



When Fidel Castro entered Havana in triumph on January 8, 1959, placards (Gracias Fidel), television cameras, and bell ringers were ready. But there was no need to fake what one American reporter called "the magic of his personality." His political skills would help make him the longest-surviving head of government in a major nation after North Korea's Kim Il Sung and Jordan's King Hussein.

Castro's Cuba

At the age of 62, Fidel Castro seems to be outliving the forces that helped establish him in power almost 30 years ago. The Cold War, which brought him Moscow's patronage, is in at least partial remission; Mikhail Gorbachev is negotiating with Washington on arms control and reducing Soviet involvement in several regional wars (Afghanistan, Angola). And the old Marxist-Leninist vision of the "purifying" revolution has accumulated some new blots outside Cuba itself—notably the brutal excesses that have blighted much of Africa, created the boat people of Indochina, and added to the hardships of Central Americans. Marxist guerrillas still seek to seize power in the Philippines and El Salvador. But ethnic differences or simple nationalism now sustain far more local conflicts than Marxism does. Indeed, historian James H. Billington, former director of the Woodrow Wilson Center and now Librarian of Congress, suggests that "the wave of revolution—and the idea of violent convulsive upheaval effecting meaningful social change—are becoming anachronistic."

Here, Castro biographer Tad Szulc reflects on the sinuous course of the Cuban leader's long reign—and its possible aftermath. Pamela S. Falk views Castro's Cuba as it has vexed seven U.S. presidents. And W. Raymond Duncan describes how Nikita Khrushchev's dream of easy gains in the Third World—and Castro's own ambitions—gave a succession of Soviet leaders expensive new allies in Latin America and Africa.

FIDELISMO

by Tad Szulc

"It was much easier to win the revolutionary war than it is to run the Revolution now that we are in charge."

So Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz observed some months after taking power in Cuba early in 1959. Only 33 years old, he had just launched Latin America's most fundamental social and political upheaval in a half-century, proclaiming a wide-ranging agrarian reform and ordering a

mass literacy campaign to teach all Cubans to read and write as prerequisites for progress.

On this particular evening, over steaks served in the kitchen of a Havana hotel, the fiery young "Maximum Leader" was explaining to a few friends and visitors how hard it was to transform his Caribbean island. The conversation went on through midnight, and then past day-break. As one of the guests, I vividly remember the glorious dreams and promises Castro spun off, and the excitement that pervaded Cuba at the dawn of what was to be a splendid new age.

Going Spearfishing

Thirty years later, a still-ebullient Castro has not solved the problem that confronted him in 1959: How to provide his 10 million compatriots (there were six million when he ousted Gen. Fulgencio Batista) with a modicum of satisfaction, if not the boundless Marxist-Leninist joy that he so often promised during the 1960s.

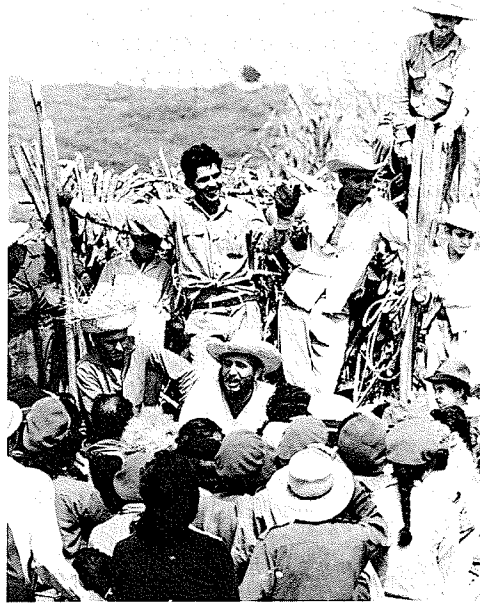
After three decades of experimentation, of costly zig-zagging in economic plans, of vast national effort and sacrifice, and increasing Soviet subsidies, Fidel's overarching revolutionary goal—the creation of a new "Socialist Man" in an efficient socialist system—still eludes him. And to make matters worse, old and new Cuban generations are paying a heavy price—the denial of personal and political freedoms—for the social gains that do exist today.

