Cuba's tourist industry: Parallel economies and social stratification

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CUBA'S TOURIST INDUSTRY:
PARALLEL ECONOMIES AND
SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

by

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1999

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ABSTRACT

CUBA'S TOURIST INDUSTRY:
PARALLEL ECONOMIES AND
SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

by

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International tourism has played an important role in unintended social changes in socialist countries. These social and cultural changes affect not only the economic, political and cultural genre of the government, but also of its citizens. Changes such as these are occurring in Cuba today.

This thesis asks the question, "Has the reintroduction of international tourism in Cuba diluted and compromised the egalitarian goals of the revolution"? I intend to show that the consequences of Cuba's emerging tourist industry has not only compromised the ideology of the revolution, but has in fact seen a return of a pre-revolution stratified society and parallel economies, one based on the peso and government subsidies the other on the dollar and entrepreneurial endeavors.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has unleashed both technology and information – made available through foreign contact creating conflict between ideology and practicality. Cuban lives are being reshaped but their discourse has taken on a positive note of existence, as they become part of the globalization that Castro sought through his reintroduction of tourism. Most obvious is their pride in achievements manifested through their hard work and entrepreneurial endeavors. My aim here is to question whether or not these endeavors, which have created a dual or parallel economy will, in the long run, compromise the goals of the revolution, namely an egalitarian society.

Cuba is evolving as it fights for economic stability. The future is unknown based upon the longevity of Castro. Castro's objectives have not changed since the revolution, namely "maintaining complete political control and ensuring a smooth succession of power and the long-term survival of his revolution" (Suchlicki:2000:78). However, changes do occur to host countries as they accept and adapt to guest needs, becoming more like the guests community (Smith:1989:266). As tourism increases in search of the U.S. dollar, cultures mingle as tourists experience Cuba. Cuba is adapting in order to be perceived
as meeting the needs of the influx of tourists. These tourists depart Cuba leaving behind their dollars as well as the influence and demands of their culture, dollars which directly impact the lives and status of individual Cubans citizens.

Class stratification has evolved with the availability of the U.S. dollar and the introduction of capitalism into this socialist economy. Cuba's "special period" – and the need to survive by inviting in foreign investments – was the catalyst for the emergence of post-revolution class and the economic stratification that exists in Cuba today. Professing to be a socialist country, Cuba ignores the ever-increasing capitalist society within. By comparing the formal (government) and informal (capitalistic) economic arrangements, it becomes obvious that while revolutionary ideology is professed certain manipulations of the economy are tolerated.

The resumption of tourism in Cuba has created an uneven associative relationship between those who participate in the tourism industry and those who are excluded for whatever reason. The end result is a parallel economy. This parallel economy has also allowed the leakage of tourism revenues away from the state and into the hands of entrepreneurs – without the payment of taxes and free from government regulation. This informal economy has benefited the society at the expense of the government. This informal economy has also had the effect of a gradual repositioning of state Socialism, capitalism and social stratification, resulting in not a middle class bourgeois racially segregated society, but rather economic or class segregation – a social process which evolves along with the development of capitalism, (Pascale:1997:4). Also
contributing to the class stratification of Cuba is the fact that certain neighborhoods are “segregated” for the elite, such as Castro’s cabinet. Class stratification occurs, according to Leeds, when “access to resources in a system where everyone is conceived to have some minimum resources” provides exchange and buying power (1994:154). But in order for class stratification to evolve, significant surplus must be generated within the framework of “centralized polities and economies” (Winthrop:1991:143). This “surplus” did not occur in Cuba until the ideology of Castro and the goals of the Revolution were compromised.

The transformation from a socialist state into the marketable product of a safe, friendly and open society which tourists prefer, requires the manipulation of a world image for acceptance by the international tourism market. The schism between state Socialism and capitalism are linked by the ideology of the revolution and the fervor of the revolutionist generation to maintain the achievements of the revolution. The question that remains to be answered is can this image be created and tourism be successful while maintaining the egalitarian ethos of the revolution.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theory and Perspective Literature

Tourism, as a distinct type of analysis by anthropologists, emerged late from studies of migration, folklore and cosmology. Today, there are a multitude of theoretical perspectives used to analyze tourism. This ranges from Merry's (1992) neocolonialism which studies the impact of first world countries on third world societies, to the Crick (1989) and Fernandez (1999) studies of the 4 s' of tourism. What follows below is a brief overview of some of the more representative studies of tourism. I include these to illustrate the various perspectives anthropologists have adopted toward the study of tourism.

Kearney's (1995) perspective is that the trend in anthropology is based on the awareness of globalization and the effects of tourism on sustainability, development, environmental studies and internationalization. Not a small part of this globalization is tourism and the economic pressure on countries to realize a quick profit on the investment necessary for tourism. According to Merry (1992), tourism is seen as a present-day manifestation of neocolonialism and creates increasing interest in the economic, cultural and legal aspects of countries.
Crick (1989) and Fernandez (1999) both agree that part of international tourism is often referred to as the "4 s' – sun, sex, sea and sand, and set out to explore the polemic views of tourism both as a good thing and a bad thing. Crick finds that serious study is lacking in an industry which generates dollars only second to oil, and goes on to suggest that there is much to be studied and learned from the cultural aspects of tourism – both from the perspective of the traveler and the host. The serious study of tourism will yield information regarding the political and economical as well as the cultural aspects of a nation or community. In the past, anthropology has looked at the sacred or religious pilgrimages of tourism, but the fact remains that today's tourist is also looking for pleasure, relaxation and new experiences. The task for the anthropologist is to look at the varied forms of tourism both from the edic and emic perspective to obtain a complete understanding of tourism today.

Hoben's (1982) perspective is more academic and believes that the development of tourism, along with nutrition, marketing and health concerns, are fields which require special focus. Since the end of World War Two, developing third world countries have needed a focus by anthropologists, whose discipline is development oriented. It is believed that only with this type of specialization and research can we tell the story of development, which benefits emerging nations as well as the field of anthropology.

Umiker-Sebeok (1977) believes that tourism and tourists should be studied with a semiotic approach to methodology and theory of culture. The viewpoint of the researcher and that of the culture should be included in this
approach, along with the more obvious aspects of the culture such as dance or other symbolic practices. Using this approach, the anthropologist has the influence to affect not only the expectations of would-be tourists but also the subjects of study themselves.

Burns (2000) also looks at tourism from a cultural perspective and believes that tourism is more than an industry and should be studied as social phenomena of sub-systems of cultural processes. The questions that should be asked by researchers are: What motivates both the tourist and the destination culture? Is the motivation curiosity, consumerism or is it economically or politically driven? These areas must be explored in order to get a true picture of tourism.

Chambers (2000) interest in tourism is not global, and although tourism has generally been studied in third world or marginal countries, there is much to be gained from a closer perspective of domestic tourism. The study of tourism by anthropologists may affect the behavior of others. According to Nash (1996), it is important to view people in their everyday environments in their day-to-day activities in order to fully understand a culture. There are many ways to view participants including using statistics, questionnaires, interviews and participant-observations, all the while employing objectivity as well as empathy but avoiding in-depth discussion of theory. This is one perspective for understanding and researching tourism while the applied side of anthropological research focuses on the sustainability and the future affects of tourism.
It is important that wherever the study of tourism is undertaken a historical perspective be included. In any study it is important to understand and consider the perspective of both the host country and the tourist. It is also important to understand the culture of the tourist as well as the host in order to understand the importance of leisure and what role it plays in their cultural ethos.

Related Literature

Works on tourism by authors such as Józef Böröcz state that tourism is a credible entity for study in order to view the social, as well as economical and political changes of a country. According to Böröcz international tourism is the fastest growing segment in the world economy, one that facilitates ties or external linkage between societies and economies. This linkage in turn creates unintended social, political, cultural and economic changes and consequences (1996:191). Such was the case of Stalinist Hungary which changed not only its political ideology but also its economic strategy in order to capture the quantifiable financial benefits of international tourism and foreign exchange earnings. International tourism can be an important factor in ending the isolation of Cuba and opening the door to economic and political compromises leading to the end of socialism, as it did in Hungary in the late 1950s.

The difficulty I encountered was locating a comparable model for analysis. Caribbean islands do not have a current history of socialism except for limited area of revolutionary Grenada. Socialist countries such as China and the Soviet Union have little information available on tourism development, but are a source
for globalization and market economies in socialist countries. Cuba's economic model is based on the Soviet Bloc, which remains in crisis as does Cuba itself. China has enjoyed double digit economic growth during the decade of the 90s while preserving socialism (Peréz-Lopez/Diaz: 1998:56). But China is a large market that has achieved most favorable status, while Cuba is still shunned by the U.S. Therefore, what works in China with all its power has not worked for the isolated small island of Cuba especially with its close proximity to the U.S. and a disenfranchised Cuban community (Peréz-Lopez/Diaz: 1998:96).

