ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis examines the educational system in Cuba between 1899 and 1958, specifically primary and secondary schooling, with occasional reference to teacher training and non-formal programmes. It explores the relationship between education and Cuban political economy, demonstrating how expectations of education determined demands upon the state, how the educational system was affected by the interplay between external influences and domestic pressures and in what ways it reflected national concerns and debates.

Chapters one and two investigate the role that independentistas expected education to play in an independent Cuba and how the intervention of the United States affected the foundation of the system of public education. Chapters three, four and five analyse why the system became a focus of national anxiety in the 1920s, the ways in which those anxieties were manifested during the crisis of the early 1930s and how the government used rural education in its campaign to pacify the island following the "revolution" of 1933 and the national strike of 1935. Chapters six and seven explore the impact of the Constitution of 1940 and the condition of the educational system as the revolutionary struggle commenced in 1953.

The major themes addressed by this research are the relationship between education and nationalism, and between education, capitalism and dependence. The faith placed by liberals in the power of public education to forge national consciousness and to foster development is considered in the context of the principal characteristics of pre-revolutionary Cuba: its monocrop economy, significant class divisions and unequal relationship with the United States. The thesis concludes that these structural constraints prevented the educational system from realizing expectations. Furthermore, the vision of education held dear by Cubans could not be achieved without radical political and economic transformation.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not, of course, have been undertaken without financial assistance. The Central Research Fund of the University of London, the History Department and Graduate School of University College London, and the Roger Brew Fund all generously contributed to my research trips to Cuba. I am very grateful to them for their assistance.

My visits to Cuba were notable for the encouragement and support I received there. From the employees of the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas who housed and fed me, to the librarians who assisted me on a daily basis, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the Cubans and their enthusiasm for my work. Nancy Machado Lorenzo, Marlene Valdés Borrero and the other librarians of the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí were an invaluable source of assistance. Tomás Fernández Robaina went out of his way to find and supply me with books to build my own collection. Marta González, the daughter of Diego González y Gutiérrez, and her son Pedro Pablo, generously allowed me access to their father/grandfather’s documents. For this introduction I am grateful to Jon Lee Anderson. He and his family adopted me during one stay in Cuba, and made Sunday a day to look forward to. I also spent a fruitful afternoon in discussion with Professor Josefina Meza, who is coordinating a Cuban research project on education before the revolution, and I benefited greatly from her insights.

I am grateful to Louis Pérez Jr. for his suggestions early in the project, which kept me on track. John Kirk provided enthusiastic support and helpful advice throughout. Charlotte Crow proved to be an inspiring editor as I prepared an article for the August 1995 issue of History Today, in which some of this material first appeared. As writing commenced, several people read and reread the material I produced and offered insightful criticism, particularly Christopher Abel, Mary Turner, Nicola Miller and Philip Kolvin; their thoughts were invaluable in the process of clarifying my own.

Christopher Abel provided outstanding supervision. He was unfailingly generous with his time and attention, and his humour and moral support buoyed my confidence. His foresight, guidance, advice and assistance were crucial to the completion of this work. I am deeply indebted to him for all he has done.

I have also been encouraged by family and friends. Among them, Shirley Chapman, Lois Reynolds and Fiona Plowman retained unshakeable conviction that I would complete this work and do it well. Fiona, William and Charlotte Hodson, with great kindness and sympathy, brightened otherwise lonely days of writing. As always, my family - Johnstons, Laidlaws and Kolvins - supported me. Robin Johnston took time out of a well deserved holiday to proofread the final draft. Philip Kolvin, my husband, gave me strength and spirit for this project, as for everything; he is the source of so much of the passion and peace which fuel my life.
The merits of this thesis owe much to all the people who have encouraged me throughout, and particularly to those who considered and commented on the work. The faults, needless to say, are exclusively my own.

Finally, very special thanks to Mary Turner who has supported me without fail since my undergraduate years. She has listened to me, lectured me, fed and watered me, sympathized, read, criticized, comforted, applauded, questioned, and generally ensured that I kept an energetic and positive outlook. Her commitment extended to joining me in Cuba, a special time which I shall never forget. Words simply cannot express my gratitude and my appreciation for all she has done. This work is dedicated to her, as one small way of saying thank you.
Introduction

In the non-industrialized country, the school is an institution that not only keeps the individual from self-definition but keeps the entire society from defining itself.\(^1\)

What might an examination of primary and secondary education in Cuba between 1899 and 1958 reveal? As an historian rather than an educationalist, my interests lie in considering the relationship between education and the larger society during this period, and determining its significance, rather than in making a specific probe into pedagogical technique. In particular, I wish to ascertain what part education played in generating or hindering the process which culminated in the Cuban revolution in 1959. Consequently, I have chosen to explore the connections between education and the Cuban political economy, rather than specifically educational matters. What is the relationship between the state and society which influences the function and content of education?\(^2\) How do perceptions of education's role in society and its ability to fulfil expectations influence demands on the state?

The period between 1899 and 1958 is the setting for some of the formative events in the development of Cuban national consciousness. The growth of nationalism, the spread of communism, the development of the labour movement, the "revolution" of 1933, the democratic facade of the 1940s and the island's relationship with the United States all contributed to this process. Many of the causes of the revolution of 1959, what has informed its evolution, and the length of its survival, lie in this earlier period. Much of the historiography concentrates on the revolution and the insurrection which immediately preceded it, and thus begins in 1952, with Fulgencio Batista's coup, or 1953, with the attack on the Moncada barracks. Nonetheless, some good surveys of the republican period have been written. Some of the best articles seeking to explain the revolution reach back into Cuba's past;\(^3\) particular attention has been paid to the relationship with the United States, the sugar economy, Machado's presidency and the revolution of 1933.\(^4\)

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the period remain largely unexplored, however, including the important years between 1934 and 1940, when the impetus for radical change was diffused.5

The relationship between education and the development of Cuban national consciousness has never been scrutinized. I argue that it is important to do so because Cubans themselves used their educational system to measure the progress, or decline, of their independence and nationhood. Commitment to public education was an incontestable ideological cornerstone of Cuba Libre. Every government claimed legitimacy in part by professing active support for the improvement of educational standards. Education was on everyone's political agenda, from the U.S. military government of 1899-1902 to Fulgencio Batista in his incarnations as populist and dictator, to the communists. Failure to achieve the educational ideal contributed to the accurate perception of frustrated aspirations which dogged the republic, and contributed to its fall. The issues affecting education from the defeat of Spain to the triumph of the fidelistas reflect the larger contradictions, frustrations and challenges which faced the nation.

There is little secondary material in English on the topic of education. What is available tends to concentrate on the first U.S. occupation, in some ways the most accessible period given the availability of sources and the extent of change in the educational sector. Both Louis A. Pérez Jr. and Edward D. Fitchen have written research articles on education during the occupation, although Fitchen's work tends to the purely descriptive.6 Overviews of education in republican Cuba, forming introductions to detailed work on education in the revolutionary period, are also available. Rolland G. Paulston, Richard Jolly, Theodore MacDonald and Carl J. Dahlman have all contributed material in this way. Although they present useful data, their contributions remain summaries. Martin


5 Two major exceptions are Samuel Farber, Revolution and Reaction in Cuba, 1933-1960: A Political Sociology from Machado to Castro (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1976); and Instituto de Historia del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, Historia del movimiento obrero cubano, 1865-1958, 2 vols. (La Habana: Editora Política, 1985).

Camoy and Jorge Werthein also provide an introduction, which commences in 1955. Otherwise, snippets of data may be found in larger histories, such as that of Hugh Thomas.

Cuban secondary sources yield more on education, although they are somewhat richer on university politics. Baldomero Expósito Rodríguez published two short books about teachers, one covering the period 1899-1961 and the other 1933-34, both highlighting communist activity.® Gaspar Jorge García Galló also wrote two books containing information on education during the republican period from a Marxist perspective.® References to the educational system may be found in many sources which address other topics, such as general histories or biographies. However, as a rule they tend to provide scattered data without context or analysis. Ramiro Guerra's *Historia de la nación cubana*, for example, contains an article by Mercedes García Tudurí on education; although long, its lack of analysis makes this piece confusing and surprisingly uninformative. Cuban researchers have recognized the gap in their history: a major study of education during the republican period is currently underway in Havana, led by Professor Josefina Meza.

By far the richest sources on education are the books, pamphlets, speeches and articles detailing conditions in the educational system, which Cubans during the republican period produced abundantly and tirelessly. For the government or against it, attacking private education or defending it, communist or conservative, their voices leap off the page, their passion and indignation palpable. The briefest scan through a Cuban newspaper or journal will soon reveal how dearly the cause of education was held by so many. I have consulted these sources widely but selectively, for they constitute a lifetime's worth of research, and because of the condition of the sources themselves. A few have been lost or damaged and others are very fragile. Some of the newspapers and magazines in the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí are too delicate to be made available to readers, and not many had, at the time of research, been placed on microfilm.®

Cuban writings are supplemented by the studies of international observers, private think-tanks and social scientists who visited Cuba and who often had access to government sources. Studies by the Foreign Policy Association, the World Bank, Lowry Nelson and Gerald H. Read fall into this category. Such works provide an additional perspective, and often contain vivid detail. Contemporary analysts could speak directly to their informants

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® One of the particular conditions of the "special period in peacetime" in Cuba, during which I did my research in 1992 and 1993, was the limited and inconsistent availability of electricity. Thus microfilm could not always be used, or the bulbs were so dim as to make the film unreadable.
and observe as well as read, possibilities largely denied to a later researcher. Some travel writers were able to bring the island and its inhabitants to life in much the same way.¹⁰

Statistical sources are uneven but available. The first U.S. administration was notable for its collection of quantitative data and Cuban censuses also provide useful information.¹¹ Although educationalists consistently claimed that no reliable educational statistics existed, nonetheless they produced figures to buttress their allegations of stagnation and decline. I have approached this data with caution. As my research progressed, it became clear that not always did one statistical agency agree with another, or even compare like with like, and some obscured more than they revealed. Governments, for example, manipulated figures in order to demonstrate success in educational policy. I have used quantitative evidence to indicate broad trends rather than to make definitive statements. Although specific numbers may differ, the broad picture which emerges is largely consistent. There seems little point in debating, for example, whether 30 per cent or 35 per cent of children were enrolled in school at a given time, when the salient point is that about two thirds of children were not enrolled. Furthermore, if Cubans of the period widely conveyed a sense of anxiety about low enrolment, the significance of the five per cent difference recedes still further.

Republican Cuba's educational system was a casualty of the larger problems besetting the island. Inequalities in Cuban society repeated themselves in schools. In particular, the educational system reflected the disparities between Cuba's rural and urban areas, between blacks and whites, between impoverished and wealthy, and to a lesser extent between women and men. The contradictions and tensions in the relationship between the United States and Cuba influenced the educational sector, with schools paradoxically providing both a means of penetration for, and an instrument of resistance to, U.S. cultural influence, even as educators and politicians looked to the United States to provide intellectual and technical assistance in the quest to "cubanize" education. Schools also became a focus of nationalist energy as different groups appropriated national mythology and struggled for its expression in the educational regime. The corruption prevalent in public administration permeated public education, which acquired a poor reputation. By considering these topics, this thesis fills a gap in Cuban historiography in both English and Spanish.

Race in Cuba, as everywhere, transcends simple biological definitions. Miscegenation of Spaniard and African blurred racial boundaries. White-skinned people generally deemed themselves superior to mulattoes and blacks, but distinctions of wealth,

¹⁰ See, for example, Erna Fergusson, Cuba (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946) and Olive G. Gibson, The Isle of a Hundred Harbors (Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1940).

education, religion and social position combined with skin colour and distinguishing features to complicate definitions. While recognizing these complexities, I have chosen to use the word "black" to denote black and mulatto Cubans normally consigned to the bottom of Cuba's social and economic hierarchy and suffering from racial prejudice, for simplicity in writing. To some extent the existing literature allows me to take this route, but in doing so I have no wish to oversimplify racial issues.

Issues wider than education in Cuba are raised by this work. Possibly the most powerful themes which the research exposed were those of the relationship between education and nationalism, and between education, capitalism and dependence. These relationships are perhaps more frequently explored in development studies, or by educationalists. However, there is much here of interest to the historian, particularly when pondering the reasons for the revolution of 1959. A clear difference of opinion exists between those, most famously the World Bank, who argued that Cuba's development could not occur until it possessed a much improved educational system and others, including Fidel Castro, who maintained that Cuba's educational system was a symptom rather than a cause of economic and political failure. This clash of views is significant, for it is representative of the differences between those who believed that the entire structure of republican Cuba was workable, but poorly implemented, and thus advocated reform, and those who decried the entire system, championing revolution.

This study contributes to comparative Latin American historical studies on education by adding the example of Cuba to existing research. It reveals that republican Cuba shared many of the general characteristics of Latin American education, both past and present, analysed by Colin Brock. These characteristics include problems with enrolment, especially in rural areas; high numbers of pupils repeating years and failing to complete school; inadequate provision of public secondary schooling except for the urban middle class; a relatively large and thriving private sector; a strong relationship between the quality of educational provision and social class; and little correlation between formal education and the occupational structure.\(^\text{12}\)

Another important characteristic of public educational systems throughout Latin America was the faith which liberals placed in education as a powerful instrument of social change. Concomitantly, they saw the educational system as a medium through which to propagate an image of patria and win loyalty to it. Educational reform in Argentina in the nineteenth century, for example, emphasized the importance of responsible citizenship and respect for authority.\(^\text{13}\) The formation of good citizens was believed to be one of the

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\(^{13}\) See, for example, Mark D. Szuchman, "In Search of Deference: Education and Civic Formation in Nineteenth-Century Buenos Aires" in John A. Britton, ed., *Molding the Hearts and Minds: Education, Communications, and Social Change in Latin America* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1994), pp. 1-18; Cynthia Jeffress Little, "Education, Philanthropy and Feminism: Components of
responsibilities of the school system in Cuba, as elsewhere, but in Cuba the construction of a national consciousness, or cubanidad, could not stress, although it could advocate, deference to authority. Cubanidad was built around the idea of Cuba Libre. One of the consequences of late independence and subsequent military occupation by a foreign power was the emphasis in national mythmaking on struggle, including armed struggle, against authority. Deference did not sit easily alongside this tradition. Authority thus had to meet or claim to meet the demands of Cuba Libre in order to generate acquiescence rather than opposition.

This thesis does not pretend to be a definitive work on the subject of education in pre-revolutionary Cuba. There are clearly many more areas which could be pursued. University education is not included here because it has been covered in existing literature, albeit more for the political activities of its students than its educational role. Non-formal education deserves attention in its own right, as does the education of Cubans in other countries, particularly the United States. The content of textbooks would be worthwhile of scrutiny; equally, vocational and technical education. Sixty years is a long period of history to chronicle, and I am aware that some detail has been sacrificed in the effort to portray the larger sweep of the story. It seemed, to take one example, a digression to embark upon detailed discussion of curriculum proposals when the case made by Cuban educationalists - that education suffered from consistent neglect - had yet to be put. Reforming the curriculum meant little if teachers and textbooks were not also provided and students were not in the classroom; the focus of interest then becomes not the curriculum change but the contradiction between the veneer of progress and the lack of resources and opportunities. By exploring such contradictions, I have sought to illuminate and explain the disjuncture between the faith in the power of public education to forge national consciousness and to foster development, and the structural constraints imposed on this vision by the republic's political economy.

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Chapter 1

Education and the Dream of Cuba Libre

Education became a key issue in Cuban politics in the nineteenth century. Although Cuba's second, successful war for independence was not launched until 1895, more than half a century after the establishment of independent republics in the rest of Spanish America, the intellectual war against Spanish domination began before the first failed revolution of 1868-78. Private Catholic schools attempted to suppress aspirations for national liberty by fostering the loyalty of the ruling male elite to Crown and Church. Crown and Church in Cuba sought to deny the majority of Cubans an education, equating mass literacy with subversion and heresy. Republicans amongst both the creole elite and the working class demanded the liberation of the Cuban educational system, through the eradication of the educational monopoly of Catholic schools and the spread of literacy. Nineteenth century republican intellectuals argued that a system of free, universal, secular public education was essential to the establishment of Cuba Libre, the independent and democratic nation for which so many Cubans would fight and die.

Influenced by Enlightenment ideals, a succession of Cuban intellectuals, including José Agustín Caballero, Félix Varela y Morales, José Antonio Saco and José de la Luz y Caballero, looked outside the Church for ways of understanding the conditions in Cuban society and the relationship between Cuba and Spain. In common with intellectuals throughout Latin America, where some rudimentary public educational systems were in the process of being established, Cuban pensadores rejected Church scholasticism for liberal, rational thought. Educational methods, they argued, particularly learning by rote, teaching in Latin and emphasis on the abstract over scientific and technical education, worked to hinder both independent individual reasoning and the development of an independent and prosperous nation.

In advocating a nation-state, rather than the perpetuation of colonial ties, republicans understood the significance of secular, mass education differently from their colonial masters. Given the relationship between Church and state, they insisted upon the separation of the two as a prerequisite for independence; public instruction thus became inextricably bound with the drive towards secularism in an independent state. This drive

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1 José Agustín Caballero (1762-1825) taught at the San Carlos Seminary in Cuba where he propounded Enlightenment ideals. He taught Félix Varela, José Antonio Saco and José de la Luz y Caballero, his nephew. Félix Varela y Morales (1787-1853), a professor of philosophy at the San Carlos Seminary and member of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, taught, among others José Antonio Saco. Varela ceased to use Latin in his philosophy lectures in 1811. Saco (1797-1879) succeeded Varela as professor of philosophy and edited the Revista Bimestre Cubana. José de la Luz y Caballero (1800-1862), followed Saco as professor of philosophy and founded the San Salvador College. For an introduction to their thought, which was by no means uniform, see Sheldon B. Liss, Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).
had widespread appeal; given the association of the Church with colonial rule, its political power outweighed its spiritual influence. In addition, republicans argued that mass education would enhance, rather than undermine, acceptance of the authority which represented the nation. Higher levels of education would improve economic capacity, facilitating the country's ability to compete on an international scale. Rather than being a dangerous vehicle for spreading revolution, education was seen as a critical means of forming productive citizens, loyal to the patria. It would be an instrument for fostering cubanidad, or the collective consciousness of a unifying, unique heritage and identity, committed to a common progress.

Mid-nineteenth century Cuba had four types of educational institutions. Religious orders operated fee-paying schools for the elite, with occasional charitable ventures. Private schools founded by individuals and organizations not connected with the Church challenged Church control of education, and offered both fee-paying and free school places. The municipalities ran a small number of public schools. When public and charitable instruction were not available, families which could not afford to send their children to the institutions run by the religious orders often used amigas, described as schools but probably better understood as inexpensive daycare, usually run by barely educated black women. In 1842, the year of the island's first school law, just over nine thousand children, or 4.5 per cent of the school-age population, attended 222 schools. Of those, six thousand were white boys. Fewer than six hundred of the children were black, free blacks of course, and only 180 of those were girls. Over five thousand of the children paid for their education. Of the others, a small number attended free schools or were taught by their teachers without payment. About two thousand attended school at municipal expense. Only this latter group, 1 per cent of the school-age population, could be described as receiving public instruction.

Dissatisfaction with the educational system led to the establishment of liberal secular schools, which became popular amongst republican creoles and proved influential in the spread of nationalist ideas. The authorities also viewed with alarm the growing popularity among the creole elite of sending their sons to be educated in the United States, a practice which became associated with social status. Spain had every reason to discourage the development of close links between the United States, a potential colonial rival, and Cuba.

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2 The Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, a social club and lobbying group modelled on similar societies throughout Spain's empire, had found in a 1793 survey that in many schools "the instruction was of the worst, nothing but reading being taught in many of them which were in charge of colored women". An 1801 survey, again conducted by the Society, found seventy-one schools in Havana, "most of which were not under the government and...taught by ignorant colored women who had neither method nor order". United States War Department, Office Director Census of Cuba, Report on the Census of Cuba 1899 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), p. 568.

3 Enrique José Varona, La instrucción pública en Cuba: su pasado, su presente (La Habana: Rambla y Bouza, 1901), pp. 10, 11.
and to prevent the importation of "subversive" republican and democratic political ideas by Cubans who had been educated there.

Following the outbreak of the Ten Years War in 1868, the Spanish authorities searched for the causes of burgeoning republican sentiment. In 1871, a new decree regulating primary instruction blamed the war on inappropriate education, noting that teachers figured prominently among the insurgents. The preamble claimed that crime increased with educational provision, and that excessive freedom of thought in Protestant countries prompted more suicides. The decree openly affirmed Spain's intention "to educate and hispanicize, as far as possible, the coming generations, to the end that the dominion of Spain in the Antilles may be permanently assured". Restrictive measures operated to ensure this end. Although local authorities were expected to finance schools, the central government insisted on administrative control. Subjects and textbooks were banned and private schools with independent, secular inclinations were closed. Religious instruction was given priority over arts and sciences and the plan of studies was placed in the hands of the Church.

Although the insurgents were defeated, the Ten Years War failed to bury the issue of independence. Spain made a futile attempt to mollify the still dissatisfied creole elite by acceding to some educational demands. In 1880, a new decree expanded secondary and higher education. In addition, it made schooling compulsory between ages six and nine and implemented school inspections. However, the failure to provide sufficient resources, such as buildings, school materials, inspections and training, undermined the primary school reforms. Administrative corruption diverted the resources available and teachers, although normally poorly paid, were often political appointees rather than trained educators. As the 1899 census reported, "the appropriations for the schools were far from adequate and their administration most imperfect, and thus the scheme of popular education, which as a theoretical proposition was almost beyond adverse criticism, utterly failed to accomplish its ostensible purpose". The efforts of the Spanish authorities to command Cuban loyalty through restricted access to education also failed. "It has sometimes seemed to me," remarked one observer, "that Church and State had undoubtedly combined to force a flimsy and inadequate [educational] system upon Cuba, the main purposes of which should be political and religious. If such is the case the plan is a

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manifest failure; they have never made of a Cuban schoolboy a Spaniard, or a very religious man.*

The working class political programme also contained an educational component. Poor Cubans shared the belief in the importance of education as a means to a better future, and activists identified it as necessary to political analysis. In the 1860s, labour leaders launched the practice of readings in tobacco factories to foster unity and raise the moral and intellectual level of the workers. Tobacco workers paid for people to read from newspapers and books as they worked, attracting people on the streets who would listen at the factory windows. The practice was so successful that in 1866 it was forbidden by law. Even after the defeat of revolution in 1878, when the practice was restored, factory owners attempted to censor the material read. Articles and pamphlets by labour leaders dedicated to educating workers were placed in libraries; library hours were extended to accommodate those who worked during the day. Activists organized centres of primary instruction specifically for workers. The labour newspaper *La Aurora*, founded in 1865, encouraged willing workers to take advantage of these opportunities.

The defeat of the republicans in the Ten Years War radicalized working class struggle. Economic hardship in the 1880s further widened opposition to Spain. Anarchosyndicalism, a legacy of Spanish immigration, gained credence with Cuba's working class, particularly among tobacco workers both on the island and in the factories established in Florida to circumvent U.S. trade barriers. In contrast to the majority of *pensadores*, however, who identified Cuba's position as a colony as the source of the island's ills, anarchosyndicalists, and later the socialists and communists, analysed Cuba's colonial status and economic contradictions as a function of capitalism. Nonetheless, landless peasants and jobless workers joined liberal intellectuals and professionals in pursuit of nationalist objectives, however vaguely defined. While a common vision of the future was not easily identified, a conviction that education would be key was shared by all classes in Cuba; yet belief in the link between education and independence did not override internal divisions within the republican movement.

José Martí became the key figure in the ideological transition from an understanding of independence as simply the end of Spanish rule to the vision of *Cuba Libre*, a nation of social as well as political cohesion. From the Ten Years War until his death in battle in the second war of independence, through his writing and his indefatigable struggle to unite nationalist factions, Martí widened the fight for independence beyond the disaffection of

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* José Rivero Muñiz, *La lectura en las tabaquerías* (La Habana: P. Fernández, 1951). The practice was so popular that it was taken to Florida by Cuban tobacco workers. For an account of the importance of tobacco workers in Cuban labour history, see Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
creoles to incorporate democratic goals which afforded all classes economic opportunity, racial equality and social justice. He argued against monopoly and for redistribution of wealth, although he did not wish to alienate the wealthy and remained committed to common cause between classes. Thus, although for Martí political democracy included democratization of the economic sphere, he did not advocate a revolution of workers over landowners and capitalists.

Martí stressed the importance of education in the battle for Cuban independence. "An educated people," he insisted, "will always be strong and free. An ignorant people can be deceived by superstition and become servile." He maintained, "all men will vote and, as ignorance is the guarantee of political misconduct, a true conscience and pride in independence guarantee the sound exercise of liberty." To this end he advocated compulsory, free education. "The teachings of reason have replaced Catholic dogma," he argued. "Obligatory education is an article of faith of the new dogma."12

Practical rather than abstract education, both as preparation for life and as a fundamental component in the development of the nation, lay at the heart of Martí's vision. Education relevant to the nation's needs underpinned economic success and political freedom, providing the key to individual and national achievement. "Behind every school," Martí demanded "agricultural land...where each student will sow a tree." He argued that education should include manual and technical components, without being exclusively devoted to these fields. "What is known as industrial or manual training," he concluded, "...is only a partial education...rather than...incorporating all the elements common to the country's life, which is what public education must be."14

Education, Martí maintained, was a natural right for all, regardless of race, sex or class. His commitment to mass education underpinned his belief that public primary schools were essential to the educational system and the nation. Women, blacks and rural dwellers were as entitled to instruction, as important in the educational progress of the nation, as men of the elite - although he did not envisage women receiving the same instruction or applying their education in the same ways as did men. A man of action as well as a thinker, in 1890 Martí co-founded a night school in New York City for black

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12 Ibid., p. 217.


Cuban exiles. Amongst other classes, students could attend Martí's lectures, which emphasized the importance of Cuban autonomy and national identity.\textsuperscript{15}

Martí recognized the dangers to Latin America inherent in the imperialist ambitions of the United States, which had expanded steadily westward and southward in its pursuit of territory. At a time when so many Cubans were taught in the United States that schools opened there especially to cater for them, he felt strongly that Cubans should be educated in their own country, lest they become scornful of their own people.\textsuperscript{16} Mindful of the U.S. belief in manifest destiny, its repeated attempts to buy Cuba from Spain and its growing investment in the island, Martí viewed the struggle against annexation by the United States as part of the struggle for independence. He also understood that the United States posed a more subtle threat than open annexation. "Whoever says economic union says political union," he argued, identifying the link between economic dependence and political impotence. "The nation that buys, commands. The nation that sells, serves. It is necessary to balance trade in order to guarantee liberty."\textsuperscript{17}

Martí identified the United States as the monster threatening "Our America".\textsuperscript{18} "I lived in the monster," he wrote, "and I know its entrails - and my sling is that of David." He feared - correctly, as it transpired - that a protracted struggle for independence would lead to internal divisions amongst the revolutionaries and that both conditions would be exploited by the United States. Martí worked vigorously to heighten awareness of the dangers of overthrowing Spain, only to have it replaced by the United States. For, he asked, "once the United States is in Cuba, who will drive it out? Or why should Cuba remain in America...as an artificial nation, created for strategic reasons? I want," he insisted, "a more secure foundation for my people."\textsuperscript{19}

Despite the risk of U.S. intervention, Martí launched another war of independence in 1895. The renewed bloodshed ensured that \textit{Cuba Libre} encompassed much more than an end of Spain's dominion on the island. "To the historic objective of national liberation," one historian has observed, "was added a social imperative of national revolution, and instantly a movement dedicated to the establishment of a new nation became a force devoted to shaping a new society."\textsuperscript{20} Cubans striving for national self-determination identified


\textsuperscript{16} Tomás Estrada Palma, an independence leader and first president of the Cuban republic, had, for example, run a Quaker school for boys in New York state.

\textsuperscript{17} José Martí, "La Conferenda Monetaria de las Republicas de America", in \textit{Obras completas, tomo 6: Nuestra America} (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 160.

\textsuperscript{18} See his letter to Manuel Mercado, written on 18 May 1895, the day before he was killed in battle, in Martí, \textit{Obras completas, tomo 4: Cuba}, p. 168. "Our America" referred specifically to Latin America.

\textsuperscript{19} Martí, letter to Gonzalo de Quesada, New York, 29 October 1889, in \textit{Obras completas, tomo 1: Cuba}, p. 251.

public education as an essential means of developing the national identity, civic responsibility and economic proficiency they believed necessary to the formation of that new society. The Cuban rebel government of 1898 underscored its commitment by creating a cabinet post for education. The dream of *Cuba Libre* included a public educational system which would foster individual development and secure the survival and prosperity of the nation.

The U.S. intervention in the war and subsequent military occupation was a devastating blow to Cuban aspirations. The formal relegation of Cubans to the sidelines of their own struggle was confirmed when the United States and Spain negotiated the end of Spanish dominion over Cuba unencumbered by the presence of Cuban representatives. The war became known as the Spanish-American War, obliterating Cubans from their own history. Nonetheless, for most Cubans the proclamation of peace in 1898 did not end the war of independence. Instead, it posed a new challenge to Cuban nationalist ambitions: the imperial designs of the United States.

The Teller Amendment of 1898 prevented the United States from openly annexing the island. Passed by Congress when U.S. public opinion regarded military assistance for Cuba's struggle against Spain as heroic rather than imperialistic, the amendment stated that the United States "disclaims any disposition of intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said island except for pacification thereof, and asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the government and control of the island to its people". 21 It is also possible that the amendment prevented the United States from becoming mired in an embarrassing war against *independentistas* in Cuba, as it did in the Philippines. Moreover, not everyone in the United States saw reason or advantage in Cuba joining the union and some, particularly beet sugar and tobacco interests and those concerned about Cuba's racial composition, were opposed. However, the Teller Amendment notwithstanding, many U.S. politicians and businessmen believed that Cuba "naturally" belonged to the United States. Restrained from annexing Cuba, they believed she could be encouraged to sue for admission to the union, as Hawaii had done. In the words of one news bulletin: "There is much prospect...that Cuba, in the exercise of her independence, will at no distant day express a desire for closer relations with the United States, if not for admission into it as a State." 22 The U.S. military government did all it could to facilitate those closer relations, to the advantage of the United States. The educational system became a crucial battleground as the struggle for Cuban independence took a new form.

21 See ibid., p. 178.
Chapter II
Cuban Education and U.S. Intervention, 1899-1909

Cuban nationalist sentiment, along with U.S. public opinion and the Teller Amendment, required a reason for the U.S. presence in Cuba that dissociated the United States from imperialistic designs on the island, both in 1899 and during the second occupation of 1906-09. Resident Spaniards and creole property owners, nervous about the consequences for their wealth and power of Cuban independence, welcomed the U.S. interventions; some favoured annexation. For most Cubans, however, occupation by a foreign power represented a humiliating conclusion both to a devastating war and to the proclamation of independence in 1902. During each occupation the U.S. presence was widely resented and only accepted because it was regarded as temporary.

The U.S. administrations in Cuba claimed legitimacy on the grounds that Cubans could not govern themselves. Unlike the Spaniards, however, who had resisted Cuba's independence, the United States promised to educate Cubans, with a view to eventual self-government. "The American army proceeded to the conquest of the Spanish colonies, the sword in one hand and the school primer in the other", enthused a British report on the U.S. educational reforms in Cuba.¹ U.S. opinion concurred with this description. "Education is with Americans a national hobby," claimed one American. "Whenever, for whatever cause, a people has come under our national tutelage, our first thought and pains have been to put them to school. We had done so with negro and Indian, and we did so now with redoubled zeal and energy with Cubans."²

Between 1899 and 1902 the U.S. military government oversaw the construction of a significantly expanded Cuban primary school system, as well as the reorganization of secondary and higher education on the island. It identified the reform of Cuba's educational system as one of its immediate and top priorities. It dramatically increased the number of schools, recruited and trained teachers, imported textbooks, enacted school laws and developed and implemented administrative practices. The 1899 census included detailed questions on education and special census forms were sent to all schools to gather information on facilities and staffing levels. The U.S. administration created a new Department of Public Instruction, at first combined with Justice but shortly thereafter separated, and made the position of Secretary a cabinet post. During the second occupation, U.S. authorities attempted to bolster the system they had implemented. The activity in the educational sector was presented as one means of facilitating Cuban

independence. Yet at the same time, the United States was pursuing policies which vitiated this end.

