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CUBAN: EDUCATING FUTURE THIRD WORLD LEADERS [REDACTED]

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Cuba's massive program of scholarships for foreign students is a major part of the Castro regime's drive for influence in the Third World. In addition to educating some 20,000 foreign pupils in primary and secondary schools on the Isle of Youth, about 6,000 foreign students are attending universities in Cuba.* Several thousand more are being trained in military, vocational, and leadership subjects. [REDACTED]

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Third World students in Cuban classroom exhibit a salute of solidarity

*For a detailed examination of Cuba's primary and secondary school programs on the Isle of Youth, see "Cuba: Molding Revolutionary Spirit on the Isle of Youth," Latin America Review, 23 November 1979. [REDACTED]

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**The source of the above copyrighted photograph is Bohemia, 18 August 1978. [REDACTED]

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Cuba sees an early payoff in the enhanced image of the revolution and of President Castro as a major leader of the Third World, but over time it envisions an elite corps of Cuban-trained people in the developing world eventually supplanting Western-educated individuals in leadership positions. Two, perhaps three, generations of future leaders will be educated by Cubans in the next few years.

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Even though Cuba is facing economic difficulties, the Castro regime is unlikely to curtail the program. Much of the training produces political benefits for Cuba, and some courses, such as work-study programs in construction and agriculture, enable the government to take advantage of student skills.

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The Pattern and Programs

Assistance to Third World countries and liberation groups long has been a major part of Havana's foreign policy. Soon after Cuba's revolution, Castro defined an expanding international role for himself and his country. He sent medics to Algeria during its struggle against France in the late 1950s, for example, and gave broad support to Latin American insurgents in the early 1960s. In recent years, the scope and intensity of Cuban internationalism have increased markedly.

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In selecting candidates for scholarships, the Castro regime has centered on developing countries and insurgent groups that need assistance, lean leftward politically, and generally can be labelled "progressive." The countries usually are allowed to choose from a variety of technical assistance programs ranging from training in medicine, education, rural development, and political organization.

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Havana attempts to help the students overcome language, cultural, and social barriers. Before the students arrive in Cuba, they usually are provided with information on the Cuban revolution and Cuban culture. All students are required to take several months of classes on topics such as Marxist/Leninist philosophy and the Cuban perspective on history and the world.

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Some students begin training at home in the Spanish language, but more typically they undergo six months of intensive language training in Cuba. The duration of scholarships varies from a few weeks for symposia to as many as seven years for medicine and engineering. [REDACTED]

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Cuba has seven basic programs designed to represent the full spectrum of developing countries' needs:

Academic-Educational. The majority of the 6,000 students that Havana claims are studying in Cuban universities are from Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua--all close allies of Cuba. The remainder are from 22 other revolutionary and "progressive" countries and liberation groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. [REDACTED]

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Most scholarships apparently are for the study of agriculture, agronomy, zoology, chemistry or other hard sciences, and technical fields. Aiming to mold teachers with a socialist perspective who will help forge socialist societies, Cuba hands out a significant number of scholarships annually for education programs. Scholarships for other social sciences majors represent a minuscule amount of the total granted each year, mostly because the emphasis is on educating people best suited to the needs of developing countries. [REDACTED]

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Military-Security. Military training dates from the earliest days of the revolution and today the Castro regime trains both regular military personnel and guerrillas. Insurgents from a number of Latin American, African, and Middle Eastern countries reportedly are trained in small weapons and guerrilla tactics at various locations, including the Granma Training Camp--a facility that has been used for this purpose since the early 1960s. Cuba's equivalent of West Point, the General Antonio Maceo School of Combined Arms, annually graduates a number of foreign officers. Nicaraguans and Angolans are instructed in the operation of small aircraft at the Carlos Ulloa School of Civil Aviation in western Cuba. Intelligence, VIP security, and police training also is available. [REDACTED]

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Technical-Economic. Technical fields, such as construction, fishing, and sugar production, attract the largest number of foreigners. In 1979, Granma, the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, reported that hundreds of students, mostly from Angola, Algeria, Mozambique, and Jamaica, were enrolled in schools of the Ministry of Construction. Since 1976, 1,500 Jamaicans have been trained in Cuba in a variety of construction skills. [REDACTED]

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Many of those receiving construction training divide their time between work and study, and to some extent they ameliorate spot shortages of Cuban workers in that industry. Cuba also has used its expertise in the sugar and fishing industries to train foreigners in the development and management of these enterprises at home. Instruction also is offered in industrial and factory management, foreign trade, and mining. [REDACTED]

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Health. The shortage of medical personnel in most Third World countries makes Havana's offers of scholarships in the health professions very attractive. At the conclusion of the 1977-78 school year, a Cuban magazine reported that 341 foreign students were enrolled in the island's medical schools and 40 in dentistry. Up to that time, Cuban schools had granted degrees to 144 medical doctors and 17 dentists from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Havana also trains nurses, laboratory and X-ray technicians, paramedics, hospital managers, and related health professionals. [REDACTED]

