

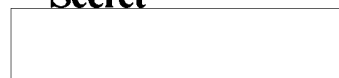
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Cuba: A Revolution's Discontent



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A Research Paper

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Cuba: A Revolution's Discontent

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [Redacted] the
Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It
was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and
may be directed to the Chief, Middle America-
Caribbean Division, ALA [Redacted]

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**Cuba:
A Revolution's Discontent** [Redacted]

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 15 April 1986
was used in this report.*

We believe Cuba is entering a new era in which the Castro regime will face increased popular discontent. A new generation of Cubans with high expectations is reaching maturity at a time when the country's economic difficulties are mounting. Simultaneously, a series of foreign policy setbacks, most notably Grenada, have raised public doubts about the skill of the leadership. At minimum, Castro will have to see growing signs of dissatisfaction as an indication that Cuba is losing its revolutionary fervor, a troublesome development at this point in his life and one that may provide policy opportunities for the United States. [Redacted]

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There is considerable evidence, [Redacted] of dissatisfaction and disillusionment in Cuba, particularly among the generation born since Fidel Castro came to power:

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- The Cuban media have reported widespread worker apathy that seriously hampers productivity.
- The government is publicly concerned about the postrevolution generation and the problem of secondary students dropping out of school and turning to crime.
- Reporting from [Redacted] the regime's media, indicates that crime has risen dramatically.
- The regime's own statistics show that unemployment has nearly tripled since 1981. [Redacted]

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Grumbling within the military, evolving from the debilitating struggle in Angola and sharply accelerated by the trauma of defeat in Grenada, is likely to worsen, in our view, as Cuba's Angolan venture drags on and economic necessity pushes the regime to look for ways to reduce military expenditures. As it is, [Redacted]

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- Officers, most of whom have already served one or two tours in Angola, are weary of such onerous service and want no further duty there.
- The desertion rate is high, and the regime is concerned that deserters are being protected by their families and friends.
- A party ideological study released last year indicates that the public has lost faith in the military establishment, apparently as a result of the prolonged war in Angola. [Redacted]

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Discontent, however, is not likely to result in broad active resistance to the regime. There is no nucleus of organized opposition around which Cuba's disillusioned can gather to exert pressure on the leadership to secure policy

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changes and improve their lot. Moreover, Cubans have a healthy respect for the internal security forces, and the knowledge that anything resembling "counterrevolutionary activity" receives quick and harsh treatment tends to discourage initiative. 


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Thus, while we doubt that the present levels of discontent will result in any direct resistance to the regime, they will cause Castro problems in numerous ways. We believe the cumulative effect of collective apathy, for example, will make it difficult for Havana to attain the political, social, and economic goals it set out for the 1986-90 period. Reduction in funding for social programs, housing construction, and school repair could be particularly severe and in turn risk sparking even more disgruntlement on the island. 

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Castro is aware of the dimming of revolutionary zeal. To prepare for the difficult times ahead, Havana has already begun to take several precautionary measures:

- Greater regimentation of society is well under way.
- The propaganda apparatus is being strengthened to provide more effective indoctrination.
- The alleged threat of direct US military intervention is being used to arouse patriotism and a willingness to endure personal sacrifices.

These steps do not address the roots of discontent. Castro's costly efforts to strengthen his ideological apparatus, in fact, reveal a vulnerability that we believe is likely to grow with austerity. He clearly feels the attraction that news and entertainment broadcasts from abroad have had for the Cuban people, especially in the past few years, and has moved quickly to meet the challenge. His response, however, appears to be misguided and in our opinion is likely to prove ineffective. Indeed, we expect Cubans to turn more to foreign broadcasts as their faith in the Cuban media continues to erode. 

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Looking ahead, internal Cuban disillusionment could manifest itself in the international arena. Increased domestic dissatisfaction may well spur Castro to seek new "victories" abroad to boost morale and provide symbolic evidence that increased sacrifices can pay political dividends for Cuba. For example, even though Castro's Angolan policy is one of the

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major causes of dissatisfaction, he acknowledged at the Third Party Congress in February that he had augmented Cuba's military presence in Angola. 

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If internal circumstances push Castro into a corner, we believe he might try to provoke a limited clash with the United States to convince his people that the external threat is genuine. If he does not produce a credible external threat to blame for his failures, if shortages and mismanagement increase, and particularly if casualties abroad mount, discontent could become more disruptive, forcing the regime to use stronger repressive actions. Such a turn of events could undermine the credibility of Castro's revolution even more, both at home and abroad. 

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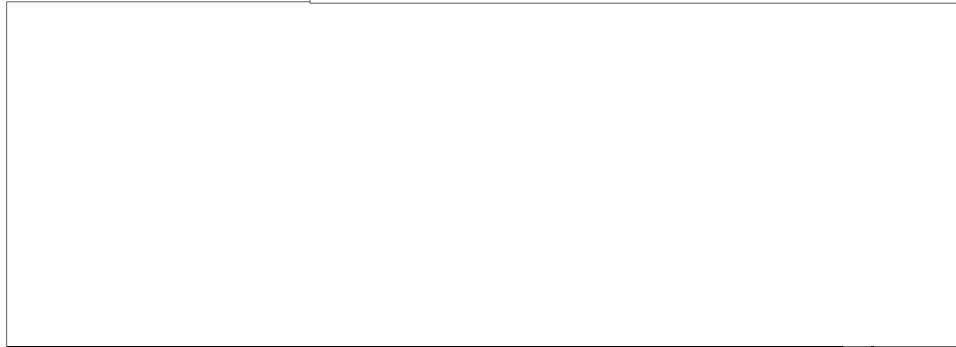
Scope Note

Cuba is entering a period of heightened economic stress that is likely to last for more than a decade.