Thus, especially to its early sympathizers at home and abroad, Castro's regime on the threshold of its fourth decade must answer a poignant question: Why was political freedom not welcomed alongside the Revolution's accomplishments in the realm of social progress? Castro's revolution, widely admired when it began, might well have turned out better if, instead of exercising absolute power, he had tolerated personal freedoms, creating a form of partnership with the nation. After all, as he told us that night in the hotel kitchen, that was what the Revolution would be all about: freedom and happiness. Yet, even today, he keeps hundreds of political prisoners, many of them at the penitentiary on the Isle of Pines where he himself was confined during 1953–55.

Unquestionably, Castro's regime stands at something like a final crossroads. At home, it is stagnating. Following the sizable gains of the 1960s and '70s, Cuban living standards have declined during the 1980s. In 1987, for example, domestic production dropped by 3.2 percent from the previous year. Abroad, Castro finds himself out of step in the Marx-

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The Maximum Leader with cane cutters, 1965. Sugar production fell sharply during the early 1960s, in part because of a scarcity of skilled specialists. Of 300 agronomists working in Cuba in 1959, 270 fled the country—joining a “brain drain” that also saw the departure of about half the island’s teachers, more than half of its 6,000 physicians, and nearly all of its 6,500 North American residents.



ist-Leninist world. He clings to a public orthodoxy that most other Communist leaders have begun to abandon. He has refused to emulate Mikhail Gorbachev's push toward decentralization, modernization, and higher productivity (*perestroika*), and relative openness and liberalization (*glasnost*) in the Soviet Union. China's economic reforms have been anathema to him. Today, Cuba is, with the possible exception of Kim Il Sung's North Korea, the most inefficient and repressive Communist country in the world. (During a speech on the revolutionary holiday of July 26 this year, Castro asserted that the Cuban Revolution “need not imitate others; she creates.”) In the Soviet Bloc today, ironically, the Cuban leader stands with the anti-Gorbachev conservatives—East Germany's Erich Honecker, Romania's Nicolae Ceaușescu, and Czechoslovakia's Miloš Jakeš.

Yet Castro, a public relations virtuoso, generally succeeds in projecting an image of tolerance, bonhomie, and unruffled self-assurance. Last April, for example, he found time to meet at length with New York's Roman Catholic Archbishop, John Cardinal O'Connor, and actor Robert Redford to discuss Cuba's relations with the church and the fate of political prisoners held by the regime. Like so many other foreign visitors, both the Cardinal, the first U.S. churchman of his rank to travel to Cuba in well over 30 years, and the Hollywood star declared them-

selves very impressed by their host.

That Castro has not lost his touch as Cuba's great master of political seduction is as obvious on Cuban television as in the many interviews he gives to U.S., West European, and Latin American TV networks. And there are his all-night meetings with Yankee businessmen, professors, and politicians, all of whom are welcome in Havana. Having given up cigars—his trademark olive-green uniform and beard remain, although the latter is now greying and kept closely trimmed—he emphasizes the healthy life for himself and all Cubans. He swims, goes spearfishing, plays basketball with the children when visiting Cuban schools, and in general behaves as if all were well in the best of all possible worlds, i.e. socialist Cuba.

Back to 'Spiritual Incentives'

But his outward show of confidence, his ability to woo visitors, mask the travail of his people: the shortages of consumer goods, the lack of urban housing, the glaring inefficiencies of the state-run economy, and, finally, the likelihood that little will change in the foreseeable future. They live in a mood of hopelessness.

And there is a private Castro—moody, impatient, irascible, and downright violent with his subordinates. His behavior patterns have not changed in 30 years: Since the time he entered Havana riding a column of jeeps, tanks, and trucks on January 8, 1959, he has never deviated from "*L'état, c'est moi*" (I am the state), and, like Louis XIV, he has kept himself surrounded by sycophants. Yet, for all his outward ebullience, he is a very lonely man, trusting no one.

Since I first met him in 1959, I have been impressed by his erudition, his sense of history, and his political agility and imagination. These qualities—and others—brought him victory over Batista against immense obstacles. For several decades, they helped make him a widely admired Third World leader and made Cuba a player in Central America and Africa. What, then, is happening to Fidel Castro?