The goal of Cuba seems to be to restructure socialism with an emphasis on market incentives. Still the current government stops short of creating a totally capitalist society through limiting self-employment and discouraging abandonment of revolutionary ideology which continues to be displayed on billboards, radio and newspapers.

The Albanian "Stalinist" model has recognized tourism as the largest single item in world trade, but in order to protect its socialism ideology, it limited the number and movement of foreign tourists. The reverse is true of Cuba as it attempts to attract as many international tourists as possible, it is convinced that the ideology of the revolution will prevail. There is also no control of movement in Cuba. Only the U.S. government demands a day-by-day itinerary of Americans traveling in Cuba. Albania shares with Cuba a favorable climate, mountains and sandy beaches but its relatively small size, 472 km, could lead to saturation of tourism with negative effects on residents, and the environment while engendering hostility and resentment by locals against both tourists and the
State. Although larger than Albania, Cuba has in fact already witnessed some of this backlash.

Albania has also excluded foreign investment in their country while Cuba has deliberately sought involvement and investment from foreign countries. The Albanian government believes that the cost of tourism, namely the “leakage”, would prove too great an expense. The need to import goods and services required by tourism, and expenditures on imports to satisfy the consumer aspirations of the indigenous population, whose expectations also rise with the exposure to tourists, were also considered too great (Hall:1984:540-543).

Tourism generally comes at a cost to other state programs such as industry and agriculture, but in Cuba technology and industrial development are also being promoted to replace the diminishing agricultural crops of sugar and coffee on the world market. In Cuba tourism has been assigned a high priority for obtaining hard currency to participate in the global market as well as to reinvest in Cuba’s infrastructure.

The Economics of Tourism

Cuba’s economic plan was conceived following the Soviet Union as a national economic model, but it did not meet the needs and character of Cuba. Instead, a meltdown of the entire economy developed including production, distribution, exchange and consumption (Villanueva:1998:23). During1991, Cuba’s economy declined by 10.7 percent, while other Latin America countries economies expanded. Absent in Cuba’s economic system were efficiency and
quality in productivity resulting in not being able to compete in a global market with their exported products of sugar, coffee and minerals (Cabello/Herrero:1998:9-17).

Foreign investors propelled Cuba into the world economic system. Special incentives, including tax breaks and investment protection, were extended to foreign investors from Latin America who chose to invest in joint ventures in specified development areas for the tourist industry. Tourism was seen as an investment offering quick returns of capital and less risk, compared to other segments of the economy such as sugar, coffee and the export of technology. Douglas Pearce states that third world tourism depends on “enclavistic development” with external participation for building large scale properties using “economies of scale” to benefit the society (1992:27).

Today, the number of hotel rooms available for accommodating international tourists exceeds 60,000, compared to approximately 5000 rooms in 1980. According to Villanueva (1998), the projected increase is 4000 rooms per year. Also, a joint venture with Italy includes a $5 million cruise ship terminal. In 1994, the creation of the Ministry of Tourism (Ministerio de Turismo) had as its goal to “make tourism policies more coherent; raise the efficiency and competitiveness of the Cuban tourism industry to levels comparable with those in the Caribbean; and to improve the quality of tourism services and of the management of tourism facilities” (Fernandez:1999:83). Although tourists have responded slowly to the marketing of Cuba as a destination, the Ministry of Tourism predicted 2 million visitors by 2000 with a 20% growth annually.
As host countries adapt to the influx of tourism, tourist clientele tends to "replicate itself" (Smith: 1989:266). Tourism can also have an immediate impact on the forms and style of class expression. According to Maria Espino, "tourism represents the consumption of domestic goods and services - and export activity"— and creates "an improved balance of payments, generates government revenues, enhances income, creates jobs, and promotes economic growth and development" (1987:155). Tourism was discouraged during the early years of the revolution because it was seen as evil which compromised the values and morals because vices such as drugs and prostitution followed tourism.

In Grenada the socialist PRG's (People Revolutionary Government) looked to tourism to help with the economic problems of that country. However, unlike Cuba, tourism was seen by some to contribute little to the economy due to the fact that tourists brought with them "undesirable values and behavior" such as prostitution. Tourism was viewed as an undependable source of income and required an increase in imports to meet the desires of the tourists which led to small percentage of profits (Pryor: 1986:95). Like Albania, Grenada did not make the financial commitment to tourism by seeking out joint ventures and therefore lacked the infrastructure and facilities to attract a returning tourist business. As with Cuba, the U.S. government "unofficially" warned its citizens against travel to Grenada (Pryor: 1986:98).

Cuba also lacked the infrastructure for tourism as the pre-revolution hotels were abandoned or occupied by Cuban citizens. In spite of limited facilities, during the mid-1970s, approximately 8,400 tourists from capitalist countries
visited Cuba. This number increased to approximately 400,000 by the early 1990s and continues to rise as Cuba realizes the economic advantages of developing its tourism market. Approximately ten percent of gross domestic product is attributable to tourism in the Caribbean Islands and depend mainly on North American visitors (Powell:1973:41). Cuba on the other hand has been able to capture the European market, the largest source of tourists visiting Cuba, representing over 40 percent of visitors. But Cuba's share of Caribbean travel has been limited to less than 4 percent due mainly to U.S. restrictions regarding travel to Cuba (Espino:1994).

The Economics of Entrepreneurship

The main motivation for the promotion of tourism in Cuba was the economic benefit of receiving hard currency in U.S. dollars to spend in the global market. Tourism, in turn, was responsible for the onset of a new entrepreneurial economy in Cuba as individuals scrambled to meet the needs and wants of the influx of international tourists, a factor leading to economic stratification.

Anthony Leeds (1994:153) states that Latin American countries are basically “two class systems – and within the classes various kinds, means and degrees of ranking exist”. This is true of the Cuban profile. Cuba is basically a two class system, lacking a middle class: those dependent on the government for survival and those who are not, those who participate in capitalism and those who do not.
An economic effect of tourism is that people have become self-employed in support trades and businesses required by tourists such as transportation, restaurants or paladores in private homes, flea markets and prostitution. In order to be self-employed, a license has to be procured and a percentage of gross sales must be paid to the government. But the financial rewards can be greater than depending on the dole or a promise of a job from the government.

University graduates are not authorized to engage in self-employment. All doctors, dentists, teachers, professors and researchers will have a job guaranteed by the state. So will all other university graduates. In my observations these rules were not adhered to since students hold down outside employment with bands and other tourist related activities. As one student told me, he was trained as an architect, but there were no jobs, so he formed a band and now travels around Havana playing for tourists in order to support his mother and five sisters. This type of story is often repeated in Cuba.

Socialist Redistribution Economy

The Cuban government does provide an opportunity for Cubans to participate in the economy. In Cuba students can choose three professions they want to pursue. Then the government chooses which one the person will accept. In this manner, the economic structure is constructed and stratified, from the highest echelons of government on down to the populace. And while individuals make choices regarding their training and education, Castro supplies them with a
monthly ration allowance, rent allocation and annual clothing distribution based on the peso, the government's monetary standard.

Castro has also been credited with creating a new elite class - namely persons who work directly for the government – bureaucratic officials. This is a departure from the communist ethos whose goals are the welfare and benefits of the society as a group and not individual prosperity. During the years of Russia's support of Cuba, the Cubans enjoyed a life full of privileges. So much so that the first signs of capitalism crept into this socialist economy. Those in the upper echelon of the governmental society and the regime drove Russian cars and sported gold Rolex watches, a symbol of wealth, power and position in Cuba (Oppenheimer:1992:121). Jankowiak (1993:61) states that in China "social status closely corresponds to the distribution of political and economic resources in the creation of socialist stratification". This is also true in Cuba.

Castro with his desire for tourism and globalization, has been the catalyst for the economic stratification that exists in Cuba today. Class stratification is being constructed in Cuba, no matter what the propaganda states to the contrary, and it is visible in the lifestyles and attitudes of the people who enjoy a higher economic standing in the community.

Perception Differences Based on Economic Power

According to Sherry Ortner (1995:266), what creates social stratification is money and success and the degree to which people use the opportunities available to them. This is the theory behind the class stratification of Cuba today.
Castro's socialist programs were designed to implement a re-distributional economy creating an egalitarian society. But the economic policies of the 70s set goals of a more "balanced economy with less emphasis on sugar" with hopes for positive results of "overall economic growth, increased consumer satisfaction but with the possible emergence of selfishness, stratification and unemployment pockets" (Mesa-Lago: 1974:29).