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paper focuses on the link between economic austerity and popular discontent in Cuba, examines the evidence of dissatisfaction, assesses the regime's efforts to defuse it, and discusses Havana's likely actions as greater austerity promotes further disillusionment. This paper also assesses the implications of these trends for the United States.



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**Cuba:
A Revolution's Discontent** 

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Introduction

In the late 1970s, signs of a breakdown in social discipline began to appear in Cuba that hinted at growing popular disenchantment with the government. Corruption on a large scale also began to surface, and there was a dramatic rise in street crime—much of it attributed to young Cubans. Emigration pressure increased markedly and Cubans began taking desperate measures to get out of the country, for example, seizing diplomatic missions in Havana at gunpoint. Grumbling about military service overseas could be heard openly on Havana street corners. 

All of these phenomena had appeared at various times during the earlier years of the Castro regime, but their occurrence did not suggest a fundamental loss of faith in the revolutionary system. A handful of corrupt officials was ousted in the 1960s, for example, in what came to be known as the "dolce vita" purges, but the political impact of the affair was negligible. The emigration wave during the Varadero-Miami airlift from 1965 to 1973 consisted not of dissatisfied revolutionaries but largely of older Cubans and their families who could not adapt to the radical change from the Batista era to the age of revolution. 

The trend begun in the late 1970s appears much more broadly based, reaches high up into the leadership itself, and appears open-ended. The scope of this trend clearly has Havana worried. Numerous countermeasures have been adopted—so far with little effect. It is against this backdrop that this study examines evidence of dissatisfaction in Cuba, its causes, and its likely impact on the Castro regime. Special attention is devoted to the generational problem that has developed between the group that has ruled Cuba since 1959 and the 50 percent of the population that has been born since the revolution. 


The Roots of Dissatisfaction

We believe there is a variety of reasons for what appears to be widespread disillusionment and dissatisfaction in Cuba today. Most damaging has been Cuba's economic malaise.¹ In addition, what seems to many Cubans an interminable war in Angola has helped undermine the credibility of the Cuban military establishment. A review of  press and diplomatic material, suggests that corruption, incompetence at high levels, and a stultifying bureaucracy have sapped confidence in the leadership and fostered nationwide apathy. 


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Economic Problems

Cuba's difficult economic plight is the result of a number of factors, as reported by the US Interests Section in Havana 

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World sugar prices have remained so low in recent years that sugar, by far the country's most important export for decades, has given way to reexported Soviet oil as Cuba's prime earner of hard currency. Moreover, Soviet economic assistance has leveled off as Moscow tries to come to grips with its own internal problems.² Trade with Western countries has suffered from Havana's need to refinance its external debt. Natural disasters (Hurricane Kate in late 1985 was particularly destructive) have also dealt serious blows to the economy. 


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More damaging, in our view, are several subjective internal factors. President Fidel Castro's longstanding practice of concentrating the government's efforts on



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² The agreements signed in April that will govern Soviet-Cuban economic interchange over the 1986-90 period appear to provide little or no relief for the Cuban consumer. 

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addressing a few key problem areas, the so-called guerrilla approach, has usually resulted in an imbalance of priorities and a misallocation of resources that have a detrimental impact on other sectors of the economy. The futile drives to produce 10 million tons of sugar in 1970 and to build 100,000 homes per year by 1975 are cases in point. [redacted]

In addition, Castro has concentrated virtually all authority in his own hands, which has helped stifle individual initiative and foster administrative inflexibility, which diminishes the economic structure's ability to adjust to rapidly changing conditions. For ideological reasons, Castro has made a conscious policy decision, reiterated in public statements, not to create a "consumer society." [redacted]

[redacted] the resulting lack of consumer goods has undercut worker incentive and, judging from accounts in the regime's own media, has engendered widespread apathy. He also has a penchant for investing in costly showcase projects that fill propaganda needs or satisfy foreign policy goals but, at best, are of questionable economic merit. His refusal to accept constructive criticism [redacted]

[redacted] has intimidated his advisers; few, if any, economists in Cuba are willing to risk challenging his views once he has decided on a particular course of action. [redacted]

Pressures at Home

In our judgment, these factors have led to the development of a governmental apparatus that is viewed by the average Cuban as a system that provides no worthwhile incentive for extra effort and, according to refugee reports and the US Interests Section, cannot even provide work for those who are graduating from its high schools and universities. According to the US Interests Section, consumer goods are in very short supply except for the regime's elite. Moreover, food and clothing are wanting in quality, quantity, and variety. Many items are still rationed after 27 years of revolutionary rule. Although the ration system was designed to provide a more equitable distribution of basic items, the process of acquiring rationed goods is so time consuming that some Cubans, usually pensioners, supplement their income by standing in ration lines for a fee, according to the US Interests Section. The housing shortage is especially acute and the

