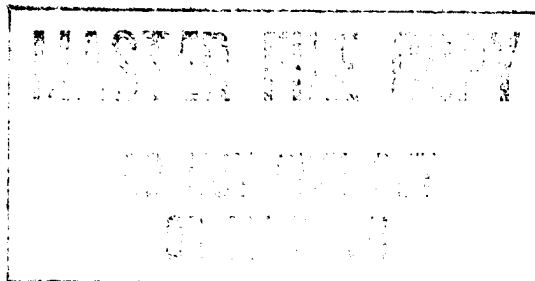


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The Cuban Educational Assistance Program: An Investment in the Third World

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A Research Paper

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August 1983*

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**The Cuban Educational
Assistance Program:
An Investment in
the Third World** [redacted]

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Summary

*Information available
as of 15 July 1983
was used in this report.*

The education of Third World students has become an increasingly important element of Cuban foreign policy over the past five years. Havana uses its educational programs both to further Marxist ideology and to deepen its influence in the Third World through the development of a cadre of individuals who are sympathetic to Cuban aims and who can further Cuban interests. The USSR and East European countries provide their tacit support by awarding Cuban scholarships to LDC students through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Cuban educational assistance complements other Communist training programs, and Moscow benefits, if only indirectly, without having to become involved. [redacted]

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Our estimate, [redacted] is that more than 50,000 students from 80 countries have traveled to Cuba for schooling since the early 1960s. More than two-thirds of the total have arrived since the mid-1970s, and one-half are enrolled now. Cuban education programs are:

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- Highly focused. Three-fourths of the foreign students training in Cuba in 1982 were from four Marxist countries—Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua.
- Oriented toward youth. More than half of the foreign students enrolled in 1982 were of high school age or younger.
- Concentrated on the Third World. Students from developing countries make up 3.5 percent of university students in Cuba and 1 percent of total primary, secondary, and university enrollments, a significantly higher percentage than in other Communist countries.
- Aimed at students abroad as well as in Cuba. We estimate, on the basis of numerous sources, that Havana has some 5,000 teachers in 17 countries organizing and working in elementary, secondary, and university educational systems. [redacted]

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The financial burden on Cuba of administering these programs is small, and Havana may actually be earning a profit on some parts of the programs, such as receiving hard currency payments for sending teachers abroad. Even though Cuba's all-expense scholarships include room and board, tuition, and medical expenses, the home country pays for transportation—the only associated hard currency expenditure. Havana budgets the peso equivalent of about \$10 million annually to train foreigners, according to official Cuban figures. [redacted]

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The low cost, the excellent potential payoffs in maintaining and furthering influence in target countries, and the personal interest of Fidel Castro in training students from the Third World suggests significant future growth of Cuban educational assistance. Cuba is allocating larger number of university scholarships to its Caribbean neighbors, while maintaining awards to other recipients at previous levels. Cuban officials consider cultural and educational exchanges among the best tools to cultivate ties with non-Communist countries.

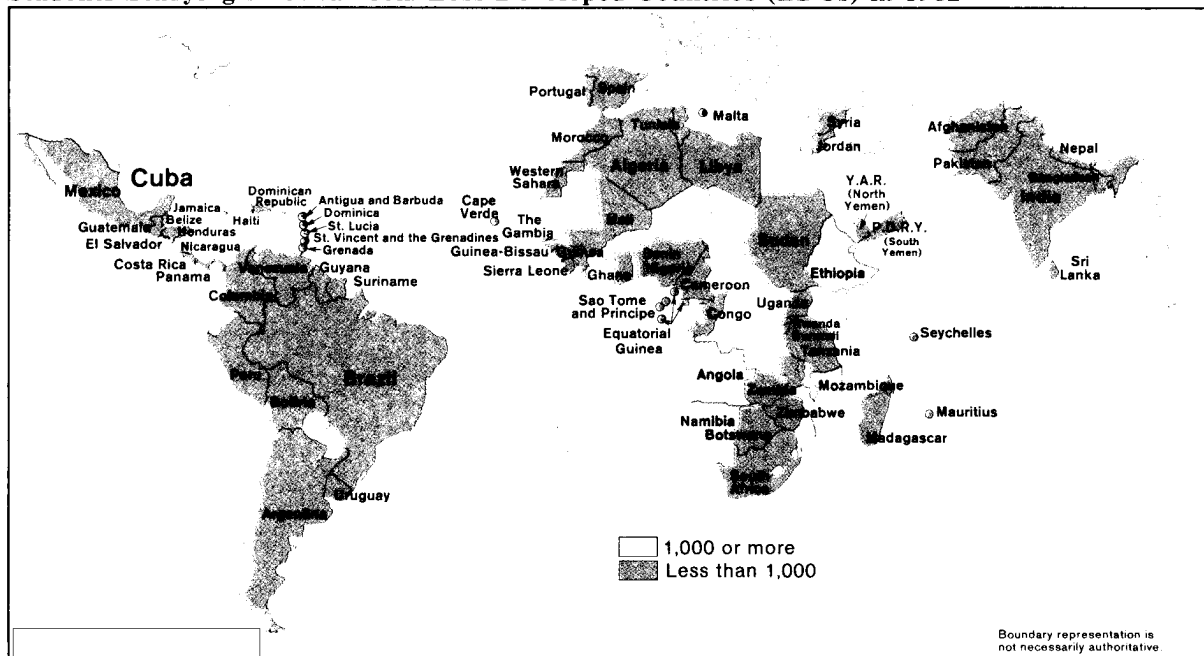
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Figure 1
Students Studying in Cuba From Less Developed Countries (LDCs) in 1982



