

Cuba a country study

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On the cover: La Iglesia de San Francisco de Asís (Church of San Francisco) and the plaza fountain in La Habana Vieja (Old Havana), 1997
Courtesy Mark P. Sullivan

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Foreword

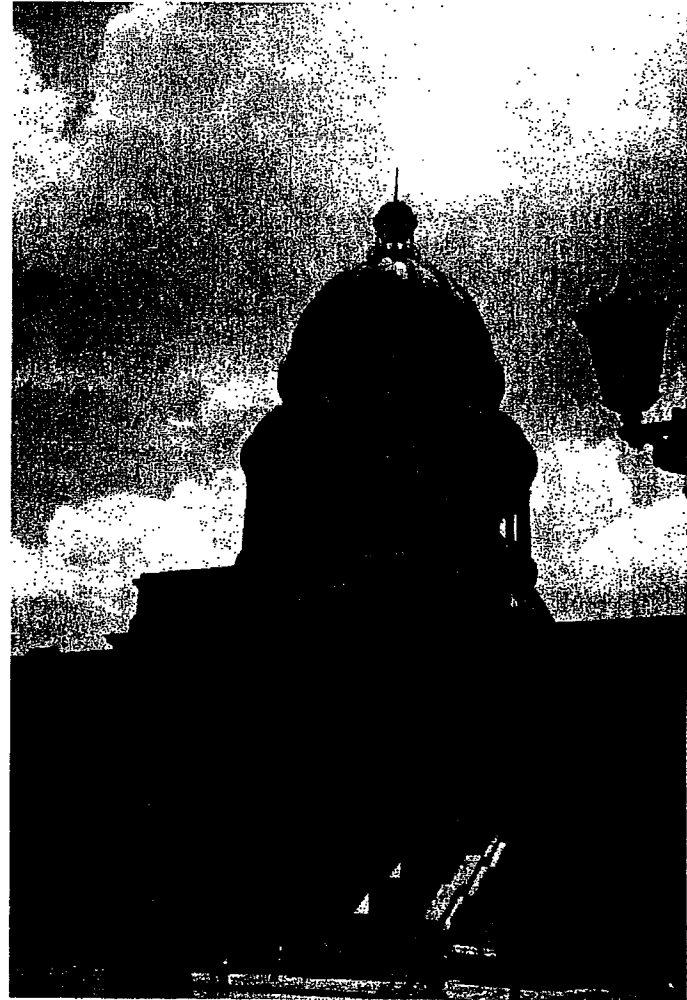
This volume is one in a continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. The last two pages of this book list the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by historical and cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

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Chapter 4. Government and Politics



*The National Capitol (El Capitolio Nacional), the seat of government until 1959, now houses the Cuban Academy of Sciences (Academia de Ciencias de Cuba) and the National Library of Science and Technology (Biblioteca Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología).
Courtesy Mark P. Sullivan*

SUDDENLY, DRAMATICALLY, ALMOST unexpectedly, the Cold War came to an end in Europe, and the world changed. Communist governments tumbled throughout Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, and, by the end of 1991, the Soviet Union itself collapsed. Constitutional governments, increasingly democratic, emerged in the 1990s in much of Central and Eastern Europe.

For Fidel Castro Ruz (president, 1976–) and his associates in the Cuban government and the Communist Party of Cuba (Partido Comunista de Cuba—PCC), these results were a catastrophe. As a result of a trade protocol signed in Moscow in late December 1990, Soviet economic subsidies to Cuba ended as of January 1, 1991. Bilateral trade between Cuba and the Soviet Union would henceforth be conducted at world market prices. Whereas in the past Cuba had dealt with only sixty-two Soviet agencies and enterprises, the trade protocol abolished the central management of trade relations and required Cuba to develop commercial relations with some 25,000 Soviet firms. The Russian government, successor to the Soviet Union, retained similar policies: trade with Cuba would be conducted on a commercial basis presuming no "special relationship" between Russia and Cuba. Stunned and inexperienced, Cuban government officials at first had great difficulty coping with these changes. And, bereft of economic subsidies, Cuba's economy collapsed (see *The Economic Crisis of the 1990s*, ch. 3).

Cuba also lost the political and military protection provided by the Soviet Union that it had enjoyed since 1960. Cuban leaders, consequently, felt nakedly vulnerable facing the United States. The United States government, for its part, increased its pressure on the Cuban government in the 1990s to force it to change or, preferably, to fall.

Cuba was unable to pay on its own for the costs of its worldwide activist foreign policy. Absent Soviet backing, the Cuban government risked United States retaliation for overseas military expeditions. Consequently, Cuban foreign policy retreated across the board. In September 1989, Cuba completed the repatriation of its troops from Ethiopia. In March 1990, all Cuban military personnel in Nicaragua were brought home. In May 1991, Cuba's last troops were repatriated from Angola. Also in 1990 and 1991, Cuba brought back its troops and mili-

tary advisers from various other countries. Cuba's global military deployments ended nearly instantaneously as the Cold War was winding down in Europe and as Cuba was rapidly losing Soviet political, economic, and military backing. Cuba had become once again only a Caribbean island archipelago—no longer an aspirant to major-power status astride the world stage.

Born bristling in radicalism, Cuban state socialism changed in the 1990s. In 1960 the government expropriated all foreign firms. In 1989 it launched a campaign to attract private foreign direct investment once again (see *Economic Reforms*, ch. 3). In May 1990, President Castro inaugurated the first of many foreign-owned hotels on Cuba's premier tourist beach at Varadero. He announced that Cuba would henceforth seek foreign investment to develop its economy. These policies would soon be endorsed by the PCC's executive organ, the Political Bureau (Buró Político). These changes had implications well beyond their economic significance. In reversing the regime's founding policies, President Castro and his comrades signaled that they could no longer govern Cuba as they had and as they would still prefer. Other modest market-oriented economic policy reforms further communicated to the population the state's retreat from orthodox bureaucratic socialism (see *Economic Reforms*, ch. 3). Cuban leaders were compelled to change by a world suddenly averse to their brand of bureaucratic socialism.

The capacity of the Cuban state weakened at home as well. This weakening was in part a consequence of the leadership's unexpected inability to govern as had been their practice. Citizens who witnessed Fidel Castro's reluctant retreat from the policies he still cherished and had long implemented felt newly free to begin to take their lives into their own hands. An illegal economy or black market (see *Glossary*) boomed in Cuba in the early 1990s (see *The Second Economy*, ch. 3). The government could no longer prevent it, nor could it assure an acceptable standard of living to the population. The grip of the state loosened gradually in various aspects of social life. Religious activity revived (see *Religion in the Special Period, 1990–97*, ch. 2), and intellectual life became more independent in some respects. Human rights and political opposition activists undertook bolder actions, and their groups became more likely to endure.

The story of Cuban politics in the 1990s, therefore, has three principal strands. First, government and PCC leaders have sought to retain enough political support to continue to govern, adapting policies, streamlining organizations, and replacing personnel to make their survival more likely. Particularly significant have been a major replacement of the political leadership just below the very top of the regime and a substantial downsizing of the armed forces (see *Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces*, ch. 5). Second, a slow political transition has gotten underway, unloved by the rulers but constructed by Cuban citizens who, step by step, have edged away from the control that the state and the PCC had held over Cuban life for the preceding decades. Third, internationally, the Cuban government has designed a strategy to resist United States pressures and to fashion a new network of international relations for the only surviving communist regime outside East Asia. Cuban leaders have gained support in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Canada, and East Asia from governments that object to United States attempts to force them to follow United States policy toward Cuba. This "negative" international coalition in opposition to United States policy is a key to the Cuban regime's capacity to survive seemingly against all odds years after the Soviet Union crashed.

Institutional Structure

Cuba features a formidable array of state, government, and partisan entities. Some have endured for nearly forty years, and all have lasted for at least two decades. And yet, in the 1990s as in earlier decades, these formal institutions manifest only one of the two "faces of power" in Cuba. Officeholders in state, government, and PCC organs and in the mass organizations often have less power than it would seem from a description of their formal rights and duties.

The other "face of power" in Cuba is intensely personal. It derives its clout from the Revolution in the 1950s and from "revolutionary accomplishments" in the years that followed. A key feature of these "accomplishments" is that they appeared to require heroic deeds and leaders who succeeded in reaching an impossible dream. Fidel Castro epitomizes this source of power. His towering role in Cuban politics at times has allowed him to override institutional rules and constraints to veto some policies and enact others. Other men (and some, but not very many, women) have also acquired significant public standing as

a result of their heroic deeds over the years, but most of them died during the revolution of the 1950s and in the 1960s. Fidel Castro's capacity to make policies happen, or to stop their implementation, and his unmatched capacity to pick and choose officials to whom he delegates extraordinary powers shape the capacity of these institutions to function.

The Constitution

The Fourth Congress of the PCC met in October 1991 to review the debris from the collapse of the communist world in Europe and its impact on Cuba. One of its decisions was to revise Cuba's constitution of 1976. The leadership closely controlled the process of constitutional revision, and PCC and National Assembly committees carried out the task. Although the text was open to discussion by Cubans through the country's official mass organizations and other means, no plebiscite was held to approve the substantially revised text. The PCC and the National Assembly approved the new constitutional text in July 1992.

The new constitution signaled Cuba's changed circumstances and, especially, a more tolerant approach to certain differences within society. Unlike the old constitution, the text of the new constitution makes no reference to the Soviet Union, a country that had ceased to exist. The normative chapters of the constitution seek to embrace all Cubans, not just those ideologically committed to Marxism-Leninism. Its preamble and opening chapters invoke the mantle of nationalism in an attempt to cover all Cubans. The new Article 1 (unlike its predecessor) refers to José Martí and affirms that the socialist state seeks to serve all and the good of all. The PCC remains enshrined in Article 5 as the single party, still Marxist-Leninist, but now also a follower of José Martí. Whereas the old Article 54 proclaimed that the state based its actions on and advocated a "scientific materialist conception of the universe," while also guaranteeing freedom of conscience and worship, the new Article 55 omits all reference to scientific materialism and simply seeks to guarantee freedom of religion. In these and other symbolically significant ways, the 1992 constitution seeks to include all Cubans ready to pledge their allegiance and otherwise attempts to marginalize none.

The 1992 constitution retroactively legitimizes the changed property regime inaugurated with the search to lure foreign investment that started in 1989 and was made public in 1990.

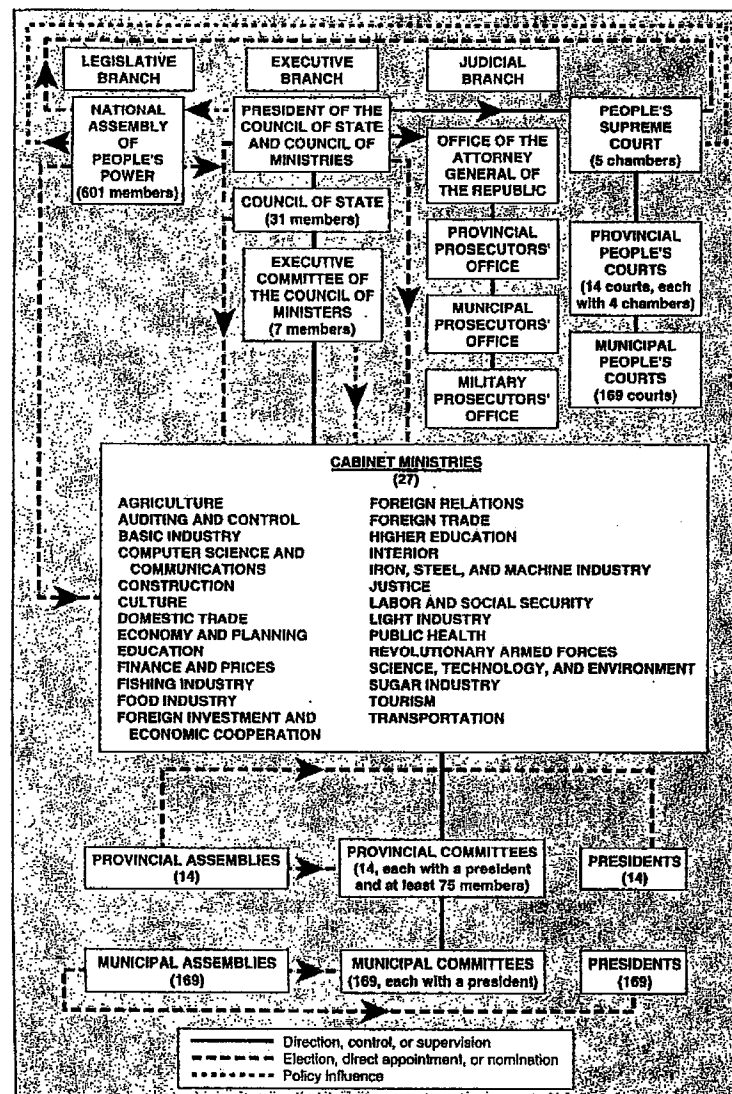
The 1976 constitution had authorized only state property, except for what individuals were authorized to own directly. The 1992 constitution limits state ownership to the "fundamental" means of production (Article 14). Article 15 goes further, however. It opens by seemingly prohibiting the privatization of most enterprises and other forms of economic activities, but it goes on to authorize the privatization of every property, provided such transfer of ownership is approved by the Executive Committee (Comité Ejecutivo) of the Council of Ministers (Consejo de Ministros).