The Housing Problem

According to the US Interests Section in Havana, the Castro regime stated in 1960 that the deficit of adequate housing was approximately 655,000 units. Data taken from official Cuban statistics show that from 1959 through 1982, about 330,000 new housing units were built. This is well below what would have been necessary to keep pace with population growth and with the number of houses that become uninhabitable each year. Despite housing units "given" to the state by departing emigrants, the shortage of adequate housing by 1985 was probably well over 1.2 million units. This is twice the 1959 deficit and is certain to grow with each succeeding year. [redacted]

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regime's half hearted remedial measures suggest a lack of will to undertake the dramatic changes required to address the problem realistically. [redacted]

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Other factors exacerbate the situation. Cuban radio and television, as well as other forms of entertainment, conform to rigid ideological guidelines and, as a result, have little popular appeal [redacted]

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[redacted] Nudged by the United States' Radio Marti, Havana has taken important steps to overhaul the media and make its entertainment industry turn out a more appealing product, but much remains to be done before it can compete successfully with the foreign media. Young people especially chafe at the lack of adequate opportunities for amusement; juvenile delinquency and even gang warfare have become a police problem. [redacted]

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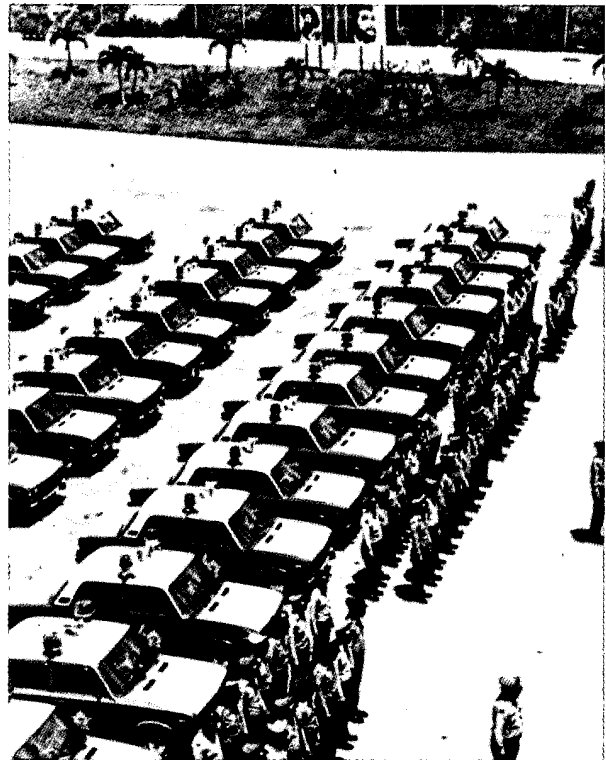
Opportunities for advancement, even through the party, are diminishing. For example, many Cubans have sought to enhance their chances for party membership or advancement in government by volunteering for duty in one of the many Cuban military or civilian contingents serving in more than a dozen Third World countries. These recruitments were encouraged by promises from the regime that the volunteers' civilian jobs would be held open until they

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The sharp rise in crime and juvenile delinquency since the late 1970s has resulted in the formation of several unique police units, according to [redacted] open sources. The one pictured above is the Special Battalion of the National Revolutionary Police. It was organized in December 1982 to handle large crowds that form on



special occasions such as festivals and sporting events. In addition, new equipment was imported and personnel were brought in from eastern Cuba to beef up police in Havana where street crime had soared. [redacted]

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returned and that soldiers would receive special consideration for enrollment in the universities at the end of their overseas tours. Although service abroad—judging from the sharp growth in the size of the party and its youth arm since 1975—did pave the way for party and Young Communist League membership for many returnees, the regime reneged on many of its other promises. Cubans coming home with high expectations found little reward for their years of hardship, according to Cubans whose disenchantment led them to defect. In our view, so many Cubans have served overseas (over 200,000 in Angola alone, according to a public statement by Fidel Castro himself) that the pledge of special privileges could not possibly be honored. [redacted]

Complicating Factors

The coincidence of certain events has compounded Havana's dilemma. For example, [redacted] the Cuban leadership was stunned at the level of popular disillusionment revealed in April 1980 when over 10,000 Cubans sought asylum in the Peruvian Embassy compound in the 72 hours following the removal of Cuban guards from the Embassy's gates. This incident quickly grew into the Mariel refugee boatlift in which over 125,000 Cubans fled before Castro halted the exodus five months later. While the Mariel exodus

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was under way, events surrounding the development of the organization Solidarity in Poland attracted considerable attention at all levels in Cuba, from the man in the street to the party and government elite, according to reporting from the US Interests Section.

