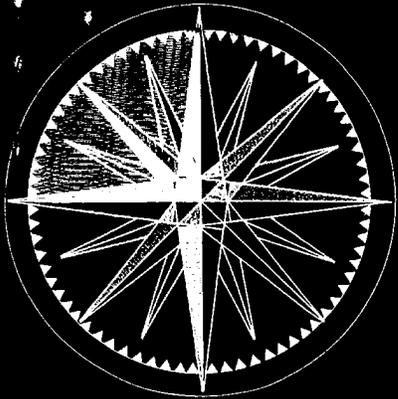


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30 September 1966



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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY

# SPECIAL REPORT

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CASTRO'S CUBA TODAY



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## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

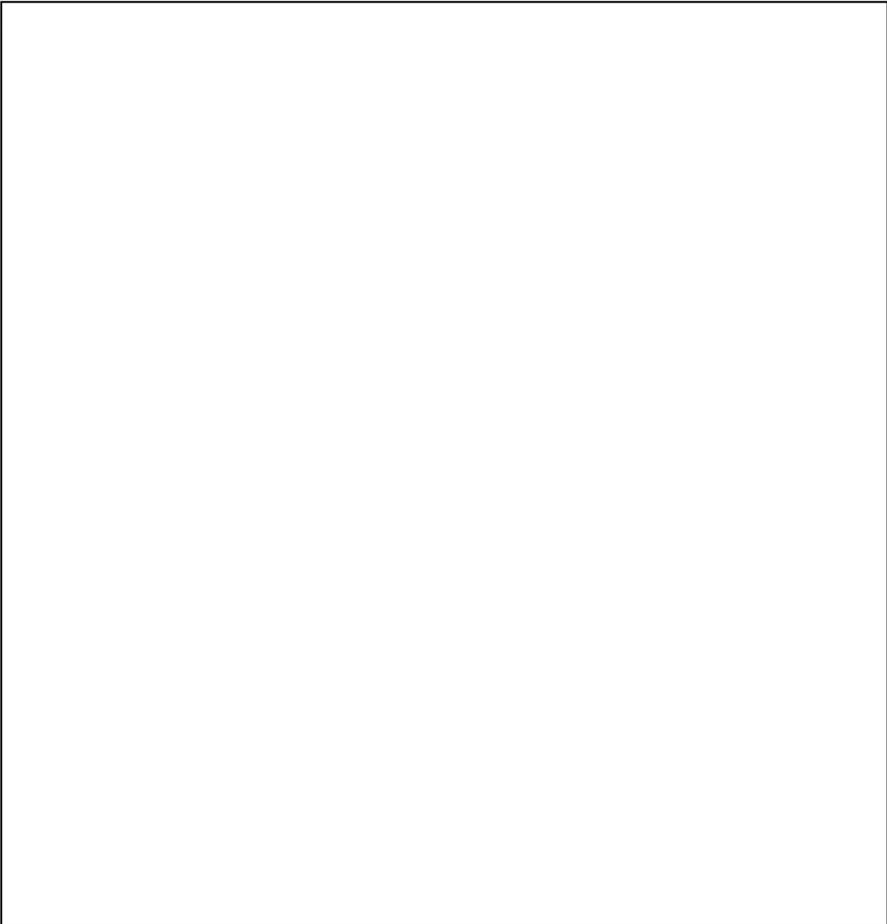
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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## CASTRO'S CUBA TODAY

Fidel Castro is still the undisputed "maximum leader" of the Cuban revolution and the dominant figure in Cuban politics, despite rumors to the contrary which circulated widely last spring. He sets policy, governs the country, and gives impetus to the revolution. The Cuban Communist Party, of which Castro is first secretary, is gradually becoming a pervasive influence in Cuban life. The struggle since 1959 between the so-called "old" and "new" Communists lies dormant--Castro and his supporters are in full control.

The military establishment, well equipped and capable of defending Cuba against anything but a large-scale, US-supported attack from abroad, is staunchly loyal to Castro. Organized internal resistance to the Castro regime has been eradicated and, aside from an occasional isolated act of sabotage, internal security has ceased to be a serious problem.

The Cuban economy, hampered by a combination of mismanagement, natural disasters, and a dearth of trained personnel, is sustained by massive foreign aid, primarily from the Soviet Union. Housing is inadequate, some foods are rationed, and many consumer commodities are difficult or impossible to obtain, but the Cuban people are far from starvation and there is evidence that the next sugar crop, so important to the national economy, will be among the best in the island's history.

### The Role of Fidel

When the corrupt Batista dictatorship collapsed on New Year's Day in 1959, the political vacuum was quickly filled by the only available force that had not been compromised in the eyes of the Cuban people--Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement. Castro had set the stage for his assumption of power by a carefully conducted campaign of clandestine press and radio propaganda de-

picting the 26th of July Movement as a rightful successor to the Batista regime by virtue of its two years of guerrilla-style resistance in the Sierra Maestra Mountains of eastern Cuba. Castro's utopian promises of a better life for all, his idealistic approach, and his magnetic personality reacted with the Cuban people's innate propensity for hero worship to establish the enigmatic rebel leader in the

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minds and hearts of the overwhelming majority of the population.

