalty for ingratitude, as during the days of slavery, was severe punishment.

About twelve of the insurgents, or Moncadistas, were Blacks.[17] They were humble, restless men from working class backgrounds, among them Juan Almeida Bosque, Armando Mestre, three brothers—Angel Ameijeiras, Gustavo Ameijeiras, Juan Manuel Ameijeiras—and Agustín Díaz Cartaya.[18] To these men, Castro was not only El Jefe, but also a sort of savior. Díaz Cartaya recalled, "We saw Fidel as Cuba's Redeemer, the heir of Martí, as a politician whose victory would change the fortunes of us Blacks."[19]

None of the black Moncadistas was personally close to Castro before the assault, nor did any of them have any special relationship with him other than that which was necessary for carrying out the attack.[20] This, however, was accepted as normal, as they had already come to look up to him as their uncontested Jefe and intellectual superior. In this sense, the black Moncadistas were following a well-established pattern of post-1912 Cuban ethno-politics.

Involvement by Blacks in anti-government political agitation had been traditionally viewed as "double treason" by those in power. Black Moncadistas captured in the abortive assault were therefore marked off for selective treatment. As Hugh Thomas relates, "Batista's soldiers openly said that it was a disgrace to follow a white such as Castro against a mestizo such as Batista"[21] and at best regarded the black Moncadistas as *negros domesticados* (misguided Negroes) and *gente engañada* (misled people), but never as men intellectually responsible for their action.[22] In fact, some of the black Moncadistas owed their lives to being regarded in that light,[23] as Batista's soldiery considered the attack on Moncada a "plot by Cuban whites."[24]

Most of the black Moncadistas survived the assault to be visited and at times severely tortured for having "betrayed" Batista. "Several

of [Castro's] black or mulatto followers had been taunted by their black soldier captors at the time of Moncada for following a white leader against Batista, the friend of the Negroes. Some soldiers had shown genuine surprise that there were any "black revolutionaries." A Negro bricklayer, Armando Mestre, maltreated by the police at Moncada, was told, "You a revolutionary, you! You don't know that Negroes can't be revolutionaries! Negroes are either thieves or partisans of Batista, not revolutionaries."[47]

Castro's survival immediately after the Moncada assault and his position thereafter as a living national hero were both due to the vagaries of the unfathomable racial question in Cuba. At the time of the assault Castro's father-in-law, Rafael Díaz Balart, Sr., was Batista's minister of transport, and his brother-in-law, Rafaelito Díaz Balart, Jr., was Batista's deputy chief of the interior [ibid., 835, 843]. Notwithstanding, the dictator issued stern orders that the rebel lawyer was to be killed on sight.[48] A wide manhunt was launched, forcing Castro and several white colleagues to flee the area of battle into the nearby mountains.

Lt. Col. Pedro Sarría, a very dark Afro-Cuban in his mid-fifties, apparently had good reason to thank Batista. He was the grandson of Claudio Sarría, an ex-slave who had become a legendary figure in the war for independence. A career officer, Pedro Sarría had joined the military after Batista's 1933 coup opened to Blacks the then-racially-segregated army officer corps. His career took a turn for the better when the party of soldiers he led in search of the Moncada escapees stumbled on three white rebels asleep in an abandoned peasant hut in the La Gran Piedra mountains. "When Lieutenant Sarría and his men came upon the sleeping Castro and his two followers, their shout was, 'They are white!' ['*Son blancos*'], as if proof that they were revolutionaries, not *guajiros* or workers," related Hugh Thomas.[49] Sarría instantly recognized the ringleader of the Moncadistas and assured him that his life was safe.[50] "He refused to kill Castro or let him be killed by any of his men, but brought him alive, and Castro lives."[51] To keep Castro alive after his capture, Lieutenant Colonel Sarría swiftly informed the provincial capital's press and the Catholic bishop of Santiago de Cuba, Monsignor Pérez Serantes, that he held Castro and was bringing him in. Sarría's gesture may have been motivated by a number of factors. It seems to indicate that a two-fold process was at work: an erosion of Batista's "friend of the Blacks" image and the strengthening of Castro's messianic appeal. [Sarría was eventually dismissed from the armed forces for his "betrayal." After

seizing power, Castro made him chief of the security guards of the presidential palace. He died in 1972.][52]

Castro's life was soon spared once again by the action of another disobedient black army officer. "While Castro was in prison following his capture . . . the prison command was ordered to poison [him]. [Julio Yanes Pelletier, the military supervisor of Domicter Prison, refused to poison Castro and warned [him] of the plot. Yanes was relieved from duty at the prison and was forced out of the army a few weeks later."[53] Risking his life by defying orders issued by Batista himself, Captain Yanes not only smuggled edible food into Castro's cell but also alerted the news media about the assassination plot. The resulting uproar in the press forced Batista to call a halt to any attempts to liquidate Fidel Castro. Yanes then fled into exile, later to join the opposition against Batista. [After Castro's victory, Yanes became the Caudillo's aide de camp and chief of his bodyguards. In 1961, however, Castro ordered his arrest and imprisonment without trial for reasons that were never made public. In the early 1980s, Yanes was reported to be still in prison without trial.][54]

The "disloyalty" of Blacks in favor of Castro throughout the Moncada affair affected even the Cuban Communist party [Partido Socialista Popular]. Initially suspecting the Party of having instigated the Moncada assault, Batista ordered its top leadership, old acquaintances of his, to be arrested.[55] While proclaiming its innocence, the Party roundly denounced both the Moncadistas and Batista. Its newspaper, *Hoy*, stated: "We repudiate the putschist methods, peculiar to bourgeois political factions, of the action in Santiago de Cuba and Bayamo, which was an adventuristic attempt to take both military headquarters. The heroism displayed by the participants in this action is false and sterile, as it is guided by mistaken bourgeois conceptions. . . . The entire country knows who organized, inspired and directed the actions against the barracks and knows that the Communists had nothing to do with it. The line of the [Communist party] and of the mass movement has been to combat the Batista tyranny and to unmask the putschists and adventuristic activities of the bourgeois opposition as being against the interest of the people."[56]

A lone voice emerged from within the Party to challenge that position. At the age of twenty-five, Walterio Carbonell was in 1933 one of the best-informed black intellectuals recruited by the Party since the 1930s.[57] A historian and a sharp theoretician, he was a rising star in the youth wing of the Party, which Raúl Castro had already joined

in the summer of that year. A specialist on Cuban slavery and Afro-Cuban religions, Carbonell appears to have been responsible for the Party's renewed interest in the racial question in the early 1950s. At the time of the Moncada assault, however, he was already in trouble with the Party leadership for pursuing with "excessive vigor" issues related to racial matters and for expounding views held to be ethnocentric.[34] He had already broken Party discipline in forming an autonomous offshoot of the Frente Contra la Discriminacion Racial [Front Against Racial Discrimination] at the University of Havana and outside of Party control.[35]

Carbonell had met Fidel Castro at the University of Havana in the early 1940s. He was convinced that Castro was no mere putschist, but a dynamic and radical nationalist capable of assembling a good portion of Cuba's youth behind him, a man sympathetic to the aspirations of Cuban Blacks.[36] He was incensed at the Party's opportunistic condemnation of the Moncada action, which he saw as the most revolutionary deed undertaken in Cuba since the revolution of 1933 [ibid.]. To underscore his revolt, Carbonell again broke Party discipline and sent a congratulatory telegram to Castro, who was imprisoned at the time for the assault on the Moncada and Bayamo barracks.[37] The Party swiftly expelled the "filthy provocateur," "petit bourgeois adventurist," and "undercover agent" with the customary vilification marking such events.[38]

Lest the unilateral action of an "undisciplined" member be mistaken for Party policy, the Communists issued a statement reiterating that "the party rejects this kind of adventurist action [i.e., the Moncada assault] which served only to immolate dozens of young people."[39] Alluding to Carbonell, it denounced "those who are attempting to involve the newspaper *Hoy* [the Party paper] with a filthy provocation . . . entangling it in the adventure of Castro and his group" [ibid.].[40]

The white middle-class radicals who, under Castro's leadership and initiative, conceived the first serious insurrectional assault against Batista's dictatorship had vaguely referred to Cuba's need for "new men and new procedures," "welfare and economic prosperity," and "total and definite social justice."[41] However, as much as a pervasive racism made the racial question one of the most crucial in any profound overhauling of Cuban society, Castro and his intimate associates were silent on that point. There was no mention of it in Castro's lengthy statement, "History Will Absolve Me,"[42] nor in his explanations to the court on the social reasons behind his revolt against the Batista regime.[43] Such blindness to the most glaring sore spot in Cuban society was hardly appropriate for the radical nationalist and well-informed social reformer that Castro was at the time. As Thomas pointed out, Castro "had never had anything yet to say on the problem of the Negro in Cuba. . . . There was as ever lacking any mention of racial intolerance; indeed, it would have been possible to have read 'History Will Absolve Me' without ever knowing there were Negroes at all in Cuba. . . . Castro never mentioned the matter in any of his speeches or programmes before the revolution. To read 'History Will Absolve Me' would suggest that Castro was addressing a racially homogeneous nation."[44]

Castro was undoubtedly an ardent anti-imperialist of advanced social ideas, consumed as much by a desire to challenge the imperialist stranglehold over Cuba as by a messianic will to power. If anything, the Moncada fiasco had strengthened his conviction that history had chosen him for the accomplishment of a great design. He was certainly opposed to racial segregation and discrimination on ethical grounds, as would be expected of a white liberal nationalist reformer operating in such a heavily Africanized environment as Cuba. Equally clear is the fact that at no time had he attempted to understand the racial question in its historical, political, or psychocultural dimensions.

A Paternalistic Superiority Complex

Based on two decades of close political association and personal friendship with Fidel Castro, Carlos Franqui, former propaganda chief of the Movimiento 26 de Julio, recalled Castro's racial myopia. "In all conscience, based on the knowledge I have of Fidel on a personal basis, I must say that Fidel Castro is not a discriminator in a segregationist sense. He is not the type of person who would discriminate against a black man just because his skin is black. By the same token, I do not believe Fidel to be a *machista* in the sense that he would discriminate against a woman because she is female, or against a Chinese because he is Chinese. That is not where Fidel's problem lies. Fidel's limitation—great limitation!—is in his incapacity to understand what it has meant and continues to mean to be black in Cuba. He is equally incapable of understanding what it means to be a worker, to be a peasant, or to be a woman! And this has to do with a profound problem of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois revolutionaries who entertain a deeply paternalistic outlook on revolution. It is the problem of those who, having neither emerged from nor lived among

the people, come into positions of leadership and nonetheless believe themselves capable of really identifying with the ordinary man."[49]

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 environment, 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[50] 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.

4 BLACK CUBA RESPONDS TO CASTRO

As far as Fidel Castro could see, he was the author of a Revolution which had "established social equality and given the Blacks the right to education, the right to work, the right to go to the beach, and the right to grow up in a free country without being hated and discriminated against."[1]

Craving justice and recognition, Black Cuba, notes Rene Depestre, had endorsed the "racial reform." Past demagogues had used the racial problem for lowly electoral ends. Now, however, a prestigious leader had arrived and clearly stated that the Revolution was to be for all Cubans or it would not be at all. "In the conversation of Negroes and Mulattoes there was no talk of orgies with white women, noisy parties, the invasion of private clubs nor superhuman erotic competition," Depestre remembered. "We spoke of labor, dignity, justice. . . . We spoke about the end of a nightmare and of the possibility of fully exercising our right to historic initiative. . . . Throughout the island those were the great hopes that stirred humble Negro homes in those days."[2]

As the pacesetter of the Revolution, it was the Caudillo's prerogative to determine the role Black Cuba was to play in it. "Because a large bulk of the Cuban population is Black," claimed biographer Carlos Franqui, "the new government was compelled to confront the problem of racial discrimination soon after assuming power. When a series of measures was taken, quickly abolishing social and racial discrimination, the people embraced the Revolution as their own. . . . [But] all decisions were taken by, and imposed from the top; the people had no say whatsoever in what, where, when, or how any measure affecting them should be applied. Such was the case with the agrarian and labor questions. It was also the case with the leadership's banning of racial discrimination in labor, social services, education and recreation. Those primarily concerned had no voice in it."[3]

Castro's Racial Tokenism

The new regime's neo abolitionist integrationism was bound to appeal to the majority of Cubans: the marginalized descendants of African slaves. Of all Cubans, the latter were the most rejected sector. Torn by an unresolved conflict between a deep craving for acceptance by and dissolution into the dominant group, and a recurring awareness of its distinct ethnic self interests, Black Cuba was seduced by Castro's integrationist promises. Integration thus became a magic word. As observed by an analyst of U.S. ethnic relations, the social consciousness of Blacks in the Americas "possesses inner qualities of different degrees of nationalism and integrationism."[3] Castro's approach had simply been to fuse both these aspects into the concept of "national integration" and therefore declare all matters closed.

By excluding the areas of political power and cultural dominance from his sketchy overview of the racial question, while concentrating exclusively on its segregationist aspect, Castro could honestly pat himself on the back. Cuba's new white rulers was convinced that he had "given" Blacks their freedom. The breakdown of racial segregation within such a narrow context, however, left only one way open to Cuban Blacks: uncritical adoption of the cultural outlook and lifestyle of the politically dominant Hispanic revolutionary elite. The Afro Cuban Communist poet Nicolás Guillén Landrián could thus gloat over the most trivial results of desegregation: "You don't know how pleased I was to see, in the first days of the Revolution, a Negro boy playing golf in one of the old aristocratic clubs in Cuba," he said. "I do not know whether it was in the Biltmore Yacht Club or what. The fact is that I approached the little fellow and asked him if he liked that sport. The boy looked at me, his face lit up with joy, and he replied: 'Oh! I like it! I have become an Eisenhower!'"[4]

Conducting a series of interviews during the earliest stage of Castro's rule, a European journalist recorded characteristic black Cuban responses to the new order. He spoke to a twenty two-year old woman, an enthusiastic Castro supporter who had joined the Army:

> "We're proud to serve under Fidel. He's a real leader, a genius, a hero, a fine noble hearted man." ... She was gazing at me dreamily. I laughed. "What are you thinking about? Your platoon? The mountains?" "Nothing," she replied abruptly. The next moment she said, quite unexpectedly, "You are a real white. Cuban girls like me, with mixed blood dream of going out with a white man like you. The Revolution has done away with color prejudice but to marry a white man—one hundred percent white, that would be great. That's a wonderful thing the Revolution could do. It ought to step up the process of making Cuba white. It wouldn't be difficult. You'd only have to invite white men and women to come and settle here. There's room for plenty of people. In that way the colored's would soon become absorbed, and there'd be no more Negroes, no more prejudices, no more anything. Isn't that a good idea? If you see Fidel you should suggest it to him."[5]

Another interviewee, a Rebel Army officer's bodyguard, expressed similar feelings, though in different words:

> A prosperous looking villa in Marianao, the great residential quarter of Havana. ... To one side, a rocking chair. Seated in it, a tall lanky Negro with his tommy gun across his knees. ... "There is a Communist dance who lives in it. ... Maid, I love here too. Look up there, the window on the left. That's my room. I sleep in it. Yes, sir, in this house built by white men, for white men. And I am a Negro. What's more, they feed me, do my washing and give me sixty pesos a month. ... Negroes don't feel like Negroes anymore. They have become white men. ... Before Fidel, I was a shoeshine boy at the Miami. ... Then Fidel came along. He said: 'Negroes and white folks are all the same, all of us just men.' ... When Fidel said: 'Negroes and white folk are all the same, all of us just men,' I believed him. Every Negro believed him. We've got reason to believe Fidel."[6] (ibid., 63, 63–64)

Social improvement, however slight, was seen as synonymous with the adoption of the dominant Hispanic lifestyle and, in fact, becoming white:

> "You know," the sentry went on, "Fidel thought about the women too. He said to the Negro women: 'That's all finished your old life. You're going to live like the white women.' I've got a sister. Rita. Before Fidel there were only two things she could do: become a maid for white folk or become a whore. ... Now that's all finished. They gave my sister a job sweeping up in an office. She's quite happy now." (ibid., 65–66)

Deep seated self-hatred, the desire to escape the black persona and dissolve into whiteness, could now become "revolutionary" qualities:

> He searched through his pockets and pulled out a cardboard holder. ... "Look at this. It's my country club membership card. ... Negroes in the United States, they can't go to a country club. That's reserved for the white. They couldn't here either, before Fidel. They'd get thrown out. It was reserved for the whitest of the whites. ... It's hard to say to myself: Pablito, all that's finished. You've not a nigger any more. Ever since Fidel said, 'Negroes and white folk are all the same,

all just man,' I look myself in the mirror every morning. 'Pablito,' I say, 'Pablito, you're not a nigger anymore. You've become a white man. Fidel said so and Fidel's always right.'" (Ibid., 66–67)

In the thick of the Castroite racial reform, the Movimiento's mouthpiece, *Revolución*, regularly ran a seemingly innocuous half-page advertisement that perhaps best symbolized the new spirit: "It has finally arrived!!! Made in Cuba. Protein-based Allyns Hair-straightening Cream. Now, after repeated scientific research, Allyns and Co. has put on the market a totally improved **HAIR STRAIGHTENING CREAM WITH PROTEINS**. $1.50 per jar."[4] Neo-racism was raising its head under the cloak, and with the sanction, of the Revolution.

The "Gracias Fidel" Syndrome

Fidel Castro found fertile ground for the expansion of his messianic self-image in the climate of overall oppression that prevailed in Black Cuba upon his seizing power. "Gracias Fidel" was the universal cry of thanks with which dispossessed Cubans greeted each granted from the top reform; these deprived workers and peasants, the unemployed, felt all the more compelled to unrestrained loyalty to the man who had "freed" them.

In a searing analysis, the black psychologist and revolutionary theorist from Martinique, Frantz Fanon, described the pathetic phenomenon of racial overcompensation. The oppressed, racially humiliated, and culturally alienated, he explained, hunger for even minimal justice. Blacks were therefore liable to overreact to whatever personal, social, or political gesture—no matter how trifling—was accomplished on their behalf by a member of the dominant group. "The native is so starved for anything," wrote Fanon, "anything at all that will turn him into a human being, any bone of humanity flung to him, that his hunger is incoercible, and these poor scraps of charity may here and there overwhelm him. His consciousness is so precarious and dim that it is affected by the slightest spark of friendliness."[5] Cuba's new white revolutionary leaders would fully exploit this legacy of black oppression.

Typical of the "Gracias Fidel" phenomenon was a black housewife's reaction to the granting of employment to her husband in the aftermath of Castro's racial reform:

> Mrs. Gomez must have been between forty-five and fifty. She was fat, with light coffee-colored skin. She was happily excited. . . . Eulogio

> was her husband. He worked from seven in the morning till six at night in Sears Roebuck, one of the big American stores Castro nationalized. As far as I could make out from Mrs. Gomez's description, Eulogio must have been a porter. She said vaguely, "He helps, you know. He carries up parcels from the basement. They send for him when they have to move furniture. It's a good job, 110 pesos a month. . . . Fidel is my god, my soul, the light of my life. And that's the truth. When we heard the news about our new house, I said to Eulogio, 'You know, Eulogio, that I've always been a good wife to you, and never deceived you. I've always remained faithful. But if Fidel asked me to go to bed with him, I must admit it to you, I wouldn't hesitate. Don't be angry, that's the way it is. . . .' Fidel, Fidel! *¡Que hombre! ¡Que hombre!* What a man! But for Fidel we would still be living like pigs, without hope."[6]

In *Sex and Racism*, the black American scholar Calvin Hernton assessed the phenomenon of overcompensation in terms that both echo and complete Fanon's analysis: "Because the Negro is hated . . . so deeply on the basis of his blackness," he pointed out, "any black [person] who receives kind treatment from a white person is indeed grateful. . . . After the deprived self-concept that centuries of racism has wrought within the Negro, a simple act of human kindness from a white [person] elicits the most extreme feelings of gratitude from the Negro."[7] In a real sense, it can be said that Black Cuba's compensatory response to Castro's "racial reform" was the passionate offering of an uncritical subordination and unswerving political loyalty to the revolutionary white regime. Castro understood it as such[8] and, given his background, there is no reason to believe he expected otherwise.

The Black Middle Class Wants Power

Revolutions have the effect of arousing the consciousness of slumbering oppressed groups and inciting them to express the interests that unite them. To a greater or lesser extent, those social classes establish and define their objectives within limits set by the regime and support it as long as they are not excluded.[9] There was one sector of Afro-Cuba that tempered its "thanks" to Castro with demands for long-denied political enfranchisement. Desegregation for this group was simply not good enough. Access to power, not beaches, was the goal of the black middle class.