The ideological and property regime shifts of the 1992 constitution made the political regime more inclusive and, especially, more tolerant of religious belief, behavior, and organizations. They signaled as well a much greater emphasis in public discourse on Cuban nationalism rather than on the canonical texts of Marxism, Leninism, socialism, or communism. The changes in the property regime, of course, accelerated the process of private foreign direct investment.

The 1992 constitution remains deeply authoritarian, however. The PCC remains the only legal political party. The bill of rights is as riddled with exceptions as it was in the 1976 constitution. The new Article 53 is identical to its predecessor in recognizing freedom of expression, but only so long as it conforms to the "goals of a socialist society." All mass media must remain in state hands. And the article also enables the government to further regulate whatever residual freedoms remain. Other articles recognize the privacy of the home and of personal correspondence, unless, of course, the law states otherwise. Finally, Article 62 (like its predecessor) prohibits the use of any of these freedoms "against the existence and purposes of the socialist state." Indeed, in one important respect the 1992 constitution is more authoritarian than its predecessor. The new Article 67 empowers the president of the Council of State (Fidel Castro) on his own authority to declare a state of emergency and to modify the exercise of rights or the obligations embedded in the constitution.

National Assembly of People's Power

The 1992 constitution also institutes some modest changes in the design of the organs of the state (see fig. 7). The 1992 constitution, like its predecessor, vests all formal legislative powers (including the powers of amending the constitution) in the National Assembly of People's Power (Asamblea Nacional



Source: Based on information from Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula, and Joseph L. Scarpaci, *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, New York: 1997, 178; and Jorge I. Domínguez.

Figure 7. Central Administrative Structure, 2001

del Poder Popular—ANPP; hereafter, National Assembly). The National Assembly has the formal powers, among others, to declare war in the event of military aggression; make peace; enact or modify legislation; approve the budget and the national economic plan; elect the members of the Council of State (Consejo de Estado), including its president; and elect the members of the Supreme Court (Tribunal Supremo Popular). (The Supreme Court cannot judge the constitutionality of National Assembly decisions.) National Assembly leaders also generally oversee the rule-making activities and electoral processes of the provincial assemblies and municipal assemblies.

Despite all of its functions, the National Assembly is not a powerful institution. For the most part, it ratifies decisions made prior to its meetings; it typically votes unanimously or nearly unanimously to endorse government bills. Deputies have other full-time jobs, and the National Assembly characteristically meets only twice a year, three times at most. Each time it usually meets for two or three days. Founded in 1976, the National Assembly became, in the 1990s, simultaneously marginally less institutionalized but also more effective. Institutionalization declined because officials at times failed to observe their own rules. For example, National Assembly elections should have been held in 1991 but were postponed until February 1993 in order to defer the electoral process well past the shock of the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist regimes. And, at times in the 1990s, National Assembly sessions were canceled or deferred arbitrarily instead of meeting at their normal times.

The National Assembly became more effective, however, under the leadership of Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, who became its president in March 1993. Alarcón reinvigorated the National Assembly's working commissions, which aid the National Assembly and the Council of State in carrying out their functions. Alarcón urged the commissions to audit the operation of state agencies, ask questions, and write reports. The National Assembly's debate in its standing commissions has at times forced the executive branch to amend, reconsider, or delay the submission of bills for formal approval. Among the most vigorously debated bills was the Law on Foreign Investment, finally approved after much delay and several drafts in September 1995. Alarcón has also urged deputies to remain in closer touch with the voters and to campaign actively for office as if they were contested. In these respects, the National Assem-

bly's political efficacy has risen, and so has Alarcón's political star.

National Assembly deputies are elected for five-year terms. In 1998 the new National Assembly had 601 members. The 1992 constitution mandates that the deputies be elected directly by the people, in contrast to the previous system, in which the provincial assemblies elected the deputies. However, the Electoral Law of 1992 requires that the number of candidates equal the number of posts to be filled. The old Electoral Law required that a provincial assembly (*Asamblea Provincial*) be given a choice of nominees somewhat larger than the number of posts to be filled. Thus, the change in national electoral procedures had the appearance of democratization while embodying a reduction in effective choice. The election of deputies through the provincial assemblies had fostered some competition within the elite; the 1992 changes reduced the level of open political contestation.

Candidates for National Assembly deputy, candidates for membership in the Council of State, and candidates for National Assembly president, vice president, and secretary originate with a National Commission for Candidacies. This commission is constituted of appointees designated by the officially sponsored mass organizations. These mass organizations are the Cuban Workers Federation (*Central de Trabajadores de Cuba—CTC*), the Federation of Cuban Women (*Federación de Mujeres Cubanas—FMC*), the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (*Comité de Defensa de la Revolución—CDR*), the National Association of Small Farmers (*Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños—ANAP*), the Federation of University Students, and the Federation of Secondary School Students (*Federación de Estudiantes de la Enseñanza Media—FEEM*) (see *Mass Organizations*, this ch.). The CTC representative chairs the commission. The commission, which consults various national, provincial, and municipal leaders, proposes a list of precandidates (with a number of precandidates equal to no fewer than twice the number to be elected) to a similarly constituted commission at the municipal level. The latter commission formally nominates the candidates for deputy. Those nominated for candidacy are almost certain to be elected because the final list of candidates equals the number of posts to be filled.

After the 1993 national elections, reelected incumbents constituted only 17 percent of the new National Assembly. This fig-

ure was not the result of voter discontent (all the incumbents who stood for reelection were reelected), but of a prior elite decision not to renominate most incumbents. In contrast, after the 1998 national elections, reelected incumbents constituted 35 percent of the new National Assembly. (Average age in the National Assembly rose from forty-three to forty-five from one election to the next.) In general, this pattern of sweeping personnel change in the early 1990s but somewhat greater continuity in the late 1990s reflected the top leadership's greater confidence that it had removed the "dead wood" and identified a good political team to ensure the continuation of the political regime. A similar pattern would be evident in the composition of the PCC's Central Committee (*Comité Central*) (see *Political Bureau and Central Committee*, this ch.).

The proportion of female members of the National Assembly rose from 23 to 28 percent from the 1993 to the 1998 elections. In addition, 78 percent of the deputies were university graduates in 1998 (versus 75 percent in 1993). The number of deputies on active duty in the Revolutionary Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias—FAR*) or in the Ministry of Interior remained the same (thirty-five deputies). The number of high PCC officials dropped substantially, however, from 24 percent to 11 percent in part as a result of the downsizing of the PCC's Central Committee in 1997.

Council of State

The Council of State is elected by the National Assembly and is empowered to make all decisions on behalf of the National Assembly when the latter is not in session, which is most of the time. Among other powers, the Council of State can appoint and remove ministers, ambassadors, and other high officials, issue decrees with the force of law, declare war or make peace, ratify treaties, and suspend or revoke the decisions by all provincial or local governments. In effect, the Council of State, not the National Assembly, is the routine, constitutionally authoritative collective decision maker.

The president of the Council of State, who under the constitution is also president of the Council of Ministers, is the chief of state. These functions had been performed by different individuals before the adoption of the 1976 constitution, as had been the norm in communist countries. Since 1976, these posts have been held by Fidel Castro, who, in taking on these func-

tions, adopted a pattern of presidentialism familiar to Latin Americans.

The six vice presidents of the Council of State are among Cuba's most important politicians. The first vice president is General of the Army Raúl Castro Ruz, minister of the FAR and Fidel Castro's formally designated successor. The other vice presidents are Commander of the Revolution Juan Almeida Bosque, who has long played a role in maintaining discipline and morale in the military and the PCC; Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, minister of interior and decorated hero of the republic of Cuba for his role in Cuba's wars in Africa; Carlos Lage Dávila, secretary of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers and, in effect, chief operating officer for the Cuban economy; José Ramón Machado Ventura, long-time secretary of organization of the PCC's Central Committee; and Estéban Lazo Hernández, first secretary of the PCC in Havana City Province (Ciudad de La Habana Province).

The Council of State has thirty-one members, including its president, vice presidents, and secretary, all of whom were reelected in 1998. Its membership had been relatively stable from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. Six leaders—the Castro brothers, Almeida, Armando Hart Dávalos, Machado, and Pedro Miret Prieto—have been members of the Council of State since its establishment in 1977 and were reelected again in 1998. In 1998, however, there was a major overhaul of the council's membership, the only top leadership organ to be reorganized so thoroughly in the late 1990s. Only seventeen of the thirty-one members of the 1993 Council of State were reelected in 1998; only two of the departing fourteen members had died. On balance, there were three fewer ministers in the 1998 Council of State, two fewer generals, and none of the three members of the old council without significant political responsibilities. However, three local government officials joined the Council, as did two intellectuals. Some of the rotation was intended to retain the representation of a political role that had passed from one individual to another. By tradition, the heads of the most important mass organizations belong to the Council of State. The number of women in the Council of State was the same in 1993 and in 1998: five women, one more than in the first Council of State chosen in 1976. There are six Afro-Cubans in the 1998 Council of State (the non-white share of Cuba's population was one-third in the 1981 census). In general, the slight changes in membership led away



*Fidel Castro Ruz in the early
1980s
Courtesy Ministry of Foreign
Relations*

from those with administrative responsibilities and toward those with political responsibilities, paying little attention to concerns for gender or racial representation.

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the highest executive and administrative organ. The constitution empowers it to issue regulations to administer laws and decrees and to authorize exceptions to state ownership of the means of production. It responds to the National Assembly and to the Council of State. Ministers are formally chosen by the National Assembly on the recommendation of the president of the Council of State, but they can be changed as well by the Council of State, on its president's recommendation.

Ministers are replaced one by one, or in small numbers. There has never been a wholesale replacement of the Council of Ministers; there is no provision for such National Assembly action in the constitution. In the 1990s, the National Assembly began to ask for more information from ministers about the work of their agencies, but ministers are, in practice, principally responsible to the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers and to President Castro. On April 21, 1994, the Cuban government adopted a drastic reorganization and simplification of its administrative structure, reducing the number of ministries to twenty-seven and abolishing, combining, or

downsizing another sixteen major agencies of the national government. In 2000, the Council of Ministers included a president (Fidel Castro), a first vice president (Raúl Castro), a secretary (Carlos Lage), four vice presidents, a minister of government, twenty-six ministers, the president of the central bank, and the directors of four cabinet-level institutes.

Courts

The Supreme Court of Cuba is organized into five chambers: criminal, civil and administrative, labor, state security, and military. The members of the Supreme Court are nominated by the minister of justice and confirmed by the National Assembly, with two exceptions. First, the Supreme Court's president and vice president are nominated by the president of the Council of State (Fidel Castro); second, the members of the military chamber are nominated jointly by the ministers of justice and the FAR (the latter minister is Raúl Castro). The minister of justice exercises administrative control over all the courts, including the Supreme Court; the Ministry of Justice thus has full authority over budget, payroll, and personnel.

The Supreme Court and all the courts are subordinate to the National Assembly and the Council of State (Article 121). The Supreme Court has no authority to declare a law unconstitutional. The courts are formally much less independent, therefore, than in other political systems. Judges are appointed for a term, not for life, and they can be removed from office if proper cause is shown. As a result of these measures, the courts show considerable deference to executive authority and are marked by political timidity.

There are also provincial courts in each province. These courts have four chambers, the same as for the Supreme Court except for the military chamber. The provincial courts exercise jurisdiction over crimes for which punishment will not exceed eight years; thus, about three-quarters of all crimes fall within its realm.

There are municipal courts in each municipality. They serve as trial courts at the lowest level, and they have jurisdiction over minor crimes that typically carry a penalty of imprisonment for less than one year or small fines. They are also the courts of first instance in civil and labor cases. Municipal courts are not divided into chambers, but trials are always held before a panel of three judges.

All of Cuba's courts have both professional and lay judges. Each of the chambers of the Supreme Court, for example, has professional and lay judges, as is also the case at the provincial and municipal levels. The reliance on lay judges reflects a political judgment that decisions in courts belong to the people, and that ordinary citizens with relatively little training are appropriate judges nonetheless. (In United States jurisprudence, the role of juries bears some resemblance to this Cuban procedure.) Professional judges are selected through a competitive examination administered by the Ministry of Justice. About half of Cuba's judges are members of the PCC, with a higher proportion of PCC members in the Supreme Court.

The role of the Cuban courts is quite similar to that in other countries. The courts are key institutions in law enforcement. In Cuba they also seek to educate the population about their rights and obligations. The Supreme Court, as an appellate court, is responsible for ensuring uniformity in the application of law throughout the country; the Supreme Court revokes lower-court decisions that are contrary to law or precedent.