[redacted]

Having experienced the shock of Mariel and fearful that the Solidarity experiment might spark a similar movement in Cuba, President Castro made a major effort to bring new faces into the leadership during the Second Party Congress, held in December 1980. The 100-member Central Committee, which had undergone little change since its formation 15 years earlier, was expanded to 144 full members and 77 alternates, and the heads of the mass organizations were all appointed to the Politburo as alternates, leading Castro to boast, presumably with Poland in mind, that there was no gap between the leadership and the people in Cuba. Less than a year after his boast, however, Castro admitted to a visiting US official that 500,000 Cubans, some 5 percent of the entire population, would emigrate if given the opportunity.

Castro's fears began to materialize in 1982 when a group of workers in the Havana area, emboldened by Solidarity's example, attempted to form their own union independent of the government's mass organization for labor, the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC). According to diplomatic and press reports, the effort was savagely quashed; its five leaders were initially sentenced to death, according to press reports, but their sentences were later reduced to 30 years in prison. The crushing of the Solidarity-inspired union leaked out to the Western media, however, and apparently prompted the regime to back off somewhat. For example, when small groups of workers within the CTC structure carried out several scattered wildcat strikes,

[redacted] they succeeded in having authorities

[redacted]

tend to their grievances apparently without retaliation. Havana presumably decided it was better to accommodate a few recalcitrants at the local level than to risk more adverse publicity.

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The Defeat in Grenada. In ordering Cubans to fight to the death against the invading US forces in Grenada in October 1983, Castro alarmed much of the Cuban population, He also offended the professional military officers who saw resistance in the one-sided conflict as suicidal, The trial, conviction, and punishment—most were sent off to Angola as common foot soldiers to redeem themselves under fire—of virtually all of the 40 to 50 Cuban military professionals who were in Grenada during the invasion probably further eroded military morale.

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By mid-1984 the leadership's serious view of its ideological and morale problems was reflected in a call by the Central Committee plenum in July for a study "on the party's ideological work." The study, which was approved at the next plenum in December but not released to the Cuban press until February 1985, showed that a massive gap had developed between the population and the military establishment. According to the study, many Cubans viewed the military as a dumping ground for deviates or an institution for punishing those guilty of antisocial or criminal activity. Desertions from the military were at an unacceptable rate and, according to the study, deserters, rather than being denounced, were being warmly received and shielded by family and friends. Much of the popular distress over military service almost certainly had been building up since Cuba's massive intervention in Angola in 1975, but the Grenada affair, in addition to raising doubts about the political leadership as well as the armed forces, seemed to serve as a catalyst that caused this negative public attitude to gel.

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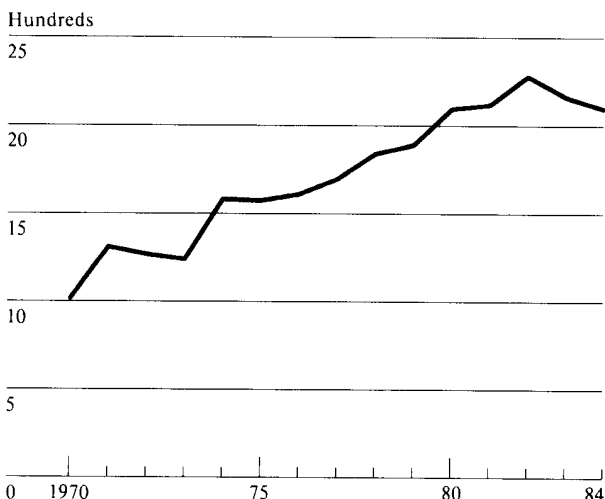
Treatment of Cuban Elite. Leadership perquisites such as expensive cars, multiple estates with swimming pools, access to Western consumer goods, and

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Suicides in Cuba, 1970-84



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unique medical facilities, also stir discontent. While some Cubans accept this as the expected attributes of high office, many resent the double standard in what is purported to be a classless society. A major complaint of Cuban youth, [redacted] is the fact that government officials and high military officers live in an affluent manner not in keeping with either Communism's ostensible egalitarianism or their own public professions of devotion to the simple life. [redacted]

Evidence of Dissatisfaction

Judging from the evidence amassed since the late 1970s, discontent in Cuban society has been increasing and, in the eyes of many Cubans, the revolution has lost much of its luster. Information on the existence of discontent in Cuba comes through a host of channels. US officials and foreign visitors have seen antiregime graffiti and talked to Cubans who acknowledge dissatisfaction and disillusionment among

family and friends. Defectors from all walks of life have reported personal observations of disgruntlement. Western diplomats have witnessed incidents of popular dissent and heard of many others. Reporting [redacted] describes incidents growing out of dissent and measures taken by the government to suppress them. [redacted]

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In addition, the Cuban media and official statistics point to a serious erosion of revolutionary zeal. For example, it was the party newspaper last year that revealed the study detailing the public's shocking loss of confidence in the armed forces. The government's own statistics show that suicides doubled between 1970 and 1980. The labor organization's newspaper published studies in 1984 and 1985 analyzing pervasive worker apathy, and the party's theoretical journal provided evidence of the regime's concern over the public's flagging patriotism and waning support for the policy of "internationalism," that is, service abroad. The serious high school dropout problem was amply covered in 1984 in the party newspaper, and the Interior Ministry's journal, *Moncada*, has acknowledged over the past several years that the black market is a major industry, street crime has risen alarmingly, and delinquency and lawbreaking by young Cubans have become so prevalent that a special police unit had to be set up to combat their antisocial activities. [redacted]