The passing of the old political order could hardly dismay a subclass reduced to a subordinate clientele status. As one analyst sum-

mattered, "the old Cuban society allowed no leadership to emerge from that 40 percent of the population which was black."[34] The mono-ethnic character of the new revolutionary regime, however, did raise early fears that the complexion of political power would remain unchanged. Seen in that light, Juan René Betancourt Bencomo's piece in *Bohemia* was a veritable position paper. Middle class Blacks had suffered the most from the unspoken segregation of Cuban politics. Consequently, the black middle class was most keenly interested in the integration of political power. In one word, desegregation of beaches and clubs was good, but desegregation of *the state* was even better!

According to the 1943 Cuban census, there were at least 460 black lawyers, 424 doctors, a fifth of the total in the country, were black, as were 3,500 teachers, compared to about 16,000 white teachers. Blacks were said to be well represented in the arts, dominated laundering, sewing, shoemaking, woodcutting, and tailoring, and were on a level with whites as barbers, bakers, carpenters, coopers, and blacksmiths.[35] The political, economic, and cultural influence of the black middle class was still negligible. Blacks in middle class positions numbered approximately 100,000 in 1959, roughly one-third of their white counterparts. The black middle class was virtually absent from the higher and middle levels of management, business, commerce, the armed forces and from the white preserve of government administration.[36]

Since its armed uprising of 1912, the black middle class had failed to assume any leading role in Black Cuba's continuing fight for enfranchisement. Many middle-class Blacks aped the Hispanic value system to the point of espousing its most aberrant manifestations, and strove for absorption by the dominant group.[37] After 1912, radical middle-class Blacks had aligned themselves with the politics and ideology of the Communist party as an outlet for their nationalism and social concerns. After years of timidly campaigning with minimal success for proportional ethnic representation in the affairs of government, Black Cuba's efforts had been brought to a halt when Batista took control of Cuban politics in 1952. Castro's Revolution bore all the signs of an entirely new era. And the black middle class on the whole endorsed it.

A Movimiento de Orientación e Integración Nacional (Movement of National Orientation and Integration), composed of prominent black and white professionals, was set up following Castro's two speeches on race. Its avowed aim was to assist the revolutionary government in carrying out the "racial reforms." The organization's chairman was Dr. José Elías Entralgo, a Hispanic Cuban university professor and sociologist. Elías Entralgo had studied the racial question since the 1940s and was the proponent of a white Cuban version of eugenics. In a controversial work, *La liberación étnica cubana* (1953), he contended that "mulattorization" was the most viable policy for ending Cuba's racial dilemma. Seeing a cause and effect relationship between "mulattorization" and "national integration," Elías Entralgo had saluted the extensive sexual abuse of African women under the slavocratic colonial regime for heralding a new, heroic era. "The day . . . when a white slavemaster first had intercourse with a slave Negress in the bush or in the barracoon," he wrote, "was the most luminous for mankind. . . . A vivifying transfusion took place that engendered a fertile and plastic symbiosis. From such miscegenation were to emerge new physical attributes and ascending psychic and moral virtues."[38]

La mulattización cubana was a post-revolutionary follow-up to his thesis. The whitening and Hispanization of the Negro, the darkening and Africanization of the whites, Elías Entralgo argued, "would bring about a new product . . . imbued with its own differentiated essence and which we may call mulattohood. The study of mulattoism may thus be divided into three categories: mulattoship, mulattoness and mulattorization. The first is imbued of inferior qualities, the second encompasses intermediary qualities, while only the third is superior. . . . Through a correct orientation in our country's educational and teaching system, we will perhaps be able to proscribe mulattoship, improve mulattoness and stimulate mulattorization."[39]

The black co-chairman of the Movimiento de Orientación e Integración Nacional, Dr. Salvador García Agüero, had been a top-ranking member of the Cuban Communist party since the 1930s and was also a theorist on the racial question.[40] He had supported the Party's expulsion of black labor leader Sandalio Junco in the '30s and that of Walterio Carbonell in 1953, both of whom the Communists had come to regard as "black chauvinists" and "Trotskyites." Both Elías Entralgo and García Agüero were therefore quite representative of the type of policies the new regime intended to follow.[41]

In early April 1959, less than two weeks after Castro's "Declaration of Negro Rights in Cuba," a televised panel discussion took place with the aim of assisting the government's integration drive. One of the panelists, Dr. Eudaldo Gutiérrez Paula, was national chairman of the Association of Cuban Journalists and a respected black political

opponent of the overthrown regime. He seemed the most appropriate personality to voice Black Cuba's opinion on the issue. Unexpectedly, he disrupted the televised discussion from the start. He pointed out that revolutionary Blacks were conspicuously absent from Castro's cabinet, and he emphasized that the integrationist drive should have begun at the top. The two other panelists, Dr. Eduardo Corona and Dr. Carlos Olivares, were enraged. Only whites comprised the revolutionary cabinet, agreed Corona, but "these were not instances of discrimination but of selection according to criteria of revolutionary merit."[10] Consequently, he continued, "If the State is found to have discriminated on occasion, it was on the basis of personal revolutionary merit" (ibid.). Gutiérrez Paula was indignant. He had to challenge a statement, he said, which implied that only whites were revolutionaries and only whites had merit. There were in Cuba as many Blacks with revolutionary and administrative and political skills, he contended, as there were white ministers in the cabinet. Dr. Olivares, a black Communist party theorist, countered: "The Revolution," he said, "will not combat discrimination by placing a Negro in public view as has been done in the past, but by sincerely struggling against it" (ibid.). Unruffled, Dr. Gutiérrez Paula charged point blank: "The foremost discriminator is the State. . . . The integrationist campaign must be taken into that area just as into all others" (ibid.). On this perilous note, Social Welfare Minister Elena Mederos hastily closed the debate. Soon after, the regime unleashed a veritable campaign of harassment at its potential black competitor. One by one, the most respected black middle class spokesmen would go into exile.

The Assault on the Black Middle Class

By accusing Castro's all-white regime of discrimination, Gutiérrez Paula had voiced much more than a personal opinion; he had expressed the apprehensions of an entire class. When underscoring that as many competent revolutionary Blacks as whites could be found to occupy any post in the revolutionary cabinet, the issue of proportional ethno-political representation had resurfaced wearing the garments of "integration." The black middle class understood integration to mean inclusion into the State on an equal footing with its white counterpart. Once aware of the extent of the black middle class's autonomous political ambitions, however, the revolutionary regime undertook to destroy its only avenue for independent political action: the self-help, all-Black Sociedades de Color (Colored Societies). This move was carefully camouflaged as part of the desegregation drive.

Founded in 1890 by Juan Gualberto Gómez, one of the most influential nationalist black politicians in Cuban history, the Directorio Central de Sociedades de Color had escaped the ban imposed on black organizations by the 1910 Morúa Law passed to eradicate the Partido Independiente de Color. Conceived to promote the education of black former slaves, the Sociedades de Color increasingly became active forums for the social and political demands of Afro-Cubans. After the black insurrection of 1912, the radically castrated black middle class abandoned the rallying cry of proportional ethnic representation. The Sociedades reflected that change and thereafter alternated timid political demands with the vigorous promotion of assimilationist goals.[11] By the mid-1940s, however, assertive representatives of the black middle class, such as sociologist Dr. Juan Rene Betancourt Bencomo, had defined a "Doctrina Negra" (Black Doctrine). The latter was a platform of specific political demands that would have ultimately wrested the racial question from the monopoly of the Communist party and asserted the identity of Black Cuba.[12]

A shift in the purely "cultural" orientation of the Sociedades towards political action was already suggested by their effusive statements of support for Castro in the first months of the Revolution. The more it appeared that the revolutionary regime intended to do away with party politics altogether, the more the Sociedades became the black middle class's last refuge for the expression of autonomous political demands. "In the early months of the Revolution," an analyst observed, "an attempt was made by Negro Clubs to strengthen their organization, but this was thwarted by the government."[13]

The first limitation imposed by the Castro regime was the restriction of the Sociedades' functions to parties held on Saturdays and Sundays (ibid.). Then, ominously, the government went on to confiscate the proceeds of these festivities. The Sociedades were thus deprived of their only independent source of income and "were encouraged to wither away by administrative actions that deprived them of their income and office space" (ibid., 80). The coup de grace came when the national federation of these associations was abolished along with their provincial headquarters. In a short time, the previously existing 526 Black Societies had closed (ibid., 97). The handwriting was on the wall; Betancourt, national president of the Sociedades, fled into exile.

The destruction of the Sociedades was in line with the regime's determination to destroy all autonomous bases for dissent or protest. It was intended to be, and indeed was, a crippling blow to the political aspirations of the black middle class. A specialist on Cuban affairs concluded that "The intervention procedure, by means of which the Committees of Negro Societies that were devoted to the promotion of racial equality were integrated with the hierarchy of government, in effect took away the right of Negroes to express any corporate opinion except one of wholehearted approval. According to government propaganda perfect freedom had been established by the mere fact of revolution, and therefore, the Societies ceased to have any recognized function" (ibid., 80).

The destruction of the Sociedades was Castro's unequivocal answer to black middle-class demands for proportional ethnic representation in the new regime. It served notice that integration of Blacks into the new regime would follow the old pattern of selection from the top by the ruling group and at the pace prescribed by it alone.[26] As before, selective incorporation into the government required subordination to the politically dominant Hispanic Cuban elite.[27]

The Black Workers Endorse Castro

In 1951, 60 percent of Cuban Blacks were reported living in cities.[28] Black Cuba was also predominantly working class, heavily concentrated in the agrarian sector, the sugar mills, and construction work; a high proportion of black workers was unemployed or underemployed; a substantial portion was concentrated in the "lumpen proletariat" of newspaper and lottery vendors, shoeshiners, street hustlers.

In 1959, out of a total work force of some 2,500,000 laborers, Blacks accounted for an estimated 64.1 percent. As much as 34.3 percent of the black work force was permanently and/or partially unemployed in 1959. Added to the estimated 11.5 percent of Blacks consigned to the lumpen proletariat, approximately 45.8 percent of employable Blacks were in a state of permanent and/or partial unemployment in 1959. The plight of the black worker in pre-Castro Cuba was certainly grave.[29]

Fidel Castro boasted to a journalist that when he took power "there wasn't even one percent" of revolutionaries in Cuba.[30] And yet the Cuban working class as a whole had a long record of militant struggles. Revolutionary politics, noted Maurice Zeitlin, had a venerable tradition in the Cuban working class dating to the very foundation of the Republic itself.[31] "The workers formed the major social base of the Communist-led anti-imperialist movement of the late twenties and early thirties that culminated in the abortive popular revolution of 1933–35," he noted. "Thus, the Cuban revolution and socialist ideology had a significant base in the working class long before the revolution's leaders began to think and speak of themselves and their revolution as 'socialist'" (ibid.).

What was true of the Cuban working class as a whole was all the more so for black workers. Comprising the bulk of the workers in Cuba, Blacks had spearheaded every major struggle against oppression from colony to Republic. Socially excluded and discriminated against, bearing the heaviest brunt of economic and cultural oppression throughout Cuba's history, black laborers stood out as a permanently available force for radical agitation and revolutionary enterprise. From the mid-1920s onwards, the Cuban Communist party found its most receptive, durable, and enthusiastic clientele among Blacks. They formed the backbone of the Party right up to Castro's accession to power. "In fact, some of the most prominent left-wing leaders in Cuba were Negroes, and among leaders of the Communist Party, as well as of the non-Communist labor unions, Negroes were well represented. . . . During the revolution of the 1930s the 'soviet' of workers and peasants which withstood the military forces of Batista the longest, *Realengo 18*, right into the early months of 1934, was led by a Negro Communist, Leon Alvarez. Perhaps the most revered labor leader was the martyred Jesus Menendez, the Negro head of the sugar workers' union who was murdered in 1947. . . ." (ibid., 70).

The radicalism of black Cuban workers can be attributed to their well perception as victims of a system based on economic exploitation. Their pro-Socialist and even pro-Communist proclivities, however, had a subjective basis. The traumas inherited from the slave/colonial period led black laborers to identify more readily with an ideology that offered a class-only explanation for the oppression of ethnic groups and racial integration as the final solution.[32] Thus, black Cuban workers often identified with class rather than with a racial group,[33] and aligned themselves with radical organizations that purported not to see color, allowing them to regard themselves as "colorless,"[34] and to avoid confronting the painful question of racial oppression.[35]

In his 1962 survey on differential ethnic responses to the Revolution, Zeitlin found that "while 80 percent of Negroes favored the

revolution, only 67 percent of the whites had the same attitude. The favorable attitude was 91 percent among Negroes who had worked nine months or less before the Revolution. Thus, among the most critically marginal—the black and unemployed—was the strongest support for the revolution."[56] The high concentration of Blacks among the unemployed and underemployed—respectively 75 percent and 85 percent—explains why black workers were the real social base of the Castro regime in 1959 and increasingly so thereafter.

Given the complex blend of black economic insecurity and a rebel tradition, observed Zeitlin, "one would probably surmise that Negroes would be more likely than whites to support the revolution" (ibid., 72). His survey did in fact demonstrate that, "taken as a whole, the Negro workers . . . are more likely to favor the revolution than the white workers" and that "the relationship is essentially the same when viewed among only those who were workers before the revolution" (ibid., 77). The reason for the ethnic differential, Zeitlin found, was in "the connection between the racial situation and the prerevolutionary class structure and economic order which the revolution destroyed" (ibid., 83-84).

The response of black Cuban workers to the Castroite order was essentially ethnic, with subjective factors playing as much a part as the material conditions of deprivation forced upon them by the old order. "Indeed, if we look at the effect of change in employment status since the revolution on Negro and white workers . . . the results are essentially the same as when we looked at prerevolutionary employment status alone. Both among the workers who are working more regularly and those who worked regularly before and since the revolution, Negroes are more likely than whites to favor the revolution . . . , and we might infer that *the social status of the Negro racial group accounts for the Negro-white differences*" (Italics added.) (ibid., 78).

As members of an oppressed racial group, black workers easily related the discrimination they experienced to Cuba's economic domination by the United States. Over the years they had proved their willingness to support political programs and leaders with a marked determination to challenge the U.S. More than any other sector of the population, black workers had suffered the direct, even personal, impact of the white American presence in Cuba—occupation troops, industrialists, gangsters, businessmen, and tourists. They naturally tended to believe that "their fight to win full citizenship in their society, their struggle to enlarge their social and political rights and to improve their conditions of life was in the main directed against foreign economic interests, essentially those of American corporations" (ibid., 288).

The identification of foreign domination as the source of all their woes may have provided a psychological escape for a group that shied away from confronting the domestic causes of its oppression, that is, the prevalence in Cuba of a home-grown system of white supremacy. Moreover, the image of the U.S. as a land of anti-black hatred and Jim Crow segregation (an image skillfully played up by Cuba's white ruling classes) further inflamed an anti-Americanism which, translated into political terms, was pure anti-imperialism. Thus, the racial problem in Cuba was, if anything, a boon to Castro. In the hands of the revolutionaries, the race issue was extremely useful for discrediting the old social order. Furthermore, because of the "instant liberation" of the Negro, tens of thousands of disadvantaged Cubans were recruited into the ranks of revolutionary enthusiasts."[1]

"Although the Cuban government is . . . predominantly white in character," observed an analyst, "the incorporation of the black masses proved as important as the destruction of a social class in the delineation of the revolution."[58] The benevolent paternalism and elite messianic leadership inherent in Castroism found fertile ground among the politically radical but culturally alienated black Cuban workers. Imbued with a sense of superiority over those it designated as los humildes (the humble ones), the white revolutionary regime could feel entitled to expect the willing subordination and instant political loyalty of those whom it had generously delivered.

The desegregation drive undertaken by the revolutionary regime demonstrated perhaps Castro's intuitive grasp of Cuban race politics. "How clever Fidel Castro was to understand what these sons and daughters of slavery wanted, what embittered them. He didn't promise them the earth. He simply said, 'You are no longer pariahs. You're men!'"[59] remarked a European observer. Few of these born again black men and women who saw themselves emancipated by the "racial reform" would have viewed the revolutionary government's policy of opening up new employment and educational opportunities to Blacks as "a belated and only partial compensation for past discrimination in Cuba."[60] Rather, grateful black workers were willing to overcompensate their new white rulers with an increasingly unflinching loyalty. A spontaneous "racial contract" had emerged between Cuba's domestic Africa and the white revolutionary regime.

5 CUBA, THE THIRD WORLD AND THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Toward the end of 1959, Fidel Castro began to resort to the "Negro question" in order to discredit his enemies, both domestic and foreign, and to enhance his messianic hold over Black Cuba.[1] His first major use of the race issue as a weapon was to defeat opposing factions within his own movement and to consolidate himself as the sole arbiter of Cuba's fate.[2] The Huber Matos affair gave the Caudillo an opportunity to resort to race baiting tactics he would perfect into a veritable weapon.

Major Matos had resigned from the army over the issue of communism. "I do not want to become an obstacle to the revolution," he wrote to Castro, "and believe that, before choosing between adapting myself and resignation to avoid doing harm, it is honest and 'revolutionary' to leave. I think that . . . whoever has had the frankness to speak to you of the Communist problem should do so."[3]

Matos's resignation was interpreted by the Caudillo as a challenge to his personal leadership,[4] a "crime" against which he had warned his subordinates from as early as 1954 when he wrote: "The indispensable preconditions of a genuine civic movement are ideology, discipline, and leadership [jefatura]. The three are essential but leadership is most fundamental. I do not know if it was Napoleon who said that one bad general in battle counts more than twenty good ones." Castro said: "It is not possible to organize a movement in which everyone believes he has the right to issue public statements without consulting anyone, nor can anything be expected of an organization made up of anarchic men, who, at the first dispute, find the easiest way out, breaking and destroying the machine. The propaganda apparatus, an organization, should be so powerful that it would implacably destroy anyone who tried to create tendencies, cliques, schisms or who should rebel against the movement."[5]

Dramatically arrested at his home by Castro personally,[6] Matos was tried by a kangaroo court on charges of conspiracy and sentenced to a twenty-year term, which he served in full before he was released

at the end of 1979. The entire episode underscored the fact that, for Castro, opposition to Marxism was then tantamount to "high treason," as Matos's "crime" had been no more than that. In a matter of months, in fact, Castro would openly declare: "He who is anti-Communist is a counter-revolutionary."[7] A veritable purge of the armed forces, the government, and the administration was under way, with the Communist party already offering its cadres as replacements.

On October 26, 1959, Castro announced the formation of a militia to crush the "counter-revolution." Speaking to a huge rally, the Caudillo made his first public reference to the racial question since his two speeches in March. He likened men such as Huber Matos to the slaveowners of the past. Anti-communism and opposition to his regime, he inferred, were but attempts to suppress the rights his Revolution had "given" Cuban Blacks, the peasants, the have-nots.

"For the first time in the history of the Cuban nation, which has spanned four centuries and began with the Indians persecuted and murdered by the Conquistadores, and which then continued on to a greater stage of slavery, when men were bought and sold like beasts . . . , has emerged a revolutionary power," he said, "which is dealing a damaging blow to all privileges, all injustices, and which has finally redeemed the tarnished manhood of men who in some cases can trace their origins back more than four centuries."[8] Castro asked the one-million-strong crowd whether or not they agreed "with the fact that the beaches, once the exclusive privilege of a few, have now been opened up to the Cuban people regardless of colour, without stupid prejudices. I ask the people if they are or they are not in agreement with the fact that equal opportunities of employment are open to Cubans of every colour. . . . And that is the explanation for our making the Revolutionary Laws which damage national and foreign privileges, it is for that they attack us, it is for that they call us Communists, it is for that they accuse us" [ibid., 96].