It appears that he has, oddly, become both the victim of his unfulfilled promises to construct socialism in "the most orderly manner possible" and the prisoner of his enduring conviction, unchallenged by his colleagues, that he alone understands what is good for Cuba. The added difficulty Castro seems to have created for himself (and for Cuba) stems from his misperception of what is really happening among the Cuban people. He still crisscrosses the island on trips by helicopter or Mercedes limousine, but he seems not to see and not to hear what is around him. And, increasingly, there is the steady murmur of discontent.

"Fidel is desperate over his inability to make Cuba work," a man who has known Castro all his life told me not long ago, when we ran into each other in Europe, "and this is why he is losing control and he is doing things that make no sense." This man doubts that Castro believes in

Marxism-Leninism viscerally or intellectually. He suggests that Fidel adopted it as convenient revolutionary dogma, and that his only true beliefs, underneath all the rhetoric, now revolve around himself—*Fidelismo*. We were discussing the great ideological campaign the Maximum Leader unveiled in 1987, known as “Rectification of Errors . . . and Negative Tendencies.”

Specifically, Castro has re-introduced in Cuba the notion of “spiritual incentives” to inspire the citizenry to labor unselfishly for the common welfare, instead of the various “material incentives” that the Chinese, Soviets, and East Europeans have begun to offer. Under “rectification,” Cuba’s workers and students are instructed to “volunteer” for unpaid work in the fields or in construction on their days off, just as they did during the 1960s when the nation was still in the grip of nationalistic (if not ideological) fervor, and most Cubans were ready to do almost anything Fidel proposed.

Interestingly, Castro is stressing “spiritual incentives” (medals, awards, publicity) to revive the ideal of “Socialist Man” that the famous Ernesto “Che” Guevara propounded during the Revolution’s early years. Guevara, the Argentine-born physician who joined Castro’s exiled rebel movement in Mexico in 1955 and became his chief lieutenant in the guerrilla campaign, was probably the purest believer in Marxism-Leninism of his generation; he was also Castro’s only intellectual equal among the rebels, and his principal ideological counselor.

Firing the Technocrats

Castro told me several years ago that the greatest error committed by the “Revolution” (Fidel never says *he* has committed mistakes; it is “we” or the “Revolution”) was to try to implant pure communism in Cuba, skipping over the preparatory “socialist” stage that Marx and Lenin had recommended. Not even Stalin’s theoreticians saw the Soviet Union achieving the status of a classic “communist” society, but Fidel and Che set out to create such a society on their Caribbean island. They were on the verge of abolishing money altogether (in 1966) when the Soviets persuaded Castro that premature experimentation with classical communism would sink Cuba economically.

Che Guevara was killed in October 1967 in the Bolivian mountains where, for reasons that remain unclear to this day, he had launched a guerrilla movement, hoping to rouse local Indian peasants. For the next 20 years, Castro appeared to have forgotten “spiritual incentives” and “Socialist Man,” concentrating on other themes. Meanwhile, Fidel used pay raises and favoritism in the distribution of scarce consumer goods to keep both top officials and lowly workers attentive to their duties. One result was creeping corruption in the Cuban Communist Party—Fidel is its first secretary as well as president of Cuba and the armed forces’ Commander in Chief—which has added to the erosion of popular faith in

the selfless qualities of Cuba's rulers.

That his regime is in profound crisis is, to some degree, publicly recognized by Fidel himself. During the mid-1980s, he berated Cuba's "workers who do not work" and "students who do not study." He has also been discarding the annual plans drafted by his top economists, and firing the authors for being "despicable technocrats." Castro personally redrafts the plans, down to the smallest detail—typical of his intervention in almost every arena of government.

Imitating Mao?

Fidel has reacted in other ways. To the call for "spiritual incentives," he added a series of harsh austerity measures early in 1987. These ranged from a cut in the sugar allowance (even rice and meat are still imported and rationed) to an increase in urban transit fares (the bus system is in shambles) and a curtailment of daily television broadcast schedules. Cuba's external debt to Western Europe had to be renegotiated because Havana had no hard currency with which to make payments; the Soviets presumably extended again the deadline for payments on the billions (the figures are never published) that the Cubans owe to Moscow. Thus, Castro had no choice but to embrace some sort of radical crisis management.