Cuban courts are unusual in one respect: they are very harsh in their treatment of the political opposition. Cubans can be jailed for speaking ill of their rulers or for organizing groups to contest political power. The number of political prisoners has declined from the very high levels of the 1960s, but it remains characteristically in the hundreds. In the 1990s, the Cuban government often released some political prisoners at the request of visiting foreign dignitaries. For example, in 1998, many political and common prisoners were released on the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba that January. Nonetheless, the existing rules to protect "state security" make it probable that the overall number of political prisoners remains the same: some are freed, but others are arrested.

The Office of the State Prosecutor (Fiscalía General de la República) is subordinate to the National Assembly, which formally elects the prosecutor (Fiscal General de la República), and the Council of State. The prosecutor has wide latitude to review the past conduct and prospective actions of all organs of state power. The prosecutor has specific oversight over all law enforcement, with a rank equal to a Supreme Court justice. The prosecutor is directly responsible for cases of treason or corruption.

Provincial and Local Government

Cuba has fourteen provinces. From west to east, they are: Pinar del Río, La Habana, Ciudad de La Habana, Matanzas, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus, Ciego de Ávila, Camagüey, Las Tunas, Granma, Holguín, Santiago de Cuba, and Guantánamo. The Isla de la Juventud (Isle of Youth), the Cuban archipelago's second-largest island, is a special municipality. The entire national territory is subdivided into 169 municipalities.

Each province is formally governed by a provincial assembly and each municipality by a municipal assembly (Asamblea Municipal). The respective assemblies elect municipal committees. The president of a provincial assembly's provincial committee functions as a provincial governor; the president of a municipal assembly's municipal committee functions as mayor. Provincial assembly delegates serve for five years; municipal assembly delegates serve for two and one-half years. Provincial assemblies must have no fewer than seventy-five members, although some are larger because of a province's greater population.

The Provincial Commission for Candidacies, constituted in the same manner as the National Commission, proposes precandidates for provincial assembly delegates to the Municipal Commission for Candidacies. The list of precandidates equals no fewer than twice the number of posts to be filled. The Municipal Commission formally nominates the candidates for delegates. As at the national level, the number of candidates for provincial delegate equals the number of seats to be filled. Voters have no choice among candidates for provincial delegates, just as they have no choice among candidates in the vote for national deputies. (The Provincial Commission also nominates the candidates for provincial assembly president, vice president, and secretary.)

The Municipal Commission for Candidacies is constituted in the same way as its national and provincial counterparts. Formally, it nominates candidates for municipal assembly president and vice president. The Municipal Commission also formally sorts out the precandidacies for provincial delegate and national deputy, and presents the respective lists to the municipal assembly for final nomination. As a practical matter, the political process that leads to these nominations is controlled carefully from national headquarters. Nonetheless, because the number of precandidates is twice the number of



*Restored and unrestored homes
in Old Havana
Courtesy Suzanne Petrie*



*A cobblestone side street in Old
Havana
Courtesy Suzanne Petrie*

eventual nominations and posts, there is some significant competition among insiders for these symbolically important posts.

The elections for municipal assembly are different, however. Nominations come from assemblies of neighbors held at the precinct level. For each post, there must be at least two candidates, and there may be more. To be elected, a candidate must receive more than half the valid votes cast. Because of multiple candidacies, runoff elections between the top two contenders from the first round are common in many municipalities. In the municipal elections in spring 2000, for example, 5.7 percent of these municipal posts were filled in the second round. Overall, approximately half of the incumbent municipal assembly members were reelected in these elections.

Research by Cuban scholars shows that many voters are often unaware whether candidates for municipal assembly delegate are members of the PCC. Membership in the PCC serves typically neither as an asset nor as a liability in local elections, although, in fact, most elected officials are party members. The main motivations for voters are whether local candidates have a reputation for honesty, good neighborliness, and humane sensibilities. Cubans vote for their friends and neighbors for local office in ways not unlike voters do in United States local elections. Thus, it is noteworthy that many of these are, indeed, PCC members; the party members seem to be held in high regard even if the PCC as an institution is not an object of popular affection.

Municipal governments provide social services and run retail trade enterprises, as well as restaurants and cafeterias, at the local level. They also build residential housing. They have no control over provincial and national enterprises that have offices or subsidiaries in the municipality, but they can at times develop collaborative relations with the larger state firms for the benefit of the community. Through their relations with local governments, large national state enterprises, in effect, have local "charitable" activities that are somewhat similar to the practices of large firms in other countries.

The main limitation on the scope of municipal government is the principle of double subordination. That is, local firms and agencies supposedly owned and operated by the municipality must still meet the standards for quality of performance and personnel set at the national level. In practice, this principle has greatly limited the municipality's actual discretionary

powers; there are few significant policies they can change on their own.

In 1988 the government authorized the creation of People's Councils (*Consejos Populares*) to expedite the administration of services at the local level. There are several People's Councils within each municipality. Each People's Council includes the municipal delegates elected within a given territory as well as representatives from the mass organizations and state institutions operating within that locality. People's Councils became, in effect, one more layer in Cuba's administrative structure; they did not materially change the efficacy of the delivery of services or the quality of political representation.

Cuba's provinces face significant problems in carrying out their tasks. From 1986 to 1996, the percentage of nationwide budget expenditures disbursed at the provincial and municipal levels fell from 35 percent to 27 percent. For the most part, this drop was accounted for by the collapse of subnational government entrepreneurial and investment expenditures, while local governments attempted to sustain their funding of basic services. In 1996 every provincial government ran a deficit (although Havana's budget was nearly balanced). The size of the deficit of the provincial governments of Ciego de Ávila, Las Tunas, Matanzas, Pinar del Río, Sancti Spiritus, Santiago de Cuba, and Villa Clara was equal to more than half of the revenues of these provinces. The size of the deficit of the provincial governments of Granma and Guantánamo was larger than the revenues of these provinces.

National and Local Elections

Elections for the National Assembly are held in multimember districts. Voters have three choices: they can vote for the single official slate; they can vote for some of the candidates on the official slate (but never for opposition party candidates); or they can cast a blank ballot. To be elected, a candidate has to receive more than half of the valid votes cast. No candidate failed to be elected in the 1993 and 1998 National Assembly elections. The government, the PCC, and the mass organizations campaign vigorously to increase voting turnout, and, in particular, they urge citizens to vote for the entire single official slate. Thus, one measure of lawful dissent is the percentage of Cubans who vote for something other than the single slate (see Table 17, Appendix).

In the 1998 National Assembly elections, the overall results were slightly more favorable to the government than in 1993, reflecting the trend toward economic stabilization and recovery during the intervening years. In 1998, 89.7 percent of the voters cast their ballots for the single slate, and only 5 percent of the voters voided their ballots or voted blank. The results were also more favorable to the government in La Habana Province, where the single slate received 88.4 percent of the votes cast and the percentage of null or blank ballots fell to 7 percent. These results necessarily imply, however, that the single slate performed less well in some of the other provinces.

Comparative inter-provincial data, available for the 1993 National Assembly election and the 1997 and 2000 municipal elections, show a fairly consistent geographic distribution of dissent (see Table 18, Appendix). Voiding one's ballot or voting blank are the only two means of expressing displeasure with the political system at the municipal level, so the percentage of voters who choose them is somewhat larger than in national elections. At the National Assembly level, there is the additional option of not voting for the entire official slate. In all three elections, the largest proportion of dissenters was found in the western provinces (Pinar del Río, Ciudad de La Habana, La Habana, Matanzas, Villa Clara, and the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud, or Isle of Youth). And in all three elections, the smallest proportion of dissenters was evident in four eastern provinces: Las Tunas, Granma, Santiago de Cuba, and Guantánamo. The overall trend toward a decline in voting null or blank was evident in both National Assembly and municipal elections in the 1990s.

Cuba's Electoral Law of 1992 treated national, provincial, and municipal elections differently with regard to campaigning. Up until 1992, there was no campaigning at all for any post. At the municipal level, the "campaign" was limited to the posting of the photographs and biographies of the candidates in public places. These biographies were prepared and posted by the public authorities and could include derogatory comments about the candidates. At the provincial and national levels, provincial delegates and national deputies were chosen by the municipal assemblies. Their names were made known only after they were so chosen.

The 1992 Electoral Law did not change the procedures for municipal elections. For provincial and national elections, as already noted, one change enacted in 1992 was direct popular

election—a change rendered nearly meaningless because there was no choice among candidates in the 1993 and 1998 National Assembly and provincial assembly elections.

Another change was the posting of photographs and biographies of provincial and national candidates in public places and encouraging candidates to meet voters and answer questions. Thus, since 1992, the Electoral Law has featured multi-candidate single-party elections with no effective campaigning at the municipal level and entirely uncompetitive rules but some campaigning at the provincial and national levels.

At all levels, the political regime sharply constrained the freedom of political association. Cubans were not free to associate in a political party other than the PCC to contest elections. Candidates for office in different provinces and municipalities on the official slate could not even associate into formally constituted "factions." The public authorities and the PCC retained the right to shape associational patterns at all levels.

Communist Party of Cuba

Fourth and Fifth Party Congresses

In October 1991, the Fourth Congress of the PCC met to assess the wreckage of international communism. The Soviet Union was on the verge of disintegration, and the Soviet Communist Party was rapidly losing its hold on power. The Fourth Congress declared that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes of Europe was a "political disaster" that stemmed from avoidable mistakes, which the PCC would avoid. One consequence, according to the Fourth Congress, was the establishment of a "unipolar world" in which United States military power reigned. And one manifestation of that power was the Gulf War on Iraq, which was designed to intimidate any government daring to differ with the United States.

Thus, the Fourth Congress took heart that Cuba had been invited to the first Summit of Iberoamerican heads of government, held in Guadalajara, Mexico, months earlier, and hoped that Latin American countries would join to advance their common interests. It hailed the world's remaining communist governments, all of them in East Asia. But it reached out generally to governments everywhere in search of support. It underlined the repatriation of Cuban troops from African soil and Cuba's disposition to work within the United Nations system. It clearly sought to avoid needless trouble.

At home, the Fourth Congress affirmed its conviction that Marxism-Leninism remained its guide to the future, but it noted—for the first time in the history of these documents—that this ideology "should not be applied dogmatically." Moreover, the PCC would apply these principles taking into account Cuba's new circumstances. The Fourth Congress recognized that "the world has changed. Today the enemies of the people feel stronger than ever." But it stated its conviction that a greater strength is the "will to independence, freedom, and development of every people. The duty of every revolutionary continues to be to make the Revolution, and to defend it." Thus, the Fourth Congress proclaimed that it would make no concessions, for concessions are the path to ruin. Defiant still, Fidel Castro's government was not ready to fold.

And yet, the Fourth Congress understood that it had to adjust to the changed international circumstances. One adjustment has already been mentioned: the full repatriation of Cuban troops, mainly from Africa but also from other countries, which was completed by the time the Fourth Congress met. A more regime-changing adjustment was the reorientation of economic policy. The Fourth Congress set its own priority clearly: "The supreme objective [is] to save the Homeland, the Revolution, and Socialism." The Fourth Congress endorsed the continued use of traditional instruments, such as mass mobilizations, to produce food or address other tasks; these measures had typically been inefficient in their use of resources and often ineffective in terms of reaching their objectives, however.

In Cuba's newly dire circumstances, the Fourth Congress understood that it had to authorize changes in economic policy. It endorsed the development of an international tourism industry as a new engine of growth that, by the late 1990s, had become a crucial earner of foreign exchange (see *Key Economic Sectors*, ch. 3). The Fourth Congress authorized a slight liberalization of self-employment, especially in services, even though clear preference was expressed for centralization of ownership, management, and planning; such liberalization of self-employment would be implemented two years later.

More dramatically, the Fourth Congress authorized retroactively a new policy on foreign direct investment. In so doing, the Fourth Congress departed from a foundational decision at the origins of revolutionary rule in Cuba, namely, the expropriation of all foreign firms. The Fourth Congress affirmed that

foreign investment should be not just tolerated but "promoted" and that considerable flexibility should govern its terms of entry.

An important social and political change had also been authorized by the PCC's Political Bureau prior to the Fourth Congress and simply ratified by it. In the "Call to the Fourth Congress," the party pledged "sincere communication with . . . members of various religious denominations who share our life and endorse our program . . . although some aspects of their ideology may differ from ours." At the Fourth Congress, PCC Statutes were changed to permit religious believers to join its ranks provided they otherwise supported the party's program.

Despite these significant changes, the main thrust of the Fourth Party Congress was to resist widespread political change. In December 1991, Carlos Aldana Escalante, PCC secretary for ideology and for international relations and Fidel Castro's principal political agent in the late 1980s and early 1990s, addressed the National Assembly. Aldana had been the only top PCC leader who had ever implied in public that he thought well of "reform communism" in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Aldana rectified his views. He denounced those who still advocated the implementation in Cuba of reforms akin to those blamed for the collapse of communist regimes in Europe. Despite his adoption of this harder line, Aldana, too, was dismissed from office for various reasons in September 1992.