A week before the Matos "trial" began, Castro addressed another large crowd in Santiago de Cuba and again likened his opponents to the slaveowners of the last century. "There are some truths that must be said," he told them. "Do you all know who all of those people really are? They are the same ones who, during the last century, were slave-holders."[9] Taking his cue from the leader, Raul Castro, speaking at another mass rally, asked: "What shall we do with the black-skinned men and women for whom Maceo fought! . . . We know 'what to do' with them, for ours are the commitments of José Martí and Antonio Maceo."[10] Che Guevara, speaking at the University of Las Villas, echoed the new mobilizing theme: "What words could I address to the university that would underscore its primary function in the new Cuba? Simply, that it must become Negro, it must become mulatto . . ."[11]

The sudden insistence on the racial issue by the foremost leaders of the regime was not unpremeditated. Castro was merely reverting, in an entirely new context, to a time-honored gambit in Cuban race politics, from José Martí to Fulgencio Batista. "In the past, it was a frequent political ploy [in Cuba] to denounce the existence of racial discrimination in appealing for electoral support . . . ," commented a scholar. "Shortly after the Revolution, Castro began his own propaganda campaign on behalf of racial equality. He has asserted that all Negroes in the country can see the social treatment they deserve. Hotels, beaches and resorts have been opened to all, regardless of race, and tangible evidence of segregation has been eliminated. . . . The regime has given maximum publicity to the role of Juan Almeida, a Negro who held the position of chief of staff of the army, citing him as proof of the willingness of the leaders of the Revolution to accept a Negro colleague."[12]

Race as a Foreign Policy Weapon

As more opposition to Castro mounted in the United States, the existence of a racial problem there developed into one of the most damaging foreign policy weapons in Havana's anti-American arsenal. In mid-November 1959, instructions were given to INIT, the state-run tourist organ, to invite the most prominent black Americans to Cuba, "a land free of racial discrimination," for a New Year's Eve banquet with Castro.[13] In late December 1959, former world heavyweight champion Joe Louis, and black baseball stars Roy Campanella and Jackie Robinson arrived in Havana, heading a party of "prominent American Negroes." The visit was well publicized by the Cuban media. Newspapers printed front page photos of the Caudillo's New Year's dinner with his black American guests.[14] To the delight of Black Cuba, national television rebroadcast several times the images of Castro, flanked by his loyal black aide, Juan Almeida, merrily feting the prominent black americanos. Havana had succeeded in its first conscious attempt to woo American Blacks to its side in a war against a common oppressor.

The racial question had proved to be the one element which thoroughly discredited and isolated the conservative and liberal white

Cuban opposition. The upper classes in Cuba were very much self-consciously white, segregationist, and strongly Negrophobic. They were indeed the product, and modern representatives, of the ideology and economic class interests of the slave-holders in Cuba's staunchly ante past. The "Negro question" was equally Washington's Achilles' heel. Castro would direct increasingly heavier blows to that soft spot the more both countries squared off for a violent confrontation. Fearing an American intervention, Cuban leaders attempted to shore caucus the U.S. by canvassing the sort of support that could allow their revolution to survive if Washington decided to concretely intervene. Hence, on both sides—particularly on Cuba's—a vast propaganda campaign was set in motion. Denouncing American racism and stressing that racial discrimination was eradicated in Cuba, Castro now redoubled his efforts to canvass the support of American Negroes in his struggle against imperialism."[14]

The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a U.S.-based pro-Castro organization, was set up in the spring of 1960. The FPCC was to become the chief vehicle through which the Cuban leadership sought access to America's black population. Founded by two American television journalists, Robert Taber, a white, and Richard Gibson, a Black, the FPCC was from the outset an effective organ for conveying Castro's message to the black American community. A well-regarded journalist, Taber was a personal friend of Castro, whom he had interviewed in 1958 during the Sierra Maestra campaign. Taber certainly had been instrumental in creating an early awareness in Havana of the importance of canvassing black American support. Gibson, in contrast, seems to have played more of a window-dressing role.

In May 1960, former heavyweight champion Joe Louis, one of the prominent U.S. Blacks invited to Cuba by Castro the previous year, was named U.S. publicity agent to promote tourism to Cuba.[15] Louis, dancer Josephine Baker, novelists Richard Wright and James Baldwin, and a host of other black American celebrities were on Cuba's invitation list, drawn up by the FPCC. Prominent U.S. black intellectuals, associated with leftist and/or civil rights causes, were also eagerly sought out by the FPCC for protected tours of Cuba.

In July 1960, a group of black U.S. intellectuals finally arrived on Cuba on an organized FPCC tour. Among them were poet Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka), the historian-sociologist Harold Cruse, writer Julian Mayfield, historian John Henrik Clarke, and civil rights activist Robert Williams, whose fortunes were on the rise. Recalling this second organized trip of American Blacks to revolutionary Cuba,

Harold Cruse wrote about his misgivings: "I noticeably held back all outward exuberance for the Cuban situation," he said. "I was admittedly pro-Castro, but there were too many Communists around acting imperious and important. Moreover, there was *the obvious and unclarified position of the Cuban Negro* to consider. Yet we were all treated with such overwhelming deference, considerations and privilege, it was difficult to be critical" (italics added)." Others in the second group of guests wrote favorably about the trip upon their return to the U.S.[16]

The visitor who would prove instrumental in Havana's attempts to won U.S. Blacks to its side was Robert Williams. A former Marine and Korean War veteran, Williams was at the time the most militant civil rights leader in the United States. Head of the Monroe, North Carolina, chapter of the NAACP, he had since 1958 advocated armed self-defense as the only road to obtaining the basic rights of black Americans. He had immediately attracted the attention of Cuban intelligence and of Fidel Castro himself.

Williams was born and raised in the Deep South. Accustomed to a racially segregated environment, he was wonder-struck by his Cuban trip. "A Negro, for example, was head of the Cuban armed forces and no one could hide that fact from us here in America," he marveled.[17] Williams said that in Cuba he was "made to feel that I was a member of the human race for the first time in my life" (ibid.). He thanked "Fidel Castro and Free Cuba [for] granting persons of African descent entrance into the human race" (ibid., 70). Such language could only delight white Cuban leaders, who presumably had already begun to regard themselves as the saviors of black Americans, whom they increasingly described in terms such as "wretched U.S. Negroes."

Williams's exaggerated reactions to Castro's "racial reforms" made him the most fervent and influential supporter of the Cuban regime among U.S. Blacks. The full weight of his prestige, he warned would be placed at the service of Castro's cause. "As for my being 'used as a pawn in the struggle of Cuba' against imperialist and racist North America, I prefer to be used as an instrument to convey the truth of a people who respect the rights of man, rather than to be used as an Uncle Tom whitewasher of black oppression and injustice and an apologist for America's hypocrisy" (ibid.). He defended Havana's right to criticize the U.S. racial situation. "Cuba's aversion to America's inhumanity to man is not an interference in a 'native American problem.' . . . Racism in the U.S.A. is as much a world

problem as was Nazism . . . . Yet, wherever there is oppression in the world today, it is the concern of the entire [human] race. My cause is the same . . . as Cuba's against the white supremacist imperialist" (ibid., 70, 71).

A good many of the FPCC's activities on behalf of Cuba centered on propagandizing Castro's "racial reform" and extolling the "perfect racial equality" reigning on the island. "There is full freedom there. Every human being has equal rights to work and education. There is no racism; a Negro is the chief of the army," argued a prominent U.S. Marxist leader.[18] The Federal Bureau of Investigation took an interest in the FPCC from the start, and had infiltrated the pro-Castro organization. (The Cuban leadership would later contend that FBI operatives had been among the FPCC's founding members.) In June 1960 Washington declared two Cuban diplomats persona non grata.[19] Carlos Manuel Sánchez y Basquet and Berta Louis Pla y Badia were charged with "distributing anti-U.S. propaganda . . . to augment racial dissension in the U.S." (italics added) (ibid.).[20] Washington had now begun to fear the long-term consequences of Castro's exploitation of the American racial situation to further his own ends.

Maj. Manuel "Red Beard" Piñeiro Losada, Cuba's intelligence chief, knew American society intimately, having once lived in the U.S. He spoke English fluently and was married to a Texan dancer. He headed a department which would soon become famous as the Dirección General de Inteligencia or DGI, Cuba's counterpart of the CIA. Piñeiro's involvement in Havana's attempt to woo the black American population clearly meant that the utility of U.S. Blacks to Cuba had outstripped pure propaganda purposes. Robert Williams had attracted Piñeiro's attention, and before the close of that summer, the militant civil rights leader was invited back to Cuba. This time, however, he went as Fidel Castro's personal guest.

In 1960, Cuba's propaganda machine stridently criticized Washington on the "Negro question." Meanwhile, a clandestine effort by Piñeiro's department was under way to recruit American Blacks for sensitive operations within the U.S., not excluding acts of sabotage.[21] Within a year, fifteen of those Blacks had fallen into the FBI's hands; five others reportedly fled to Cuba.

The First Declaration of Havana

The propaganda war between Washington and Havana reached new heights in the summer of 1960. To American charges that Cuba was taking a "pro-Red" direction, Havana countered that the White House was following an "anti-Black" course. Washington's efforts to alienate support from the revolutionary Cuban regime thus seemed to boomerang. Meanwhile, in Cuba itself, Castro's charisma and his revolutionary mystique made him "the man of the hour, the new messiah."[24] Voicing popular sentiment, a Presbyterian minister declared, "Fidel Castro is an instrument in the hands of God for the establishment of His reign among men."[25] Not averse to such comparisons, the Caudillo proclaimed to a mass rally: "Those who condemn this Revolution are condemning Christ, and they would be capable of crucifying Christ, because He did what we are doing."[26]

By late August 1960, material preparation was well under way in the U.S. for the violent overthrow of the Castro regime. A White Paper was submitted to the Organization of American States, which met in San José, Costa Rica, to legitimize in advance an operation Castro had long anticipated. Charging Cuba, among other things, with having trained "Communist agents and guerrillas to spread the Communist revolution throughout Latin America,"[27] Washington asked the OAS to unequivocally condemn the Castro regime as a threat to hemispheric security.

In two speeches delivered on August 30, 1960, Castro attacked the U.S. and denounced the OAS's Declaration of San José. He told Cubans that his regime was a friend of the Communist bloc (ibid.). Three days later, he countered with his own "Declaration of Havana." Castro lashed out against the "discrimination against Negroes and Indians," and proclaimed "the right of Negroes and Indians to full human dignity" (ibid., 120). Cuba, he said, would "gratefully accept the support of Soviet rockets" if invaded by the United States.[28] Apparently with an eye to mobilizing the Afro-Asian bloc, American Blacks, and all Third World peoples on his behalf, he said that:

> By offering friendship to the North American people—that is, to the Negroes who are lynched, the persecuted intellectuals, and the workers who are forced to accept the leadership of gangsters—we underscore our intention to walk . . . with the entire world and not merely with a section of it . . . . Democracy is incompatible with financial oligarchies, with discrimination against Negroes, the doings of the Ku Klux Klan . . . .
> The National and General Assembly of the Cuban people demands the right of workers, peasants, students, intellectuals, Negroes and Indians . . . to struggle for their economic, political and social claims; the right of every people to enjoy the solidarity of all oppressed, colonized, aggressed and exploited peoples . . . regardless of which corner in the world

they may be in, or the geographical distance between them. All peoples of the world are brothers (ibid., 116–117, 118, 121).

Encapsulated in his words was the irrevocably extra-national proclivity of the Castro regime. On the one hand, it maintained the right of nations outside the hemisphere to rush to Cuba's succor. And, as subsequent events would show, it also assumed Havana's right to intervene in any part of the world where it was in its own best interests to do so. Washington had declared its "right of hot pursuit." Castro had countered by proclaiming his own right of retaliation anywhere on the globe.

Courting the Afro-Asian Bloc

Castro's equation of anti-communism with counter-revolution marked the end of a purely tactical "anti-Communist" neutrality in Cuba. Cuba's new posture was that of a non-aligned, pro-Communist Third World state. That policy profile reflected decisive domestic changes, as described by Hugh Thomas. "Already the Communists had some positions in the Cuban State, already they were Castro's followers, though he was not yet their leader. More positively . . . after years without a clear creed, Castro seems . . . to have felt increasingly drawn towards the idea of a complete explanation of politics . . ."[9]

In mid-summer 1959, the Caudillo had reshuffled his government. Manuel Urrutia y Lleo, the vocally anti-Communist president, was jettisoned and replaced with Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, whose links to the Cuban Communist party dated back to the 1940s. Cuba's new head of state was a wealthy lawyer, descended from a founding family of Cienfuegos, one of Cuba's most staunchly segregationist cities. He was distantly related to nineteenth-century millionaire planter and slave trader Tomas Terry (ibid., 98, 1085ff). For a time he was the personal secretary to Communist party President Juan Marinello, but he was also commodore of the Cienfuegos Yacht Club, one of the racially segregated private white clubs (ibid., 1234). Dorticós had also been president of the elite National College of Lawyers. Besides his sound credentials as the descendant of an aristocratic family, Dorticós possessed the one quality most prized by Castro: unswerving loyalty and submission to the Caudillo. (Dorticós remained Cuba's president until the end of 1976, when Castro himself took that title, he committed suicide in 1983.)

Guevara Tours the Afro-Asian Bloc

Assiduously courted by the rival eastern and western camps, the Afro-Asian bloc seemed the most apt to lend Castro the diplomatic protection he sorely needed. Afro-Asian states appeared to be the most logical allies of a revolutionary regime that had eagerly proclaimed itself neutral and anti-colonial. Thus, even while seriously contemplating the option of binding the fate of the Revolution to an alliance with the Soviet bloc, Castro "continued to feel closer to the neutralist Third World leaders than to those of the Communist world, and thought it would be enough to cultivate the former's friendship and be incorporated into their midst to have nothing more to fear from the imperialist powers."[10]

In early June 1959, within weeks of Castro's promulgation of agrarian reform in Cuba, Che Guevara set out with three aides for a three-month Afro-Asian tour. He arrived in Cairo on June 16 on the first leg of his tour. He became the first Castroite leader to set foot on the African continent, but his visit was devoid of any African significance.[11] His hosts were Pan-Arabists, and Guevara's primary goal was to meet Gamal Abdel Nasser, chief of the non-aligned bloc. Guevara's mission was to woo the non-aligned Afro-Asian states, enlist their backing for the Castroite regime, and procure the advantages of their protective political umbrella.

Whatever interests Havana had in Africa at that juncture were confined to the Arab North, not only because Egypt was then the most prestigious Afro-Asian state, but also because a national liberation struggle similar to Castro's campaign in Cuba was under way to wrench Algeria from French rule. The Castroites viewed the Algerian struggle as the closest reflection in the Third World of their Sierra Maestra experience, and immediately identified with it (ibid.). As for Egypt, Castro was quick to establish parallels between himself and Nasser, the fiery colonel who had successfully defied British imperialism and repulsed a Franco-Israeli-British intervention. Like the Egyptian Rais, Cuba's Caudillo intended to fashion a non-aligned, anti-imperialist, independent foreign policy for his Revolution. And Havana's leadership also anticipated a Caribbean reenactment of the sort of conflict that followed nationalization of the Suez Canal.

Guevara opened his talks with Nasser with appropriate flattery. Egypt's resistance at Suez during the tripartite attack in 1956, Che told the Rais, had encouraged Castro to launch his own Sierra Maestra campaign. Egypt's leader had always been a "source of moral

strength" to the Castroites.[31] In short, Castroism was but a Latin American version of Nasserism. But Nasser was nonetheless suspicious of Castro and his followers. He doubted their revolutionary sincerity (ibid., 311), suspecting Castro to be an opportunist. As their conversation waned, Guevara inquired how many Egyptian landowners had fled the country as a result of Nasser's agrarian reform. Nasser explained that only a few had fled, mostly "white Egyptians," naturalized foreigners (ibid., 312). Guevara was dismayed. "That means," he said, "that nothing much happened in your revolution. I measure the depth of the social transformation by the number of people who are affected by it and who feel that they have no place in the new society" (ibid.). Nasser calmly replied that he had intended liquidating the *privileges* of a class, *not individuals* of that class (ibid.). Now the distrust became mutual.

A lightning visit to the Sudan left Guevara disappointed. That country, he felt, was simply too backward to be of help to Havana. Morocco, then under the rule of the strongly nationalist monarch Mohamed V, lifted Che's spirits: the first important encounter between leaders of the Algerian FLN and a leader of the Cuban revolution took place there.[32] Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia were then serving as rearguard bases for the FLN. Hence, Castro's decision to set up his first diplomatic missions on the continent in Rabat, Tunis, and Cairo. Wallerio Carbonell, the black Cuban who had been expelled from the Communist party in 1953 because he supported Castro, became the ambassador to Tunisia.

Guevara toured Yugoslavia, Indonesia, India, Burma, Ceylon, Japan, and Pakistan, returning to Cuba in early September, dismayed at the poor prospects for trade with the Afro-Asian bloc. Having concluded only two "rather unprofitable treaties with Egypt and Ceylon,"[33] he had discovered the limitations of partnership with nations he felt were much less developed structurally, and perhaps politically, than Cuba. A good measure of his disillusionment could be inferred from the report of his tour he delivered on nationwide television.[34] Somehow he felt compelled to apologize for not having ventured south of the Sahara while on the black continent. "Lack of time forced us to leave out Iraq and other countries from our planned itinerary . . . ," he said. "Nor were we able to visit Ghana—a new African republic we had intended to visit—because the trip was too long" (ibid.).

Black Africa could hardly have figured high on the list of priorities of the Castroite regime at the time. Omission from Guevara's itinerary of black countries headed by the two most radical exponents of non-aligned anti-imperialism in sub-Saharan Africa—Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana and Sékou Touré's Guinea—served to underscore that point. Possibly Nasser had also apprised Guevara of his own misgivings about Nkrumah, with whom he was embroiled in a bitter feud over continental leadership.[35] When Guevara arrived in Cairo, Nasser's dual claim to leadership over Africa and the Arab world was being hotly contested by Gen. Abdel Karim Kassem in the Middle East and by Nkrumah in Africa.

Ever since Ghana had become independent in 1957, Nkrumah had resisted Nasser's hegemonic ambitions over the African continent (ibid.). In fact, while Guevara was in Cairo from July 16 to 19, Nkrumah, Sékou Touré of Guinea, and William Tubman of Liberia met at Sanniquelli and announced the formation of a tripartite Pan-African union. Nasser correctly saw the project as directed against Egyptian hegemony over black Africa. A year before, the Ghana-Guinea union of November 1958 was equally interpreted by the Egyptian president as another of Nkrumah's schemes to undercut Cairo's continental leadership ambitions (ibid., 46).

It is conceivable that in order to cultivate Nasser's friendship, Guevara delayed the opportunity to establish direct ties with black Africa's two most dynamic states. After all, Nkrumah was also regarded as a founding father of the Afro-Asian bloc. Another eloquent indication of the priority Havana afforded Arab North Africa over black Africa was Guevara's suggestion upon returning to Cuba, that Egypt should become Cuba's diplomatic base for future contact with sub-Saharan Africa.[36]

Guevara's statement that India's development was being stunted by "cows and religion" might have been more than a passing comment.[37] Obsession with religion had characterized all of the Afro-Asian states he visited. Guevara was an atheist, anti-imperialist revolutionary steeped in the western rationalist tradition. Most likely, Guevara returned from the Castro regime's first probe into the non-white world even more firmly convinced of Cuba's political and intellectual advancement over these Afro-Asian countries. However, for tactical reasons, Havana would have to keep up the pretense of advocating a non-aligned anti-imperialism of the Afro-Asian type.

Within three weeks of Guevara's tour, Cuba began a campaign stressing the extra-national vocation of the Revolution and identifying its fate with that of the Afro-Asian bloc. Foreign Minister Raul Roa Garcia made that point before the U.N. General Assembly. "It

is unfortunately evident that the world finds itself divided nowadays into two main groups respectively led by the United States of North America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ... and a third group which purports to bridge the gap between them but whose strength is more moral than material," he said. "By virtue of its historical position, geographic location and internal obligations Cuba is included in the group of countries designated as 'western.' But the revolutionary government of Cuba will not accept such prearranged options .... Concretely, this simply means that we will not accept being forced to choose between the capitalist and communist solutions. There are other roads and solutions."[38] Cuba, said Roa, had already "found its own road to the original solution of its own problems—a road which it shares in common with the other Latin American peoples ... that road and solution is what links [the Latin American people] ... to the undeveloped peoples of Africa and Asia in their courageous search for self-expression" (ibid.). For that reason, Roa said, Cuba "can count on the moral support of all the underdeveloped peoples of America, Africa and Asia, because it is a known fact that defeat of the Cuban revolution would be a great setback as well in the inexorable liberation process of these nations" (ibid.).

Speaking at a mass rally a few weeks after Roa's U.N. declaration, the Caudillo himself proclaimed for the first time that Cubans had a sort of historical mission to fulfill. "Today, the eyes of the whole world are on Cuba," he said. "Cuba elicits the admiration of the whole world and nothing can lower the esteem the peoples of America and the whole world feel for her."[39] Now asserting the uniqueness of the Revolution and of Cubans, Castro struck a heroic, messianic note: "Our revolution has been possible only because of the sort of people Cubans are .... The people of Cuba have a mission to *fulfill* and we will fulfill it, because the people of Cuba are the kind with whom a revolution like this can be carried out ...." (Italics added.) (ibid.).