What is surprising, however, is Castro's recourse to the old Marxist-Leninist gospel. Fidel's "rectification" campaign is aimed at warding off the twin demons of "capitalism" and the "bourgeoisie." He has closed down small farmers' markets that he authorized in 1980, claiming that peasants were getting too rich selling piglets, chickens, and garlic directly to private customers. He now contends that any free-market experiment pollutes Marxism-Leninism. In a public remark that must have reached Gorbachev's ears in Moscow, Castro announced recently that the way things were being managed around the world, he regarded himself as the last true bearer of the Marxist-Leninist banner. And Fidel does not joke about such matters.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to fathom his apparent belief that contemporary Cubans will be turned toward noble socialist purposes by the revival of ideological slogans. Most Cubans are of the postrevolutionary generation (40 percent are under age 15). Although they may increasingly regard Fidel Castro as a heroic figure, they regard his revolutionary goals as abstractions. They did not experience the struggle of the 1950s. They take for granted universal education and health care, and, like people elsewhere, they want to enjoy a better life—a life they hear about via Spanish-language radio stations 90 miles away in Florida, where some 1.5 million native-born Cubans now reside.

An exile in Miami remarked recently that "what throws me is that Fidel really seems to think that a team of aging revolutionaries—a 30-year-old team—can rekindle the fires of revolution in Cuba." Another



Rich soil, broad plains, and abundant rain (wet season: May-October) make Cuba the world's leading sugar producer. Cane is grown on much of the island, but other assets are scattered. In the west is the finest tobacco and the Havana area, where nearly one in four Cubans live. Around Camagüey and Las Tunas are large cattle ranches. In the east are nickel and iron mines, and Guantánamo, the U.S.-leased (\$2,000 a year) base long used for the training of navy ship crews.

Cuban, who lives in Havana, drew a comparison between Castro and China's late Mao Zedong. He suggested that Fidel had made a decision to risk everything on his version of a "Cultural Revolution" (though a bloodless one) to preserve the purity of the original struggle. "But please remember that Mao lost in the end, and the reformists took over to liberalize and modernize," the Cuban said. "No two situations are alike, yet there are constants in human behavior, and Fidel, who should know better, is disregarding reality."

Castro won his struggle against the Batista dictatorship 30 years ago precisely because he had disregarded what was widely perceived as reality at the time: that his tiny guerrilla force in the Oriente Mountains

could never oust an entrenched (albeit incompetent) military regime. Castro's faith in himself is as strong today as it was then.

Relying on his own audacity and imagination, Castro has always moved from one turning point to another, either defining them himself or exploiting events. His first move after the 1959 victory was the decision to transform the ouster of Batista into a continuing radical revolution. As Fidel explained it later, mocking "liberals" and "imperialists," he had always planned it that way, but "our enemies never understood what we had in mind, and we didn't act until we were good and ready." Castro also understood that the United States would never endorse a radical regime next door, one committed to the nationalization of U.S.-owned land and other investments and to the rejection of Washington's continued influence over Havana, and he behaved accordingly.

Literacy, Not Liberty

America-baiting was a key element in Castro's strategy. He foresaw that his regime would gain at home and in the eyes of much of the world if the Eisenhower administration (and later President Kennedy) reacted with hostility to his actions and his rhetoric; the Yankees would be the bullies. And, given the 60-year history of American dominance on the island, it was easy for Fidel to rouse latent nationalist sentiment among his compatriots. Quickly, his supporters came up with the chant, repeated endlessly at every public appearance by Castro: "... Fidel, for sure ... Hit the Yankees Hard! ..." This was the atmosphere as the Revolution acquired momentum—and as Washington officials began hatching plans to remove the Maximum Leader, especially after he declared himself a Marxist-Leninist in December 1961.

But Castro's decision to sever links with the United States required some new ally who could compensate for the loss of resources and trade from the mainland. Given the Cold War rivalries of the superpowers and Castro's public fealty to communism, the Soviet Union was the logical candidate. By early 1960, high-level talks were underway between Havana and Moscow, and soon Soviet weaponry as well as oil and wheat began arriving in Cuba. By all accounts, Premier Nikita Khrushchev was as anxious as Castro to nurture the new relationship, inasmuch as it gave the Soviets their first strategic foothold and a Marxist-Leninist ally in the Western Hemisphere. But it is possible to argue that, in truth, Fidel manipulated the eager Soviets into providing massive economic aid. In any case, Castro owes his regime's survival to the Soviet connection; it is less clear what continuing real profit the Kremlin has reaped from its long investment.