The goal of a "balanced economy" has not materialized. The lack of trade opportunities for Cuba, due in part to the trade embargo enforced by the United States and a declining sugar market, is in part responsible. What did emerge was a power differential, which according to Williams (1995:225), "requires divisions into socialized substance at some level, ...and places all types in the social order". In other words, Castro's manipulation of the economy created power differentials and class differentials that were obvious in material possessions, housing, and travel opportunities. People are aware of their power and status because they hire housekeepers and are not the ones being paid to clean other people's houses. Class demarcation is demonstrated in clothes worn as well as food consumed.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Collection of Data

I collected my data during two visits to Cuba. My first visit was in December, 2000, during the holiday season and I traveled as part of a People to People delegation. My permit to travel was part of the organized tour. My second visit, which was independently organized, occurred during the summer of 2001 and necessitated a special license. I spent a total of six weeks in Cuba – first as a tourist for two weeks staying at upscale hotels built by Canadians or Spaniards in conjunction with the government of Cuba. My second visit lasted one month and I was free to travel around Cuba at will. I stayed in private homes as well as moderately priced old Cuban hotels.

The food, service and amenities offered varied greatly between establishments, but only in the homes and Cuban owned hotels did I realize a true assessment of the situation in Cuba. I spoke with approximately 150 informants – about 75% casually and the rest in some depth. The issues I addressed were based on their age or generational relevancy, their recollections of the revolution, and the memories of their parents still living in Cuba or elsewhere, particularly Little Havana in Florida. My interviews focused on food,

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race relations, economics of lifestyle and hopes for the future. I witnessed the entrepreneurial spirit and expertise of the Cuban people. I asked questions and the questions were answered openly and honestly concerning politics, ideology, religion, health issues, diet, food availability and family life. I was never refused an answer. When they were repeating their country's doctrine they would make it known to me and then give me their opinion on the particular question.

My informants covered all social classes from Cuba as well as the diverse racial and ethnic groups in the city of Havana to the relatively isolated country folks of Isla de Juventud, to those working at international resorts such as Varadero Beach, and to the most eastern tip of Cuba, Santiago de Cuba, with a history rich in African roots.

I also met a guide, Jesús, and his wife, Maria, in Havana who literally took me in. They introduced me to another American from Austin, Texas, Charles Hornung, who has set up a non-profit Med-Aid Foundation for Cuba. He organizes Cuban art auctions in order to raise money to buy medicines and medical equipment for Cuba. He is young and his energy and resourcefulness is making a positive impact on the lives of the people of Cuba.

The counterpoint to my research was concluded in the Miami area known as Little Havana. I found this part of my research necessary because you cannot understand Cuba today without understanding the Cuba of yesteryear. I spent three weeks there getting to know the community, its people and their beliefs. It was harder to talk to people here because of very passionate feelings of what occurred in Cuba more than forty years ago – when they lost their privileged
positions – that of the upper class. They still live with the loss, the hatred of
Castro and the revolutionists. They still talk about the lives they led, the beautiful
homes they left behind, now occupied by former “slaves” and revolutionists.
Many want to see Cuba destroyed and burned to the ground. Some believe that
second-generation Cuban Americans have adopted changing values and view
America as their home and have transformed themselves from “Cuban exiles into
Cuban ethnics” but experience “tugs and pulls of the exile experience”
(Stack/Warren:1990:2) as conflicts arise between the governments of the United
States and Cuba.

But there is another side to Little Havana. The people are also
passionate about their food and the topic of food becomes a wonderful medium
for conversation. Conversations on the subject of foods opened doors for other
topics of conversations such as politics. People who seem disinterested in
engaging in conversation with a stranger can suddenly become very animated
when discussions turn to food. Felix, the manager of La Carreta, a Cuban
restaurant in Little Havana maintained, a cool detachment to my conversations
until I mentioned that I was studying Cuban foods. He then became very excited
about the foods of his homeland – Cuba. He left Cuba as a child but he still
carries Cuba in his heart. This is the passion which stays with the people of Little
Havana, as they send money back to Cuba each month to help relatives and
family. It is estimated that U.S. families send approximately 800 million dollars to
family in Cuba annually (Fernandez:1999:84).
My best informants were business people in the restaurants and in the art galleries, souvenir shops, market and salons. Here the younger generation, born in Cuba but raised in the United States, had totally different views than those of the older generation. I met a reporter for the Miami Herald who recently married a Cuban man in Cuba and was most candid in sharing with me both the critical American media viewpoint as well as the viewpoint of a recently transplanted Cuban.

Treatment of Data

The most difficult aspect of my research was remaining neutral and not becoming emotionally involved with my informants. Their passion for their country – even with Castro in charge – was very contagious. It is a beautiful country with warm, friendly people who welcome Americans and are anxious to tell their story so that Americans can get to know them. This was the situation from coast to coast and in each province that I visited.

The second most difficult aspect was keeping my research focused on the culture regarding the post-revolution economics of Cuba and how tourism is impacting the society. I could have very easily gone into the medical or academic culture, or the music and dance of Cuba. The information made available to me by my informants came at such speed and variety, that it took several reminders by my committee chair to "stay focused."

The result is that this study utilized an eclectic, multidirectional approach to research including historical data, ethnographic fieldwork, and personal
interviews as well as material issued by Cuba's government which reflects its bias. The focus of my study was to observe the day-to-day activities of the people and compare it to the professed ideology of the government and the Cuban people.
CHAPTER 4

CUBA – A HISTORY OF REVOLUTIONS

It is impossible to discuss Cuba without first looking at its history; a history of revolutions, power and economic policy changes through political and military hegemony. It was these processes that facilitated the revolution of Fidel Castro, and set the stage for the emergence of the silent social stratification that exists today.

Revolutions – The History of Cuba

Cuba’s history has created a tapestry of a multiracial society. Slavery, which existed in Cuba from the 1500s to the 1800s “involved the treatment of persons as commodities” and was seen as “the property of another, politically and socially at a lower level than the mass of the people, and performing compulsory labor” (Kopytoff:1982:211). Slaves from sub-Saharan Africa were brought to Cuba to work the sugarcane fields, the main cash crop of Cuba. When slavery was abolished in 1886 most slaves took to the countryside and to the Sierra Maestra Mountains and lived in abject poverty. These were the seeds of racism that would manifest in the reshaping and defining the history of the future Cuba. A relationship developed between the European whites and the
African blacks which created a color bar in the "social, cultural, and economic" pursuits of the society with "strong mutual resistances and antagonisms of the races and cultures" (Malinowski:1961:11).

According to David Hellwig (1998:76) during the years of 1898 – 1902, Afro-Cubans had fought with great honor in the war for independence against Spain but were ignored once independence was established. Their military units were kept segregated and Afro-Cubans were nearly invisible in the formation of the new political government. Their voices of protest were met with promises of change, change that never materialized. Discrimination became the norm. Discrimination was evident in "public service, the armed forces, education, and in foreign-owned companies" and also in politics. No positive changes came about and in 1908 restless and disgruntled blacks formed the “Partido Independiente de Color (PIC), composed primarily of workers who were veterans of the War for Independence” (Hellwig:1998:77). But discrimination continued and eventually came to a head when an American-owned hotel in Havana refused service to Afro-Cubano congressmen. Racial tensions increased and Afro-Cubans continued to live in poverty in restricted areas of increased populations, making living conditions intolerable. Some blame fell on the political and racial practices of the United States. The racial system and prejudices practiced in some areas of the United States were being transplanted to the shores of Cuba.

Even when black business people opened business, the white population shunned them and limited their trade to white owned businesses exclusively (Schwartz:1998:114). Blacks were shut out of the economic base of Cuba and
only the European whites prospered. Blacks were denied access to both the
educational and medical systems since they lacked funds to participate or faced
"whites only" policies. According to Schwartz, this economic and socioracial
fragmentation existed in Cuba during the 1920s and 30s, and both Cuban whites
and American whites living and doing business in Cuba did little to improve the
tensions between class and race boundaries created by economics and political
policies.

Verena Martinez-Alier in her book *Marriage, Class and Colour in
Nineteeth-Century Cuba* (1974), portrays the history of Cuba as one founded on
inequality (*a necessary element for class stratification*) through the sociopolitical
constructs of it society and the importance of "purity of blood" (1974:6). The only
hope for the black person was to be "whiter" but in order for this to happen he
had to "renounce his blackness" (Fanon:1967:18). This "whiteness" evolved
through the miscegenation of races but was in opposition to the "purity of blood"
dictates of the society and church.

When Fernando Ortiz addressed the problem of racism in Cuba he noted
that racism did exist in Cuba but was "less virulent than elsewhere"
(Robaina:1998:126). Also, racism in Cuba was seen as "less violent and less
pervasive" than in the United States (Brock:1998:9). This was the attitude that
prevented the eradication of segregation and discrimination until forces were
united behind Castro and the revolution of 1959. Verena Martinez-Alier states
that a revolution promised to change the sociopolitical constructs of "racial purity"
and the resulting "legal and economic perpetuation of social privilege and rank"
The constructs of racial purity is no longer an issue in Cuba, but post-revolution economics have not solved the problems associated with social privilege and rank, referred to here as class stratification.