The extra-national nature of this mission could be gleaned from a declaration by the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), by then fully under Castroite control: "The Cuban revolution is the guide of the countries of Latin America for the attainment of economic and political liberty," said the document. "Our labour movement, in order to march at the vanguard of the revolution, must also be a guide to the Latin American labour movement."[40] The same tone pervaded a note from Foreign Minister Roa to the U.S. government, underscoring that "in accord with their historical traditions and the idea they

entertain of the Nation, their mission in America and *their role in the world*, the Cuban people ... have now found their own avenues of political, economic, social and cultural expression" (Italics added.).[41]

Castroism and World Communism Converge

Quite plausibly the results of Guevara's Afro-Asian foray motivated Castro to quickly seek the closest possible ties with the Communist bloc. A firm advocate of that course himself, Guevara had returned with strong arguments to buttress that position. For one, all of the non-aligned states he had visited shared a common denominator: they had special economic and trade ties with the USSR, from whom they received considerable military and technological assistance. From Nasser to Nehru, Nkrumah to Sukarno, all neutralist Afro-Asian leaders were close friends of Moscow and Peking, and none seemed unhappy about being the recipient of substantial Communist bloc aid.

At the same time hostility and fear of the U.S. were driving Castro closer to the Communist bloc, the ranks of world communism were undergoing the greatest split of their history. In the course of the summer of 1959, the Kremlin destroyed agreements to help China develop nuclear weapons, reneged on commitments to help modernize Chinese industry and technology, and imposed a blockade on its former ally.[42] In the meantime, Castro had become convinced that a small underdeveloped country could only escape the clutches of a superpower by relying on another superpower. Unquestionably, Castro was aware of the dangers that such a reliance implied: satellization, loss of sovereignty, and dependency. In that context the growing Sino-Soviet schism was perceived by Havana as a safeguard for Cuba's political independence as it drew closer to the Kremlin.

By showing sympathy for China, believes Cheng Ying-Hsiang, Havana was indicating its readiness to tactically exploit the split: "What made Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara discover at the end of the summer of 1959 that Peking's support could be much more valuable than initially foreseen? Simply, the realization that however strong a sympathy they evoked among Third World neutralists, their support would remain disquietingly passive. They foresaw that once the viciousness of the capitalist camp was unleashed, Cuba would have no other recourse but to hitch itself onto the socialist camp, whereupon Havana's only chance to escape becoming a mere pawn of the Kremlin was to play Peking against it" (ibid., 52).

Guevara's tactical sinophilia quite probably had to contend with Castro's own reportedly ingrained sinophobia. Since the days of

slavery, anti-Chinese prejudices had been commonplace in Cuba. Sino-Cubans have been stereotyped as crafty, treacherous, lecherous, and inscrutable. The popular saying, "Vale mas un muerto que un Chino" (A corpse is worth more than a Chinaman), reflects that racist contempt. Castro's former confidant, Carlos Franqui, recalled Castro's dislike of the Chinese as obsessive. "I have spoken many times with Fidel about the Chinese. He feels a great antipathy for Chinese as such. To my surprise, his attitude towards them was visceral: he detests them. His attacks against Mao Tse-tung have the imprints of that astounding personal prejudice of his."[44]

Prejudices against the Chinese might indeed have played no small part in Castro's open hostility toward China in the mid-1960s, when the ideological Moscow-Peking feud had degenerated into racial innuendos and mudslinging. Did Castro's reported disdain for the Chinese also cause him to resist Peking's strenuous efforts to enlist Cuba's support against Moscow in the early 1960s, even when Havana had good cause to condemn the Kremlin's behavior? In any event, between 1959 and 1969, the Sino-Soviet rift certainly offered Havana not only the leverage to deal with the mighty USSR practically as an equal but even to intimidate Moscow's cautious leadership into committing itself to guaranteeing the survival of the Castroite regime. Castro was to play Peking against Moscow to his own economic, political, and military advantage, displeased but passive, the USSR was forced to dance to his tune.[45]

6 CASTRO DISCOVERS BLACK AFRICA

At the end of 1959, it was evident to close observers that the domestic rapprochement between Castroism and communism was but a prelude to Havana's convergence with the Soviet bloc. Second only to Castro, the most interested participant in a Soviet-Cuban entente was certainly the Cuban Communist party. The inescapable consequences of such an event were perceived foreboadingly by many independent radical Castroites. "We knew," explained Carlos Franqui, "that if the Cuban Communist party got hold of the Revolution, Cuba would enter the dark ages politically and that to get her out of it would be worse than fighting a hundred Batistas together."[1] But because of the enthusiastic popular support enjoyed by the Caudillo, radical non-Communist Castroites were increasingly impotent. The most they could do was to use their personal ties with Castro to offer foreign and domestic policy alternatives to the drift towards the Soviet bloc and the Cuban Communist party.

An Afrocentric Foreign Policy Proposal

Perhaps only someone of the ethnic and political background of the Afro-Cuban diplomat, Walterio Carbonell, could have elaborated, at such an early date and with such a keen sense of future events, the sort of *Afrocentric* foreign policy alternative he presented Castro toward the end of 1959. The former Cuban ambassador to Tunisia was the first to alert the revolutionary leadership to the importance of a black African connection. He had urged Castro to adopt a resolutely pro-African stance. Carbonell perceived Africa as the key to a network of Third World alliances that could be a powerful factor in Cuba's negotiations with the USSR. If the Revolution was to resist absorption by the Soviet bloc, it was imperative that the momentum of the Cuban revolution converge with the radical mainstream of African nationalism and decolonization.

Cuba's colorful entry into the arena of world politics in 1959 had coincided with that of the African continent. Between 1956 and 1960,

Castro's fight against Batista and the struggle for independence in Africa shared the headlines. Gamal Abdel Nasser stood up to the western powers at Suez in 1956, Ghana became independent in 1957, Guinea followed suit in 1958, and the Algerian FLN was on the offensive in 1959. Africa was definitely on the move. Yet Castro and his associates seemed totally oblivious of the black continent at that time. "At the beginning of the revolution," stated Franqui, "Fidel and the others had never really spoken about Africa, and it is difficult to say exactly at what point their interest in Africa began. There was, of course, the situation in Algeria, because the war being waged there was so similar to the one we ourselves had fought. In fact, the Algerians had sent some of their people to contact us in Cuba. . . . But there was never, to my knowledge, any discussion or reference to black Africa specifically at this period either by Fidel or anyone else" (ibid.).

Africa came up for discussion only toward the end of Castro's first year in power. Franqui recalled: "After the triumph of the Revolution, the whole question of the relationship between Cuba and the African continent—black Africa particularly—was initially raised by Walterio Carbonell when he proposed, for the first time, the idea of convening a tricontinental conference," Franqui recalled. "Generally speaking, people are ignorant of the facts, but it was Carbonell who first advocated the idea of a tricontinental conference and of establishing special links with black Africa. In fact, he perceived Africa as playing a pivotal role in his tricontinental proposal. That idea took form while he was ambassador to Tunisia in 1959. Tunis was then harboring Algerian guerrilla leaders, was frequently visited by Frantz Fanon, and was a meeting point for African radicals. . . . Personally, it was from Carbonell that I heard the first references to Africa and I know for a fact that it was he who brought up the subject with Fidel" (ibid.).

Barely three months after having been appointed Havana's first ambassador to an African country, Walterio Carbonell was back in Cuba, his diplomatic career cut short by an accident. The car he was reportedly driving accidentally killed a pedestrian in the streets of Tunis, whereupon Carbonell immediately resigned his post.

Four years of exile in Paris, during Batista's regime, had brought him into contact with the exponents of radical African nationalism, grouped around the Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), and with the works of anti-colonialists such as Martiniquans Aime Césaire and Frantz Fanon, Senegalese Alioune Diop and Cheikh Anta Diop, Haitian Marxist Rene Depestre, and black American novelist Richard Wright.[1] Carbonell was familiar with the

conclusions of the Second World Congress of Black Artists and Writers, held in Rome in 1959, and apparently met with Frantz Fanon while in Tunis.[2] He was easily the most Africa-conscious and best informed Castroite official on the Third World, particularly African affairs. A historian and ethnologist, during his years with the Cuban Communist party, he had also become the most incisive specialist on the race question in Cuba.

Carbonell attempted to impress on the revolutionary leadership the potential strategic importance of the African continent in terms of Cuba's relationship with the two rival superpowers. But at the time, as Carlos Franqui admits, Cuba's new white rulers were ill prepared for such visionary reasoning. "In 1959 the ignorance of Cuba's leaders, including Fidel and the others, was practically total on Africa," he recalled. "There was in fact an attitude of contempt for Cuba's own Africanity by a leadership which was conspicuously composed of white Cubans. Moreover, at that time Cuba was entirely cut off from the black world. Carbonell's attempts to change that state of affairs therefore ran into strong resistance" (ibid.).

Carbonell, however, was intent on taking advantage of the environment created by Castro's new approach to the racial question as a foreign policy device, the key link being the recognition of Cuba's racial kinship with continental Africa. To this end, he published a series of theoretical articles in *Revolución* challenging the prevalent assumptions about the historical position of what he termed the "African Cuban population," taking care to stress the overwhelming Africanity of Cuba's national psychology and home-grown cultures.

Apparently at first Fidel Castro remained aloof. Carbonell then resorted to a public forum. A seemingly innocuous article he published in *Revolución* in early December 1959 was actually a synthesis of the comprehensive proposals he had presented to Castro.[3] In this article, he outlined a strategy that, among other moves, called for the convening in Cuba of a Third World tricontinental congress. He urged the rejection of alliances with either superpower in favor of establishing a third bloc composed of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

The example of the African and Asian leaders who had met in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, he explained, held important lessons for the Cuban revolution. The strategy of militant Afro-Asian states was geared towards strengthening their independence against western imperialism while keeping the Soviet bloc at a comfortable distance. This was a course that Carbonell felt all Third World countries would

do well to follow. The independence of Ghana and Guinea, the anti-imperialist revolution in Iraq, and the upsurge of a strong anti-colonial movement in Asia and Africa could all be traced in one way or another to the "spirit of Bandung" (ibid.). Bandung had laid the foundation for a strategic power bloc independent of the two rival powers that were dominated world politics. "No matter how powerful a country," Carbonell argued, "it will be incapable of imposing its policies on another if not backed by other states. The United States would not dare impose its policy on Cuba through the OAS were it not for the support it musters from a group of 'democratic' and tyrannical states" (ibid.). Nasserite Egypt was able to resist western imperialism without, at the same time, surrendering its sovereignty to the USSR, because it could rely on its own strategic powerbase—the Afro-Asian bloc (ibid.).

It was impossible for a modern state to survive outside of the context of power bloc arrangements, let alone successfully defend its national sovereignty. "The world is divided into blocs: the bloc of western capitalist countries, and the bloc formed by Russia and the other Socialist states. Outside of 'blocs' no country can exercise any real influence on international affairs. . . . For that reason, Afro-Asian governments have felt obliged to seek unity in order to form a third bloc to defend their national sovereignty much more successfully and exert their influence on world events" (ibid.). Communist Yugoslavia, Carbonell explained, offered a good example of the impotence of a state that attempted on its own to be independent of the two superpowers (ibid.). The only solution left open to the Cuban revolution, he surmised, was the formation of its own powerbase through the transformation of the Afro-Asian bloc into a *tricontinental* power bloc that included Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Like Africa and Asia, Latin America is underdeveloped and needs to defend its national independence" (ibid.), Carbonell argued. The strategic advantage of such a union seemed equally clear. "The day a South American Afro-Asian bloc comes into being, no power whatsoever could attempt, directly or indirectly, to aggress any of the members of such a Solidarity Community of Underdeveloped Countries. By sheer weight of votes at the United Nations, such an entity would become the predominant diplomatic world force, tipping the international scale in its favor" (ibid.).

Arguing that "geographic distance never deterred the great powers from hooking up their metropolises to the colonies by way of monopolies and supranational arrangements such as the Baghdad Pact, CENTO, and the OAS," Carbonell emphasized the necessity for the Cuban revolution to promote the building of a tricontinental power base. "Such a union is possible. As a start, the next meeting of the underdeveloped countries should be made to take place in Cuba, which has seized the diplomatic leadership of all Latin America" (ibid.). He listed five immediate benefits to be derived from the convening, under the Cuban aegis, of a tricontinental conference in Havana:

1. Cuba's diplomatic position would be enormously strengthened.
2. The OAS, where only "the most spurious interests" then prevailed, would receive a fatal blow.
3. The basis for a Latin American Afro-Asian entente at the United Nations would have been laid.
4. The superpowers would be forced to negotiate on an equal footing with revolutionary governments and have to renounce their aggressive designs against them.
5. The possibility for trade, cultural, and even military relations among Third World countries would increase (ibid.).

While perceiving Africa as the most dynamic component of the Afro-Asian bloc—precisely because of its singular history of intense oppression—Carbonell saw Latin America as politically the most experienced of the continents.[4] "The countries of Latin America had the good fortune of achieving their independence one hundred years before Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Today, however, Latin America happens to be less free than the Afro-Asian states taken as a whole." Through a partnership with the Afro-Asian world, Latin America could retrieve its vanguard role and reassert its independence. "Latin America can recover the leading role it played during the nineteenth century because from an industrial standpoint it is better equipped than the states of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Moreover, it is less bound to tradition, and the conflict between archaic and modern social structures is less sharp. Additionally, Latin America enjoys a greater linguistic unity than the underdeveloped countries of the other continents" (ibid.).

By putting up the most radical challenge to American domination in the history of the hemisphere,[5] Castro's revolution had placed Cuba squarely at the vanguard of revolution in Latin America. The Castroite government should, therefore, initiate the ties with Africa.

The historic credit of linking Africa and Latin America must belong to the revolutionary government of Cuba. Through such a union, Cuba herself would be in a position to wield its diplomatic influence at the

United Nations to the fullest extent . . . Cuba could then become a world diplomatic center, staking out for itself a role of the highest order in the diplomatic history of this twentieth century. Because of the radicalism of our Revolution, and of its chief, Fidel Castro, the underdeveloped peoples would look up to Cuba and its government as their guide (Italics added.)[9]

Cuba's population of African descent was, in the eyes of Carbonell, the greatest single asset the revolutionary regime possessed in order to build a special relationship with the black continent, though, as Franqui recalls, "the ingrained contempt then reigning in Cuba for anything African, added to the prevailing ignorance about the African continent itself, provided a bad climate for the adoption of [Carbonell's] project."[10] Not to be excluded is the possibility that the regime might have also felt uneasy about considering policies which could have the long-term effect of awakening a sort of dormant ethnic nationalism among Afro-Cubans.[11] Be that as it may, and to the utter consternation of Walterio Carbonell, Fidel Castro did eventually co-opt his proposals. However, as will be seen, Castro went about implementing them in the context of a Communist state irrevocably allied to the Soviet Union. An Afrocentric foreign policy strategy designed to prevent Cuba from being pulled into the Soviet orbit was turned on its head. The "Carbonell Plan," in due course, became the "Castro Doctrine" on Africa.

Cuba and the Congo

Throughout the summer of 1960, Patrice Lumumba, the fiery prime minister of a recently independent Congo, attempted to fend off a legion of plots to unseat his nationalist government. The Congo crisis forced Africa even more to the forefront of international politics. The Congo's independence, on June 30, 1960, had coincided with Castro's first major nationalizations. Subsequently, the Congolese and Cuban crises evolved in parallel, each culminating dramatically in Lumumba's murder and the October missile crisis. Both issues concurrently monopolized the debates of the memorable fifteenth General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1960.

The events surrounding Lumumba's first four months in power had riveted Castro's attention to the black continent.[12] Threatened by the merciless intrigues of the major western colonial powers and the U.S., that defenseless newborn African country was an important test in the eyes of Havana. At stake was the Kremlin's willingness, determination, and ability to succor a geographically distant, weak,

progressive government threatened with overthrow through direct military intervention by the western imperialist countries.[13] No situation better illustrated Castro's own position vis-à-vis Yankee imperialism than Lumumba's predicament before the western powers. Havana's identification with the cause of the Lumumbists was therefore immediate. Since much of what occurred in the Congo bore direct relevance to Cuba's developing crisis with the U.S., when the Kremlin declared its intention of militarily supporting Lumumba's government in the event of western intervention, Cuba applauded. The Soviet's pledge received prominent exposure in the Cuban media, no doubt reflecting the hope that it also held true for Castro's regime. In a full-page article, *Revolución* warmly commended the Soviets. The carefully worded text bore the distinct hyperbolic language of the Caudillo. "The Soviet Union has played a preeminent role in the Congolese problem. The Soviet government's offer of military aid to the Republic of the Congo has certainly brought the Belgian interventionists and their NATO accomplices to a screeching halt. . . . This is the first time in the history of the USSR that she has played such an important role—and what a role!—in black Africa. These are novel events which will go down in posterity in the history of world diplomacy."[14]

A few weeks prior to Havana's announcement on September 13 that Castro intended to be present at the U.N.'s General Assembly, the Cuban leader instructed his foreign ministry to set up an ad hoc commission on Africa, Asia, and Oceania and report back to him on the major problems of these regions.[15] The commission's hastily drafted report was to form the basis of Castro's foreign policy pronouncements before the U.N. The report inaugurated an era of ever-growing Castroite concern for the black continent's affairs. On September 14, *Revolución*'s headline read: "Topics to be Treated at the U.N.: ALGERIA, CHINA, CONGO and CUBA. Fidel Will Speak to the General Assembly."[16]

Fidel Castro landed in wintry New York City with a huge delegation, igniting controversy from the airport to his luxurious hotel. He had come with a carefully thought-out plan of how to wrestle the Afro-Asian bloc to his side by presenting Cuba's case as a typical colonial and neocolonial situation.[17] He intended to define Cuba as a strictly nonaligned nation whose position before the U.S. was no different from those of Egypt and Ghana vis-à-vis Great Britain, Algeria and Guinea vis-à-vis France, or the Congo in respect to Belgium. Personal contact with the Afro-Asian leaders would overcome

their hesitation and secure their active backing beyond the traditional assurances of moral support.

Havana was readying itself for a military confrontation with the U.S. Castro now wanted to know exactly what action the non-aligned leaders intended to take when the rapidly approaching hour arrived. To force their hands, the Cuban premier intended to invite them to Cuba en masse for a tricontinental Third World summit. The proposal, of which only Castro's most intimate aides were apprised, had stemmed from the "Carbonell Plan."

The Harlem Show

It seems that the U.S. was misled into believing Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos Torrado would be heading Cuba's delegation to the U.N. until a few days before Castro himself arrived.[14] Washington was apparently caught without a plan for countering the shock waves the Cuban leader would set off. As would be the case over and over again in Cuban-American relations with Castro, initiative gave him a clear advantage, which the Cuban leader came prepared to fully exploit. Washington's arrogant ineptitude provided him ample room to do so.

Castro's first opportunity was handed to him immediately after his arrival. Washington had restricted the movements of the Cuban delegation to Manhattan. A hostile management of the plush Shelbourne Hotel, where Cuban diplomats usually stayed, demanded advance payment for the Cuban delegation's sojourn. The American press published lurid stories that portrayed the Cuban premier and his men as organic primitives, plucking chickens in their luxurious suites, throwing lit cigars on expensive carpets, and cooking their own food on camp stoves in the bathrooms of their suites. Everything indicated a concerted effort to humiliate, harass, and discredit Castro and his delegation.