Soviet weapons (and Washington's bungling) helped to save Castro from the ill-fated 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion by CIA-organized Cuban exiles. And Khrushchev's installation of Soviet nuclear missiles on the island in 1962 led to the now-famous "eyeball-to-eyeball" U.S.-Soviet

confrontation, still depicted in the United States as a Cold War triumph for John F. Kennedy. The story has another side. In return for removal of the missiles, President Kennedy gave private assurances to Khrushchev that the United States would never invade Cuba, thereby guaranteeing the future of Castro's regime.

Still, a regime with revolutionary aspirations must do more than simply survive. To prosper as a social and political phenomenon, it must create a better life for its citizenry. This became Castro's overwhelming concern along with the permanent Soviet-aided defense of the island. Yet immense contrasts developed between the regime's success in achieving social progress and its failure in economic development.

That social progress did occur, to a degree rarely achieved elsewhere in the Third World, is widely recognized. As a result of the mass read-and-write campaign of the early 1960s, Cuba today has an impressive 96 percent literacy rate. The island has an ample network of schools and universities, and the postrevolutionary generation is by far the best educated in Cuban history; nowadays it lends teachers and doctors to other Third World countries. Public health in Cuba is better than in most Latin countries: Between 1960 and 1986, infant mortality below the age of one dropped from 62 to 15 per 1,000 live births (the U.S. rate: 10 per 1,000). Life expectancy at birth is 74 years (lower than the United States' 75, but far ahead of Bolivia's 53); caloric intake per capita is 127 percent of the international standard (it is 79 percent in Haiti). One can dispute such statistics, but few observers, hostile or friendly, dispute Cuba's progress in these areas. Health, literacy, and education *have* improved since Batista's time, even as political freedom has not.

The Green Belt Fiasco

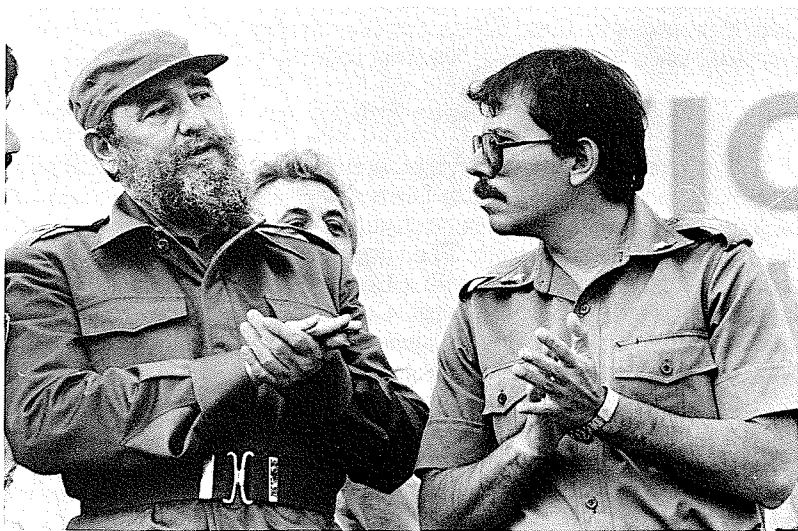
The economy is a disaster, and, in retrospect, one of the reasons is that Fidel Castro, the Maximum Leader, kept changing his mind. When he took power, Cuba was a monocultural country with sugar as its principal product and export-earner. The vulnerable, narrowly based economy could have been transformed with a blend of diversified agricultural and industrial growth. This was what Castro talked about at our hotel kitchen dinner in 1959. But his ideas never seemed fully thought out. And, in the end, they were never realized.

