

The Cuban Anti-colonial Revolution

THE PERIPHERALIZATION OF CUBA

As has been observed, the conquest, colonization, and peripheralization of vast regions of the world by seven European nation-states from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries involved the imposition of systems of forced labor for the production of raw materials, thus establishing a world-system in which the core nations have access to cheap labor and cheap raw materials as well as markets for their surplus manufactured goods. In the case of Cuba, forced labor included African slave labor, indigenous slave labor, and the Spanish colonial labor systems of the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento*. Five raw materials were exported such as sugar, tobacco, coffee, gold, and cattle products.

1. **Gold** nuggets were extracted from riverbed sand immediately following Spanish conquest of Cuba in 1511 and 1512. Father Bartolomé de las Casas documented the brutal treatment of the indigenous slaves, who toiled in the riverbeds from dawn to dusk. The exploitation of the gold ended in 1542, with the exhaustion of the gold and the near total extermination of the indigenous population, as a result of the harsh conditions of labor, the effects of disease, and the disruption of indigenous systems of production (Foner 1962, 20–32; López Segrera 1972, 35–49; Pérez 2006, 18–22).

2. **Cattle products**, exported to Spain, or to other European nations via contraband trade, constituted the principal economic activity in Cuba in the period 1550–1700. The cattle haciendas, using low-waged indigenous labor, were ideal for the conditions of limited supplies of labor and capital that existed in Cuba during the period.
3. **Sugar** plantations, oriented to export to Europe, were developed utilizing African slaves. They were first developed in Cuba at the end of the sixteenth century, and they continued to expand, especially after 1750, in conjunction with the expansion of the capitalist world-economy. Sugar plantations and slavery dominated the economy and defined the Cuban political–economic system during the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries.
4. **Coffee** production, like sugar, was developed using African slave labor. It was never developed on the scale of sugar, but it was a significant part of the export economy of colonial Cuba. It expanded after 1750, and it received a boost in Cuba as a result of the arrival of slaveholders and their slaves from Haiti following the Haitian revolution (Barcia et al. 1996, 259–260; López Segre 1972, 36, 60–158; Pérez 2006, 32–33, 40, 48, 54–65).
5. **Tobacco** production for export emerged in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Whereas sugar, coffee, gold, and cattle products were developed in Cuba in accordance with a peripheral function in the world-economy, tobacco production in Cuba was developed as a combination of peripheral-like and core-like characteristics. It was peripheral-like in that it was a raw material produced for export to the core of the world-economy. However, it was produced not by forced low-waged laborers but by middle-class farmers. By the first half of the eighteenth century, some tobacco growers had accumulated sufficient capital to develop tobacco manufacturing. Tobacco production and manufacturing represented a potential for the development of Cuba that was different from the peripheral role represented by sugar, coffee, and slavery. During the first half of the eighteenth century, there was a possibility that Cuba would emerge as a semiperipheral nation, with a degree of manufacturing and economic and commercial diversity. Contributing to this possibility was the diversity of economic activities in the city of Havana, as a consequence of its role as a major international port. But with the expansion of sugar production after 1750, the peripheral role defined by sugar and coffee

became predominant, although tobacco production by middle-class farmers and tobacco manufacturing continued to exist (López Segrera 1972, 75–76, 90–91; Pérez 2006, 33, 40).

Consistent with the general patterns of the world-system, the peripheralization of Cuba created its underdevelopment. There were high levels of poverty and low levels of manufacturing. The vast majority of people lacked access to education, adequate nutrition and housing, and health care. Relatively privileged sectors, such as tobacco farmers, tobacco manufacturers, and the urban middle class, found their interests constrained by the peripheral role and by the structures of Spanish colonialism. Only owners of sugar and coffee plantations benefitted from the peripheralization of the island, and even they were constrained by Spanish colonialism. Spain played a parasitic role, imposing taxes and a monopoly on commerce (via compulsory government trading posts), and lacking the capacity to provide markets for Cuban products or capital for investment.