On the morning of September 19, Castro personally lodged a protest with U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, who offered the Cuban delegation the use of the U.N.'s accommodation facilities. The Cuban premier refused. Castro had a more dramatic move in mind, which he disclosed to his immediate aides, among them Carlos Franqui: he and the entire Cuban delegation would pitch tents in New York's Central Park.[15] This was intended to embarrass Washington beyond measure, as well as vividly dramatize Cuba's global position as a victim of North American discriminatory treatment and aggression. When Castro apprised Robert Taber and Richard Gibson of his intentions, however, the FPCC leaders had a still more outrageous idea: to lodge Castro and his retinue in America's largest black ghetto . . . Harlem![16] Castro seized upon the plan enthusiastically. "¡Vamos a darle un gran golpe a los Americanos!" ¡We will deal the Americans a strong blow!" he is reported to have told his entourage.[17]

As soon as the U.S. State Department heard of Castro's intentions, the secretary of state hurriedly stepped in to prevent him from exploiting the U.S. racial situation. The elegant Commodore Hotel suddenly offered free lodging to the entire Cuban delegation. It was too late.[18] "Fidel and his men packed their bags and moved to Harlem, at the same time issuing incendiary declarations against racial discrimination in the United States."[19]

Knowledge of Castro's presence in Harlem, once the cultural capital of black America, spread like wildfire among its residents. In a matter of hours, hundreds of Blacks surrounded the Hotel Theresa in swelling throngs, effectively blocking traffic in the area. Castro's success in defying and mortifying the American colossus, wrote an observer, "made him a hero . . . to much larger numbers of Negroes ready to cheer any challenger of white American power. Great crowds turned out to greet the white Cuban Castro when, in pursuit of his own shrewd exploitation of the racial tensions in the United States, he came to Harlem."[20] America's neglected "little Africa," delighted at suddenly being thrust into the world's spotlight, was bursting with excitement.

As soon as Castro and his retinue had moved to Harlem, Havana's propaganda machinery went into full gear. "Cuban propaganda emphasized the racial integration of the revolutionary island, and the contrast with previous regimes, under which Negroes had been effectively excluded from the smarter tourist regions—except, of course, for entertainers or servants—so as not to upset white visitors from the United States. Negro newspapers in the United States noted and approved, while throughout the Americas, leaders of the dark-skinned poor relayed the message."[21]

Mass rallies were convened throughout Cuba by the labor unions, the Cuban Communist party, and the Movimiento 26 de Julio to denounce the Ku Klux Klan and American racism. Cuban radio, television, and newspapers produced stories of the New York police beating Blacks near the Hotel Theresa for shouting, "We want Castro!" A rally of one million Cubans was called together in Havana to protest "the discrimination against Fidel," which was likened to that practiced against U.S. Blacks and black Cubans prior to the Revolution.[22] Maj. Raúl Castro, who was deputizing for Fidel as premier, told his cheering audience: "A victorious enemy gave orders to close

the doors of the hotels but must now watch impotently as the heroic population of Harlem opens its doors to our prime minister. . . . The truth, the justice and the logic of the Cuban revolution have pierced the walls of lies . . . winning over the hearts of twenty million oppressed Blacks in the United States."[31]

To the delight of the predominantly black crowd, Raul Castro skillfully brought to mind the opening of hotels, one of the first achievements of Castro's desegregation drive. Encouraged by the shouts of the crowd ("Fidel, free American Negroes too!" "Fidel, turn Harlem into another Sierra Maestra!" "Fidel, sí, Ku Klux Klan, no!"), Raul Castro went on to compare the racial question in Cuba with that in the U.S., and to link both to the struggle being waged in the Congo:

> To our black brothers of the North, and to those who, led by the patriot Patrice Lumumba, are at this very moment struggling in the Congo, we extend our grateful greetings in the one and fraternal solidarity to the other. The Cuban nation knows that among its people there flows a fraternity based on blood kinship and identity with those who are their brothers and who are fighting European colonialism and imperialism in revolutionary Africa. The people of Cuba today unite in grateful solidarity with the entire American people whose friendship they want to develop, but especially with our . . . [ten] million black American brothers who are the most exploited and humiliated of all. To them go out our friendship and solidarity. [ibid.]

Raul Castro's words signaled an entirely new direction in Castroite foreign policy. The "linkage" proposed in the "Carbonell Plan" had now become a fact: Cuba's domestic Africa, the U.S.'s "little Africa," and continental Africa were now interconnected ethno-political factors in Havana's thinking. In that light, Castro's Harlem performance was not merely a propaganda stunt, but a major tactical victory on three fronts. Cuban Blacks had been made to feel that their Maximo Lider was being subjected by the Yankees to the same segregationist treatment they themselves had experienced for centuries. U.S. Blacks began to consider the bearded Hispanic from Havana as their personal liberator. And the leaders of the newly independent African states massed in New York for the Assembly meeting looked upon Castro with new eyes. The short- and long-term political gains for the Cuban revolution from Castro's Harlem performance were therefore incalculable.

Castro's political cunning, his penchant for effective theatrics, and his capable handling of the racial weapon were abundantly illustrated throughout his stay in the U.S. At first he refused to appear before immense crowds chanting "FI-DEL, FI-DEL, FI-DEL!" below his hotel windows. Castro prolonged the suspense for an entire day.[34] In the meantime, he had put through a call to his brother in Havana requesting that Maj. Juan Almeida Bosque—black chief of the army and Castro's most loyal follower since the days of Moncada—be sent immediately to New York.[35] Almeida, in the easternmost part of Cuba at the time, was hurriedly taken to Havana and sent off to New York to join the until then all-white Cuban delegation [ibid.].

No sooner had Almeida arrived in Harlem on September 21 than Castro, bowing at last to the "will of the masses," appeared at his balcony window smiling and waving, his right arm over the shoulders of his trusted black aide. The sight brought a veritable explosion of joy from the huge crowd of Blacks.[36] To maximize the effect of Almeida's presence, Castro urged him to take a walk in the streets of Harlem and mix with the crowd in the company of Agrarian Reform Institute chief Capt. Antonio Nuñez Jimenez.[37] Delighted, the crowd cheered Almeida and waved signs that read "U.S. Jim Crows Fidel Just Like U.S. Jim Crows Us Negroes!" Next day, the Cuban press headlined "Thousands of Americans Cheered Almeida While He Walked Around Harlem," "'Brother!' Was the Shout of the People to Almeida."[38] In an evocative front-page photo, *Revolución* depicted Cuba's white foreign minister, Raul Roa Garcia, lunching at what it described as a Blacks-only Harlem cafeteria [ibid.].

On September 20, the day after his move into Harlem, Castro received a visit from the man who had pledged to keep him in power with nuclear missiles. Stepping out of his black limousine into Castro's open arms, Nikita Khrushchev, all smiles, warmly hugged the Cuban leader on the sidewalk in front of the Theresa Hotel. Cheers and prolonged applause came from the huge crowd of black Americans gathered around the hotel. That an encounter sealing the Soviet-Cuban marriage had taken place in America's "little Africa" was symbolic of things to come. Khrushchev was certainly just as aware as Castro of the impression their rendezvous in the heart of Afro-America would have on the leaders of the Afro-Asian bloc.[39]

Revealingly, Castro's first encounter with official Africa took place on September 22 in the impersonal U.N. building rather than in Harlem—America's grassroots Africa—as Castro would have evidently preferred. Only Nasser and Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru followed Khrushchev's example and journeyed up to Harlem to meet the Cuban leader.[40] The U.N. building was also the site for Castro's meetings with Marshal Tito, Ahmed Sukarno, and the other leaders of the non-aligned movement.

News of these meetings was unwelcome in Washington, where plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion were already in progress.[11] Perhaps in an attempt to recoup some of the terrain lost to Castro, President Eisenhower threw a lavish luncheon at the Waldorf Astoria for Third World representatives. Shunning the event, Castro organized his own. "I will have lunch with the humble people," Castro told the press, and he invited the entire black staff of the Theresa Hotel to eat with him.

The previous day, he had met with a group of prominent American radicals, including Robert Williams, and been visited by Black Muslim leader Malcolm X. Suspecting that Castro sought to use the plight of U.S. Blacks to score a "psychological coup over the U.S. State Department," Malcolm X remained noncommittal during their meeting.[12] Questioned by journalists on his impressions of the reception given him by black America, Castro replied: "Before coming to the United States we already enjoyed great sympathy among American Negroes because we have always fought against racial discrimination and for equality. We enjoyed that sympathy before coming, but now it has increased even more. American Negroes have grasped one great human truth: that everyone is happy in Cuba."[13]

On September 25, the eve of Castro's marathon five-hour speech to the General Assembly, the FPCC organized a reception for him at the Theresa Hotel, to which only the cream of the left-wing black intellectual community was invited. As one author described this event, "Fidel Castro arrived rather late, and was immediately surrounded by a group of Negroes, each as imposing in stature as Fidel himself. They flung themselves into his open arms. Everyone else then wanted to follow their example, and there were a few moments of pandemonium."[14] Foremost among the black celebrities at the reception was Robert Williams. Already on good terms with Castro, Williams's name would thereafter become inextricably linked with Havana's drive to exploit the American racial situation to its advantage.

Flanked by Major Almeida and an imposing retinue of bodyguards, Castro called Theresa Hotel manager Love B. Woods to his side and presented him with a bust of Jose Marti inscribed, "He who incites and propagates racial hatred and opposition is sinning against mankind." Amid thunderous applause, the black FPCC executive, Richard Gibson, then offered Castro a bust of Abraham Lincoln with the words "from one liberator to another liberator."[15]

Castro Upstages African Leaders

The Fifteenth General Assembly was taking place at a time when American Blacks were increasingly Africa-conscious, demanding their basic human rights and reclaiming their African cultural heritage. By moving into Harlem, Castro had usurped the Africans' eminence in the eyes of U.S. Blacks. Safely ensconced in their luxurious Manhattan hotel suites, most of Africa's new leaders seemed intent on impressing the western world with their sophisticated, political behavior. Africa's leaders had confined their Afro-American contacts to the elite, while Castro had plunged into the heart of America's largest and most effervescent black "ghetto." Cuba's Caudillo was not hampered by a sense of inferiority to western society, of which he was a highly born member, nor was he bound to be politic vis-à-vis the U.S. His main objective in coming to New York had been to undermine the foundations of American foreign and domestic policy, thereby beating the Yankees at their own game of innuendo, half-truth, and propaganda.

By capitalizing on the U.S.'s racial situation Castro had psychologically outflanked Africa's most politically radical leaders on their own terrain. Acute awareness of this fact may have prevented men like Nkrumah and Toure from meeting Castro in Harlem, which had become stolen ground. More than any other African leader, Nkrumah would have been painfully aware that Castro had put him at a severe disadvantage.[16] Ghana's president had done most of his higher studies in black U.S. universities. He had a long history of close friendship with prominent New World Blacks (e.g., George Padmore, W. E. B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, Alpheus Hunton). Nkrumah naturally had intended his first visit to the U.S. as head of state of black Africa's first independent country to be a sort of homecoming (ibid.). But Castro's theatrics had effectively upstaged his anticipated triumph.

Castro's political pyrotechnics and seductive charisma succeeded in impressing the Afro-Asian leaders as well as U.S. Blacks. Initially, Nasser's "suspicion of Castro's theatricality and his own preoccupation with events in the Middle East made [him] shy away from involvement with Castro."[17] However, the Cuban Caudillo's ability to muster the support of black America strongly impressed the de facto chief of the non-aligned movement. Nasser's importance to Castro was underscored by the fact that he was the first non-aligned leader contacted by the Cuban revolution through Che Guevara. In addition, three months prior to the General Assembly, Raul Castro himself had

led the Cuban delegation attending the anniversary celebrations of the Nasserite revolution (ibid., 312).

At their meeting in Harlem on September 23, Castro's courtship of Nasser bore fruit. "Nasser met Fidel Castro for the first time in New York . . . Castro repeated what Guevara had said about the encouragement given them in 1956 by the way Egypt had stood up to the British, French and Israelis over Suez and had come out on top . . . Nasser went to visit him up there in the New York black ghetto and he wanted to propose that if the Americans made it impossible for Castro to attend the United Nations then the United Nations would have to be moved to some other country" (ibid., 313, 314). The fact that both Nasser and Nehru journeyed uptown to Harlem could be seen as a victory in Castro's campaign for protection by the Afro-Asian bloc, though the proposal to convene a tricontinental non aligned summit in Havana did not go down well.

Foreign Minister Raul Roa had even traveled to Belgrade earlier in 1960 to convince Marshal Tito to convene a "Conference of Hungry Nations" in Havana. Had it materialized, such a summit would have transformed Havana into the Latin American pole of non-alignment—a tremendous psychological and diplomatic blow to Washington. Afro-Asian leaders, however, were unwilling to accept such a proposal. In New York, the Caudillo insisted on the idea, was turned down, and grudgingly left matters at that. (Six years later, he convened a Tricontinental congress in Havana but that, too was stillborn.)

The "Castro Doctrine" on Africa

In a private interview with leftist French journalist K. S. Karol, Castro revealed his strategy for the following day. His speech to the U.N., he told Karol, would link Cuba's predicament to those of the Congo and Algeria. "With a somber expression and in a confidential tone of voice," Karol later wrote, "he informed us that his speech to the United Nations the next day would be very hard to put across. 'Cuba's case is almost identical with that of the Congo and Algeria,' he said."[40]

When Fidel Castro addressed the U.N. General Assembly on the afternoon of September 26, he was assured of an overwhelmingly positive reception. As one analyst pointed out, "Between the Bandung Conference and its successor, the Belgrade Conference of 1961, in which Cuba participated and obtained significant support, twenty-one new independent states were carved out of British and French colonial possessions in Africa . . . In all circumstances . . . sovereignty was a word to take seriously. Thus when Fidel Castro's Cuba appeared on the scene in the United Nations, there were scores of Afro-Asian countries prepared to give it a sympathetic hearing."[41]

Castro began disarmingly by detailing the harassment that had forced his delegation to seek refuge in "a modest hotel, a Negro hotel in Harlem."[42] The Cuban premier said he was aware that "to some gentlemen, a modest hotel in Harlem, where the Negroes of the United States live, could not be anything but a brothel" (ibid.). After a long historical review of Cuban-U.S. relations, Castro concluded that his country's position was not exceptional. "Cuba's is not an isolated case. It would be a mistake to think so. Cuba's case is that of all the underdeveloped countries; it resembles that of the Congo, of Egypt, Algeria . . . In short, although we have not referred specifically to the rest, the case of Cuba is that of all the underdeveloped and colonial countries" (ibid., 130).

Establishing a parallel between Col. Joseph Mobutu, who had just deposed the legitimate Lumumba government, and dictator Batista, Castro condemned foreign intervention in the Congo and pledged Havana's backing for the Lumumbists. Cuba would also support the Algerian and South African revolutionary struggles. "We are, therefore, on the side of the Algerian people, as we are on the side of the remaining colonial peoples in Africa and on the side of the Negroes against whom discrimination is exercised in the Union of South Africa" (ibid., 132).

Alternately speaking as the authoritative, self-confident leader of a major power, then as a plaintive representative of a poor, beleaguered Third World nation victimized by the bullying tactics of a superpower, Castro repeatedly drove his point home. Cuba was an American colony. "The difficulties which the people of Cuba have had with the imperialist Government of the United States are the same difficulties as Saudi Arabia, or Iran or Iraq, would encounter if they nationalized their oil. The same difficulties were encountered by Egypt when it, quite rightly, nationalized the Suez Canal . . . Instances of the nature of these difficulties are provided by the surprise attack upon Egypt, and the surprise invasion of the Congo" (ibid., 131).

The revolutionary process unfolding in Cuba, according to Castro, was an integral part of the general movement towards decolonization in Africa. Cuba was a non-aligned state, struggling to recover its national sovereignty. Cuba was opposed to military and ideological

black Cuba was opposed to colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid.

The attention of African leaders focused less on the historical background of Cuban-U.S. relations and their present conflict than on Castro's pointed insistence on establishing a parallel between Africa and Cuba. In fact, the Cuban premier had devoted about one hour of his U.N. address to stress that point. Self-confidently, Castro singled out for flattery those African leaders who met with his approval. He praised their continent as "that Africa which we are beginning to know today, not the Africa pictured on the map or in novels and Hollywood films, not the Africa of semi-naked tribesmen armed with spears, ready to run away at the first clash with the white hero, that white hero who became more heroic the more African natives he killed" (ibid., 133).

The neo-abolitionist imagery that had endeared Castro to black Cuba surfaced once again as he spoke to his U.N. audience of the New Africa. Adopting a fatherly tone,[41] while African leaders listened intently, Castro now proclaimed:

> [T]he Africa we see represented here by leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré, the Africa of Nasser's Arab world [is] the true Africa, the oppressed continent, the exploited continent, the continent which was the birthplace of millions of slaves, this Africa whose past is so full of anguish. To this Africa we have a duty: we must save it from the danger of destruction (italics added).[42]

Cuba supported the proposal made by Ghana "that Africa should be cleared of military bases and thus of nuclear weapon bases, in other words the proposal to free Africa from the perils of atomic war" (ibid.). Castro asked: "Why should we not also go forward toward freeing certain parts of the world from the danger of nuclear war?" (ibid.) That much the world owed Africa, he said:

> Let the other countries make some recompense! Let the West make up a little for what it has made Africa suffer, by preserving it from the danger of atomic war and declaring it a free zone as far as this peril is concerned. Let no atomic bases be established there! Even if we can do nothing else, let this continent at least remain a sanctuary where human life may be preserved! (ibid.)

Castro's insistence that Africa be "saved" from destruction betrayed the sense of mission that would thereafter characterize Havana's growing involvement in African affairs. And one cannot avoid drawing parallels between his protective concern for the black continent and his paternalistic approach to Cuba's domestic Africa.

He seemed imbued with the same "sense of duty of a member of the elite who believed that he knew what he must determine the aims and lead the masses to a happier future."[43] Despite his lavish praise of those African leaders who met with his approval (Lumumba, Nkrumah, Touré), it is questionable whether Castro considered them to be his equals.

The Cuban leader's first major policy statement of the "Castro Doctrine" on Africa can be summarized in three main points: Cuba and Africa are linked by historical bonds (the slave trade) and by common contemporary realities (underdevelopment and decolonization); Cuba supports those forces on the black continent whose anti-imperialism qualifies them as the most representative voices of the "New Africa." Finally, Cuba has a duty to perform towards Africa: to protect her from the manifold dangers of imperialism.

Castro's was an impressive showing at the U.N. He proved his ability to galvanize black America, to put Washington on the defensive, and to influence the very Third World leaders Moscow was so assiduously courting. These factors have great tactical importance to Soviet policy makers. Castro's triumph in America's "little Africa," his newly formed connections with continental Africa, signaled the sort of latitude Cuba could enjoy on the black continent.

The penetration of Africa and the Arab Middle East were the Kremlin's top strategic priorities in the Third World. Castro's claim ascendancy over the chief Afro-Asian leaders—particularly those of Africa—must have given Moscow much pause. On the other hand, for all his talk of "colorblindness," the white leader of revolutionary Cuba already had his eyes riveted on a goal to which he would assign a growing priority and increased resources: the extension of Cuba's political influence to black Africa. To this end, Fidel Castro would thereafter strain his rhetorical ingenuity to the breaking point to define and project an Afrophilic foreign policy profile.

7 THE NEW AFRICAN POLICY AT HOME

[It would take some years for the full political impact and African repercussions of his Harlem performance to be assessed, but Fidel Castro's first major victory in his courtship of black Africa was certainly his visit to Harlem. The Cuban leader returned from his U.N. expedition in triumph and immediately addressed a mass rally, threatening to seize the American-owned Nicaro nickel mines, excoriating American racism, the Ku Klux Klan, and the colonial domination of Africa. Castro's message was clear: his regime was fighting the same enemy which oppressed black Africa and kept American Blacks at bay. "There are in the very entrails of the U.S. empire," he said, "twenty million oppressed and exploited Negroes whose aspirations cannot be met with a fistful of dollars. It is a much more serious problem because such aspirations can only be satisfied with justice!" (ibid.) He then announced that two of Africa's most prestigious leaders—Gamal Abdel Nasser and Kwame Nkrumah—would be visiting Cuba within the next few months.[3] (However, neither was ever to show up in Cuba.)

Indeed, Castro had pulled off a great coup with long-lasting effects and implications. He had diplomatically defeated the world's foremost superpower, politically dwarfed the most radical Afro-Asian leaders, and, psychologically, begun to cast a protective shadow on a most strategic zone in the Third World. Havana's self-proclaimed duty to "save Africa" from imperialism appears to be a subtle transfer onto the black continent of the ethno-political strategy Castro had successfully applied to Cuba's domestic Africa. Yet at the historic U.N. meeting in September 1960, Kwame Nkrumah had outlined a sort of "Hands-off Doctrine" for Africa. Guinean President Sékou Touré had warned that "Africa has ceased becoming a prey to become herself."[4] (As Touré spoke before the U.N., the world press was headlining uprisings by and massacres of Blacks in Rhodesia, the fierce struggle in the Congo, and the widening offensive of the FLN forces in Algeria.[5])

The day following the Guinean leader's U.N. address, the Democratic party candidate for the U.S. presidency, John F. Kennedy—a personal friend of Touré and the man Castro had called "an illiterate millionaire" during his U.N. speech—echoed Touré's stand. Employing the "neglect-of-Africa" theme in his campaign against Republican rival Richard Nixon, Kennedy had declared, "We must ally ourselves with the surging tide of nationalism in Africa."[5] Both Castro and Kennedy had decided on strategies which depended on alliance with Africa. The coincidence of the strategies of the aspiring American president and the embattled Caudillo even extended to their choice of Sékou Touré as the African leader who was most suitable for such purposes. Assiduously courted by both Washington and Havana, Touré's ambivalent loyalties would thereafter color his relationship with both governments. They would eventually become a major obstacle to Castro's first attempt to create an African bridgehead.