In the 1950s, United States corporations owned most of Cuba’s farm, industries and large corporations, but the corruption of the U.S. backed government of Fulgencio Batista created ill will with the working class of Cubans due to the brutality, and military strong-arming against the people of Cuba. Revolution was again in the air, as a young Fidel Castro and his brother Raul and a revolutionist from Argentina named Ernesto “Che” Guevara, gathered a new rebel group of exile Cubans in Mexico and led an attack against Batista’s military force. Castro was defeated but the spirit of Castro and Che Guevara quickly gathered strength and new rebel members. Castro's army of 800 volunteer rebels fought against Batista's army of 30,000 and was successful in defeating them (Cramer:2000:13). These revolutionists were the lowest and poorest class of Cuba which would soon expect the promises of the new government, especially of equality. Moreno (1971:485) states that revolution “conducive to and supportive of a socialist structure is one that emphasizes the worth, rights, and functions of the collectivity above (not in opposition to) those of the individual”. This was the goal of the Revolution – an egalitarian society for all void of the stigma of stratification.
Castro's Revolution – The People's Revolution

"Imperialism relied on cannons and tanks, we began with a revolutionary people."

Fidel Castro (Castro/Fernandez:2001:155)

It was on New Year's day, January 1, 1959, that Batista fled Cuba (Ripley:1998:41). The people who supported the revolution, namely students, artists, writers and the middle class, took to the streets destroying anything symbolic of U.S. capitalism and Batista's rule. Castro became premier and head of the Cuban government in February, 1959. He immediately nationalized all Cuban businesses, farms and industries. He established free health care and free education for all Cubans and adopted a pro-Soviet foreign policy. Racial isolation ended when people were encouraged to have large families to support the revolutionary way of life. According to Jesús, inter-racial marriages proliferated, the population surged and created an independent ethnic component – the generation of the revolution. This supported a trend towards a national ethnic consolidation, the naturalizing of a mono-ethnic multi-racial nation, and every Cuban claims to have some African blood in them no matter what the color of their skin - this according to every informant I spoke with no matter which area of Cuba they were from. Instead of “the whitening” of Cuba and its purity of blood Cuba is now darker and the “pure blood” white Cuban is becoming extinct.

When Castro's revolutionary government took hold, the first item of business was to address the problems of discrimination. This in part is due to the fact that most of the rebels were the poor blacks who came down from the
hills to support his revolution. Castro stated "we can't leave the promotion of women, blacks, and mestizos to chance. It has to be the work of the party: we have to straighten out what history has twisted" (Baker: 1997:91). Laws were enforced to eliminate racial inequities. Social structures that encouraged racism were abolished, and education and health care programs were made available to all free of charge. Castro concentrated on the rights of all citizens on an individual basis and not affirmative action for a specific ethnic group which would have created reverse discrimination.

In spite of the increased availability of education available to all Cubans, regardless of race, some Cubans, namely the older pre-revolutionary generation, continue to harbor racial prejudices especially, according to Jesús, regarding marriage between races, but the issue has not become a vocal point in Cuba (Fuertes 1998:282). Since the early 70s, Cuba dropped from its census any reference to racial or ethnic mix, but racial discrimination, silently ignored by both citizens and government, has continued in spite of the ideology of the revolution (Fernandez: 1999:86).

Since the economic withdrawal of the Soviet Union, capitalism and entrepreneurship has flourished in Cuba. This fact plays against the social reforms of the revolution and as a result there is "increased racism around tourism and foreign-owned industry and a promotion of individualism" (Fuertes: 1998:282). It is precisely this individualism and the onslaught of tourism which has created both economic and racial discord in Cuba today that manifests itself in a stratified society of class and racial discrimination. Capitalism requires
inequalities of both class and race for its existence while class stratification evolves through the process of measurable accumulation (Donham:1999:204) (Leeds:1994:166).

Émigrés – The Aftermath of the Revolution

Relations between Cuba and the United States continued to disintegrate and a mass exodus of Cubans fleeing to the United States claiming to be political refugees flooded the U.S. immigration services (Arboleya:1995:11). History was to repeat itself as the émigrés flooded South Florida to an area known as “Little Havana”. Little Havana had been named and established in 1890 due to the political climate of Cuba following the ten-year war (1868-1878). More than 7,000 refugees settled in the Miami area as well as Key West and Tampa (Leonard 1999:67).

Most refugees escaping Cuba in 1959 were backers of Batista. They fled to the safety of the United States and other countries to escape retribution by the Castro government. Next came the business owners who lost their business when Castro nationalized the country, followed by people of the “privileged” sectors of society including professionals, academics, and skilled technicians, each seeking political asylum in the United States. When the political dust of emigration settled, Cuba had lost most of its European white, educated, prosperous segment of the society to Little Havana (Leonard:1999:71) and elsewhere creating in its wake a racial imbalance for those remaining in Cuba.
Many believe that the number of Cubans emigrating would have been far less without the help of the United States and the assistance programs made available to them. It is also suggested that many of the refugees came in search of a better life and the possibilities of improving their socioeconomic standards, not for political reasons. But another phenomenon has emerged: Those who left Cuba, namely the elite and upper class, have been joined by others not of the same socioeconomic class, and what has evolved and continues to evolve, is a stratification in the U.S. Cuban communities into the "lower middle and lower socio-economic" groups which mirrors the evolving classes in Cuba (Jorge and Moncarz:1993:9).

According to Leonard (1999:71), Castro’s response to those who had left Cuba was that they were not allowed back into Cuba and all their possessions and lands were confiscated by Castro’s regime without compensation. This action on Castro’s part is what has most alienated those who emigrated. The followers of Castro’s revolution moved down from the hills and country and occupied the homes and business left vacant by the émigrés. The only means of communication between families in Cuba and the United States was via telephone or mail, but a trade embargo initiated by the United States against Cuba limited the flow of mail. This has changed somewhat in recent years now that restricted travel for family visits are allowed by both governments.
The Solidification of Ethnic Differences: U.S. Military Intervention

“If we had not been well armed, the imperialists would have hurled themselves on our country long ago. But they know we prefer to die a thousand times over rather than lose this homeland we have today. That is why they are forced to think.”

Fidel Castro (Castro/Fernandez:2001:160)

This sums up the thoughts and beliefs of my guide, Jesús, who told me that finally Cuba has its own identity. Cubans have their own homeland – not a part of Spain – not part of the United States – and not a colony of any other country. Simon During in his studies of post-modernism and post-colonialism states that, “The post-colonial desire is the desire of de-colonized communities for an identity...connected to nationalism, for those communities are most often...nations” (1995:125). This desire for identity has been one of the strongest motivators for holding to the revolution ethos. Friedman concurs when he states that people become enraged when “their identity of their sense of home is stripped away” (1999:32).
CHAPTER 5

THE SOVIET COLLAPSE:
POVERTY AND RADICAL EGALITARIANISM

Cuba's Special Period

"This is the most difficult period in Cuba's history. It is not just the most difficult period of the revolution, but the most difficult in Cuba's history."

Fidel Castro
December 29, 1991
Speech in Havana

Since the collapse of the Soviet trade, the Cuban economy has suffered, but has survived. It has survived mainly due to the talents and charisma of Fidel Castro and his popularity with the Cuban people, his political astuteness and his ability to manipulate U.S. aggression to his advantage. The sanctions against Cuba have had a unifying effect among Cubans from the very poor, the elders, all races, down to and including the younger generation who have been most vocal against Castro's leadership. Castro has manipulated the economy of Cuba by offering bicycles to the people when oil imports were cut and gasoline was in short supply. He gave the farmers oxen when both the oil shortage and spare parts shortage made it impossible to operate farm equipment. You can still see the oxen working the farms on the countryside, with the unpredicted advent of an
organic farming industry that is rapidly expanding with support from U.S.
universities. The cars that are still on the roads tend to be the American 50s
automobiles, held together by ingenuity and faith. Cubans are proud of their
mechanical talents in keeping their treasured cars running – they refer to it as the
“magic” of the Cubans. Here also exist economic and class distinctions. Those
claiming ownership to these cars of history are those who can afford to have
them fixed. Most of the old American cars are owned by independent tour guides
who are the new entrepreneurs of Cuba, cashing in on the tourism market and
breaking away from the egalitarian economy brought on by this “special period”.
There are also some Ladas the Russian car so revered by those in the close
Castro circle when Russia was supportive of Cuba – not owned or driven by
those who depend on Castro’s rationing system for survival.