Following the 1895-98 war, "a state of desolation, starvation and anarchy prevailed almost everywhere," according to General John R. Brooke, the first occupation's original commander. "The most complete political, economic and social chaos prevailed". Rebuilding required capital, which most Cubans did not have. In particular, Brooke commented, "the large capital necessary to the economical production of cane sugar precludes the small farmer from entering this field." Planters and small farmers requested government assistance "in the way of supplying cattle, farming implements and money; the latter to enable them to restore their houses". "The matter has been most carefully considered," Brooke went on, "and the conclusion reached that aid could not be given in this direction." The stated reasons appeared noble. The United States feared "encouraging and inducing pauperism". Furthermore, to provide assistance would be "to destroy the self-respect of the people by this system of paternalism", thereby facilitating "the most dangerous implanting of a spirit alien to a free people". Instead, U.S. capital provided loans and purchased Cuban land and businesses; thus the economic penetration of Cuba by the United States accelerated. This process continued throughout the second occupation. It remained only to convince Cubans that the United States knew what was best for their future.

The First Occupation, 1899-1902

In January 1899, the Spanish flag was taken down in Cuba and a U.S. military government took charge of a country that had been laid waste by war. "The country roads, mail service, public instruction, and local governments were in a state of almost complete abandonment," wrote Brooke. In addition to the widespread economic damage and severe physical hardship, only 16 per cent of school-age children attended school. Illiterates comprised nearly two thirds of the population of one and a half million. Of the 904 public schools which had existed in 1895, only 541 remained standing; four hundred of 740 private schools survived. A total of six hundred teachers remained in the country.

4 Although the Foraker Amendment of March 1899 prevented the military government from granting concessions and franchises, it did not impede the expansion of U.S. capital in sugar production, transportation, mining, utilities and other sectors of the Cuban economy. Even the ban on concessions could be surmounted, as General Leonard Wood and Sir William Van Horne demonstrated. Van Horne was a U.S.-born, naturalized Englishman who had built the railway in Canada and who led the consortium of U.S. capital which built and ran the railway in eastern Cuba.
The official aim of the U.S. occupation of Cuba was to prepare Cubans for self-government. Given both the years of dominion by Spain and the high proportion of illiteracy amongst the population, Washington contended that Cubans were not yet ready or able to govern themselves. The military government assigned itself the task of preparing them. In order to do so, "the intervening Government, deeply sensible of the importance of education to those who should be reared to become capable of self-government, and with the necessary educational qualifications to exercise their right of franchise wisely, ... dedicated a princely sum for educational purposes". Throughout the occupation the military government earmarked approximately one quarter of the budget for education, a reflection of how much importance the United States attached to educational reorganization in Cuba.

Primary education received particular attention because of its role in extending literacy. In direct contrast to the ousted Spanish authorities, U.S. policymakers argued that widespread literacy was a prerequisite for stable government. On this basis, the government denied the right to vote to Cuban illiterates unless they could lay claim to at least $250 worth of property. "Shall persons who cannot read about public affairs and do not understand the principles of popular government be allowed to vote?" queried a document on civic organization. "The tendency is to say that ignorant persons shall not be permitted to vote, but every person may have the opportunity to learn to read and be educated for citizenship at the public expense."

Why did the United States place such emphasis on literacy? Clearly, it would be necessary in the proportion of the population required to service infrastructure and foreign capital, such as clerks. In addition, the corollary of the belief that widespread literacy equalled stable government was that the enfranchisement of illiterates would lead to unstable government. The definition given by General Leonard Wood, Brooke's successor, is enlightening in this regard. He wrote to Elihu Root, Secretary of War in the United States, that "when money can be borrowed at a reasonable rate of interest and when capital is willing to invest in the island, a condition of stability will have been reached."

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8 The franchise was granted to resident Cuban males, twenty-one years and over with no criminal record who were either literate or fulfilled the property requirement or had been honourably discharged from the Cuban army. These restrictions permitted approximately 5 per cent of the population to vote. See Leonard Wood, "The Military Government of Cuba", Annals of the American Academy of Political Science, 21 (March 1903), p. 161 and Louis A. Pérez Jr., Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 182. The literacy qualification for membership in the new rural guard helped to ensure a composition acceptable to landowners.
9 Appendix to the School City Charter in Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900, Report of the Military Governor of Cuba on Civil Affairs, 1, part 4, p. 209.
On another occasion he was even more succinct. "When people ask me what I mean by stable government," he told Root, "I tell them 'money at six per cent'."\(^{11}\)

Wood expressed concern that illiterate people, if enfranchised, would "dominate the political situation" and elect "radical factions", thus threatening the attraction of investment capital to Cuba.\(^{12}\) "Radical factions" appeared to refer to any group not sympathetic to U.S. aims on the island, including Cubans desirous of political independence. The fact that advocates of independence convincingly defeated U.S.-backed conservative candidates in the municipal elections of 1900 caused Wood considerable anxiety. Writing to Washington, he expressed the hope that the next municipal elections would secure "a better class of people". If not, he argued, the United States "must choose between establishing a Central American Republic or retaining some sort of control for the time necessary to establish a stable government".\(^{13}\)

A further important factor in the consideration of literacy and "stability" was the racial breakdown of the illiterate population. According to the 1899 census, 42 per cent of illiterates ten years old and over in Cuba at the time of the intervention were "colored", although blacks and mulattoes made up only 33 per cent of the population. 72 per cent of the black population ten years old and over could neither read nor write, compared with 53 per cent of native whites and only 29 per cent of foreign whites living in Cuba.\(^{14}\) The literacy qualification disenfranchised, at a stroke, three quarters of Cuba's adult black and mulatto males, denying them the very participation in the government of the country for which so many had fought Spain.

The exclusion of so many black males did not disturb the Americans. One of Wood's biographers stated quite bluntly that "saner leaders realized that universal suffrage at that time would be a calamity. The possibility of negro dominance lay like a thunderhead on the horizon".\(^{15}\) Among these "saner leaders" was Elihu Root, who boasted that "when the history of the new Cuba comes to be written, the establishment of popular self-government, based on a limited suffrage, excluding so great a proportion of the elements which have brought ruin to Hayti and San Domingo, will be regarded as an event of the first importance".\(^{16}\)

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\(^{12}\) Quoted in Lane, p. 321.


\(^{15}\) Hagedorn, I, p. 297. Although Hagedorn omitted to use the word "male", female suffrage was not contemplated.

\(^{16}\) Quoted in ibid., p. 299.
The alternative to denying the franchise to illiterates whilst simultaneously promising to educate them was to neglect to educate them at all. However, neither U.S. rationalizations nor Cuban self-image could tolerate such a choice. The very presence of the United States in Cuba rested upon the justification of a civilizing mission; to have openly denied education to any element of the population would have been to appear no better than the defeated and despised Spanish government. In Cuban perceptions, education remained central to the concept of *Cuba Libre* and the development of the democratic nation; this development required the education of all. The all-encompassing nature of the vision forced its adherents to deny that race was even an issue in Cuba. So great was the *independentista* commitment to an inclusive, democratic society that the new Cuban Constitution of 1901 did not incorporate the literacy qualification for the franchise.\(^{17}\)

The ideologies which motivated and constrained decisions and actions on both sides were very powerful; however flimsy their basis in fact, anything other than complete adherence to the principles remained unthinkable. Even those in the United States and Cuba who regarded the prospect of the enfranchisement of the "hopeless class" with great apprehension, could not risk shattering the myths which underpinned the uneasy truce between the U.S. occupation and the Cuban independence movement.

*The "Americanization" of Education*

Under General Brooke, the military government gave priority to the provision of schoolrooms and buildings, a task undertaken partly by converting into schools the Spanish military barracks which existed in every town, but primarily by renting buildings constructed for other uses, including homes and warehouses. Creation of schoolrooms occurred under the first school law, Order 226, which itself reflected the speed with which educational change was implemented. Alexis E. Frye wrote Order 226, which he based on Spanish law, in a matter of hours. A teacher who had become independently wealthy by writing geography textbooks, Frye had volunteered his services to assist with U.S. educational work in the Philippines. The U.S. government chose instead to send him to Cuba where, in November 1899, Brooke appointed him Superintendent of Schools.

Promulgated on 6 December 1899, Order 226 provided for the creation and administrative organization of public schools. It established local boards of education to which educational powers and duties were delegated. Appointment to the boards was by mayors; election was rejected on the grounds that the authorities did not have sufficient time to organize elections and the creation of schools must have first priority. The order also established student attendance requirements, staff pay and conditions, school terms and

\(^{17}\) The property qualification was also dropped at this time. Women were excluded from the franchise; the vote was granted only to men over twenty-one years of age. Others disallowed included prisoners, the mentally incapacitated and those serving in the armed forces.
subjects of study. Under its provisions, by June 1900, 3,313 primary schoolrooms had been established. Public primary school enrolment had quadrupled to 143,000 from 36,306 in 1895. Over three thousand teachers had been employed.\textsuperscript{18}

This statistical success masked serious tensions. Resistance to continued U.S. occupation ensured scepticism about the ultimate aims of the United States. Although in 1899 "the country was clamouring for schools", Cubans did not necessarily find themselves in agreement with U.S. educational policies.\textsuperscript{19} Cubans embraced the plan to improve public instruction, and educationalists and intellectuals took an interest in U.S. theories and methods. Nonetheless, the United States remained an occupying force in a country which had spent the previous three years fighting a war for independence; therefore, not all Cubans accepted unquestioningly U.S. direction on how and what Cuban children should be taught.

The military government claimed, in an extension of its argument for being in Cuba at all, that U.S. organization of the Cuban public educational system was necessary because Cubans lacked the expertise to establish a system themselves. This claim allowed the United States to view its actions as munificent, fitting neatly into its self-defined role of purveyor of republican principles to lesser peoples. Leonard Wood himself could barely disguise his contempt for Cubans. "...We are dealing with a race that has steadily been going down for a hundred years and into which we have got to infuse new life, new principles and new methods of doing things," he maintained.\textsuperscript{20} However, given continued Cuban determination to achieve independence, and the very real possibility of aggravating resistance on the island, the occupying government remained sensitive to accusations of "americanization". "The [Cuban] people were rather suspicious of our motives and of the sincerity of our declaration that we were to ultimately withdraw from the island", Wood confessed.\textsuperscript{21}

Strategies adopted to overcome the shortage of schoolteachers reflected U.S. sensitivity to Cuban suspicions. "There has been considerable criticism and comment over the fact that American teachers have not been introduced into Cuba," Wood wrote, reflecting elsewhere that, "needless to say, these comments were not made by Cubans." The lack of sufficient numbers of Spanish-speaking U.S. teachers posed a practical dilemma. To bring English speakers to Cuba, explained Wood, "would have been regarded as an attempt to impose the English language upon the people and would probably

\textsuperscript{18} Civil Report of Major-General Leonard Wood, Military Governor of Cuba, for the period from December 20th, 1899 to December 31st, 1900, vol. 1, p. 118; Report on the Census of Cuba 1899, p. 584. An additional 25,384 children were enrolled in private schools in 1895.

\textsuperscript{19} Matthew E. Hanna, Acting Commissioner of Public Schools, First Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Island of Cuba 1900-01, for September, October, November and December 1900, vol. 1 (Habana: 1901), p. 22.

\textsuperscript{20} Quoted in Hagedorn, 1, p. 285.

have resulted in a great deal of suspicion and bad feeling.\textsuperscript{22} Although some U.S. teachers were provided in areas new to Cuban pedagogy, such as kindergarten, he concluded that the Cubans "would have considered the appointment of several thousand American teachers as an effort to 'Americanize' the children."\textsuperscript{23}

The hostility of Cubans in general and teachers in particular would have been provoked by the sight of U.S. citizens taking jobs in Cuba that Cubans themselves very much needed. Consequently, the military government made every effort to recruit teachers from the stratum of Cuban society which it believed to be most sympathetic to U.S. aims. Salaries were fixed at levels roughly equal to average teachers' salaries in the United States as "it was believed," Wood reported, "that by the maintenance of liberal salaries we could secure as teachers women from the best families in the island.\textsuperscript{24} Cubans were encouraged to view joining the profession as the best way of working for the future of their country, in the hope - unrealistic, as it transpired - that energy would thus be diverted from political activism. "Educated young Cubans," advised one U.S. citizen, "will be better employed in teaching than in talking politics or fretting about the independence of the Island."\textsuperscript{25}

Wood’s specific reference to women reflected the social conventions of both countries which approved of women teaching young children. In addition, along with its belief that it held common interests with a certain social class, the government undoubtedly shared the prevalent assumption of the time that women were inherently conservative and more passive than men. Thus, it would have expected women to be compliant with its desires. Certainly it singled out female teachers for particular praise. They "distinguished themselves from the start for the activity and zeal they put in their work," reported Enrique José Varona, Secretary of Public Instruction from May 1900 to May 1902.\textsuperscript{26} One writer enthused that "all capable observers agree with Mr. Frye that the hope of Cuba for the future rests with the women teachers...in no part of the world is the standard of social morality higher than with the women of Cuba."\textsuperscript{27} "Whatever good is to be accomplished in the schools of Cuba will have to be the work of the women," predicted another; "not

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    \item \textsuperscript{22} Civil Report of Wood, December 20th, 1899 to December 31st, 1900, 1, p. 165; Informe del Brigadier General Leonard Wood, U.S.A. Gobernador Militar de Cuba por el período de enero 1 a mayo 20 de 1902, p. 20.
    \item \textsuperscript{23} Wood, "The Military Government of Cuba", pp. 163, 164.
    \item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 12. Teachers in Havana could earn a maximum of $900 per annum. The maximum salary which could be earned in the provincial capitals was $750, falling to $600 elsewhere. The military government reported the average salary of a teacher in a city in the United States of 200,000 people or more to be $750, and in the United States as a whole $525. See Civil Report of Major-General Leonard Wood, Military Governor of Cuba, for the period from December 20th, 1899 to December 31st, 1900, 1, p. 116.
    \item \textsuperscript{26} Civil Report of Military Governor of Cuba 1899-1900, Report of Enrique José Varona, Secretary of Public Instruction, from 1 July 1899 to 30 June 1900, p. 5.
    \item \textsuperscript{27} Sylvester Baxter, "The Cuban Teachers at Harvard University", \textit{The Outlook}, 65, no. 14 (August 4, 1900), p. 778.
\end{itemize}
much can be expected at present of the men."\(^{28}\) In order to encourage women to take up teaching posts, the military government provided that male and female teachers would be paid equal salaries. During the 1900-01 school year, of 3,594 teachers employed, 2,144, or nearly 60 per cent, were women.\(^{29}\)

The military government's attempt to ensure sympathetic teaching staff through recruitment and salaries did not prove to be entirely successful. From the beginning, teachers signalled their determination to participate in decisions concerning them. Besides being strong supporters of Cuban independence, they complained about salaries, conditions and what constituted recognized teaching qualifications, forming teachers' associations to press their positions. In January 1900, one month after Wood took over from Brooke, teachers objected so vigorously to their remuneration that the military government issued a circular insisting on the generosity of teachers' pay, and adding that "teachers are earnestly advised to cease further agitation concerning salaries".\(^{30}\) The military government based its claim for the "generosity" of teachers' salaries on favourable comparisons with pay scales in the United States, but failed to acknowledge that the cost of living was higher in Cuba.

In turn, the government found little to praise in the professional abilities of the teachers, claiming that they were unqualified and untrained. Nonetheless, José Antonio González Lanuza, Secretary of Justice and Public Instruction under Brooke, took the extraordinary step of closing the island's normal schools, on the grounds that they could not provide satisfactory professional preparation. It fell to Cuban teachers to organize teacher training on the island. In April 1899, the Asociación Nacional de Maestros, Maestras y Amantes de la Niñez Cubana, itself scarcely five months old, opened what it called the Instituto Libre de Enseñanza which effectively operated as a mixed normal school.\(^{31}\) The association revealed its potential strength when it successfully lobbied for the regular payment of teachers' salaries and the separation of the Secretariat of Public Instruction from Justice, but it proved unable to persuade the military government to reopen normal schools on the island. Instead, teachers received accreditation by examination, and were required to be re-examined regularly in order to renew their certificates.\(^{32}\)

The issue of teacher training remained a contentious one. Public opinion strongly favoured the establishment of normal schools in Cuba, indeed it was "somewhat excited

\(^{28}\) Roger Clapp, "Cuban Teachers at Harvard", *Educational Review*, 20 (October 1900), p. 240. Such praise of women did not extend to consideration of female suffrage.


\(^{30}\) Civil Report of Wood, December 20th, 1899 to December 31st, 1900, 1, p. 116.

\(^{31}\) Founded on 23 January 1899, the association changed names several times until it became the Asociación Nacional de Maestros in 1913. It remained an important voice for Cuban teachers until significant political differences caused it to split in 1933.

\(^{32}\) A grade one certificate was valid for only one year, grade two for two years, and grade three for three years.
over this matter" according to Varona, who supported the move. The military government rejected the idea on the grounds that not enough qualified Cubans existed to staff normal schools. Unwilling to reopen the normal schools and unable to bring U.S. teachers to Cuba, the military government decided instead to send Cuban teachers to the United States for training, a plan which, it argued, would be more cost-effective than opening normal schools in Cuba.

The first such scheme, conceived by Alexis Frye, provoked Cuban accusations of "americanization". "The idea of this excursion met great opposition at the start," reported a U.S. school inspector, "and a great deal was said against it, not only in the press but in speeches." The idea of women travelling unchaperoned also engendered resistance. Not surprisingly, however, teachers were very much in favour of a visit to the United States, at no cost to themselves. Over one third of the national teaching body was chosen to attend, elected from each municipality by their peers. In June 1900, nearly 1,300 teachers from across the island travelled to Harvard University for a six week summer school, fully funded by the military government, Harvard and donors in the United States. Upon the completion of the summer school they travelled to historical, educational and industrial sites in New York, Washington (where they were entertained by the President) and Philadelphia, before returning to Cuba.

The event generated a great deal of press interest in the United States where it was widely pronounced a success, "practically devoid of unpleasant or unfortunate incidents", according to Wood. The U.S. hosts had at first been suspicious of their guests as "it had been widely reported that they would represent a rather low social order". In spite of these fears, Cuban women in particular proved their good breeding by not fulfilling "visions of universal cigarette smoking among the women". Educationalists expressed mixed responses to the trip, however. One complained that the Cubans were like "grown-up children" who had little desire to work hard, failed to concentrate and failed to appreciate the opportunity which they had been given. For their part, the Cuban teachers were not always happy about the curriculum, and complained particularly about the history course, criticizing "the matter as well as the method of the lectures". The only course which both sides agreed had been successful was that offered on kindergarten instruction.

34 Wilcox in Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900, 1, part 4, p. 219.
35 60 per cent of the teachers who went on the trip were female.
36 Civil Report of Wood, December 20th, 1899 to December 31st, 1900, 1, p. 119. He was stretching the truth somewhat, as we shall see.
37 Baxter, p. 777.
38 Clapp, pp. 236-237.
39 Ibid., p. 234.
In addition, it is interesting to note the divergence of opinion regarding racial conflict on the trip, given the presence of black Cubans among the teachers. One U.S. observer remarked that there was "not the slightest indication of any drawing of the color line" between Cubans, although it was unclear how the "racially prejudiced" in the United States would react to black Cubans. Another, in contrast, maintained that "the color problem" between Cubans "gave the managers of the expedition continual trouble".40

Pedagogical accomplishment had not been the only, or possibly even the main, aim of the expedition. Positive exposure to the United States was at least as important to the military government, and this was achieved. One teacher confessed to a Boston newspaper that he very much regretted his previous anti-U.S. sentiments.41 An assessment of the venture for the British Board of Education concluded that "probably the friendly recollections carried back to inoculate Cuban society with pro-American sentiments will prove the chief result of the expedition".42 Wood himself remarked that the teachers' "journey was valuable not so much from what they learned from books as from what they saw and absorbed by going about in the country. Of course," he added, "they received a certain amount of valuable instruction also, but this, I have always considered, was secondary."43

The Harvard trip was only the first of several teacher training expeditions to the United States. With the support of Matthew E. Hanna, Commissioner of Public Schools from June 1900, who argued that "the most desirable plan is that of carefully and thoroughly training a number of our teachers in one or more good Normal Schools of the United States", two hundred more teachers travelled to Harvard in 1901.44 The military government also made an arrangement for the normal school in New Paltz, New York, to receive Cuban teachers each summer. Sixty were sent in September 1901 and an agreement was reached with the school to take a yearly quota of Cuban teachers for training for ten years. The teachers were to be instructed in English. Negotiations also began to send male teachers to a normal school in Connecticut.

The United States aimed to build in Cuba a corps of teachers, "perfectly instructed, and all Cuban". As a result, the military government believed, Cubans would feel

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40 Baxter, pp. 778-779; Clapp, p. 240.  
41 See Baxter, p. 782.  
44 Hanna, First Annual Report of the Public Schools 1900-01, 1, p. 20. It should be added that it was not just teachers who were given the benefit of education in the United States. The U.S.-based Cuban Educational Association provided finance for Cuban students to attend colleges and universities in the United States. The programme was directed at an elite group in Cuba in order to make them more sympathetic to U.S. aims. The beneficiaries of the Cuban Educational Association's programmes were white men. Students who reached university level almost invariably came from wealthy families and were generally expected to become the future politicians of Cuba. Over 2,500 went to the United States in the first years. See Louis A. Pérez Jr., "The Imperial Design: Politics and Pedagogy in Occupied Cuba, 1899-1902", Cuban Studies, 12, no. 2 (July 1982), pp. 13-14 and Cuba and the United States, p. 130; Foner, 2, pp. 463-464.
increasing confidence in the U.S.-trained teachers of their children, and ultimately Cubans themselves would "begin to suggest the convenience of employing American teachers in certain higher teaching subjects, not only as instructors of children, but also as instructors of teachers". Cubans were not so persuaded. The strength of opposition in Cuba to the training of Cuban teachers in the United States can be gauged by the fact that the Cuban government, in one of its first acts following independence, cancelled the New Paltz contract in 1902.

For those teachers who did not travel to the United States, the government organized summer schools in Cuba. In contrast to those sent abroad for training, teachers who attended the summer schools were required to pay tuition fees. The government caused further grievance by insisting that receipt of salaries would be conditional upon attendance. As a result, teachers, particularly in Havana, refused to pay or feigned sickness in order not to attend. The military government retorted that teachers' salaries were so generous that complaints about paying for summer school indicated "an ungrateful disposition". "The teachers of Cuba," opined the Commissioner of Public Schools, "are exceptionally fortunate to receive their salaries during the vacation period." With neither side prepared to concede, the agitation which resulted disrupted training, forcing the military government to acknowledge that, although the schools displayed "remarkable pedagogic spirit", Havana's at least had not been a success.

Books provided another important means of familiarizing Cuban teachers and children with U.S. culture. Alexis Frye wrote the official training manual for Cuban teachers, entitled Manual para maestros. When the military government sought bids for the provision of textbooks for children, submissions from Cubans attracted criticism for "containing defects caused by the hurry with which they have been prepared". The textbooks offered by U.S. publishers escaped this particular criticism by not being prepared for a Cuban audience at all; instead, the publishers simply provided Spanish translations of U.S. textbooks. These were judged "excellent" and "the best", in spite of the fact that "they do not meet the conditions of Cuba" and "the readers treat of northern scenes, conditions and customs that are totally unknown to the children of Cuba". Direct translations also posed difficulties, with Hanna noting that one syllable English words could become three syllable Spanish words. The military government nonetheless accepted the U.S. bids; it deemed such defects an acceptable price for Cuban children to pay in order

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46 Hanna, First Annual Report of the Public Schools 1900-01, 1, p. 102.
to fulfill the "very natural desire" to follow educational methods used in the United States, already proven there to be "exceedingly efficient" and "satisfactory".50

One of the priorities both in teacher training and in the classroom was the emphasis given to learning the English language. Frye's Manual para maestros stressed the importance of the language in the educational system. Although he was against the use of English as the principal language of schooling, Frye argued that it should be taught to all Cuban children, and that the ability to teach English should be a requirement for Cuban teachers.51 In 1901, seventy-nine teachers travelled to Harvard to learn English. The idea that citizens of the United States should learn Spanish was never raised, much less considered. Instead, the military government highlighted the advantages of learning English in a country which, it argued, was destined to have close commercial and cultural relations with the United States. English was promoted as the language of trade, of success and especially of the future.

In addition to initiating a course of study which mirrored that offered in U.S. schools, the military government made a concerted effort to introduce U.S. political beliefs and practices to Cuba's children, and through them their parents, with the School-City programme. At the invitation of Leonard Wood, in October 1900 Wilson Gill, President of the Patriotic League in the United States, introduced to Cuba this "method of moral and civic training", originally designed for immigrants to the United States.52 By 1901, over one hundred school-cities had been successfully established in five provinces. Children organized their schools into miniature cities, with their own mayors, councils, police force, judiciary and other civic bodies. As well as "the moulding of private and civic character during the susceptible period of childhood and early youth", the military government claimed that "the object is to teach principles and practices of citizenship and free government rather than any particular form of government".53

Not everyone accepted this latter claim, as indicated by one Wood biographer's assertion that the programme was "not a governmental attempt to 'brainwash' a country's youth".54 However, in common with his government, Gill believed that Cubans, having just been freed from the Spanish monarchy, had no understanding of citizenship and therefore needed to "look elsewhere for experience and forms of government". It was to

52 Appendix to the School-City Charter, in Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900, 1, part 4, p. 199.
the United States, "the greatest and most successful of all republics", to which Cubans must chiefly look.\(^5\) The School-City programme reflected this view.

The Notes for Organizers in the appendix to the School-City Charter advised that "it is well to look at the unsuccessful republics to see the cause of their misfortunes, and at successful republics to see the cause of their success". Hispanic American republics certainly did not fall into the latter category. In case anyone had any doubts about this, the notes reminded organizers "of chronic revolutions in Central and South America, where the people are impulsive and easily led by hot-headed orators who...collect exorbitant taxes and blackmail from the people so they can live in ease and luxury without doing much work". Even worse, the orators "make fiery speeches and incite a lot of men to get out their machetes and guns and kill or drive away the other orators. In Colombia this sometimes happens as often as four times a year". The principles of successful government advocated by the charter were based, of course, on the political organization of the United States. To ensure that no one missed the point, the notes, echoing Gill's belief, stated that "the United States is the most successful of all human governments".\(^6\)

The emphasis in the organization of the school-cities reflected the political bias of the military government. Although it professed to support eventual Cuban independence, it frowned upon and suppressed manifestations of genuine enthusiasm for this cause. The failure of Cubans to accept wholeheartedly U.S. reforms was cited as evidence of their unreadiness for independence and their continued need for U.S. tutelage. Further contradictions inevitably arose as the United States pursued its stated aim of preparing Cubans for self-government by endeavouring to force Cubans to conform to U.S. norms and expectations, even as the majority of Cubans persisted in their allegiance to Cuba Libre.

Cubans were not the only people caught in this contradiction, as the case of Alexis Frye demonstrates. Frye, who had willingly supported and encouraged the importation of U.S. history, culture and language into Cuba, and who took Cuban teachers to experience all three first hand in the United States, nonetheless lost favour with Wood. Ostensibly Frye had established too many schoolrooms too quickly, neglecting to ensure that the provision of materials kept pace. "To have gone forward," remarked Wood, "would have been to have conducted the whole affair in an irresponsible and reckless manner."\(^7\) In March 1900, he issued a telegraph ordering a halt to the opening of new schools, although this caused overcrowding in some areas and left others without any school at all. The official explanation did not account for the deep animosity between the two men, however. As a protesting Frye pointed out, his actions fell within the scope of the extant school law.

\(^6\) Appendix to the School-City Charter, pp. 205-206, 207.
\(^7\) Civil Report of Wood, December 20th, 1899 to December 31st, 1900, 1, p. 162.
Furthermore, he argued, enthusiastic Cubans were responsible for the rapid establishment of schools and they needed assistance, not restrictions. Many local school boards showed their support for Frye on this point by resigning.

Wood reacted by ordering Lieutenant Matthew Hanna, someone in whom "Wood felt that he had found a kindred spirit", to draw up a new school law to replace Order 226.⁵⁸ Order 368 of 1 August 1900 became the new school law on the island and was used by Wood in an attempt to undermine Frye, who was too popular with teachers to be dismissed outright.⁵⁹ Wood published Order 368 during Frye's absence at the Harvard summer school. In addition, the order created the post of Commissioner of Public Schools and made it senior to the post of Superintendent of Schools held by Frye. Wood then appointed Hanna as the new Commissioner.

The replacement of Order 226 required justification. Hanna argued that the order had not provided the material support necessary to the successful maintenance of the many schools which it had created. His specific criticisms included rental, rather than ownership, of school buildings, the lack of a uniform course of study, no recognized plan for summer normal schools, meagre official reporting and poor enforcement of attendance. Overcoming the defects of Order 226, according to Hanna "was a work of considerable difficulty and has demanded a great amount of tact and patience".⁶⁰ That the problems in the educational system were not all caused by the inadequacies of Order 226 was demonstrated by the fact that they survived the implementation of Order 368. The cause lay deeper. In any event, the evidence indicates that political rather than educational concerns motivated the replacement of Order 226. Wood reported that "after a careful examination of the school laws of a number of different states, it was decided to adopt, with certain modifications, the school law of Ohio", although the fact that Hanna had taught school for four years in that state was perhaps more influential in determining the choice.⁶¹ Hanna based Order 368 on the school law of Ohio, in spite of his own admission that conditions in Cuba were very different. Thus, in addition to undermining Frye, Order 368 was used as a method of administrative reform, changing the school law from one based on Spanish practice to one which more closely resembled that of the United States, and replacing General Brooke's law with one ordered by and promulgated under Wood. Consequently, rather than overcoming clearly identified problems in the Cuban educational system, Order 368 became a new source of conflict between the military government, determined to pursue its own agenda in administrative reform, and Cubans in the public educational sector attempting to protect their economic and political interests.

⁵⁸ Hagedorn, 1. p. 196.
⁵⁹ Originally Order 279 of June 1900, modified by Order 368.
Local school boards in particular had not conformed to expectation. "As a general thing," commented Varona, "they fulfilled their duties most languidly." The government complained that the boards hired and fired teaching staff based on family and political affiliations. This practice was considered to have its roots in the power of the mayor to appoint school boards, granted by Order 226. In contrast, Order 368 provided for the election of school boards. Hanna believed that he had therefore provided "every reason to hope that the objectionable features of a too intimate relationship between the existing school system and the politics of the Island...will no longer exist". In spite of the fact that "it has been stated by some that the time had not arrived for the enforcement of a law which placed the correction of evil administration so completely in the hands of the people", Hanna was able to report that "the abuses of the law have been few." The new elected bodies allowed him to conclude that his law was "the most democratic Order that has been published during the Military Occupation of the Island of Cuba".

Cuba's teachers objected to aspects of the new law. In particular, they protested against the provisions limiting teachers to yearly contracts and salaries based on the number of students attending class. Before it departed Cuba, the military government altered the basis for the payment of salaries to reflect ability, but it remained unmoved on the issue of the one year contract. "The most intelligent men and women," argued Frye on behalf of the teachers, "will not volunteer to make teaching their life profession until the law assures them permanence of employment." Although Hanna maintained that the one year contract could only be used to dismiss incompetent teachers, in practice this was not always the case; some even alleged that the law was used to dismiss teachers "too fervent for early Cuban independence". Opposition to Order 368 amongst teachers at the Harvard summer school was so great that Wood, in the United States at the time, felt it necessary to travel to Boston to calm the situation.

Nor did Order 368 perform to expectation by overcoming the corruption which attended the scramble for teaching jobs. Instead of giving appointments to friends and families, elected board members traded jobs for votes. Hanna accused Cubans of failing to understand the importance of school board elections and blamed electoral fraud on this failure. At the same time, however, he castigated teachers for participating in politics.