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE OF 1868

During the nineteenth century, conditions of underdevelopment gave rise to a Cuban anti-colonial movement, which would have contradictory dynamics. In the colonial situation, the elite within the colony has an interest in substituting its rule for that of the colonial power, but in preventing a popular revolution that would place the newly independent nation under the control of the popular classes. In the case of Cuba, the estate bourgeoisie (plantation owners) had an interest in eliminating the parasitic role of colonial Spain, thus establishing itself as a peripheral elite in a semi-colonial republic, with popular interests and demands contained, similar to the Latin American republics. In contrast, as a result of the deepening of peripheralization, the popular classes and sectors (formed by workers, peasants, slaves, free blacks and mulattos, and the petit bourgeoisie) had an interest in a political and social transformation that would place the popular classes and sectors in power and that would create the possibility for severing the core-peripheral relation and establishing autonomous economic development.

Prior to the development of an anti-colonial movement in Cuba, slave rebellions and other forms of slave resistance were an important part of the political landscape of Cuba (Pérez 2006, 55, 72–74; Foner 1962, 48–50). The conditions during slavery of extreme and brutal repression

made impossible the development of a social movement, able to form organizations and formulate programs and ideologies. Nevertheless, slave resistance and rebellion were an important expression of a spirit of rebellion that emerged as an integral part of Afro-Cuban culture. And because of the high degree of cultural and ethnic integration in Cuba, the Afro-Cuban cultural characteristic of courage and audacious rebellion would become an important influence on the Cuban movement of national liberation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, there emerged in Cuba a number of intellectuals whose writings and teachings provided the foundation for Cuban national consciousness and identity, which as it evolved would unite two critical ideas: the independence of Cuba and the abolition of slavery. The most outstanding of these intellectuals was Father Felix Varela, a professor at San Carlos Seminary in Havana. In general, Catholic priests, many of whom were from families of the Cuban estate bourgeoisie, played an important role in the development of progressive Cuban political thought. The emerging Cuban nation, however, did not join in the Latin American independence movements of the early nineteenth century. Cuban landholders feared that an independence movement would unleash uncontrollable forces from below, as had occurred in Haiti from 1789 to 1805 (Barcia et al. 1996, 12–14; Castro 1990, 5; Larrúa Guedes 1997; Vitier 2006, 5–41).

But a Cuban ethic, integrally tied to social and political movement, continued to evolve, an ethic that sought Cuban autonomy in accordance with universal human values. On this moral and spiritual foundation, the Cuban Revolution was launched on October 10, 1868, when Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, a landholder and slaveholder in the Eastern province of Oriente, declared, at his plantation La Demajagua, the independence of Cuba and the freedom of his slaves, a gesture followed by other slaveholders present. Seeking to enlist the support of Western landholders to the independence cause, Céspedes called for the gradual and compensated abolition of slavery, rather than immediate abolition. Subsequently, landholders from the central provinces of Camaguey and Las Tunas joined the insurrection. On April 10, 1869, the Republic of Cuba in Arms was established in the town of Guáimaro in Camaguey. Its Constitution declared the abolition of slavery. However, the independence war of 1868 failed to attain its goals. The 1878 Pact of Zanjón ended the war without conceding the independence of Cuba, and it granted liberty only to those slaves who had fought in the insurrectionist

ranks. Various factors contributed to the failure of the Ten Years' War: the opposition to the struggle on the part of the Western landholders, who feared that the unfolding forces would unleash an uncontrollable revolution from below; divisions between the executive and legislative branches of the Republic in Arms, which led to the destitution of Céspedes as president in 1873; the deaths of Céspedes in 1874 and Ignacio Agramonte in 1873, the two principal leaders of the revolution; and a tendency toward regionalism and *caudillismo* in the revolutionary army (Arboleya 2008, 49–51; Barcia et al. 1996, 25–52, 94–96, 140; López Segrera 1972, 112–115, 126–129; Pérez 2006, 86–93; Vitier 2006, 5–8, 42–69).

In sum, the independence war of 1868 was a revolution of national liberation and a democratic anti-slavery revolution. Although it was led by Eastern landholders, it inspired the popular sectors to active participation, including the rural and urban middle classes, revolutionary intellectuals, an emerging proletariat, artisans, slaves in the liberated zones, and free white, black, and mulatto farmers. It forged a common struggle, uniting popular sectors, overcoming divisions of class and race. It failed to achieve its objectives, as a result of disunity among the leadership and the premature deaths of two of its principal leaders (Barcia et al. 1996, 2–3; Castro 1990, 6).