In the ensuing years, the image of the romantic Robin Hood of the Sierra Maestra has become tarnished, but Castro has been able to maintain and even strengthen his political position through maneuvers designed either to elicit popular support or to develop and reinforce those institutions by which he controls the masses. He often uses an alleged threat of imminent attack by "imperialist" forces from the US to unite the people behind him and shift attention from disturbing domestic problems. His internal security apparatus ruthlessly suppresses any opposition, real or imagined. Through his hypnotic oratory, he holds out to the Cuban people the pledge of a brighter future and then resorts to the convenient scapegoat of US "imperialism" when the promises do not become reality.

In a more practical vein, Castro has placed himself at the head of the three most important institutions in Cuba. Besides his job as first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, he is commander in chief of the armed forces and prime minister of the government. He has so integrated these three institutions that none functions independently of the other two. His appointment of his most faithful supporters, mostly 26th of July Movement veterans, to key positions is a further guarantee of his secu-

rity. Such a power structure, based on Soviet financing and substantial popular support and acquiescence, has provided the regime with a high degree of political stability.

However, so powerful is the Castro mystique and so important is he to the regime that his sudden removal from the scene through death or permanent incapacitation would place a severe strain on the Cuban political machinery. Although Castro has already designated his younger brother, Raul, currently minister of the armed forces and second secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, as his successor, ambitious members of the Cuban hierarchy could be expected ultimately to challenge Raul's authority in the event of Fidel's demise.

#### The Cuban Communist Party

The Cuban Communist Party (PCC), which evolved from the United Party of the Socialist Revolution during the latter's reorganization in the fall of 1965, provides Fidel Castro with the machinery through which he governs. As Cuba's sole political party, it has a membership of over 50,000. On the national level, it is organized on familiar Communist lines--a central committee of approximately 100 members, a secretariat, a political bureau, and six standing committees. Provincial, regional, and local party directorates comprise the middle and lower levels of the party

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structure while the basic party unit is the standard cell or Nucleus of Active Revolutionaries.

Cells, organized in all factories, work centers, state farms, and military units, are composed of party militants and membership candidates who have effectively demonstrated their loyalty to Fidel Castro. The cells, numbering over 5,000, are made up of from five to 200 members each. Party members and candidates must pay dues ranging from one to four percent of their monthly salaries and they receive in return official favors and special consideration.

Party officials below the provincial level are "elected" by local assemblies within each jurisdiction from a list of candidates named by the party upper echelons. Provincial party officials, however, are directly appointed by the national organization.

The heart of the PCC is the central committee and the key to the central committee is the eight-man political bureau. This bureau, which sets party policies, is composed of party first secretary Fidel Castro, second secretary Raul Castro, President Osvaldo Dorticos, organization secretary Armando Hart, and four military officers. The latter four, all veterans of the Sierra Maestra campaign, have scant experience in government and are probably included in the politburo to give strong representation to the military. Altogether,

almost two thirds of the members of the central committee and a fourth of the party rank and file are military personnel. This close political-military integration seems aimed at preventing any polarization of the regime's two most important bulwarks.

The party secretariat is responsible for administering the policies established by the politburo while the six standing committees function in a support and advisory capacity. The Constitutional Studies Committee is charged with drafting a "socialist" constitution to replace the Fundamental Law of Cuba of 7 February 1959 which is currently in use. This committee will also lay the groundwork for a new judicial system patterned after the Soviet example, and will probably plan the first PCC congress, to be held late this year or in 1967. Blas Roca, long head of the Communist Party in pre-Castro days, is the committee chairman.

Although the Committee for Revolutionary Orientation (COR) predates the formation of the PCC and is ostensibly an independent organ, it is a de facto subordinate of the central committee. The COR oversees propaganda dissemination and also supervises and coordinates party indoctrination through representatives on provincial, regional, and local party directorates.

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The party's youth organization, the Union of Young Communists (UJC), is responsible for grooming the "most exemplary" Cuban youth for party membership. The organization claims a membership of about 80,000 Cubans between the ages of 14 and 27. A junior version of the group is the Union of Communist Pioneers which organizes and indoctrinates children between the ages of 6 and 13, preparing them for the UJC. The growing regimentation of the people is evident in plans to have 70 percent of Cuba's children enrolled in the Pioneers by January 1967.