In October 1997, the Fifth Congress of the PCC convened, to the general relief of its members. They had survived. Their political regime had endured. Cuba had succeeded in resisting the sharper onslaught of United States policies during the 1990s. The Cuban economy had nosedived in the early years of the decade as a consequence of the ending of Soviet subsidies and the disruption of Cuban international trade, but the economy's decline had stopped in 1994, and a modest economic recovery had begun. Cuba was the only extant communist regime outside East Asia. The forecasts of many in Washington and Miami that the Cuban regime would tumble like other communist regimes had proved off the mark. From the perspective of the leadership of the PCC, Cuba's survival was a stunning triumph.

Nonetheless, there was a cloud hovering over the party. Fidel Castro had disappeared from public view during the preceding summer months. Now he looked gaunt, having lost much

weight in the interim. As if seeking to reassure the 1,500 delegates to the Fifth Congress that he was still in fine shape, Castro spoke for six hours and forty minutes. He recalled the difficult days of the early 1990s and detailed the significance of their success in overcoming those problems. The PCC, he believed, had made "acceptable concessions" in its preferred policies in order to survive. As he had said so many times during the early 1990s, Castro emphasized that he did not like the policies that he and the government and the party had been compelled to authorize, in particular the large-scale development of the tourism industry and the welcome to foreign investment. But these policies were necessary to obtain capital, technology, and access to markets, and they had already proven successful, he said.

Castro noted new sources of concern. Market-oriented policies had generated new inequalities. Crime had increased. And some of the newly preferred strategies for development, such as Basic Units of Cooperative Production (Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa—UBPC), which are semi-private agricultural cooperatives, were not working well. But he praised the party's resourcefulness in overcoming the "setbacks, bitterness, and deceptions" associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The PCC had rallied to the defense of the regime, said Castro, and it had prevailed.

The principal debate at the Fifth Congress centered on the new economic policy of the 1990s. Successful though it had been in rescuing the Cuban economy from further catastrophes, it was very different from the preferences of many Fifth Congress delegates for a centralized command economy. Vice President Carlos Lage, the political architect of the economic reforms, admitted that prices in those food markets and restaurants where demand and supply were allowed to play freely were often well above the purchasing power of Cuban workers. But he resisted suggestions for renewed state intervention in these markets, arguing instead for further incentives to increase production. Lage warned that renewed statism would stimulate criminality and the black market. Lage also resisted a generalized salary increase; the nation could not afford it. He preached the virtues of efficiency, balanced budgets, and control of inflation. Fortunately for Lage, he was publicly backed by Fidel Castro. Castro acknowledged the problems and reiterated his dislike of these "painful remedies," but argued that current economic policies were sound.

The Fifth Congress's resolution on the economy reflected the prevailing balance of power. The Fifth Congress took note that the United States should be expected to continue its "economic war" on Cuba. Consequently, Cuba would continue to face an adverse international economic and financial environment. Therefore, the "key objective of economic policy is efficiency," provided, to be sure, that all of the changes already adopted or about to be introduced "would always be directed to preserve the socialist essence of the Revolution."

The Fifth Congress stood firm on political changes. Perhaps its aversion to change is best summarized in the title of the political resolution approved by the Fifth Congress: "The Party of Unity, Democracy, and the Human Rights That We Defend." The closing phrase of the title implied that there were some human rights that this party chose not to defend.

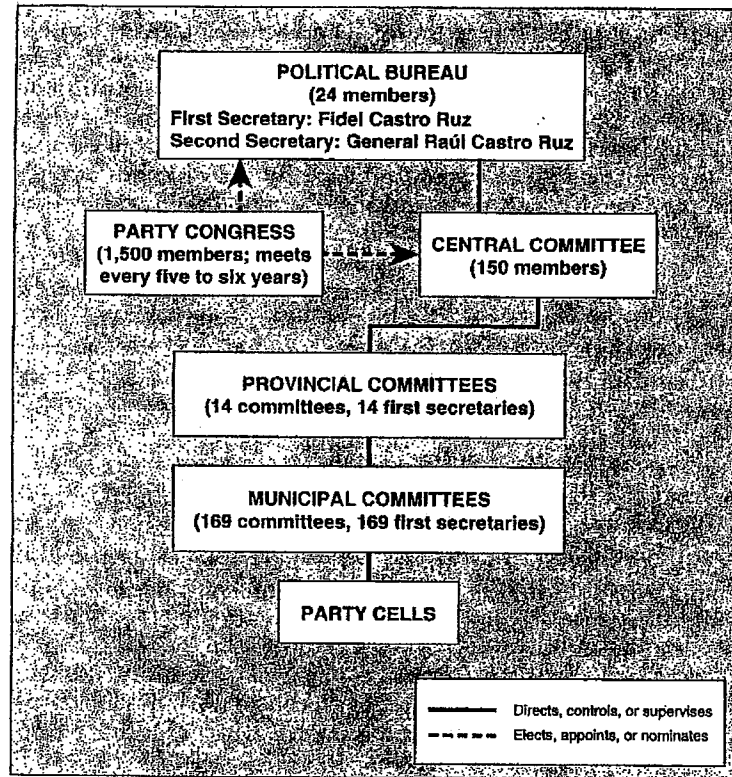
Political Bureau and Central Committee

Political Bureau

The PCC's Political Bureau is the party's leading decision-making institution, and Cuba's most important decision-making entity (see fig. 8). The Political Bureau meets regularly to discuss the nation's key issues. Membership on the Political Bureau best identifies Cuba's most powerful leaders. Political Bureau members typically have responsibilities in other spheres of public life as heads of key provinces, military commands, mass organizations, or major PCC posts. Three leaders have led the Political Bureau since 1965—Fidel Castro, first secretary of the PCC; Raúl Castro, second secretary of the party; and Juan Almeida, chief of the party's disciplinary commission.

From 1965 through 1980, no member was ever dropped from the Political Bureau, although its membership expanded from eight in 1965 to thirteen in 1975 and sixteen in 1980. By the time of the Third Party Congress (1986), death and voluntary and involuntary retirements had led to a six-member reduction (37 percent) from the Political Bureau's 1980 membership; meanwhile, four new members joined the bureau in 1986, leaving its membership at fourteen members.

The Fourth Party Congress (1991) witnessed the most dramatic change in membership in the Political Bureau since its founding. The Congress wanted to promote a younger and more dynamic leadership. Six of the members (43 percent) left the bureau during the Congress. Because the Political Bureau's



Source: Based on information from Jorge I. Domínguez; and Raimundo López, "Preliminary Report on PCC Membership, Percentages," October 8, 1997.

Figure 8. Organization of the Communist Party of Cuba (*Partido Comunista de Cuba—PCC*), 2001

size had expanded to twenty-five members, seventeen of its 1991 members (68 percent) were new—unprecedented since the party's founding in 1965. The Fifth Party Congress (1997) dropped nine members (36 percent) of the Political Bureau and added only eight new members. Thus, the Fifth Party Congress's Political Bureau (twenty-four members) suffered from less volatility than had its predecessor, as would be expected from a leadership that felt more politically secure.

By the conclusion of the Fifth Congress, only the Castro brothers and Almeida had served continuously on the Political Bureau since 1965, and only José Ramón Machado, party organization secretary, had been a member since 1975. The next two longest-serving members, both since 1986, were Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, minister of interior, and Esteban Lazo, who had served at various times as party provincial secretary in Matanzas, Santiago de Cuba, and Ciudad de La Habana Province.

In sum, only six of the twenty-four members of the 1997 Political Bureau had been members of Cuba's top decision-making organ before the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Cuba's top leadership, therefore, has already undergone an important transition at the levels just below the Castro brothers and their closest associates. Most Political Bureau members in the 1990s are themselves the product of a transition that took place under the communist political system. They do not count on Soviet subsidies. They do not count on external military support. They do not expect to be engaged in military or other foreign expeditions. They are much readier to experiment at home with various economic policy changes. They are younger. The median birth year of the 1997 Political Bureau was 1943; six were born after the assault on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953. They expect to have a political future in Cuba regardless of the name of the nation's president or the form of its political regime. The transition among Cuba's political elite is already underway.

In 1991 three women belonged to the twenty-five-member Political Bureau; that number dropped to two in 1997. In 1991 four military officers on active duty belonged to the Political Bureau; that number rose to five in 1997. In 1991 five of the provincial first secretaries belonged to the Political Bureau; that number rose to six in 1997. The post of provincial first secretary is perhaps Cuba's most challenging position, for all subnational responsibilities fall on the persons occupying these posts. Not surprisingly, three of the five provincial first secretaries from 1991 were dropped from the Political Bureau to be replaced by others. In the judgment of their superiors, the dismissed first secretaries were poor managers.

In contrast to previous decades, in 1991 Carlos Lage, secretary of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, was the only civilian minister on the Political Bureau. The PCC leadership clearly understood that its problem in 1991 was emi-

nently political: how to survive the collapse of European communism and retain the support, or at least the forbearance, of the Cuban people. By 1997 three of the Political Bureau members first chosen at the previous party congress had switched jobs to become government ministers: Alfredo Jordán Morales, minister of agriculture; Abel Prieto Jiménez, minister of culture; and Roberto Robaina González, minister of foreign relations. They were joined by Marcos Portal León, minister of basic industries. Division General Ulises Rosales del Toro became minister of the sugar industry, although he remained formally on active military duty. In 1997, with six out of twenty-four Political Bureau members serving also as members of the cabinet (along with FAR Minister General Raúl Castro, Interior Minister Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé, and President Fidel Castro), the PCC leadership signaled a higher priority for improving the tasks of governance and in particular the economy's performance.

Central Committee

The PCC's Central Committee, a much larger group than the Political Bureau, is made up of many key leaders from intermediate levels of responsibility. The Central Committee met infrequently in the late 1960s; for the most part, it convened only in times of crisis. The committee met more regularly in the 1970s and 1980s; the original party statutes called for a meeting of the Central Committee Plenum approximately every six months to enable the Central Committee to have an impact on major decisions. The party statutes in place since the 1997 party congress stipulate a plenum meeting at least once a year.

The history of membership on the Central Committee resembles that of the Political Bureau. The 1975 First Party Congress reelected 77 percent of the 100 founding members of the 1965 Central Committee. The 1980 Second Party Congress reelected 79 percent of the 1975 full members still active in 1980; the size of the committee had expanded to 148 in 1980. The 1986 Third Party Congress reelected 61 percent. The lower rate of continuity in 1986 parallels what was happening at the Political Bureau. The size of the Central Committee remained stable at 146.

In 1991 the Fourth Party Congress removed half of the members of the old Central Committee, and it expanded the size of the new Central Committee to 225. Consequently, only 32 per-

cent of the new Central Committee members had served on the previous committee. Not only was the rate of continuity the lowest since the Central Committee had been founded, but the proportion of newcomers was the highest since the PCC's founding.

The Fifth Party Congress stabilized membership on the Central Committee just as it had done for the Political Bureau. The expansion of the size of the Central Committee in 1991 had been a temporary experiment that the Fifth Party Congress reversed in 1997. The size of the Central Committee shrank to 150 members, and 56 percent of the members of the 1991 Central Committee were dismissed. The 1997 Central Committee's veterans from 1991 constituted, however, two-thirds of the membership of the new Central Committee, and accordingly the new body was far more experienced than its predecessor.

The oversized and inexperienced Central Committee in place between 1991 and 1997 was the least important Central Committee since the late 1960s. Then, as in most of the 1990s, the Central Committee met rarely—in the 1990s less often than expected from the party statutes. Moreover, although the party statutes mandate a PCC congress every five years, the Fourth Party Congress met nearly six years after its predecessor. The Fifth Congress met a full year late. In general, the Central Committee's excessive size, inexperience, and infrequency of meetings in the 1990s marked a process of party de-institutionalization that the Fifth Congress sought to reverse, hence the reduction in size and the renewed premium on experience. One result of these processes, however, was to install and sustain a Central Committee that was younger than its predecessors in the 1970s and 1980s. The Political Bureau and the Central Committee finished the century with a young and energetic leadership, steeled in Cuba's troubled life in the 1990s, ready for political competition with any challenger.

The Central Committee chosen at the Fifth Party Congress has an additional characteristic: 36 percent of its members have posts only in the PCC and its youth wing, the Union of Young Communists (*Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas—UJC*). This Central Committee is full of municipal party first secretaries, not just first secretaries at the level of provinces or on the staff of national party headquarters. This Central Committee represents the party elite better than its predecessors. It is much less a mere assembly of those who have performed meritorious service in various spheres of life. It is no longer broadly

representative of Cuban society and institutions. Its members seek to rule.

Party Organization, Membership, and Role

Formally, the PCC is governed by its party congresses. These adopt the party's statutes and its programs, and choose the membership of the Central Committee and Political Bureau. Party congresses are to meet every five years, the Central Committee Plenum every year, and the Political Bureau once a week. In practice, as already noted, the Political Bureau is the party's most important entity and the only one whose actual power corresponds to the formal organization.

Party structure was simplified in the 1990s. The post of "alternate" for various posts (including Political Bureau and Central Committee member) was eliminated. The party Secretariat is no longer a separate body but simply the party's staff at various levels. The party's subnational organization matches the number of provinces and municipalities. The most rapidly replaced significant party post is that of provincial secretary; that job requires mediation between the demands of the center and the localities and is difficult to perform.