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**The Cuban Educational Assistance Program:
An Investment in the Third World** [redacted]

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Introduction¹

Over the last decade Cuba has developed an academic and technical training program for LDC students that is among the most active in the Communist world. We have not observed Moscow guiding the program, but by its nature and structure the Cuban effort complements other Communist training programs and fosters Soviet as well as Cuban foreign policy objectives. Havana often accepts students who would not receive a scholarship in the USSR or Eastern Europe because of poor educational backgrounds. In addition, Cuba had access to a large pool of candidates in Latin America who are more willing to travel to Cuba than to the USSR. Moscow's own program has not been well accepted in Latin America for the most part, and many Soviet scholarships go begging every year. [redacted]

As enunciated by Fidel Castro himself, the Cuban program has two goals:

- To further Communist international aims in the Third World by creating a Cuban-trained cadre capable of governing in Marxist LDCs or able to work for political change in non-Marxist LDCs.
- To create opportunities for an expansion of Cuban influence within individual countries for the long term through a pool of Cuban-trained specialists who can be used to serve Cuban political, economic, or strategic interests. [redacted]

The program has grown sharply during the last five years. We estimate that Havana is currently training some 27,000 students from more than 70 Third World countries. We estimate that as recently as 1975 there were no more than 5,000 to 10,000 foreign students in Cuba. Cuba also has 5,000 teachers abroad in 17

¹ This Research Paper focuses on Cuban assistance programs and does not include military training. Estimates about the education program are based on [redacted] Cuban press releases on the number and disciplines of foreign students and scholarship offers and acceptances. Little information is available on the program's early years, limiting comparisons with data that became available as the program expanded in the mid-1970s. [redacted]

countries who have reached an additional 400,000 students. We do not expect the full impact of the program to be felt until large numbers of students begin returning home during the next few years. [redacted]

The Schools

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Cuba has more than 90 academic facilities open to foreign students. Students in primary and high school grades are trained on the Isle of Youth, while most foreign post-secondary-level students attend party schools, schools run by political organizations, Cuban universities (especially the University of Havana), and technical schools run by functional government ministries, such as Construction and Public Health. [redacted]

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The Isle of Youth. Cuba trains foreign elementary and high school students at its Isle of Youth facility 48 kilometers south of the Cuban mainland. No other country offers such an extensive program of official scholarships for primary and high school students. Havana has turned the Isle of Youth into a showcase for Cuba's educational system, in part through the labor of the foreign students themselves. [redacted]

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[redacted] there are 23 schools for foreigners on the Isle of Youth with an enrollment of almost 14,000 students from 12 developing countries (see table 1), as well as 36 schools housing 18,000 Cuban students. Students are grouped by nationality in separate schools, which are governed by a Directing Council that includes Cubans as well as foreigners, a home country committee of the party's youth arm, and an administrative section that includes representatives of the Cuban Communist Party. [redacted]

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Students from African Marxist states are a majority of the foreign student population on the Isle of Youth, as they have been since the program's inception in 1977. Several thousand students from Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Namibia have been accepted