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Youth

[redacted] the most disaffected element of Cuban society is youth, despite having received the lion's share of the benefits (primarily better education and health care) that the revolution has provided. As members of the baby boom of the 1960s leave the high schools and universities, they are finding few job opportunities, the nationwide crisis in housing, and the very real likelihood of being drawn into the military for duty overseas, according to the US Interests Section. [redacted]

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* The journal, for example, described a national conference held in Havana in May 1985 that devoted the attention of all of its six panels to the subjects of patriotism and "internationalism." [redacted]

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Today's Youth in Cuba

Despite the fact that Cuba's postrevolution generation has received most of the benefits resulting from Batista's ouster, it appears to be the most disillusioned element of Cuban society. The formal indoctrination that begins in day-care centers and continues through grade school and high school seems to have failed to prepare Cuban youth adequately for coping with the daily problems of a socialist society.

[redacted]

[redacted] perhaps Cuba's most serious problem is, indeed, the apathy and antisocial behavior of adolescents, caused largely by their opposition to the restrictions and limitations imposed on them by the political and social system. [redacted]

[redacted] the political and social system in Cuba is unnatural: adolescents normally need to set goals for their lives. The lack of this autonomy in Cuba has led to deformed personalities. The most common manifestations are apathy and preoccupation with alcohol and sex. These attitudes were prevalent among 70 to 80 percent of those in the 14-to-19-year-old age group. Common symptoms were extremely aggressive behavior, acute frustration, anxiety, and a feeling that "something is

wrong with me." In many instances, individuals who were 18 or 19 years old had still not acquired a concept of future and could only view themselves and society in day-to-day terms. The Castro regime refused, [redacted] to come to grips with the true cause of these problems of adolescents, preferring to believe that the revolution has been so successful in eliminating social problems that the youth had nothing left to fight against, and that it was enough to try to redirect their natural aggressive instincts into sports and other activities. [redacted]

[redacted] the greatest dilemma for the psychologist working in the Cuban environment was how to deal with behavioral problems that were the direct result of the social system itself. A patient, for example, might complain that his problem was attributable to the number of times he had to attend meetings because of the demands of the party or mass organizations. The psychologist might agree but had no alternative other than to try to convince the patient that some other, less obvious factor was to blame. If a patient insisted on blaming the system and the government, the psychologist would have no option but to report the patient to the authorities. [redacted]

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[redacted] youths entering the job market have little chance of finding work unless they have strong personal connections in important places. [redacted]

Even university graduates, [redacted] complain that work in their fields of expertise frequently is not available and that to subsist they must accept either menial jobs or jobs where they cannot maintain their skills. Although doctors graduating from medical school have no problem finding work, they are routinely sent to rural areas for a mandatory period of at least five years, according to the US Interests Section, and can return to the city only if an opening is available. Moreover, [redacted] basic technicians

can earn more than college graduates, making many young people believe that a university education is not worth the effort. [redacted]

Young people out of school also have extreme difficulty finding housing. According to official Cuban estimates, the shortage is not likely to be alleviated until the end of the century. In the meantime, it is commonplace for two or three generations to live under one roof in extremely crowded conditions. The US Interests Section in May 1984 reported that probably one of the greatest needs in Cuba as a whole is to find housing for youths entering the work force. [redacted]

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[redacted]
[redacted] the Cuban hierarchy is well aware of the demographic explosion of the 1960s and its implications for employment in the 1980s and beyond. While the government invested heavily in education during the late 1960s and 1970s to train this new generation, cyclical world sugar prices prevented the concomitant investment in the expansion of Cuba's industrial base to create the necessary jobs. [redacted]

unrest and apparent dissatisfaction were especially prevalent among those eligible for mandatory military service or other compulsory duties. [redacted] and young men were increasingly questioning why their peers who were the sons of the government and party elite were not drafted into the service. In addition, [redacted] one of the reasons Cuba was trying to expand its international construction projects was to provide employment for large numbers of young Cubans who, without opportunities to put their newly acquired skills to use, could quickly become restless and discontented. [redacted]

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Crime as an Outlet. [redacted]

[redacted] the economy in general and its nonagriculture industrial base in particular are not growing rapidly enough to absorb the new entrants into the labor force. Rising expectations of the younger generation have resulted in their refusal to work in traditional, labor-intensive agriculture. At the same time, growing government pressure on all ministries to increase worker productivity has made managers reluctant to retire experienced workers and replace them with inexperienced younger workers. Indeed, the government itself recently argued against retirement, publicly admitting it could not provide the annuities if all those now eligible to retire suddenly did so. [redacted]

Disenchanted by the poor employment outlook, many young Cubans who have dropped out of school, according to Cuban authorities, turn to crime. The party newspaper, reporting on a study done in early 1984 by the National Assembly's Youth Commission, admitted that dropouts had become "a problem of great social and political connotations." The Interior Ministry's journal reported that 30 percent of all minors involved in crime in 1983 were dropouts. [redacted]