The PCC is a party of selection. Not everyone who wishes to belong to the party has the right to join it, although all party members must seek to be a member. Party members are chosen through a complex process. First, all candidates for party membership must be chosen as "exemplary workers" at assemblies held at their workplace. Then, a party commission in charge of membership scrutinizes each candidacy and is empowered to reject any and all. A variant on this procedure is through membership in the UJC, the party's youth wing. Ordinarily, the party hopes that UJC members will, in due course, also be chosen as exemplary workers, but the party commissions can bypass such procedures.

Concerned that party membership might drop in Cuba in the 1990s as it had in formerly communist Europe in the late 1980s, the Fourth Party Congress liberalized membership procedures in two ways. First, it eliminated all discrimination against religious believers; the party no longer required a person to be an atheist or an agnostic to qualify for membership. Second, the probation time for young UJC members to be eligible for party membership was cut from three to two years. As a result, in the 1990s party membership grew on average some 46,000 persons per year, compared with an annual member-



*Havana Headquarters of the Union of Young Communists (Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas—UJC), 1997
Courtesy Mark P. Sullivan*

ship growth of only about 27,000 persons in the 1980s. Party membership grew to 800,000 members by the time of the Fifth Party Congress in 1997 out of a population of about eleven million people. In 1997 about 30 percent of the members had joined during the 1990s. Workers constituted about one-third of the entire party membership. Another half-million belonged to the UJC.

The PCC's manner of filling public offices differs from how political parties elsewhere in the world go about this pursuit. Elected public offices wield relatively modest power in Cuba. The National Assembly meets infrequently and has limited powers. Provincial and municipal assemblies have limited resources to carry on with their tasks. Although the PCC screens who is elected to these offices, it focuses its attention on appointed offices that wield significant power. The PCC commission at the appropriate level must clear and endorse every officeholder for such posts prior to appointment. Heads of central government agencies, state enterprises, hospitals, military commands, and so forth must all be cleared and

endorsed. This type of control is the party's principal source of power.

PCC officials, especially at the subnational level, also play key roles as problem solvers and coordinators. When difficulties arise in a province or a municipality, the party first secretary is often the only person well positioned to appeal through the party hierarchy for additional support or resources from Havana. The party first secretary in the provinces and the municipalities functions also as an arbiter in disputes that may arise in various spheres of life. More controversially, the party municipal or provincial secretary often assumes the responsibility of breaking a national policy directive on the grounds that local conditions are not propitious. This last role implies that party provincial and municipal secretaries are, in some instances, high risk-takers, but it also explains why provincial first secretaries are vulnerable to dismissal.

The PCC organs are loci for discussion and debate over national, sectoral, provincial, or municipal policies. Although the Central Committee had become less representative of Cuban society by the late 1990s, PCC cells (the party's lowest units) and various assemblies often congregate leaders from various spheres of life effectively. These fora provide opportunities to clear the air in a heated dispute and to review, understand, and influence decisions issued from on high.

The party generally orients policies at various levels and with varying degrees of specificity. In contrast to previous decades, in the 1990s the party's national staff became smaller, and party officials were instructed to interfere less in the routine running of government agencies, state enterprises, and social service entities. The party in the 1990s retained its key tasks, as outlined above, but withdrew in many cases from becoming a substitute policy executor. This behavior was consistent with turning the party into, and using it, as a political machine.

Mass Organizations

Three of Cuba's principal mass organizations were founded shortly after revolutionary victory, between late 1959 and 1961. The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) groups women members, as might be expected. The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) brings together smallholders regardless of their crops of specialization. Following the 1963 agrarian reform, many such private smallholders remained. Some cultivated plots on their own or with their families; others did so as

members of cooperatives. All belonged to the ANAP. The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) were established in every neighborhood to uncover plots against the government. "Revolutionary vigilance" was their main task. The CDRs were also responsible for rooting out common crime and, from time to time, collaborated in such activities as mass vaccination campaigns, garbage recycling, park clean-ups, and the like.

The fourth mass organization is much older: the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC) was founded in the 1930s. The CTC groups all Cubans who are gainfully employed. It is organized into federations according to sectors of economic activity, not according to professional categories or trades. The CTC has a presence in every work center, and it and the ANAP often substitute for government agencies in dispute resolution.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, these mass organizations were means by which the government and the PCC implemented policies and monitored the population. The moment of highest recognition of their role came at the Second Party Congress in 1980, when all four heads of the mass organizations became alternate members of the party's Political Bureau.

By the 1980s, however, the capacities of the mass organizations had begun to weaken. Consider the ANAP. One of the top national objectives in the rural sector was to promote Agricultural-Livestock Cooperatives (Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria—CPAs); the national leadership thought it more rational for smallholders to pool their resources. CPA membership jumped from 9,103 in 1978 to 82,611 in 1983, but by 1990 membership had dropped to 62,130. The number of hectares in CPAs peaked in 1986; after this high point, the organizations lost nearly a fifth of their pooled land.

A generalized weakening of the capacity of the various mass organizations became evident in the late 1980s. PCC leaders, worried that these longstanding means of control were breaking down, took decisive action in the early 1990s by replacing the leaders of three mass organizations. Thus, Orlando Lugo Fonte replaced José Ramírez Cruz, the longtime ANAP president; Juan Contino replaced Armando Acosta Cordero, the longtime national coordinator of the CDRs; and Pedro Ross Leal replaced the longtime CTC secretary-general, Roberto Veiga Menéndez. Lugo Fonte and Contino joined the PCC Central Committee in 1991; Ross Leal was elevated to the Political Bureau that same year.

Vilma Espín founded the FMC and has remained its only president. She is Raúl Castro's wife, Fidel's sister-in-law. Espín was promoted to alternate member of the Political Bureau in 1980 and to full Political Bureau membership in 1986. In 1991 she became a member of the Central Committee but remained as FMC president.

Notwithstanding these attempts to reinvigorate the mass organizations, primarily through new leadership, the FMC, the CDRs, and the ANAP remain weaker than in decades past in terms of representing and mobilizing the population. The CDRs hit bottom in the early 1990s; in the mid-1990s, they responded to their reduced capacity by concentrating on some strategic tasks where they are still capable of delivering important support for the political regime. For example, the CDRs came to play an important role in Cuba's electoral process in the 1990s. (As the 1990s closed, the CDRs counted 7.5 million people on their membership rolls.) During the 1998 National Assembly elections, the CDRs campaigned steadily and massively on behalf of a vote for the single official slate; they combated both blank voting and the process of voting selectively for some but not all candidates on the official ballot. On election day, the CDRs visited some homes repeatedly to ensure the highest possible turnout. The CDRs were literally an arm of the PCC working to achieve the desired electoral results.

The CTC, in contrast, found a new, albeit still limited, role in the 1990s: defending the interests of workers in some respects and questioning some of the recommendations of government technocrats. In this latter stance, the CTC differed from its prior role of just helping the government implement its objectives. In the 1990s, labor unions, for example, delayed legislation that would have forced recalcitrant workers to relocate to other jobs. As a result, Cuban state firms remained overstaffed and inefficient, but the government was spared from political protest and overt unemployment remained relatively low. Unions also resisted stricter sanctions against labor absenteeism (thus making it easier for workers to moonlight as self-employed), and fought off linking wages to productivity. The CTC also spoke out in late 1993 when the government adopted some of its most far-reaching economic reforms and, spurred by Finance Minister José Luis Rodríguez García, the government's leading technocrat, began to consider whether to impose taxes on self-employed and salaried workers. The CTC opposed the imposition of taxes on the payrolls of salaried

workers and supported a nationwide discussion of the proposed measures in "workers' parliaments" during the first half of 1994. In the end, taxes were imposed on self-employed but not on salaried workers (see Tax Reform, ch. 3).

The changes that took place in the 1990s increased the CTC's autonomy from the state and imbued it with some claims to represent the interests of state workers. This new political role, of course, came at the expense of delaying or impeding economic reform, but it no doubt made the CTC more important. During this period, the CDRs, on the other hand, became even more closely connected to the PCC's partisan interests. The ANAP and the FMC have yet to find an effective new role.

Civil Organizations

Religion and the State

The Cuban state is secular, according to the constitution. In fact, in the 1960s government policy was designed to weaken the Roman Catholic Church and other forms of organized religious behavior, while respecting "freedom of religion" at its narrowest level: Cubans remained free to worship. Active churchgoers and their children, however, risked being discriminated against when applying to selective schools and the university and when seeking promotions in the workplace. The PCC was formally atheist until 1991, and membership in the party was often a prerequisite for jobs carrying significant responsibilities. Therefore, the Cuban leadership's decision to drop atheism as a formal requirement for party membership in 1991 and, more generally, in the 1990s to discontinue the active campaigns against organized religion were significant decisions with broad impact.

In fact, Cuba witnessed a religious revival in many faiths in the 1990s. The revival began from a fairly low baseline. A large survey (N=3105, with N meaning the size of the random poll sample) conducted in the early 1990s by Cuba's Center for Psychological and Sociological Research (Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociológicas—CIPS) showed that 65 percent of respondents believed in the possibility of magical cures while 43 percent thought well of burial ceremonies. But only 17 percent approved of baptisms, only 6 percent attended religious services, and only 2 percent admitted to belonging to a religious grouping. In 1997 a Cuban government survey showed that more than four-fifths of Cubans believed in some-

thing transcendent, while 15 percent admitted to belonging to a religious grouping.

Although its social base of support remains modest, the Roman Catholic Church is Cuba's most hierarchically organized community of faith (see Roman Catholic Church, ch. 2). The rebuilding of the Roman Catholic Church in Cuba began in the mid-1980s in preparation for the 1986 Roman Catholic Congress, the first to be held since 1959. Congress participants reviewed the situation of the church in Cuba, through history and in the present. They formulated broad recommendations for pastoral action and provided the first sustained critique of aspects of Cuban government policy. The final document issued by the Congress complained of discrimination in job promotions suffered by Roman Catholics, criticized official atheism, and called attention to "moral deficiencies" in contemporary Cuba, including "duplicity, mendacity, fraud."

In the early 1990s, Roman Catholic bishops criticized the government and party policies more sharply. The bishops issued their pastoral letter, "Love Hopes All Things," on September 8, 1993, the feast of Our Lady of Charity of Cobre, Cuba's patroness, and coincidentally the grimest moment in Cuba's sharp economic collapse of the early 1990s. The bishops developed several controversial themes that would resurface during the pope's visit in January 1998. In 1993 the bishops claimed the right to speak to all Cubans, including politicians. "We bishops of Cuba," they added, "reject any kind of measure that in order to punish the Cuban government serves to aggravate the problems of our people," specifically mentioning the United States embargo and other sanctions on Cuba. The bishops criticized official practice "that leads to identifying terms that cannot be made synonymous, such as *homeland* and *socialism* . . . *Cuban* and *revolutionary*." They chided the authorities for limiting freedoms, for "excessive surveillance by the state security agencies that even extends into the strictly private life of individuals." They lamented the "high number of prisoners being held," including those "being punished for economic or political reasons . . ."

In November 1996, President Fidel Castro visited Pope John Paul II at the Vatican and invited him to visit Cuba. The Roman Catholic bishops had first invited the pope in 1989, and informal discussions had been underway since earlier in the 1980s, but the Cuban government had delayed issuing its own invitation. In preparation for the papal visit that took place in Janu-



On the occasion of the June 29, 1997, open-air mass held in Havana, the first in almost four decades, a sign advertises the upcoming January 1998 visit of Pope John Paul II.

Courtesy Mark P. Sullivan

ary 1998, the first ever to Cuba by a pope, church and state negotiated extensively. The Cuban government agreed to permit outdoor masses, not limiting them just to the period of the pope's visit, and authorized religious processions outside church buildings. In addition, in December 1997, Christmas Day became an official holiday for the first time since 1969. The Cuban mass media covered some of the preparation for the pope's visit, and during the visit radio and television broadcast all public events live. Cardinal Jaime Ortega, archbishop of Havana, was given a half-hour of free television time shortly before the pope's visit to explain the meaning and significance of the forthcoming events. The government also allowed thousands of international pilgrims, including Cuban-Americans; to visit Cuba for the duration of the visit, and allowed the church to import paper and other materials to publish necessary information.

Because the pope's visit took place well after a process of social and religious change had begun, his visit may have a longer-lasting impact on Cuban society and politics than if it

had taken place without such prior changes. Thus, the papal visit may be a catalyst or an accelerator of further changes. The Roman Catholic church in Cuba has begun to behave like its brethren in former communist countries or in former Latin American dictatorships. Some parishes sponsor book or film clubs, or other groups to discuss issues of common concern, not just exclusively religious issues. Several dioceses also publish magazines that cover a wide array of topics, not just those of religious significance. For example, the Havana archdiocesan magazine *Palabra Nueva* often publishes articles that assess and criticize government economic policy. *Vital*, the magazine of the diocese of Pinar del Río, has been the boldest in challenging aspects of government policy.