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Table 1
Students from LDCs on the
Isle of Youth, 1982 ^a

Number of persons

Total	13,720
North Africa	570
Western Sahara (Polisario)	570
Sub-Saharan Africa	10,760
Angola	2,400
Congo	600
Ethiopia	3,400
Ghana	600
Guinea-Bissau	120
Mozambique	2,400
Namibia	1,195
Sao Tome and Principe	25
South Africa (African National Congress)	20
Latin America	1,790
Nicaragua	1,790
Middle East	600
South Yemen	600

^a Numbers are rounded to nearest 5.

for training at the site over the years, and most are still studying there. In 1982, it was announced that the first Ghanaian pupils (600) would travel to the island for their education. Nicaragua—in a program that began within a month of the Sandinista take-over—has the only contingent on the Isle of Youth from Latin America or the Caribbean, and this group now numbers over 1,500 students. [redacted]

The curriculum on the island is rigorous and regimented. Cuba accepts foreign children as young as nine years old for primary and secondary schooling oriented toward vocational skills. Only the most promising candidates are accepted for such training. Once chosen, the student can expect to spend five days a week in training—six hours a day in classes and three and a half hours at physical labor. Students wear uniforms at all times and march to and from classes. They study secondary school subjects such as history, mathematics, science, Spanish, English, and chemistry as well as courses in carpentry, painting, plumbing, bricklaying, and other specialties. Students spend

three to four years on the Island of Youth, and some move directly into Cuban universities or technical institutes, spending a decade or more in the Cuban educational system. [redacted]

The Isle of Youth program has several characteristics that have helped it avoid the pitfalls of many other training programs for LDC personnel:

- Grouping students by nationality has overcome many of the adjustment problems encountered by students in a foreign country.
- Drawing about one-fourth of the teaching staff at each school from the students' homeland to teach cultural and historical subjects.

The Cuban training program also enjoys an advantage in that the climate is similar to that in most of the students' homelands, an important consideration in a successful training effort. For example, many students from tropical countries have discontinued their education in Moscow because of the severe winters. [redacted]

Most national groups are well disciplined, but the international press has reported occasional rebellions against the harsh regimen, forced labor, and poor food. In the past two years, several hundred students have been expelled for misbehavior, and others have been recalled by their home governments. Cuban press accounts indicate that Angolans have been especially troublesome, destroying a school and some citrus groves last year during riots which involved up to 300 students. These kinds of incidents may have made recruitment somewhat more difficult for the Cubans as reports filter back about the hard work and production quotas on the island. [redacted]

The Political Schools. We estimate that about 500 foreign students receive comprehensive schooling at the Cuban Communist Party schools in active measures—propaganda, political agitation, intelligence, and covert action. They are enrolled at the Nico Lopez National Party School, the Julio Antonio Mella School of the Young Communists League, or

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one of four cadre schools run by the mass organizations.² Courses run from two weeks to two years; instruction is given in a broad range of subjects with emphasis on ideology, economics, propaganda, journalism, and organization of political groups and mass organizations. [redacted]

The Nico Lopez School, the most advanced and prestigious party training school in Cuba, accepts the elite among Cuban and foreign candidates. [redacted] we estimate that about 100 places at the school are reserved for foreign nationals. Founded in 1970 and directly administered by the party Central Committee, the school offers a two-year program that provides the highest level of party training and a four-year university type program. [redacted] political trainees receive far more favorable treatment than students in nonpolitical disciplines. We have been unable to ascertain the extent of these benefits, but presumably these students receive more money, clothing, and privileges. [redacted]

Students enrolled in political-oriented programs are on scholarships provided by the Cuban Communist Party to foreign Communist or leftist parties. Occasionally funding is arranged through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), the Soviet-led Communist economic organization. The typical foreign political trainee is affiliated with a domestic Communist or a leftist party and has been chosen for potential and ability. [redacted]

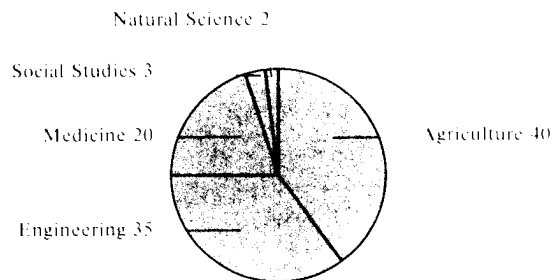
The Universities. Some 7,000 students from the Third World were enrolled in Cuban universities in 1982.