The Party: Apparatus for  
One-Man Rule

While theoretically an organ of collective management, the PCC has developed into an apparatus for one-man rule--it is the political framework that Castro lacked when he replaced Batista in January 1959. He borrowed it from the "old" Communist Party and when the "old" Communists tried to retrieve it, he reshaped it, gave it a new name, and called it his own. It is the machinery by which he governs and its operation is simple. Castro dominates the politburo in standard totalitarian fashion; the politburo dominates the central committee and central committee dominates the party; and the party, through its integration in all organs and aspects of Cuban life, dominates the nation. This integration, still in progress, ensures that no other institution will have the strength,

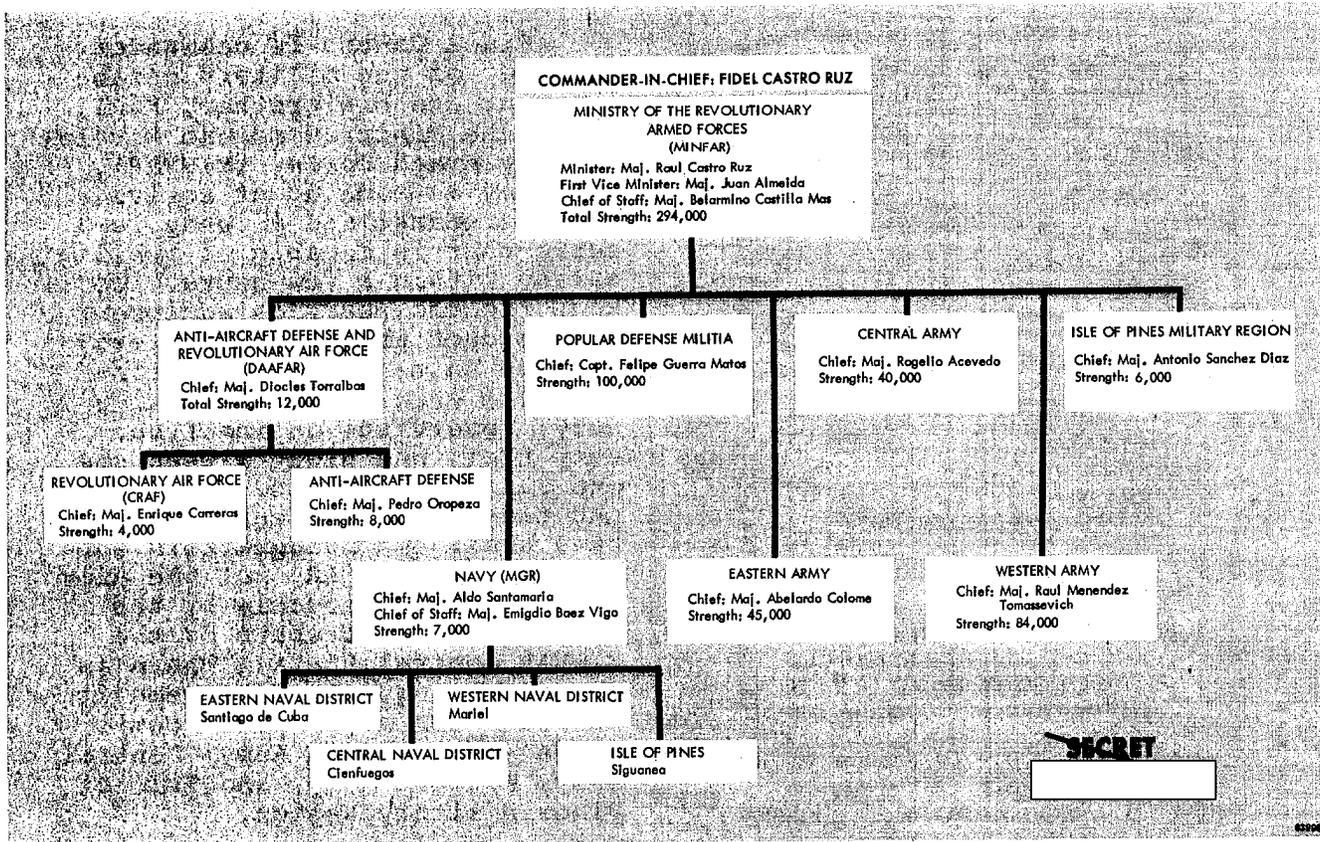
the organization, or the leadership to act against the regime.

Castro's supremacy within the party is unchallenged. Those who might have been able to threaten his hold on the reins, such as Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos, and Huber Matos, have disappeared from the scene. The so-called "old" versus "new" controversy, which allegedly pitted the pre-Castro, or "old" Communists against the pro-Castro, or "new," Communists, has been stifled. With Castro's savage denunciation of "old" Communist Anibal Escalante in March 1962 and the reorganization of the original party in late 1965, the dispute has become dormant and factionalism in the regime appears to be at an all-time low. While more than 15 "old" Communists are members of the central committee, they are effectively outweighed by an overwhelming preponderance of Castroite members. Moreover, the all-important politburo is composed solely of men who served with Castro's July 26th Movement during the Batista administration.

The Cubans have discovered, however, that it is as difficult to create an effective Communist party as it has been to bring socialism to the island. The shortage of qualified technicians has become a serious stumbling block on both counts. Castro pointed out in his speech of 29 August that the party cadre is not fulfilling its intended role as the "main driving force"

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behind the Cuban revolution. PCC organizing secretary Armando Hart spelled out this problem on 19 September when he admitted that the party organization is "extraordinarily weak" because of the low technical knowledge of the party cadres. Hart said that all too often PCC incompetents have been "supervising" economic production, and that this is one reason for Cuba's continued poor economic performance.