At the start, both Castro and Che Guevara believed, almost as a matter of dogma, that the role of sugar cane had to be greatly diminished. But sugar was the only commodity that Cuba could produce in quantity for export to the Soviet Union. By 1968, when that reality could no longer be ignored, Fidel shifted gears so brusquely as to strip them altogether. Although the normal crop yielded about six million tons of sugar, the 1970 crop, Castro proclaimed, would yield a record 10 million tons. In the attempt to reach that goal (the harvest came up 1.5 million tons short), he damaged the rest of the economy by diverting transport,

labor, and other resources to the cane fields. Today, sugar remains the mainstay of Cuba; the Soviet Union not only purchases the export crop, but pays more than the world market price. But Cuba's inability to meet all of its economic production quotas led to the austerity measures of 1987. In fact, Castro has recently admitted that he has had to buy sugar at 10½ cents a pound on the world market to live up to his export commitments to the Soviet Bloc.

Sugar has been only one of the failures. Much of the once flourishing cattle industry was destroyed when Cuban- and American-owned estates were broken up under land reform; professional managers were replaced by untrained army officers. Herds began dying off, and they were never replenished. Castro, meanwhile, experimented with mass production of poultry; it was a fine idea, but, again, nobody in the state apparatus knew how to make it work. And, at the start, Fidel refused to encourage tourism; it represented a throwback to "imperialism." When, during the 1970s, he finally decided that tourism could provide desperately needed foreign exchange, Cuba no longer had the facilities to handle visitors; major efforts to spruce up resorts and colonial towns such as Santa Clara, Santiago, and Trinidad did not start until the 1980s.

For years, Fidel was repeatedly distracted by new economic visions, neglecting Cuba's existing assets—such as sugar and tobacco. One of his grander concepts was to surround Havana with a "Green Belt" where coffee, fruit, and vegetables would grow in abundance. After



Fidel in 1985, with Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega at a Cuban-built sugar plant near Managua. The Sandinistas followed Castro's script, including his 1959 argument that "real democracy is not possible for hungry people."

great investments of time, effort, and money, Castro quietly dropped the idea; for one thing, it was discovered belatedly that there was no water available for irrigation. In the end, the best that can be said of Castro's hands-on management is that perhaps a quarter-century—and billions of dollars in Soviet aid—has been wasted in the process.

Amid austerity, mismanagement, and worker absenteeism, Cuba suffers increasingly from unemployment and underemployment. The island has seen growth in population without equal growth in jobs. The 1980 exodus of 125,000 Cubans—freedom-seekers as well as convicts, inmates of mental asylums, and other undesirables—from the port of Mariel to Florida eased the pressure briefly. The absence of many Cubans (around 55,000 as of mid-1988) serving in military units in Angola and Ethiopia has also helped to reduce joblessness. And in 1987, Castro agreed to an annual flow of emigrants to America: ex-political prisoners, and up to 20,000 others with U.S. relatives or certain skills. From exporting revolution, Cuba has turned to exporting unemployment.

Mozart, Hemingway, Marx

The Cubans are tired. One sees it in the faces of men and women riding to work in Havana's rickety, overcrowded buses and in the faces of shoppers queuing up for rationed goods in front of nearly empty stores. It may take long years to be able to rent an apartment (72 percent of Cubans now live in Havana, Santiago, and other cities). To purchase a car (a Soviet *Lada*), the buyer must be recommended by the Communist Party, the labor union, and the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (part of the Interior Ministry's neighborhood police network).

Cubans work every other Saturday as an extra boost to the economy. Under Castro's "rectification" campaign's "voluntary" labor requirements, men and women have little time to themselves—or for leisure. In addition to full-time jobs, most employees are expected to attend frequent indoctrination meetings at the workplace or at local Communist Party headquarters—often to discuss Castro's latest speech. Then there are long hours of mandatory drill in the Territorial Militia. Thus, ordinary people are physically exhausted much of the time, and bored much of the rest.

Leisure activities are severely limited. Those fortunate enough to own cars face gasoline rationing. Most people find it difficult to reach the beautiful beaches that Castro had proclaimed as the proud property of the *pueblo*; buses are few and tardy. Travel to the lovely old colonial towns is no easier. So, by and large, Cubans stay at home, visit neighbors, read, or watch television.

The residents of the capital fare better. Old Havana, the colonial *barrio* adjoining the harbor, has been beautifully restored, and thousands stroll in the narrow streets and wide plazas on serene evenings. A pianist

A CHRONOLOGY OF CASTRO'S REVOLUTION

1952 Fulgencio Batista ousts civilian "regime of blood and corruption."

1953 Fidel Castro imprisoned on Isle of Pines for attack on Moncada barracks.

1956 Castro establishes 26th of July Movement at La Plata in Sierra Maestra.

1959 Batista abdicates. Castro becomes premier a month later. U.S. sugar holdings seized. Peasant militia formed. "Revolutionary justice" trials held.