"Africa, Finally!"

Castro's African strategy seemed to have begun to yield results in early October of 1960 when an Egyptian delegation, headed by Egypt's Minister of Economy Abdel Mounem Kaysouni arrived in Havana.[6] Then, on October 8, the Cuban leadership announced the imminent arrival of Sékou Touré. (*Revolución* devoted a full page to reproducing the most significant portions of the Guinean leader's speech to the U.N.)[7] The prospect of Touré's visit to Cuba naturally caused concern in Washington. Perhaps seeking to placate the U.S. by de-emphasizing a visit that for Castro was yet another grand psychological and political coup, Touré told a press conference that Cuba was merely one stop in a tour that would take him to the U.S. South, Canada, and Haiti. He pointedly remarked that the tour had been planned long in advance.[8]

With Havana threatening daily to take drastic steps against all remaining American economic interests in Cuba, both Washington and Touré may have reasonably feared that Castro would seize the occasion of his visit to dramatically announce a Cuban-style Suez coup. And, indeed, on October 14, immediately after the Guinean leader had arrived in Cuba, the Council of Ministers adopted a law nationalizing all banks, sugar refineries, railroads, building firms, and other American-owned interests in Cuba.[9] Phillip Bonsal, the U.S. ambassador to Cuba, was promptly recalled for "prolonged consultations."[10]

Castro had succeeded in making his first African ally an unwilling eyewitness to his escalating conflict with the most powerful superpower. It is not unlikely that both Nasser and Nkrumah, whom Castro had invited to Cuba at the same time as Touré, demurred out of fear of being manipulated into just such a highly embarrassing situation. But exactly two years later—at the height of the October missile crisis—Touré would categorically refuse to take the next step, from witness to accomplice.

Touré's two-day stay in Cuba was emotionally charged for the majority of Cuba's population of West African origin. Coming from the farthest corners, black Cubans had poured into Havana hoping for a glimpse of the African leader. The throngs that lined Touré's route from the airport to the capital could be heard shouting "Africa! Africa! Africa!"[11] *Revolución* reported that a black woman broke down, crying, "Africa, finally! . . . "[12] For the occasion, the newspaper recalled the slave trade that had transplanted hundreds of thousands of West Africans to Cuba, emphasizing that a good many of them had come from Guinea (ibid.). Touré thus appeared to be the living embodiment of a new phase in the historical process that had linked Cuba to Africa since the sixteenth century.

For black Cubans, Touré's visit was cause for ethnic pride, for it was the first time they had seen a black head of state. "When I saw Touré," explained one Cuban Black, "I had to fight back tears. For the first time in my life I felt proud to be Black. . . . I was brought up to think of Africans as naked savages living in trees. But here was an African who was a president! Now I am dying to go over there and see what it's really like."[13]

Black Cuba's pride in Touré's visit provided all the more reason for solidifying its bonds of gratitude with the regime and the man who had made such a thing possible, as Castro had most likely banked on. The Caudillo's intention to fully capitalize on Touré's visit, both for domestic and external purposes, was evident from the start. On hand at the airport to welcome the Guinean president and flanking the Castro brothers and Ché Guevara were Cuba's black army chief, Maj. Juán Almeida Bosque, and the black deputy foreign minister, Dr. Carlos Olivares, who was suddenly removed from his high-ranking post some months after Touré's visit and sent to Moscow as ambassador. (A lawyer, well-versed in international affairs, and a veteran member of the Cuban Communist party, Olivares had been instrumental in Castro's earlier "racial reform" drive. He fought the idea of proportional ethnic representation in the revolutionary cabinet

as a "reactionary" black demand. He eventually fell from favor with Castro, and was summarily recalled from Moscow and consigned to obscurity in the early sixties.]

Saluting Touré's arrival, Odon Alvarez de la Campa, secretary general for foreign affairs of the powerful Confederation of Cuban Workers, said, "Today we host the liberator of a territory from whence a long time ago another abominable imperialism took slaves and brought them to our land. Thanks to the January revolution and the abolition of an archaic and unjust system of racial discrimination, these [former slaves] have now become our brothers!"[14] *Revolución* devoted full pages to the history of Guinea and to a biography of Touré that compared him favorably to Cuba's own Liberador [ibid., 16]. "With Sékou Touré and Fidel Castro," proclaimed one article, "Africa and Latin America, which share a great many common traditions, have met again" [ibid.]. *Lunes de Revolución*, the weekly voice of the Castroite intelligentsia, transformed an entire fifteen-page issue into a supplement entitled "Africa Today."[15]

Toure ended his visit with much fanfare. Cuba and Guinea had signed cooperation agreements that included scholarships granted by Havana for training Guinean students in Cuba. It is not insignificant that in the first accord between the Castroite regime and an African country, Cuba appeared as the donor and Guinea as the recipient. The terms of that relationship were never to be reversed. The political and intellectual initiative of Cuban/African relations that Castro had taken at the fifteenth General Assembly was being consolidated in concrete terms.

Havana's desire to quickly consolidate its first African connection was evident in the deliberate speed with which a Cuban ambassador was sent to Conakry less than two months after Touré's visit. The man chosen for the post, Dr. Salvador Garcia Aguero, was a veteran Communist party theoretician on the racial question, and, appropriately, black. Conakry's own envoy, Ambassador Soumah Naby Issa, arrived in Havana one year later. This may well have been another indication of Touré's cautiousness in not wanting to be implicated any further in an already complex situation.

"Blood Links" vs. Realpolitik

The Castroite leadership may have underestimated the full emotional and ethnic impact of Touré's visit on Black Cuba. As Carbonell had insisted, Africa lay powerfully dormant in the psyche of most Cubans despite centuries of adverse propaganda and degrading stereotypes. Touré's arrival in Cuba had unquestionably awakened a sleeping giant that Castro had intended to keep indefinitely at rest with his integrationist racial reform drive of the previous year. Latent in Black Cuba's response to the Guinean president was evidence of a strong, clandestine ethno-cultural nationalism. Men like Carlos Franqui, who had criticized Castro's cavalier approach to Black Cuba, saw the full implications of the event. "Sékou Touré's visit to Cuba in 1960 was that year's most important event for Cuba, viewed from the angle of the ethnic and cultural structure of Cuban society," he said. The Cuban population was basically derived from two original cradles, Africa and Spain. "But while white Cubans had found a powerful and emotional theme of identification with Spain, the other Cuba, which originated in Africa—black Cuba—continued to be ignored and despised. The real beginning of a rediscovery of Africa and of the black world as such began in 1960 and was highlighted by Sékou Touré's visit to Cuba. . . . In a concrete sense, Touré's visit brought to the surface the question of what I may call 'clandestine Cuba'—black Cuba!"[16]

Taking full advantage of Sékou Touré's visit, the man who had provided Castro with the first Afrocentric foreign policy strategy went on the offensive. Increasingly pessimistic about the regime's handling of the ethnic question in Cuba, Walterio Carbonell grew apprehensive of the motives behind Castro's courtship of the black continent. An Afrocentric foreign policy, in his opinion, was either inseparable from the revalorization of Cuba's domestic Africa or it was a political fraud.[17] In a provocative essay published by *Revolución* while Touré was still on Cuban soil, Carbonell reminded the Cuban leadership that it was chiefly Africans from the Guinean Gulf who had built Cuba's prosperity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[18] These very slaves, he insisted, had also freed Cuba from the Spanish yoke. Moreover, their relentless struggle against slavery and colonialism had been the incubator of Cuban national consciousness [ibid.]. The underlying message seemed clear: the regime's desegregationist emphasis fell far below the accumulated exigencies of centuries of ethnic, economic, and cultural oppression. Access to the beaches, hotels, restaurants, and work centers was no substitute for the ethnic democratization of Cuba's new cultural and socio-political structures.

Carbonell hailed Toure's visit as a landmark for Black Cuba. He reminded that it was "Spanish colonialism [which] severed the relations of kinship and friendship between Cuban Blacks and the Blacks of Africa."

> We must have the courage to say it: in Cuba *only the Blacks have kept alive the old religions* of Africa. They were severely persecuted for it by Spanish colonial domination as well as by the so-called "Cuban" governments that bowed and scraped to American imperialism. Blacks are the only ones to have upheld the living memory of the motherland Africa! Up till today, Africa continues to be a taboo continent in Cuba. Till now no one has shown an interest in Africa's cultures or its political currents, whether reformist or radical. It was felt that being a black continent, the cultures or political aspirations of Blacks were unworthy of consideration. Only a revolutionary government such as that led by Fidel Castro could have shown interest in Africa and invited to Cuba the most radical of its leaders: Sékou Touré. Many rains have had to fall on Cuba and Guinea for these two peoples, united by blood, cultural traditions, music, customs and psychology, to have reunited [Italics added.] (ibid.).

Despite its laudatory tone for the Castroite regime, Carbonell's article implied clear warnings: the revolutionary government's sudden interest in black Africa should not be utilitarian; the attitude adopted towards Cuba's predominant Africanity would be the test of its sincerity; the revalorization of Black Cuba had to go hand-in-hand with a political concern over continental Africa. In this regard, the Castro government's position on Afro-Cuban religions, the repository of Cuba's most powerful cultural distinctiveness, was fundamental.

Domestic Repercussions

The domestic implications of Carbonell's essay could not have escaped Castro's attention. The Caudillo's reaction to the trend awakened by Touré's visit came less than six months afterward, when Carbonell amplified his criticism of the regime's attitude towards Afro-Cuban culture in a highly controversial book, *Crítica: Cómo surgió la cultura nacional*. Cuba's home-grown cultures, it claimed, were essentially African culture in another dynamic setting; Cuba's national consciousness was forged in the slave insurrections of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the still prevalent official history of Cuba was anti-Black; the whole edifice of white supremacy remained standing despite the Revolution's racial reform. Pointing an accusing finger at "those who are revolutionaries and have contributed to liberating our country from the domination of the bourgeoisie, but are incapable of liberating themselves from the ideological power of the bourgeoisie,"[19] Carbonell found it ominous that the regime still refused to take a stand on Afro-Cuban religions. Afro-Cuban religions, he pointed out, were the marrow of Cuban popular culture. The government's refusal to see them in that light could only open the doors to reactionary and racist cultural policies within the new revolutionary setting. For Afro-Cubans, wrote Carbonell, African religions "prevented Spanish colonialism from destroying their rich ancestral experience."

> Thanks to the vitality of these religions, black music could survive: the rhythms and music that gave birth to Cuban music, the highest expression of our culture. I have said that these religious organizations have played a politically and culturally progressive role in the forging of our nationality. This statement may surprise many, because up till now the contrary thesis has prevailed, that is, that black religions are a manifestation of savagery. That was precisely the view upheld by the ideologues of Spanish colonialism and their progenitor, the reactionary bourgeoisie. . . . As a matter of fact, the silence of certain revolutionary writers concerning the political and cultural role of these cults of African origin is becoming highly suspect (ibid., 108).

Less than three months after publication, Carbonell's book was withdrawn from circulation, then banned on Castro's orders. Carbonell was subsequently removed from the Cuban foreign ministry, attacked as a "provocateur" by high-ranking officials, and consigned to obscurity. The man who had awakened Castro's interest in Africa would be made to pay dearly for that very Pan-Africanism. The Castro regime, simply, was developing divergent policies towards Afro-Cuba and continental Africa.[20]

The official birth of Cuba's African policy, dramatized by Sékou Touré's visit in October 1960, coincided with the resumption of a silent, protracted, and relentless war against Afro-Cuban religions and also against any autonomous ethno-cultural manifestations by Cuban Blacks.[21] Three weeks after Touré's visit, a six-month long seminar on ethnology, "folklore," and culture was convened by the Cuban government's cultural and educational affiliates. The seminar led to the organization of an Instituto Nacional de Etnología y Folklore in December 1961.[22] Headed by two Hispanic Cubans, Dr. Argeliers Leon and Isaac Barreal, the Institute's role was to research the full impact of Afro-Cuban music, dance, mannerisms, national psychology, and traditions.

From the outset, the study of Afro-Cuban religions and brotherhoods (Mayombe, Lucumí, Arara, Abacuá) was one of the Institute's priorities. To judge by the pressing tone with which the beginning of such studies was announced, ulterior motives underlay this sudden interest: "Religious sects of African origin will be continuously

researched. Studies will be centered on those sects which have come into conflict with the Revolution."[13] Actually, what was being announced was a frontal assault on Afro-Cuban religions reminiscent of the destruction in the previous year of the Sociedades de Color (Colored Societies.) The first step in that direction was a concerted effort to represent Cuba's African heritage as being "exotic" and "folkloric."

Derogatorily termed "sects" in pre-revolutionary days, Afro-Cuban religious fraternities had been systematically portrayed as "atavistic," "primitive," and even "criminal." They were accused of being a major hindrance to Cuba's "modernization." Castro himself had come to power with these opinions.[14] He even considered abolishing Afro-Cuban carnivals, replacing them with Spanish *comidas*, or bullfights (ibid.). Out of his personal distaste for drums, Castro restricted drumming in public places.[15] The growing restrictions imposed on Afro-Cuban religions and festivities as of 1961 were perhaps as much the result of Castro's negative view of black Cuban culture as they were of the apprehensions aroused by Sékou Touré's visit.[16]

The regime's struggle to stamp out Afro-Cuban religious fraternities became a permanent feature of Castroite policy towards Cuba's domestic Africa. Religious leaders began suffering arrest and at times imprisonment in the mid-sixties, and at least one case of execution by firing squad was reported by the end of the decade.[17] Sacred rituals were converted into "folkloric" ballets, and rigid discrimination was exercised against cult members in employment. In 1976, a Lucumí leader was to tell an African journalist, "After the Revolution—in 1972 to be exact—the leadership of the Communist party informed us that thereafter we would have to secure authorization from the CDR before celebrating any of our ceremonies. The CDR is an adjunct of the State Police and we have been refused permission over and again."[18] The Yoruba religion is, however, one of the most important African belief systems in Cuba. About 75 percent of the Afro-Cuban population belongs to it, as well as an ever-growing number of whites. "Catholics do not need permission from the CDR to celebrate their mass," explained the religious leader. "My own son was refused membership in the Communist party because to become a member one has to 'lead a clean life,' be a 'good worker' and have a good 'Marxist-Leninist conscience.' I have come to suspect that my own activities [as a religious leader] caused him to be refused membership" (ibid. 44–45).

The journalist also interviewed a black Cuban couple, the wife a gynecologist, the husband an engineer, who described their predicament as "cult" members. "As far as we Blacks are concerned, there have indeed been changes. My father was a cult leader. When he died I took his place. The cults are what keep us permanently in touch with the Africa of our ancestors. That's all we now have left. At any rate, that's all we had left of our African origins. The change is that even that is being taken away from us. . . . The question we now ask ourselves is: did Cuban Blacks originate in a Spanish province?" (ibid., 44–45).

Summing up his interviews, the journalist remarked that "Adepts of the various Afro-Cuban religions have been arrested for having organized ceremonies outside of the days specifically stipulated by the government. The ceremonies of certain Afro-Cuban cults have been declared incompatible with a Socialist society. Of note is the use of the term sect by the Institute of Folklore to designate African religions in Cuba. The term is in itself significant. Moreover, the dances, music, and sacred ceremonials of the cults, all of which have profound religious meaning, have been mounted as 'folkloric spectacles' for the amusement and distraction of visiting foreign delegations to Cuba, as well as for Cuban audiences. . . . What I was witnessing was an attempt to destroy the values of an entire culture" (ibid., 45).

Anthropologist William Bascom, who studied Afro-Cuban religions for many years, underlined their power just prior to Fidel Castro's seizure of power in 1959. "The worship of African deities, as it is practiced in Cuba today, is known as *santería*," he explained. "Santería is a vital, growing institution, practiced throughout the entire length of the island, in both rural and urban areas, in the latter, in fact, it is probably the strongest. In recent years it seems to have been expanding, recruiting additional members from the Negro, the mixed, and even the white population."[19] Bascom noted.

> The African elements of santería are predominantly Yoruba, or Lucumí, as the Yoruba of Nigeria are called in Cuba. . . . The Yoruba influence is also recognizable throughout Cuba, despite regional variations, in the names of the Yoruba deities, in similarities to Yoruba ritual, in the Yoruba cities named by Cuban Negroes as homes of their ancestors, and in individuals who can still speak the Yoruba language. On a quick trip in the summer of 1948, more than eighty years after slavery, it was possible to find Cuban Negroes in towns from one end of the island to the other, and in Havana itself, with whom I could talk in Yoruba. (ibid.)

By the end of the 1960s, and in a way reminiscent of the days of Spanish domination, Afro-Cuban religions were "characterized by government officials as prone toward criminal activity."[30] The final declaration of the first National Congress on Education and Culture in 1971 stated: "The Congress considers that juvenile delinquency in its distinctive manifestations forms part of the social pathology which must be observed, controlled and repressed on a national scale . . . , and following a preliminary study of the causes and factors which produce it, the following points were examined: The importance of mental backwardness and school retardation in the development of this phenomenon. . . . The incidence of problems arising from some religious sects, especially some of African origin (ñáñigo and abacuá)."[31] This statement, notes Jorge I. Dominguez, is reminiscent of those made by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in his *Hampa afrocubana* (1910), where he stressed the "criminality" of Afro-Cuban religions.[32]

After conducting a series of interviews with religious leaders in Cuba during the summer of 1976, Michel Legre, an African journalist from Ivory Coast, wrote that Afro-Cuban religious meetings had to be conducted clandestinely, with official approval secured in advance. "My informants, all black Cubans who supported the Revolution, told me that African religious cults were definitely being repressed," he wrote. "However, when I inquired of the officials—all white—they claimed that all religions were respected by the Revolution. Nevertheless, I kept running into a large number of black Cubans who claimed that the government was repressing black African religions. At any rate, what is for sure is that those who practice the African cults in Cuba—an impressive amount of Blacks, as I found out—did live in fear of professing their faith and were reticent to discuss the issue with a foreigner."[33] [As an analyst has pointed out, "Even the term 'Afro-Cuban' [i.e. Cuban blacks as separate and distinct] was officially discouraged."[34]]

The repressive policies inaugurated by the government against Afro-Cuban religions may have been indicative of the regime's failure to understand that black Cubans were indeed the embodiment of a distinct culture. "Whatever their origins," one analyst observed, "the various elements of the black population evolved a cohesive Afro-Cuban tradition that permeated not only the artistic and intellectual spheres of Cuban life but also the social and religious aspects, even after the Revolution. . . . In addition, the survival of African spiritualism and the existence of hundreds of societies devoted to a syncretic

worship of African saints has greatly influenced the religious life of the island. . . . [S]ome observers agreed that there might be a trend not only toward the integration but toward the assimilation of Cuban Blacks into a white-dominated society. Black intellectuals in Cuba have resisted this absorption, claiming that their culture has the right to be fully expressed—not just as an obscure, quaint, folkloric expression lacking sophistication or meaning for all Cubans."[35]

The regime's assault on the very source of Cuba's Africanity at a time when Havana was forging its first political ties with black Africa indicates that pragmatic exigencies, not sentiment, had led Castro to seek an African alliance. Cuban affairs specialist Jorge Dominguez sustains, not without reason, that the new black revolutionary elite bore a heavy responsibility for such an aberrant situation. "The policy toward Africa," he remarked, "could please enough black leaders to get them to support the Cuban government without insisting too much on changes in internal race relations: this policy toward Africa could co-opt internal support and require the least change in internal policies."[36]

It would seem all the same paradoxical that a white revolutionary regime such as Castro's, determined to play its African cards, would continue maintaining an Afrophobic stance domestically. This is not so, contended Carlos Franqui. "The white Cuban leadership is the product of an entirely different culture and outlook from that of the bulk of the Cuban people," Franqui said.