#### The Military Establishment

Thanks to Soviet and Czechoslovak assistance, Cuba has one of the largest and most modern

military establishments in Latin America. Roughly four percent of the entire population is either on active duty, in the ready reserve, or in the militia. Young men from 16 to 26 are subject to draft and must serve for three years unless exempted because of physical or mental disability, or deferred as students. The Cuban forces are equipped with such sophisticated armament as surface-to-air and short-range surface-to-surface missile systems, guided missile - firing surface craft, and rocket-armed MIG jet fighter planes. The mission of the armed forces is basically to defend against internal insurrection and external assault.

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### Inventory of Arms and Equipment

#### JET FIGHTER AIRCRAFT ----- Total 130 to 135

48 MiG-19 Fagot                      11 MiG-19 Farmer  
10 MiG-19 Midge                      35 to 40 MiG-21 Fishbed  
28 MiG-17 Presco

#### NAVAL VESSELS ----- Total 115

12 Komar-class guided missile boats  
6 Kronstadt-class submarine chasers  
6 SO-1 class submarine chasers  
12 P-6 motor torpedo boats  
12 P-4 motor torpedo boats  
3 patrol escorts  
62 miscellaneous patrol and service craft

#### MISSILES

4 coastal defense cruise missile sites with 8 launchers and 50 (est.) anti-ship Kennel missiles  
23 surface-to-air missile sites with 162 launchers, 290 transporters, and 600 (est.) SA-2 Guideline missiles  
60 SS-N-2 cruise missiles for Komar-class guided missile patrol boats  
100 ground-to-ground variant Kennel missiles with 61 launchers

#### TANKS, SELF-PROPELLED GUNS, AND OTHER ARMORED VEHICLES ----- Total 1,045

19-8, T-54-99, and T-34 tanks  
SU-100 assault guns  
Armored personnel carriers  
Armored scout cars with anti-air guided missiles

#### FIELD ARTILLERY AND ANTI-TANK GUNS ----- Total 1,230

77-mm. anti-tank guns  
76-mm., 85-mm., and 122-mm. field guns  
75-mm., 110-mm., 122-mm., and 152-mm. howitzers

#### ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS ----- Total 1,475

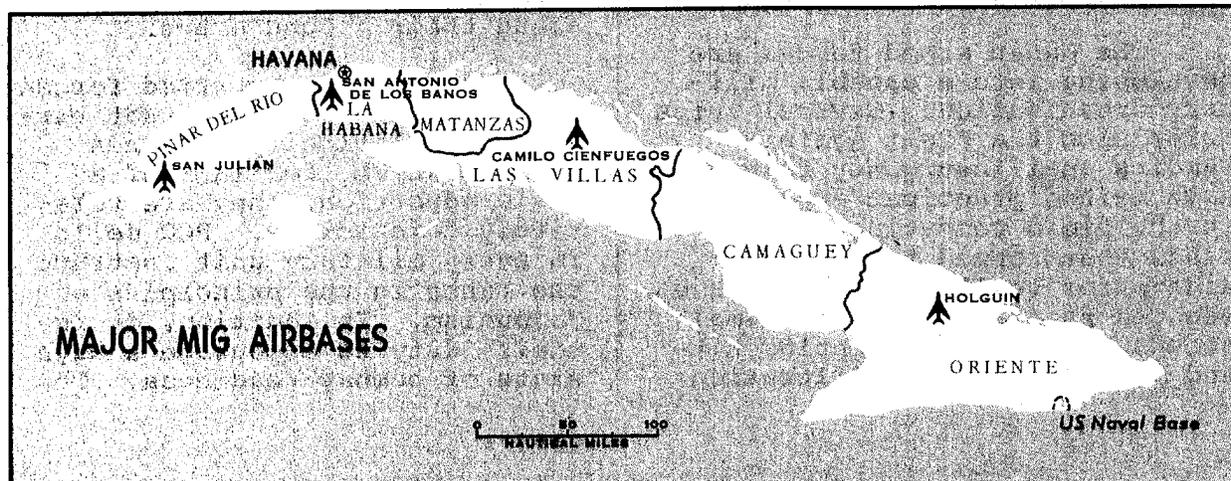
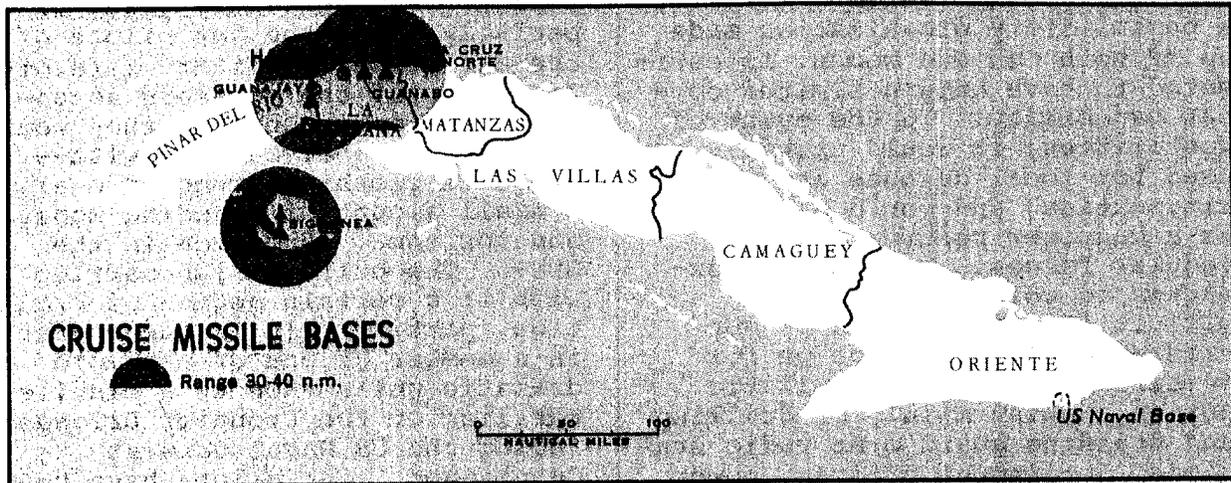
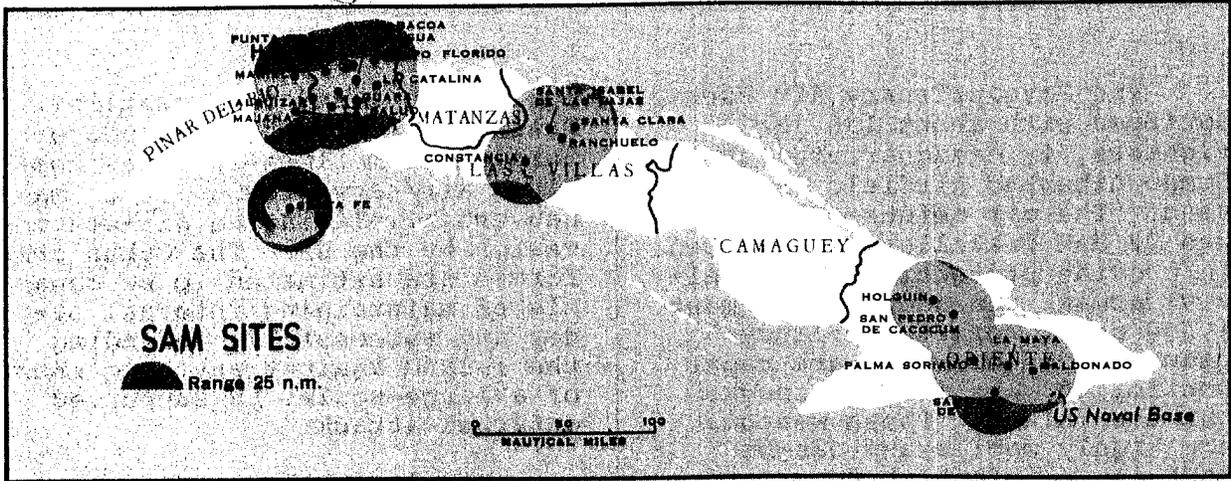
28.7-mm. (quad)  
37-mm. (quad)  
23-mm., 30-mm. (twin)  
17-mm., 27-mm., 89-mm., and 100-mm.

Fidel Castro is commander in chief of the military establishment and his brother, Raul, heads the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR). The army is made up of active duty personnel and a ready reserve that is capable of mobilization within a few hours. To keep records, service equipment, and conduct training, the ready reserve units apparently maintain skeleton cadres on active duty; reservists on inactive duty train one night a week and one Sunday per month. The navy and the air/air defense force have their own headquarters subordinate to MINFAR, but the army is controlled directly by the Operations Directorate of the MINFAR General Staff. There is no army headquarters between it and the four major field commands--the Eastern Army, Central Army, Western Army, and Isle of Pines Military Region.

The navy is similarly organized into Eastern, Central, and Western naval districts, and the Isle of Pines area. Cuba's four coastal defense cruise missile sites, three surrounding Havana and the fourth at Siguaneya, are manned by the navy, as is the coastal defense radar system. The navy's major units afloat, Komar-class guided missile boats, motor torpedo boats, and submarine chasers, are usually based on the north coast at Cabanas and Mariel in Pinar del Rio Province and in Havana; on the south coast at Cienfuegos; and on the Isle of Pines at Siguaneya.

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The Revolutionary Air Force, equipped with about 130 jet fighters, is headquartered at Campo Libertad Airfield in Havana. The air defense force has 22 SAM installations located to provide protection for sensitive areas. In addition, almost 1,500 anti-aircraft artillery pieces, some of which are radar controlled, are sited throughout the island. These weapons are highly mobile and can be used in an infantry support role as well as against aircraft.