JOSÉ MARTÍ

José Martí, the son of Spanish immigrants from Valencia and the Canary Islands, was born in 1853 in Havana. His father worked as a bureaucrat in the Spanish colonial administration. The young Martí was greatly influenced by his teacher, the Cuban patriot Rafael María de Mendive, from whom he learned the teachings of Cuban nationalist thought and its concepts of Cuban independence and the abolition of slavery. Martí was imprisoned in 1869 at the age of 16 for his activities in support of Cuban independence, and he was deported to Spain a year later. He subsequently lived in Madrid, Guatemala, Mexico, and New York City, spending fourteen years in the USA from 1881 to 1895. He played a central role in the further development of the Cuban nationalist ethic, seeking to overcome the divisions and ideological limitations that had led to the failure of the independence war of 1868–1878 and the “*Guerra Chiquita*” of 1879–1880. Seeking to establish in political practice the necessary unity and ideological clarity, he formed the Cuban

Revolutionary Party in 1892. He died in combat in 1895, shortly after the beginning of the second Cuban war of independence (de Armas and Rodríguez 1996, 391).

The injustice of colonial domination in Cuba and the violence and brutality against the Cuban black population had a profound impact on Martí. He sought to form a common consciousness that would be the basis for political action and for the forging of a popular democratic revolution by all, regardless of race or class. He envisioned independence not only from colonial Spain but also from the imperialist intentions of the USA. And he envisioned a republic by and for the good of all, regardless of race or class. In reflecting on these issues, he synthesized a wide variety of intellectual and moral tendencies, including naturalism, positivism, and the perspective of the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Central America (de Armas and Rodríguez 1996, 387–390; Vitier 2006, 74–78).

Martí formulated his vision at a time in which conservatism and reformism dominated the public discourse in Cuba. Even in its most progressive expressions, reformism did not advocate independence, much less an independent republic characterized by inclusion and social equality. Thus, what Martí proposed seemed impossible. But Martí believed that the task of Cuban patriots was to make possible the impossible. And this is attained through a commitment to integrity and duty, which involves above all the seeking of truth, thereby overcoming distortions and confusions. For Martí, the delegitimation of the distortions that emerge from colonialism, slavery, and domination constitutes the necessary foundation of a struggle for liberation. He believed that heroes emerge that lead the way, heroes that are dedicated to the “redeeming transformation of the world” (Vitier 2006, 91) through sacrifice and the seeking of the truth (Vitier 2006, 78–91).

Because of the confusion dominating the public discourse in Cuba as well as restrictions imposed by the colonial situation, Martí focused his efforts on the Cuban émigré community. But even the Cuban emigration was characterized by many divisions: class divisions between the petit bourgeoisie and the factory workers (concentrated in tobacco factories in Florida); racist attitudes among white Cubans; various currents of conservative and reformist thought among the petit bourgeoisie; and currents of socialist and anarchist thought, which held nationalist patriotic struggles in disdain, among factory workers. Accordingly, Martí formed the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892, with the intention of forging an ideological unity in support of fundamental principles:

the independence of Cuba; the formation of an independent republic not controlled by colonial or imperialist powers; the development of an inclusive republic by all and for the good of all, regardless of race or class; and identification with the oppressed and the poor (Arboleya 2008, 55–57; de Armas and Rodríguez 1996, 403–411; Vitier 2006, 92–97).

As a result of his fourteen years in the USA, Martí was aware that capitalism was entering a phase of monopoly capital, that is, large and concentrated industries and banks, and that this made possible an imperialist penetration by the global powers in nations that are formally politically independent, a phenomenon that we today call neocolonialism. He thus considered anti-imperialism to be a necessary component of a genuine struggle for national liberation. He believed that imperialism has a psychological base in disdain for the peoples of the world and an ideological base in the belief in the superiority of whites over blacks and of Anglo-Saxons over Latinos. He believed that the Cuban struggle for national liberation was part of a global struggle against US imperialism that not only would establish the sovereignty of the colonized peoples but also would save the dignity of the people of the USA (Arboleya 2008, 58; de Armas and Rodríguez 1996, 392–399).