> The leadership really does not understand the way of life of that people. Where is the contradiction? First of all, in the outlook dominated by the notions of happiness and *fiesta* [enjoyment], and the outlook wherein Sparta stands as the prototypical model. The spirit of pachanga [festival]—the term itself sounds African—was an important thing in the Cuban revolution. The opposing spirit was that of the Spartan revolution. Fidel Castro's outlook is dominated by the idea of a Spartan, obedient, laboring, and heroic revolution based on sacrifice. His idea is that of a moralistic revolution. That view is inextricably bound up with the Catholic, Hispanic, and caudillista outlook. . . . The problem is not one of either "good" or "bad," but of mental structures. . . . those young men who acted as the vanguard in that revolution and became its top leaders were both white and middle class."[37]

APPENDIX 4 SURVEY: AFRICAN YOUTH AND THE CASTROITE INTERVENTION IN AFRICA[1]

Cuba's popularity in Africa has never been as strong as it was when many of its troops were permanently camped on the black continent. At the peak of Cuba's military and political involvement there, an overwhelming majority, 72.5 percent of the African youth questioned, said they approved of Cuba's military interventions in the conflicts in Angola and Ethiopia; 26 percent said they were totally against them; and only 3 percent were undecided. Given the tremendous uproar over the Cuban military presence in Africa, it was most surprising to see to what extent African young people supported it. For example, at the time when the Cuban military and political intervention was most conspicuous, 66 percent of the youth interviewed said they would like to see a Cuban-type regime in their own countries, against only 11 percent who did not agree and 22 percent who were undecided (1 percent gave no response).

When this survey was carried out, the Cuban military force in Africa had reached 40,000 soldiers as a result of the Cuban intervention in the Somalo-Ethiopian war (December 1977–March 1978), and the continuation of Cuban-Angolan military operations against the South African-supported UNITA rebels in southern Angola.

Young Africans placed Cuba (20%) well after the United States (45%) as the country where they would most like to be scholastically and professionally trained, putting Cuba just ahead of the European countries (17%) and the USSR (17%). The fascination with Cuba increased when the question was where they would most like to spend a holiday. Cuba ranked first (43%), ahead of the United States (26%), all the European countries (18.5%), and the USSR (11%).

What attracted these respondents to Cuba? Cuba's "economic progress" was admired by 27.3 percent, while 16.7 percent cite the "policy of aiding liberation movements," and 16.8 percent mention the political changes that have reportedly resulted in a real "people's democracy" in Cuba. The "installation of racial and social equality" was considered by 15.2 percent to be the greatest Castroite success. Yet a large number of those interviewed (24%) did not reply.

A Warm Welcome—For Afro-Cubans

The African youths questioned were particularly receptive to the Cuban presence in Africa. This is explained in large part by their perception of Cuba as culturally and ethnically similar to Africa. The majority (67.5%) thought that Cuba was composed primarily of Blacks and people of mixed African and Spanish origin. They felt that the Afro-Cubans were "at home in Africa" (62.5%), although 35.5 percent considered them "foreigners" and 2 percent were undecided. None of those interviewed had ever met a Cuban, and the majority (57%) did not know how they would react if they accidentally met one of their transatlantic cousins. Only 1.3 percent admitted they would be mistrustful, whereas 22.2 percent said they would try to strike up a conversation, and 19 percent said they would invite him to their homes.

Not Well-Informed

A striking result of this survey was that only 14 percent gave relatively well-informed answers about the Cuban revolution. Although the Castro regime is very popular with the African youth, they lack information on the economic, political, and social situation of a regime that 66 percent of them would like to import as a model for their own country. A significant percentage (20%), for example, were convinced that 50 percent of the Cuban leadership was of African origin ("Blacks and Mixed"). When asked to state the three greatest accomplishments of the Cuban revolution, a relatively large number did not know what to answer (24%). Those who mentioned "economic progress" as Castro's most impressive success went on to attribute feats to the Cuban revolution that not even Castro himself has suggested, including "nuclear force," "equality of income," and "industrial power."

The contrast between the Anglophone and Francophone African youth was most noticeable on this point. The young Francophones were infinitely better informed about the Cuban revolution and its African extensions than were their Anglophone counterparts. The Anglophones, however, knew more about the problems in South Africa

Cuba Yes, But . . .

What these African youths liked the most and were the most unanimous about (72.5%) was Havana's "internationalist" policy, precisely what others term its "interventionism." Cuba was seen as the

country that forced the champions of apartheid to retreat from Angola (1975–1976); that flew to the aid of an African state threatened with dismemberment (Ethiopia, 1977–1978); and that guarantees the national unity of the African states and the inviolability of their borders.

Nevertheless, there were serious reservations when it came to long-term the Castroite policy in Africa. As a student leader from the Ecole Normale Superieure in Bamako (Mali) explained in June 1979, "We'll be for Cuba as long as they're on our side, but we'll fight against them if we ever discover they're manipulating us." (Yet he was among the 27.5 percent who were convinced that the Cuban intervention in Africa was motivated by altruism.) Although the Cuban presence in Africa was overwhelmingly approved, the majority of these young people were convinced that there were "unavowed ulterior motives" behind Havana's "internationalist" actions. A considerable number (24.5%) were silent on the issue.

Anglophones: Cuba?

I had originally intended to carry out this survey both in an Anglophone African country and a Francophone African country. Senegal and Nigeria were selected.

Only nine out of a hundred questionnaires distributed to students at the University of Lagos (May 1978) were returned, and those were only half completed. The others were returned with "Don't Know" written in various places, or almost entirely covered with question marks. The attempt to substitute Ghana for Nigeria (May 1978) was equally a failure. Only three questionnaires given to the students at the University of Legon were returned entirely completed; fifteen were half filled out. I thus came to the conclusion that the young Anglophone Africans were not interested in Cuba, knew very little about it, and did not feel affected by Cuba's political and military role on their continent.

The Questionnaire

TABLE I

CUBAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFRICA

1. Do you approve of Cuba's intervention in African conflicts such as Angola's or Ethiopia's?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
Yes	90%	Yes	55%
No	10%	No	42%

TOTAL:		
	Yes	72.5%
	No	26 %
	No response	1.5%

2. Do you think that Cuba's actions in Africa have been motivated by altruism or unavowed ulterior motives?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
Altruism	33%	Altruism	22%
Unavowed ulterior motives	67%	Unavowed ulterior motives	29%

TOTAL:		
	Altruism	27.5%
	Unavowed ulterior motives	48 %
	No opinion	24.5%

TABLE II

CUBA AS A MODEL

1. Do you think that the kind of society Cuba has would be good or bad for African countries such as your own country?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
Good	84%	Good	48%
Bad	7%	Bad	15%
Undecided	9%	Undecided	35%
		No response	2%

TOTAL:		
	Good	66%
	Bad	11%
	Undecided	22%
	No response	1%

2. In which category would you place the three greatest accomplishments of the Cuban revolution?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
Economic	37 %	Economic	17.7%
International	27 %	International	6.3%
Domestic political	18.7%	Domestic political	15 %
Social, Cultural	17 %	Social, Cultural	13.3%
No answer	0.3%	No answer	47.7%

TOTAL:		
	Economic	27.8%
	Domestic political	16.8%
	International	16.7%
	Social, Cultural	15.2%
	No answer	24 %

TABLE III

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CUBA AND CUBAN SOCIETY

1. In your opinion is Cuba composed of Blacks, whites or people of mixed race?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
Black	31%	Black	29%
White	24%	White	40%
Mixed	45%	Mixed	30%
		No response	1%

TOTAL:		
	Black	30 %
	White	32 %
	Mixed	37.5%
	No response	0.5%

2. In your opinion are the Cuban leaders Blacks, whites or of mixed race?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
Black	21%	Black	19%
White	37%	White	62%
Mixed	42%	Mixed	18%
		No response	1%

TOTAL:		
	Black	20 %
	White	49.5%
	Mixed	30 %
	No response	0.5%

TABLE IV

AFRICAN PERCEPTION OF AFRO-CUBANS

1. Do you think that a black Cuban, because of his African origins, is at home in Africa or do you consider him a foreigner?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
At home	68%	At home	57%
A foreigner	32%	A foreigner	39%
		Undecided	4%

TOTAL:		
	At home	62.5%
	A foreigner	35.5%
	Undecided	2 %

2. If you accidentally met a black Cuban, would you invite him to your home, strike up a conversation, or would you keep your distance?

MALI		IVORY COAST	
Invite him	17.3%	Invite him	21 %
Talk with him	23.3%	Talk with him	21 %
Keep a distance	1.4%	Keep a distance	1.3%
Undecided	58 %	Undecided	56 %

TOTAL:		
	Invite him	19.5%
	Talk with him	22.2%
	Keep a distance	1.3%
	Undecided	57 %

TABLE V

CUBA AS A PLACE TO VISIT

1. Would you prefer a scholarship to study in the U.S., in Europe, in Cuba, or in the USSR?

	MALI	IVORY COAST
US	35%	55%
Europe	21%	13%
Cuba	29%	11%
USSR	15%	19%
Undecided		2%

TOTAL:	
US	45%
Europe	17%
Cuba	20%
USSR	17%
Undecided	1%

2. If you had the choice of a paid vacation to Cuba, Europe, the US, or the USSR, which country would you like to visit?

	MALI	IVORY COAST
Cuba	48%	38%
Europe	19%	18%
US	24%	28%
USSR	9%	13%
Undecided		3%

TOTAL:	
Cuba	43 %
Europe	18.5%
US	26 %
USSR	11 %
Undecided	1.5%

NOTES

All foreign language translations into English are the author's unless otherwise attributed.

CHAPTER 1

1. Fidel Castro, *Angola girón africain* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976), 26.
2. Robert Scheer and Maurice Zeitlin, eds., *Cuba: An American Tragedy* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1964), 61–62.
3. See Lee Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).
4. Carlos Franqui, interviews with author, Montecatini, Italy, 15–17 April 1977.
5. Information provided to author by Jorge I. Domínguez, March 1985.
6. Speech at Central Park, New York City, 24 April 1959, in Fidel Castro, *Pan sin terror* (Havana: Ediciones Movimiento, 1959).
7. Press conference of 22 January 1959, Hotel Riviera, Havana. Transcribed in *Revolución*, 23 January 1959, p. 14.
8. Interview with Etienne Lalou and Igor Barrere, April 1961, in *Fidel Castro parle*, ed. Jacques Grignon-Dumoulin (Paris: Maspero, 1961), 253.
9. Juan Martínez-Alier and Verena Martínez-Alier, *Cuba: Economía y sociedad* (Paris: Ruedo Ibérico, 1972), 69.
10. For a reliable study of early attitudinal responses of the various social sectors of the Cuban people to Castro, see Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril, *Attitudes of the Cuban People toward the Castro Regime in the Late Spring of 1960* (Princeton, N. J.: Institute for International Social Research, 1960).
11. Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba*, 160, 161.
12. Frank Mankiewicz and Kirby Jones, *With Fidel: A Portrait of Castro and Cuba* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 50.
13. See Fidel Castro's televised speech of 24 June 1960, in *Obra revolucionaria* 12, 25 July 1960, p. 20.
14. From Mexican exile, Castro indignantly wrote to the Cuban press in July 1956 to deny Batista's charges that his movement was Communist: "What moral right . . . does *Señor* Batista have to speak of communism when he was the presidential candidate of the Communist party in the elections of 1940, when his electoral slogans hid behind the Hammer and Sickle, when his photographs hung next to those of Blas Roca and Lázaro Peña, and when half-a-dozen of his present ministers and confidential collaborators were prominent members of the Communist party?" (Published in *Bohemia*, 15 July 1956, reprinted in Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom*, [London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971], 887.)
15. Franqui, interviews with author.
16. The initiative was the work of a hard core of independent radicals—Frank País, Carlos Franqui, René Ramos Latour, Faustino Pérez, Enrique Oltusky, Armando Hart, and Félix Peña. Of this group, Pérez, Oltusky, and Hart (whites) became ministers after 1959.

17. Franqui, interviews with author.
18. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson Valdés, eds., *Revolutionary Struggle 1947-1958 The Selected Works of Fidel Castro*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1972), 270. See also *Pensamiento Crítico* 21 (1968): 207–220.
19. Carlos Franqui, *Diario de la revolución cubana* (Paris: Ruedo Ibérico, 1976), 150.
20. Franqui, interviews with author.
21. Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba*, 23.
22. Contrary to popular legend, Castro had intended a repeat performance of the Moncada assault upon landing in December, 1956. See Yves Lacoste, "Fidel Castro et la Sierra Maestra," *Hérodote* 1, no. 5 (1977): 7–33.
23. Franqui, *Diario*, 189.
24. Leslie Manigat, *Evolution et révolutions. L'Amérique latine au XXème siècle, 1889–1929* (Paris: Editions Richelieu, 1973), 136.
25. Franqui, *Diario*, 272–73.
26. Letter to Celia Sanchez, 5 June 1958, reprinted in Franqui, *Diario*, 473.
27. Bonachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 98–99.
28. Franqui, interviews with author.
29. Carlos Nicot and Vicente Cubillas, "Relatos inéditos sobre la accion revolucionaria del líder Frank País," *Revolución*, 30 July 1963, p. 2. See also Bonachea and Valdés *Revolutionary Struggle*, 99.
30. Franqui, *Diario*, 287, 288. The term Vilma Espin used, "negrito," translates either to "nigger" or "blackie," depending on the context in which it is employed. In any case, it is derogatory. White Cubans claim it's a term connoting affection! Afro-Cubans, much like black Americans, use "niche" (nigger) among themselves as a term of endearment and intimacy, but would react with violence if it were used by whites. The latter, in turn, do *not* use the Kalo term *niche* or *nichando* but "*negrito*" or "*negro de mierda*" (nigger shit), as a racial insult.
31. Bonachea and Valdés, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 98–99, 100–101.
32. The *foquista* conception found its most elaborate elucidation in Ché Guevara's *Reminiscences of the Revolutionary War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968) and Regis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).
33. Edward Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro: The Limits of Charisma* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), 93–94.
34. As quoted in Thomas, *Cuba*, 952. "Nuestra razón" was actually drafted by Mario Llerena, MR-26-7 international representative.
35. Carlos Moore, "Le peuple noir a-t-il sa place dans la révolution cubaine?" *Présence africaine* 4, no. 52 (1964): 202.
36. "During the armed struggle . . . Batista began to propagate rumors that Castro was intending a 'revolution for whites' . . . with the intention of alienating the black masses from the armed struggle. The rebels were quick to point out that they had a Negro in their midst. The rebels lost no time in comparing Almeida to the black general Antonio Maceo and presenting him as the new Maceo" (Moore, "Le peuple noir," 211–12).
37. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1122.
38. *Revolución*, 5 February 1959, pp. 1, 2.
39. Castro's own accounts agree with Hugh Thomas's assessment that, "At the end of 1958 the rebel army was a heterogeneous group of about 3,000 at most, many of them civilian camp followers." (*Cuba*, 1042).

40. Ernesto Ché Guevara, speech to the *Nuestro Tiempo* cultural society, 27 January 1959, in Grignon-Dumoulin, *Fidel Castro parle*, 67.
41. Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*, 48.
42. K. S. Karol, "Where Castro Went Wrong," *New Republic* 7 (August 1970).
43. Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*, 52.
44. Extolling the "new men governing the destiny of the Cuban people," he remarked that the Cuban people now had

> [L]eaders who are at their service, leaders who live modestly . . . who work. They see leaders who mingle with the people; who meet with the people, who give their hand to the poor Cuban and to the rich Cuban, to the black Cuban and to the white Cuban alike. Hence, there is created a complete identification between leaders and people, and for the first time there is a genuine democracy, for the first time the people can reach the leader and speak with him on equal terms.

Statement published in *Revolución*, 10 April 1959, p. 2. Translated in Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*, 52.
45. Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*, 52, 93–94.
46. Karol, "Where Castro Went Wrong."
47. Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*, 93.

CHAPTER 2

1. See Fidel Castro, *Bilan de la révolution cubaine* (Paris: Maspero, 1976), 171.
2. The question of how many Blacks there are in Cuba remains highly controversial. In his only public statement on this subject, however, Fidel Castro reported to foreign journalists in 1966 that *half* of Cuba's population was of African descent. (See *Le Monde* 30–31 January 1966, and *Al Ahram*, Cairo, 29 January 1966.) For a full discussion of Cuban racial demographics, see Appendix 2.
3. Moore, "Le peuple noir," 199. This information is based on the author's conversations with two black Rebel Army soldiers in 1962, and with Agustín Díaz Cartaya, one of the black *moncadistas*.
4. Fidel Castro, press conference on 23 January 1959, transcribed in *Revolución*, 23 January 1959, p. 14.
5. Interviews by J. Hernández Artigas, in "¡Negros no . . . ciudadanos!" *Revolución*, 20 February 1959, p. 16.
6. The insurrection of 1912 was an armed black uprising led by the Partido Independiente de Color. U.S. troops were landed, and the insurrection was crushed after three months of fighting. Thousands of Blacks were summarily executed as suspected sympathizers of the revolt. See Rafael Fermoselle-López, "Black Politics in Cuba: The Race War of 1912" (Ph.D. diss., The American University, 1972); Serafín Portuondo Linares, *Los independientes de color. Historia del Partido Independiente de Color* (Havana: Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1950).
7. See Juán René Betancourt Bencomo, *El negro, ciudadano del futuro* (Havana: Cardenas y Cia., 1957); idem, *Doctrina negra: La única teoria certera contra la discriminación racial* (Havana: P. Fernández y Cia., 1955).
8. Juán René Betancourt Bencomo, "Fidel Castro y la integración nacional," in "Recuento de la gran mentira comunista," recopilación de la revista *Bohemia* 1, no. 2 36 (Hialeah, Fla.: Empresa Recuentos, 1959).

9. See Juán René Betancourt Bencomo, "Castro and the Cuban Negro," *Crisis* 68, no 5 (1961):270–274.
10. Pena was a young university student in Santiago de Cuba, Oriente Province, when he joined the struggle against Batista in the early 1950s. A close companion and schoolmate of Oriente underground leader Frank País, he had cast his lot with the Castroite movement from the start. To coincide with Castro's *Granma* landing, Pena and País organized several attacks on military posts in Oriente in the hope of sparking a national uprising. Following País's death and the abortive April 1958 general strike, Castro summoned Pena to the Sierra Maestra. (Biographical data on Félix Pena Díaz provided by Carlos Franqui in interviews with the author, Italy.)
11. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1202.
12. Fidel Castro, statement to the press, in *Revolución*, 3 March 1959, p. 15.
13. Charismatic and eloquent, Pena was a national revolutionary figure in his own right, more inclined to regard Castro as an equal than as a redeemer, according to Franqui. Interviews with the author, Italy.
14. Fidel Castro, speech on 22 March 1959, in René Dépestre, "Carta de Cuba sobre el imperialismo de la mala fé," *Por la revolución, por la poesía* (Havana: Instituto del Libro, 1969), 92.
15. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1205.
16. Dépestre, "Carta," 96–97.
17. For a study on the resistance of white Cuban workers to the breakdown of segregation in work places, see Geoffrey E. Fox, "Race and Class in Contemporary Cuba," in *Cuban Communism*, 3d ed., ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1977), 421–442.
18. David Booth, "Cuba, Color, and the Revolution," *Science and Society* 40, no 1 (1976):156.
19. *Revolución*, 26 March 1959, p. 2.
20. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
21. Booth, "Cuba, Color," 169–70. See also Martínez-Alier and Martínez-Alier, *Cuba: Economía*, 25–26.
22. Booth, "Cuba, Color," 157.
23. See Thomas, *Cuba*, 1433; Booth, "Cuba, Color," 169–71; Marín Loney, "Social Control in Cuba," in *Politics and Deviance*, ed. Ian Taylor and Laurie Taylor (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 50; John Clytus, *Black Man in Red Cuba* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1970), 76; Elizabeth Sutherland, *The Youngest Revolution* (New York: Dial Press, 1969).
24. Antoine G. Petit, *Castro, Débray contre le Marxisme-Léninisme* (Paris: Laffont, 1968), 121–22.