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62 Civil Report of Military Governor of Cuba 1899-1900, Report of Enrique José Varona, Secretary of Public Instruction, from 1 July 1899 to 30 June 1900, p. 5.
63 Hanna, First Annual Report of the Public Schools 1900-1901, 1, p. 10.
65 Ibid., p. 18.
68 Wood appears to have had difficulty doing this. The teachers, supported by Frye, accused him of being a tyrant and a despot. See Hagedorn, p. 303 and Hugh Thomas, Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), p. 447. Interestingly, it was at this time that Wood proposed that Wilson Gill introduce the school-cities to Cuba.
Although he stated that they did so only to secure appointments, as though they had no other reasons, Hanna nonetheless passed an order prohibiting political activity on the part of teachers. Declaring that the teaching profession required the complete engagement of members' time, the order rendered teachers liable for breach of contract for neglect of duty if they participated in politics. They would be allowed to vote, "but the right to actively engage in a political campaign is denied to them".

There can be little doubt that one of the reasons for the hostility between Wood and Frye resulted from Frye's support for Cuban teachers in their conflicts with the government, which intensified following the implementation of Order 368. During the preparation of Manual para maestros, a school inspector reported that "Mr. Frye and his work were violently opposed by the press of the Island. Some of the papers, referring to it, said that this manual would be given the teachers and American methods forced into the schools". In response to the outcry, Frye had declared at the front of the book "absolute freedom to every teacher, to employ their own method of teaching". This declaration reassured the teachers, and marked the beginning of Frye's alliance with them.

According to one of Wood's biographers, Frye was "unstable and difficult to work with" because "he magnified and distorted issues, organized Cuban teacher protests, appealed to [Harvard president] Eliot and [Elihu] Root, and wrote political columns in the press". Frye eventually tendered his resignation after teachers began campaigning against the proposed Platt Amendment, apparently with his support. Wood complained to Root that Frye "was a very dangerous man on the island, and his influence on the teachers and children was in the direction of the most intense radicalism as to the future relations between Cuba and the United States". For his part, Frye believed that Wood had sabotaged the old school law to discredit Brooke. At no time does Frye seem to have advocated anything other than the declared U.S. aim of self-government, along the U.S. model, for Cuba; however, he took the meaning of Cuban independence quite literally. "Cuba must teach her sons," he argued, "that whatever nation tramples on her freedom is a tyrant, and she must be ever ready, with life and fortune, to guard the freedom of the fatherland against any foreign power whatever".

Frye's commitment accounted for the fact that his popularity amongst teachers remained unabated despite the cessation of his formal duties. Upon his resignation in

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69 Hanna, First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Schools 1900-1901, 2, p. 84.
70 Wilcox, Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900, 1, part 4, p. 223.
71 Frye, p. 3. Frye scholar Edward D. Fitchen argues that the manual was "a turning point in [Frye's] acceptance by all Cubans". See Edward D. Fitchen, "Alexis E. Frye and Cuban Education, 1898-1902", Revista Interamericana, 2, no. 2 (1972), p. 139. Equally, it appears to have been a turning point in Frye's understanding of the Cuban desire for independence.
72 Hitchman, p. 52.
73 Quoted in Hagedorn, 1, p. 334.
74 From Frye's papers, quoted in Fitchen, p. 146.
January 1901, he married a Cuban teacher; following independence, the Asociación de Maestros Públlicos made him its honorary president for some years. "There was no secret about Mr. Frye's popularity," the New York Evening Post maintained. "It sprang from his hearty entering into the hopes and aspirations of the Cubans. He did not, like the rest of official America, cease cheering for 'Cuba Libre' the moment the war was over and as soon as the island began to appear as a very fruitful Naboth's Vineyard for us to seize upon. Mr. Frye always spoke, and spoke openly, as if the United States intended to keep its solemn promise, and as if Cuba were to be launched as an independent nation. This made him popular with the Cubans. It appears to have made him unpopular with the American military government." Frye's failure in Wood's eyes was to support the cause of Cuban independence.

The Reform of Secondary Education

Although the military government appointed U.S. citizens to oversee the construction of the primary educational system, it left the reform of secondary and higher education to Enrique José Varona, a highly respected Cuban intellectual whom Wood appointed as Secretary of Public Instruction in May 1900. The almost exclusive use of the secondary system by the sector of the population which the military government believed to be already sympathetic to its aims, the white elite, and the very limited numbers affected, ensured that reforms could be entrusted to the care of a cooperative Cuban. Varona was a critic of the Spanish system of education, particularly at the secondary level. He deplored both the abstract content and the low educational standards in the institutos, or the pre-university secondary schools, which were academic in nature rather than vocational or technical. "The institutos were only so by name," he claimed. "Nothing was taught in them. They were the scene of the most barefaced traffic in certificates of excellence and degrees...Students would leave these colleges furnished with bachelor degrees who could not write a fairly well spelled letter."

Varona advocated secondary education emphasizing vocational requirements and scientific reasoning to replace the Spanish system in Cuba, a position which coincided with official U.S. views. He based his reorganization of secondary education, known as the Plan Varona, on his belief that "all our educational work should rest upon a strictly

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75 In 1943, a bronze bust of Frye was placed on the Paseo in Old Havana. Ramiro Guerra, at that time a teacher, knew Frye and described him as proceeding always with a "noble and elevated spirit". See Ramiro Guerra, "El curso especial de verano en Harvard para maestros cubanos en 1900", Trimestre, 4, no. 3 (julio-agosto-septiembre de 1950), p. 35.

76 Quoted in Foner, 2, p. 463.

77 In the 1900-01 school year, only 601 students were enrolled in the country's institutos. See Civil Report of Military Governor of Cuba 1899-1900, Report of Enrique José Varona, Secretary of Public Instruction, from 1 July 1900 to 31 December 1900, p. 24.

78 Ibid., p. 1.
scientific basis, in order that it be objective, experimental and practical".\textsuperscript{79} To accomplish this, he sought completely to "alter the character of instruction, so that it would cease to be purely verbal and rhetorical and become objective and experimental, and cause the pupil not to limit himself to seeing and hearing, but impel him to learn to work and to investigate personally".\textsuperscript{80} "Two or three men of letters are sufficient for Cuba," he claimed, "but she cannot get along without several hundred engineers. Here is the nucleus of my reform."\textsuperscript{81} He shortened the length of study for a bachillerato, or instituto degree, by one year to four years, and reduced the number of subjects by removing some of the less practical, such as Latin. He substituted universal history for the history of Spain and added physics, chemistry, biology and natural history to the curriculum.\textsuperscript{82} English and French became optional subjects. In addition, new schools of stenography and typing, commerce, land surveying and agriculture were founded.\textsuperscript{83}

In an attempt to improve standards in secondary education, Varona's plan set the minimum age of attendance at fourteen. In exceptional circumstances, younger children might be admitted, but none younger than thirteen "to avoid the danger that what is a concession for exceptional cases should be converted into an easy way of evading the law".\textsuperscript{84} Such measures, argued Varona, were necessary to check "the unwise desire of so many families to see their children furnished with diplomas and degrees as early as possible" and in particular to ensure that "private interests are prevented from speculating with this desire, to the prejudice of Cuban youth and to the danger of this country's culture and productive capacity".\textsuperscript{85}

The Cuban elite resisted Varona's plan, not least because most of the University and instituto staff did not hold the professional qualifications it required and so were dismissed. New appointments were made on the basis of competitive examinations. The plan altered student examinations in an attempt to test understanding, rather than memorization, leading to complaints that standards had become too rigorous. The removal of Latin from the curriculum of the institutos proved a further source of grievance. "What

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{80} Quoted in Aurelio Hevia, "General Leonard Wood and Public Instruction in Cuba", \textit{Inter-America}, 4 (October 1920), p. 12. This article is wrongly attributed to Hevia in the English translation which appeared in \textit{Inter-America}. It was written by Ramiro Guerra and originally published in \textit{Cuba Contemporánea}, 23 (1920) and published again as a pamphlet in 1959.
\textsuperscript{81} Quoted in ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{82} Order 267, 30 June 1900. Physical education was also added, but does not appear to have been implemented.
\textsuperscript{83} Ramiro Guerra, "Fundación de la escuela pública cubana (1899-1902), Trimestre, 4, no. 4 (octubre-noviembre-diciembre 1950), pp. 133-134. The article was originally published in 1920. It was under Varona that the University of Havana was moved from the old city to its present site in Vedado.
\textsuperscript{85} Civil Report of Military Governor of Cuba 1899-1900, Report of Enrique José Varona, from 1 July 1899 to 30 June 1900, p. 10. The minimum age requirement left an age gap between primary and secondary education; however, the number of students affected by this gap, those able to complete their primary education and do so in only six years, was very small.
we need," Varona insisted in response, "is to improve in all respects our material conditions, in order to ensure that the great inert mass of our wretched population is law abiding and enlightened, before we can sit down to enjoy Virgil or decipher Horace." 86

While Varona and Wood appear to have had a good working relationship, it has been argued that Varona placed emphasis on practical training not only out of antipathy towards Spanish education, but also as a means of countering U.S. influence on the island. He aimed to create a new professional middle class in Cuba, without which, he believed, the country would be unable to withstand the impact of the United States in the development of its own national identity. 87 Nonetheless, he failed to include the history or geography of Cuba in the plan of studies for the institutos, on the grounds that adequate textbooks could not be found. Although he founded a school in the University to train instructors for teachers, he did not reopen the normal schools closed by his predecessor. Instead, he complied with the strategy of sending Cuban teachers to the United States for training. His plans for a new type of educational system in Cuba were hampered as Cubans attempted to work within an externally imposed order, rather than themselves building a new nation.

Private Education

While the new system of public education extended educational opportunities to many Cubans who previously had none, it did not replace the private schools which had served the elite under the Spanish. The U.S. occupation facilitated the introduction of new actors. Missionaries representing the main Protestant churches in the United States moved to Cuba during the occupation and founded schools in the course of their missionary work, often under the auspices of U.S. corporations. They provided another means for the penetration of U.S. culture and values into Cuba, following the U.S. curriculum, using U.S. textbooks and teaching in English. The cheaper fees of missionary schools attracted Cubans who could not normally afford private education.

Escuelitas, a continuation of the colonial amigos, comprised the majority of private schools. Hanna described them as "miserable little schools, located in the worst rooms of the home of the teacher, badly supplied...badly lighted, badly ventilated and often taught by men or women who are scarcely able to read or write". 88 He believed that, given the improvements in the public system, escuelitas would soon die away. However, he neither

86 Enrique José Varona, "Las reformas en la escuela superior" in Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Leonard Wood: La escuela pública cubana quedó fundada durante su mando (La Habana: Editorial Lex, 1959), p 50. Varona's pamphlet was originally published in 1900.
anticipated nor desired that private education would cease altogether. "The better [private schools] still remain and there will be work for them for many years to come," Hanna wrote.89 In fact, he argued, "the Island needs the assistance of every good private school, and far from discouraging them they should be encouraged in every possible way".90 Good private institutions, he maintained, making an argument that would be repeated for many years, were needed to fill the gap left by the shortage of public schools.

Initially the military government chose not to regulate private education in any way, although Spanish law provided a precedent to ensure satisfactory material conditions. It soon reconsidered, however, as, in Hanna's words, "the feeling is gradually growing that provision should be made in the School Law for a more careful supervision of the private schools of the Island".91 In particular, Cubans expressed concern over the need to protect the employment conditions of teachers in private schools, to supervise teaching competence and to obtain educational data from the schools. General opinion, Hanna wrote, held that effective government inspection and supervision would secure these ends, resulting in the protection of good schools and the closure of bad ones. The Constitutional Convention reinforced this opinion by voting in favour of state supervision of all levels of education and educational qualification, while allowing the free establishment of schools.

The government nonetheless showed some reluctance to extend regulation. Varona acknowledged that it was in the public interest that private schools be of a high standard but added that "it is difficult to determine up to what point the Government should intervene". The debate was resolved by Order 4 of January 1902 which gave the government the right to authorize private schools, to require proof of the competence of their teachers, to carry out health and hygiene inspections and to demand monthly reports from each school. "To go any further," Varona wrote, "would be to invade the rights of professional liberty." But he had more serious concerns. "In many cases the Government might stumble against very grave difficulties," he went on, "such as in the case of the sectarian schools."92

Although the military government had disestablished the Church in Cuba, it signalled that it was not prepared to challenge religious private schools. To have done so would have meant confronting the growing influence of U.S. Protestant missionaries as well as alienating the wealthy Spaniards whom it believed to be natural allies and who showed a continued preference for private Catholic education. U.S. administrators admired the Spaniards, noting their supposed superiority to Cubans in business skills. "They are people of order," opined Wood, "and make excellent citizens."93 The authorities actively encouraged Spanish immigration as a means of compensating for low levels of

89 Ibid., p. 17.
90 Ibid., p. 139.
91 Ibid., p. 23.
educational attainment in Cuba, whitening the population and counteracting Cuban nationalism. Interference with private education would have undermined the cultivation of Spanish support.

Although Wood reported a "general tendency" to abandon private schools for public ones, Hanna commented that Cubans still tended to assume that private schools were superior. "It is not uncommon," he observed, "to find a father sending his children to a private school where he pays their tuition...when he has a free public school at his door." Daughters of the elite were sent to private school in order to receive religious education and to segregate them from boys; sons were educated privately to maintain and affirm social status. Both daughters and sons were sent to private schools in order to avoid the black and mulatto children who increasingly took advantage of the public system.

The Second Occupation, 1906-1909

Cuban determination to achieve political independence ultimately forced annexationists in both countries to abandon their hopes for political union, making the continued U.S presence untenable. In May 1902, Cuba became an independent republic. The U.S. withdrawal from Cuba did not, however, signify the end of U.S. involvement in Cuban affairs. The United States ensured its continued intervention in Cuban political and economic decisions by insisting, as the price of its departure from the island, on the incorporation of the notorious Platt Amendment into the new Cuban Constitution of 1901. The most broadly drawn clause, only one of eight, allowed the United States "to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty", or effectively at will. The U.S. occupation had facilitated the takeover of the essential elements of the Cuban economy by U.S. capital and the Platt Amendment provided the political means necessary to protect U.S. interests. The enforced passage of the amendment enhanced Cuban distrust of U.S. motives towards their country. To add insult to injury, the United States insisted on congratulating itself for its generosity in accepting the amendment, "the cornerstone which

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94 Black immigration was not allowed during the U.S. occupations.
97 The British Legation in Havana commented that the U.S. position in Cuba "was so secure, their influence so unquestioned, that any demands they might choose to make hereafter, on a Cuban government, once established, would of necessity have to be met. Their action then in trying to wrench an unwilling consent from the [Constitutional Convention] Delegates, and to make it appear as a spontaneous expression of their views, seems to have been as unnecessary as it certainly has been productive of suspicion and ill feeling". Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO5 2465 (1901), political no. 2, 1 March 1901.
serves to protect and sustain [Cuba's] sovereignty and independence", guaranteeing her "equality of rights and privileges in the concert of nations".98

In 1903, Cuba and the United States signed a reciprocity treaty which gave Cuban agricultural products, particularly sugar, preferential access to the U.S. market in return for reduced tariffs on U.S. imports, which were often manufactured from raw materials produced in Cuba. The priority given to sugar encouraged its development as the country's most important crop, with production rising from 283,651 tons in 1900 to 1,183,347 tons in 1905.99 Although its economy was based on agriculture, the concentration on sugar ensured the island would have to import food staples. The economic weight accorded to sugar in turn led to greater concentration of land ownership and more U.S. investment. U.S. enterprises, such as the United Fruit Company, owned 60 per cent of Cuban land by 1905.100 The preferential access allowed to goods from the United States discouraged the development of a local manufacturing base, as undercapitalized Cubans were unable to compete with U.S. industry. These conditions formed the pattern for the economy of the republic, consolidating the unequal economic relationship between Cuba and the United States. The Reciprocity Treaty acted as the economic equivalent of the Platt Amendment.

The sugar industry profoundly affected employment patterns. Corporate land holding prevented the acquisition of land by small farmers. Hence, many rural people turned to wage work and became heavily dependent for survival on employment by landowners. Landowners required the bulk of their labour for the sugar harvest, or zafra, which lasted for only a few weeks of the year, leaving a large body of usually unskilled, floating unemployed for the remainder of the year. This group essentially operated as a reserve body of labour for the cane growers.

While U.S. capital controlled land, Spaniards dominated financial and commercial affairs on the island. Spanish businesses also showed a marked preference for hiring Spaniards, thus denying Cubans other avenues of employment. "Cubans," remarked Charles Magoon, Provisional Governor during the second occupation, "have noted that a majority of the inhabitants of many towns of the island, including in Havana, is foreign."101 It was these foreigners, he observed, who were engaged in and benefiting from commerce on the island.

Given that foreigners largely blocked the participation of Cubans in the island's economy, the role of the Cuban government as an employer took on tremendous importance. Government remained virtually the only sector to which Cubans had

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98 Cuba, Informe de la Administración Provisional desde 13 de octubre de 1906 hasta el 1 de diciembre de 1907 por Charles E. Magoon, Gobernador Provisional (Habana: Rambla y Bouza, 1908), p. 4.
100 Pérez, Cuba, p. 197. Spaniards owned a further 15 per cent of the land.
101 Cuba, Informe de la Administración Provisional desde 13 de octubre de 1906 hasta el 1 de diciembre de 1907, p. 33.
unfettered access. Political power provided one of the few routes Cubans had for capital accumulation. Consequently, competition for power, and for the jobs which politicians distributed once elected, became fierce. Such circumstances bred corruption. Members of Cuba's privileged classes made their fortunes whilst holding political office.  

The overwhelming presence of foreign capital in agricultural production, mining, finance and infrastructure such as railways and utilities which the first occupation facilitated, particularly frustrated the ambitions of black Cubans. That blacks were fully prepared and able to take advantage of new opportunities was evidenced by the increase in the black literacy rate from 24.5 per cent in 1899 to 45 per cent in 1907. Blacks believed they had much to gain from independence, confident that the end of Spanish dominion would bring an end to discrimination and expand economic opportunity; however, the U.S. occupations reinforced racial prejudice on the island and the concentration of economic activity and political power in white hands.  

Tensions arose ineluctably from the lack of economic opportunities available to Cubans. Political corruption, already much in evidence by the time of the presidential election of 1905, was a direct consequence of an economy geared to foreign benefit. The importance of political favour in sustaining so many Cubans ensured that the election would be contested vigorously. The losing side forfeited not just political power, but the allocation of jobs and contracts that went with control of government. The election was fought less for principle or policy than for political and financial reward.  

Allegations of fraud rather than any substantive policy differences resulted in the opposition Liberals refusing to accept the re-election of President Tomás Estrada Palma following the 1905 presidential campaign. "There is no doubt but that the last elections were absolutely fraudulent," reported a British resident of Trinidad. "The outs or liberals were really in a majority of quite two to one, but the boxes were stuffed and every trick known at American [sic] elections played and improved on, the police even going so far as

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102 A British landowner in Cuba complained to the Foreign Office that [Cuban President] "Palma came here they say $8,000 in debt, he is known to be worth over $500,000 now and is surrounded by a lot of robbers in the Administration, and I am afraid that Sir William Van Horne taught the Administration first how nice it was to accept large sums for concessions and so grow rich rapidly". See letter from Harry Garnett in Trinidad to Sir Edward Grey, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 56 (1906), 18 September 1906.


104 It should be noted that many Cubans argued that the United States introduced racism to Cuba. This position cannot be substantiated given that Cuba had been a slave society and racism is otherwise documented. It is also true that outside observers often commented on an apparent lack of racial prejudice in Cuba. Discrimination appears to have been associated with economic and social disparity; mixing of races and acceptance of blacks was much more common among the poor, which included most blacks, than among elite Cubans, who were almost exclusively white. There can be little doubt, however, that the U.S. occupations intensified racism on the island and introduced some of the forms in which racism manifested itself.
to prevent the liberal country people from going to the poll at all. An armed rebellion led by the losing side broke out in August 1906. Estrada Palma appealed for U.S. intervention. When U.S. mediation failed to resolve the differences, Washington exercised the Platt Amendment and provisional U.S. government, under judge Charles E. Magoon, returned to Cuba.

The 1906 rebellion was not just about squabbling over spoils amongst the island's elite. The U.S. determination that Cuba's white property owners should run the island continued to motivate its actions. Many Cubans, including the blacks who had made up at least half of the rebel army in the 1895-98 war and over two thirds of the rebels in 1906, repudiated Washington's position that Cuba owed its independence to the United States. "Notwithstanding the whisperings of knowledge and reason," complained one army administrator, "Cubans as yet credit Cuba's independence of Spain to Cuban deeds." This was not the worst of their presumptions, however. "Having taken," the administrator went on, "as [the blacks] think, so effective a part in securing the independence of their country, they are inclined to demand a corresponding part in its administration."

The United States and its supporters on the island had other plans for Cuba. "The essential question...is not one of race," protested one U.S. writer disingenuously, "but of the control of the Island on the one hand by those who by many years of nomadic life, looting and marauding have lost much of the disposition to labor and much of the sense of civic responsibility." No matter that nomadic life was forced on people who could not find work in their own country. "The Conservative men of Cuba are determined that element shall not become their governors, but there is great danger that this will occur if order is not enforced with a strong hand." The same writer, a U.S. businessman with close links to U.S. government, warned that "capital will not be invested in important permanent improvements, like railway extensions, tramways and new mills until order under some form of government is permanently assured". The "mission" of the United States should be "to give that assurance". Furthermore, Cuba's future would actually be "bright" if good government was restored, bringing with it certain conditions, including "the return of blacks to honest labor".

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105 Harry Garnett to Sir Edward Grey, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 56 (1906), 18 September 1906.
107 Ibid., p. 630.
109 Ibid., p. 142.
110 Ibid., p. 146.
The Problems in Public Education

When the provisional U.S. government arrived to administer Cuba in 1906, the problems which were to plague public education for the next half century were already apparent. The shortage of schools was identified as one of the most pressing but no school construction programme had been planned. In 1902, the Secretary of Public Instruction, Eduardo Yero Buduén, had resisted recommendations to build schools on the grounds of lack of financial resources, arguing, against the evidence, that the public would be scandalized at the allocation of funds for this purpose. Meanwhile, government expenditure for the rental of buildings used as schools increased steadily, until by the 1907-08 school year the cost exceeded one thousand dollars a day. The practice of renting in turn created further difficulties. In particular, the buildings used were often unsuitable as schools, unhygienic and badly situated.

School attendance had also fallen. The eruption of the rebellion at the start of the school year was partially responsible. "Except in some important cities," the occupying government reported, "attendance was reduced to insignificant proportions, and in rural districts and the provinces of Pinar del Río and Santa Clara, practically no attendance at all." National enrolment of over 111,000 in September 1905 fell to ninety-one thousand one year later as the rebellion began. Average attendance fell from over eighty-four thousand to sixty-three thousand. The rebellion, however, could not be blamed for the general decline in school enrolment. Despite the compulsory school attendance law and an increased birth rate, fewer children enrolled in school in September 1905 than in September 1900. Although it undertook a school inspection to determine the cause of the decline, the provisional government acted by treating the symptoms. It ordered a crackdown on truancy, passing a law permitting the arrest of children aged between six and fourteen if found in the street during school hours.

Even truancy could not fully explain the drop in enrolment. Economic hardship forced children out of schools and into work. Military Order 141 of August 1899 had defined the school year in accordance with that in the United States, with no consideration given to potential demands placed by families on their children's labour. The provisional government legislated for fines to be imposed on shops or factories breaking the law by employing children under fourteen years of age, without considering the reasons for the

111 Guerra, Fundación del sistema de escuelas públicas de Cuba, 1900-1901, p. 191.
112 Cuba, Report of the Provisional Administration from December 1, 1907 to December 1, 1908 by Charles E. Magoon, Provisional Governor (Havana: Rambla y Bouza, 1909), p. 306.
113 Cuba, Informe de la Administración Provisional desde 13 de octubre de 1906 hasta el 1 de diciembre de 1907, p. 107.
114 Ibid., p. 321.
use of child labour. Following the example set by Order 368, which had closed schools in sparsely populated areas, the government also threatened to close schools with low attendance, causing teachers to falsify attendance reports. Special school inspectors then had to be appointed to overcome this practice.

The provisional government later professed to have reversed the trend of declining enrolment; when it left Cuba in 1909, it claimed a public school enrolment for the 1907-08 school year of nearly 196,000, or 58 per cent of the school-age population. This is a very high figure, particularly since it excludes private school attendance, the addition of which would put primary school enrolment at nearly 63 per cent. However, the government reported an average attendance of 99,760 in public schools and 12,461 in private institutions, or 33 per cent of the school-age population. Educationalist Ramiro Guerra cited an average attendance of 123,000, or nearly 37 per cent, for this year. The latter two figures give a more realistic impression of the extent to which Cuba's children were able to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Conflict between teachers and government continued. With many of their jobs dependent on political connections, teachers and members of the boards of education had joined the 1906 uprising in large numbers. The acting Secretary of Public Instruction, Lincoln de Zayas, reported that some children had arrived at school to find their teachers gone. The government then ceased to send educational supplies to the countryside, contributing to the difficulties of those who remained. After the rebellion, when teachers returned to claim their old jobs, they found in many cases that others had been appointed in their place. Not all of those who petitioned for their old posts were reinstated, leading to allegations of political persecution. In addition, some black teachers claimed racial discrimination. The provisional government countered that only inadequate teachers had lost their jobs.

The provisional government in turn complained of a lack of competent teachers. "Perhaps 40 per cent of the active teachers are not equal to the task that is required of them," lamented Lincoln de Zayas. "They are not fitted either intellectually or temperamentally." However, the government continued to place obstacles in the way of teachers' intellectual development. It cancelled summer training schools and suspended the system of selecting teachers by examination, and maintaining accreditation by re-

116 Cuba, Report of the Provisional Administration from December 1, 1907 to December 1, 1908, pp. 140, 307; Guerra, Fundación del sistema de escuelas públicas de Cuba, 1900-1901, p. 191.
117 Guerra, Fundación del sistema de escuelas públicas de Cuba, 1900-1901, p. 191. Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez (1880-1970) was an historian and educator, closely associated with Cuba's educational system throughout much of the republican period. He was one of the many who took up the teaching profession during the first U.S. occupation and he went on the trip to Harvard University. Later, he became Superintendent of Schools for Pinar del Río; eventually he was appointed Superintendent of Schools for the island, and, very briefly, Secretary of Public Instruction, under President Gerardo Machado. He wrote numerous textbooks and histories of Cuba, among other works.
118 Report of the Department of Public Instruction, in Cuba, Report of the Provisional Administration from December 1, 1907 to December 1, 1908, p. 299.
examination, and instead extended the validity of teachers' certificates. Selection by examination had always been regarded, by the Cubans at least, as a temporary measure until the establishment of a normal school programme. Yet, despite repeated demands for normal schools, the provisional government rejected them as being too expensive. The problem of normal instruction was not addressed, "the matter requiring more time and attention than the Provisional Government could give". Instead of formal training, the government offered "Pedagogic Inspectors", appointed to provide teacher training on location. Their numbers, by the government's own admission, were too few and they did not travel to remote schools; however, they did provide a means for the administration to increase the number of school inspections.

The provisional government deemed elected school boards a failure because they were "composed often of illiterate men and almost always of partizans [sic] in friendship, family or politics, understanding little of the requirements of law" and consequently had become "centres of political activity". This political activity manifested itself in "a lack of respect and discipline [which] did not confine itself to non-obedience of orders, it did not remain passive; it was active and boisterous". "The most trivial causes gave rise to the wildest rumors," complained Lincoln de Zayas. "Some teacher could always be relied upon to sign a letter in the public press, denouncing in violent terms, some real or imaginary act or tendency of the heads of the department or of the local Board of Education, and Boards of Education could always be relied upon to assume a hostile attitude toward the central office and toward any teacher holding a political opinion different from the one entertained by the majority of the Board."

Neither the central government nor the Department of Public Instruction could claim to be free of corruption. In 1902, the Secretary of Public Instruction had abolished the post of Commissioner of Schools and absorbed those duties into his own position. The technical aspect of education thus came under the direct control of politicians, an arrangement which did not in itself cause corruption, but certainly contributed to it. Magoon did not at first assign a U.S. supervisor to oversee the Department of Public Instruction, but the discovery of serious "irregularities" prompted the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel R. Bullard in 1908. Accusations of sinecures and bribes abounded.

Bullard commented that "to the American...it is all but incomprehensible that a man will not put forth the last effort to acquire and pile up all wealth. This is his main subject of carping in Cuba. It is his point of least patience and last condemnation of the Cuban".

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119 Cuba, Report of the Provisional Administration from December 1, 1907 to December 1, 1908, p. 140.
120 Bullard, "Education in Cuba", p. 383; Cuba, Informe de la Administración Provisional desde 13 de octubre de 1906 hasta el 1 de diciembre de 1907, p. 358.
121 Report of the Department of Public Instruction in Cuba, Report of the Provisional Administration from December 1, 1907 to December 1, 1908, pp. 311-313.
Corruption in public office, including the Department of Public Instruction which he supervised, proved impatience was unjustified, as Cubans who could seized one of the few opportunities for enrichment on the island. Embezzlement and theft signalled "a wave of immorality" perpetrated, according to Lincoln de Zayas, "in all cases" by "persons of culture and experience, and enjoying an excellent reputation for laboriousness and honesty". De Zayas complained of "a sort of moral anarchy, which, unfortunately of late," he concluded gloomily, "has characterized Cuban public life; age, culture, patriotism, virtues, self-sacrifice, disinterestedness, are no longer respected, and a wild scramble for places in the Budget and an insatiable longing for increase of salary have been predominating features in Cuban bureaucracy, and public life in Cuba, for some time past".123

Teachers and board of education representatives who had participated in a rebellion against corrupt government could hardly be expected to remain passive in the face of continued corruption. Furthermore, it was unrealistic of the provisional government to expect local cooperation when the very fact that the United States once again occupied the island caused unrest and protest. The spectre of annexation had necessarily reared its head again. In spite of repeated assertions to the contrary, complained Magoon, "a great majority of Cubans harbor the fear that the United States desires and intends to annex the Island".124 As the British Legation in Havana reported to the Foreign Office in London, "while certain large planters and capitalists would welcome annexation...such a solution would not be agreeable to the people of Cuba in general".125

The Impact of the U.S. Occupations

The efforts of the United States to implement an island-wide public educational system generated a great deal of interest, excitement and support in Cuba. They were closely analysed and widely discussed. Enrique José Varona reported that, in spite of much hostility to the first U.S. occupation "the country, in what refers to the reform of popular education, has shown itself to be an enthusiastic co-operant of the government".126 "It can be clearly seen," recorded the special inspector of schools, "how enthusiastically the people of Cuba in general aided in the work of education, and said enthusiasm, shown in
the whole island, increased from day to day." 127 Even Leonard Wood conceded that "the interest in the public schools [is] more genuine and sincere than in any other branch of the Government in Cuba." 128

From the beginning, however, outside observers expressed doubts about Cuban ability to benefit from U.S. educational reforms. "The question remains how far the people will be able to respond to the education provided for them," warned a report for the British Board of Education. "There is a danger of forcing on them more instruction than their mental capacity allows them to assimilate...and only time can show whether their apparent incapacity for sustained and concentrated effort is due to racial characteristics or merely to their utter lack of mental training." 129

The early appearance of problems in the educational system, from falling enrolment to political conflict, appeared to confirm racist analyses such as this one. The racial and intellectual inferiority of Cubans, their inability to build on the educational system left to them by the U.S. military government, their incapacity for self-government, seemed, to some observers, indisputable. Bullard concluded that "we gave them an overdose. There is no people that has like faith or approximately like faith with us in school education as a cure for every human defect, individual, national or racial. We prescribed it in too great quantity in succession to Indian, Negro, Filipino, and Cuban, with the same result in every case - the patient's stomach turned". 130

Analyses which blamed Cubans exclusively for their problems, stemming as they do from an assumption of Cuban inferiority and U.S. magnanimity, do not provide an adequate explanation for the failures of public instruction on the island. They accept the rhetoric of U.S. intentions in Cuba, without considering the actual impact of the occupations. Many of the problems which afflicted Cuban education throughout the years of the republic were inherited from or exacerbated by the period of the first occupation. The failure of Cubans to consolidate the public educational system of which they dreamed was not, of course, the responsibility of the United States alone. However, the larger context of the structure of the Cuban republic and its relationship with the United States prejudiced their chances.