The vision of Martí stood in opposition to powerful interests: colonial Spain; the USA, increasingly penetrating economically in Cuba and positioning itself to emerge as a neocolonial power in relation to Latin America; and the Cuban estate bourgeoisie, owners of sugar and coffee plantations in Cuba. The emerging industrial bourgeoisie could support the vision of Martí, to the extent that its economic interests were tied to the vitality of the domestic market. Recognizing the formidable enemies that such a vision would create, Martí conceived the Cuban Revolutionary Party as a political structure that would unify the popular classes and sectors that had an interest in the development of the alternative society. These popular classes and sectors included agricultural workers, small farmers (independent and renting), urban workers, the middle class, blacks and mulattos (Arboleya 2008, 55–58; Raimundo 2009, 88–90).

Although Martí had discerned the need a coalition in defense of popular interests, as against the interests of the national bourgeoisie, he had not read Marx. As a result, he underestimated the tenaciousness and the unpatriotic boundlessness of the national bourgeoisie. He believed that, to the extent that the popular revolution advanced toward the attainment of its goals, the Cuban national bourgeoisie would join the independence struggle as the best option in defense of its “diminished

interests” and that it would join in the construction of a society “by all and for the good of all.” In fact, however, the national bourgeoisie actively supported the counterrevolution in the 1890s, and it did not abandon the colonialist cause until 1898, when the military incapacity of Spain and the impossibility of its restoring the Cuban economy became evident. Beginning in 1898, many members of the Cuban national bourgeoisie incorporated themselves into the US-directed counterrevolution, which sought to contain the popular revolution through the imposition of neocolonial structures (Arboleya 2008, 60–61).

THE SECOND WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1895–1898

The Cuban revolutionary movement under the leadership of Martí launched the second war of independence in 1895. Martí was killed in battle, at the age of 42, in the first months of the war, an incalculable loss to the Cuban revolutionary movement. Tomás Estrada Palma assumed the direction of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, which during the independence war of 1895–1898 functioned as a government outside the country parallel to the revolutionary forces in Cuba. Estrada Palma is described by Jesús Arboleya, as having been an “obscure but respected figure” who had participated in the independence struggle since 1868. However, he did not share the anti-imperialist perspective of Martí, and he considered that once the Cuban people attained its independence from Spain, annexation by the USA would be an acceptable democratic option (Arboleya 2008, 61; de Armas and Rodríguez 1996, 387–390; Vitier 2006, 74–78).

During the war, the revolutionary forces, directed by Generals Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo, adopted a strategy of burning the sugar fields in order to destroy the production and commerce that sustained the colonial regime. Responding to this strategy, the colonial government placed the rural population in concentration camps in towns and cities, with the result that 200,000 persons died from malnutrition and disease. Apart from the civilian losses, it was a war with high casualties, with one-third of the Spanish soldiers and one-fifth of the revolutionary troops killed in battle. The war was unsustainable for Spain, as a result of popular opposition in Spain, provoked by the high level of casualties; escalating government debts caused by the war; and the destruction of the Cuban economy. By 1898, Cuban revolutionary forces controlled the countryside and the Spanish army controlled the most

important population centers, which were under siege by Cuban forces. The revolution was approaching triumph (Arboleya 2008, 59–60, 63).

As the Cuban revolutionary forces advanced, many members of the Cuban national bourgeoisie abandoned the country and pressured Estrada Palma to support a US military intervention, which was being proposed by some sectors in the USA, because of the threat that the popular revolution posed to US imperialist intentions. Estrada Palma came to support US intervention, without insisting upon any guarantees of representation of the Cuban people, or with respect to the role of the Cuban revolutionary military forces, in an independent Cuba (Arboleya 2008, 60–63; Barcia et al. 1996, 519–523).