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The Castro regime has for several years been aware of the existence of potentially serious problems of social unrest and dissatisfaction among Cubans in the 15-to-30-year-old age group. [redacted]

Incidents of aggressive behavior by young people have come to light much more frequently in recent years. For example, when a foreign rock group held a concert at the town of Bejucal south of Havana in June 1983, youths flocked there in such numbers that the police decided to intervene to prevent the situation from becoming a "negative" political event. [redacted] The police intervention was counterproductive, however, precipitating a protest demonstration in which the youths attacked the

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[redacted] the population appeared to be increasingly divided in its attitude toward the revolution, with the breakdown based largely on age: those over 30 had accepted the permanence of the revolution while those in the 15 to 30 age group exhibited frustration and apparent dissatisfaction with the political and social system in Cuba. The

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**Percentage of 16-Year-Old Dropouts,
by Province, Location, and Sex, in 1981-82**

Province	Both Male and Female			Urban			Rural		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Pinar del Rio	31.1	28.8	33.4	22.5	21.2	23.9	38.8	35.8	42.3
Havana	32.7	30.8	34.7	28.6	27.6	29.6	44.3	39.6	49.3
Havana City	17.7	18.0	17.4	17.7	18.0	17.4			
Matanzas	26.8	25.3	28.3	22.1	21.7	22.6	41.1	36.0	46.5
Villa Clara	26.8	24.9	28.8	20.6	19.5	21.7	39.8	35.9	44.1
Cienfuegos	31.1	28.3	34.1	25.0	23.0	27.2	46.0	41.3	50.9
Sancti Spiritus	28.9	25.2	32.9	21.9	18.8	25.0	39.8	34.5	45.9
Ciego de Avila	29.6	24.8	34.8	24.8	21.2	28.6	39.0	31.8	47.0
Camaguey	25.6	22.0	29.3	20.1	18.1	22.2	39.3	31.7	47.4
Las Tunas	42.6	35.1	50.5	30.5	23.5	37.6	54.0	45.6	63.1
Holguin	38.3	32.1	44.7	26.7	22.5	30.9	49.8	41.3	59.0
Granma	31.7	26.4	37.2	22.3	17.9	26.8	41.1	34.7	47.8
Santiago de Cuba	19.3	17.9	20.7	12.7	12.3	13.1	29.7	26.4	33.2
Guantanamo	29.4	26.5	32.4	19.1	17.6	20.6	40.2	35.4	45.6
Isla de la Juventud ^a	33.2	30.6	35.8	29.2	27.7	30.8	51.6	44.9	57.7
National total	27.6	24.9	30.4	20.9	19.5	22.4	41.7	36.0	47.8

^a Isla de la Juventud is a municipality governed from Havana City.

Source: *Resumen del Trabajo Anual del MINED Ano Escolar 1983-84*, Havana, p 248.

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police, shouted slogans against the government, and destroyed the window fronts of nearby commercial establishments. [REDACTED]

In mid-1984, *Bohemia*, Cuba's national news magazine, carried an article that indicated young people in Havana were staying away from social centers where dances were held because "antisocial elements" frequented them and started trouble. In late 1984 *Moncada*, the Interior Ministry's monthly journal, described a surge in incidents of drunk and disorderly young people and criminal conduct at beaches near Havana. *Moncada* also indicated that a special police force, the Vigilance and Protection Corps, had been formed to patrol and reduce crime at beaches, hotels, and other areas frequented by tourists. [REDACTED]

The Cuban Worker

Worker apathy is one of the regime's most serious problems and, on the basis of media coverage [REDACTED] appears to be growing. Since the late 1960s, it has been a major factor contributing to low worker productivity and thus far has defied the regime's efforts to find solutions. Many Cuban emigres have pointed out that in most jobs workers are paid the same no matter how hard they work or how much they produce, and thus there is little incentive to put forth one's best effort. Moreover, the persistent shortages of consumer goods mean that workers frequently have little to purchase with their salaries, and the government has at times had to develop special mechanisms (such as making some goods available at

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exorbitant prices) to reduce the excess liquidity. Castro's continuing public refusal to move toward a consumer society seems to assure the continuation of the current productivity dilemma. [redacted]

The Cuban media provide some of the most convincing evidence of problems in the labor force. An article in the national labor organization's *Trabajadores* in March 1984, for example, identified the constant movement of workers from one factory or enterprise to another as a serious problem that stemmed directly from worker dissatisfaction. The article also criticized managers whose "sole solution was to call for higher salaries." The author attributed much of the dissatisfaction to other problems, such as a paucity of advancement opportunities, promotions based on favoritism, poor supervision on the job, generally unfair treatment and managerial indifference, in addition to poor working conditions. [redacted]

The problem of work force movement was raised again in September 1984 at a meeting to discuss young workers in the sugar industry. In addressing the closing session, a top labor official blamed "the high rate of departures and work instability among that work force" for low wages, poor housing conditions, poor transportation, and a lack of opportunities for sports, culture, and recreation, according to Cuban media reports. [redacted]