The first U.S. occupation, despite the rhetoric which accompanied it, was designed not to facilitate democratic self-government but to mould Cuba to the political and economic needs of the United States. The word "democracy" is frequently used in ways which render its meaning obscure; nonetheless, the implementation of Cuba Libre was plainly not

127 Wilcox in Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900, 1, part 4, p. 218.
128 Civil Report of Major-General Leonard Wood, Military Governor of Cuba for the period from December 20, 1899 to December 31, 1900, 1, p. 161.
129 M.E. Tanner, "Education in the American Dependencies" in Special Reports on Educational Subjects, 11, p. 473.
130 Bullard, "Education in Cuba", p. 382.
among U.S. aims. Wood clearly prepared Cuba for the possibility of annexation and the certainty of its new place in the growing U.S. economic empire. "There appears to be little room for doubting," as one observer remarked, "that ultimately American money and American management will dominate the industrial and commercial affairs of the island."\(^{131}\) The public school system was intended not to provide an effective common education but to further political and cultural influence even as U.S. capital invaded the island. Through Cuban children, the occupying governments hoped to reach their parents. Through teacher recruitment and training, curriculum changes, educational materials and the provision of educational opportunities in the United States, the military government familiarized Cubans with U.S. political and educational concepts and methods; encouraged positive attitudes towards them; and represented them as being natural and best.

Cubans believed their new educational system would result in political independence and economic strength; the United States viewed it as a means for the political and cultural penetration of the island. Cubans largely accepted, with notable exceptions, U.S. activity in the educational sector because it coincided with their own expectations and ambitions. However, the United States did not facilitate the national sovereignty and economic diversity which Cubans were persuaded would stem from public instruction, but actively undermined these ends. It did not even lay the foundation for an effective educational system. It is scarcely surprising that problems had already become apparent by the time of the second occupation. The Cubans could not successfully consolidate a system which had not been designed with their needs or desires in mind.

The United States, by intervening in Cuba when it did, forestalled the Cuban independence struggle and founded a new imperial order. It pursued its imperial ambitions through, among other avenues, the new educational system which it established in Cuba. The occupying governments did not facilitate, nor did they desire, democratic self-government in Cuba. The legacies of U.S. intervention in Cuban education remained with the island for the next fifty years and contributed to the frustrated nationalist ambitions which played such an important part in the revolution of 1959.

\(^{131}\) Lindsay Forbes, *Cuba and Her People of Today* (Boston: L.C. Page, 1911), p. 125.
"When a child attends school and finds that he has neither a seat, nor a desk to work at, nor materials;" wrote Cuban educationalist Arturo Montori, "and he is obliged to remain in mental inactivity and physically still for several hours in a hot, small, poorly ventilated and dark room, such is the repulsion which develops in him that he will probably not return, even when his parents compel him to."\(^1\) Montori's description evoked schooling in Cuba during colonial times, yet his comments appeared in 1912. His observations, and the title of the article in which they appeared, "The School Crisis", presaged a conjuncture in Cuban history of profound political scepticism, economic uncertainty and reawakened nationalism in which perceptions of the state of education in Cuba would play a critical part.

From the end of the second U.S. occupation in 1909 until Gerardo Machado assumed the presidency in 1925, and particularly in the early 1920s, Cuban intellectuals and educationalists holding a wide range of political positions published damning articles and pamphlets on the state of the country. Historian Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, anthropologist and legislator Fernando Ortiz, writer Carlos Trelles, and educationalists Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Arturo Montori and Alfredo Aguayo, among others, analysed at length Cuba's economic, social and political difficulties, with Roig de Leuchsenring's piece even meriting an editorial in a Washington newspaper.\(^2\) All the comments possessed a common theme. The authors assessed the state of the nation and compared it with the hopes which had been generated by independence; they concluded that the conditions in Cuba under Spanish rule, from which she had struggled so valiantly to free herself, persisted in the republic. Almost without exception, their works identified public education as one of the principal causes for concern.

In keeping with the beliefs of the nineteenth century intellectuals who advocated Cuba Libre, the intellectuals and educationalists of republican Cuba maintained that an independent, democratic republic could not exist without a strong public educational system. Support for public education was equated with nationalism, its promotion a patriotic duty. It was the task of schools "to inculcate love of and respect for patria and its institutions,...its heroes and martyrs,...greater discipline and a greater spirit of social and political tolerance."\(^3\) The strength of this feeling cannot be overemphasized. "To abandon

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\(^1\) Arturo Montori, "La crisis escolar" in Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Rehabilitación de la escuela pública: un problema vital de Cuba en 1954 (La Habana: P. Fernández, 1954), p. 31. The article was originally published in 1912.

\(^2\) Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, La colonia superviva: Cuba a los veintidos años de República (La Habana: El Siglo XX, 1925).

\(^3\) Juan Villoldo, "Voz de alarma", La Discusión, 25 de marzo de 1912, p. 8.
education," warned educationalist Ramiro Guerra, "is the worst crime which can be committed against the nation."⁴

According to this position, schools were responsible for teaching young Cubans the rights and duties of citizenship and respect for and obedience to the law.⁵ "The public school is a product of democracy," argued Antonio Iraizoz, Assistant Secretary of Public Instruction, in 1924. "The school must be an efficient laboratory in which citizens are prepared for the direction of public matters and, at the same time, for the respect due to, and the acceptance of the powers emanating from their will."⁶ Equally, no aspect of national life - political, economic or social - could be successfully pursued in a country of illiterate or semi-literate inhabitants.

The public educational system was expected to create a strong sense of national identity and loyalty. "The fundamental national problem of the present generation," argued the Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Pedagógicos, "is to consolidate independence, liberty and internal peace."⁷ The formation of a sense of national solidarity was crucial to achieving this end. The public school played a central role in promoting national solidarity because of its function as a socializing agent. While cautioning that "to achieve a uniformity of culture, of civilization and of aspirations is to suppress progress", the society nevertheless declared "that in our opinion, true collective interests are never in opposition to nor in conflict with individual interest in peaceful, freely organized and democratic societies".⁸

Following the establishment of national solidarity, national development could be targeted. Education remained crucial to this process. "The aim of education is always - and it cannot be otherwise in normal conditions - to contribute to the resolution of national problems," argued the Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Pedagógicos.⁹ Through education, national requirements of employment and production would be met. In other words, education equalled progress. Education would ensure that each woman and man of Cuba achieved the necessary training to improve their employment prospects and their own lives, thereby simultaneously allowing Cuba to attain a higher level of development.

An increasing recognition of the importance of women and girls in attaining these national aims characterized this period. According to María Luisa Dolz, one of Cuba's first

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⁵ See, for example, Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Fines de la educación nacional* (La Habana: La Propagandista, 1917). This document was prepared under the auspices of the Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Pedagógicos, an ad hoc group of educationalists formed in 1916 under the presidency of Enrique José Varona to address Cuba's educational problems. Guerra was the author, but the views were those of the group. Also, Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, "El problema del analfabetismo: sus antecedentes, su solución", *Trimestre*, 4, no. 4 (oct.-dic. 1950). This article was originally published in 1925.
⁸ Ibid., p. 7.
⁹ Ibid., p. 6.
and most influential female educators, mothers were society's first teachers and moral agents. As such, Dolz believed, "she who yesterday may have formed heroes who spilled their blood in the fields of palms and cane...galvanized by love of liberty, knows tomorrow how to form citizens inflexible in the fulfilment of their duty, protectors of the adored country". An innovator in girls' education, Dolz promoted physical, secondary and science education in her schools, all of which had previously been denied to girls.

Women and men advocating female education took up the theme of women as influential moral agents and children's first educators. Women's biological role as mothers, supporters argued, allowed them by extension a public role as mothers of society. Some feminists maintained that girls should be given the same education as boys in order to improve their ability to fulfil their societal role, as well as to equalize the intellectual relationship between husband and wife. Generally, however, it was believed that girls' education should be oriented towards children and home. "Our poor and middle class homes," argued the Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Pedagógicos, "lack the most basic hygiene, in the city and in the country, among other reasons because Cuban women have not received a domestic education which prepares them for the lofty functions which they must perform in the family." The positions open to women, and therefore the education deemed acceptable for them, remained limited by traditional beliefs concerning appropriate gender roles.

By the 1920s, a widespread sense of both national and educational decline pervaded the arguments about the function of education in a democratic society. In 1920, Arturo Montori warned that all the evidence - specifically, poor collective aptitude for economic activity and low patriotic sentiment in much of the population - pointed to the existence of a deficient system of national education. The following year Guerra complained that "our public school...is not today in a condition fully to discharge the social function that belongs to it in connection with our republican institutions". In particular, primary instruction "has not acquired the thoroughness that is demanded by the elementary culture of the pupil in relation to the high duties of citizenship in a democracy".

This failure had occurred in spite of the fact that public primary schooling had been totally reorganized, "almost created we might say", by the United States. Guerra was not

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10 María Luisa Dolz, "En visperas de la República. La educación de los ciudadanos de mañana" in La liberación de la mujer cubana por la educación (Municipio de la Habana: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad, 1955), p. 93. The essay was originally presented under the title "Preparación de la mujer" in 1899.

11 Physical education was increasingly advocated for girls in Latin America at this time, in the belief it would help them to bear stronger children.

12 See, for example, Aurelia Castillo de González, "Women Rather than Men", Inter-America, 2 (October 1918), pp. 40-43.

13 Guerra, Fines de la educación nacional, p. 22.


15 Ramiro Guerra, "The Present State of Primary Instruction in Cuba", Inter-America, 5 (December 1921), p. 101. He is incorrectly named as "Rubán" by the journal.

16 Ibid., p. 101.
the only person to look back on the first U.S. occupation as a high point in Cuba's educational fortunes. Lavish praise accompanied much of the discussion of the educational system set up by the U.S. administration. Carlos Trelles, for example, wrote admiringly that the work of Leonard Wood "was truly admirable and there are not words eloquent enough to celebrate it...never has the education of our people received such a formidable stimulus". In addition, most commentators assumed the superiority of U.S. educational models. Antonio Iraizoz wrote proudly that the "present education system, especially in primary (elementary) education, conforms more nearly to the education system of the United States than any other Latin American country".

Those who endorsed liberal ideals of progress tended to accept uncritically that the U.S. military government had provided a solid educational foundation for the island. At least until la danza de los millones of 1920, they analysed Cuba's cultural failings in isolation from her political and economic contradictions. Even while many were arguing that Cuba had yet to attain true independence, they admired and sought to emulate their powerful neighbour. This specific admiration of U.S. institutions must be distinguished from the growing opposition to U.S. authority in Cuba, particularly as represented by the Platt Amendment. Nonetheless, problems in Cuba's public educational system were widely attributed to the failure to keep pace with the lead provided by the United States.

Educator Alfredo Aguayo, a political conservative, offered a different perspective on the reasons for Cuba's apparent educational failures. As a conservative, Aguayo did not adhere to the anti-Spanish sentiment which constrained many liberals to accept U.S. educational direction because it appeared to overcome the perceived defects of the Spanish inheritance. "No one should be surprised by the rapid decline of our popular school," he observed. "This school...was in great part an institution of exotic character, whose values and ideals did not harmonize well with our environment. [It was] the fruit of a long evolution, realized in a country whose laws, customs and other civil and political institutions differ radically from ours." He wrote in a rather exasperated tone that the educational system must be either accepted or rejected, but that tinkering with it simply did not work. Nonetheless, Aguayo failed to pursue his analysis, going on to blame Cuban incompetence and corruption for the conditions in public instruction, without examining the political and economic context.

17 Carlos Trelles, El progreso (1902 a 1905) y el retroceso (1906 a 1922) de la República de Cuba (La Habana: El Score, 1923), p. 5.
18 Iraizoz, p. 15.
21 Aguayo, "Factores cualitativos de nuestra decadencia escolar", p. 90.
The second U.S. occupation left the island no more economically secure or politically stable than had the first. Cubans continued to be squeezed out of participation in their economy, leaving many of them economically vulnerable. "Foreigners own 90 per cent of all the land in Cuba that is worth working," reported one observer. "In other words, the only outlook for the Cuban is to serve as a hired man."22 Black Cubans, who had more than doubled their literacy between 1899 and 1919, remained particularly excluded from Cuba's wealth and society.23 Their frustrations erupted in armed rebellion in 1912, savagely repressed by the government. Convinced of the unreliability of black Cuban labour, sugar companies encouraged the Cuban government to overturn an earlier ban on non-white immigration and allow the immigration of blacks from other countries in the Caribbean.24 In 1912, the United Fruit Company brought in 1,400 Haitians. In 1919, nearly thirty-four thousand Jamaicans and Haitians came to Cuba.25 Even as increased concentration of land ownership drove peasants off the land and into wage work, they found their limited opportunities for rural employment threatened by immigration from elsewhere in the West Indies.

By the early 1920s, three factors combined to increase the politicization of the Cuban public, particularly workers, students and intellectuals. The first was a growing understanding of Cuba's economic reliance on sugarcane and the consequent vulnerability of the economy to external forces. The economic frenzy which became known as la danza de los millones underscored this vulnerability. The First World War fuelled a rise in world sugar prices from 1915, but the escalation became especially dramatic in 1920. From 1.9 cents per pound in 1915, the price of sugar mounted to 9.2 cents per pound in 1918. In March 1920, sugar sold for 10 cents per pound. This increased to 13 cents by 1st April, 18 cents by 15th April and 22.5 cents by May. That same year, sugar accounted for 92 per cent of Cuba's total export value.26 Business confidence and speculation increased with the dramatic inflow of wealth, and these in turn caused an upsurge in the flow of credit.

22 Lindsay Forbes, Cuba and Her People of Today (Boston: L.C. Page, 1911), pp. 122-123.
23 Black literacy aged ten years and over increased from 24.5 per cent in 1899 to 53 per cent in 1919. An additional 3 per cent of blacks could read but not write in 1899. See U.S. War Department, Office Director Census of Cuba, Report on the Census of Cuba 1899 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1900), p. 368; Cuba, Censo de la República de Cuba 1919, p. 569.
24 Lindsay Forbes, writing before the rebellion, reported that employers found black labour "inefficient, unreliable and difficult to control". He added that, "if capitalists have ceased to be apprehensive regarding the negro of Cuba, which is by no means certain - it is not because he has suddenly ceased to have a desire for disturbance, with its attendant opportunities for loot, but because they have greater confidence in the ability and inclination of the authorities to suppress outbreaks with promptness". In 1912, the Cuban government proved itself worthy of this confidence. See Forbes, pp. 103-104.
The economy could not sustain the outburst of speculation, consumption and overexpansion. The collapse in the price of sugar was sudden and devastating. By December 1920, sugar sold at 3.8 cents per pound. Surpluses built up rapidly and remained unsold. Credit which had been extended at 22 cents per pound left many businesses exposed. Producers could no longer service their debts; bankers found themselves undercapitalized. The financial system foundered, many of its institutions failed and the National Bank came close to bankruptcy. The government found itself unable to pay its employees. Only new loans from the United States averted total economic collapse, but these were made conditional upon administrative and financial reorganization dictated by Washington. Economic breakdown facilitated and intensified the penetration of foreign capital which had begun during the first U.S. occupation. Foreign interests owned land, mills, utilities, railways and mining operations. Cuba's economy, and its exposure to foreign interests, thus became the subject of national debate.

The U.S. loans and their conditions, and widespread U.S. ownership of land and business in Cuba, in turn drew attention to U.S. political influence on the island, symbolized by the infamous Platt Amendment. Washington interpreted the Amendment as giving it the right vigorously to press its point of view on a wide variety of internal matters, from legal measures to the granting of building contracts and other concessions. Intervention went further than diplomatic notes and representations. Backed up by its military base in Guantánamo in eastern Cuba, the United States threatened to intervene militarily during the racial conflict of 1912. Between 1917 and 1922, it occupied the eastern end of the island after the fraudulent national elections of 1916 had generated a revolt there and the Cuban government openly acknowledged that it could not ensure the sugarcane harvest and keep the railway open as well as suppress the rebellion. U.S. marines landed to protect the U.S.-owned sugar estates when the rebels began to destroy cane.

General Enoch Crowder, the "special ambassador" of the United States, further revealed the extent of Washington's role in Cuba's government. Crowder first came to Cuba to write its electoral code, passed by the Cuban Congress in 1919. He returned on

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27 Examples include the Cuban Telephone Company, which was owned by ITT; United Fruit, Hershey (which also owned a railway line) and Hires owned plantations; General Electric owned Cuban electricity companies. Private investors included members of and men influential in the U.S. government. See, for example, Thomas, pp. 557-563.


29 See Leo J. Meyer, "The United States and the Cuban Revolution of 1917", Hispanic American Historical Review, 10, no. 2 (May 1930), pp. 138-166. Although the marines, and later troops, were ostensibly in Cuba because of World War I, well after the war ended the Cuban House of Representatives was reduced to adopting a weakly worded resolution asking the U.S. troops to leave. "It would be," the resolution declared, "a friendly act if the United States would withdraw troops stationed in Cuban territory." See Current History, 15, no. 4 (January 1922), p. 668.
orders from Washington to resolve the political stalemate in Cuba in 1921, whereupon he reorganized government finance and administration and even appointed the cabinet of President Alfredo Zayas. His presence suggested impotence on the part of the Cuban government. As Louis A. Pérez Jr. has argued, "by preempting Cuban rule so blatantly, in plain sight of a national audience, the United States exposed Cuban sovereignty as a fiction, revealing Cuban rulers as little more than instruments of North American interests, incapable of defending national interests and unable to preserve national sovereignty - and thereby serving to set in motion demands for another kind of patria and stirring the embers of Cuban nationalism."30

Economic dependency on the United States and on a small range of agricultural products, the culmination of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1903, led to chronic unemployment and underemployment in Cuba, bringing poverty to many and insecurity to most. Cuba's politicians appeared indifferent. They spent their time bickering among themselves over the spoils of government, such as the national lottery.31 Cubans could not hold themselves blameless in the failure to build an independent nation or a cohesive national identity under the shadow of the United States. The Cuban elite not only failed to resist manifestations of U.S. intervention, but often encouraged them. Politicians manoeuvred with an eye to encouraging U.S. intercession as well as preventing it, and whenever technical expertise was sought, Cubans looked northward. The disregard for Cuba's welfare which such behaviour represented provided the final catalyst for national self-criticism and assessment.

The Failure of the Public Educational System

Alarmed critiques of public education appeared in Cuban magazines and pamphlets in the early years of the republic, as Cuban pensadores judged that the educational system had not laid the foundations for democracy, citizenship, solidarity and national development as expected. "The reform of our system of primary instruction is urgent and necessary," warned Arturo Montori in 1920.32 Fernando Ortiz alleged that the degeneration of public instruction was so grave that "if it continues, the next generation will enter the category of uncivilized peoples."33 "Public teaching is diminishing, day by day, in a frightening manner," claimed Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, "and illiteracy is increasing in terms which produce dismay in all who think about and concern themselves with the future of the Republic."34 "Our deep and firm conviction," the Asociación

31 The national lottery, established under the government of José Miguel Gómez in 1909, became a means of dispensing political favours and symbolic of government corruption.
32 Montori, El problema de la educación nacional, p. 46.
33 Fernando Ortiz, La decadencia cubana (La Habana: La Universal, 1924), p. 11.
34 Roig de Leuchsenring, La colonia superviva, p. 20.
Pedagógica Universitaria, an organization which included most of Cuba's leading educators, attested, "is that if Cuba does not raise the level of education, all our public evils will be aggravated and we will live in perpetual crisis, with extremely grave damage to our national institutions."35 What specific problems caused educators and intellectuals such alarm?

In 1910, Ramiro Guerra wrote an article entitled "Towards Illiteracy" which exposed the failure of the educational system to eliminate illiteracy in Cuba. *Cuba Contemporánea*, one of the leading journals of the time, published the article, which went on to warn of a likely increase in the proportion of illiterates in the population. The government of José Miguel Gómez did not welcome Guerra's intervention, although it professed to be committed to a strong public educational system. The Secretary of Public Instruction responded to Guerra in the newspaper *El Mundo*, by denying that a problem existed and accusing anyone who thought otherwise of being unpatriotic.

The public school system did not receive any benefit from the brief prosperity of *la danza de los millones*, but the economic collapse which followed depleted both the resources of the government and the personal resources of many Cubans. Opportunities for schooling lessened. When the crisis came, wrote one school teacher, "children by the hundreds were leaving the schools because of lack of clothing and inability to pay for books and pencils". Even prosperous Cubans were affected. "If they were in private schools," the teacher added, "they left because they could not pay the nominal tuition fee."36

In 1925, Guerra re-examined the problem of literacy and published another article which indicated that his earlier fears had been justified. His figures showed that literacy had increased, from 36 per cent in 1899, to 41 per cent in 1907 and nearly 48 per cent in 1919.37 He pointed out, however, that these figures represented percentages of the total population, and argued correctly that the immigration of people who could already read and write kept the figures high.38 It had been observed in both the United States and Cuba that those who had not learned to read and write by the age of ten were likely to remain illiterate or semi-literate throughout their lives.39 Examination of literacy rates among ten to fourteen year olds showed a decrease in literacy between 1907 and 1919. In 1907, 70.5 per cent of native white children aged between ten and fourteen, and 69.9 per cent of black children were recorded as being literate. By 1919, only 55.1 per cent of native whites and

35 Asociación Universitaria Pedagógica, p. 16.
36 Olive G. Gibson, *The Isle of a Hundred Harbors* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1940), p. 239.
37 Guerra, "El problema del analfabetismo", p. 164.
38 See Table 1.
47.6 per cent of blacks in the same age group could read and write. These figures, argued Guerra, did not bode well for the educational attainment of Cuba's future citizens. Guerra's fears of increased illiteracy ultimately proved to be unfounded. The literacy rate climbed from 61.6 per cent of the population ten years old and over in 1919 to 71.7 per cent in 1931. However, at the time he was writing it had increased by only 5 per cent in twelve years, during a period of steady immigration, and he had no reason to suppose it would grow more quickly in the future. Furthermore, he was not alone in his concerns. The reasons for his pessimism were rooted in the material conditions in the public school system.

**Primary Education**

Improvements in literacy between 1899 and 1907 were in part possible because of the small number of children going through the school system, due to the low birth rate during the war of 1895-98 and the increased number of primary schoolrooms during the first U.S. occupation. By 1910, however, the children of the post-war baby boom were beginning to enter an educational system which had not sufficiently added to the number of schoolrooms available (3,916 in 1912 from 3,533 in September 1901). In 1910, in order to save money, the Secretary of Public Instruction ordered spare schoolrooms to be closed, just as the school-age population was expanding. A public outcry failed to stop the closures. Besides forcing children, especially those living in rural areas, to travel further to school, teachers soon faced many more students in the classroom.

In 1911, the government of José Miguel Gómez (1909-13) acknowledged the problem of large classes, but proposed to overcome it by dividing the school day, already reduced to four hours by one of the last acts of the U.S. military government, into two. Two separate sessions per day were organized for two different groups of students, reducing class sizes at the cost of halving the normal school day for the children. Enforcement of attendance laws ceased with the abolition of the posts of inspectors of

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41 Girls were slightly underrepresented at primary level until the 1920s and the rate of female literacy was lower than male literacy until this time. Increased public school enrolment and literacy among girls in Cuba in the 1920s was part of a general trend in Latin America during that decade. Boys were more likely to apprentice to a trade at a young age, thus reducing their numbers in school in favour of girls. In the battle for state secular education, public school enrolment was seen as one way of reducing female loyalty to the Church and so was encouraged. It was also widely believed that girls needed to be educated in order better to fulfil their future roles as mothers and the first teachers of Cuban children. See Arturo Montori, "La educación en Cuba", *Cuba Contemporánea*, 38, no. 150 (junio 1925), p. 151; Francesca Miller, *Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991), pp. 51, 53.


43 This plan had originally been contemplated during the first U.S. occupation.
attendance in financial cutbacks. Nonetheless, Arturo Montori estimated in 1912 that the country had only enough classrooms for 50 per cent of the school age population, and that the average class size had reached fifty students.\footnote{Montori, "La crisis escolar", p. 30.}

An increase in the number of classrooms by the government of Mario G. Menocal (1913-21) was not enough to overcome the existing shortage and to keep pace with population growth. Cuba's first pedagogical conference, held in Havana in 1910, put building more schoolrooms at the top of its list of recommendations for action necessary to improve educational standards, even as the government was closing schoolrooms. Educationalists continued to identify construction of schoolhouses as a priority. "No national necessity is more important or of greater urgency," wrote Ramiro Guerra.\footnote{Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, p. 9.} The school shortage was so acute that most public schools continued to be situated in private properties, which swallowed a large amount of the education budget in rent.\footnote{The Secretary of Public Instruction for 1925-1926, Guillermo Fernández Mascaro, recorded that in that year the state paid over 630,000 pesos in rent for 1,804 school buildings. 1,498 were donated for free while 225 buildings belonged to central or municipal government. Guillermo Fernández Mascaro, La obra de un libertador en educación popular (La Habana, Editorial Lex, 1953), p. 299.} This practice elicited frequent and pointed comments by educationalists and observers on the economic advantages of building over renting, to little effect.

The use of buildings not originally designed as schools combined with inadequate maintenance to result in unsatisfactory conditions in most schools. Even purpose-built schoolhouses, particularly in rural areas, were flimsy, constructed of mud and thatch, with dirt floors. Many suffered from inadequate sanitary facilities, lighting and ventilation. On becoming Provincial Superintendent of Schools of Pinar del Río in 1913, Guerra found that 79 of 412 classrooms were completely unfit for use. Many others, although usable, needed major repair work.\footnote{Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, La enseñanza en Pinar del Río, (La Habana: Cuba Pedagógica, 1917), pp. 9, 49.}

Uneven distribution of schools exacerbated the shortages. Some municipalities could boast one school per two hundred inhabitants, while others had only one schoolroom per 1,400 inhabitants.\footnote{Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, "Un programa nacional de acción pedagógica", in Guerra, Rehabilitación de la escuela pública, p. 109. This article was originally published in 1922 under the auspices of the Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria and reprinted in Revista Bimestre Cubana in 1923. Guerra uses these figures again in the APU's subsequent pamphlet, La reforma de nuestra educación.} Rural areas were particularly poorly endowed; the provinces of Oriente and Camagüey had the poorest school to inhabitant ratios. Uneven distribution in turn aggravated low attendance, as both students and teachers often had long distances to travel to school, frequently over bad roads and mule tracks, many impassable during the rainy season. Arturo Montori estimated that only 30 per cent of five to fourteen year olds enrolled in school in 1923, a figure largely unchanged over fifteen years.\footnote{Arturo Montori, "La educación en Cuba", p. 151; Mercedes García Tudurí, "La enseñanza en Cuba en los primeros cincuenta años de independencia" in Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Historia de la nación cubana, tomo}
successive governments ignored repeated calls by educationalists for a school census to
determine where new schools should be located.

In the classroom, pupils and teachers faced a shortage of basic materials. Furniture
provided by the military government during the first occupation, never added to or
replaced, became not only insufficient in quantity but deteriorated in quality. Tropical rains
in particular accelerated rot in the wooden desks and chairs. Guerra, in his capacity as
Superintendent of Schools for Pinar del Río, reported that in 1913 some classrooms had no
furniture at all. In one school in the city of Pinar del Río he found "children seated at
planks supported by boxes or at old benches given to the teacher by charitable persons.
There are classrooms in which, because there are no cupboards, the teacher has nailed to
the wall a drawer in which is kept school materials and records".50

Educationalists also bemoaned the dearth of external facilities which would benefit
both pupils and teachers. The lack of playgrounds and sports equipment hampered extra-
curricular activities. The national library was poorly stocked, with only about fifty
thousand books in the 1920s. Privately funded public libraries, such as that run by the
Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, attempted to fill the gap without government
assistance. Little value or support was accorded to research, and many of Cuba's
historical papers remained ignored in U.S. and Spanish archives. Cuba's few archives
were privately funded, many by U.S. benefactors. Fifteen years after independence, no
biographies of any of Cuba's heroes of independence had been published and only two or
three recent histories of the country existed.51

The material shortages in the public school system had pedagogical repercussions.
In 1919, the technical adviser to the Secretary of Public Instruction identified the
concentration of students in the lower grades as the most serious problem in primary
schooling. "As a consequence," he reported, "the children are discouraged and accustomed
to listening without understanding, the school thus directly contributing to the formation of
slow learners."52 Older children in the same grade as younger ones were found generally
to dislike school and to attend poorly. In spite of the fact that their situation was a common
one, a stigma was attached to their personal performance. In 1919, Guerra reported that 75
per cent of children in school were enrolled in grades one or two, a statistic much repeated
thereafter.53

10 (La Habana: Editorial Historia de la Nación Cubana, 1952), p. 68. Montori gives the matriculation
figure for 1907 as 30 per cent, a figure also used by García. The 1907 census lists numbers attending
school from one month or less to eight months or more. If the total of these figures is taken as being an
approximation of the numbers enrolled, the 1907 enrolment figure according to the census is 39 per cent. If
this is correct, school enrolment decreased following the second U.S. occupation. See Olmsted and
Gannett, pp. 236, 248.
50 Guerra, La enseñanza en Pinar del Río, p. 46.
51 Trelles, El progreso (1902 a 1905) y el retroceso (1906 a 1922) de la República de Cuba, pp. 14-15.
52 Quoted in Guerra, Adelantos en el año escolar próximo pasado, p. 19.
Students were not remaining in school long enough to complete even their primary education. In 1922, Ramiro Guerra wrote an article under the auspices of the Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria which contained alarming figures widely quoted at the time. The article claimed that in 1919, only an estimated 1 per cent of public school children passed to fifth grade while only seventy-one children in the whole country completed grade six, the extent of primary education. While these figures seem very low, the problem of small numbers completing primary was certainly very serious; it was particularly acute in rural areas, where it was compounded by the reduction of the plan of studies to four grades in 1921. This effectively precluded publically educated rural children graduating to secondary schools. "In the country...primary teaching conditions could not be more deplorable", reported the newspaper Heraldo de Cuba. Drawing together the nationalist anxieties which motivated many educationalists, Ramiro Guerra warned that "a population with such a low level of instruction cannot serve as the basis of a prosperous national economy, nor an enlightened democratic and efficient government".

Secondary Education

As late as the 1920s, in spite of Enrique José Varona's efforts, Cuba retained the colonial tradition of conceiving of secondary education as preparation for university only. This interpretation, argued the Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, among other groups, stood in complete opposition to modern concepts of education which maintained that secondary schools should continue where primary schools left off, equipping young people for lives as responsible adults within society. Education, wrote the Asociación, must prepare people "for the adequate execution of political functions, which democracy has put in their hands". The fact that opportunities for education for a majority effectively ended at the age of twelve undermined this aim. In 1924, the Asociación reported that even the most favourable estimates of enrolment placed only 3 per cent of the eligible age group in secondary instruction in Cuba.

Pre-university secondary education in Cuba took place in schools known as institutos. Cuba had six at the end of the first U.S. occupation, one in each provincial capital. Both number and locations remained unchanged in the early republican era, in spite of continuing population growth. In the 1920s, observed one commentator, Cuba

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54 Ibid., p. 109. The figure of 1 per cent is probably an underestimate, given that the same organization reported in 1924 that a maximum of 3 per cent of the eligible age group enrolled in secondary school. See Asociación Universitaria Pedagógica, pp. 18, 23.
55 Santiago García Spring, La enseñanza popular en Cuba: desde el descubrimiento hasta nuestros días (La Habana: La Universal, 1926), p. 57.
56 Heraldo de Cuba, 7 January 1915, p. 2.
57 Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, p. 9.
58 Ibid. pp. 18, 23.
provided only one *instituto* per half a million of the population.\(^{59}\) Hygiene in the *instituto* buildings was no better than in primary schools, with Havana's building judged the worst. The inadequate material conditions of the primary schools were also duplicated in the *institutos*. Buildings, textbooks and other equipment were insufficient in number and quality.