[redacted] Most of these students are also from Marxist developing countries such as Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nicaragua (see table 2). Foreign students attend all of Cuba's four major universities, but more than three-fourths are at the University of Havana. [redacted]

² The Lazaro Pena Trade Union School of the Central Organization of Trade Unions, the Fe de Valle School of the Cuban Women's Federation, the Niceto Perez School of the National Association of Small Farmowners, and the School of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution. [redacted]

Figure 2
Cuba: Composition of Foreign Student Body, by Specialty

Percent



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Courses of study in Cuba resemble those in the same fields at universities in other countries with the addition of political indoctrination and requirements for physical labor. While the Cuban press has referred to university scholarships in more than 190 specialties, programs generally emphasize skills that can be put to immediate use in a Third World country. The distribution of foreign students by specialties is similar to that found in the Cuban university system as a whole (figure 2). [redacted]

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The course of study usually runs for four to six years, often including a year of preparatory and language studies to provide a uniform educational base for students from divergent backgrounds and to integrate them into Cuban university life. Open sources indicate that to graduate, a university student must spend 4,000 to 5,000 hours in classes, and participate in

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Table 2
Cuba: LDC Academic and
Technical Students in Cuba, 1982^a

Number of persons

Total	13,010		
North Africa	115	Latin America (continued)	
Algeria	5	Belize	30
Libya	100	Bolivia	10
Morocco	5	Brazil	5
Tunisia	5	Colombia	10
Sub-Saharan Africa	7,235	Costa Rica	5
Angola	2,800	Dominica	25
Benin	40	Dominican Republic	5
Botswana	15	Ecuador	5
Burundi	15	Grenada	330
Cameroon	5	Guatemala	5
Cape Verde	50	Guyana	200
Congo	145	Haiti	5
Equatorial Guinea	15	Honduras	10
Ethiopia	900	Jamaica	190
Gambia, The	30	Mexico	20
Ghana	40	Nicaragua	4,020
Guinea	300	Panama	50
Guinea-Bissau	60	Peru	10
Madagascar	30	St. Lucia	30
Mali	5	St. Vincent	20
Mauritius	5	Suriname	20
Mozambique	1,700	Uruguay	15
Nigeria	125	Venezuela	10
Rwanda	40	Middle East	480
Seychelles	20	Jordan	10
Sierra Leone	10	Lebanon	20
Sudan	5	North Yemen	5
Tanzania	500	PLO	400
Uganda	200	South Yemen	20
Zambia	40	Syria	25
Zimbabwe	140	South Asia	115
Europe	15	Afghanistan	85
Malta	5	Bangladesh	5
Portugal	5	India	10
Spain	5	Nepal	5
Latin America	5,050	Pakistan	5
Antigua	10	Sri Lanka	5
Argentina	10		

^a Excludes students attending courses with durations of less than six months. Numbers are rounded to nearest 5.



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1,000 hours of physical labor at factories, farms, or other productive facilities associated with the universities. Once a student has completed the necessary coursework and practical training, he receives a licenciado degree. Several years of further study earn a doctorate degree; there is no intermediate degree equivalent to the US masters degree. [redacted]

The Technical Schools. Cuba's technical schools accept about 6,000 students from the Third World every year. Most of the courses are four years in duration, and the most popular ones for foreign personnel are in engineering, construction, and agriculture. Like Cuban universities, these schools require a high school diploma for entry. Some LDC trainees continue on into technical cadre training school upon completion of their courses. If a student has shown above average potential, he may be enrolled in an industrial cadre school. These facilities train personnel for managerial roles in their respective technical fields. [redacted]

Cuban Training: A Political Experience
 Cuban education is highly politicized—as is the case in other Marxist countries—and foreign students are exposed to the same indoctrination as domestic children. The Cuban press repeatedly has pointed out that the role of education should be “to train highly qualified professionals capable of organizing, developing, and guiding the economy, science, and culture based on Marxist-Leninist principles and a genuine proletarian spirit.” Educational policy in Cuba is subject to rigid central planning. The Ministers of Education (MINED) and Higher Education (MES) are members of the Communist Party Central Committee. [redacted]