With the Soviet collapse, Cuba was forced to look to new markets and for
new trade partners to acquire necessary provisions. Emphasis was put on
looking for foreign investments, “to insert Cuba into international markets without
making any dramatic changes in the internal socioeconomic structure”
(Hausmann:1999:49).

The government instituted needed austerity measures in order to offset
the shortages brought about by the withdrawal of Soviet support. According to
Hausmann (1999:49) these included:

- Reducing fuel deliveries to both the state and private sectors by up
to eighty percent

- Substituting cars and buses with bicycles
Substituting tractors with oxen and mules

Shutting down the nickel-processing plant and oil refinery to save energy (there was not enough crude oil to process anyway)

Reinstating rationing for food and clothing

Returning to labor-intensive programs in agriculture and displacing workers from the cities to the countryside. Thousands of people were ordered to leave their workplaces in the cities to join the brigades of movilizados and move to the countryside to perform labor-intensive agricultural jobs.

The people of Cuba were forced to radically change their lifestyle, as Cuba became a subsistence economy. Food luxuries such as butter disappeared from the store shelves in order to use the cream to continue making the Cuban’s favorite snack, Coppelia ice cream (Oppenheimer:1992:138). Beer was the next thing to disappear from the shelves of the stores as Germany and Czechoslovakia terminated their barter deal of malt for sugar. There were also recipes for homemade deodorant printed in the newspaper, as personal hygiene items disappeared from the shelves of stores. The Cuban people were being asked to make due with less and less – as the government manipulated the population into a “one class mentality” – creating a radical egalitarian society.

These are the times that Castro calls “special times”. These are the times that the people of Cuba call very “difficult times”. Rationing and long lines became a way of life as people tried to obtain the bare necessities. The Cuban diet has always been one based on fresh seafood, red beans, rice, pork and
chicken. The mainstays of their diet have not changed that much although there are none of the goodies such as imported sweets, caviar and beefsteaks, which were available during the Russian years. The Cuban diet is based on rations allocated to last one month but in reality, according to Jesús and his cousin Victor, lasts a family two weeks at best. Chickens have become in short supply as well as cooking oil, detergent and soap. Writing paper, pens and books are scarce commodities along with artist's supplies of canvas and paint. The clothing allotment for the people of Cuba was cut in half. Instead of one pair of slacks and one pair of shoes per year – courtesy of Fidel Castro – the people would only be entitled to one pair of slacks and one pair of shoes every two years (Oppenheimer:1992:142). But rum is free! Cubans can have all the rum they want with their ration cards. There is also no legal drinking age, yet alcoholism is not a problem. The women drink very little and everyone else seems to handle their alcohol in moderation. During my six weeks stay I never met one inebriated person of any age.

The Economics of Cuba's "Special Period" - *Resolver, Inventar, Escapar*

The late 1980s brought continued shortages to this egalitarian society; Cubans had to learn to be resourceful in order to feed their families. Wherein the "special period" resulted in the leveling of class and racial differences, the resourcefulness of the people in an effort to survive created the beginnings of the current economic stratification. The black market flourished with contraband including food, soap, soft drinks, candy and toilet paper. But in order to buy in the black market you needed U.S. dollars – the only currency of value. Dollars
were obtained from tourists and from family members living abroad creating better economic situations for those whose family could send U.S. dollars regularly, structuring economic classes.

The other system to obtain what is needed to survive is the **bolsa**. This means of procurement is to steal directly from the state, from the workplace, stores, and even directly from state owned trucks. If caught the penalty is imprisonment. Cubans risk imprisonment from operating a black market or involvement in the bolsa – but this is the resolve of the people to survive this “special time” – the time of resolver – another word for procuring items in an entrepreneurial manner (Oppenheimer: 1992:142), further separating the classes by the have and have-nots.

**Inventar** became the word for ingenuity (Oppenheimer: 1992:142). When the government would not authorize a Cuban to do something or if he couldn’t find something he needed, the resourceful mind of the Cuban would find a way to do it. This included using condoms instead of balloons for a child’s birthday party since balloons have not been found in Cuba for years, or diverting plumbing from one house to another in order for two people to have water. The prime example of **inventar** has been the ingenious methods used to keep the mechanical marvels – the American cars of the 50s – still running.

The third operative word of the “special times” is **escapar** – to escape (Oppenheimer: 1992:142). This refers both to what had been procured at the black market or obtained via the **bolsa**. It was also used to speak quietly of a party given for someone who was anticipating a run, **escapar**, from Cuba to the
United States by whatever means appropriate, rubber tube, homemade raft, or
boat. To all these things, resolver, inventar and escapar, the government turned
a blind eye.

I was fortunate enough to be in Cuba for the anniversary celebration of the
revolution in 2000. In the city of Cienfuegos, thousands gathered in the streets
while salsa music blared from a bandstand and a podium was set up to receive
Castro. People young and old gathered in the streets and danced to the lively
music. Children ate ice cream and were oblivious to the real meaning of the day.
Castro did not appear while I was there, but later that night was seen on
television from Cienfuegos touting the virtues of the revolution and thanking the
people for their support and their endurance and cooperation during this very
“special period” in Cuba.

According to Moreno (1971:493), “the main task of the Revolution faced in
1959 was to bring Cuba from underdevelopment and traditionalism to
development and modernity...to eliminate hierarchical elitism and individualism
and to implement egalitarianism and a collectivistic orientation”. This has not
evolved. The revolutionary government has survived but the goal of
egalitarianism has not. The people of Cuba have not been willing to live on
rations alone in order to maintain this ideology. Castro’s indulgence of ignoring
the economic endeavors of his citizens erased the temporary and limited
egalitarian of class. Except for power elites (government officials) most Cubans
were structured similarly in material wealth or lack of same. However, in spite of
radical egalitarian policies, economic differences burgeoned, as the more
ambitious citizens became enterprising citizens and a new way of survival was found. This marked the return of pre-revolution class stratification in the post-revolution era.
CHAPTER 6

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW ECONOMIC FORCES

GLOBILIZATION AND TOURISIM

"Today, life, reality...forces us to do what we would have never done otherwise...we must make concessions."

Fidel Castro - July 26, 1993
Speech at the National Assembly
Havana Cuba

Globalization – In Pursuit of the U.S. Dollar

In 1991 when Castro implemented needed reforms during the “special period”, the U.S. responded by tightening economic sanctions against Cuba. After vowing to “be a Marxist-Leninist” for his lifetime, Castro “put on a business suit for a conference on globalization in Havana” in 1999 where he was joined by leading economists on globalization and free market economy (Friedman:1999:11). Some believe that the end of the Soviet Union was also the end of Marxism and socialism – the “longest and most painful route from capitalism to capitalism” (Verdery:1996:3). But the dictates and dynamics of Marxism namely, “continuing commodification, technological innovation, ensuing competition among capitalists, the increasingly rapid movement of capital across the globe, with continuing crises, booms and busts” (Donham:1999:xi), mirror those of globalization. So does Karl Marx’s mode of production theory viewed by
Wolf (1982:400-04) as “historically constituted combination of resources, technology, and social and economic relationships, creating use or exchange value”.

Tourism – The Foe Revisited

In the pursuit of economic stability, Cuba turned to Spanish and Canadian investors to build a future economy for Cuba – one based on tourism. Tourism was to be the catalyst to join the global market. Lanfant and Graburn state that countries are judged by their competition and success in the international tourism venue. Tourism is an “economic fact” and a “market phenomenon” but can also create conflict between economic development and cultural mores (1992:94-101). This was the history of tourism in Cuba. Tourism - the monster responsible in part for the Revolution in 1959 - was welcomed back with opened arms. Tourism - which created the environment for crime, gambling, prostitution and wanton capitalism to flourish in the 40s and 50s - was to be the salvation for Cuba. Castro was turning to joint ventures to build luxury hotels – world-class hotels – in order to draw wealthy tourists from all over the world (Ripley:1998:17). The hotels were built and continue to be built, hotels that compete with the finest in the world with tourists arriving daily from Canada, Germany, England, Italy, Latin America and France. The French arrived in the greatest numbers during the year 2000. At a meeting I attended in January with the Director of Tourism we were informed that more than 400,000 visitors had arrived in Cuba by the end of 1999. Back in 1987, Castro projected that tourism revenues would generate
$1 billion by year-end 2000 (Espino:1994:158). This revenue goal was reiterated to me in early 2000.