Educationalists criticized the *institutos* for following a curriculum oriented solely towards passing university entrance examinations, rather than providing an education valuable in itself. In any event, they argued, the plan of studies implemented by Order 267 in 1900 was, nearly a quarter of a century later, unable to meet the needs of the country and its secondary-level pupils. The plan had, for example, been drawn up when only young men attended the schools. Observers noted that no changes had been made to accommodate the growing number of young women who attended each year.\(^{60}\)

An annual fee was charged to attend the *institutos*: 12.50 Cuban pesos in 1924.\(^{61}\) This fee, along with the cost of travelling, books and uniform, and the need to live away from home for those who did not reside in a provincial capital, put the *institutos* beyond the financial reach of most Cubans. Successful completion of the course, however, was a prerequisite for university entrance. Students had to be at least fourteen years old to enrol at an *instituto* and prove by examination that they had completed six years of primary education.\(^{62}\) Standards of entrance examinations varied considerably, and students who had the means were reported to travel from one province to another to find an examination which they could pass. Rumours abounded that those with sufficient financial resources could bypass the problem of passing the entrance examination altogether by paying for a satisfactory result.\(^{63}\)

The intellectual and financial gap between primary schools and the *institutos* led to recurring demands for the creation of *escuelas primarias superiores*, or primary school extensions of two years. "As everyone knows," Alfredo Aguayo wrote in 1909, the *escuelas primarias superiores* "are free secondary schools for the Latin American

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60 About 40 per cent of students enrolled in *institutos* at this time were female. See Massip, p. 193. Note the implicit assumption that young women should be taught different subjects than young men.
61 This compared to about 15 pesos per calendar month for private schools. Iraizoz, p. 18; Arturo Montori, *Ponencia del Dr. A. Montori sobre reglamentación de las escuelas privadas que la directiva de "Fundación Luz Caballero" dedica a sus asociados y simpatizadores* (La Habana: Aurelio Miranda, 1917), p. 20.
62 Students who were fortunate enough to complete their primary education in six years would thus find themselves too young to enrol in the *institutos*. This age gap is indicative of the confusion in the administration of the educational system, and provided a further argument for the foundation of *escuelas primarias superiores*. It is also likely that the few students who were able to finish in six years were largely privately educated, and able to circumvent the age requirement.
63 For example, see Montori, *El problema de la educación nacional*, p. 22. In particular, private students were believed to abuse the system in this way, as it was necessary for them to pass public school examinations to gain accreditation recognized by the state.
peoples. Educationalists conceived of the escuelas primarias superiores as schools in which children not destined for university could complete their education to a higher standard or prepare for further vocational or industrial training.

Highly unequal access to the institutos was an acknowledged problem, but educationalists also argued that university education was not appropriate for all or even the majority of young people in Cuban society. Most agreed that improved, widespread technical and vocational education was essential to further national development. Students could attend normal schools, a home economics school, a commercial school and a school of arts and crafts, but so few secondary-level institutions could not provide many places, and their concentration in Havana reduced their accessibility. Only very limited expansion of vocational and industrial education was undertaken at this time, however. The most successful new school was the home economics school for young women, established in 1918. Arturo Montori described it as one of the best organized and most popular schools in Cuba.

Educationalists emphasized the agricultural base of Cuba's economy in their recommendations for better rural schooling and agricultural training. The Gómez government responded with the creation of six granjas agrícolas in 1909, one in each province. These schools provided a two year general and agricultural course, under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, but each took only thirty students per year. Government continued to ignore persistent recommendations for consolidated rural schools and for special training for rural teachers.

Normal schools, essential to the supply and quality of primary level teaching staff, were not provided for by law until 1915, after active campaigning by many teachers and educationalists and escalating public pressure. Supporters argued that normal schools would overcome corruption in the examination and appointment of teachers as well as improve training. Seven opened between 1915 and 1923. As with the institutos, the normal schools were located in the provincial capital; Havana had two, one for each sex. Unlike the institutos, they were free and so provided a possibility of further education and employment for students who could complete their primary education and find the means to live in the provincial capitals. In particular, they opened up opportunities for socially acceptable secondary level education and future professional work for young women. In 1923, the government reintroduced teacher qualification through examination; the certificates of these maestros habilitados were designed to be provisional, and could be made permanent only by completing the normal school course.

Commentators condemned teaching standards at the secondary level. Critics complained that "colonial" methods of teaching, such as oral examinations and learning by

rote, remained in place. The training of secondary school teachers was judged inadequate, where they were trained at all; rumours regularly circulated of unqualified but well-connected people receiving teaching appointments. It was also widely believed that public school teachers neglected their staff duties in favour of tutoring private students, thus providing important supplements to their small incomes.

By 1925, Enrique José Varona’s reform of the secondary system at the turn of the century had been developed no further; his dream of widespread, practical education for Cuba’s youth had not yet been fulfilled. Although Cuba had a population of over 300,000 people between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, public secondary education remained extremely limited and available only in urban areas. Prescriptions for secondary education indicated the extent of national ambitions. Cuba, educationalists argued, needed to expand secondary education to include adequate numbers of professional schools, commercial schools, agricultural schools, vocational schools, night schools. Wider variety had to be matched by varied location. Cuba’s young people needed to remain in school longer, by attending \textit{escuelas primarias superiores}, and through the lengthening of vocational courses (normally only two years). The list of demands was long and the impression left - of an inadequate, uncoordinated and under-resourced secondary system - was bleak. Arturo Montori maintained that the reality was even worse than educationalists claimed, and no one disagreed with him.\textsuperscript{66}

\textit{Botellas and Dilettantes}

Successive governments did not remain completely indifferent to the plight of public education, nor to popular pressure to improve conditions in public schools. Commentators occasionally reported government efforts to augment the number of classrooms, provide materials or in other ways tackle the system’s inadequacies. In 1910, the government of José Miguel Gómez organized the first public night schools. Mario G. Menocal’s administration revised the course of studies for primary schools in 1914, with an emphasis on using Cuban textbooks. A pension fund for teachers was established the following year. In an effort to reach children unable to attend schools, the Department of Public Instruction, also under Menocal, authorized the use of \textit{maestros ambulantes}, or itinerant teachers who travelled to pupils, in order to provide a basic education to isolated rural children. Lack of resources, however, undermined the endeavour. In 1917, Guerra had only eighteen \textit{maestros ambulantes} in the province of Pinar del Río. Most of those posts had been created in 1913 to service the estimated 60 per cent of six to fourteen year olds, or about twenty-five thousand children, who did not attend school.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{66} Asociaciôn Pedagôgica Universitaria, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{67} Guerra, \textit{La enseñanza en Pinar del Río}, pp. 11, 14-16.
The newspaper *Heraldo de Cuba* had no doubt as to where accountability lay for the poor conditions in public education. "The responsibility for this lamentable neglect cannot be attributed to parents," it insisted, "but to the government." Three points in particular stand out with regard to government (in)action during this period. Firstly, initiatives to maintain and improve the public educational system did not originate with government, but rather with the people who used and worked in the system. Secondly, when action was taken, as the example of the *maestros ambulantes* suggests, insufficient commitment and resources sabotaged the results. Finally, government consistently took decisions to implement short-term palliatives in spite of predictable negative long-term consequences. The halved school day is a good example of this type of decision-making.

Some critics attributed the problems in education to government incompetence. Alfredo Aguayo, for example, complained that no Secretary of Public Instruction since 1902 had understood educational issues, nor conceived a clear plan of reform, and indeed none were any more than *dilettantes*. Many...of our men of action and thought...," Ramiro Guerra lamented, "prefer an automobile to a reputation." A serious problem lay at the heart of government: political corruption. Educationalists believed that corruption created a lack of vitality and responsibility at all levels of the educational system, from the Secretary of Public Instruction to the teachers in the schools, which contributed to the dismal state of public instruction in Cuba. Corruption remained endemic to the Cuban political system, regardless of the party in power. "Our political parties, without programmes which differentiate them and without ideals which recommend them," complained Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, "pursue only their personal interest and that of their coterie, with absolute contempt for the needs of the country and the well-being of their fellow citizens." The most prevalent form of corruption was the *botella*. In Cuba," explained Aguayo, "the national institution par excellence is the *botella*, and by *botella* I understand, not just a sinecure, where the office-holder frees himself from all obligation, but work performed intermittently, without devotion, without loyalty, without zeal and energy." Illustrating this point, Arturo Montori cited the many inactive or under-utilized people working in public administration; some were teachers, who could be used to much better purpose in a classroom. Nonetheless, he complained, "the number of schoolrooms in the Republic is limited, and cannot be increased; on the other hand, the number of employees in some departments has no fixed limit, and bureaucratic capacity seems to be infinitely flexible".

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69 Aguayo, "Factores cualitativos de nuestra decadencia escolar", p. 91.
70 Guerra, "The Present State of Primary Instruction in Cuba", p. 100.
72 Aguayo, "Factores cualitativos de nuestra decadencia escolar", p. 92.
73 Montori, "La crisis escolar", p. 32.
Antonio Iraizoz, Assistant Secretary of Public Instruction under President Alfredo Zayas (1921-25), responded to the government's critics by arguing that "up to the present it has been thought that problems of education in Cuba could be solved by recommending certain legal or administrative measures, or, on the other hand, in order to cover personal aspirations, some plan of material reforms has been offered, bringing them before the attention of all social classes". He concluded that "surely, after the first agitation brought about by their proposal has passed, we have seen that no benefit has occurred to the school or the educative [sic] system". Failing to note that this was often due to government inaction, corruption or ineptitude, the solution Iraizoz proposed was "to soar in order to find the calm regions of the ideals", "where we can consider the sad truths of the present as mere pebbles on a rough road that we are forced to follow...", not a position likely to restore faith in government competence.

Iraizoz' rejection of administrative and legal changes as a solution to the problems in public education is interesting, because during this period successive governments in fact made several such changes. The most important was the passage of the 1909 school law, proclaimed by the government of José Miguel Gómez as the first of the Republic. After considerable pressure from teachers' organizations, the new law placed restrictions on transfers and dismissals, effectively granting security of employment following a two year trial period. It brought to an end the one year contract which had caused so much insecurity and resulted in the "disconcerting spectacle of groups of itinerant teachers, going from Junta to Junta in search of a contract for the following year, like unemployed workers at the end of the zafra...".

While it retained elected boards of education, in effect the 1909 law ensured that real local power lay with the district inspectors, who were centrally appointed. The law stipulated that all action by the school boards, including the appointment and dismissal of teachers, should be taken either at the recommendation or with the prior approval of the district inspector, who was in turn responsible to the provincial inspector. The steps from district inspector to Secretary of Public Instruction were few: between them lay only the provincial inspector, the superintendent of the province and the General Superintendent of Schools. In other words, the decentralized nature of the system was seriously undermined, if not undone. These layers of administration did not occur at the secondary level; secondary education was directly controlled by the Secretary of Public Instruction.

While Cuban governments appeared unable to organize the education of the country's children, incompetence and corruption did not prevent the militarization of the island, according to Carlos Trelles. Trelles noted that in 1919, education received approximately 15 per cent of the national budget, while the military received 24 per cent.

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74 Iraizoz, p. 20.
75 Ibid., p. 21.
76 Montori, El problema de la educación nacional, p. 15.
He compared this with the U.S. administrations, when education had received a higher share of the budget than the military. In 1910, according to Trelles, education's share of the budget halved while the military's doubled. In 1919, he alleged, Cuba boasted 5,400 teachers and eighteen thousand soldiers. The number of soldiers had increased during the First World War, but the difference in number between soldiers and teachers remained high after the war ended. By 1922, Trelles wrote, Cuba had increased its number of teachers to six thousand; at the same time, thirteen thousand soldiers served the country. Trelles contrasted this situation with that in the United States, which had, he said, 600,000 teachers and 125,000 soldiers. Ramiro Guerra supported this argument. "Still our governors do not put schools, either in words or in deeds, on the same level as the army and the treasury," he complained.

Lack of expenditure was not the cause of the problems in public education, however, and critics recognized this. Whether they identified corruption or centralization, or both, as the source of the educational system's ills, they judged the impact of government on public education to be negative. Educationalists clamoured for institutional and legal changes which would lessen government control, while governments accomplished the reverse. Political corruption went much deeper than diverting funds and la botella, but many critics did not appreciate its structural nature and continued to believe that a change of government would bring a change of policy. Ramiro Guerra in particular was to pay a high price for this belief.

Responses to Problems in the Educational System

Problems in the educational system could not be attributed to a lack of popular support. Every class, at least rhetorically, supported the development of public education on the island, with those outside the elite often genuinely committed to this end. Ramiro Guerra reported that "the campesino father wishes to give his children some instruction - the only thing they [sic] are able to give". Communities built their own schools with donated supplies and labour; property owners provided buildings free of charge, as did professionals their time. Parents grouped together to hire teachers for their children where no public school had been provided. Nor was the desire for education confined to the young. The public consistently demanded greater provision of night schools for adult

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77 Trelles, p. 13. Another study roughly supports Trelles. The Cuban budget for education as a percentage of the total national budget, in 1919, is given as 16 per cent; for the military, 22 per cent. In 1909-10 the percentage of the budget devoted to education is recorded as 13 per cent; for the military, almost 19 per cent. This compares to about 21 per cent for education under the U.S. military government. See Frederico Chang, El ejército nacional en la república neocolonial, 1899-1933 (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1981), pp. 195-199. Albert G. Robinson devotes a chapter to revenue and expenditure under the U.S. military government in Cuba and the Intervention (New York: Longman's, Green, 1905).

78 Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, pp. 7-8.

79 Guerra, La enseñanza en Pinar del Río, pp. 3-4.
education and voluntary groups set up schools for both young and old whom the public system had yet to reach.

Commentators regularly reported a nationwide commitment to the development of a strong public educational system, with popular enthusiasm cited as a significant resource upon which the Department of Public Instruction could draw. Government failure to address problems in the educational system frustrated this energy and created anxiety in its place. The consequence was twofold. Politicized Cubans developed an increasingly radical analysis of the connection between Cuba's educational ills and the political and economic challenges which she faced. Meanwhile, those with sufficient economic resources abandoned public education for the growing number of private educational institutions on the island.

The Opposition to Private Education

In the early years of the republic, private schools multiplied "extraordinarily", according to Arturo Montori. The expansion of private education caused some disquiet amongst educationalists. In particular, commentators expressed concern over the influence and practices of religious schools, which by definition violated the republican concept of state, secular education. The persistence of private education became a source of anxiety amongst educationalists. Their concerns entered the national arena, and private schools became a focus of widespread perceptions of Cuban educational failure, and thus of Cuban decline.

The most prevalent private school was the escuelita. Numerous, small and cheap, they were particularly common in poor barrios. They appear to have been little more than informal daycare centres; local women would take in neighbourhood children for one or two pesos a month. Normally the children were too young to attend public schools, or there was none nearby. A small number of secular charitable schools existed; the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, for example, ran highly regarded schools founded by private benefactors for charitable purposes. Mutual societies, such as the Spanish Regional Association and other immigrant associations, particularly from different areas of Spain, frequently ran their own schools. Individuals founded private schools as commercial businesses. The most important private schools in terms of political influence, however, were established by religious communities. Normally fee paying but occasionally charitable, they were chiefly run by Catholic orders from Spain and Protestant orders from the United States.

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81 SEAP ran eight schools in 1925 and nine by 1937. Not all charity schools were as well thought of. According to school inspector Ismael Clark (see below), some treated children as they would sick dogs, as though they were stupid and inferior. See Montori, Ponencia del Dr. A. Montori, p. 13.
82 The categories of private schools described here do not include informal or ad hoc arrangements made by parents, particularly in rural areas, to provide education for their children, such as hiring a teacher between
The growing numbers of private educational institutions in Cuba reflected the mounting lack of confidence in the public school system. Corruption, incompetence and lack of political will took their toll on public schools, resulting in the chronic shortage of resources and abysmal conditions - poor hygiene, want of materials and space, high teacher turnover and absenteeism - which undermined parental confidence. Often children were sent to private schools in protest, in spite of warnings by educationalists that abandoning the public educational system would lead only to further decline.

Ethnic and religious influences and prejudices also guided parents in their choice of schools. Spanish immigrants often perceived themselves as distinct from native Cubans and consequently favoured sending their children to schools run by fellow immigrants, alongside other children from their community. This feeling of distinctness lay behind the foundation of the very small number of Jewish schools in Cuba. Schools run by religious orders and business concerns from the United States were popular because parents believed that graduates stood a better chance of gaining entrance to U.S. schools for advanced study and subsequently of finding employment.\(^3\) Parents were also motivated by the composition of the student body. Co-education offended some, while others would not send their children to public schools attended by poor and/or black children.\(^4\)

Many Cubans retained the belief from colonial times that private education was superior to that provided by the state. While there is no evidence to support this assumption, private schools did appear to offer an easier, if more expensive, route to a better end. They provided qualifications in less time than state schools and rumours abounded of university admissions made on the basis of school attended rather than academic ability. The newspaper *Heraldo de Cuba* reported that a private secondary school in Guanabacoa had printed final results one month before the students sat the final examination, an occurrence which failed to elicit protest from the instituto which authorized the degrees.\(^5\)

In 1909, the Partido Independiente de Color, a political party founded by black Cubans, analysed Cuba's educational system from the perspective of race. Private schools flourished, the Party argued, because of the poor conditions in the public system, yet impoverished children and children of colour did not normally have access to private education, either because of lack of funds or direct discrimination. It attacked private education for frustrating the best aims of Cuban educators by using archaic methods, operating practices of racial discrimination, encouraging the formation of an elite group in several parents. For an example in a later period, see Lowry Nelson, *Rural Cuba* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), pp. 229-230 (originally published by the University of Minnesota in 1950).


\(^4\) Public schools were occasionally accused of separating white and black children, an accusation always denied by government.

Cuban society, and for anti-Cuban, anti-patriotic teachings. The Party demanded free obligatory education, both academic and vocational, up to and including university level, for all Cubans, in order to decrease reliance upon the private sector. In addition, it demanded that private schools be regulated by the state in order to ensure uniform education for all Cubans.86

In 1915, private education in Cuba became the subject of national debate. That year, the newspaper *Heraldo de Cuba* published a series of articles by school inspector Ismael Clark which described his experiences of private schools and examined the impact of private education on Cuban society. Developing many of the points raised by the Partido Independiente de Color, Clark's criticism focused on three main themes. He accused private institutions of maintaining unacceptable educational standards, of the perpetration of class and racial divisions in society and of holding anti-nationalist attitudes.

Clark claimed that standards of hygiene were often no better in private than in public schools. He was particularly horrified by the *escuelitas*, where he had found children ill and poorly clothed, kept inside dirty one-room dwellings. "In certain country villages," he wrote, "I have seen...an unauthorized escuelita, in which four or six completely nude children are on a dirt floor. In Vedado [a suburb of Havana] I knew another, and in the same was an old paralitic man, half naked, on whose knees the children played."87 This description, and the fact that *escuelitas* were overwhelmingly run by women, seems to support the argument that they in fact acted as informal neighbourhood daycare and perhaps did not fall into the same category as private schools with more pedagogical pretenses.

Clark also found reason to criticize teaching methods in the private sector. "Absolute pedagogical confusion exists in private schools in general and above all in religious schools, principally in girls' schools," charged Clark. "Most of the 'sisters' in charge of teaching are absolutely ignorant of method and even of the text intrinsic to the very subject which they are teaching."88 With some honourable exceptions, private schools were "centres of opposition to modern pedagogy".89 They continued to use teaching methods from colonial days. Many schools were staffed by teachers of dubious training and some were run, he alleged, by religious orders which had been expelled from other countries, particularly France and Spain.

Echoing the Partido Independiente de Color, Clark argued that private schools exacerbated racism and class divisions in Cuban society. He cited fear of contact with "*gente sucia*"90 in public schools as one of the reasons for patronising private institutions.

87 Ismael Clark quoted in Montori, *Ponencia del Dr. A. Montori*, p. 17.
89 Ibid., p. 5.
90 Literally, "dirty people".
Private schools, he contended, fostered class differences in society as well as notions of inferiority and superiority. They did so through their very existence and through what they taught, as well as by separating black from white and impoverished from wealthy. The latter practice in particular roused his ire. Some of the schools he described openly labelled children as rich or poor. "In consequence," he wrote, "children (and above all girls) are separated...forbidden to meet even in the street...and the parents of the poor children, because of vanity, because the school has a majestic name and their children wear a uniform, send their children there and consent to this humiliation!"\(^{91}\)

In addition to class and race divisions, the lack of homogeneity and common history in the immigrant society of early twentieth century Cuba troubled educationalists. Education, they believed, by fostering national solidarity, played an important part in fully incorporating immigrants into Cuban society. Educationalists argued that as long as immigrants and their children were educated in their own schools with their own curriculum, their only common interest with their new country would be economic, weakening Cuba's political development.

Clark condemned private schools for failing to foster nationalism in Cuba's children; he reserved particular vitriol for those which actively discouraged it. He protested that private schools failed to introduce children to the concept of *patria*, the child's relationship to it, the history of Cuba, or its patriots. They did not observe Cuban holidays and important days in the country's history. They acted as a "focus of denationalization".\(^{92}\) Furthermore, "they use texts printed abroad, in which the subjects are not treated in accordance with scientific truth, nor a pedagogical plan, or in which Cuba is omitted, when it is not slandered".\(^{93}\) As an example, Clark cited a college run by Jesuits in Cienfuegos. The text being used for moral and civic instruction taught, he claimed, "detrimental concepts" about Cuban sovereignty.\(^{94}\) The Secretary of Public Instruction had ordered the college to modify the text or cease using it, but his instructions were ignored. Clark believed that such defiance provided sufficient cause to close a school.

It was most unlikely, educationalists argued, that defeated Spanish colonialists and frustrated U.S. annexationists were teaching Cuban children the principles of *cubanidad*. "To claim," argued one newspaper column, "...that foreigners teach Cuban youth of the glorious epics of 1868 and 1895, of heroes and martyrs, of the necessity to strengthen patriotic sentiment, of the great influence which the proximity of the United States has

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91 Clark, "Escuelas Privadas", p. 5. Although Clark clearly believed that private schools had particularly adverse effects on girls, he never accused them of fostering gender divisions in society in addition to race and class divisions.
92 Ibid., p. 5. This is the same word later used by Ramiro Guerra, cited on page 77.
exercised over Cuba's destiny and, finally, of the vital necessity to create a potent and vigorous nationality, is to be out of touch with reality."\textsuperscript{95}

Limited state secondary education resulted in heavy reliance on private education at the secondary level. As private institutions were frequently run by foreign religious orders, educationalists complained that secondary education had, in effect, become both private and religious, violating the principle of state secular education. Furthermore, they alleged that religious schools had launched an attack on their secular counterparts. To support this point, the \textit{Heraldo de Cuba} printed a Jesuit pamphlet which claimed that "the secular school is a demon transformed into a teacher. Today it asks only to be admitted as a guest: tomorrow it will rise as a tyrant...it will make its own many unfortunate souls, corrupt not a few hearts, rob peace and honour from many families."\textsuperscript{96}

The link between problems in Cuba and the availability of private education was pursued by Arturo Montori. He argued that the poor pedagogical standards and anti-nationalism or anti-nationalism of the private schools affected principally the wealthy, because it was they who attended these schools. Consequently, the upper classes developed a low level of patriotism. As evidence of this assertion, Montori cited the large-scale sale of Cuban land and industry to foreign concerns, the preponderance of foreign businesses in Cuba and their influence on Cuban culture and society, and repeated Cuban requests for foreign experts to advise on Cuban problems, in spite of the fact that Cuba possessed professionals who could and did offer expertise.\textsuperscript{97} Private schools, argued Montori, produced the badly trained and corrupt professionals and politicians who were such a feature of Cuban society. Private schools educated the class responsible for the frequent political disturbances experienced in Cuba.\textsuperscript{98} "In truth, almost all the great collective problems from which this society suffers," he maintained "stem from the defective education which this social class now receives."\textsuperscript{99}

Clark's articles stirred nationalist sentiment, as educationalists and nationalists alike recognized that a splintered educational system would lead to a splintered society at many levels, undermining their aims of national development, \textit{cubanidad} and loyalty to the \textit{patria}. The Fundación Luz Caballero, named for one of Cuba's renowned nineteenth century intellectuals, was formed to publicize the issues Clark raised. It argued that the state had both the right and the duty to mould a particular type of citizen, one who acted in accordance with "the economic, moral and political aspirations of society."\textsuperscript{100} To overcome the perceived threat to this aim which private schools posed, educationalists argued not for the abolition of private education, but for its regulation, to ensure adherence

\textsuperscript{95} Juan Villoldo, p. 8. He was referring in particular to Spanish orders.
\textsuperscript{96} Printed in \textit{Heraldo de Cuba}, 9 August 1915, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{97} Montori, \textit{El problema de la educación nacional}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., p. 7; Montori, \textit{Ponencia del Dr. A. Montori}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{99} Montori, \textit{El problema de la educación nacional}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{100} Montori, \textit{Ponencia del Dr. A. Montori}, p. 8.
to nationalist objectives. "I promise that I am not an enemy of private primary schools," Clark reassured his audience; "on the contrary I believe their disappearance would be a national calamity." 101 "Private schools cannot be prohibited because this would be an assault on freedom," he went on, "but as their existence is an assault on the Republic, it is necessary to submit them to the law: to regulate them." 102 The purpose of regulation would be to achieve what Clark identified as the theme of his campaign, the "cubanization" of private education. 103

The proposed regulation aroused fierce opposition. The conservative newspaper Diario de la Marina ("naturally", wrote Clark) gave space to writers to attack Clark's position. Conservative educationalists, including Alfredo Aguayo, maintained that the solution to unsatisfactory public education was a strong private system. They accused Clark of being anti-religion, an accusation which Clark denied strenuously. Supporters of private education occasionally insisted that private religious schools did not teach anti-nationalist sentiments (Clark retorted that Belén may have produced some illustrious patriots, but they did not learn their patriotism at the school), but mainly focused their arguments on the issues of freedom of religion and education. Clark himself was personally attacked, anonymously threatened and subjected to a stringent review of his previous six years work in an effort to find grounds for his dismissal.

The conflict highlighted an ambiguity in the Constitution regarding private education. Clark's opponents argued that his proposals contravened Article 31, in particular the phrase which promised that "all persons may learn and teach freely any science, art or profession, and found or maintain establishments of education and instruction". 104 Clark, noting that the article also placed education "in the charge of the state", accused anyone who believed that regulation of private schools contravened the Constitution of being ignorant of its contents or unable to read. 105 "If private religious schools," Clark wondered, "have the best buildings, the most educated teachers, the support of the best people, if their nature is almost deified, why evade the light of day, of what are they afraid?" 106

The theme of "cubanization" resonated with many people. In 1917, in response to the debate and the work of the Fundación Luz Caballero, Fernando Ortiz submitted to the national legislature a proposal for the regulation of private schools. The proposal attempted to address the doubtful pedagogical credentials of many private institutions, and especially their alleged anti-nationalist teachings. Although this concern was not vocalized during the debate, it implicitly acknowledged the threat posed to the employment of Cuban teachers,

102 Clark, "Escuelas Privadas", p. 5.
103 See Heraldo de Cuba, 16 August 1915, p. 2 and 19 August 1915, p. 2.
104 Cuba, Constitución de la República de Cuba (La Habana: Rambla y Bouza, 1901), pp. 9-10.
105 Ibid., p. 9.
particularly normal school graduates, by the private school practice of hiring foreigners and Cubans trained in private schools. Supporters claimed that the proposal enjoyed wide public approval.

The proposed legislation asserted the state's right to inspect private schools, with inspectors hired for that specific purpose. It stipulated that only texts approved by the Board of Superintendents should be used in the classroom and that the course of studies in private schools should match that of their public counterparts. The nationalist aspirations inherent in the position of Clark and his supporters were reinforced by the specifications that directors of private institutions should be Cuban-born; that the history of Cuba (not then taught in most private schools or public secondary schools) and civics should be taught only by Cuban-born teachers; and that the Cuban flag should be placed prominently in all schools. It added that only those with qualifications recognized by the state should be entitled to employment. Public school teachers were to be forbidden to work in private schools at any time, an attempt to stop the practice of state employees supplementing their income by tutoring in private schools, resulting, it was alleged, in neglect of their duties.

Cuba's politicians refused to pass the legislation. Largely the products of private schools themselves, they also educated their children privately; they were therefore responsive to the vigorous and angry resistance of many private institutions and their supporters to the proposed regulation. The dispute continued to simmer, however, and re-emerged on a national scale during the debates which surrounded the creation and implementation of the Constitution of 1940.

**The Educational Programme of Students and Workers**

The debate over nationalism in schools which private education precipitated foreshadowed the national introspection of the early 1920s. International events also reverberated in Cuba. The Mexican Revolution and Mexico's new constitution of 1917, the October Revolution in Russia in the same year and the Latin American University Reform Movement which began in Córdoba, Argentina in 1918, were keenly observed and discussed. Protest movements formed in Cuba as new groups challenged existing political and economic arrangements. Women pressed for a social agenda which would improve their position, and for the right to vote. Intellectuals decried government corruption, and searched for a uniquely Cuban culture. Trade unions widened their interests from immediate trade-specific and economic concerns to include political demands, such as the right to organize and to strike, and formed labour coalitions to fight for change. The small professional and entrepreneurial class also became aware of the need to organize politically in order to promote their economic interests, in opposition to governments apparently supine before external pressures.
Students, particularly at the university and secondary level, became key players in this new period of activism. As the first generation born in the republic reached adulthood, it found the promise of independence dimmed and its own prospects bleak. The national context of assessment, criticism and challenge resonated within this group and an important leader emerged from the student ranks. Perhaps more than any other Cuban of his generation, Julio Antonio Mella represented the increasingly radical nationalism of Cuban youth. Born into a middle class immigrant family in 1903, he received his primary education in private Catholic schools. He went on to study at the secondary institutes of Havana and Pinar del Río and then at the University of Havana. Salvador Díaz Mirón, a Mexican poet and his childhood tutor, inculcated Mella with the teachings of José Martí and stories about the Mexican revolution. According to Mella's biographer Erasmo Dumpierre, Martí's work had a major impact on Mella. The Mexican Revolution, the Russian Revolution and the University Reform Movement all influenced Mella's intellectual development.

Mella threw himself into the political activity at the University of Havana which erupted after his arrival there in 1921, and became one of the points of connection between working class militancy, student rebellion and intellectual protest in Cuba. His intellectual pursuits and his activism led him to form radical nationalist beliefs which identified the imperialist nature of the economic ties between the United States and Cuba and the consequences for Cuba's economic and political independence. Accepting Martí's comprehensive definition of political democracy, Mella looked for a model of economic democracy which would enable the implementation of Martí's ideal. He turned to Marxism, persuaded that only revolutionary change, led by the working class, could overcome the inequalities from which Cuba suffered. In particular, he became convinced of the importance of an alliance between students and workers in achieving such change.

In 1921, an international student congress was held in Mexico, which advocated an alliance between workers and students and declared its opposition to imperialism. In October 1923, Mella organized a national congress of students in Havana. Then only twenty years old, Mella had already become a student leader. He was in particular associated with the University Reform Movement, which campaigned for university autonomy from government, student participation in administration, practical education and extension of educational access. Mella was able to attract over fifty delegations from across

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107 A common predicament which faced middle-income parents at the time was the inability to finance private education beyond the primary level. This may have been (part of) the reason for Mella's change to the state system. The decision may also have been influenced by his own resistance to private school discipline which led to his being expelled, according to his biographer. See Erasmo Dumpierre, J.A. Mella: biografía (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 3.

the country to the student congress, including leading educationalists of the day, many alumni groups and secondary school students.