It is difficult to assess the relative size of Cuba's various communities of faith. Nonetheless, both before the Revolution and in the 1990s it is likely that the largest such community is heir to Cuba's Afro-Cuban religious traditions. *Santería*, *regla de palo*, spiritualism, and other forms of Afro-Cuban religiosity command significant popular allegiance, probably more than Roman Catholicism. The already mentioned large survey from the early 1990s, for example, suggests strong support for beliefs and practices often associated with Afro-Cuban practices. According to the survey, more Cubans believed in the worth of consulting a *babalao* (an Afro-Cuban religious leader) than a priest. In the western provinces, Roman Catholic Church attendance once a month reached 20 percent by late 1994, but, even after the pope's visit in 1998, consistent weekly church attendance nationwide was only about 3 percent, although the proportion was much higher in Havana than in eastern Cuba.

During the 1990s, evangelical Protestantism reportedly grew rapidly in Cuba, as was the case elsewhere in Latin America and in former communist Europe. More traditional forms of Protestantism did not grow much, however. To the extent that religious belief and behavior remained a form of distancing oneself from the government and the PCC, then the fact that other forms of religiosity grew faster than mainstream Protestantism could be explained in political terms: Cubans were unwilling to join those communities of faith perceived as too close to the political regime, and some Protestant pastors from mainline Protestant faiths had agreed to serve on the government's single official slate for National Assembly elections.

Cuba also has a small Jewish community but no resident rabbi, although one or two are in training and rabbis from the

United States visit Cuba for services on holy days. The Jewish community has also grown, as older and younger Jews have sought to explore their religious tradition. (Some Jews, however, have used this reactivation of their community links as a means to emigrate to Israel. If they are active members of a Temple, Jews have found it more likely that Israel will accept them as immigrants and that the Cuban government will permit their emigration.)

Nongovernmental Organizations

Cuba's most important nonreligious nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are often government operated nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs). This is the case for two reasons. The nature and extent of government and PCC control over Cuban society and political life have been very extensive. The principal forms of societal organization, for example, have been the mass organizations, already discussed. By the late 1970s and thereafter, however, the government and party found it useful to establish organizations with a greater margin of autonomy. In the 1990s, one additional motivation was that GONGOs could more readily obtain international assistance from NGOs in Western Europe and Canada.

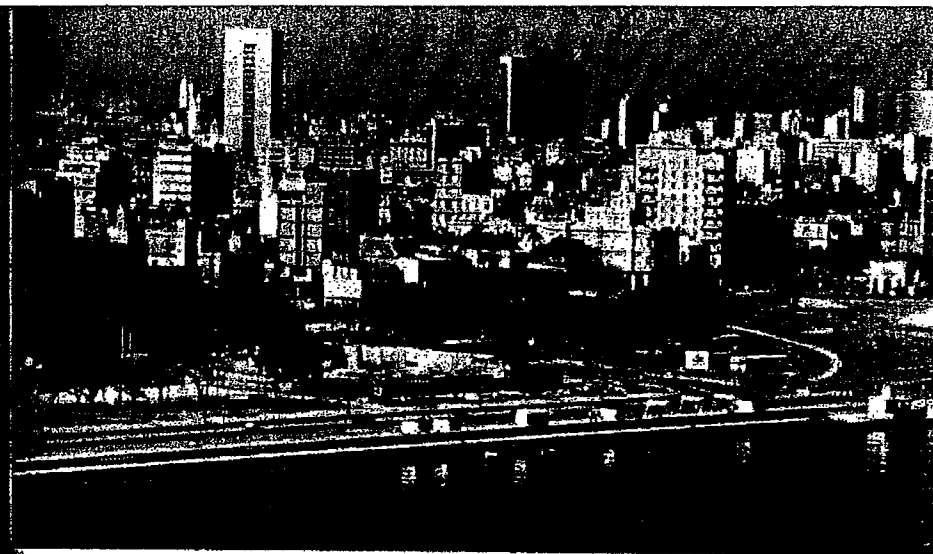
There are many examples of GONGOs. They include sports clubs; environmental organizations; a Cuban variant of a national rifle association; professional associations of lawyers, economists, engineers, and so forth; as well as many intellectual and scientific organizations, including think tanks. The think tanks focused on political, economic, and social analysis, were founded directly by the PCC, and followed its guidelines fairly closely through the 1980s. The Center for the Study of the World Economy (Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Mundial—CIEM), for example, conducted research principally on the Soviet Union and East European communist countries until their collapse, but also on the Cuban economy. The director and deputy director of the CIEM, Oswaldo Martínez and José Luis Rodríguez, respectively, successively held the post of minister of economy in the 1990s. In the mid-1990s, more than one-half of the publications produced by the CIPS (Center for Psychological and Sociological Research) were classified for the use of government and party officials, not for wider academic circulation.

In the mid-1990s, the most notable GONGO was the Center for American Studies (Centro de Estudios sobre América—

CEA). Founded in the late 1970s by the PCC to generate information and analysis about the United States, Canada, and Latin America, the CEA, by the early 1990s, was strikingly independent in the development of its work while remaining well connected to some high-ranking government and party officials. Central Committee members and staff, National Assembly leaders and staff, and ministers of government solicited the work of CEA staff and at times attended CEA workshops and conferences.

In the early 1990s, CEA economists working on Cuba distinguished themselves by the originality of their thought and their willingness to venture past the officially established canon for discussion of economic policy. One CEA-produced book, *Cuba: La restructuración de la economía, una propuesta para el debate*, provides a searching diagnosis and critique of Cuba's economic circumstances and proposes economic policies different from those the government was then pursuing. The CEA economists wished to accelerate the use of market incentives and instruments, although still within a socialist framework. The CEA sociologists and political scientists had also been working on domestic Cuban politics and society. In the spring of 1994, they held a conference to assess the quality of Cuban democracy. In that conference and in the resulting book that was published in 1995, some foreign authors were included as well. The publication of these two CEA books, however, alarmed some within the leadership.

In March 1996, Raúl Castro, minister of the FAR, read a wide-ranging report on behalf of the Political Bureau to the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee. One part of the text sharply criticized the CEA, accusing its academics of parroting the line of United States scholars on Cuba and, more generally, of serving United States interests and undermining revolutionary ideology. There followed an investigation led by José Ramón Balaguer Cabrera, party secretary for ideology. The terms of the investigation resembled a witch hunt. The CEA senior staff held together, however, insisting that they were good revolutionaries and good communists. (The United States government from time to time had denied CEA academics visas to enter the United States precisely for these reasons.) Although they "confessed" to minor issues (for example, something could have been done better), they held firm in defense of their substantive ideas and professions of loyalty. In the end, although they had to leave the CEA (the institution became a



*A view of Havana from Fort Spain (Fortaleza La España)
Courtesy Danielle Hayes, United Nations Development Programme*

pale shadow of its former self), each of the senior academics at first found employment that, for the most part, permitted the continuation of much of their academic research. None was immediately expelled from the PCC. The survival of the CEA academics depended greatly on the expression of international support by scholars and governments in many countries that had come to value CEA researchers.

NGOs, no matter what their origin might have been, create spaces between state and society, between ruling party and private citizens. Such an occurrence has been an aspect of the Cuban experience in the 1990s. The CEA case is instructive because the CEA was able to resist more effectively than would have been the case in Cuba in previous decades.

Human Rights and Opposition Groups

It is not news that the Cuban government harasses or jails human rights activists and groups as well as the political opposition. The news in the 1990s was that the government was no longer succeeding in its repression. Since the defeat and destruction of violent counterrevolutionary forces in the mid-1960s, the government has not feared violent opposition. But, beginning slowly and haltingly in the late 1970s and gathering

steam in the 1980s, a human rights movement finally blossomed in Cuba in the 1990s.

In the 1990s, when the government jailed human rights activists or opposition political leaders or destroyed some of their organizations, others, hitherto unknown, replaced them. Thus, the work of these groups has continued even if the faces and names of the people and organizations have changed.

A high-water mark for human rights groups was reached in 1995-96. On October 10, 1995 (the anniversary of the beginning of Cuba's first war of independence), an organization called the Cuban Council (Concilio Cubano) was founded. The Concilio was an attempt by some 140 small, unofficial opposition groups to coalesce around a minimal program. The Concilio's aims were a general amnesty for all political prisoners, full respect for the present constitution and fundamental laws, a call on the Cuban government to fulfill its obligations to respect human rights under the United Nations Charter, a demand for freedom of economic organization, and a call for free and direct elections on the basis of the pluralist nature of society.

In November 1995, the Concilio reaffirmed its commitment to use only peaceful means to achieve its aims. In short, the Concilio respected the country's constitution and legal framework while demanding changes within them. In December the Concilio formally asked the government for permission to hold a large gathering on February 24, 1996 (the anniversary of the beginning of Cuba's last war of independence). On February 15, however, the government launched a wave of repression against Concilio leaders and members; the next day it banned the gathering. The Concilio's principal leader and national delegate, Leonel Morejón, served a prison term for his role in the organization; several others were jailed as well.

The Concilio Cubano episode was noteworthy because it was the largest and most ambitious attempt to consolidate human rights and opposition groups. Throughout the 1990s, the repression of human rights and opposition activity and the rebirth in due course were a recurring pattern. In the late 1990s, human rights and opposition activists founded new groups, some of which created new, smaller coalitions. The government again resorted to repression, and the activists and oppositionists rebounded as well.

As in decades past, in the 1990s the government responded to opposition efforts by forcing some activists into exile and

sometimes, in effect, deporting them. One means of assuring political stability since 1959 has been the government's export of its opposition. Many Concilio Cubano leaders and members went into exile after the 1996 crackdown, for example. The government often releases political prisoners only on the condition that they emigrate.

Mass Media

In the 1990s, as in decades past, the state owned and operated all mass media, except for publications of the Roman Catholic Church. Because of the high cost of importing newsprint, in the early 1990s the government sharply cut back on the publication of newspapers and magazines. Many journals and magazines were shut down; the circulation of newspapers was cut back.

The principal daily newspaper is *Granma*, official organ of the PCC. *Granma* reads like a collection of press releases. It often publishes the full texts of official speeches and is generally devoid of editorial or substantive variety. In the late 1990s, it resumed occasional publication of abbreviated "letters to the editor" along with responses to them, thereby providing a glimpse of how official Cuba addresses popular questions. *Juventud Rebelde* is the official organ of the UJC (Communist Youth Union). In the 1990s, it changed from a daily to a weekly. It is likely to feature opinion pieces that provide a slightly wider range of political and social commentary. *Bohemia* is a news-magazine of long standing that at times presents investigative reporting of problems that government leaders wish to bring to light.

By the end of the 1950s, Cuba had an impressive nationwide network of television broadcast companies and television sets. Fidel Castro employed television extensively in 1959 and thereafter to communicate his vision and his policies to the Cuban people. The Cuban Revolution was the first revolution whose leaders made extensive use of television. In the 1990s, however, the costs of production for television led the government to reduce the number of channels and of hours of transmission. Nonetheless, television remains the principal source of communication for entertainment and news.

In the 1990s, however, radio, a lower-cost alternative to print or television media, became the more dynamic mass medium. Moreover, the Cuban government's response to the United States-sponsored Radio Martí Program led to wider freedom of

programming for radio. Consequently, Cuban radio engages in investigative reporting of various misdeeds, ranging from stores that do not open when they should or that sell shoddy merchandise, to incidents of crime and corruption. Live talk shows urge listeners to call in with their questions and complaints. Some radio programs broadcast internationally popular music, instead of the establishment revolutionary or "solidarity" music favored by official Cuba. In 1993, for example, Radio Taíno was revamped to broadcast with the characteristics of commercial-style radio. It featured contemporary Cuban and international Latin dance music, and it carried advertising from foreign firms operating in Cuba.

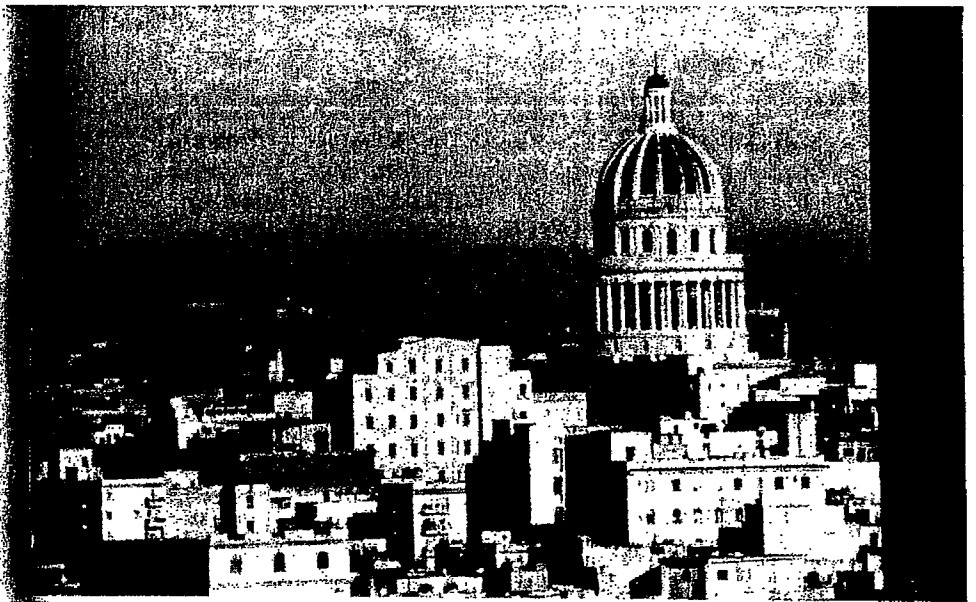
In the 1990s, the Roman Catholic Church was allowed to accept donations to import materials and equipment to publish the texts necessary for the liturgy and to publish magazines of substantial circulation. As already mentioned, several archdioceses publish magazines and other limited-circulation publications. The most important one, *Palabra Nueva*, sponsored by the Archdiocese of Havana, features articles on religious themes, but it has also published regularly on economics and social issues, at times diverging significantly and critically from government policies.