The popular defense militia, a paramilitary organization made up of both men and women, is estimated to have only a limited combat capability. In the event of hostilities, it would probably be used for local defense and security duties, and would also serve as a manpower reserve for the regular forces. Workers are expected to volunteer for the militia if they want to be considered for advancement or for membership in the PCC; militia duties consist mainly of drilling and standing guard over radio stations, government offices, power plants, communications facilities, and other public buildings and installations.

The Cuban armed forces are developing into a capable military organization. Several units comprising the Fight Against Bandits anti-insurgency forces, have gained practical experience in the field combating anti-Castro bands that roamed the countryside prior to 1965. Others have engaged in firefights with small groups of exiles attempting hit-and-run attacks or infiltration

operations along the coastline. Training is a continuous procedure and sometimes involves combined air/navy/ground forces maneuvers simulating an air-sea invasion by the US. The Cuban armed forces are estimated to be capable of maintaining internal order and successfully defending the island against anything short of a large-scale, US-supported external attack.

Morale in the armed forces, except for some of the draftees and the men of the labor battalions, is apparently good, especially among the jet pilots of the air force. Military life offers many of the soldiers advantages and opportunities they would never have received otherwise--adequate clothing, regular meals, a small amount of spending money, and for some, education in the USSR. The uniform also carries with it a certain degree of prestige, particularly if the wearer is a member of one of the more dramatic units such as a missile battalion or the Frontier Brigade facing the US Naval Base at Guantanamo. Jet pilots have been so affected by their own prestige that their arrogant attitude has reportedly created resentment among their ground crews.

Members of the armed forces are subjected to a constant barrage of political propaganda against which, for lack of a basic education, they are relatively defenseless. PCC cells in every military unit instruct the ranks in the principles of Communism. In addition, it is their duty to encourage a high state of combat readiness. The

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vast majority of the troops are undoubtedly loyal to the regime, and to Fidel Castro in particular. The same is true of the officer corps.

A new type of quasi-military unit, the labor battalion, was formed in the armed forces in November 1965. Faced with a labor shortage in the 1965-66 sugar harvest, Cuban authorities killed two birds with one stone by drafting clergymen, suspected antiregime elements, riff-raff, petty criminals, and perverts, into Military Units for Aid to Production. In some towns troops reportedly went up and down the streets picking up anyone who could not produce proof of gainful employment. Special targets for induction were priests, ministers, seminarians, and members of the Jehovah's Witnesses sect. These draftees live under guard in prison-like encampments surrounded by barbed-wire fences. Discipline is severe and they are rarely allowed to receive visitors or to go home on pass. They receive no weapons training and are used in strenuous agricultural work, primarily in the sugarcane fields. As of the spring of 1966, there were only 11 such camps, all in Camaguey Province where labor is scarce, but the system is spreading to other provinces. While lamenting the need for these labor units, Fidel Castro announced in his 29 August speech that they would be increased and would be used throughout Cuba. Regular troops are also used in the sugar harvest and sometimes in construction projects, but the conditions under which they serve are quite

different from those of the labor-unit unfortunates.

#### Internal Security

The Castro regime has been effective in dealing with minor and sporadic internal resistance. Attempts at assassination and isolated acts of sabotage have been reported from time to time but the Department of State Security (DSE), the branch of the Ministry of the Interior that is charged with counterintelligence responsibilities, has achieved such proficiency that its agents have been able to penetrate the occasional small groups bent on subversion and to spoil their plots.

Larger scale resistance, in the form of roving bands of dissidents hiding in the hills and mountains, seems to be a thing of the past. Working in close coordination, the DSE and the anti-insurgency units of the armed forces liquidated the last of such bands in early 1965. Those disaffected elements of the populace that would normally form the core of an insurgent or underground movement, recognizing their impotence in the face of powerful and well-organized organs of repression, have chosen exile rather than resistance.

The ubiquitous Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, organized by the Ministry of the Interior in 1960 as civilian vigilante teams for rooting out real and suspected counterrevolutionaries, have undergone a functional evolution. Originally developed to provide the Cuban security services with a network

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of informants reaching into every factory, block, and apartment house, the civilian teams gradually lost their raison d'etre as the more professional government and armed forces units systematically uncovered and eliminated almost all organized subversive elements. Rather than being disbanded, however, the vigilante units were shifted from the Ministry of the Interior to the Superior Council of Urban Reform where today, under the direction of national coordinator Luis Gonzalez Marturelo, they perform such innocuous low-level administrative tasks as distributing health cards and ration books, conducting inoculation campaigns and blood donor drives, and mustering people for rallies and demonstrations in support of the regime. Their transfer from the Ministry of the Interior is a tribute to the effectiveness of the DSE and an acknowledgment that internal security is no longer a major problem in Cuba.

Not infrequently, rumors come out of Cuba, usually via the refugee route, announcing that a purge is being carried out and alleging that the Castro regime has been seriously undermined or divided and may be ready to collapse.