More recent evidence of apathy in the work force surfaced in *Trabajadores* in late March 1985. An article describing inspections of 53 factories and work centers in Havana City Province in mid-January cited statistics indicating that nearly 4 percent of the workers did not show up on time and an average of over one-fifth never showed up at all. In addition, 4 percent were alleged by their supervisors to be working at some location outside the work center and their attendance could not be confirmed by the inspectors. Of the 70 percent or so whose attendance could be confirmed, nearly a fourth were involved in non-job-related activities such as "reading magazines, books, and newspapers; discussing non-work-related problems; eating at unscheduled times; goofing off; or sleeping at their desks." The article condemned the "obvious deterioration in labor discipline brought on by a lack of supervision, the absence of production

quotas, and failure to apply existing wage legislation and regulations." To drive home that these conditions in Havana City Province could be generalized, the author of the article pointed out that the statistics were chosen because they were representative of the inspections carried out in over 300 work centers "throughout the country, at both the national and local levels, particularly in the administrative sector." [redacted]

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Subsequent inspections in May and September 1985 indicated that little had changed, according to *Trabajadores*, and in some categories worker performance had actually deteriorated. In 12 factories and work centers in Havana City Province, for example, more than a third of the workers were absent or not at their usual place, while in seven work sites in Havana Province the figure was almost 43 percent. In October, *Trabajadores* reported that 228 inspections had been carried out in these two provinces in the first half of 1985 and had resulted in the punishment of 98 officers and managers under a decree that provides for penalties ranging from reprimands to dismissal. [redacted]

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This situation will make it difficult for the regime as it tries to implement major shifts in economic policy that will necessitate belt-tightening measures. [redacted]

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Grumbling in the Military

Although the initial success of Cuba's interventions in Angola and Ethiopia almost certainly caused a surge in the morale of Cuban armed forces, attitudes apparently began to change as the Angolan insurgency dragged on. By the end of the 1970s, when reservists

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were being called up for a second—and in some military specialties a third—tour overseas, the glamour of war had begun to wear thin. Some young Cubans fled the country rather than return to Africa, according to defector reports, while others who had yet to serve deliberately dropped out of school just short of graduation to reduce their chances of being called up. [redacted]

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This reluctance to serve in Angola is apparently shared widely. [redacted]

officers see no end to Cuban involvement in Africa and realize that as professional officers they most likely will have to serve repeat tours there, a prospect they do not welcome, particularly in view of what they believed to be the deteriorating security situation for Cuban troops in Angola. Such qualms in the officer corps presumably were greatly exacerbated two months later when Fidel Castro, during the visit to Cuba of UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, pledged to send “another 200,000” Cubans to Angola if the situation there required it. [redacted]

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[redacted] grumbling among reservists called up for a second tour in Angola began to be heard on the streets of Havana. [redacted]

[redacted]

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The US Interests Section in September 1983 reported rapidly growing discontent among Cubans at home over losses in Angola, and that some people had even mistreated Angolan students in Cuba. Regime leaders clearly were aware of the problem; the Interests Section learned from an African diplomat in Havana that, in his conversations with officials at various levels, the Cubans had expressed concern about the growing level of discontent over Cuba’s involvement in Angola. [redacted]

In April 1985 the regime promised to carry out a broad range of actions that seemed designed to address the disquiet in military ranks: a military housing construction plan would be fulfilled; the remodeling of camps, barracks, messhalls, and facilities for the troops’ rest and recreation would be finished; entertainment for military personnel would be improved, as would the organization of various recreational activities for troops on weekends. In our judgment, these palliative measures will not halt the grumbling in the ranks nor will they bridge the gap that has developed between the military and the masses. [redacted]

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The experiences in Africa apparently have only strengthened growing reservations in the Cuban military about the regime’s Angolan commitment. [redacted]

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Looking Over the Horizon

After a period of economic austerity in 1982 and 1983, Havana apparently gambled in late 1983 that a burst of spending on imports and construction would stimulate economic growth. The leadership probably hoped that pumping up the economy would increase employment and eventually improve living standards, and that this might soothe growing popular discontent. By mid-1984, however, it was apparent that unfavorable world markets for Cuban commodities and domestic economic bottlenecks were foiling the recovery effort. At best, the experiment was producing moderate short-term economic growth, but at the cost of rapid expansion of the hard currency deficit and sharp criticism from Western and Soviet creditors. [redacted]

Economic Pressures on the Rise

Since then, Cuba's economic policy has been revamped considerably. As a result of strong Soviet pressure to get his economic house in order, Castro has unleashed an "economic war" that places great stress on energy conservation, import substitution, the reallocation of budget priorities from social welfare to the productive sector, and the fulfillment of export quotas to the USSR and other CEMA countries. This policy line was instituted in December 1984 and was strongly reinforced at the Third Party Congress this February—in both Castro's Main Report and the party program for 1986-90. [redacted]

Despite these moves, the short-term economic outlook is poor. The market for Cuba's primary hard currency earners (reexported Soviet oil, sugar, and nickel) are weak and the sugar industry is still reeling from the effects of last year's drought and Hurricane Kate. The apparent leveling off of Soviet oil deliveries and economic aid will be especially harmful as Havana depends on both to meet its basic investment and consumption needs. Moreover, the lower priority accorded to social welfare and consumer goods will only add to labor discontent that is likely to result in

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decreased productivity. The unemployment rate will probably rise as government enterprises try to reduce their labor costs to improve profits, and as hard currency shortages make it increasingly difficult to purchase Western imports needed for production.