The student congress promoted the aims of the University Reform Movement, but it also functioned as a forum for the discussion of much wider educational, social and political ideas. Over ten days of meetings, the congress sent its greetings to the government of the U.S.S.R., which it agreed to ask the Cuban government to recognize; expressed solidarity with the oppression experienced by people in various countries around the world; spoke out against imperialism, especially "yankee imperialism" in Cuba; and declared its opposition to the Platt Amendment.

Led by Mella, the congress adopted a document which listed the rights and duties of students. The first duty of a student, it stated, was "to spread knowledge among society, principally among the manual proletariat", the group "most similar to the intellectual proletariat", in order "to promote a new society, free of parasites and tyrants, where no one lives except by virtue of their own effort". In this way, Mella articulated his belief in the natural alliance of students and workers, and introduced a means of cementing their union: education. Students, the intellectual proletariat of society, would impart their knowledge to society's exploited workers, the revolutionary class, in an attempt to overcome the cultural monopoly held by one stratum of society, and to forge a revolutionary alliance.

In order to put his belief into practice, Mella founded a popular university named after José Martí and modelled on popular universities which had been established in Peru, Mexico and Argentina. Those in their turn had been influenced by a school in Barcelona, known as the Escuela Moderna, run by an anarchist as an alternative to the public system. The concept of popular universities was not new to Cuba when Mella formed the Universidad Popular José Martí. In 1922, the Federación Obrera de La Habana, led by Alfredo López, an active trade unionist, established a night school for workers known as the Escuela Racionalista, directed by communists José Miguel Pérez and Carlos Baliño. The school, held in the Centro Obrero de La Habana and other trade union centres, taught the children of workers during the day and the workers themselves at night. López and Mella were friends, and both López and Pérez became involved in the popular university.

Popular universities, argued Mella, could not in themselves bring about liberation. However, he added, "we believe that each new organization which dedicates its labour to the emancipation of people must be very useful. So it is with the popular universities". In particular, "they destroy one of the tyrannies of society today: the monopoly on culture". "No higher ideal exists," he went on, "than the emancipation of the proletariat through

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110 *Acta de la primera sesión ordinaria de mociones del Primer Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes, celebrada el miércoles 17 de octubre de 1923* in ibid., pp. 531-532.
culture and through revolutionary action." Consequently, while its statutes declared the Universidad Popular José Martí to be anti-dogmatic, without affiliation to any doctrine, system or creed, Article 3 stated its principal aim to be the formation of a "completely new and revolutionary" consciousness among the working class.112

On 3 November 1923, just after the Student Congress drew to a close, the Universidad Popular José Martí opened its doors "to the humble, who because of their daily labour to earn their bread, are not able to receive higher education".113 Over five hundred workers took advantage of the new opportunity. The university attracted considerable support from left-wing students, teachers, activists and intellectuals. Inevitably it was controversial, not least among university students, some of whom wished it closed. Eventually the dispute amongst the students became so fierce that Mella decided to move the popular university from the campus of the University of Havana to Havana's instituto, and from there to various centres for workers. It may be that these moves served to heighten its profile, particularly among increasingly politicized secondary students.

The Universidad Popular José Martí provided an important meeting place and centre of activity for students, teachers and workers. It offered courses for adults of varying abilities, from the illiterate to those who wished to pursue particular areas of study, as well as conferences on revolutionary themes. Cultural and recreational facilities were also available. Subjects included history, social and biological medicine, natural sciences, first aid and hygiene, law, literature and grammar. Mella taught a course on general and Cuban history.114 In addition, students were given the opportunity to discuss a wide variety of problems facing Cuba.115 Conference topics analysed Cuba's political and economic structures and relationships, U.S. capitalism and the role of intellectuals in society.116

The University was an important example of the mobilization of new political actors and forces on the island and indicative of the importance of education in this process. Economic insecurity, political impotence and growing nationalism had altered the face of Cuban politics. As the wave of politicization spread across the island in the 1920s,

111 "El nuevo curso de la Universidad Popular" in ibid., p. 127. Originally from an editorial in Juventud, November 1924.
114 Matilde Serra Robledo, "Julio Antonio Mella y la Universidad Popular 'José Martí', OCLAE, no. 7 (1977), p. 11.
115 One government surveillance report on a class in the Universidad Popular José Martí briefly records an interesting exchange between a teacher who believed education in Cuba offered sufficient preparation for life, if little else, and a Peruvian student who argued that any future revolutionary change in thought required immediate school reform, in primary as well as higher education. "Informe mecanográfico de la Sección de Expertos del Cuerpo de la Policía Nacional al Secretario de Gobernación relativo a las clases de la Universidad Popular "José Martí" y reunión de la Liga Antimperialista", 23 November 1925, Fondo Especial, Caja/legado 6, no. nuevo 1011, Archivo Nacional, La Habana.
116 Dumpierre, p. 30.
problems in Cuba's educational system were increasingly linked to the political and economic context in which they occurred. Educationalists despaired of government and its failure to reform public education in a coherent and rational way. The crisis in education became equated with a national crisis; a nation at a crossroads, facing "the possibility of rapid progress and a brilliant future on the one hand," as Guerra put it, "and tremendous dangers of disintegration and denationalization, if you will permit me the term, on the other".\footnote{Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, p. 16, emphasis in the original.} Even as the sense of nationalism deepened, the United States appeared to provide an impressive educational model for Cuba to emulate. Rejection of U.S. interference in Cuba continued to sit uneasily alongside admiration of educational progress in the United States.
Chapter IV
The Struggle for Change, 1924-1934

Cuba's elite and liberal reformers hoped that the election of General Gerardo Machado of the Liberal Party in 1924 would contain and alleviate disaffection. They were wrong. Powerful nationalist and radical ideas had been unleashed, and they were about to propel Cuba into revolution. The period of Gerardo Machado's presidency, which would last until the crisis of 1933, and the short administration of Ramón Grau San Martín which followed, witnessed further consolidation of the new political activism in Cuba. Political disillusionment, economic uncertainty and frustrated nationalism continued to find expression in new ideas and to come together in new forms of organization and protest. In 1925, over one hundred mainly urban-based trade unions formed the Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba (CNOC). Shortly afterwards, Julio Antonio Mella and Carlos Balino established the first Communist Party in the country. After 1928, the traditional political parties ceased to be a route for political disaffection, as all supported Machado in his re-election. By 1933, communism had overtaken anarchosyndicalism as the dominant ideology in labour politics. During this period, the educational system became an important means of the informal dissemination of radical ideas, as well as a key sector of political activity.

The 1924 election placed further strain on the public educational system as politicians diverted financial resources to their campaigns. While on a tour of public schools in Caibarién, near Santa Clara, the Superintendent of Schools warned a U.S. teacher that "we should find all the public schools greatly depleted because the funds of the School Board had been confiscated by the various political parties to carry on the campaign; a statement verified by every teacher in the schools, for they all told us the same story". The teacher went on to describe the consequences of this financial neglect. "In every public school room in the city," she reported, "we found three or even four children packed into a single seat, without books, paper, pencils or any other material with which to work, absolutely nothing but a teacher and a blackboard without chalk." Recognizing the mounting political and economic frustrations in Cuba, Machado campaigned on a programme of nationalism, declaring himself in favour of economic diversification and the protection and development of local industry. Already wealthy at the time of the election, his additional undertaking to end political corruption carried great weight with the public. He capitalized on popular discontent by running his campaign on

what he called a "Platform of Regeneration". This platform included a promise captured by
the slogan "water, roads and schools", an indication of the serious infrastructural problems
which Cuba still faced more than twenty years after independence. Machado's electoral
programme pledged active support of primary instruction, an increase in the number of
public schools and the formation of a body of technical experts to oversee public
education. The country accepted Machado's promises and elected him president.

During the first term of his presidency, Machado launched ambitious public works
programmes in order to improve the island's infrastructure and provide employment.
Responding to the demands of Cuban small capital, he passed legislation designed to
provide state support to local entrepreneurs. The Customs-Tariff Law of 1927 reduced
duty on raw materials and increased duty on imported manufactured goods in order to
stimulate Cuban production. New manufacturing enterprises slowly grew; communication
and transport facilities improved.

In spite of these efforts, Machado did not emerge as the saviour for whom many
Cubans had hoped. Although he promised a new, nationalist Cuba, he represented the old,
U.S.-dominated order. His substantial links with U.S. business and government (General
Electric, for which he had worked, provided him with campaign funds) proved important
in influencing the decisions he took as president. On a trip to the United States in 1925, he
promised that "every guarantee will be extended to American interests in the Republic",
and that "every possible facility" would be provided to expand Cuba's economic relationship
with the United States. He financed the public works programmes with U.S. loans,
borrowing $109 million in 1927 alone. This sum represented more than two thirds of
Cuba's total U.S. debt prior to Machado's presidency. "The net effect of this
programme," it has been argued, "was to mortgage Cuba's national independence and put
the country more completely in the hands of Yanqui imperialism."

From the time he assumed the presidency, Machado made clear the extent of the
measures he was prepared to take to overcome dissent. Within months, he ordered the
assassination of opponents, including newspaper owner and Conservative Party member
Armando André in August 1925. By 1926, he had "launched an uncontrolled terror against trade unions, commencing with the repression, through use of the army and martial

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3 See "Programa electoral de gobierno de Gerardo Machado" in Hortensia Pichardo, Documentos para la
4 Cuban economist Julio Le Riverend argues that the law affected mainly European imports, and not those
from the United States which posed the most serious threat to Cuban manufacturing. See Julio Le
5 Current History (June 1925), p. 466.
6 See Louis A. Pérez, Jr., Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy (Athens: University of
7 Fabio Grobart, "The Cuban Working Class Movement from 1925-1933", Science and Society, 39, no. 1
(Spring 1975), p. 78.
law, of both a railroad strike and a strike by sugar workers in Camagüey. Targets for surveillance, arrest, kidnappings and murder included union leaders, members of the newly formed Communist Party, members of the Liga Antimperialista and participants in the Universidad Popular José Martí. When economic crisis triggered by the Depression led to increased political protest, state repression intensified. When political protest spread beyond the working class, so did state violence.

Education under Machado, 1925-1930

In 1925, the Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria published a follow-up to its pamphlet Un programa de acción pedagógica of 1922. In the new pamphlet, La reforma de nuestra educación, the association complained that no steps had yet been taken to address its previous concerns, nor were any solutions in sight. The purpose of the second pamphlet was clear. "The Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria," wrote Alfredo Aguayo in the introduction, "entrusts the government of the illustrious General Gerardo Machado with inaugurating in Cuba a liberal political pedagogy, intelligent and farsighted, and inspiring in the Department of Public Instruction, rectifying its past errors, a spirit of spiritual renovation, of respect for the law and of devotion to the interests of teaching." Machado proved responsive to the association's pleas as part of his willingness to appease Cuba's urban middle class, even as he turned on labour opposition and attempted to check the growth of radical politics.

Machado indicated that he recognized public anxiety regarding education by appointing Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez as Superintendent of Schools, the senior non-political position in the Department of Public Instruction. Guerra had endorsed Machado, but nonetheless the appointment appeared to signify that Machado accepted the criticisms and recommendations of the Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, given Guerra's position as member and author of much of its work. Guerra commenced his new job with enthusiasm. For nearly fifteen years he had warned of the decline in public education; he must have relished the opportunity at last to improve matters.

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8 Ibid., p. 86. This charge was made against Machado at the time, by groups both outside of and within Cuba. The President of the Pan-American Federation of Labour announced in 1927 that the accusations against Machado "warrant the conclusion that a condition of virtual terrorism existed...The stories of extreme cruelty, assassination and inhuman treatment were so amazing that they seemed incredible". In 1927, in the Cuban House of Representatives, Carlos Manuel de la Cruz stated that "since 1925 a policy of arrests and expulsions in regard to workingmen [sic] has been pursued. Men have disappeared from many homes; many laborers have entered military prisons". Quoted in Raymond Leslie Buell, "Cuba and the Platt Amendment", Foreign Policy Association Information Service, 5, no. 3 (April 17, 1929), pp. 42, 43. See also Charles Albert Page, "The Development of Organized Labor In Cuba", Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1952, pp. 63-66. Machado's past hinted at what was to come. In 1910, while Minister of the Interior, he had violently repressed a railway strike in Santa Clara. See Page, p. 48.

9 Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, La reforma de nuestra educación (La Habana: La Propagandista, 1925), p. 6.
Guerra was responsible for the creation of new schools which characterized the early Machado years. In 1926, a presidential decree authorized the foundation of *escuelas primarias superiores*, the higher primary schools which educationalists had been requesting for many years. The schools were designed to provide technical courses for those who could not afford secondary schooling or were not considered intellectually suited to it. A revised course of primary studies further attested to Guerra's activity. The new plan of studies introduced agriculture and the geography of Cuba to the primary curriculum. The following year, another decree founded new commercial schools. At the community level, hundreds of new parent-teacher associations were formed.

The limited number of public secondary schools left secondary education largely in the hands of religious organizations. Young people who could not afford private fees or the charges for the *institutos* had access to free secondary education only if they attended one of the normal schools or the school of arts and crafts. The demand to attend normal schools grew rapidly; in 1926, the government increased the number of places available in Havana, although demand continued to outstrip supply. In 1929, the government opened an industrial technical school for boys just outside Havana, named after Machado, who made a personal donation to the school. The course of studies of the home economics school in Havana was reorganized in 1927, allowing the institution to grant qualifications to teachers of manual and home economic skills, for use in normal or elementary schools. At the same time, new home economics schools were authorized for each provincial capital.

Notwithstanding these changes, the Machado administration did not provide sufficient public secondary institutions to break the dominance of religious organizations over secondary education. The tension between private schools and liberal demands for secular education continued. However, the administration did make the first effort to outline the relationship between government and private primary educational institutions since Order 4 of the first U.S. occupation. In 1926, it issued a decree which reaffirmed the right of all to open a private school subject to certain conditions. Teachers were required to hold recognized accreditations and follow the assigned course of studies. The local chief of health had to certify that the building was hygienic and the staff free of transmissible diseases; the school could not then relocate from its site. Schools were responsible for submitting reports and data to the Secretary of Public Instruction. The decree also authorized periodic inspections to ensure that schools fulfilled the conditions stipulated.

Guerra also instituted two competitions for public and private students to write essays on the theme of encouraging Cubans to consume Cuban agricultural and industrial products.

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10 See, for example, Gabriel García Galán, *Nacionalización de la enseñanza primaria* (La Habana: Otero Hermanos, 1924).

products in preference to imports. Guerra drew attention to a recent government report outlining the problem of huge imports, including $70 million spent on importing food which could have been produced on the island. "Among present Cuban problems," he argued, "none surpasses in importance those of an economic nature, principally in relation to the improvement and diversification of our agriculture, the development of our industries, and the necessity...to reduce or suppress the importation of articles of consumption and to substitute them with others of national production." Through the competition, he hoped to promote consumption of Cuban goods by using students to extol their virtues, to encourage students as consumers to buy domestic products, and to stimulate interest in Cuba's agricultural and industrial bases among its youth. The project provided concrete expression for the widespread belief, one held strongly by Guerra himself, that education could and ought to be used as a vehicle to promote the best interests of the nation, in this case defined as economic development based on diversification.

After one year in office, both President Machado and Ramiro Guerra could claim, not unreasonably, that they had made concrete attempts to overcome some of the problems confronting public education in Cuba. In 1927, Guerra published a report which assessed the 1925-26 school year. In it he wrote most approvingly of the government's accomplishments. He even went so far as to assert that the achievements of the Machado administration rivalled those of General Wood and the U.S. army, of which Guerra thought highly. "It is a source of legitimate patriotic pride," he declared, "...that a Cuban government has surpassed in such advantageous and satisfactory terms the great work realized...by the military government of the United States." Cuba, he claimed, could now boast a greater proportion of children in primary school, both public and private, than any other Spanish speaking republic.

In his report, Guerra recorded that public primary school enrolment had increased to 63 per cent of the school-age population, a figure never again equalled in the republican period. The World Bank's Report on Cuba of 1951 cites this figure as evidence of an increase in enrolment between 1902 and 1925, and a decrease between 1925 and the 1950s. Other sources have subsequently repeated the comparison. However, the figure of 63 per cent does not seem credible given a widely agreed enrolment of only 30 per cent.

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12 Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Contribución de las escuelas primarias a la independencia económica de la República (La Habana: Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, Boletín No. 4, 1926), pp. 14-15. The competitions promoted the mild economic nationalism then being formulated into the Customs-Tariff Law.
13 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
15 Ibid., pp. 8-9. Although he does not specify, he appears to refer only to Latin America.
16 Ibid., p. 7.
of school-age children in 1923. In 1925, the Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria declared that since 1922 "our school system has improved neither a little nor a lot and even reveals symptoms of evils and afflictions which are worsening by the minute". Guerra's critical article "El problema de analfabetismo", also published in 1925, gives no indication whatsoever of what circumstances might have facilitated an enrolment which, according to his claim, more than doubled in two years. No hints of the transformation may be found in any of the many articles and pamphlets published between 1922 and 1925 warning of disaster in the public educational system. Therefore, it is likely that either the figure of 63 per cent was incorrect, or Guerra's method of calculating the school-age population exaggerated enrolment.

It is interesting to note that Mercedes García Tudurí, in a long article on the history of education in the first fifty years of the Republic, provides a chart showing matriculation between 1902 and 1952 but does not include any figures between 1923 and 1931. In other words, she does not use Guerra's figures for 1925-26, although she must have known about them, particularly as her article appeared in the history of Cuba edited by Guerra.

The 1919 census recorded that 234,038 students attended primary school. The number of students enrolled in public primary education in 1923 given by both García Tudurí and Arturo Montori, is 269,796. The official enrolment figure for 1924-25 recorded by Guerra, and by the Secretary of Public Instruction for 1925-26, Guillermo Fernández Mascaró, is 390,583. Guerra claimed a public primary school enrolment of 433,200 for

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18 Asociación Pedagógica Universitaria, *La reforma de nuestra educación*, pp. 3-4.
19 Guerra calculated the school-age population as one fifth of the total population. It should be noted that percentages of enrolment are not always comparable, as not everyone calculated the total school-age population in the same way.
21 Cuba, *Censo de la República de Cuba 1919*, p. 240. Of these, 226,909 were aged six to fourteen, the age of compulsory attendance.
22 *The Statesman's Yearbook* records 272,892 for the year 1923-24. See J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Yearbook 1925* (London: Macmillan, 1925), p. 786. It also cites enrolment figures of over 300,000 for the years 1919-25, with the exception of 1923, which means that according to it, Cuba experienced a significant, unexplained drop in attendance in 1923-24. However, given that the figure it cites for 1919-20 is over 100,000 greater than that recorded in the 1919 census, its figures would not always appear to be reliable, or are printing errors. See *The Statesman's Yearbook* for the years 1920-26.
23 Guillermo Fernández Mascaró, *La obra de un libertador en educación popular* (La Habana: Editorial Lex, 1953), p. 300. Fernández also gives the figure 388,349. 388,349 is repeated more than once by Fernández, whereas 390,583 appears only once. *The Statesman's Yearbook 1926* carries the former figure. Again, however, the sources do not agree. Antonio Iraizoz cites an enrolment figure for 1924 of 393,255, although he is not clear whether this is for the 1923-24 school year or 1924-25. Given the numbers cited by other sources, it is more likely to be the latter. See Antonio Iraizoz Villar, *Outline of the Educational Systems and School Conditions in the Republic of Cuba* (Havana: Department of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, 1924), p. 15.
1925-26. These figures indicate an unexplained, significant jump in enrolment in 1924-25, followed by another notable increase in 1925-26.

When assessing the accuracy of these figures, it is important to recall Guerra's political allegiance to the Machado regime and the regime's stated commitment to improved education in Cuba. Guerra both endorsed Machado's candidacy and worked in a senior capacity for the Machado government. Machado eventually rewarded his loyalty with the post of Secretary to the President, and Guerra was with Machado on the day the latter left the presidential palace in 1933. Therefore, his comments regarding Machado's achievements for public education, and his figures, must be greeted with some scepticism. Guerra was not the only source of exaggerated enrolment figures. If the 1919 census was at all accurate, then Guillermo Fernández Mascaró, Machado's Secretary of Public Instruction, was equally guilty of exaggeration in claiming an enrolment of 390,583 in 1925-26.

Even if the enrolment of 63 per cent was accurate, it does not in itself provide evidence of improved educational standards in Cuba. If, for example, increased matriculation was the result of an enrolment drive under Machado or Zayas before him, and not steady growth, it had no long-term or even short-term impact. By Guerra's own admission, enrolment notwithstanding, attendance at school remained very low and urgently needed improvement. Certainly the Constitutional Convention of 1928 had absolutely no basis for declaring that "the average of attendance at...centers of learning from the University down to the most elementary, attains a figure which compares favorably with that of the most civilized nations". Although Guerra's figure bettered the 1901-02 enrolment of 46 per cent by 17 per cent, he reported that average daily attendance was proportionally about the same in both periods. The average number of days attended in 1925-26 was also very low, at only fifty-five out of a school year of 175 days, although Guerra estimated that due to teacher absenteeism, poor weather and other factors, schools were only open, on average, ninety-six days. He further reported that the percentage of children who attended school past grade two had increased since 1902, but acknowledged that the comparison meant little as the U.S. occupation ended before most children who began school during it reached grade three. Even so, 69 per cent of children in school in 1925-26 were enrolled in grades one or two.

Guerra was also on somewhat uncertain ground when claiming Cuba's enrolment exceeded that of any other Spanish speaking republic. Guerra compared Cuba to Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. In the first two instances he used enrolment figures from the

24 Verbal evidence suggests that Guerra's loyalty to Machado led to his house being attacked by anti-Machado crowds.
25 Quoted in Buell, "Cuba and the Platt Amendment, p. 38.
26 Guerra, Adelantos en el año escolar proximo pasado, pp. 9-12.
27 Fernández Mascaró, p. 300.
previous year, 1924, and compared them with his figure for Cuba of 1925. This placed Argentina five percentage points behind Cuba, and Chile only one point behind.28 He used the same method to support his claim that Cuba graduated a higher percentage of students in each grade than did Argentina. In that instance he compared figures for Cuba from 1925 with Argentinian data of 1923.29

Finally, while Guerra reported the continuation of old problems, such as the bunching of children in lower grades and older children being forced to repeat grades with younger children, he failed to mention other issues, including whether the curriculum was sufficiently scientific and uniform; the motivation of teachers; the conditions in schools (including construction, hygiene and supply of materials); the efficiency of administration; education in the countryside; extracurricular activities; and the training and qualification of school inspectors. The whole tone of his report is significantly different from that in his previous articles, and appears designed to support his contention that the Machado government deserved praise for generating a new vitality in public schools. Two years later the Constitutional Convention made a similar boast. "Our system of public instruction," it declared, "has received an impetus which places it on a par with that in the most progressive countries."30

The foregoing may serve only to illustrate that quantitative data given by different sources do not agree. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there is no evidence to support the contention that educational standards improved in the 1920s, other than the anomalous enrolment figures cited by Guerra and Fernández Mascaró. Neither do contemporary accounts or subsequent events justify the claim. In a prologue to a book entitled Los problemas educativos de la nación, published in 1929, Alfredo Aguayo remarked that the title of the book correctly summed up Cuba's current situation.31 The author, Roberto Verdaguer, discussed many of the issues which Guerra had neglected in his 1927 report, confirming that problems had not been overcome and in many cases had not even been addressed.

The public educational system still relied heavily upon the volunteered support of parents and communities. In 1928, before political disturbances completely disrupted public education, Escuela No. 1 "Aurelio Castillo" in Camagüey (in other words, the principle school in the provincial capital) received government approval to build a kindergarten class but no government assistance. A member of the community donated a private home in which to hold the class until the community itself was able to construct a

28 Guerra, Adelantos en el año escolar próximo pasado, pp. 8-9.
30 Quoted in Buell, "Cuba and the Platt Amendment", p. 38.
31 Roberto Verdaguer y García, Los problemas educativos de la nación (La Habana: La Propagandista, 1929).
new classroom. This type of local action had been essential to the maintenance of the public educational system prior to the Machado presidency, and there is no evidence to indicate that the experience of the school "Aurelio Castillo" was unusual during it.

A further limitation on the Machado government's efforts was their urban orientation. The new escuelas primarias superiores, for example, were built only in urban areas. Although they had been designed to provide vocational education to young people who could not attend secondary school, an acute problem in rural areas, their vocational nature soon eroded. In practice they became urban preparatory schools for secondary education, including both the institutos and normal schools, presenting a further hurdle in access to secondary education to which they had been intended as an alternative.

The rising disaffection in the educational sector undermined government claims of improvements in public instruction. As Machado's re-election ambitions increased public opposition, teachers became more politicized. The oldest teachers' organization was the Asociación Nacional de Maestros, which had existed under different names since 1899. Its main occupation had been to lobby for satisfactory pay conditions and inamovilidad, or job security. In 1928, normalistas formed a new association, the Club Pedagógica de Cuba. In a reflection of national labour trends, exemplified by the Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba, the new group widened its demands to incorporate social and political, as well as economic, concerns. In addition to the usual positions on salaries and job tenure, the Club Pedagógica de Cuba demanded school breakfasts and lunches for children, an end to what they claimed to be the exploitation of employees of private educational institutions, and campaigned against Machado's re-election plans.

The repressive nature of the Machado regime and the deteriorating political and economic situation in the country proved to be the principal factor which undermined Guerra's efforts to improve public education. From 1927, resistance amongst university students to the constitutional revisions designed to allow a second Machado term led to frequent disturbances at the university and periodic, sometimes lengthy, closures. These disturbances affected the secondary schools because of the many social links and political affiliations between secondary and university students. Led by the Directorio Estudiantil Universitario and the organizations of individual schools, young people formed an important sector of those opposing continuismo. As early as 1925, Machado had ordered covert surveillance of the Universidad Popular José Martí and the Liga Antimperialista with which it was linked. Student activists were expelled and imprisoned, provoking further action. In June 1927, Machado ordered the closure of the Universidad Popular José Martí. Julio Antonio Mella, in fear of his life, left the country.

Asociación de Padres y Maestros, Escuela Numero 1 "Aurelio Castillo": Memoria de los trabajos realizados durante el año 1928 (Camagüey: Gutenberg, 1928), pp. 4-5.
Mella's exile marked the beginning of an increasingly open and violent assault by the Machado regime on the nation's youth. The terror extended even to Mexico where, on the night of 10 January 1929, Mella was gunned down. Although the Mexican government attempted to blame Mella's lover, Tina Modotti, for the killing, no one seriously doubted upon whose orders the assassination had taken place. Machado, busily engaged in murdering opposition in Cuba, had no reason to ignore Mella, one of the most dangerous of the revolutionaries, merely because he lived in Mexico. Only twenty-six when he died, Mella's years of intellectual maturity still lay before him. Had he lived, he would have been just fifty-six at the time of the Revolution. Once again Julio Antonio Mella symbolized his generation; not now its hopes, but its loss.

Education under Machado, 1930-1933

The corruption of Gerardo Machado's regime is generally traced to 1928. That year Machado reneged on his promise not to seek a second term of office. He bribed and bullied Cuba's politicians into nominating him as sole presidential candidate, thus sparing himself the inconvenience and uncertainty of an election. In addition, he altered the Constitution to extend the presidential term from four years to six. This historical periodization has been challenged by Fabio Grobart, a Polish communist who was a member of the Cuban Communist Party from its foundation in 1925 until his death after the revolution. Grobart argued that the actions for which Machado became infamous, in particular state repression and violence, began not in 1928, but from the time Machado came to power in 1925. The turning point in the regime came not in 1928, he contends, but in 1930 when the economy deteriorated rapidly under the impact of the Depression and direct confrontation erupted between the state and its citizens. The evidence supports this contention.

The year 1930 marked the beginning of a new phase in the struggle between Machado and his opponents. The economic insecurity and destitution already experienced by workers deepened and spread to the middle class as Cuba suffered the effects of depression. Attempts to alter working conditions inevitably led to clashes with the United States, as U.S. capital dominated the island's economic base. The United States refused

33 For a description of Mella's death and the events which followed, see Margaret Hooks, *Tina Modotti: Photographer and Revolutionary* (London: Pandora, 1993), pp. 3-7, 171-184. Robert Alexander suggests the communists may have killed Mella because he was turning towards Trotskyism, a theory with scant supporting evidence which does little but divert attention from the systematic nature of Machado's repression. See Robert Alexander, *Trotskyism in Latin America* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), p. 218.

34 Grobart, p. 77.

to reconsider its relationship with Cuba, however, in spite of the resentment building on the island. Repeated appeals by Machado to renegotiate at least the Reciprocity Treaty, and tentative raising of the subject of the Platt Amendment, met with no response; Washington declared confidently that "the rights inhering in the United States were not created by the...Platt Amendment...but merely recognized thereby".36

U.S. loans, which had saved Cuba from economic catastrophe in the past, continued to be provided in sufficient quantity only to prevent collapse as the United States confronted its own economic crisis. The U.S. Hawley-Smoot Act of 1930 contributed to the further deterioration of the ailing Cuban economy by increasing duty on Cuban sugar, resulting in a sharp fall in the Cuban share of the U.S. market.37 The Cubans responded by contracting production, a strategy in use since 1926. The Cuban government formalized this strategy in 1931 with the Chadbourne Plan, agreed with other sugar-producing nations, designed to keep sugar prices up by restricting supply. Between 1929 and 1932, Cuban sugar production fell by over 60 per cent.38 Government revenues dropped accordingly. As its income fell, the government assigned priority to servicing the national debt over investment.

So central was sugar production to the Cuban economy that restriction of production resulted in the constraint of almost all economic activity. The shortening of the *zafra* to only sixty-six days affected thousands of workers. An estimated 315,000 workers harvested Cuban sugarcane in 1929; in 1933, only 100,000 were needed.39 Wages plummeted. Sumner Welles, Washington's ambassador to Cuba in 1933, acknowledged that "the average laborer on the plantations has been paid less than the minimum amount required to feed himself and his family and the conditions of distress and actual destitution which exist cannot be exaggerated".40 Businesses and factories decreased production; wages dropped further. Having assigned priority to servicing the debt, the government cut back employment and reduced wages. Businesses and factories closed; unemployment increased. Families lost their homes and land. Economic hardship spread dramatically. In

37 The Cuban share of the U.S. sugar market fell from 49.4 per cent in 1930 to 25.3 per cent in 1933. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States*, p. 181.
39 Ibid., p. 220; Grobart, p. 90.
1933, 90 per cent of the population lived in poverty or on the margins.\textsuperscript{41} The Communist Party declared that half a million heads of families were unemployed.\textsuperscript{42}

The effects of depression spread to Cuba's small middle class. Professionals and students, the first generation born in independent Cuba, found their personal expectations and ambitions frustrated by the deteriorating conditions in their country. A U.S. teacher who made Cuba her home noted the reduced circumstances this group confronted. When she first travelled to the island, on a holiday in 1920, the people she met had dressed elegantly, the men in white linen, the women in white silk. "Little did I dream," she wrote later, "that within a few years I should see the children of those very same people, so fascinating in their immaculate white, enter the schoolroom shod in sandals, home-made of the cast-off inner tubing of automobile tires - a pair cost five cents when all finished - and garments crocheted of raveled gunny-sacks. But such were the vicissitudes through which many splendid people had to pass during the Machadato, the economic crisis and the depression in general." "Thousands were actually at starvation point," she recorded later. "I could notice the decline in mentality of some of my pupils, whom I knew were living on one meal a day, and that of cornmeal."\textsuperscript{43}

In March 1930, Machado banned the Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba and other labour organizations. In response, the CNOC led a one day general strike. About 200,000 workers took to the streets of Havana and other cities both to protest against the ban and to show solidarity with a Latin American labour protest against unemployment.\textsuperscript{44} "The choice," declared the Communist Party's manifesto, "is to struggle or to die of hunger." Under the slogan "Bread and Work" it appealed to "those who have lost their work and those in danger of losing it" to join the fight against the government.\textsuperscript{45} The government responded with violence and imprisonment. The failure of the strike to effect change convinced members of the Communist Party that urban protest alone could not defeat the government. A communist-led campaign to organize workers in the countryside began.\textsuperscript{46}

Strikes continued throughout the spring of 1930, including a large Labour Day demonstration. On 30 September, the University experienced a serious political protest, during which the police killed Rafael Trejo, president of the Law school and a well known

\textsuperscript{43} Gibson, pp. 35, 219.
\textsuperscript{44} Instituto de Historia del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, \textit{Historia del movimiento obrero cubano}, 1, p. 259; Grobart, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{45} "Manifesto del Partido Comunista de Cuba" in Rosell, p. 164.
activist. The students, in their manifesto "Al pueblo de Cuba", denounced the Machado tyranny and called for the overthrow of the president. The demonstration marked a resurgence of student political activity; students found themselves in jail alongside imprisoned workers, and new youth organizations formed. "The basic cause of the revolutionary sentiment is poverty," U.S. Ambassador Guggenheim informed Washington. "The immediate occasion is found in the indignant idealism of the students." This new generation became known as la generación del 30, committed to fighting for the independence of Cuba which it believed had been frustrated by the United States and the corrupted remnants of the generation of 1895. The failure of an uprising against Machado in August 1931, led by leaders of the older generation Mario García Menocal and Carlos Mendieta, reinforced this perception.