1960 Pro-government unions take over major newspapers opposing Castro regime. U.S. assets seized. "Literacy brigades" formed. Military mobilization against "imperialism" begins. First Soviet advisers, arms arrive.

1961 Bay of Pigs. Castro declares Cuba socialist; literacy campaign begins.

1962-63 Missile Crisis. Moscow withdraws MRBMs and 20,000 troops, leaves air-defense rockets and "Soviet brigade" behind. Private farms nationalized.

1965-66 Communist Party rule established. Prospects for industrialization dim; reliance on sugar renewed. Rice ration halved.

1969-70 Bread rationing instituted in Havana. Castro publicly admits economic woes. Drive for record 10-million-ton sugar harvest fails.

1972-73 Sugar ration reduced by 35 percent; beef allowance cut 20 percent.

may play Chopin in the courtyard of a restored palace, a violin quartet may perform Mozart's works in a chamber next door, and a Caribbean ensemble may evoke tropical rhythms down the street. They all blend marvelously—and provide an escape from reality.

Under Castro, the official encouragement of culture has been constant, but highly selective. The government awards literary prizes to Cuban and foreign writers and poets. But nothing that is politically (or even aesthetically) unorthodox—of Cuban or foreign origin—is visible in the bookstores. Yes, there are novels by Fidel's friend Gabriel García Márquez, the Colombian Nobel laureate, and by Ernest Hemingway (who lived in Havana before his death in 1961), but not by many other "bourgeois" authors. The collected works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin are in every bookshop, but even telephone directories and foreign language dictionaries are difficult to obtain.

Movie houses (Havana alone has about 30) show some good Cuban productions. Television, to which Cubans are condemned as their principal distraction, is less well endowed. Its menu relies on East European

1974 Leonid Brezhnev visits. Voters in first provincial elections in 15 years choose delegates to Municipal Assemblies.

1975 Cuba's First Five-Year Plan calls for growth; planners emphasize profitability, decentralized decision-making. Troops go to Angola, beginning Cuban intervention in Africa that goes on for 13 years.

1976 Popular referendum approves constitution making Cuba a "socialist state" and the Communist Party its "leading force." Campaign by some Cubans for direct election of National Assembly members—the one effort at democratizing Cuban Marxism—fails: Municipal Assemblies get task of naming deputies.

1979 First medics, teachers, and military and security advisers depart to aid new Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

1980 Mariel exodus shocks regime into relaxation: "Free stores" stock once-rationed foods (at high prices); farmers' markets allowed in cities.

1985 For the first time, sugar is bought abroad (from the Dominican Republic) to ship to Soviets. "Difficult" talks held on new trade agreement with Moscow.

1986 In the name of "rejuvenation," Castro stresses orthodoxy, closing farmers' markets and expanding already large militia (one in 10 Cubans belong).

1988 Castro criticizes Soviet economic reforms as "prescriptions for someone else's problems that we never had."

movies with Spanish subtitles (Western films cost too much to rent in hard currency), Mexican soap operas, occasional Cuban historical dramas, propaganda-laden news programs, baseball (the national sport), live broadcasts of official ceremonies, and speeches by Fidel Castro.

The Cuban National Ballet is among the world's best, but it is difficult to see a regular performance; there are 1,000 applicants for each ticket. Nightlife, to the average citizen of Havana, means a few bars with loud music; the traditional hot spots, such as the hotel nightclubs and the famous Tropicana with its spectacular floorshows, are reserved for visiting foreign delegations or hard currency-spending tourists from Canada and Western Europe.

In contrast to the Soviet Union, Cuba has little trouble with alcoholism: At more than \$20 a liter, Cuban rum is out of the average Cuban's reach, and foreign liquor is only obtainable in special hard-currency stores. But beer is cheap; young people in Havana drink it with gusto, especially on weekend evenings downtown.