The basis for many such rumors has been the "rationalization" campaign that began in early 1964 in the Cuban National Bank and the Cuban Workers' Organization. The campaign, conducted by units known as Fight Against Bureaucracy Commissions, is aimed at increasing governmental efficiency through eradication of

bureaucratic overemployment and duplication of effort. As a natural by-product of their investigations, the commissions sometimes uncovered evidence of embezzlement or other administrative irregularities which resulted in disciplinary measures being taken against the perpetrators.

In Havana Province, where the bureaucratic fat was the greatest, over 16,000 positions had been eliminated by the end of March 1966. As of February 1966, more than 13,000 positions had been abolished in the remaining five provinces. Such extensive changes are bound to raise cries of "purge" but the purge is largely administrative in nature rather than political, and is not motivated by concern for the regime's stability.

#### The Economy

The economic situation continues to be the Castro regime's greatest problem. A series of natural disasters has aggravated troubles arising from mismanagement, inefficiency, and low labor productivity. Many personnel and organizational changes, however, are improving the situation in some important sectors. The regime's plans which placed excessive emphasis on industrial expansion were sharply revised in 1962 and 1963 and the basic importance of agriculture to the Cuban economy was again recognized. Greatest stress is now on increased sugar production. By 1970 the regime hopes to harvest an annual crop of ten million metric tons. Special attention

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is also being given to developing the livestock and fishing industries.

The total output of the economy today is about what it was in 1957, the year of highest prosperity during the prerevolution period. In per capita terms, however, the economy had deteriorated and per capita income in 1966 will be 10 to 15 percent below that of 1957. With the expected recovery of sugar production next year, this situation will improve somewhat; nevertheless, per capita income will remain below the pre-Castro levels.

At present, the economy depends heavily on the largesse of the Soviet Union and the other Communist countries. In addition to \$600 to \$800 million in military aid, Cuba, as of early 1966, had utilized nearly \$1.1 billion in economic credits from Communist countries, of which more than \$800 million was supplied by the Soviet Union. The USSR is also expected to help Cuba out of difficulties caused by the poor 1966 sugar harvest by forgoing a large portion of its quota of 3 million tons of sugar and by providing additional trade credits.

The 1966 sugar harvest totaled slightly less than 4.5 million metric tons, about 1.5 million below the 1965 harvest and approximately 2 million below the planned level. The poor crop was caused mainly by the drought during the growing season, but lack of fertilizer and a decline in the area of sugarcane available for harvest also played a part.

Prospects for next year's harvest are considerably brighter. It has already been announced that this harvest will start on 25 November and by December, 60 of the country's 152 mills will be in operation. In December 1965, only three mills were operating. The regime has optimistically announced a goal of 6.5 million metric tons for 1967, still somewhat below Cuba's record of 7.2 million set in 1952.

Looking beyond 1967, the Cubans continue to lay the basis for trying to realize their goal of 10 million tons of sugar in the 1970 harvest. Construction was begun in 1962 on dams and canals for irrigation, flood control, and drainage of areas that can be reclaimed for agricultural use. Over 1.5 million acres of uncultivated lands are scheduled to be cleared. Approximately 43,000 miles of roads connecting the farmlands with towns and seaports are to be constructed. Port facilities are being improved and railroads are to receive new equipment. Increased quantities of fertilizer are being imported from Europe, as are large amounts of agricultural machinery and construction equipment. Cuba is also negotiating with several European countries for the purchase of fertilizer plants. Investments are being increased to repair and expand many of the sugar mills and new mills will probably be purchased in Europe. In the field of education, emphasis continues to be placed on the training of agricultural technicians and hydraulic engineers. Mechanics to repair and maintain the

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heavy construction equipment are also being trained, some of them in France.

#### "Living Standard"

The Cuban people have already been told that in order to finance these purchases and improvements they are going to have to tighten their belts and continue to make sacrifices. This is not something new. Meat, rice, coffee, and milk are all on the rationed list. Many other food items are very scarce or impossible to obtain and food distribution is poor. Fruit and poultry production was damaged by hurricane Alma and these are in short supply as is fish, despite the rapid expansion of the Cuban fishing fleet. The limit of three pounds of rice per month is particularly irksome since rice has always been a basic food in the Cuban diet. In an effort to provide a replacement, the regime is negotiating for pasta and macaroni manufacturing plants from Europe and has tried through the press, radio, and television to get the people to change some of their eating habits.

The shortage of spare parts for automobiles and all types of machinery and the wearing out of electrical appliances is another source of irritation to those fortunate to have owned such luxuries. The lack of adequate housing has been aggravated by the hurricanes that periodically strike Cuba, and Castro himself has admitted that it will be some time before the housing situation is appreciably improved. City-wide power failures are becoming

regular occurrences in Havana; this situation, however, will probably be corrected when the new power station at Mariel comes into operation. Prices of most consumer goods are high, and poor services are getting worse. These difficulties are bound to cause grumbling and lower morale.