Cuban scholars call the Spanish–Cuban–American War the conflict that US historians have called the Spanish–American War. Cuban historians emphasize that the support provided by Cuban revolutionary forces was indispensable for the USA taking of Santiago de Cuba, the only bastion of importance in which US interventionist forces were able to attain control. In the subsequent peace treaty, negotiated without Cuban participation, Spain ceded Cuba to the USA. Ignoring Cuban interests, the treaty prohibited the entrance of Cuban revolutionary forces into the cities, and it contained no terms for the transfer of power to the Cuban revolutionary forces. Estrada Palma supported the treaty and persuaded the revolutionary military chiefs to accept it, presenting the USA as an ally of the Cuban revolutionary movement (Arboleya 2008, 62–64; Instituto de Historia de Cuba [IHC] 1998, 3).

In this historic moment characterized by US maneuvering in pursuit of imperialist interests, with the collusion of Estrada Palma and the Cuban national bourgeoisie, the absence of the advanced understanding of Martí was a critical factor. Máximo Gómez wrote in his diary, “It is a difficult moment, the most difficult since the Revolution was initiated. Now Martí would have been able to serve the country; this was his moment” (quoted in Arboleya 2008, 63). Also critical was the death in combat in 1898 of Antonio Maceo. Maceo unified the most radical sectors of the revolution as a result of the enormous prestige in which he was held by the popular sectors, rooted in his refusal to accept the Pact of Zanjón in 1878 and his leadership of a continued political–military resistance that sought to attain independence and the total abolition of slavery, which came to be known as the Protest of Baraguá (Arboleya 2008, 59, 61, 63, 68; Barcia et al. 1996, 140–149, 503–504).

The US interventionist government was established on January 1, 1899, under the command of Major General John Rutter Brooke. A necessary precondition for the establishment of a republic in Cuba under US control was the dismantling of Cuban revolutionary institutions, which was accomplished during 1898 and 1899, with the dissolution of the three principal Cuban revolutionary institutions, namely the party, the army, and the legislative assembly. (1) On December 21, 1898, Tomás Estrada Palma had dissolved the Cuban Revolutionary Party that Martí had established. (2) A Representative Assembly, elected in zones controlled by the Government in Arms, constituted the civil authority of the revolution. But its authority was not recognized by the US military government, and it lost the confidence of the people by seeking to dismiss Máximo Gómez from the position of Chief of the Liberator Army. The Representative Assembly dissolved itself on April 4, 1899. (3) Rather than demobilizing, Máximo Gómez kept the revolutionary army quartered, maintaining that Cuba had not yet attained independence. Gómez considered the possibility of mobilizing the Cuban revolutionary forces, in spite of possible repercussions, such as an expanded US occupation or US annexation of Cuba. However, in light of divisions and distrust between Gómez and the civilian leaders and the absence of a consensus to continue the armed struggle, he concluded that this was not a viable option. The revolutionary army was demobilized, and the soldiers received compensation through funds donated by the US government (Arboleya 2008, 66–68; IHC 1998, 7–11).

On July 25, 1900, the US military governor convoked elections for a Constitutional Assembly. Suffrage was limited to men who had financial resources or were literate or who had served in the liberation army, thus excluding all women and two-thirds of adult men (Pérez 2006, 182). The elections were held on September 15, 1900; thirty-one delegates from three recently formed political parties were elected. Inasmuch as the revolutionary institutions had ceased to exist, the development of a revolutionary plan of action with respect to the Constitutional Assembly was not possible. Political games were played, and candidates without commitment to Cuban self-determination vis-à-vis US imperialist intentions presented themselves as *independentistas*. The Constitutional Assembly was a confusing mix, with ideological divisions within parties and alliances across parties. In addition, there was the pressure established by the continuous US threat of a permanent military presence if the results were not in accordance with US interests (Arboleya 2008, 67–69; IHC 1998,

24–27; Pérez 2006, 182). Because of these dynamics, the Constitution did not reflect the experiences of the Cuban national liberation struggle, and it had a “made in the USA” character. As Arboleya, writes, “The Constitutional Assembly was the burial of the Republic of Martí. It created a government whose structure copied in its fundamentals the North American model.... Nothing was said in relation to social rights, nor of the obligations of the state in the economy and in the protection and aid of citizens, nor of the strategy that ought to be followed with respect to foreign capital, the monopolies or the large estates” (Arboleya 2008, 69).