What will their future be? The simple answer is that as long as Fidel

Castro keeps his health, nothing is likely to change. Since he appears to be in fine fettle, chances are that he will be in charge for some time—although he claims, unpersuasively, that he has already turned over many of his responsibilities to others, e.g., the Communist Party, the labor confederation, and “Popular Power” self-government groups operating locally under the aegis of the National Assembly (it meets twice a year for some speechmaking and rubber-stamping).

Clearly, governing will become more difficult for Castro because he cannot arrest the waning of the old revolutionary esprit or (at this late date) perform economic miracles. For three decades, the threat of a U.S. invasion has been invoked (with some reason during 1959–62), and it is still used to justify the 500,000-member armed forces and reserves, and the even-larger militia. But the Yankee menace, now more illusory than real, cannot keep a growing, well-educated society united forever in the absence of some other kind of glue.

A Different World

This is the crux of Castro's problem. *Fidelismo*, in contrast to Marxism-Leninism, seems strong enough to assure him a certain mass following—quite apart from the all-pervasive security apparatus that watches out for deviants. Yet, people talk more and more about having “one son in Miami and one son in Angola,” alluding to those Cubans who have fled to the United States and to those dispatched to fight in Africa in the name of socialist “internationalism.” Fidel still electrifies a great many Cubans when he rises to perorate, threaten, promise, and cajole, but the heartfelt explosive response that came from the admiring crowds during the early 1960s is no longer heard. Today, the cheers are much more ritualistic. Cubans know that the political system does not really work, and they increasingly, if quietly, resent the Communist Party's privileged bureaucrats.

The challenge to the existing system probably will come from the younger generations. They were educated by the Castro regime, they listen to foreign radio, and nowadays they ask why the system does not function more rationally. To be sure, they do not ask such questions in public. During Fidel's student years, Havana University was a forum for great political debates; under communism, there simply are no such forums. In contrast to Eastern Europe, in Cuba there is no visible political dissent and no underground literature.

One can glean enough from casual conversations to suspect that young Cubans are more attentive to what America and the West can offer them—in material ways and in ideas—than they are to the strictures of Marxism-Leninism. After 30 years of Castro's rule, young Cubans do not seem convinced that trading total dependence on the United States for total dependence on the Soviet Union was a triumph of national policy. They probably would be delighted if Castro could find ways

of establishing a fruitful dialogue with the next U.S. administration. In Havana, one finds no overt resentment over the Bay of Pigs or the CIA's past plotting against Castro. Generally, Cubans remain attracted to the United States, where so many have relatives, and U.S. visitors get a friendly reception (Russian residents are almost never seen in public).

What seems beyond firm prediction is Cuba's future when Fidel becomes incapacitated in some fashion. An agreed-upon mechanism for succession exists: Raúl Castro, Fidel's younger brother by five years, has been formally designated as the inheritor of the state, the Revolution, and the Communist Party.

Recent history demonstrates, however, that such advance arrangements may not function as planned. In Cuba's case, it would be preposterous to assume that Raúl Castro could enjoy Fidel's personal popularity. Raúl is feared and respected, but he is not loved. His command of the armed forces and security services would presumably assure him of a period in power—it would most likely resemble a military occupation. It is doubtful that any other figure could emerge from among Castro's aging revolutionary peers to take on Fidel's role for long. Cuba would be plunged into instability.

In the Maximum Leader's absence, the reformist tendencies surfacing in the Communist world today would surely come to the fore in Cuba. It is even questionable whether any vestiges of Marxism-Leninism would survive Fidel. Moreover, one must assume that the United States would not sit idly by as the process of change unfolded. And it may be that the Soviets would not greatly object if a new Cuba sought better relations with the West—and lessened its need for Soviet subsidies.

In a real sense, the coming 30th anniversary of Castro's rise to power marks the end of an era in Cuba, Latin America, and the rest of the Third World. Fidel Castro, his political genius, and his rhetoric may remain with us for a time, but this is a different world from the heady days of 1959. To a degree that neither Fidel nor his foes could have imagined, the East-West relationship has changed, as has the communism that Castro embraced. The poorer nations increasingly seek other development models: Marxism-Leninism has fallen out of favor in most of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. So has Fidel Castro's revolution. The struggles for national liberation on which he sought to capitalize are essentially over. Castro is gradually shrinking as a major figure on the international stage.

Fidelismo is not what it used to be.