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Government Reactions

Tangible evidence of the regime's concern over popular attitudes can be seen in the actions the government is taking to combat popular dissatisfaction. Judging from reports in the Cuban media, there has been a trend over the past year toward greater use of material incentives, such as salary bonuses, to boost productivity. Some experimenting with material incentives occurred in the early 1980s only to run afoul of the regime's powerful ideological watchdogs. Since then, however, the hardliners' political fortunes have taken a downturn with the removal of two of the most influential proponents of ideological rigidity from the Politburo. [redacted]

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Even the Armed Forces Ministry has resorted to material incentives by allowing soldiers overseas to purchase some consumer goods not normally available to the Cuban public. [redacted]

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[redacted] Moreover, according to the Cuban military journal *Verde Olivo*, in September 1985 the Armed Forces Ministry was handing out cars, motorcycles, and promotions to retiring military officers. [redacted]

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In January 1986 the official who heads Cuba's consumer polling apparatus acknowledged to an Interests Section officer that there was discontent over consumer goods being exported to meet Cuba's external commitments and added that dissatisfaction with the quality and variety of Cuban-produced items had resulted in large inventories of unsaleable consumer goods. Even Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez has admitted there is some retrogression in the revolution; in discussing Cuba's internal problems with a Western delegation in January 1986, he acknowledged that "Communism has become a more distant goal." [redacted]

Castro's decision to declare "economic war," although primarily a reaction to Soviet pressure, is itself formal recognition that internal problems can no longer be ignored and that the public's complaints about transportation, housing, and consumer goods shortages are indeed valid. Other indications of the regime's awareness of widespread popular dissatisfaction include:

- The extensive efforts it is making to improve the effectiveness of its indoctrination apparatus, especially the media, which suggests it believes the Cuban population has become more vulnerable to external sources of information and entertainment such as the United States' Radio Marti.
- The approval at the Third Party Congress of the 1986-90 party program in draft form only, which is a tacit admission that the program contains unpopular measures that must be carefully explained to the masses rather than thrust upon them as an accomplished fact. [redacted]

Cuban Vulnerabilities and Implications for the United States

No matter how widespread dissatisfaction may be in Cuba today, there is no sign that malcontents are organized. Neither is there any institutional structure through which they can legitimately exert collective pressure on the regime to seek redress of their grievances. Any effort to organize, such as the ill-fated attempt to create an independent union in 1982 showed, is immediately suppressed. [redacted]

Nevertheless, the existence of widespread dissatisfaction in Cuba—and the likelihood that increased austerity will heighten that discontent—leaves Castro vulnerable to external events that could have an impact on popular sensitivities. An increase in Cuban casualties in Angola, especially if the losses received wide and persistent international press coverage, almost certainly would exacerbate popular disillusionment over the regime's involvement in Angola. We believe increased casualties would also sharpen the military's perception that Soviet interests often come first when Cuban foreign policy is being shaped, and this could help to undermine the officer corps' faith in the regime's present leadership. [redacted]

As the impact in Cuba of the Solidarity experience in Poland showed, Castro is also vulnerable to news from abroad that provides ideas, tells how people in other countries are handling similar problems, and suggests to the Cuban people that there are solutions to their dilemmas. While some older Cubans clearly have become resigned to their plight, others, particularly the young, seem anxious to promote change even at the risk of confrontation with the regime. Shaken by the extent of ideological weakness that was exposed as a result of the Grenada intervention in 1983, Castro has been making major investments in the mass media in an effort to restore Cuba's badly eroded credibility. Unless economic conditions improve, however, we believe Cubans will increasingly turn to non-Cuban media to find out what is happening in the world. [redacted]

Another vulnerability stems from the public perception of the impact of Cuba's cold relationship with the United States. Any hints of a warming trend between Havana and Washington would invariably raise popular expectations in Cuba that trade will be restored and, with it, the possibility of an improvement in the standard of living. By preventing such a trend, Castro appears to be serving as a stumblingblock to a more comfortable life for the masses. Moreover, the public conviction that Washington stood ready to reduce tensions in some quid pro quo arrangement could, in our estimation, undercut Castro's alarmist rationale

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for preparing for a "war of all the people," remove the justification for the further regimentation of Cuban society, and leave Castro with no diversionary excuse for his own economic mismanagement.

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If increased austerity causes problems to mount, as we fully expect, Castro in time may see merit in promoting some artificial crisis with Washington, to deflect popular frustrations from himself and toward the United States. Castro proved adept at such activities in the 1960s and is not above provoking an incident to waken Cuban patriotism and give substance to his claims of an imminent US intervention. We believe he would have in mind a limited crisis, but the chance for miscalculation would probably be great. We doubt he would have any intention of sparking a serious confrontation unless he believed his domestic problems signaled a complete unraveling of the revolution. Short of a manufactured crisis with Washington, he has few options to quell dissent other than outright repression. In that event, the regime's internal security forces are capable, in our estimation, of handling any internal threat from the population that does not have significant support from the military establishment.

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