Political Processes

Emerging Political Leaders

Cuba's political processes at the start of the twenty-first century were more complex than in decades past. President Fidel Castro remained at the pinnacle of power. Although aging (he was born in 1926) and less healthy than in prior years, his energy and talents remained extraordinary. He could still deliver multi-hour speeches with few notes; and he still kept the hours of a night owl, insisting on seeing foreign leaders at midnight or thereafter when the latter were exhausted and he was in his prime. Castro is still thoughtful, eloquent, inspiring, decisive, and charming. He is also ruthless, brutal, intolerant, egomaniacal, and manipulative. These and other traits make him a politician who is revered and feared, admired and loathed, but whom none take lightly.

Fidel's slightly younger brother Raúl Castro (born in 1931), the FAR minister, is the designated successor. Raúl Castro lacks the more attractive qualities of his brother's public personality, but he has inspired respect and loyalty among subordinates for



*A view of downtown Havana (Old Havana), including the National Capitol (Capitolio Nacional), 1996
Courtesy National Imagery and Mapping Agency, Washington*

his painstaking and effective construction of Cuba's armed forces. Although no longer a formidable force, the FAR won the wars that it fought twice in Angola against South African invasions (1975-76, 1987-88) and once on Ethiopian soil against Somalia's invasion (1977-78).

Other important political leaders will most likely continue to play a role in Cuba's future politics. PCC Organization Secretary José Ramón Machado was a winner in the composition of the Central Committee chosen at the Fifth Party Congress and positioned himself well for the future. Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé, "Hero of the Republic of Cuba" for his combat service in overseas wars, rose through a professional career in the army and in the late 1980s became interior minister. National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón revitalized Cuba's parliament and, to some degree, political life by reaching out to a wider number of loyal "revolutionary" Cubans who were not necessarily PCC cadres. Alarcón has remained the government's chief of relations with the United States. Esteban Lazo Hernández is the party's expert on subnational government, having served as first party secretary in more provinces (including La Habana) than anyone else. Lazo (born in 1944)

is the Afro-Cuban who best combines relative youth and significant experience at the top of the leadership. Carlos Lage, vice president of the Council of State, heads the economic cabinet and, backed by Minister of Economy and Planning José Luis Rodríguez García, was the political architect of Cuba's economic reforms of the 1990s. Younger than these others, Lage portrays on national television and in person an image of quiet competence and candor. Also playing political roles wider than their ministerial portfolios imply are Culture Minister Abel Prieto, Division General and Sugar Industry Minister Ulises Rosales del Toro, and Basic Industries Minister Marcos Portal. Portal in particular was the champion of more efficient administrators in state enterprises.

In the 1990s, unlike the 1960s, Cuba had no clearly identifiable "factions" within the party, but it has witnessed varying currents of opinion. These combine and overlap. In general, PCC cadres and Secretary Machado tend to oppose most economic, political, and religious reforms. Leading military and internal security officers in contrast, favor various market reforms. FAR Minister Raúl Castro, for example, took the lead in 1994 to advocate market reforms in agriculture, contrary to what had been Fidel Castro's position. The Ministry of Interior, too, favors economic reforms to decriminalize activities that would otherwise occur illegally; ministry officials believe that they have tougher enemies to fight than parents seeking milk for their children. Vice President Lage and National Assembly President Alarcón, among others, have been more willing than other national leaders to support the various economic and political experiments that took place in the 1990s.

Political Aspects of the Security and Military Forces

Cuban state security remains effective in many ways. In the summer of 1994, it controlled and suffocated with a professional use of force a large riot that took place in downtown Havana, as thousands of Cubans protested the use of force against those seeking to emigrate without prior lawful authorization. Cuban leaders quietly pointed out that the People's Liberation Army of the People's Republic of China used massive force in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, in 1989 to put down protests. The Cuban military was not called in to put down this riot, however, because internal security forces handled the incident effectively, with restrained use of force. Internal security

forces also effectively suppressed illegal job actions and attempted strikes at various moments in the 1990s.

Politically, several factors are noteworthy about the FAR. Most Cuban military officers are also PCC members. In the 1990s, military officers on active duty constituted a consistent fifth of the membership of the party's Political Bureau. Two of the key members of the Political Bureau were Generals Raúl Castro and Abelardo Colomé. And, after the 1997 Fifth Party Congress, the military represented 17 percent of the membership of the party's Central Committee, continuing a slide evident over the decades but retaining significant clout (see also *The Military in the Government and Party*, ch. 5).

In the 1990s, the FAR became a pale shadow of its former self, as regards combat readiness and effectiveness. Cuba stopped receiving weaponry free of charge from the Soviet Union at the beginning of the decade, and it could not afford to import sufficient new equipment or even spare parts. As a result, the FAR had to reduce the frequency and scope of its military exercises. Its size shrank greatly, downsizing to not more than 65,000 regular troops. From 1989 to 1997, the size of the military and internal security budget (in pesos) was cut by 45 percent. The leadership's downsizing of the FAR was a major political and budgetary contribution to any future government of Cuba.

To facilitate the demobilization of personnel and to supplement the meager peso-denominated pensions, the government created semi-private companies (they operate as private companies, but the state is the sole shareholder) to employ former officers. The military-run tourist firm Gaviota is one example; many of its taxi drivers, former military officers, are paid in dollars by tourists. However, military officers on active duty are prohibited from moonlighting and discouraged from receiving funds from their overseas relatives. As a result, the standard of living of military officers dropped appreciably relative to other Cubans who enjoyed lawful access to self-employment or to dollar remittances. Some officers moonlighted, nonetheless, and in so doing broke the law they were sworn to uphold.

The Widening of Public Space

The most notable change in elite political processes in the 1990s was that some disputes could no longer be resolved just in private as had hitherto been quite common. In the 1990s, some disputes became quite public. The new Foreign Invest-

ment Law 77 of 1995 was vigorously debated and its approval consequently delayed. Another publicly debated case, that relating to the imposition of payroll taxes, was the first instance in which an economic initiative advocated by the leadership was defeated. Fidel Castro's need to explain and defend publicly his invitation to Pope John Paul II both at the Fifth Party Congress and in the days prior to the pope's arrival was yet another example.

The widening of public space was most closely associated, however, with the weakening of the government's control. The boom of illegal markets in the 1990s, discussed in previous chapters, is the best example of weakened control. The government had been an intrusive micromanager of economic life, shaping the work place and earnings decisions and outcomes for every Cuban. In the 1990s, that changed. Lawfully or not, many Cubans took hold of their economic lives and became largely independent of the state for their livelihood. Given the context of past decades, this was a major political change, not just an economic change.

Moreover, President Fidel Castro repeatedly made it clear that he detested authorizing the limited market-oriented policies that he felt compelled to authorize in the 1990s to ensure his government's survival. For Cubans long-accustomed to a ruler who had governed with vast discretion, this, too, was a stunning political change. Fidel Castro could no longer govern his way.

Human rights and opposition activists understood this new modest but nonetheless real opening. Each of them might suffer repression, abuse, or imprisonment, but they were newly confident that others would pick up their fallen standard to continue to press for wider spaces for democratic liberties. Cuba's government could no longer prevail even in the one area that had always mattered the most, namely, the capacity to eliminate all organized opposition.

The academics associated with the Center for American Studies (CEA) did not consider themselves dissidents or oppositionists but loyal PCC members; nonetheless, the party leadership came down hard on them. And yet, these academics resisted, as well, in ways unlike in the past. They did not break ranks. They did not betray each other. And, to a surprising degree, they succeeded in continuing at least some aspects of their academic work.

"Do not be afraid," said Pope John Paul II during his visit to Cuba in January 1998. Posters with the pope's photograph, plastered all over the country, reiterated this fundamental message. Cubans took the pope's message to heart in their participation in the events associated with his visit. The pope's pilgrimage to Cuba, as already noted, was likely to have some lasting impact because it rode the crest of a wave of renewed interest in religiosity.

The political attitudes of Cubans also changed. In the spring of 1990, Cuba's newsmagazine *Bohemia* conducted a nationwide public opinion poll (N=957). Asked about municipal government, more than 40 percent of respondents failed to express trust in the delegate elected from their district; nearly 60 percent believed that improvements needed to be made in Cuba's local government structures and procedures. In the spring of 1990, the PCC also sponsored a nationwide survey. Only 20 percent of respondents said that the food supply was good, and only 10 percent said that the quality of transportation was good. Having thus reported criticism on certain matters, the poll was believable when it reported that 77 percent of respondents thought that health services were good and 83 percent believed in the efficacy of the country's schooling. Cubans were, therefore, unhappy with the capacity of their government institutions and leaders to represent and serve many of their interests, but they continued to be impressed by performance in education and health care. This legacy of at least partial public support was crucial for regime survival at its moment of greatest peril, when so many Cubans had come to feel free to express their severe unhappiness even to PCC pollsters.

In late 1994, an affiliate of the Gallup Poll conducted a large survey in Cuba's western provinces. A large proportion of respondents had no difficulty reporting complaints. Only a quarter of Cubans believed that their needs for food were fully met, although half believed their health care needs were being met and nearly three-quarters were satisfied with Cuba's education programs. Only one in ten Cubans called themselves "communists" although half thought of themselves as "revolutionaries"; a quarter said that they were not supporters of the regime. Half of those surveyed were interested in setting up small businesses, if the government were to authorize them. More Cubans supported the value of equality than the value of freedom.

These views suggest that Cubans had absorbed—and supported—a number of socialist values but that many also disagreed significantly with the government and were not afraid to voice those disagreements to pollsters. Support for the PCC was quite low even though, as noted before, many individual party members were highly regarded by their neighbors.

Cuban politics changed slowly but decisively in the 1990s. Political leaders could not and did not govern as had been their custom. They were forced to authorize some changes and permit others, even when they disapproved of them. Cubans began to act through the market, legally or not, and chose to explore new political, religious, and intellectual alternatives.

The PCC and government leaders, in turn, had enacted important changes on their own to shape Cuba's present and future. The leadership was substantially overhauled in the early 1990s. New, younger people were appointed to significant posts. The armed forces were downsized sharply. After a period of decline and deinstitutionalization early in the 1990s, the government took some steps to strengthen and rearticulate regime institutions as the decade closed. The regime's leaders and institutions, however, had changed in perceptible ways even if their purpose continued to be the retention of power.

Cuba in the 1990s was in the throes of a political transition, although its end point was uncertain. This "transition to somewhere" did not imply a transition to a liberal democratic regime as had occurred elsewhere in Latin America or in much of the former communist world. It was associated with more open spaces for a private and public life autonomous from government and party power, and with rules that enabled market processes to operate. Whether Cuba's transition would evolve toward democratization remained unclear as the decade reached a close.

Foreign Relations

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe, Cuba was bereft of international allies. Its trade, investments, military support, and political relations had been disproportionately concentrated and dependent on governments that no longer existed. As 1990 opened, the Soviet Union required that all bilateral trade be conducted at international market prices by whatever private or state enterprises engaged in pertinent activities. No



*The North East Gate, Marine Barracks, Ground Defense Force,
U.S. Naval Base, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, 1993*

longer would bilateral trade be mandated and carried out by the central government in Moscow.

During the 1990s, Cuban economic relations with Central and Eastern Europe plummeted. Cuban economic relations with Russia focused principally on barter trade, at market prices, exchanging sugar for petroleum (see *The Economic Crisis of the 1990s*, ch. 3). Cuba refused to service its large accumulated international debt to the Russian Federation, but that was no different from its general policy on nonservicing of any debts. Russian ground troops, who had been stationed in Cuba since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, also departed in 1992.

Russia and Cuba retained two somewhat more complicated relationships. The Russian government paid rent to Cuba for the use of electronic eavesdropping facilities set up south of Havana at Lourdes (see *Relations with Russia*, ch. 5) at the height of the Cold War. And Russia and Cuba continued to negotiate over the fate of the nearly completed but mothballed nuclear power plant near Cienfuegos in south central Cuba. The investment costs of completing the nuclear power plant, however, were beyond the capacities of both governments.

Cuba accepted international inspection of these facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Cuban relations with China recovered only gradually from the sharp bilateral split that had become manifest in 1966. With the collapse of European communism, however, political relations warmed more quickly between these two remaining communist governments. The Cuban government sought to learn fast and well the magic secrets of China's creation of market Leninism. Economic relations between the two countries remained basically what they had been, however: significant for Cuba, modest for China, and conducted at international market prices. Sino-Cuban military relations are modest in scope.