Machado's political opposition expanded as organizers learned from past mistakes and economic vulnerability intensified. In turn, Machado escalated the level of repression, refusing to tolerate even moderate opposition; indeed, he raised the stakes by making protest literally a matter of life and death. He institutionalized this strategy by creating, in 1930, a torture and assassination squad known as la Porra, or the bludgeon. In 1931, two important new opposition groups formed, the ABC and the Ala Izquierda Estudiantil. That same year, increasing numbers of the opposition took up arms, bombing and assassinating government targets.

Student political activity was not confined to the University. Instituto and normal school students were also well organized. The Ala Izquierda Estudiantil and the Communist Party actively recruited from secondary schools. In 1931, the communists organized the League of Pioneers of Cuba, an offshoot of the Young Communist League.

49 See, for example, Nydia Sarabia, Flóro Pérez: Biografía de un revolucionario de 1930 (La Habana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1972). Educated privately, Pérez's studies were occasionally interrupted when his parents were short of money. Unable to finance his desired career as a lawyer, he studied to become a teacher instead, winning a scholarship to the normal school in Oriente. He was arrested, tortured and murdered in September 1932 while still at normal school, aged 26. See also Asociación de Revolucionarios 1930, Héroes y mártires de la revolución de 1930: líder estudiantil Juan Mariano González Rubiera (La Habana: Ayon, 1948), for the story of the leader of the Institute of Havana students' organization, tortured and murdered in 1932, aged 16. Not even the intervention of the U.S. ambassador afforded protection, as the British Legation describes in an account of murders which occurred in spite of undertakings to the ambassador that the young men concerned would be protected. See Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16573 (1933), political no. 39, 4 April 1933 and Charles W. Hackett, "Unrest and Disorder in Cuba" Current History (March 1933), pp. 726-728. Machado's police tended to leave the bound and tortured bodies of their victims on the streets in wealthy neighbourhoods, as a warning to others, including parents.
50 The ABC was a clandestine organization, committed to armed opposition, which repudiated both fascism and communism, although the left accused it of being pro-fascist. It drew its support mainly from professionals, as well as students. The Ala Izquierda Estudiantil was a marxist-influenced splinter group of the Directorio Estudiantil Universitario.
which claimed 3,500 members between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, to work among children of elementary school age and to introduce them to communist ideas. Many of the League's demands centred on the educational system, including provision of school materials, payment of teachers' salaries, free school meals, equal treatment for black children and an end to corporal punishment. The government responded swiftly to student organization. Machado suspended constitutional guarantees and closed the university and secondary schools. A decree issued on 1 November 1930 threatened the "expulsion from any national educational institution of students and professors guilty of sedition". Many fell victim to this threat. In reply, those who had been expelled and fired declared they would never accept a post under a Machado government. Schools became the target of opposition bombs. Whenever secondary schools reopened, the government monitored attendance and activity, and occasionally used the army to maintain control. Strikes and disruption followed, leading to further closures in February 1931. Police claims to have uncovered a planned uprising prompted renewed closure of the university, "institutos" and normal schools in July. Although the Cuban courts later declared this action unconstitutional, this time the schools remained closed. The closure of educational institutions freed urban youths and their teachers from their normal activities and responsibilities and gave them ample time and reason for political organization. Students and teachers opposed to the government contributed to the paralysis in the system by refusing to take or hold examinations. Those who did were accused of being supporters of Machado or favoured by members of the regime. Nonetheless, "for the cessation of state-provided secondary education," the British Legation reported to London, "the responsibility rests with the government alone".

At the same time, the government confronted discontent among primary school teachers, who complained principally of economic hardship. As government employees they suffered from the financial cutbacks which included salary reductions, job losses and the late payment of salaries which the government imposed on all but the military. By the end of 1931, public employees' salaries had fallen to an estimated 50 per cent of the 1930

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54 See " Expediente mecanografiado de la Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, contentivo de los informes de los Institutos de Segunda Enseñanza, Escuelas Normales y Escuelas de Comercio sobre la asistencia y actividades de los estudiantes desde el inicio de la huelga", Fondo Especial, Lejado 14, no. nuevo 2697, Archivo Nacional, La Habana.
56 Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16577 (1933), Annual Report 1932 - Education.
level.\textsuperscript{57} By 1933, payment ran as much as six months in arrears.\textsuperscript{58} Although primary schools officially remained open, financial hardship forced some to close, while others struggled to function under demoralized, unpaid teachers, without educational materials.

In September 1932, Machado appointed General Eugenio Molinet as Secretary of Public Instruction. The British Legation in Havana warned that "he will find little to do in his new Department except, perhaps, to appease the school teachers whose salaries are months in arrears and who have recently developed a tendency to kick over the traces and refuse to work without pay".\textsuperscript{59} In December of that year, teachers in Havana struck over additional cuts in their salaries and continued late payment. Lacking funds and organization, the strike failed and the organizers were dismissed but, according to the British Legation, a "good deal of bitterness remains".\textsuperscript{60} The teachers of Santiago organized a strike in January 1933. Led by a splinter group of the Asociación Provincial de Maestros, the strikers accused the leader of the Asociación of being a machadista, and replaced him with a new executive. The strike continued until April, spreading to areas outside the city, and was resolved only with the direct intervention of the Assistant Secretary of Public Instruction.

As a consequence of relentless financial cutbacks and systematic government repression, no sector of the public educational system could be described as functioning normally after the 1929-1930 school year.\textsuperscript{61} The paralysis in public education increased reliance on alternatives. For those with the means, private education provided a substitute for the public system. Meanwhile, wherever possible, the poor took advantage of charitable, non-formal education.\textsuperscript{62} For the majority, however, reliable and consistent access to education, already fraught with obstacles, became yet more difficult.

\textsuperscript{57}Current History (November 1931), p. 272.
\textsuperscript{58}One book claims ten months, although it seems to be alone. See Gaspar Jorge García Gallo et. al., \textit{La educación en Cuba} (Buenos Aires: Editorial Convergencia, 1975), p. 17.
\textsuperscript{60}Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16577 (1933), Annual Report 1932 - Education. The majority of primary school teachers - between two thirds and three quarters - were women. Machado had noted the large numbers of women opposing him and tempted them with the vote in order to win their support. One of Machado's followers blamed women for the "excessive cruelty" of the political crisis. "Women are more cruelly aggressive than men," he alleged, "and history has always shown this to be so." Proof lay in the response of women to the violence. "The fact remains that every time one of Machado's friends lost his life by violence the comments of the women were harder and more cruel than those of the men." Additionally, he claimed, "it was proved that in all the important events the intervention of the polished hand of a woman could be found". Apparently women could indulge their "cruel natures" because of the "impunity" which their sex gave them. See Alberto Lamar Schiwyer, \textit{How President Machado Fell: A Dark Page in North American Diplomacy} (La Habana: La Casa Montalvo Cardenas, 1939), p. 31. In fact, their sex did not protect women from the violence.
\textsuperscript{61}See Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{62}Prominent among those who provided non-formal education were women's groups. The Lyceum y Lawn Tennis Club, formed in 1929, ran libraries, schools, night schools and summer courses in most provincial cities. Classes were offered in physical education, biology, languages, literature, gardening, wood carving, cooking, typing and shorthand. From 1933, the Club offered evening classes for illiterate and semi-literate adults, which taught literacy skills, domestic skills and basic mathematics. Summer courses for poor women emphasized homemaking, including sewing, cooking, nutrition and childcare. See
The Pittman Report

In 1932, as the political crisis deepened, the government issued an invitation to an educator from Michigan, Marvin S. Pittman, to come to Cuba to study the educational system and report on his findings. The invitation was extended during a U.S. economic mission to Cuba, symptomatic of the pressure which Machado was under to control events on the island. In requesting Pittman's visit, the government undoubtedly wished to reassure Washington and to reassert its liberal, reformist credentials in the face of a significant growth in middle class opposition, particularly in the educational sector. Instead, the invitation aroused controversy. Opponents asserted that Cuban educationalists were perfectly able to assess their own system, without the assistance of foreign "experts". The fact that Pittman could neither speak nor understand Spanish, they argued, highlighted the unsatisfactory nature of reliance on outsiders. The decision appeared to confirm the lack of cultural confidence that arose from the overwhelming influence of the United States on the island.

The Pittman report provided a description of Cuba's educational system which largely supported previous assessments by Cuban educationalists. Given past warnings, its damning conclusions should not have come as a surprise. Upon receipt of the report in December 1932, however, an outraged government refused to publish it. Instead, the government appointed a commission to refute some of the report's central allegations. The Assistant Secretary of Public Instruction, Juan de Dios Romero Viamontes, led the attack. To what had Cuba's government taken offence? Its official response revealed that it largely accepted Pittman's findings. What it could not tolerate was the conclusion which Pittman drew. Cuba's educational system, Pittman alleged, revealed a tension between democratic ideals and the continuation of a colonial mentality. He accused Cubans of a tendency to revert to the "life of aristocracy" as experienced under Spanish dominion.

Vincentina Atuña de Carone, "Lyceum y Lawn Tennis Club", Revista de la Habana, 1, no. 3 (noviembre 1942), pp. 293-294. Graduates of the home economics schools worked with the Lyceum, instructing preschool teachers in childcare skills. See K. Lynn Stoner, From the House to the Streets: The Cuban Woman's Movement for Legal Reform, 1898-1940 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 133-134. Also active in educational work was the Alianza Nacional Feminista, originally formed in 1927. It too ran a library. Its schools, which numbered seventy-two by 1933, offered primary education as well as courses such as sewing and embroidery. Like the Lyceum y Lawn Tennis Club, the Alianza Nacional Feminista was largely an organization of privileged women which directed its educational projects at working class women, aiming to improve their skills both in the home and in the workplace. Women's organizations stressed the importance of women as the first educators of Cuban children, which in part accounted for the emphasis placed on domestic skills. They also used their educational programmes to promote women's rights, such as suffrage. In addition, workers' organizations and philanthropists continued to offer limited opportunities for schooling to the poor.

The following comments on the Pittman report are based on the detailed response written by Luciano R. Martínez for the government commission which assessed the report. Martínez' response provides extensive details of the Pittman report, and he makes it clear which are Pittman's comments and which are his own. See Luciano R. Martínez y Echemendia, Dictamen sobre el informe emitido por el profesor Marvin S. Pittman acerca del estado de la educación en Cuba (La Habana: Molina, 1933). 

Martínez, p. 25; Juan de Dios Romero Viamontes, La democracia en la escuela (La Habana: 1933), pp. 11-12.
Pittman blamed the government for failing to allocate sufficient resources to education. "A democracy cannot be prepared to comply with the fundamental obligations of democratic life unless it invests at least a quarter of government revenue" in education, he maintained, observing that the Cuban government spent only half that amount. He estimated that the government provided only one third of the requisite elementary school places, that large numbers of buildings and nearly fifteen thousand additional primary teachers were required. Noting the poor condition of school buildings and materials, and reporting classes of sixty students with only two textbooks, he advised further investment in furniture, books and other instructional materials.

Pittman made equally harsh comments about teacher training, maintaining that too little time was devoted to it and arguing that, since 1920, it had been determined by political, not pedagogical considerations. Normal school programmes should be expanded, he advised, and the number of normal schools increased, with some designated specifically for rural teacher training. In addition, Pittman recommended methods by which teachers could continue their training after entering the profession, including involvement in the preparation of courses. He condemned the policy of equal salaries for both sexes, arguing that men should be paid more in order to attract them to the profession. He recommended a salary scale based on sex, qualifications, ability and classroom location. In order to improve morale, Pittman insisted that teachers needed proper financial rewards and satisfactory working conditions.

The limited opportunities for secondary education in Cuba attracted Pittman's attention. Although he classified fifty-two schools as being of a secondary nature, including the escuelas primarias superiores, he described the numbers enrolled in secondary education as "almost ridiculous". The institutos were criticized for being preparatory schools for university, rather than providing a broad education. Pittman noted that staff realized this, and recognized the need for reorganization. He recommended that secondary schools be fully integrated into the educational system, and that all communities should be provided with one.

Pittman also objected to the teaching methods used in Cuban schools, which he described as "rigid" and "paramilitary". Children were not taught how to ask questions, but learned how to answer them. Large class sizes and lack of books impeded individual attention and participation, resulting in the impartation of facts by teachers and reiteration.

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65 Pittman quoted in Martínez, pp. 14-15
66 Luciano Martínez rejected this view. "Certainly the fact that men are abandoning primary school teaching in our country is a serious problem," he wrote, "but this phenomenon is not exclusive to Cuba...And we can look - without establishing an economic privilege of men over women - for ways of encouraging the entry of men into primary teaching." See Martínez, p. 32.
67 These words are those of Martínez, who records an attendance in the fifty-two schools of 16,692. See ibid., p. 52.
68 See Herminio Almendros, La inspección escolar: exposición crítica de su proceso en Cuba y sugerencias para una readaptación posible (Santiago de Cuba: Universidad de Oriente, 1952), p. 38.
by students. The excessively formal system led to monotony, which dampened the interest of all concerned. "In the army," Pittman wrote, "the general thinks; the lower ranks...do as they are bid without questioning...In general, education in Cuba has followed this precedent. This," he concluded, "is not good preparation for democracy."69

Pittman reserved some of his strongest criticism for political corruption in Cuba, which he identified as the source of many problems in the Cuban educational system. "The influence of politics," he declared, "is, and always has been, the curse of Cuba, and the assassin of education in Cuba."70 To compensate for the political character of the Secretaries of Public Instruction, he advised administrative reorganization. Supporting Cuban educationalists, he advocated the creation of a national council for education under the General Superintendent of Schools as the best means of overcoming political interference in the administration of education.71

Luciano R. Martínez, at the time a director of one of the schools run by the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, replied to Pittman's report for the government commission. Having read and "reflected deeply" on the contents, Martínez conceded that the report "is a document which makes assertions of extraordinary gravity, and that its conclusions provide proof not only of our very distressing scholarly decline - which by itself is serious enough - but also of the failure of an entire system, terrible apathy and the incapacity of a people - the Cuban people - to prepare for democratic life."72 "For my part," Martínez went on, "I do not deny the great solidity of the argument employed; but, as a Cuban, many of the appraisals cause me pain...; and I believe that Professor Pittman should have been, at the least, more prudent when writing."73

Martínez refused to accept the report in its entirety. He disagreed, for example, with the method by which Pittman calculated the number of schools and teachers needed on the island. He opposed Pittman's proposed criteria for salary scales for teachers. He differed with aspects of the educational theories which underpinned Pittman's appraisal. Essentially, however, Martínez objected to specific features of Pittman's analysis and strategy, not to the nature or scale of the problem which Cuba faced. He did not accept the precise figure which Pittman put forward for new schools, but he conceded nonetheless that thousands were required. He objected to teachers receiving a salary based on sex and school location, but he acknowledged that they needed more incentive and support.

Pittman also touched a nerve with his comments on private schools. "There are many private schools in Cuba," Pittman wrote, "too many to render the best service to the cause of education in general".74 "In a country like Cuba," Martínez replied, "which still

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69 Pittman quoted in ibid., p. 38.
70 Pittman quoted in Martínez, p. 58.
71 Ibid., pp. 60-62.
72 Ibid., pp. 13, 14.
74 Pittman quoted in ibid., p. 55.
lacks *thousands* of schools...it is not possible to accept that there are *too many* schools due to private initiative." On the contrary, Martínez argued that private schools, whether religious or secular, should be encouraged. The state should retain the right of inspection, he believed, but only regarding employment of teaching personnel and use of buildings and school materials. Anyone should be able to open a private school, he maintained, and, while the state might act as an adviser, it must respect freedom of teaching.

The Pittman report recorded the cost to Cuba's children of the inadequate and uneven supply and poor administration of public education. More than half of the children enrolled in school attended kindergarten, or first or second grade. They attended school irregularly and received their education from teachers who were, in general, poorly trained and poorly paid, in rundown buildings with few or no facilities, textbooks or other teaching materials. Those who managed to complete their primary education encountered impediments at the secondary level. In essence, the government accepted this picture. In spite of suggestions regarding Pittman's lack of perspective and technical errors (put tactfully by Martínez, more forcefully by the Assistant Secretary of Public Instruction), Martínez made this acceptance perfectly clear.

It was not the distressing picture of education in Cuba to which the government objected, however. In Pittman's opinion, grave long-term consequences arose from poor educational attainment. "It is certain that in Cuba an insufficient proportion of the years of youth are invested in education," he argued. "Such a restricted period of education will not produce, cannot produce, educated Cuban citizens, nor an intelligent electorate." "Perhaps," he concluded, following this reasoning, "after thirty years of democratic effort, Cuba wishes to adopt again the way of life of an aristocracy. In that case it ought, openly and sincerely, to take this road, and to organize its school system in a way which meets these aims. But if, on the contrary, it desires to continue in its efforts to arrive at a fulfilment of democratic ideals, then it must ensure that its educational machinery and its teaching methods are linked in such a way, coordinated in such a way, and administered in such a way that an efficient democracy emerges from them. A qualification without substance is vain illusion." 

"We are and we want to be democratic," thundered the Assistant Secretary of Public Instruction in response. "We do not wish in any way 'to adopt again' the way of life of an aristocracy; in the first place because we have never lived it, and in the second, because we do not love it...All the efforts of our teachers strengthen the essentially democratic instinct of our country, as do those of Cuban legislators, who have tried to endow Cuba with all the successful advances in the educational order of the United States and Argentina, the two

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75 Ibid., p. 56, emphasis in the original.
76 Ibid., p. 27.
77 Pittman quoted in ibid., p. 27.
78 Pittman quoted in ibid., p. 21.
best prepared nations on the continent in this regard." He completely ignored the evidence in the Pittman report which undermined the validity of these claims. "We do not wish," he stated categorically, "to abandon democracy as a system or as an educational objective."

There is a certain irony in government hints that flaws in Pittman's expertise, and therefore his report, were due to the fact that he was foreign, when the government itself had chosen to invite a foreign expert to Cuba in spite of Cuban objections. There is even greater irony in the government's furious response to Pittman's accusations of lack of commitment to a democratic system, either educational or political, given the political crisis in Cuba at the time, and the reasons for it.

The Fall of Machado and the Rise of the Revolutionary Left

By May 1933, political opposition to Machado had reached such proportions that the United States sent Sumner Welles as its ambassador to Cuba to mediate between the different groups demanding Machado's resignation. In ordering Welles to Havana, Washington indicated its concern about the extent of political mobilization in Cuba and its lack of confidence in Machado's ability to contain it. It is often argued that U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbour Policy made the United States reluctant to intervene in Cuba in 1933, but Welles' presence and his active involvement in Cuban politics indicates that this reluctance, such as it was, applied only to military intervention. Even so, U.S. warships sat visibly off Havana's shoreline throughout the crisis, and a ship remained there until the Cuban government signed the Reciprocity Treaty between the two countries in September 1934.

The U.S. warships stationed around the island, seen by some as a form of "moral intervention", provided a visible target for anti-imperialist feelings. "Youths on the Malecón fired their revolvers in impotent rage" as one U.S. destroyer entered Havana's

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79 Dios Romero Viamontes, pp. 11-12.
80 Ibid., p. 12.
81 The ambassadors of the United Kingdom and Spain in Havana had reason to believe that elements in the United States desired military intervention. An anonymous handwritten note on the file containing the U.K. Legation's dispatches to London blames Sumner Welles for "the scheme of the [United States Government] to throw on us and on Spain the responsibility for any intervention which they might find it necessary to make". A further note adds, "I think Mr. Welles was at the bottom of this - it would be quite typical. I knew him in Buenos Aires in 1919; and when sometime later he left the diplomatic service, his U.S. colleagues openly expressed relief, regarding him as an unprincipled adventurer and intriguer". Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, F0371 16573 (1933), political no. 1122.
82 Charles A. Thomson, "The Cuban Revolution: Reform and Reaction", Foreign Policy Reports, 11, no. 22 (January 1, 1936), footnote p. 269.
The mediation of Sumner Welles also provoked a strong reaction. The staff of the *institutos*, led by Luis A. Baralt, and instructors at the women's normal school in Havana agreed to participate in Welles' mediation. The CNOC and the communists were opposed. The students of Havana's *instituto* were hostile, on the grounds that mediation represented "a veiled form of intervention in the domestic problems of Cuba". The Directorio Estudiantil Universitario openly denounced the mediation as intervention and refused to participate in the negotiations. The mediation would, the organization insisted, "diminish the right of the Cuban people to self-determination" and would yet again instil in Cubans the belief that "our internal difficulties can only be resolved with the collaboration of a foreign country". In addition, "the Marianao students' faction have also announced their opposition because the negotiations will weaken the determination of Cuba to secure absolute sovereignty through the abolition of the Platt Amendment".

Welles' intercession underlined the tension in Cuba between the old politics of the Platt Amendment and a strong new anti-imperialist sentiment. Many Cubans with a stake in the island's political economy solicited or attempted to provoke U.S. intervention under the Platt Amendment, while the dispossessed and frustrated vehemently opposed it. When Washington indicated that it no longer intended to support Machado, Machado appealed to nationalist sentiment to retain his position. In August, however, a strike against the government paralysed Havana. The communists took a leading role in the strike action, prompting Machado to offer them a deal. He would, he promised, trade recognition of the Communist Party and release of prisoners in return for an end to the strike. Although the communists agreed, both parties had underestimated the strength of popular feeling and resolve and overestimated Communist Party influence. Fearful that the United States would intervene in Cuba, the army withdrew its support from the government. Machado was forced to leave the island.

The government of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes which replaced Machado's commanded Washington's support, but not that of the Cuban people. By the end of August, businesses in Havana had become increasingly worried about the combination of labour agitation and the uncertain loyalties of the army. "The spirit of the army is weak," the British Legation telegraphed London. "Discipline within the army, while improving," Welles reported to Washington, "is not yet sufficiently good to give the

83 Herbert A. Grant Watson, British Legation, Havana to Sir John Simon, Foreign Office, London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16573 (1933), political no. 96, 12 September 1933.
84 *Lamar-Schweyer*, p. 96.
86 Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16573 (1933), political no. 63, 15 July 1933.
87 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16573, telegram no. 44, 30 August 1933.
Government assurance that its orders will be complied with in every instance." On 3 September, the army acted again; this time its junior ranks mutinied under Sergeant Fulgencio Batista. Joined by the Directorio Estudiantil Universitario and other civilians, the soldiers effected the formation of a new coalition, known as the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Within a week Ramón Grau San Martín had been named its head, and president.

The new government held the distinction of being the first in the history of independent Cuba formed without the sanction of Washington. "Usually the United States Ambassador in Cuba acts as a governor rather than as an Ambassador," the British Legation reported to London, "and his wishes as regards the government and appointments are accepted as decrees. The new revolutionary government, however, has been set up without any consultation of Mr. Welles, almost in opposition to his wishes." This fact, more than any other, may justify the frequent description of Grau's government as "revolutionary".

Grau's ability to form a government stemmed from the support he received from students and junior members of the army who came to prominence under Fulgencio Batista after the Sergeants' Revolt. However the alliance was an uneasy one. Machado's many opponents had only one thing in common - opposition to Machado. Some merely wished for his replacement with a less controversial and repressive president, while others demanded the transformation of society. "The groups who combined to overthrow Machado have different ideas," one observer reported, "and some desire to effect not merely a change of regime but a social revolution." Initially consensus was maintained around an affirmation of national sovereignty, the imperative to build an independent nation. In keeping with this sentiment, Grau refused to swear his presidential oath to the Constitution, which contained the hated Platt Amendment.

The British Legation identified three principal movements in Cuba at the time Grau took power. The first comprised "the persecution and execution of agents of Machado. This is purely Cuban and is dying down". The second involved "claims of labour for better conditions. As labour was stifled under dictatorship the claims lack moderation and labour unrest will continue for many months". The third movement consisted of "communist or rival agitation in the provinces. In Havana the movement is negligible but

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88 Telegram from the Ambassador in Cuba to the Secretary of State, 30 August 1933, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1933, 5, p. 377.
89 Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), political no. 96, 12 September 1933.
90 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16573 (1933), telegram no. 34, 16 August 1933.
91 A later commentator remarked that "Machado prosecuted Communism until he had the youth all over the island frenzied, and when they got the opportunity for revenge they made full use of it". See Gibson, p. 229.
in the east workers took possession of the mills and still remain in many cases in possession".92

This third movement in particular presented a challenge to the political and economic order. It is important that the nature of this challenge is made clear. It stemmed in part from the lack of a rural school system and precipitated the events of 1935, which led to the implementation of one of the most important changes in public education in Cuba's history. In thirty years, the Cuban authorities had failed to pacify the island's rural regions. The uprising of 1906, the race war of 1912, the U.S. occupation of Camagüey and Oriente between 1917-1922, persistent banditry, the continued need for the despised rural guard at least in part to protect U.S. property, and its systematic use of violence, all attested to U.S. uneasiness and central government insecurity over the ability to control rural areas, particularly in the east. The experiences of the early 1930s indicated that this doubt was justified.

The formation of the sugar workers' union in 1932, in the wake of the failure of the 1930 general strike, represented the first successful widespread organization of rural wage earners in Cuba, and it had early repercussions. In August and early September of 1933, a large strike movement developed which ultimately encompassed nearly forty sugar mills, employing over 200,000 workers, which represented nearly one third of Cuban sugar production.93 Inevitably, schools for their children appeared on the list of strikers' demands. During the second half of September, the number of strikes reduced, partly because management at some mills conceded labour demands, partly because of use of the army against strikers and partly because of the deployment of U.S. ships.94 However, the overall trend of rural labour unrest continued.

On 5 September, Herbert Grant Watson of the British Legation telegraphed London: "Communist movement in Havana and provinces where red flag has been hoisted even on American owned mills".95 On 12 September he wrote to London to report that "an Englishman who motored to the city from Camagüey on Sunday, the 3rd, tells me that in all the villages through which he passed, meetings were being held under the Red Flag. This flag had also been hoisted on a number of mills".96 Other areas of the country

92 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), telegram no. 65, 8 September 1933.
93 Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 182.
94 Grant Watson describes an incident at a U.S.-owned mill in Manatí, Oriente. The manager, given seventy-two hours to meet labour demands of an eight hour day and $1.25 daily minimum wage was "able to get word through to the United States Embassy at Havana and a destroyer was sent to Manatí and the men held back. It is interesting to note that they were not deflected from their purpose by the general naval concentration but only by the arrival of a destroyer in the neighbouring port". Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), political no. 102, 19 September 1933.
95 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), telegram no. 49, 5 September 1933.
96 Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), political no. 96, 12 September 1933.
reported similar disturbances. "Report from Vice Consul at Santiago dated September 18th," another telegram read, "indicates steady expansion of Communist agitation and Communist organization in that city and surrounding district." On 15 September, Grant Watson sent another telegram to London advising that "my German colleague has communicated to me a report published by the organ of the Russian Ministry of Propaganda stating that communist leaders in Havana are trying to develop a real revolution". "Local information," he added, "confirms this report."

By the end of September the Legation warned London that "the situation is deteriorating, soldiers are undisciplined, loyalist elements have arms, negroes are arrogant". The temerity of Cubans who refused to behave in ways expected of them caused particular offence. A complaint from a British-owned mill to the British Legation described workers holding staff and making demands for higher wages and shorter hours. No injuries or deaths resulted, but some of the staff bemoaned "the manner they were treated by the mob", in particular the fact that the strikers remained in the staff houses for a few hours. "There is no respect whatever among these unruly gangs," the Vice Consul in Cienfuegos complained. "The street urchins and shoeblacks play pitch and toss with their cents in the main streets," he went on, "and nobody thinks of interfering with them. At times one has to get off the pavement because these boys have it occupied."

White observers drew connections between unacceptable behaviour and race. "At the large Communist procession under the Red Flag in Havana today negroes were in the great majority," the British Legation reported. The fact that eastern Cuba was identified as a particular source of agitation reinforced this view. Some argued that the country was not responding to the call to organize soviets, except in Camagüey and Oriente. Consequently, the troubles could be put down not to communism, but to "colour agitation", as "the threatening attitude of the negroes in Oriente province" suggested.

"In Oriente generally, especially in Santiago, there is a lot of unrest," a foreign resident of Oriente reported to the British Legation. "Down there they have a huge nigger illiterate lazy population who in times past have about been kept by the various political chiefs by means of small donations and food. This nigger element is the most unstable element in Cuba."

97 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), telegram no. 78, 20 September 1933. "This city palpably becoming hourly more communistic" were the Vice-Consul's exact words. L. Haydock-Wilson, British Vice-Consul, Santiago de Cuba to Hugh W. Border, H.M. Consul-General, British Legation, Havana, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), political no. 128, 18 September 1933.

98 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), telegram no. 72, 15 September 1933.

99 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), telegram no. 91, 29 September 1933.

100 Vice-Consul, Cienfuegos, to Havana, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16574 (1933), political no. 63, 4 September 1933.

101 Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), political no. 110, 26 September 1933.

102 Ibid.
today, as it is utterly venial [sic] and corrupted. Were the plan to withhold the vote from all illiterates to be made law it would remove a huge sore from the body politic. This would automatically disenfranchise 50 per cent of all the votes in Oriente.¹⁰³ London judged that the communists "are working on the illiterate upcountry workmen and the negroes to keep disorder going at all costs".¹⁰⁴

The approach of the sugarcane harvest greatly increased concern about persistent labour disruption in the countryside. "Conditions in Cuba," according to one reporter, "approximate anarchy. Strikes have become so numerous as to be well-nigh general. Business and transport are paralyzed. In the interior, many of the sugar centrals are still under the control of workers organized in soviets."¹⁰⁵ "If the present weak Government continues," the British Legation advised London, "[the communists] may be able to make a red revolution at the season of the crop."¹⁰⁶ Welles remained unconvinced of communist influence but acknowledged "cumulative evidence from every province that complete anarchy exists...If this government continues much longer and no counterrevolt is successfully staged by the conservative groups it will be replaced by a soldier-workman [government]."¹⁰⁷

In addition to serious unrest in the countryside, the new government faced a further major obstacle to its survival: the refusal of the United States to grant it recognition. The British Legation reported that public opinion was overwhelmingly anti-United States and against U.S. intervention, so much so that Washington considered the Platt Amendment dead.¹⁰⁸ Rejecting the potential support which this national sentiment represented, Grau chose instead to attack the radical forces which had mobilized for change. He focused his assault on the Communist Party and labour organizations, in order to win U.S. confidence and to gain U.S. recognition.

Grau understood that the activities of radical forces in Cuba would further incite U.S. hostility. Faced with a choice, he attempted to appease the United States. "The Government are opposed to the Communists," the British Legation reported to London, "and even arrest some of their leaders, who are organising what is called 'the other revolution', the opposition being largely due to the fear that communism will provoke

¹⁰³ Extract of letter from Mr. Niel Hone of Sabanaso, Oriente, to Hugh W. Border, Havana, in Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), political no. 114, 26 September 1933.
¹⁰⁴ Handwritten note on file, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), telegram no. 101, 9 October 1933.
¹⁰⁶ He added, "but hardly before". Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16576 (1933), political no. 136, 2 November 1933.
¹⁰⁷ Telegram from the Ambassador in Cuba to the Secretary of State, 8 September 1933, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1933, 5, p. 406.
¹⁰⁸ Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16576 (1933), political no. 142, 15 November 1933.
United States military intervention. The Foreign Policy Association noted, "to eject 'agitators' and return the mills to the management. Hundreds of labor leaders were arrested. Communist demonstrations were broken up at various points in the interior."