The exodus of refugees and defectors is evidence that all is not well inside Cuba, but it would be misleading to imply that the domestic record of the Castro regime is without its economic and social successes. Although private automobiles are fast disappearing from the streets for want of repairs, public transportation has improved considerably, thanks to Leyland busses imported from Britain. Medical services, although poor, have at last been made available in the countryside. In pre-Castro times such services were concentrated in the cities, primarily Havana, and many rural areas were entirely without medical support. Educational facilities, too, have been made widely available to the rural areas and to the poverty stricken. The Ministry of Education has set a goal of 1,348,000 pupils in the various levels of study during the 1966-67 academic year, a previously unheard of educational program. Various sanitation and inoculation drives have also benefited the masses.

#### Religion

The Roman Catholic Church, the largest religious community in the country, has lost the importance it once held in Cuba.

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While the regime theoretically tolerates the practice of religion, in fact almost all religious groups are the target of harassment and denigration. The Jehovah's Witnesses sect, in particular, has come in for severe treatment and many of its members have been denounced in the press as US spies. Priests, ministers, seminarians, and lay leaders, as noted earlier, are being drafted into the forced labor battalions where they are thrown in with sex perverts, drug addicts, and criminals. The Roman Catholic seminaries in Havana and El Cobre, the Evangelical Seminary in Matanzas, and eight of the 26 Methodist churches in Oriente Province were closed early this year and many pastors have been imprisoned for "antigovernment activities." The Catholic Church had already been hard hit by the departure or expulsion in 1961 of virtually all of its foreign priests and nuns, and priests now usually must serve several parishes instead of just one. Only the Presbyterian Church seems to be favored by the regime; the Cuban branch may sever its ties with its parent organization in the US and become a national church under the influence of several pro-Castro ministers and the regime's Office of Religious Affairs.

All religious groups are forbidden to hold services or processions outside church buildings and each congregation is reportedly required to get permission from the Interior Ministry if it wishes to hold more than two services per week. The Office of Religious Affairs requires pastors to register the names, addresses,

and places of employment of all parishioners, and to file statements on church finances. A less subtle form of harassment has been the practice since early 1966 of blocking off streets bordering on churches on Sunday mornings during services and using them as sports and recreation areas for school-age children. A preacher of Havana's First Pentecostal Church states that agents from the Department of State Security attend all services and can interrupt proceedings at any time in order to make propaganda statements. The regime is likely to continue to use steady pressure of this sort, rather than blatant persecution, to undermine religious influence.

#### Cultural Cuba

Culture in Cuba today is increasingly being used as a tool to shape the minds of the people. The various art forms must carry a socialist message or teach a revolutionary lesson.

Former education minister and third-ranking party official Armando Hart, in addressing the Havana University humanities faculty on 5 June 1966, clearly identified the Castro regime's position on the role of culture; "All our efforts in the field of art, literature, historical research, philosophical inquiry, etc., should be aimed at fighting imperialism and the exploiters, at creating a classless society and forming the Communist man...."

Western observers in Havana report that intellectuals in the Cuban capital claim to be moving toward what they themselves describe as a crisis. Originally,

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most were staunch supporters of the revolution but many are now becoming progressively disillusioned. A public expression of dissent, in the form of a letter to Fidel Castro and Armando Hart signed by virtually the entire membership of the National Writers and Artists Union, was provoked when a recent regime drive against homosexuals resulted in the sending of four of that organization's members to the forced labor battalions.

The government may be seeking to release some of the pressure on intellectuals by permitting increased travel abroad. Several have left Cuba on fellowships and scholarships, a maneuver probably designed to allow their departure without an open break with the regime.

In addition to experiencing internal tensions, the Cuban cultural world is being subjected to external influences. There has been a steady flow of artists, musicians, dancers, vocal groups, and other entertainers between Cuba and the Communist countries for several years. Through cultural exchange agreements, Cubans can watch television programs produced in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, see movies made in Poland and the USSR, hear radio programs recorded in Rumania and Bulgaria, and visit exhibits from North Vietnam and Hungary.

Even sports activities are steeped in politics. Cuban teams participating in international matches are heralded as heroic defenders of the revolution winning great battles against the "representatives of imperialism." The new sports stadiums in Oriente,

Camaguey, and Las Villas, built in disregard of the critical need for other types of construction, are an indication of the priority the regime has assigned to sports.

The mass gymnastic exhibitions so common to political holidays in the Communist countries have also become a part of Cuban life. During the 26 July festivities celebrating the 12th anniversary of the Moncada Barracks attack, more than 10,000 students, youth groups, and armed forces personnel took part in a massive gymnastics spectacular.

#### Outlook

The political machine forged by Fidel Castro is being developed and refined until eventually it will absorb the vast majority of the nation's population. Those Cubans who cannot conform to the increasing regimentation have the Varadero-Miami airlift as an effective safety valve. Those who do conform can expect greater state encroachments on their personal lives and continued economic hardships for at least the next few years.

The chances for a radical change in leadership in Cuba are remote. Castro has moved quickly and effectively against any potential threat to his position from within the regime and his security forces have been equally vigilant in subduing and eliminating any elements of resistance within the population. Barring Castro's death or disability, the present regime will maintain an unassailable hold on Cuba indefinitely.

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