The pervasiveness of the Communist Party in education guarantees that students at all levels are steeped in Marxist-Leninist theory. Students in social sciences receive the heaviest doses of ideological training. [redacted] at Havana University both foreign and Cuban students study Marxist-Leninist ideology during the first year; in the second year, political application of Communist theory; and in the third and fourth years, worker organization and participation. The study of military affairs is compulsory in some programs; for example, a doctor of medicine degree requires 400 hours of military training, and nearly one-fifth of the

Table 3
Political Course Requirements for a Cuban Doctor of Medicine Degree

	Class Hours	
Total	840	25X1
Philosophy	140	
Economics and Politics	140	
History of the Cuban Revolution	90	
Scientific Communism	70	
Military Training	400	
[redacted]		25X1

coursework for a medical degree is devoted to political subjects (table 3). [redacted] 25X1

Scholarships and Recruitment 25X1

Foreign students in Cuba generally receive full scholarships that include small monthly stipends for university and party school undergraduates and about 10 pesos a month for Isle of Youth students, according to open literature [redacted] In addition, Cuba provides all foreign students with free tuition and medical care, educational materials, clothing, and transportation within Cuba. The home government or the sponsoring party is usually responsible for transportation to and from Cuba. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] Scholarships are awarded by the Ministry of Education, the Communist Party, and special interest groups such as trade unions, women's groups, and industrial ministries. CEMA organizations also fund some university scholarships. [redacted] 25X1

Study is formally open to students who have met the following requirements, although in practice the Cubans are lenient about admission standards: 25X1

- For undergraduate courses, applicants must have completed a secondary school education. 25X1
- For cadre training, applicants must belong to a leftist (preferably Communist) party and must be sponsored by the Cuban Communist Party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or an East European Communist party.

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The Isle of Youth accepts students for primary, junior high, and high school, most with little or no previous education. In many cases, Cuba advertises its scholarships in the press of the countries receiving such grants. Students must have valid passports, birth certificates, health records, scholastic records, and photographs and must arrive in Cuba by mid-August for the September school year. [redacted]

Growth of the Program

More than 50,000 nationals from 80 countries have traveled to Cuba for all types of schooling. Beginning in the early 1960s, Havana invited a few hundred students each year from friendly regimes and leftist insurgent groups in less developed countries to study in Cuban university programs or in cadre and technical training programs. Until the mid-1970s, students came from only some 15 to 20 countries, almost all in Latin America. Foreign university students never numbered more than 1,500. [redacted]

Now, foreign students account for about 1 percent of the entire Cuban school population; they make up about 3.5 percent of university enrollment. The four largest recipients of Cuban scholarships—Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nicaragua—together account for nearly three-fourths of all foreign students in Cuba. Africans have assumed increased importance in the foreign student body. In 1977, Cuba accepted several thousand elementary and high school students from Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Students from African countries now represent 70 percent of the foreign student body. Latin American countries account for a fourth of all foreign students in Cuba; most of this group come from Nicaragua. Havana's recent offers of 350 scholarships to students from conservative English-speaking Caribbean countries have not yet been taken up. We expect the number of students from these countries in Cuba to grow during the coming school year. For example, Barbados probably will accept its first Cuban scholarship this year. [redacted]

Cuban Teachers Abroad

In tandem with its program to educate students in Cuba, Havana has mounted an extensive effort to train LDC personnel abroad. In 1982 we estimate that some 5,000 Cubans were in 17 countries, teaching in or organizing university, elementary, and secondary school systems (table 4). These representatives help local officials set up curricula and work/study programs similar to those in Cuba. The Cuban teaching program in LDCs is designed to impart basic skills to broad segments of the population. Far fewer Cuban

[redacted] Cuba is relying increasingly on bilateral cultural and educational agreements to administer its scholarship program. Since 1975, 39 developing countries have established diplomatic relations with Cuba, and foreign officials have become more responsive to Cuban education offers. The importance of these formal agreements is reflected in the surge of enrollments of foreign students in Cuban educational programs since 1975. [redacted]

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Table 4 *Number of persons*
Cuban Teachers in LDCs, 1982^a

Total	4,955
North Africa	10
Algeria	10
Sub-Saharan Africa	2,705
Angola	2,000
Benin	20
Congo	55
Equatorial Guinea	10
Ethiopia	240
Guinea	75
Guinea-Bissau	30
Madagascar	10
Mozambique	150
Sao Tome and Principe	100
Tanzania	15
Latin America	2,135
Grenada	10
Guyana	10
Nicaragua	2,115
Middle East	100
South Yemen	100
South Asia	5
Afghanistan	5

^a Numbers are rounded to nearest 5.