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Mass Organizations-Ideology. In its ideological training, the Castro regime draws on its experiences to emphasize the need to establish organs of political control. Most foreign students attend one of five major schools for mass organizations or ideological training. The Central Organization of Cuban Workers' Lazaro Pena Labor School and the Federation of Cuban Women's Fe del Valle National Cadre School appear to offer the largest number of scholarships in this area of study. Fewer scholarships are granted by the Nico Lopez National Party School for the training of party cadre, the Union of Young Communists' Julio Antonio Mella National Cadre

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School for youth organizers, and the National Association of Small-Farm Owners' Niceto Perez National Cadre School for workers with peasant groups. All students undergo intensive ideological training in Marxist-Leninist philosophy and recruiting strategies. [REDACTED]

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Foreign Service. Students receive training in diplomacy at the Higher Institute of the Foreign Service and the Hermanos Pais School. They graduate after five to 12 month-long courses in international affairs and the culture and customs of the country to which they will be assigned. Also presumably covered are such topics as administrative and organizational procedures of embassies and foreign ministries. Heavy emphasis is placed on the absorption of correct political ideas before the students continue further studies in Cuba or the Soviet Union or are assigned to posts abroad. Students in the foreign service curriculum are from Nicaragua, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, and other African nations; the Palestine Liberation Organization also has some students enrolled in the foreign service program. [REDACTED]

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Cultural-Sports. Although few foreign students currently are enrolled in sports development and cultural exchange studies, these programs are increasing rapidly. Spurred on by its highly successful performance in the 1976 Olympics, Cuba is dramatically increasing its scholarships for sports studies. Havana sends sports instructors to many countries, and a growing number of Caribbean and Sub-Saharan African nations are sending students to Cuba for instruction, mostly in sports administration and recreation development. The cultural programs attempt to foster greater understanding between Havana and its allies and are an extension of existing Cuban-sponsored regional and international organizations such as the Casa de Las Americas or the Cuban Institute for Friendship among Peoples (ICAP). Havana uses its African and Latin heritage as a basis for cultural exchange. In an agreement with Guyana, for example, Havana is providing scholarships in fine arts, dance, and folklore. [REDACTED]

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Costs and Benefits

At present, Havana is more persuaded by the political than by the economic benefits of educating foreigners.

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Although the political rewards are difficult to quantify, they sometimes manifest themselves immediately in foreign support for Havana's foreign policy goals in international organizations. Cuba's allies, for example, have circulated propaganda in their countries denouncing the Cuban refugees in the United States and the US presence at Guantanamo Bay. The extent of this type of influence, however, is limited. The leadership in Havana also is aware that timely offers of assistance can produce a financial return at some later date. For example, Mozambique has granted Cuba fishing rights off its coast in exchange for the education of its students.

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Havana benefits from the work-study programs of technical students. Many trainees serve as replacements for Cuban technicians sent abroad. Some students help in the sugarcane fields during peak harvest periods. Jamaican students learning construction jobs have been used in Cuban housing projects.

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The monetary costs of the programs are not known. The 6,000 foreign students that the regime claims are studying in Cuban universities represent 4.5 percent of the total college enrollment of 133,000 in the 1978-79 school year. The government probably allocates a like percentage of its university budget for their education. The thousands of foreigners in Cuba receiving technical training also probably command a proportionate share of that budget. Depending on a country's ability to pay, many scholarships provide for tuition, books, room, board, and a monthly stipend. The costs for transporting students to and from Cuba, including home travel for vacations and holidays, are borne by the student's home countries.

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The Impact on Countries Receiving Aid

The education assistance programs have produced positive benefits for Cuba in a number of countries. Cuba's training of Nicaraguans in military and security techniques, mass organizations, and ideological development is contributing significantly to the consolidation of the Sandinista regime. Managua has sent a large number of students to Cuba to study curriculum development, boat building, and the operation of aircraft and tanks. The Sandinistas have set up organizations similar to

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Cuba's Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and have organized their Ministry of Interior along the lines of its Cuban counterpart. Grenada also is selectively adopting certain features of Cuba's Government. [REDACTED]

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In general, Havana has a long-range view of its investment. Cuban-educated returnees rarely achieve leadership positions at once, but they tend to act as goodwill ambassadors for Cuba, publicizing Havana's commitment to Third World development. They also return home with skills for which their countries depend largely on foreigners. Cuban-trained native doctors, agriculturalists, and teachers have replaced foreigners in Angola, Mozambique, and South Yemen. [REDACTED]

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Cuba's educational efforts sometimes are misguided and occasionally bring disappointment. Most of the 1,500 Jamaicans trained in construction returned home with no employment prospects. To remedy this, Havana later donated construction materials to their Jamaican graduates. In other cases, such as in the Congo and Guyana, longtime recipients of Cuban training are slow to reorder their own societies or they alter their political course. [REDACTED]

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Havana also has to contend with complaints about the quality of its education and indoctrination. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Disaffected students from Sierra Leone recently occupied their embassy in Havana to protest living conditions in Cuba. A few weeks ago, Dominica refused to accept Cuban scholarships for the 1980-81 school year because it feared that students were being propagandized. Havana also has had problems handling Cuban students envious of the special status accorded to foreign scholarship holders. [REDACTED]

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