The US government, however, was not satisfied with the results. It insisted that the Constitutional Assembly approve an amendment that would grant the USA the right to intervene in Cuba. The USA insisted upon the Platt Amendment, as it would be called, in order to demonstrate to European powers, especially Great Britain, its determination to establish economic control over Latin America, and to show to US corporations its political will to protect their investments from foreign competition. Under threat of continuous US military occupation, the Constitutional Assembly approved the Platt Amendment on June 12, 1901, by a vote of 16 to 11, with four abstentions (Arboleya 2008, 70–71; IHC 1998, 28–34).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEOCOLONIAL REPUBLIC

Following the approval of the Cuban Constitution of 1901, mechanisms were established for elections. Máximo Gómez, sensitive to the fact that he was Dominican, declined to be a candidate for president, in spite of popular clamor in support of the Chief of the Revolutionary Army. Tomás Estrada Palma and Bartolomé Masó emerged as the leading candidates. Both had been involved in the independence struggle since 1868. Estrada Palma was a believer in limited government and *laissez-faire* economics, and he was an admirer of the USA. As we have seen, he assumed the leadership of the Cuban Revolutionary Party upon the death of Martí in 1895, and he dissolved this important revolutionary institution on December 21, 1898. Masó, in contrast, was an opponent of the Pact of Zanjón of 1878 and the Platt Amendment. He was suspicious of US intentions, and he demanded the absolute independence of Cuba. US military governor Leonard Wood, acting in accordance with US interests, supported Estrada Palma. He filled the electoral commission with Estrada supporters and took other steps that created suspicion of electoral fraud. In light of this situation, Masó withdrew, with

the result that the only candidate on the ballot was Estrada Palma, who received votes from 47% of the electorate (IHC 1998, 37–41).

Jesus Arboleya maintains that the election of Estrada Palma was a reflection of the political vacuum that resulted from the dismantling of revolutionary institutions and the emergence of nebulous groups that formed alliances on the basis of particular interests, personal loyalties, or interests of a local character. These dynamics made impossible the formation of political parties with clearly defined analyses and programs of action, and they facilitated a political fragmentation that the USA was able to exploit in order to attain its imperialist interests. The administration of Estrada Palma, who was inaugurated as president of the formally politically independent Republic of Cuba on May 20, 1902, principally served US interests rather than the needs of the people or the true sovereignty of the nation. It rejected government interference in the economy, and it followed a program of low taxes, limited spending, and limited social programs. There was no support for small farmers, as was demanded by the people. The government did not adopt laws restricting foreign ownership of land, as was proposed by Senator Manuel Sanguily (Arboleya 2008, 75–76; IHC 1998, 46–49).

In 1906, the USA again occupied Cuba, in reaction to violence associated with the reelection of Estrada Palma. Charles E. Magoon, who had previously governed the Panama Canal Zone, was named to govern the island by President William Howard Taft. Magoon named the principal leaders of Cuban political parties to government posts, leading to high levels of corruption. The second US occupation ended in 1909, and constitutional and electoral “democracy” was restored. From 1909 to 1925, there were three elected presidents, which also were notorious for their corruption. During this period, commercial relations between Cuba and the USA were ruled by a Treaty of Reciprocal Commerce, which the two nations signed in 1903, during the government of Estrada Palma. The Treaty reduced US customs taxes on Cuban sugar, tobacco, and other products by 20%, and it reduced Cuban tariffs on many US-manufactured products by up to 40%. The treaty increased the organic integration of the Cuban export of crude sugar and tobacco leaf with the sugar refineries and tobacco factories of the USA. And by expanding the access of US manufacturers to the Cuban market, it undermined the development of Cuban manufacturing, and thus contributed to the “denationalization” of the Cuban economy (Arboleya 2008, 76; IHC 1998, 46–211).