Between 1989 and 1991, Cuba repatriated its overseas troops from all countries to which they had been deployed. In 1992 it announced that it had stopped providing military support to revolutionary movements seeking to overthrow governments in other countries.

The international dimensions of the Cuban government's strategy for survival required the active cultivation of foreign investment and, therefore, of better political relations with market-economy countries. To resist the increased United States economic and political pressures on Cuba, Fidel Castro's government needed to find some international support.

United States actions led to some sympathy for Cuba. In October 1992, the United States Congress enacted the Cuban Democracy Act (see Glossary), whose principal sponsor was Representative Robert G. Torricelli. The new law prohibited United States subsidiaries in third countries from trading with Cuba. Other governments deemed it an extraterritorial secondary boycott in violation of the rules under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT—see Glossary). In March 1996, the United States Congress enacted the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (also known as the Helms-Burton Act), sponsored by Senator Jesse Helms and Representative Dan Burton. However, invoking procedures in the law itself, President William Jefferson Clinton suspended the enforcement of the act's key feature, Title III, which authorizes United States citizens and firms to sue in United States courts those firms from other countries that "traffic" with Cuba. The law is broadly written to affect most foreign investment in Cuba as well as trade.

These laws provoked strong opposition from Canada, the European Union (EU—see Glossary), the Caribbean, and

Latin American countries, among others. The EU, Canada, Argentina, and Mexico enacted blocking legislation to prevent their firms from complying with these United States laws and to protect them if they were sued in United States courts. At the annual Iberoamerican summits of heads of state, opposition to these United States policies rose markedly. Although the Iberoamerican summits endorsed democracy and human rights strongly, President Fidel Castro was welcomed at each of these events, and his government's authoritarian practices were never explicitly criticized.

Within days of the enactment of the Cuban Democracy Act, in November 1992, for the first time ever Cuba gained overwhelming support in the United Nations General Assembly for a resolution condemning United States policies toward Cuba. The enactment of the Helms-Burton Act further tilted the vote in the General Assembly against the United States. In 1992 the vote was fifty-nine in favor of Cuba's resolution; three nations, including the United States, voted against the motion; and seventy-one abstained. In November 1997, 143 countries voted to condemn United States policy, three voted against, and only seventeen abstained. United States policy served Cuba's purposes well. (In separate motions, however, the General Assembly repeatedly criticized the Cuban government's violations of human rights.)

Cuban policy was most effective within the Anglophone Caribbean. Cuba was admitted to the Caribbean Tourism Organization in 1992, and in 1994 became a founding member of the Association of Caribbean States (see Glossary) led by the Anglophone Caribbean. Caribbean countries became among the most vocal opponents of United States policy toward Cuba.

In September 1993, the European Parliament (see Glossary) condemned the Cuban Democracy Act, and in September 1994 it called upon Cuba to enact democratic reforms. Also in 1993, the European Commission (see Glossary) created for the first time a humanitarian aid program for Cuba, although Cuba remained the only Latin American country with which the EU had not concluded a formal cooperation agreement. In response to the enactment of the Helms-Burton Act, European governments challenged the United States and refused to accept its imposition on European firms.

The government of Canada, along with those of various Caribbean countries, went the farthest in opposing United States policies. Canada strengthened its legislation to block the

impact of United States law on Canadian firms, established a program of official development assistance in addition to humanitarian aid, and financed the business activities of Canadian firms with Cuba. It facilitated the work of Canadian NGOs in Cuba. And in 1998, Canada's Prime Minister Jean Chrétien visited Havana.

Cuban relations with the United States featured three key events in the 1990s. In the aftermath of the riot in Havana in the summer of 1994, the Cuban government lifted all requirements for an exit permit to emigrate and encouraged unauthorized emigration by boat or raft to the United States. Tens of thousands of Cubans took to the seas. Many were seized by United States Coast Guard and Navy ships and held for months at the United States base at Guantánamo Bay. Eventually, the United States and Cuba reached agreements in September 1994 and May 1995 to end the crisis. The United States accepted almost all Cubans who had emigrated illegally in 1994, although a few criminals were excluded and returned to Cuba, which accepted them. The United States promised to accept no fewer than 20,000 legal immigrants per year for the indefinite future. The United States also undertook to intercept on the high seas and return to Cuba those seeking to enter the United States illegally and without a credible claim to refugee status; this policy has been enforced. Cuba agreed to accept those whom the United States had intercepted and not to discriminate against them. It also agreed to reimpose its barriers on unlawful exit.

The next significant episode occurred on February 24, 1996, when at least one, perhaps three, unarmed civilian aircraft piloted by Cuban-American members of a group called Brothers to the Rescue flew into Cuban airspace. (On a prior trip, Brothers to the Rescue airplanes had dropped antigovernment leaflets over Havana.) As they were fleeing the pursuit of Cuban Air Force jets, two of the planes were shot down over international waters. This Cuban action, condemned by the International Civil Aviation Association, triggered the enactment of the Helms-Burton Act.

In November 1999, a five-year-old boy, Elián González, was rescued in the Straits of Florida, hanging on a raft after his mother had drowned. At first, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service allowed his great-uncle to obtain provisional custody. Soon, however, the boy's father, Juan Miguel González, claimed custody, requesting the boy's return

to Cuba. An intense seven-month legal and political battle developed over the child's custody, engaging both national governments, various local governments in southern Florida as well as state and Federal courts, including the Supreme Court. Consistent with their new migration relations, the United States and Cuban governments assumed similar positions on the issue and ultimately prevailed: Elián González, accompanied by his father, returned to Cuba in June 2000. In the United States, the political battle over Elián was fierce; in Cuba, the government used the incident to mobilize nationalist support. In the end, the Cuban American community's insistence that the boy should remain in the United States, and not with his father in Cuba, received little support. The Elián González case may have begun a re-thinking of United States policy toward Cuba.

During the 1990s, the United States and Cuba also constructed modest confidence-building measures to prevent accidental war and minimize the likelihood of accidents. These included frequent contact between the two countries' coast guards to enforce the migration agreements and carry out search-and-rescue operations. Regular procedures for contact were also established between both sides at the Guantánamo base. In anticipation of potential trouble, both governments inform each other in great detail and, to the extent possible, coordinate their actions.

Outlook

As the twenty-first century began, Cuba's communist leadership believed that it had survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and the European communist world. It had overcome increased United States sanctions on Cuba. And it had stemmed the economy's decline. Cuban leaders were conscious that popular support had dipped seriously, but they believed that they retained enough support, and wider tolerance, from their people to rebuild the political bases of the regime and to live through the next and perhaps most decisive crisis: Fidel Castro's death. Although Castro remained firmly in charge, his health had begun to fail and, for the first time since 1959, regime loyalists began to contemplate seriously a Cuba without Fidel.

Much has already changed in Cuba in anticipation of that future. Cuba's political institutions from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s had been marked by very slow rotation of personnel.

The circulation of elites accelerated dramatically in the early 1990s and then stabilized somewhat later in the decade. Most members of the party's Political Bureau in place in 2000 had joined the bureau after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. In effect, a much younger, more dynamic set of leaders was in place, ready for the regime's future battles for political survival. The armed forces had also changed. In particular, the forces were downsized, a move that reduced the political burden on future governments to do more downsizing.

Cuba's political institutions, however, were weaker, more brittle, and enjoyed much less political support than in the past. The National Assembly, despite its partial revitalization in the 1990s, remained a toothless institution. The PCC's members were well regarded by their fellow citizens, but the party as such was not. The PCC as an institution weakened also in the early to mid-1990s, although an attempt was made to reinvigorate it in time for the Fifth Party Congress. The strengthening of the PCC in 1997 may have set the basis for a future "renewed communist" party, as in Poland, Lithuania, or Hungary in the mid-1990s.

Ordinary Cubans were ready for change and were already seizing the reins of the future. They sought and found jobs on their own. A growing number discovered the value of religion to their lives. Some courageous ones joined human rights and opposition groups, and did not desist despite repression. Intellectuals were more willing to challenge the government and the party. And even Fidel Castro grudgingly and publicly confessed that he could no longer pursue the policies he preferred most.

The future of Cuba lies also in part with the United States. It will be made easier or more difficult by United States government policies regarding the claims of American citizens and firms seeking compensation for the property expropriated in 1959 and 1960. And it will also be greatly affected by the generosity or the revenge of returning Cuban-Americans.

Cuba is an island archipelago, battered by hurricanes, natural and political. There is absolute certainty that real as well as metaphorical hurricanes will strike it in the years to come. The only doubt is when and with what force.

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Much of the literature on Cuban government and politics in the 1990s was polemical or speculative, that is, it denounced the Cuban political regime and imagined a post-Castro future. As a result, there is less careful analytical and empirical work on Cuba in the 1990s than there is for previous times. Most of the material for this chapter had to be constructed from primary sources. Various books do, however, ably place the early 1990s within the broader sweep of Cuban politics since 1959. Among them are Irving Louis Horowitz's *Cuban Communism*, Carollee Bengelsdorf's *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba*, Marifeli Pérez-Stable's *The Cuban Revolution*, and Susan Eckstein's *Back from the Future*. Perhaps the single most comprehensive analytical and empirical work about Cuban politics and economics in the 1990s remains unpublished, however. It is *Cuba in Transition*, sponsored by the Cuban Research Institute of Florida International University (for the series, see <http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/cuba/asce/index.html>). The journal *Cuban Studies* continues to provide valuable articles, book reviews, and bibliographies.

The good news is that significant social scientific work has been published in Cuba in the 1990s. Until 1996, Cuba's leading scholarly institution for political analysis was the Center for American Studies (CEA). The works of then-CEA scholars, such as Julio Carranza, Haroldo Dilla, Rafael Hernández, and Pedro Monreal, among others, contributed much to the understanding of Cuba in the 1990s. So, too, did the center's journal, *Cuadernos de Nuestra América*. Important work was also produced, although infrequently published, at the Center for Psychological and Sociological Research (CIPS) and at various research centers within the University of Havana. Cuba's premier social science publication is *Temas*, edited by Rafael Hernández.

Indispensable primary sources remain the daily newspaper *Granma*, the weekly newsmagazine *Bohemia*, and the panoply of journals published, sometimes just occasionally, by Cuba's universities and think tanks. The official legal gazette is the *Gaceta Oficial de la República*. The official Cuban government web site (<http://www.cubaweb.cu>) is also informative and useful. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Table 17. Voters in National Assembly Elections, 1993

Province (from west to east)	Number of Voters Casting Ballots	Voting for Full Official Slate (percentage)	Voting for Some But Not All Candidates (percentage)	Voting Blank or Void (percentage)
Pinar del Río.....	510,551.0	89.5	3.8	6.6
Ciudad de La Habana.....	1,607,173.0	77.3	8.0	14.7
La Habana.....	503,211.0	82.2	5.1	12.6
Matanzas.....	476,600.0	88.0	5.0	7.0
Cienfuegos.....	281,053.0	90.8	4.2	5.0
Villa Clara.....	613,616.0	88.5	4.6	6.9
Sancti Spiritus.....	327,692.0	91.8	4.2	4.0
Ciego de Ávila.....	276,274.0	91.1	4.6	4.3
Camagüey.....	537,557.0	90.4	4.6	5.0
Las Tunas.....	356,172.0	96.5	1.6	1.9
Holguín.....	718,815.0	92.0	3.5	4.5
Granma.....	560,646.0	97.0	1.6	1.4
Santiago de Cuba.....	692,228.0	94.2	3.1	2.7
Guantánamo.....	333,471.0	95.7	2.3	2.0
Isla de la Juventud.....	57,056.0	88.3	5.7	5.9
TOTAL.....	7,852,315.0	88.4 (average)	4.6 (average)	7.0 (average)

Source: Based on information compiled by Jorge I. Domínguez from *Granma* [Havana], March 11, 1993.

Table 18. Percentage of Null and Blank Votes Cast in Elections, 1993, 1997, and 2000

Provinces	1993 National Elections	1997 Municipal Elections	2000 Municipal Elections
Pinar del Río.....	6.6	8.3	6.7
Ciudad de La Habana.....	14.7	9.9	7.9
La Habana.....	12.6	11.2	8.8
Matanzas.....	7.0	8.5	6.6
Cienfuegos.....	5.0	7.9	6.4
Villa Clara.....	6.9	8.0	7.1
Sancti Spiritus.....	4.0	6.3	4.9
Ciego de Ávila.....	4.3	5.3	4.4
Camagüey.....	5.0	6.2	4.8
Las Tunas.....	1.9	4.4	4.0
Holguín.....	4.5	6.2	5.3
Granma.....	1.4	4.0	3.4
Santiago de Cuba.....	2.7	4.4	3.5
Guantánamo.....	2.0	3.9	3.4
Isla de la Juventud.....	5.9	5.9	5.3
Countrywide.....	7.0	7.2	5.9

Source: Based on information computed by Jorge I. Domínguez from *Granma* [Havana], March 11, 1993, and April 25, 2000.