CHAPTER 3

1. Fidel Castro, taped interview with Carlos Franqui, in Franqui, *Diario*, 9.
2. Mankiewicz and Jones, *With Fidel*, 50.
3. In several of his earlier speeches, Castro frequently referred to "Tarzan" comics as having provided his early vision of Africa. However, he told Carlos Franqui that his favorite comic book was "El Gorrión" (Franqui, *Diario*, 14).
4. Thomas, *Cuba*, 805.
5. Castro's only intimate relationship with Blacks during his childhood—three Black teachers, two of whom raised him for almost two years, and a black Haitian diplomat who became his godfather accidentally—was revealed by him for the first time in Frei Betto, *Fidel y la Religión: Conversaciones con Frei Betto*, (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 1985) 108–114. For an interesting dialogue between Fidel Castro and one of the black former field hands of the Manacas estate, see Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba*, 13–14, and *Bohemia* 23(4 June 1965):37.
6. Victor Franco, *The Morning After* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1963), 79.
7. "There at the place where we spent the first years of our childhood, we attended schools where we never had a black schoolmate and we enjoyed riches that we had never sweated for," admitted Raúl Castro in a speech given 7 December 1959 at the Capitolio (*Revolución*, 8 December 1959).
8. Thomas, *Cuba*, 807, 808.
9. Franqui, *Diario*, 16–17.
10. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
11. Fidel Castro, interview with Franqui, *Diario*, 9.
12. This conviction pervades Fidel's interviews with Carlos Franqui, *Diario*, 9–28.
13. See Luis Conte Agüero, *Fidel Castro: Psiquiatría y política* (Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1968); idem, *Los dos rostros de Fidel Castro* (Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1960); idem, *Fidel Castro, Vida y Obra* (Havana: Editorial LEX, 1959); Teresa Casuso, *Cuba and Castro* (New York: Random House, 1969); Franqui, *Diario*; Robert Merle, *Moncada. Premier combat de Fidel Castro* (Paris: Laffont, 1965); Gerardo Rodríguez Morejón, *Fidel Castro, Biografía* (Havana: P. Fernández, 1959); Herbert L. Matthews, *Fidel Castro* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969); Thomas, *Cuba*, 803–844; Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*; Andrés Suarez, *Cuba: Castroism and Communism, 1959–1966* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1967); Ernst Halperin, *Fidel Castro's Road to Power*, vol. I, *Cuban Politics from Machado to Moncada* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for International Studies, M.I.T., December 1970).
14. Thomas, *Cuba*, 822.
15. Fidel Castro to Gloria Gaitán de Valencia, *America libre* (Bogotá, Colombia), 22–28 May 1961, in Thomas, *Cuba*, 810–11.
16. Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba*, 81.
17. Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*, 81.
18. See also Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), 158.
19. Thomas, *Cuba*, 825, 1122 (see Thomas's Appendix XI, p. 1546, for a social and ethnic breakdown of the Moncadistas).
20. Juán Almeida Bosque survived Moncada, the *Granma* landing, and the Sierra Maestra guerrilla war to become the chief of the army in 1959. Ever since, he has come to typify the position of the handful of acculturated and docile Blacks whose presence in the higher echelons of leadership is strictly dependent on their unflagging personal loyalty to the Castro brothers. Armando Mestre also survived Moncada, but was later killed during the struggle against Batista. Juan Manuel Amejeiras died at Moncada. His brothers Gustavo and Angel survived, only to be killed in 1958 while fighting under Castro. A fourth brother, Efigenio Amejeiras, did not participate in the Moncada assault, but landed with Castro from the *Granma* and fought in the Sierra Maestra campaign. He became chief of the national police in 1959, but was arrested in 1966 under accusations of abuse of power and negligence. In the early 1980s, Amejeiras was put in charge of building a hospital in honor of his brothers (information to author by Jorge I. Domínguez, March 1985). Agustín Díaz Cartaya composed the *Himno del 26 de julio* (*Hymn of the 26th of July*), which became the anthem of Castro's political movement, just four days before the Moncada assault. Díaz Cartaya was part of the group that attacked the Bayamo barracks as a diversion for the main Moncada attack. He survived Moncada and landed from the *Granma* with Castro, being among those who

were immediately dispersed after the landing. He made his way to Havana and continued fighting with the underground. After Castro's victory he remained in obscurity and, in the mid-1960s, totally disappeared from public view.

21. Agustín Díaz Cartaya, interview with author in Havana, September 1963.
22. See Franqui, *Diario*, 70–71, 79.
23. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1122.
24. Díaz Cartaya, interview with author.
25. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1122. Merle, *Moncada*, 264, 268.
26. See Halperin, *Castro's Road to Power*, 88–91; Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro*, footnote, p. 83.
27. Thomas, *Cuba*, 851.
28. Charles P. Howard, Sr., "The Afro-Cubans," *Freedomways* 4, no. 3 380.
29. Thomas, *Cuba*, 851. For a full account of Castro's capture, see Merle, *Moncada* 268–269. Castro's own account appeared in *La Calle* [Havana], 30 May 1955.
30. Merle, *Moncada*, 268.
31. Howard, Sr., "The Afro-Cubans," 380.
32. Information to author from private source inside Cuba.
33. Howard, Sr., "The Afro-Cubans," 380. See also Thomas, *Cuba*, 1073.
34. Information to author from private source inside Cuba.
35. These included Blás Roca, Carlos Rafaél Rodriguez, and Lázaro Peña.
36. See *Daily Worker* [New York], 5 August 1953, p. 3, and 10 August 1953, p. 2, in Scheer and Zeitlin, *Cuba, An American Tragedy*, 126, 127.
37. The top Party leadership then included a good number of Blacks, among them, Blás Roca Calderío, Lázaro Peña, Oscar Pinos Santos, Severo Aguirre, Carlos Olivares and Salvador García Agüero.
38. Walterio Carbonell, interview with author, Havana, September 1963.
39. An opponent of the Frente at the university, Carbonell reported, was Hispanic Cuban writer Roberto Fernández Retamar, who regarded the organization as "black racist." Retamar became in 1969 the secretary-general of UNEAC, then president of Casa de las Americas in the 1980's.
40. Carbonell, interview with author.
41. Thomas, *Cuba*, 887–88.
42. Carbonell, interview with author.
43. Thomas, *Cuba*, 888.
44. After being expelled from the Cuban Communist party and driven into exile by Batista's police, Carbonell represented the Movimiento 26 de Julio in Europe until 1959. In that year he was appointed by Castro as the first Cuban ambassador to an African country, Tunisia. In 1961 he was stripped of all official attributions after airing his views on the "Negro question" in a book, *Crítica. Cómo surgió la cultural nacional* [Havana: Ediciones Yaka, 1961], which was banned on Castro's orders. He was finally arrested and imprisoned without trial in a labor camp from 1969 to 1975.
45. Scheer and Zeitlin, *Cuba, An American Tragedy*, 58.
46. See Fidel Castro, *La História me Absolverá: Autodefensa del Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz ante el Tribunal de Urgéncia de Santiago de Cuba de Octubre de 1953* [Havana: Delegación del Gobierno, Capitolio Nacional, Sección de Impresos, 1960].
47. See Marta Rojas, *La generación del centenario en el Moncada* [Havana: Ediciones R, 1965].
48. Thomas, *Cuba*, 822, 851, 1121.
49. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.

50. Maurice Halperin, *The Rise and Decline of Fidel Castro* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972], 8. See also Bunachea and Valdes, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 4.

CHAPTER 4

1. Fidel Castro, dialogue with the Bay of Pigs captives (*Playa girón* [Havana: Comisión Nacional del Monumento a los Caidos en Playa Girón, 1961], 456–57].
2. Depestre, "Carta de Cuba," 98.
3. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
4. Manuela Semidei, *Les Etats-Unis et la révolution cubaine* [Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1968], 57–58. See also Maurice Zeitlin, *Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class* [New York: Harper & Row, 1970], 285–86.
5. Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution?* [New York: William Morrow, 1968], 154.
6. Nicolás Guillén, interview with Dennis Sardinha, *The Poetry of Nicolás Guillén* [London: New Beacon Books, 1976], 80.
7. Franco, *The Morning After*, 40, 42, 43.
8. *Revolución*, 13 April 1959, p. 6.
9. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967], 112.
10. Franco, *The Morning After*, 68, 69, 70.
11. Calvin C. Hernton, *Sex and Racism* [London: Paladin, 1970, 76–77].
12. Fidel Castro, in Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba*, 172.
13. Nelson Amaro Victoria, "Mass and Class in the Origins of the Cuban Revolution," in *Cuban Communism*, ed. Horowitz, 173.
14. Irving Louis Horowitz, "Authenticity and Autonomy in Cuban Communism," in *Cuban Communism*, ed. Horowitz, 120.
15. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1119, 1120.
16. See Thomas, *Cuba*, 1109, 1119–1120; Robert Freeman Smith, ed., *Background to Revolution: The Development of Modern Cuba* [New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966].
17. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1124–25.
18. [ose Elias Entralgo, *La liberación étnica cubana* [Havana: Imprenta de la Universidad de la Habana, 1953].
19. [osé Elias Entralgo, "La mulatización cubana," *CASA* [Havana] 36–37[May-August 1966] 76–80.
20. See Salvador García Agüero, "Presénda africana en la música nacional," *Estudios Afrocubanos* [Havana] [1937]: 114–127.
21. Entralgo was appointed dean of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Havana in 1960. His son, Armando Entralgo, was appointed Cuba's first ambassador to Ghana in 1963. García Agüero became Cuba's first ambassador to Guinea in 1961.
22. See "Campaña contra la discriminación racial," *Revolución*, 8 April 1959, p. 2.
23. The Sociedades split into "mulatto" and "Black" branches, adopting names that reflected the acculturating mood of Black Cuba's upper crust, "Atenas" [Athens] and "Amantes del Progreso" [Lovers of Progress], among them. Nonetheless, they enjoyed great adherence among the mass of black Cubans as the only recreational and political meeting places available to Blacks before the Revolution.
24. See Betancourt Bencomo, *Doctrina negra*; idem, *Preludios de la libertad: La tragédia del negro y la táctica del partido comunista* [Havana: P. Fernandez, 1950]; idem, *El negro*

25. Howard I. Blutstein et al., *Area Handbook for Cuba* (Washington, D.C.: The American University Foreign Area Studies, 1971), 97.
26. For a summary of the defeated black middle class's grievances against the Castro regime, see Betancourt Bencomo, "Castro and the Cuban Negro," 270–74.
27. As of 1960, the Castro regime imposed a defacto ban on ethnic enumeration in all future census accounts, work force statistics, and population data (see Appendix 1).
28. Fox, "Race and Class," 425.
29. "To the extent to which our own data . . . indicate the relative material insecurity and deprivation of Negro and white workers, it is clear that proportionately more Negroes than white workers were unemployed, received low wages, and had only minimal schooling before the revolution, while fewer of them were able to become skilled workers. Insofar as such systematic disadvantages as these could become politically relevant, then, it might be expected that Negro workers would be more amenable to the appeals of racial agitation and more likely to be revolutionaries than white workers" (Zeitlin, *Revolutionary Politics*, 69–70).
30. Karol, "Where Castro Went Wrong."
31. Zeitlin, *Revolutionary Politics*, 3, 4.
32. Abdias do Nascimento, "Afro-Brazilian Ethnicity and International Policy." Paper presented to the first Congress on Black Cultures in the Américas, Cali, Colombia, 24–28 August 1977. Graciously provided to author by Abdias do Nascimento.
33. Fox, "Race and Class," 439.
34. Blutstein et al., *Area Handbook*, 78.
35. Booth, "Cuba, Color," 150.
36. Zeitlin, *Revolutionary Politics*, 53.
37. Richard R. Fagen, "Revolution: For Internal Consumption Only," in *Cuban Communism*, ed. Horowitz, 188.
38. Horowitz, "Authenticity and Autonomy," 120.
39. Franco, *The Morning After*, 64.
40. Fox, "Race and Class," 422.

CHAPTER 5

1. Fidel Castro, "Conferencia de prensa. Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, 27 de julio de 1959," 3d ed. (Capitolio Nacional), 38. (brochure)
2. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1227.
3. Quoted in Thomas, *Cuba*, 1244. For the entire text of Matos's letter of resignation to Castro, see Yves Guilbert, *Castro l'Infidel* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1961), 127–128.
4. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1255–57.
5. Fidel Castro, letter of 14 August 1954, in Franqui, *Diario*, 107. My translation closely follows that of Irving L. Horowitz, ed., *Cuban Communism*, 67–68.
6. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
7. Fidel Castro, speech of 26 June 1960, *Revolución*, 27 June 1960.
8. Fidel Castro, speech at the Presidential Palace, 26 October 1959, in *Fidel Castro Speaks*, ed. Martin Kenner and James Petras (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 95.
9. Fidel Castro, speech on 30 November 1959 in Santiago de Cuba, *Revolución*, 1 December 1959, p. 8.
10. Raul Castro, speech at the Capitolio, 7 December 1959, in Baldomero Alvarez Rios, ed., *Cuba: Revolución e imperialismo* (Havana: Instituto del Libro), 426–27.

11. Ché Guevara, speech at the University of Las Villas, *Revolución*, 31 December 1959, p. 2.
12. Blutstein et al., *Area Handbook*, 79–80.
13. Charles Howard, Sr., interview with author, Havana, July 1963.
14. See *Revolución*, 31 December 1959, p. 1.
15. Semidei, *Les Etats-Unis*, 72.
16. Scheer and Zeitlin, *Cuba: An American Tragedy*, 287.
17. Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow, 1967), 356.
18. See Leroi Jones, "Cuba libre," *Evergreen Review* (November/December 1960), 139–159; Harold Cruse, "Cuba y el negro norteamericano," *Casa de las Americas* (Havana) (August/September 1960), 65–67.
19. Robert Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1973), 69.
20. Joseph North, American Communist party executive, testifying before the Eastland Investigating Committee, in Alvarez Rios, *Cuba: Revolución*, 53.
21. Lester A. Sobel, ed., *Cuba, the U.S., and Russia, 1960–1963* (New York: Facts on File, 1964), 9.
22. See also *New York Times*, 19 June 1960. One of the expelled diplomats, Cuban consul in New York Dr. Pla y Badia, had been the chief liaison between Havana and the FPCC.
23. Julio Medina, interviews with author, Havana, September 1963. Medina apparently received instructions from Piñeiro to recruit elements favorable to the Revolution among American Negroes and intensify propaganda work among them. (My best recollection of Medina's words.) The author was taken by Medina to meet Major Moleón, during the summer of 1960. The latter, whom I met and talked with in his hotel suite near the U.N. building, specified that Castro wanted the mobilization of American Blacks to be a top priority of the movement's U.S. activities.
24. Jaime Suchlicki, *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920–1968* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1969), 87.
25. Rafael Cepeda, "Fidel Castro y el reino de Dios," *Bohemia*, 17 July 1960, p. 110. As quoted in Richard R. Fagen, "Charismatic Authority and the Leadership of Fidel Castro," *Western Political Quarterly* (June 1965), 278.
26. Fidel Castro, speech to coordinators of sugar cane cooperatives, Havana, 11 August 1960, in *Revolución*, 12 August 1960.
27. Sobel, *Cuba, the U.S., and Russia*, 17.
28. Fidel Castro, "Declaración de La Habana," in *De Marti a Castro* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1970), 117, 119, 120.
29. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1227.
30. Cheng Ying-Hsiang, *Idylle sino-cubaine, brouille sino-soviétique* (Paris: Armand Colin/Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1973), 44.
31. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
32. Muhammed Hassanein Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents* (London: New English Library, 1972), 311–12.
33. Carlos Franqui could not be altogether affirmative on this score (interviews with author, Italy).
34. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1242.
35. Ché Guevara, televised summary of his Afro-Asian tour, transcribed in *Revolución*, 8 September 1959, p. 18.
36. See Tareq Y. Ismail, *The U.A.R. in Africa: Egypt's Policy under Nasser* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 42–50.

37. Guevara, televised summary of Afro-Asian tour, p. 18.
38. Thomas, *Cuba*, 1242.
39. Raúl Roa, speech to the U.N. General Assembly, 24 September 1959, in *Revolución*, 25 September 1959, p. 2.
40. Fidel Castro, speech on 26 October 1959, in Louis Constant, ed., *Fidel Castro Revolution cubaine*, vol. 1 (Paris: Maspero, 1968), 109.
41. See *Noticias de Hoy*, 24 November 1959, p. 3, quoted in Scheer and Zeitlin, *Cuba: An American Tragedy*, 129.
42. Raúl Roa, note to U.S. ambassador to Havana, 13 November 1959, quoted in Grignon-Dumoulin, ed., *Fidel Castro parle*, 135.
43. Ying-Hsiang, *Idylle sino-cubaine*, 49.
44. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
45. Ying-Hsiang has documented this interpretation convincingly (*Idylle sino-cubaine*, 61–91).

CHAPTER 6

1. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
2. Walterio Carbonell, interviews with author, Havana, September 1963.
3. Carlos Franqui believes such a meeting "most likely" took place, but could not be affirmative (interviews with author, Italy).
4. See Walterio Carbonell, "A propósito de las causas de la revolución de 1895," *Lunes de Revolución* 37 (30 November 1959) 12–14.
5. Walterio Carbonell, "Congreso mundial de paises sub-desarrollados," *Revolución*, 5 December 1959, p. 2.
6. Carbonell, interviews with author.
7. Carbonell, "Congreso mundial."
8. Carbonell, interviews with author.
9. Carbonell, "Congreso mundial."
10. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
11. Carbonell, interviews with author.
12. For a detailed account of the Congo crisis, see Catherine Hoskyns, *The Congo Since Independence, January 1960–December 1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
13. See *Revolución*, June–November 1960.
14. "The U.N.'s Intervention Aggravated the Congo Crisis," *Revolución*, 11 September 1960.
15. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
16. *Revolución*, 14 September 1960.
17. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
18. Julio Medina, interviews with the author, Havana.
19. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
20. Author's recollections, confirmed by Franqui, interviews, Italy.
21. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
22. See Grignon-Dumoulin, *Fidel Castro parle*, 212.
23. K. S. Karol, *Guerrillas in Power* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1970), 7.
24. Harold R. Isaacs, *The New World of Negro Americans* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 337.
25. Ronald Segal, *The Race War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), 158.
26. M. Halperin, *Rise and Decline*, 80.

27. Raúl Castro, speech to mass rally in Havana, 19 September 1960, *Revolución*, 20 September 1960, p. 8.
28. Author's recollection.
29. Juán Almeida, conversation with author, Theresa Hotel, Harlem, September 1960.
30. Author's recollection. See also Moore, "Le peuple noir," 212.
31. Juán Almeida told the author that Fidel Castro had suggested he mingle with the crowds. Conversation with author, Theresa Hotel.
32. See *Revolución*, 22 September 1960.
33. In fact, one of the reasons for Castro's visit to New York was to seize the opportunity of personally meeting the Afro-Asian leaders he had been courting since the previous summer. This was primarily to invite them en masse to Havana for an informal Third World summit, either immediately after the Assembly's session, or at some time early in the following year.
34. Franqui, interviews with author, Italy.
35. M. Halperin, *Rise and Decline*, 81.
36. Malcolm X, interview with author, Paris, November 23-24, 1964. See also Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 73.
37. *Revolución*, 23 September 1960, p. 15.
38. Karol, *Guerrillas*, 7.
39. Author's recollection.
40. I am grateful to the late William Gardner Smith, former director of Ghana's School of Journalism under Kwame Nkrumah, for this interpretation (interviews with author, Paris, October 1970).
41. Heikal, *Nasser*, 311.
42. Karol, *Guerrillas*, 8.
43. M. Halperin, *Rise and Decline*, 42.
44. Fidel Castro, speech to the fifteenth session of the U.N. General Assembly, 26 September 1960. In *Official Records of the General Assembly*, part 1, vol. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1960), 118.
45. Author's recollection.
46. Fidel Castro, speech to fifteenth General Assembly, 133.
47. Karol, "Where Castro Went Wrong."

CHAPTER 7

1. Fidel Castro, speech at the Presidential Palace, 29 September 1960, in Alvarez Rios, *Cuba: revolución*, 443.
2. See *Le Monde*, 2–3 October 1960, p. 4.
3. See Sékou Touré, speech to the U.N. General Assembly, 10 October 1960, in *Official Records of the General Assembly*.
4. See *Le Monde*, 11 October 1960, pp. 3, 7.
5. See *Le Monde*, 12 October 1960, p. 2.
6. See *Revolución*, 7 October 1960, p. 1.
7. See also *Le Monde*, 8 October 1960, p. 5, and *Revolución*, 11 October 1960, p. 6.
8. See *Le Monde*, 13 October 1960, p. 8.
9. See *Le Monde*, 16-17 October 1960, p. 3.
10. See *Le Monde*, 22 October 1960, p. 16.
11. Information to author during interviews with black Cubans who witnessed the event, Havana, summer 1962.
12. See *Revolución*, 15 October 1960, p. 15.

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