US commercial and financial penetration of Cuba, which had begun during the period of 1878–1895, dramatically increased after the establishment of the neocolonial republic. US corporations became owners of sugar, railroad, mining, and tobacco companies in Cuba, displacing Cuban as well as Spanish and English owners. The rapid entrance of US capitalists was made possible by the ruin of many proprietors in Cuba, caused by the establishment of the dollar as the currency of exchange in the Cuban domestic market, provoking the automatic devaluation of other currencies, and by the denial of credit to competitors of US companies. In the first decade of the republic, US investments in Cuba multiplied five times. By 1920, US corporations directly controlled 54% of sugar production, and US ownership reached 80% of the sugar exportation companies and mining industries. Thus, we can see that in the early years of the republic, the Cuban government promoted the interests of US corporations, rather than protecting the interests of Cuban capitalists through such measures as the protection of the national currency, the providing of credit, and the establishing restrictions on foreign ownership (Arboleya 2008, 52–54, 65–66, 80; IHC 1998, 110).

Because of increasing US ownership, the Cuban bourgeoisie was in the process of being reduced to what Arboleya calls a “figurehead bourgeoisie.” It had two principal tasks in the evolving neocolonial system: firstly, to administer foreign companies and provide them with legal and financial advice; secondly, to control the population and ensure political stability. In addition, US neocolonial domination had an ideological component. More than one thousand Cuban schoolteachers received scholarships to study in the USA, and US textbooks were used in Cuban schools. North American secondary schools emerged to compete with Catholic schools in the education of the Cuban bourgeoisie and middle class. Large US companies created cultural enclaves, and North American social clubs provided social space for interchange between the Cuban bourgeoisie and representatives of US companies. Cuban architecture imitated the great buildings of the USA; North American films appeared in Cuban cinemas; Cuban newspapers provided news from the Associated Press and the United Press International; and Cuba became a favorite destination for US tourists (Arboleya 2008, 65, 80–81, 91–92).

The neocolonial situation made corruption endemic, as personal enrichment through the state became the principal means of individual upward mobility (Arboleya 2008, 77–78). The government could not respond to the common good as demanded by popular movements,

but it could provide a career in public life for officeholders. Inasmuch as governments have significant revenues that are distributed in various public service and public works projects, they provide opportunities for economic enrichment for many who have relations with the officeholders. And this situation of economic opportunity connected to the state occurs in a political context that is devoid of a meaningful social project. Pérez's description (2006, 214–220) of the distortions of the political process as facilitating corruption in the early years of the republic provides insight into the social sources of corruption in neocolonized Third World countries.

In analyzing the transition from Spanish colonial domination to US neocolonial domination, Arboleya notes that the Cuban revolutionary leadership of the era was not sufficiently unified or ideologically prepared to resist the new form of domination being imposed. The leadership was ideologically prepared to effectively resist most efforts by the USA to reimpose *colonial* domination under its tutelage; accordingly, the Cuban government prevented the USA from claiming jurisdiction of the Isle of Pines, the largest island of the Cuban archipelago; it was able to reduce US demands for four military bases to one. But the Cuban leadership was unprepared to defend the Cuban nation against *neocolonial* domination, as indicated by the signing of a Treaty of Reciprocal Commerce, which strengthened US control of the Cuban market and reinforced Cuban dependency on the USA. This failure to defend the national interests in the face of *neocolonial* domination was a result of ideological penetration, which had generated confusion and limited understanding. The death of Martí was an important factor in facilitating lack of unity, purpose, and understanding in relation to national interests and popular needs (Arboleya 2008, 68–71, 75–77).

Thus, we see that in the early years of the Republic of Cuba, the basic structures of neocolonial domination were established: A political process that is unable to respond to the interests and needs of the people; the preservation of the core-peripheral economic and commercial relation that was established during the colonial era; the reduction of the national bourgeoisie to a figurehead bourgeoisie that is unable to lead the nation in the development of an autonomous national project; ideological penetration of the neocolony by the culture and political concepts of the neocolonial power; and endemic corruption, as a consequence of its being an available strategy for upward mobility. The neocolony is the survival of the colony in a new form, and it lives on a foundation of

fiction, for it pretends to be democratic. As the Cuban poet, essayist and novelist Cintio Vitier has written, “The colony was an injustice; it was not a deceit. The Yankee neocolony was both” (2006, 122–123).

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The Light in the Darkness

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