[Redacted]

teachers are found at the university level, but a few provide instruction in medicine, agriculture, and veterinary medicine. A handful lecture in other academic fields. Some Cuban teachers reportedly help build or refurbish schools in rural areas. [Redacted]

Cuban teachers are selected for two-year "internationalist" tours abroad based on their loyalty and the strength of their Communist beliefs, according to official Cuban announcements. They take six months of preliminary training that outlines the political and educational goals of Cuban aid and provides background on the culture and conditions of their country of assignment. Where the teaching effort is extensive, such as in Angola and Nicaragua, teachers are organized into 1,000- to 2,000-member detachments

named for revolutionary heroes. Overseas duty has become an integral part of the teacher training curriculum since the mid-1970s. A tour abroad generally ensures a better position at home. The teachers are typically young and the overseas tour constitutes the final component of their own five-year degree program or their first assignment upon completion of training. [Redacted]

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Cuban press reports indicate that since many are stationed in rural areas of the least developed countries, Cuban teachers often find life abroad rigorous. The workday runs for 12 hours; in return the teachers receive lodging, food, and about \$30 per month. Castro has publicly acknowledged that a number have died in the course of duty. [Redacted]

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A Program Assessment

The cost to Cuba of its educational program for LDCs is modest, particularly when compared with the programs of other countries. Based on Cuban data, we calculate that Havana budgets less than the peso equivalent of \$10 million annually to train foreigners. To our knowledge, there are no significant hard currency expenditures associated with the program. Transportation expenses, the only hard currency component, are defrayed by the student, his government, or his party. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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The Isle of Youth program is virtually cost free, and indeed Cuban officials publicly claim it is financially profitable. Some foreign governments provide supplemental monthly stipends to the students and furnish up to 25 percent of the faculty. Students are responsible for the basic upkeep of the facilities (which are constructed by a quick and inexpensive prefabricated construction method) and work 18 hours a week in associated citrus groves and truck farms. [Redacted]

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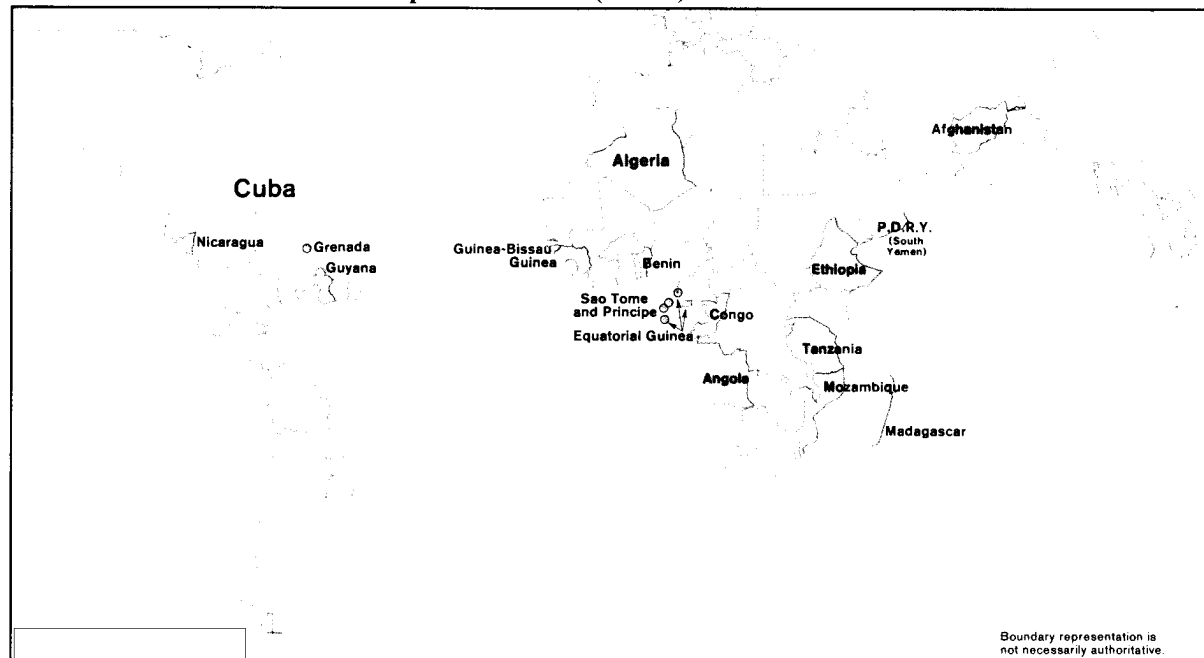
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[Redacted] after three years of operation the farm output at schools on the Isle of Youth was more than enough to underwrite construction costs and annual operating expenses. [Redacted]