Very little information on tourists from other socialist countries existed forcing Cubans to learn the tourism industry from exposure at home rather than experience (Böröcz:1996:17). Cubans apprenticed under the Spanish and Canadians learning the skills of tourism (Ripley:1998:32). The necessary skills came easily to the Cubans who are well educated and basically friendly with a good work ethic. But, according to an informant, Tomás, who worked at the front desk of a Canadian hotel, they had to overcome their teachings of equality and learn how to be of service – a position he found to be subservient. Most young Cubans share the vision of tourism as the means to a better life. Tips, paid in U.S. dollars, get pooled and at the end of a shift all workers share in the tips. In some cases, such as guides, tour operators or tour bus operators, the individuals keep the tip money to themselves. This generates dollars to be spent in the Cuban economy as well as the black market for items they need. It also offers the opportunity to acquire a larger apartment for their family a visible sign of a higher economic class.

The tourist dollar has also created a parallel economy along with the government peso. It is illegal in Cuba for citizens to participate in joint ventures with foreigners or to receive payment for services directly from foreigners. Therefore, Castro collects payment for services rendered by skilled laborers in U.S. dollars, and pays workers in pesos, worth a fraction of the value with exchange rates (Suchlicki:2000:63). This policy of government-controlled wages
contributes to destabilization of the economic stratum. Zimbalist (2000:26) states that in order for Cuba to be successful in the world economy, “incentives, productivity and potential growth” are dependent on “competitive forces that are allowed to influence resource allocation and motivate producers”.

It is argued that while community participation is desirable in developing countries, the fact is that a small number of “elite” have the power and are responsible for tourism development. In Cuba it is the government who is responsible for the advent of tourism, and the public has accepted the industry without say and have adapted their lives to share in economic gains (Tosun:2000:621). The poorest of Cuban society are shut out of economic advantage since they lack the power and resources to compete for business opportunities or engage in trade. This has created a backlash not only against tourism but also against the tourists themselves. What is needed is a sociopolitical and economic ideology with a bi-directional relationship between state and populace that has as its goal the development of tourism that benefits all. Without such a plan economic stratification will only become greater.

The Emergence of Entrepreneurs

Monaghan and Just (2000:114) state that “money erases the local particularities of production and exchange” transforming those dependent upon society to dynamic capitalists, thus a catalyst to economic and social stratification. The foreign tourist and the dollars they bring to the Cuban economy contribute to the emergence of a new class – the entrepreneurs. The
entrepreneurs become the top of the social structure but “it will also be attempted in other layers of the social strata” (Echtner: 1995:132). Most developing countries ignore the need for the development of the entrepreneur, but this is a natural pursuit for Cubans since they already possess the skills necessary for self-employment due to their high level of education afforded them through the revolution ideology. Cuba unlike other developing countries has a population that is capable and desirous of self-employment. Locally owned businesses make a profit and keep the money in the local economy thereby reducing “leakage” of profits to foreign countries in order to obtain goods and services (Echtner: 1995:122).

The introduction of tourism to the economy has enabled entrepreneurs such as guides, interpreters, prostitutes and merchants, to obtain U.S. dollars free from control of the Castro government. The black market still exists, but so does private enterprise. Cigars can be bought privately in homes along with lace goods, handbags made from straw, folk art and paintings. Old Havana has a flea market, and once a license is obtained from the government, you can be in business for yourself – all in the quest for “material betterment and for individual and communal identity” (Friedman: 1999:34). According to Herskovits (1965:461), “the consumption of goods which, in all societies, constitutes the core of prestige economics” can be credited as the cornerstones of economic class and stratification.

In 1980 the door opened for the beginnings of capitalism when Castro allowed, through the establishment of the mercados libres campesinos (MLC’s),
the sale of surplus produce directly to the consumer "free" in regard to prices and quantities sold" (Rosenberg:1992:51). Then in 1993 Castro set forth a plan for people to become self-employed ending his manipulations, to some extent, of the economy in order to create an egalitarian society. This action put Castro out of step with the ethos of the socialist government of China, which according to Jankowiak (1993:76), "delegitimized profit-seeking occupations" in pursuit of an egalitarian society.

First he qualified who could be self-employed. This included according to Hausmann (1999:95):

- Workers assigned to work centers, including graduates from middle level technical schools. Leaders are excluded.
- Persons who have been retired for whatever reason, as well as those who have reduced working ability
- Housewives

Also according to Hausmann, (1999:96) conditions existed for self-employment:

- The citizen must be registered as being self-employed.
- The authorized person must carry out the activity without employing salaried workers.
- Direct sale to the population of products or services provided by these workers is allowed. An attempt should be made to prevent at all costs the emergence of intermediaries or parasites that make profits and enrich themselves by the efforts of others.
• Prices and conditions will be agreed upon by the seller and the purchaser. In case of abuse or of clearly excessive profits, prices may be regulated by the People's Council.

• The state must not withdraw from any activity because of the emergence of self-employment. This activity must be seen as a complement to state efforts.

• No progressive tax will be levied since that process is considered to be too complex for this first phase of self-employment; the application of that tax in the future is not ruled out. (This was changed in 1996)

• The amount of the monthly fee to be paid will be determined by the municipal administration council, based on a minimum quota.

The number of registered self-employed increased steadily from 1994 through 1996. According to Hausmann (1999:98) in 1994 there were 248,552 applicants of which 169,098 were both approved and registered. This number climbed to 390,759 applicants in 1995 with 208,786 being both approved and registered. In 1996 the number of applicants for self-employment licenses jumped to 439,368 with only 206,824 applicants being approved and registered, less than fifty percent down from sixty-eight percent for the year 1994. By 1998 total applications dropped to 268,295 of which 159,506 were approved and registered, a fifty-nine percent approval rate. (Hausmann:1999:98)
A tax was imposed on all issued licenses according to the classification of the business activity. Between the years 1993 to 1996 increases in this tax made it virtual impossible for some business to continue. Examples of this (Hausmann:1999:98) include those who manufactured or sold shoes and experienced a tax increase from 45 pesos in 1993 to 200 pesos in 1996. Those who catered to the tourist trade by operating a food or beverage stand experienced a tax of 400 pesos in 1996. Artisans were charged 200 pesos in 1996, up from 45 pesos in 1993. Self-employed electricians, however, did not realize any increase in licensing taxes between the years 1993 and 1996.

In spite of all the difficulties in starting your own business in Cuba, more and more people are turning to this in order to bring in more money for their families. These difficulties include, according to Hausmann (1999:106):

- Lack of access to credit
- Inability to hire workers outside the family
- Absence of markets for supplies
- Prohibited use of intermediaries
- Very high income taxes

Those I spoke to have realized earnings in excess of one hundred fold over their state jobs as entrepreneurs. Those who are paid in dollars realize even greater profits due to the conversion factor of the dollar. A look at the monthly budget, which compares a fixed government salary to that of a self-employed individual, demonstrates the motivation towards self-employment and the results of a dual or parallel economy.
One of the most respected occupations in Cuba is that of a university professor. Since this is a government job, professors are paid a flat salary and are also assigned housing which they pay for. In 1997, according to Hausmann (1999:115), the monthly income for professors was 1000 pesos, and they had to pay 30 pesos per month for their housing. Compare that with a self-employed person making 8,602 pesos per month and whose non-assigned housing costs were just 11 pesos per month and the advantages of being self-employed become obvious.

Cubans purchase ration cards and the cost is the same for those who are self-employed or those who are employed by the government adding further to the imbalance of this dual economy. It is apparent that the economy based on self-employment versus government wages sets up to create a stratified economy.

As tourism creates a larger market for goods and services more Cubans are becoming self-employed, opening shops ranging from clothing to hand made goods and crafts and paying a percentage of sales to the government in order to maintain the license. Tourists flock to the flea markets, home restaurants (paladores), and the small cities such as Trinidad, a restored colonial city, in search of goods to take home and lend support to the self-employed, the entrepreneurs of Cuba. Self-employment is seen as a necessary element for the transition to “democracy and capitalism” steps for creating a “sustainable and growing” economy (Cruz/Villamil:1998:695). A market economy is being created, albeit a very limited one, creating a capitalist society within a socialist nation.
This is still a step in the right direction, but it has initiated and continues to expand class and economic stratification in Cuba. The goal of the egalitarian society has been silently ignored by the current generation of Cubans as they reap the benefits of their ingenuity in their new-found capitalism and in their struggle for daily existence.

Conflict exists between ideology and self-employment leading to profit. Castro has recently recalled some licenses of independent workers – namely those making too big a profit from the tourist trade – stating that overt capitalism will not be tolerated. While profit may be necessary for survival, it is viewed as “socially offensive”. The ideology of the revolution and the realities of life and survival are in conflict (Cruz/Villamil:1998:697).

