

**OTHER NATIONS**

*Training for  
Socialism*

"A New Look at the Literacy Campaign in Cuba" by Jonathan Kozol, in *Harvard Educational Review* (August 1978), Longfellow Hall, 13 Appian Way, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

In September 1960, Fidel Castro publicly vowed to teach more than 1 million illiterate adult Cubans to read and write in 12 months. The literacy campaign that followed, says Kozol, a visiting lecturer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, was not only "a pedagogical victory unparalleled in the modern world" but helped turn Cuba into a socialist country.

Kozol describes how the Cuban government in early 1961 enlisted 100,000 student volunteers (40 percent of them between the ages of 10 and 14) to go into the countryside and live and work with peasants while teaching them at night to read and write.

By late August 1961, the literacy effort was far behind schedule (only 119,000 had successfully completed the course). Thousands of factory workers and housewives were recruited to teach. With 800,000 Cubans still untaught by late August, Castro ordered more drastic measures—postponing the start of the regular school year from September to January, drafting teachers, and organizing "Acceleration Camps" and more rural teaching teams. By November, 345,000 people had com-

*The lantern issued to every student volunteer in Cuba's 1961 Campaña de Alfabetización became a symbol for the army of young literacy teachers.*



pleted the final literacy exam. Six weeks later, the figure was more than 700,000.

Kozol finds it remarkable, not only that Cuba reduced its adult illiteracy rate to less than 5 percent (UNESCO placed the U.S. rate at 6.6 percent in 1973) but that 500,000 former illiterates continued their studies and passed sixth-grade qualification exams by the end of 1968.

The key to the campaign's success, says Kozol, was not Marxist discipline but an "ethical exhilaration" spurred by the charisma of Fidel Castro and directed by a massive organizing effort. A major conse-

## OTHER NATIONS

quence was the ideological awakening of large numbers of young Cubans whose sense of social responsibility was aroused by living with the country's rural poor. The literacy campaign, says Kozol, turned "utopian kids" into "incipient socialists."

### *Catalysts of Tragedy*

"The Palestinian Factor in the Lebanese Civil War" by Michael C. Hudson, in *The Middle East Journal* (Summer 1978), 1761 N Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Between February 1975 and November 1976, some 50,000 people were killed in Lebanon in a civil war in which Palestinians played a major role—as catalysts, combatants, and victims. Hudson, director of Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, describes the intricate moves that led the Palestinians into a conflict neither they nor their Christian Lebanese opponents could hope to win.

Amid prosperity, Lebanon (population 2.9 million) had fallen prey to sectarian and class tensions. The leadership in Beirut, both left and right, Christian and Muslim, was too fragmented to resolve these tensions through reform or through force. In this charged atmosphere, the Palestinians acted as a detonating factor. Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel, whether originating from Lebanese soil or not, brought strong reprisals: 44 major Israeli air or ground attacks against Lebanon between 1968 and 1974.

Unable to protect the country from Israeli incursions, the mixed Christian-Muslim, 17,000-man Lebanese Army was also incapable of restraining Palestinian guerrillas in South Lebanon bent on raiding Israel. The central authority of the Lebanese state, unable to control the armed Palestinians or prevent open conflict among Lebanese factions, collapsed.

This power vacuum was filled by well-armed, competing paramilitary groups. There were, for example, three Palestinian factions. In addition, there were half a dozen Moslem Lebanese leftist groups, while the more conservative Christian leadership was only superficially more unified. In the chaos, each group acted out of its own fear of political extermination. The result was a tragic, inconclusive war that has left Lebanon without the capacity for self-government.

Hudson contends that any solution to the Lebanese conflict requires self-determination for the Palestinians in territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 War. Then an extraordinary constitutional convention, with international support, might begin the process of "desectarianizing" Lebanon's political institutions.