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Figure 3
Cuban Teachers in Less Developed Countries (LDCs) in 1982



We believe that the assignment of teachers to developing countries is also a profitable undertaking. Hard currency expenditures are kept to a minimum and many host countries—Angola for one—pay a hard currency fee for teachers. Under a typical Cuban arrangement, Havana pays the teachers' salaries, while the host is responsible for local costs, such as transportation and living expenses, plus a small monthly stipend for personal expenditures. [redacted]

Cuba stands to gain from its education programs for foreign students in two ways: through the rise to prominence of individual alumni of Cuban programs and through the broader diffusion throughout a country's technical and political infrastructure of a large number of students who have been trained in Cuba or by Cubans at home. Presumably these people are sympathetic to Cuban goals. Even though the expansion of the education program is less than a decade old, there are already examples of success in both areas. The most notable of Cuban alumni thus far are two members of Nicaragua's ruling National Directorate, Humberto Ortega Saavedra and Tomas Borge Martinez. Both are hardliners, and Ortega is reported

to be the closest to Castro of the Directorate's members and probably the principal conduit of Cuban influence. [redacted]

The chances for the Cuban program's success are enhanced by its careful scrutiny of a candidate's political background. Many students already are Marxists when they arrive in Cuba. [redacted]

Success on a broader scale is becoming evident primarily in those countries that have had the greatest number of students in Cuba or that have had the most

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Cuban teachers—Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. In these countries, the Cubans are conducting crash literacy programs which incorporate heavy doses of Marxist ideology. The Cuban press reports that since 1977 Cuban teachers in Angola have taught over 300,000 students, and in 1981, 80,000 Nicaraguans received Cuban training, according to the press in Managua. The impact on the domestic societies of those thousands of students is probably magnified because the skills in which they have been trained by the Cubans are in short supply at home. [redacted]

Finally, the Cuban programs have enjoyed success in altering the shape and content of the curriculum in some LDCs, which presumably could contribute to an ideological rapprochement with Cuba. According to open sources, Cuban teachers in Ethiopia, Grenada, Guyana, and South Yemen have been successful in getting these countries to revamp their primary and/or secondary schools using the Cuban Isle of Youth model. [redacted]

The Cuban program has not been without its critics. Ethiopian officials, many educated in the West, have criticized Cuban training as simplistic. Even more have complained that excessive indoctrination has interfered with the achievement of educational goals. Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique have had to recall several hundred disaffected students who have been unable to make the transition to life in Cuban society.

[redacted]

Outlook

The Cuban educational program will undoubtedly continue at least at current levels and will probably grow for several reasons:

- The Cuban school population is decreasing at a rate of about 200,000 students a year, according to Cuban data. This creates more openings for foreign students.

- Cuba has announced plans to construct 15 to 20 more schools for foreign nationals on the Isle of Youth facilities which could house 14,000 additional students.
- Some 82 developing nations now recognize Cuba, compared with 43 before 1975, greatly expanding the pool of eligible students.
- Observed Cuban scholarship offers to the longstanding African recipients have not declined while Cuba has substantially increased offers to others, particularly Seychelles and Zambia. New offers to Caribbean countries while not large in number nonetheless reflect the program's undiminished vigor and the Cuban determination to broaden penetration efforts. [redacted]

We expect that the Cuban training programs will remain an integral part of Havana's foreign policy, satisfying some of Castro's major objectives. Moscow has every reason to encourage the program, but we do not believe it is likely to get directly involved. Nonetheless, the Soviets as well as Havana will benefit as during the next decade the 27,000 students currently in Cuba move into careers made possible by Havana and an even larger number of new students take their places in Cuban schools. [redacted]

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