Tourism and Sex

Tourism is a catalyst for change and part of this change is the availability of prostitution desired and demanded, albeit covertly, by tourists. A distinct class of entrepreneurs – the prostitute – who cater primarily to tourists that flock to Cuba in search of sexual favors has emerged. This is not new. Green stated, (1983:74), that pre-Revolution statistics show that “about 100,000 young women were prostitutes” but the practice had been virtually eliminated by 1983. Pre-revolution prostitutes were mainly from the countryside, uneducated and from the low economic class. After the revolution, these women along with domestic servants had access to education and housing (Fernandez:1999:82).
Today, although prostitution is officially illegal, it is a preferred source of income for many of the island’s young women whose appetite for trendy clothing, makeup and other sundry items of modernity make this an appealing economic activity. This was the part of tourism that created the problems resulting in Castro’s Revolution, this is a continuing problem associated with the new tourism of Cuba. This is also a new form of open entrepreneurship that offers economic rewards for young people unable to secure employment elsewhere.

Prostitution is still seen as an “affront to society” by members of the women’s movement in Cuba. While the U.S. trade embargo and the collapse of the Soviet Union is “credited” for the return of prostitution, prostitution is in keeping with the history of the Caribbean and its relationship between tourism and sex workers (Kempadoo:1999:3). Yet prostitution is blatant in the nightspots in Havana as well as the cafes and sidewalk restaurants. The women, jineteras, meaning hustler, are young, beautifully dressed in trendy Western fashions. The police arrive and the prostitutes are made aware of the policemen’s intentions by the vehicles they arrive in. If they arrive on foot or by horse or patrol car, they are just intimidating both client and solicitor alike. If they arrive by van, the streets empty immediately of the prostitutes because this indicates a raid with arrests.

In Santiago de Cuba the marketing of sex is more obvious. Both available men and women hang out across from the Casa Grande Hotel in the Esepedes Square. There are male prostitutes, jineteros, by day for the female clients, and jineteras, by night for the male clients. All one has to do is sit on the large
veranda of the hotel, sip a cold drink and watch the negotiations take place. The busiest time for negotiating is between the hours of 5 and 7 p.m. and then again between 10 p.m. and midnight. Negotiations are made, partners or teams are selected and off they go, usually to return to the square within an hour or so. Some of the clients staying at the hotel bring their young ladies, or gentlemen friends, up on the veranda for a late night drink or a casual meal. All is very open and very tolerated.

Santiago has a very strong Black French culture as opposed to Havana's more Western appeal. Its streets are narrow whereas Havana's streets are wide. The buildings of Santiago for the most part are in better repair with very little restoration needed. The exception to this is the very old Port area of the city. The music of Havana is salsa whereas the music of Santiago is African. The second language most frequently heard after Spanish was French whereas in Havana it is English. But the streets of Santiago de Cuba offer harassment for women traveling alone which is not the case in Havana. Every few steps there is a gentleman wanting to show you around or bring you to Casa de Musica. Their "fee" is minimal but you are told they accept tips if you are happy with their "service". My informant told me that the tips he received were always "most generous".

I asked one young man, why he chose to spend his time soliciting when he seemed quite capable of earning a living. He answered that he was educated in engineering but that there were no jobs so he solicited the tourists by day and by night he played music in a band at one of the local hotels. This was the only
way he could earn enough money to support himself and his mother and help out the rest of the family. The young man was 22 years old and spoke fluent English, French and Spanish.

In both Havana and Santiago de Cuba the jineteras are very young, some as young as 16 but not over eighteen (Codrescu:1999:55) and the fair skinned young mulatto women are favored. Argument continues over which “race” is more in demand as prostitutes, but the myth exists of the Afrocubano women as being more desirable for her exotic looks and erotic appeal. Therefore, a mulatto identity is assumed even by “whiter” jineteras (Fernandez:1999:86).

Prostitutes have been seen as marginal people or liminality of people on the margins of society (Ryan/Hall:2001:25). But this is not the case of the new sex worker with a returning clientele which she manages and schedules, therefore controlling power in the relationship. She is not considered on the “margin of society” but viewed as an entrepreneur without the social stigma of prostitution. Vacation time is synonymous with time for relaxation and sexual pleasure and the sex worker is not concerned or connected with intimacy, therefore, power comes with the detachment and control by the prostitute, tourists are accepted for whom they are and for what they want, and their ability to pay in U.S. dollars.

Clients tend to be middle aged, white men who for the most part treat the girls with respect and are reportedly very generous with both money and gifts. Some men return several times a year to the same “girlfriend” and even send money when they are not in Cuba to help out the family. These relationships are..
usually constructed through introduction and equal access available to “class” citizens of Cuba and as such this type of relationship is not viewed as sex work but rather a relationship for the future. These “romances” are based on race, gender and class (Fernandez:1999:88). In some cases these relationships lead to marriage and life outside of Cuba. It also means an increased standard of living for the entire family in Cuba as money is sent to help support the Cuban family.

Prostitution is still illegal in Cuba, but Castro turns a blind eye towards it for the most part. With AIDS on the rise in Cuba (Baker:1997:209), it is questionable just how long this form of entrepreneurial activities will be tolerated. Blanco and Benjamin (1997:42) states that tourism is “chemotherapy” for the cancer of the Cuban economy. He adds, “the Cuban economy at this moment has a cancer, and we have to make a radical decision in order to keep it afloat. We need to keep the economy afloat because we want to maintain the free educational system, the health care system, food security, and the social security system. And to keep all that running, you need to get as much hard currency as possible, in the shortest possible time”. Tourism’s cancers are prostitution, a small increase in crimes against tourists, and the black market as well as furthering racial discrimination and economic stratification.

Tourism, Consumer Goods and Discrimination

Along with tourism came an influx of products not seen in Cuba in many years: fresh vegetables and fruits such as grapes, apples, pears and the return
of duty free caviar became available to meet the appetites and demands of the tourists. One of the most prized imports is the small bars of soap provided in hotels which are replaced daily. The maids sell the used bars of soap or use them for family.

The menus offered in the upscale hotels provide their guests with almost anything desired. Here the guest can enjoy fresh papaya, shrimp, crab, lobster and steak. Different pastas are offered along with shellfish, cream sauces, and plain spaghetti. Paella seems always to be available to guests - the Spanish influence no doubt. None of these foodstuffs are available to the Cubans outside of the hotel. Working in a hotel is now one of the most sought after positions of the Cuban people. It doesn't seem to matter what the training or education of the person is, the perks are so great in the hotel and tourism business that there is much to gain from working in the field. The maids, in anticipation of tips, take extra effort in preparing rooms because they want their guests satisfied. They write personal notes to the room guests of welcome and good wishes.

But a backlash has been created by the advent of tourism. Cubans are barred from going into tourist only hotels and restaurants (Ripley:1998:13), even as in the case of my guide Jesús, barred from attending the wedding of his friend and compatriot, Francisco, when he married a U.S. citizen at a rooftop restaurant in Havana. Gasoline is restricted for Cubans but not for tourists. Segregation occurs when Cubans are kept waiting in lines before being seated in their own sections in restaurants and not allowed the same food offered on the tourist menus. Tourists are not allowed to mingle with Cubans in these restaurants and
the seeds of anger and distrust mount as preferential treatment is given to the tourist above the Cuban. The U.S. dollar, which is still hard to come by for Cubans, is the only currency most tourist restaurants and hotels will accept. This further excludes some Cubans from participating in the new economy, creating backlash against tourism and countrymen alike which manifests itself into class stratification.

In sum, I recently communicated with my guide and informant Jesús. He informed me that the weather was getting very warm in Havana and that his family was lucky because they had two motorcycles, which meant they would be able to go to the beach quite often. This is just a small example of the benefits of working in the tourism industry. He has money to buy not just one but two motorcycles and the gas required to operate them.

Another personal example of the benefits of the dollar was a dinner I enjoyed at Jesús' cousin Victor's house in Havana. Victor, who is also a guide and interpreter, prepared a meal consisting of two oven roasted chickens, roasted red beans and rice, a fresh salad of cucumber, tomatoes and onions and a fresh fruit dessert served with homemade cookies. All this prepared for six people and at a cost to me of ten dollars. Obviously, they are afforded the luxury of procuring food at the marketplace since they have access to U.S. dollars, a visible sign of class and economic distinction. Another American, Charles, was also at the dinner and he too paid ten dollars. We spoke after dinner and both agreed that while we thoroughly enjoyed the food and the company, we felt quite
guilty in consuming food from friends because food is such a scarce commodity and comes at such a high price.

Food also serves to delineate economic and class boundaries as well. While some can afford to buy and consume chicken anytime they want to, in any amount they want to, others have to exist on the State's ration of two chickens per month. The same goes for other meats and foodstuffs such as fresh fruits, vegetables and protein products such as fish - unattainable with rations. The black market for food flourishes in Cuba for those with American dollars. The black market and the U.S. dollars it generates contribute to the economic stratification in Cuba.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The revolution had as its goal to "greatly reduce the inequalities that existed in pre-Revolutionary Cuba" as demonstrated by race, location of habitat, and access to employment (Amaro/Mesa-Lago:1971:368). This goal was compromised through Castro's concessions and desire to participate in a global market economy which set the stage for racial bias and economic stratification. Before the revolution, class stratification was hard to define other than the powerful "whites" and political appointees and those without any power. Amara and Mesa-Lago (1971:341) state that pre-revolution classes were "amorphous, confused, fragmented, and heterogeneous, lacking consensus or class consciousness". They also expressed the view that, "Cuban classes were composed of groups without adequate integration or unity and that they were not conscious of their position or role in society". This dichotomy is explained by the fact that most Cubans established their own self worth or esteem through their occupation or where they lived on the Island. This is expressed in the statement by Moreno (1971:484) that, the middle class "the petite bourgeoisie" has been
determined to be those who work with their minds in business, not as laborers. These are the present-day entrepreneurs of Cuba.

A majority of Cubans still support the ethos and goals of the revolution. The strongest support is generational, according to Zeitlin (1966:502), by the revolutionists themselves and also the first generation born after the revolution; the people whose identity as Cuban was born with the revolution. This is Jesús' generation. Someone referred to Castro as a "belligerent grandfather" who wants nothing but the best for his children but also wants to protect them from the world. I was at the home of Jesús' cousin Victor for dinner on Victor's birthday. He had just received his now annual pair of shoes from Castro - "Papa". Every year on their birthday - Cubans receive a new pair of shoes from the government. Victor jumped up and down and showed off his new black leather shoes. I asked him if they fit and were comfortable; he responded that it didn't matter - they were okay - and they came from "Papa".

Most Cubans talk about the good things about the regime; namely, a relatively crime-free environment, free education and free health care for all. The fact is that everyone is provided for through the rationing system, to some extent, and even though it is far below a livable standard, it does help the poorest of the poor. They also talk about the better economic times since the advent of tourism. The majority of Cubans are happy, but frustrated, healthy, but bored, and eager to have their country on good relations with the United States.

But Cuba is a land that is both isolated and under siege. This state has existed since the revolution of 1959. In the years before the revolution, the
people of both Cuba and the United States were free to travel and enjoy the world. Some people see international travel as a “civic liberty” and denounce countries that limit travel to and from isolationist states (Böröcz: 1996:3). American tourists have a past history with Cuba, and openly enjoyed its nightlife, such as the Tropicana and the Lido Casino, its music, its food and Cuba’s glorious sun, surf, sand and sex, the four s’ of tourism according to Ryan and Hall (2001:ix) and of course the Cuban cigar. But all this has changed and presently Cuba is a land off limits to most Americans for travel. We do not know that although Cuba is an isolated island, its citizens are highly educated, artistic, both in fine arts and performing arts, and enjoy spiritual freedom.

Cuba – An Uncertain Future

“Time goes by, and even marathon runners get tired” (Baker: 1997:71)

These were the words spoken by Castro when he stated that he might “step down” but qualified his statement by stating never while the United States maintained the status quo as regards to their stance towards Cuba. So the future of Cuba remains unsure. The people endure and make the best of a life filled with uncertainty. Cuba is a country fighting isolation in any way that they can, an isolation created by the United States and endured by the people of Cuba. An isolation that holds one man responsible – Fidel Castro – at the expense of the people of an entire nation.

The utopia that Castro dreamed of when he initiated his revolution of the people does not exist. The introduction of U.S. dollars in post-revolution Cuba
has created polemic results. On one hand it violated the ideology of the revolution of eliminating foreign currencies and on the other hand it strengthened the dual economy for those with access to the dollars. The introduction of the U.S. dollar widened the chasm between those working directly with tourists and receiving tips in dollars and those citizens shut out from the opportunities to obtain dollars. The State also benefited through participating in currency exchange and the greater availability of hard currency to compete in the global market (Villanueva:1998:37). Cuba’s developing economy is also developing a degree of social stratification, which contradicts the edicts of socialism. Cuba’s challenge is to compete internationally while it retains the social developments of the revolution cherished by the people. Foreign investment continues but at a slower pace. Pressure from the U.S. is seen as one factor but the internal policies of Cuba’s government with its layers of red tape and lack of financial power are also hindering progress. A different approach is needed in dealing with foreign investors. China’s approach in dealing with foreign investors is a multilevel approach dependent on the size of the investment. It has been suggested that Cuba would benefit by establishing a similar process.

In spite of the controls implemented by this socialist government to portray the citizens as one class, the people themselves have created class stratification through their entrepreneurial endeavors to improve their status in life. I agree that opportunity seems to be available to all people in Cuba by personal choice of professions, but the choices made by the people can be denied to them by the socialist government, resulting in limiting their
opportunities and chances for success and ascent in the class order. The same opportunities for advancement may be available to all people, but the interference of the government by handpicking people for jobs creates a form of limiting discrimination.

Prior to the revolution of 1959, according to Mesa Lago and Amaro, "racial discrimination existed in a systematic form in exclusive social association and in business frequented by persons belonging to the upper-class stratum" (1971:341). There are those who would have us believe that racism does not exist in Cuba today. Green (1983:103-5) states that there are "no racial problems in Cuba because there is no discrimination. Black people are equal, enjoying all rights and opportunities. Discrimination is not allowed". Racial discrimination in the post-revolution is evidenced by an absence of blacks at the front desks and dining rooms of tourist hotels where access to U.S. dollars in tips is denied them. This color discrimination manifests itself as economic discrimination, which in turn creates class stratification. Pascale (1997:2) states that "racial and gendered identities are insignificant or marginal to class theory". I disagree with this statement because, in Cuba at least, there is a direct correlation between "whiter" skin, and higher economic class.

I agree with Sherry Ortner's definition of class as, "objective structural positions within a capitalist economic order" (1995:259). From this perspective, class does and continues to exist in Cuba. It first surfaced as bureaucratic ranking of Soviet officials who accepted privileged positions in the redistributed economy. Today, class is increasingly manifested by access to U.S. currency
and the goods it can buy. According to Jose Moreno, (1971:474-5), "in principal, pre-Revolutionary Cuban society was open and all citizens were equal before the law, in practice, many inequalities existed that were prejudicial to some groups of the population...elitism had produced a semi-competitive, stratified society ...which gave the rich all the advantages of participation in the competitive arena of capitalism". This is true of Cuba today. Those who participate in the capitalistic economy of tourism and are part of the developing stratification, have more material goods than those who do not. International tourism creates "leakage" of financial benefits to other strata of the society, not only the state. An example of this is the economic advantages enjoyed by those who receive dollars as they do business with tourists (Böröcz:1996:14).

Class structure is fluid though, and through this fluidity the future of Cuba may look quite different. It may very well mirror that of the United States where status and class is mobile and rarely discussed. It may in fact become naturalized by its silence, as social order is socially and culturally constructed. Through their agency, these Cubans are becoming self-made, no longer being made by the structurally embedded agency of Castro’s socialist ideology. Friedman (1999:14) states that in our current age of globalization, individuals have more power “to influence both markets and nation-states than at any time in history.” The people of Cuba are establishing a capitalist society within the socialist state as they pursue entrepreneurial endeavors while paying lip service to the ideology of the revolution. Castro has admitted that capitalism exists in certain areas of the socialist system. He turns a blind eye and accepts, to some
degree, the effects of globalization that he so actively sought, which in turn creates on-going conflicts and tensions between citizens and government (Perez-Lopez:1994:212).

Accordingly, there are those who say that if socialism falls, the future economy of Cuba would adopt a free market economy, not the Chinese market model of "limited market reform and political repression" and that the "stability and democracy of the new Cuba will largely rest on the success of an optimal combination of growth and equity" (Mesa-Largo/Fabian: 1993:379). But it is doubtful that a country as small as Cuba with its controls and isolation could develop and survive in a world market economy (Betancourt:1998:160). Castro is walking a thin line between what needs to be done to survive politically as well as financially (Regnery:2002:7). It is this balance that will have the most profound impact on a post-Castro government. Most Cubans have a history of overcoming adversity in their fight for freedom, identity and a better life, and it is this tenacity that will aid them in their adjustment to the new era.

There is a "surrealism" that surrounds Cuba – a surrealism of its recent history since 1959 mirroring its past history in "social, economic and political changes" (Duany:1988:244). The danger exists that nationalism based on hegemonic power and control replicates "the conditions it rises up to combat" (Ashcroft, et al 1995:151). Such seems to be the fate of Cuba's future. As tourism expands so does the stratification between the have and have-nots in this new economy. As tourism expands so do the concerns of prostitution and other social ills such as discrimination. There is sufficient evidence based on the
racial and economic structure of Cuba today, as well as in the discourse regarding the "lack of class" structure in Cuba, that supports an alternative view that racial and class stratification remain important facets of Cuban society which are in fact compromising the egalitarian goals of the revolution.
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