Retention of the support of the army stood at the core of this strategy and remained vital to its success. Grau made it very clear where, ultimately, his priorities lay. When teachers occupied the Department of Public Instruction, demanding payment of the salaries owed to them, the President appeared on the balcony to tell them that the army would have to be paid first. The loyalties of the army were not so clear. "Soldiers have been shown to be unwilling to oppose mob if mob are nasty," the British Legation telegraphed London. "I prefer to hope that in the case of trouble we will be able to count on the support of the Cuban authorities, whoever they may be," read another report, "but, of course, the danger lies in the army. Soldiers without officers are hardly likely to fire on the people, even if the latter are determined to do mischief."

Throughout Grau's regime, while the army was used to attack strikers and communists, observers also reported that it often remained passive in the face of demonstrations, and occasionally sided with the demonstrators.

"The mysterious element in the situation," an anonymous Foreign Office employee commented, "is the relation between the workmen and the soldiers."

Grau's government responded to the pressures mounted against it by using nationalism to fight the movement for radical change. In addition to using troops to repress labour, the government took the concurrent approach of addressing some political demands. "The Grau regime," the Foreign Policy Association observed, "...was at the same time speeding a program of labour legislation and organizing the sentiment of nationalism to oppose the radical drive."

Under Antonio Guiteras, Secretary of the Interior, it legislated an eight hour work day, a minimum wage and recognized the right to join a union. The price of electricity was lowered. The University was granted autonomy, and low income students entitled to free registration. Women received the vote. The Nationalization of Labour decree required that 50 per cent of employees in industrial, commercial and agricultural enterprises hold Cuban nationality.

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109 Grant Watson to Sir John Simon, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), political no. 110, 26 September 1933. Suspected Communist teachers were among those arrested.

110 Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 184.

111 Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), telegram no. 91, 29 September 1933.


113 Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 183; Grant Watson to London, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16575 (1933), political no. 120, 9 October 1933; political no. 130, 21 October 1933.

114 Handwritten note on file, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 16576 (1933), political no. 136, 2 November 1933.

115 Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 184.
The internal pressures on the government to rectify the grievances in the educational sector were enormous. The government nullified all instituto examination results after September 1930 and the qualifications which resulted from them. Those opposed to Machado believed that only supporters of, or people associated with, the regime had taken examinations, given that refusal to do so had been an opposition strategy. Appointees of the regime were similarly targeted. The government came under considerable pressure to remove the administrative and teaching staff who had replaced people fired for their political activity against the former president, even though, in order to do so, it had to suspend past legislation guaranteeing job tenure. However, continual closures and strikes, along with army occupation and government interference, prevented any semblance of normal activity in Cuba's public schools. In this respect, as in so many others, private schools offered an alternative to the deficiencies of public education, to those who had the economic means to take advantage of their presence. Between twenty-five thousand and thirty thousand students were able to do so.ii^116

The government reorganized the school boards to include the local chief of health, the judge, a representative chosen by local parents, a public school teacher chosen by local teachers, a teacher working in the administrative capital, again chosen by local teachers, an appointee of the Secretary of Public Instruction and a workers' representative. Both the parent and labour representatives were expected to be able to read and write, and preferably possess a professional qualification. Never previously had school boards reflected such a wide cross-section of the community.

The educational sector illustrated the political divisions in Cuban society and reflected the level of politicization, protest and disruption on the island. After the strike in August 1933 which toppled Machado, the Asociación Nacional de Maestros dissolved, split by political differences. Communist teachers formed their first organization that month. At the same time, teachers realized the continued need for a national association to represent their interests. In September, between two and three thousand teachers gathered in a school in Havana to form a new union. Three days later they established the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza (SNTE).117 The name they chose stemmed from the conviction that the organization should be open to all workers in the educational sector, including administrative employees and janitors. The activities of the SNTE reflected the wider political interests of its members. Activists occupied school board offices and attended meetings of the Liga Antimperialista and the Frente Unico, organized to campaign against U.S. intervention. They seized Machado's home in Vedado, Havana, prompting Antonio Guiteras to give the house to the SNTE for use as its headquarters. In November, the press published the SNTE platform which included demands for payment

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116 See ibid., p. 130; Guerra, Adelantos en el año escolar próximo pasado, pp. 6-9.
117 See Baldomero Expósito Rodríguez, El primer sindicato de trabajadores de la enseñanza de Cuba, 1933-1934 (La Habana: 1986), p. 7.
of all outstanding monies owned to teachers, school breakfasts and provision of teaching materials. Not all teachers, or students for that matter, aligned themselves with the politics of the left in Cuba, however. The political divisions which afflicted the country at the time manifested themselves in splits within Cuba's educational community. Some teachers were communists but others became members of the ABC, which advocated that illiterates be disenfranchised. Students joined the ABC as well as the Ala Izquierda Estudiantil.

In spite of the radical potential of some of its measures and the radical politics of some of its members, the Grau government could not be described as revolutionary. Caught between two distinct tendencies - reformers and revolutionaries - it failed to satisfy either. Elements of the old Cuban political structure and the middle classes, along with Washington, perceived the government as too radical, a government which made too many dubious changes and made them too quickly, while the Communist Party and CNOC complained that it had not committed itself to fundamental change. "The government was pro-labor and anti-capital to a considerable degree," as a 1936 Foreign Policy report argued, but this was so "because, in Cuba as in Mexico, capital is predominantly foreign." This was a government more likely to respond to nationalist pressure than revolutionary demand.

Herein lay the source of its failure. It was impossible to appease both Washington and Cuban nationalist sentiment, which contained a powerful anti-United States element. Grau's relationship with student organizations, which formed an important part of his support, embodied this contradiction. While observers questioned the extent of communist influence among the students, their nationalist sentiments were clear. "The radicalism of the students is...an exultant nationalism," claimed one reporter, "which expresses itself in passionate devotion to Cuba and bitter hatred of everything and everyone who threatens her freedom. Combined with this nationalism is reckless and unrelenting fury against those who have looted and despoiled the country." Organized labour, popular movements, left-wing students and the Communist Party continued to pressure for structural changes while wealthy Cubans, business and the U.S. government demanded the control of revolutionary forces. Sumner Welles negotiated directly with Batista, warning him of all he could lose should his loyalty remain with a collapsed government. Grau's administration, unable or unwilling to consolidate support

119 Thomson, p. 264.
120 For example, the famous Nationalization of Labour decree, aimed primarily at the Spanish, failed to address the unemployment which afflicted so many with such terrible consequences. As Manuel Moreno Fraginals has argued, the decree had the effect of shifting the burden of unemployment, not reducing it. See Moreno Fraginals, p. 220.
121 Hubert Herring, "Can Cuba Save Herself?", Current History (November 1933), p. 153.
on either side, could not withstand external pressures or internal contradictions. When Batista withdrew the army's support in January and the Cuban ambassador in Washington made it clear to Grau that the United States would never accept him, Grau resigned.\textsuperscript{122} Within a few days, Batista had backed Carlos Mendieta as the new president; the United States took just five days to recognize the Mendieta government. The causes of the crisis had not been addressed, however, nor had the forces unleashed been defeated or pacified. It fell to Fulgencio Batista to forge a new political settlement in Cuba, and the educational system would prove crucial to his success.

\textsuperscript{122} Grau told a reporter shortly after he resigned, "I fell because Washington willed it". See Hubert Herring, "Another Chance for Cuba", \textit{Current History} (March 1934), p. 657.
Chapter V

Protest, Repression and Educational Reform, 1934-1940

The fall of the Grau government did not mark the end of the class confrontation which had engulfed Cuba. The power of Batista and the military alarmed many, and a new cry of protest went up against the "Batista-Mendieta-Caffery dictatorship". The number of military personnel in Cuba doubled following the fall of Machado. The only employees whose pay was not only maintained but increased were members of the military. "The Machado regime has been eliminated," the Foreign Policy Association reported, "but behind the present administration looms the Batista dictatorship, less 'constitutional' and more military than its predecessor." Batista had united the army behind him and largely secured control of the government of the island. However, he did not yet command the country. The challenge of ending the political crisis lay before him still; changes to public education would be one of his preferred methods of meeting that challenge.

Batista's most immediate problem was the threatened disruption of the sugarcane harvest. Grau had deployed the army against strikers and warned that the government would confiscate any mill which refused to grind. Batista also threatened the use of force if necessary. "There will be a harvest," he is widely reported to have announced, "or there will be blood." The zafra did proceed, but not without considerable disturbance. The British Legation cited reports from the countryside of cane burning and other damage, particularly in U.S.-owned sugar mills.

The zafra went ahead, but throughout 1934 workers engaged in continuous strikes across the country. Mines, ports, factories, mills, railways, oil companies and utilities were all affected. In early February, the government passed a decree requiring eight days' notice of strike action and forbidding work stoppages in utility companies. The decree was largely ignored. Communist influence continued to spread beyond workers into the professional class and the military. The Department of Communications sacked two hundred employees for organizing a soviet. Jefferson Caffery reported that "the communistic element...is responsible for the strike of employees of certain government departments and employees of the Electricity Company". The Foreign Policy Association

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1 Jefferson Caffery succeeded Sumner Welles as U.S. ambassador to Cuba in December 1933.
3 Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, F0371 17516 (1934), political no. 24, 19 February 1934.
4 Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, F0371 17516 (1934), political no. 48, 26 March 1934.
noted that the Communist Party had "won the support of some of Cuba's outstanding
intellectuals, and of a growing group of younger teachers, writers and professional
people". "Even some distinguished doctors are communists," reported the British
Legation, "and wear red buttonholes, while some ex-officers were implicated recently in a
small conspiracy to set up a Soviet Government." One observer declared, "the
Communists in opposition are so active that it is necessary to contemplate the possibility, if
the present Government fall [sic], of the formation of a Soviet Government in some
provinces throughout the island."

The government relied on the army to suppress communist activity and regain
control of the country. The suspension of constitutional guarantees in March formalized
this policy. The army raided communist and other opposition organizations and arrested
their leaders. "A district Communist school was raided on the 12th [April] and closed,"
according to one source. Juan Marinello, a leading communist, was arrested in May. In
addition, the army occupied workplaces to prevent disruption and stoppages. This tactic
often led to further confrontation. The Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba accused
the United Fruit Company and the army of turning the central Preston into a "concentration
camp" and carrying out a "massacre" in response to worker protest.

Sumner Welles had repeatedly advised Washington that the situation in Cuba would
only be defused when sugar companies provided sufficient work at a rate which would
enable workers to escape destitution. Caffery concurred with this view. "In the
background there is constantly the distressing economic situation," he informed
Washington; "much actual hunger, misery and want - all due manifestly to the sugar
situation which is so bad at present that some American owned mills do not seem interested
in grinding." The Cuban government once again turned to the United States for rescue.
President Carlos Mendieta made a direct appeal to Roosevelt. "Our labor problems are
most serious," he warned, "and increasing because of delay in starting the crop. As sugar
is our main industry we need a very substantial raw sugar quota...and a reduction in the

6 Commission on Cuban Affairs, Problems of the New Cuba (New York: Foreign Policy Association,
7 Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 17516 (1934), political no. 34, 5
March 1934. The Legation also reported that after Mella's funeral in September "several officers went over
to the Communists". See FO371 17516 (1934), political no. 48, 26 March 1934.
8 Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 17516 (1934), political no. 34, 5
March 1934.
9 Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 17516 (1934), political no. 62,
25 April 1934.
10 "Proclama impresa de la Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba protestando por la represión desatada en
el central Preston bajo el gobierno de Mendita-Caffery-Batista y las masacres cometidas por la compañía
United Fruit Company". 1934. Fondo Especial, Caja/Lejado 8, no. nuevo 1425, Archivo Nacional, La
Habana.
11 Telegram from the Personal Representative of the President to the Acting Secretary of State, 10 January
1934, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1934, 5, p. 96.
duty. These concessions obtained quickly would give the mill owners incentive to pay higher wages and start work."\(^{12}\)

Washington did what it could to assist the new Cuban government in its efforts to end opposition. U.S. investment in the Cuban sugar economy had declined from a pre-Depression peak; some reorganization was inevitable given the steady reduction in sugar prices, and thus profit, and continued labour disruption. U.S. capital retained sugar interests, however, as well as retail, manufacturing, mining and utility investments in Cuba. In other words, it continued to make a profit from Cuban resources and labour.\(^{13}\) Washington also had an interest in ensuring the security of U.S. loans to Cuba. Therefore, it could not afford to let anti-United States feeling on the island, and particularly universal condemnation of the Platt Amendment, jeopardize its ongoing interests in the country's economy. In May, in one of the most significant political consequences of the 1933 crisis, the two governments agreed to abrogate the Permanent Treaty of 1903 which contained the Platt Amendment.\(^{14}\) It is difficult to conceive how any Cuban government could have continued to function effectively without taking this step; nonetheless, the agreement was reached in exchange for Cuba's acceptance of a new reciprocity treaty.

In return for preferential access to the U.S. market for its sugar (provided in the form of a quota rather than through lowered tariffs, as previously), Cuba agreed to reduce import duties on U.S. products.\(^ {15}\) The reciprocity treaty contributed to an upturn in the Cuban economy, because of the concessions granted Cuban agricultural products, particularly sugar, but it hurt the tentative manufacturing and industrial diversification begun with the 1927 Customs-Tariff Law. Although Cuban capital improved its share of Cuban sugar production, the Reciprocity Treaty of 1934 once again locked the Cuban economy into reliance on sugarcane and the sale of sugar to the U.S. market.\(^ {16}\) Thus, Cuba turned away from the import-substitution policies being adopted by many of her Latin

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\(^{12}\) Telegram from the President of Cuba to President Roosevelt, 5 February 1934, in ibid., p. 182.


\(^{14}\) The United States retained its rights to the military base in Guantánamo.

\(^{15}\) The quota was based on the Cuban share of the U.S. sugar market during the years 1931-33. Cuba's share was low at that time due to the Hawley-Smoot Act, which had increased U.S. duty on Cuban sugar, and the Chadbourne Plan, by which sugar producing nations had restricted supply. Cuba's share of the U.S. sugar market dropped from 49 per cent in 1930 to 25 per cent in 1933. Cuban economist Julio Le Riverend argues that in any event a decline was inevitable, as the U.S. market had been saturated. See Julio Le Riverend, *Economic History of Cuba* (Havana: Book Institute, 1967), p. 227. Additionally, Cuba faced competition from U.S. domestic producers.

\(^{16}\) Cuban-owned mills increased from fifty out of 179 in 1935 to fifty-six out of 174 in 1939; meanwhile, U.S.-owned mills decreased from seventy to sixty-six. Although the percentage of total sugar production accounted for by U.S.-owned mills decreased, it nonetheless constituted 55 per cent in 1939, as against 22 per cent by Cuban-owned mills. Production by Cuban-owned mills would continue to increase, and by U.S.-owned mills to decrease, until the Revolution. See Schroeder, p. 258. Cuban capital was often invested in U.S.-owned mills, and occasionally played a significant role in their management. See Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or the Pursuit of Freedom* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), pp. 1,147-1,148.
American neighbours in favour of further economic integration with the United States. Cuban capital did not compete with U.S. investment, but entered into a partnership, albeit mostly unequal. Short-term economic improvement and the appearance of political sovereignty were achieved at the expense of long-term economic dependence upon the United States.

Protest and Public Education, 1934-1935

On 8th January 1934, one week before Grau's resignation, seven thousand public school teachers and several hundred members of school boards responded to a strike call by the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza (SNTE). A government concession to one of the teachers' demands, the provision of school breakfasts for poor children, came too late to avert the strike. The strikers demanded full payment of salaries and pensions in arrears, the rescinding of salary reductions, full payment of vacation pay, simultaneous pay for all teachers and the supply of sufficient educational materials for classrooms. The SNTE also raised issues beyond the purely educational, including the role of the military and its political and financial relationship to civil society in Cuba, the struggle against political corruption, and the extent of Cuba's economic and political dependence. Members asserted their solidarity with workers, arguing that teachers were society's intellectual workers. The strike received considerable sympathy, prompting even some private schools to close their doors in support. After two weeks, the Secretary of Public Instruction resigned. The new Secretary, Luis A. Baralt, agreed to address the teachers' demands, and they returned to work on 29 January.18

In March, Jorge Mañach y Robato replaced Baralt as Secretary of Public Instruction. According to one observer, "the latter...was stated to be too lenient in his attitudes towards the students and teachers", although Baralt had been attacked, both verbally and physically, for validating the results of examinations taken under Machado. Conflict between students and the government, and in particular students and the army, continued. Police and army regularly broke up student demonstrations and occasionally raided schools. In May, students and soldiers fought outside the instituto in Havana for over six hours. When the army took the building, it discovered communist literature, arms

17 Celso Furtado argues that Cuba could not have pursued ISI policies because she did not have an autonomous monetary system and thus it was unlikely the necessary inflation and exchange controls would be implemented. See Celso Furtado, Economic Development of Latin America: Historical Background and Contemporary Problems, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 284.
18 Baralt had led the delegation of instituto staff in the mediations with Sumner Welles.
19 Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 17516 (1934), political no. 40, 13 March 1934.
and explosives. In an event symptomatic of the spread of radical ideas, six former army officers were arrested for inciting the students.\textsuperscript{20}

In March 1934, the government passed a decree-law which prohibited the organization of state employees into unions which did not support the government. Having thus lost legal recognition, the SNTE demanded the resignation of Mañach, whom it accused of being hostile to teachers' demands. A further strike failed to restore the official status of the SNTE and resulted in the imprisonment of many teachers and students. The government threatened to prosecute all education employees who joined anti-government unions. Teachers divided. A pro-government union, the Unión Nacional de Maestros (UNM), formed in April to protest against alleged politicization within the schools. The SNTE responded that its struggle "to transform and humanize schools" constituted valid political action.\textsuperscript{21} In many ways, the split between the UNM and the SNTE represented the first formal division amongst workers in the educational system, between those who located the problems in public education solely within the educational system itself and those who linked the problems to wider national issues.

In the spring of 1934, the Provincial Superintendent of the province of Havana, Diego González y Gutiérrez, investigated conditions in public education. As González noted, his conclusions concurred with previous Cuban assessments and those of Marvin Pittman. Once again, a Cuban educationalist drew attention to the failings of rural education, the paucity of night schools, the case for a national council of education, bunching in lower grades, low enrolment and attendance, shortage of classrooms and uneven distribution of schools.\textsuperscript{22}

In August, the SNTE organized a national conference in Santiago de Cuba for workers in education. The conference resolutions fell into three main categories: the responsibilities of the state outside the educational system; specific material demands on the state with regard to education; and the reforms and reorganization necessary to permit the educational system to function effectively. Thus the conference enjoined the government to protect democratic rights, including the right to strike. It charged the government with fulfilling its financial responsibilities, from setting an adequate educational budget (deemed to be 25 per cent of the national budget) to paying salaries and pensions. Both physical and intellectual protection were demanded for workers, from medical care to freedom from arrest and prosecution for political activity. The conference called for the reorganization of the school curriculum, the creation of a national council of education and the formation of new popular universities to spread knowledge and combat illiteracy. It also complained

\textsuperscript{20} Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, FO371 17516 (1934), political no. 67, 5 May 1934.

\textsuperscript{21} Quoted in Baldomero Expósito Rodríguez, \textit{El primer sindicato de trabajadores de la enseñanza en Cuba (1933-1934)} (La Habana: 1986), p. 44.

\textsuperscript{22} See Diego González y Gutiérrez, \textit{Aporte a la educación cubana} (La Habana: La Propagandista, 1934).
about the expense of hiring Marvin Pittman to report on Cuba's educational problems, when teachers went without salaries and when Cuba itself had pedagogues of international standing, the conference asserted, who were capable of undertaking the task. In spite of broad agreement on the problems facing education in Cuba, however, the conference served mainly to highlight the deep divisions between the UNM and the SNTE, as well as within the SNTE itself. After two days the SNTE voted to dissolve itself.23

The same year, Antonio Guiteras formed Joven Cuba, a socialist organization dedicated to the overthrow of Batista and the revolutionary transformation of Cuba. Joven Cuba's manifesto argued that Cuba remained a colony, not now of Spain but of foreign capital. The measures necessary to affirm national sovereignty, the manifesto maintained, included a solution to Cuba's "educational problem". The educational system, it went on, required complete reorganization to bring it in its entirety under state supervision. The manifesto demanded that the education budget should never be less than the budget of any other department (foreshadowing the Constitution of 1940); it also insisted on improved conditions for employees, the formation of a national council of education and the resolution of the problems of rural education.24 Such prescriptions were not new, and indicated the consensus on both the nature of the problems in public education, and the steps necessary to overcome them.

Epitomizing the "cultural insecurity" described by Arturo Montori,25 the Cuban government once again turned to the United States for an assessment of conditions on the island. In response to a government invitation, the Foreign Policy Association of the United States formed a Commission on Cuban Affairs to provide a report on the "problems of the new Cuba". As part of its investigation, carried out in the spring and early summer of 1934, the Commission examined the educational system. While careful to point out that "the present condition of education in Cuba can be understood only if it is recalled that it has been in a state of complete disorganization for the last three years", the Commission nonetheless concluded that "independent Cuba has been unable to realize its democratic ideal to make at least elementary education available to all of its citizens".26

The Commission based this conclusion on observations which echoed those of previous commentators. In particular, it criticized the availability and distribution of education. "Elementary schools have been provided for less than half the children of school age," the report read, adding "the dearth of schools has naturally been greatest in the

23 For a detailed account of the conference and the SNTE's activities at this time, see Baldomero Expósito Rodríguez, El primer sindicato de trabajadores de la enseñanza en Cuba (1933-1934).
25 See Chapter III.
26 Commission on Cuban Affairs, pp. 129, 130.
According to the Commission, "well over one-half of the children of school age were not enrolled in public schools" at the start of the 1933 school year. In addition, the Commission observed an unsatisfactory correlation between enrolment and grade distribution. In 1932, 64.5 per cent of all children enrolled in primary schools attended grades one and two. Secondary education reached even fewer young people than did primary. "Only one adolescent in twenty of Cuba's population has an opportunity to continue his education in a public school for more than six years," the Commission reported, condemning the location of secondary schools exclusively in provincial capitals.

The Commission identified the administration of Cuba's educational system as the source of many of its problems. Noting that administration was highly centralized, the report drew attention to the blurring of technical and political positions. It recommended making "the administrative machinery more stable on the technical side by giving more permanent tenure" to the superintendents, and, supporting Cuban demands, forming a national council of education. "Only with more continuity of administrative practice," argued the Commission, "can improvement of the schools go on satisfactorily."

The Commission pointed to the lack of educational statistics, funds, and extracurricular resources as further causes of the problems in the educational system. The absence of accurate statistical data prevented sensible planning and use of resources. "Although the budget for the coming school year was being prepared while the Commission was in Cuba," the report stated, "no one knew the actual enrolment in either elementary or secondary schools." The Commission also criticized the budget for education, at that time just under 20 per cent of the national budget, excluding foreign debt servicing and public works, but still, it reported, "less than one-third the sum similarly spent in the poorest state in the United States". "Without additional funds, new schools can be opened only by introducing economies in operation in the school system as now administered," the Commission advised. However, it warned, "a system which is spending only $13.90 for each child enrolled has small margin for economy."

Finally, the Commission expressed reservations about the curriculum and teaching methods in use in Cuba's schools. "Cuban educators point out," it reported, "that both public and private schools in Cuba follow an exceedingly formal and bookish curriculum and procedure." In spite of budget constraints, it believed that certain improvements could be undertaken immediately. "To put these schools abreast of the best practice in other countries will necessitate modernization of the curriculum in terms of child needs and child

27 Ibid., p. 130.  
28 Ibid., pp. 130, 135.  
29 Ibid., p. 140.  
30 Ibid., p. 137.  
31 Ibid., p. 133.  
32 Ibid., pp. 134, 136.
interests," the report advised, "the re-education of teachers in modern school procedures based on pupil activity...and the reduction as rapidly as possible of the number of pupils to be instructed by each teacher to a manageable number." Such changes were achievable because "Cuba has persons who are well informed as to the progressive procedures which have been found feasible and successful elsewhere. Their knowledge," the Commission insisted, "must be mobilized for the task of modernizing Cuba's elementary schools". In addition, it urged the modernization of secondary education, proper coordination between the various types of secondary instruction and integration of the primary and secondary systems.

In January 1935, the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de la Habana issued a report on what it described as "the extremely grave crisis of Cuban education". The report listed the major problems confronting Cuba's educational system; all made depressingly familiar reading. Cuba lacked a sufficient number of schools; far too many children received little or no education; conditions in many schools were primitive; most lacked teaching materials; teachers worked without sufficient training and stimulation; only six institutos served the entire country; classes were too large; teaching practice stressed verbal learning. The society recommended pursuing four cardinal goals to halt the decline in education. The most important, the report argued, was to devote sufficient resources to education, at least 25 per cent of the national budget. Secondly, the system had to be depoliticized. Thirdly, scientific and practical education required strengthening. Finally, order and discipline needed to be instilled in all areas of public education. The report went on to list specific recommendations, such as a school building programme.

In spite of the repetition from so many different quarters of the failings of Cuba's educational system, and the many possibilities for action, the government remained unresponsive. Pressure from teachers and students resulted in some reorganization, particularly at the secondary level. The Havana normal schools became co-educational and commenced night classes, principally for pupils whose study had been disrupted by the closures under Machado. The elementary schools of commerce were renamed professional schools of commerce and the course of studies was redesigned. An industrial technical school for girls was founded, complementing the boys' school established in 1928. However, such changes had no impact on the problems which burdened the public educational system, and proved insufficient to stem the growing disaffection. As discontent and protest mounted, an explosion became inevitable.

33 Ibid., p. 136.
34 Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de la Habana, Al gobierno de nuestra república, al pueblo de Cuba (La Habana: Molina, 1935), title page.
35 Ibid., p. 5
36 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
The 1935 Strike

When the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de la Habana published its report on education, in January 1935, dissatisfaction in public schools had reached particularly high levels. Indeed, the entire country was experiencing a great deal of turbulence, with many workers on strike or threatening to strike. In January, a delegation of the Asociación de Maestros de Oriente travelled to Havana to present the Secretary of Public Instruction with their demands, which included simultaneous pay for all teachers employed throughout the country (rural teachers still tended to be paid after those in the cities, particularly in Havana); dismissal of administrators who failed to comply with this demand; a return to previous salary levels; teaching materials for schools; abrogation of the decree which ended job tenure; a school building programme; and the investigation of cases of alleged injustice and corruption. That these demands were substantially those which had been articulated by many different groups for well over ten years attested to the dismal conditions within the public educational system. The mounting frustrations of employees attested to the lack of change.

Throughout January, individual schools protested and struck over specific claims of injustice, particularly political detentions. On 12 February, no doubt encouraged by their teachers, the pupils of three public primary schools in Havana went on strike, a unique event in the history of student struggles. Within a few days, over eight hundred other students had joined the first group, including some from private institutions. Soon pupils of secondary schools and all but one of the teachers' organizations had augmented the numbers of strikers. The protesters set up a permanent picket outside the presidential palace. On 18 February, the University joined the protest, complaining, among other points, about "military dictatorship" over education.

The strikers' grievances reflected the pitiful state in which Cuban public education found itself in 1935. Demands for the provision of teaching materials; cleaning materials for janitors; restitution of teachers' and janitors' salaries to their levels before Machado's cutbacks (teachers then earned about $38 per month, compared to the previous figure of $100 per month for teachers and $30 for janitors); reorganization of pensions and bonuses for years of service; and the payment of back pay, evinced the lack of basic resources devoted to education. Insistence on the investigation of fraud and the release of imprisoned teachers and students exposed continued corruption and repression within the system. Calls for an end to the half school day and for the provision of school breakfasts demonstrated an ongoing failure to address the needs of students. Rural teachers added

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37 El Mundo, 3 January 1935, p. 16.
38 Ahora, 12 February 1935, p. 8.
to the criticisms of their urban counterparts. They demanded more schools, improved roads, travelling libraries and agricultural tools. Acción, the newspaper of the ABC, observed that teachers and students were forced to strike to acquire basic resources, while one sixth of the national budget went to the military. This disparity "explains perfectly," it remarked, "why there is not material in the schools. The surprise," it added wryly, "is that we still have schools".41 "Open schools and close prisons!" demanded a supportive editorial in Ahora.42

The dismissal of the Secretary of Public Instruction failed to pacify the strikers. The government then attempted to contain the strike by withholding pay, disrupting rallies and wounding, arresting and imprisoning demonstrators, all of which proved unsuccessful. Protestors faced summary justice, in courts known as emergency tribunals. At least two schools were mysteriously destroyed by fire, which provoked further anger against the government. By the third week of February, no educational institution in the country remained unaffected by the strike. Workers outside the educational sector provided support and expressed solidarity, and some joined the strike in sympathy.

"The student movement today is larger and possessed of deeper feeling than in the past," the magazine Bohemia declared. In a strongly worded editorial, it claimed that the strike over education revealed a deeper malaise in Cuba. The government's one concern, the magazine argued, was its own survival. If, in order to achieve that end, people went uneducated, schools remained miserable places and teachers were indigent, the government did not care. It was concerned only with the soldiers and arms which it believed guaranteed its security. "It is this which protestors and strikers, rebellious teachers and students now see clearly," the magazine attested. "For the first time they have revealed the problem in its true terms: there will be no change in national education unless there is a profound change in national government."43

Bohemia attacked the government for its indifference to the strikers' grievances and its use of "violent and absurd repression", and praised the determination of the strikers to remain firm until their conditions were met. Enumerating their complaints, the magazine argued that the protesters' claims were reasonable. "What is lamentable," it pronounced, "is that this government - each time more discredited than its predecessors - far from trying to resolve the students' just demands as satisfactorily as possible...is imprisoning teachers, dragging them before Emergency Tribunals, breaking up demonstrations at gunpoint, threatening to convert the movement into a protest of the entire nation."44

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42 Ahora, 12 February 1935, p. 4.
43 Bohemia, 27, no. 8 (24 February 1935), p. 35.
44 Ibid., p. 39 and Bohemia, 27, no. 9 (3 March 1935), p. 3. Even primary students were sent before the emergency tribunals. See Carteles, 23, no. 9 (3 March 1935), p. 25 and Bohemia, no. 22 (30 May 1948), p. 52.
The sacrifice of a second Secretary of Public Instruction, after only one week in office, had no impact on national feeling. On 2 March, the Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba declared a general strike. By then the protest had incorporated so many people that in effect the CNOC responded to rather than instigated mass action. Between 400,000 and 500,000 Cubans stopped work. By 6 March, the strike had claimed a third Secretary of Public Instruction. On the same day, the Asociación de Maestros Privados declared a three day work stoppage. By then, anti-democratic tendencies in government and the power of the army had become a common theme of protest. Strike demands widened to include an end to army rule, the release of all political prisoners and the abolition of the emergency tribunals.

As the protest spread both throughout the island and among the population, the government responded with renewed force. On 7 March, it suspended the publication of newspapers and magazines sympathetic to the strike. Those which continued to publish were forbidden to write politically sensitive editorials. In addition, the government once again suspended the Constitution. The army was ordered to occupy the nation's educational institutions and to close some down. Government decrees introduced the death penalty, suspended civil rights, prohibited public gatherings of more than three people, declared a curfew, reiterated the abolition of job tenure and outlawed unions which had supported the strike. A government notice warned teachers to be at their posts by the following Monday, 11 March, or lose their positions with no right to reinstatement. Most of those who returned nonetheless found themselves summarily dismissed, and many were arrested and imprisoned, often without trial. Others were deported or went into exile. The same day, the government declared a state of emergency.

Decree upon decree reinforced state control over every aspect of the nation in general and the educational system in particular. The government closed the University and all secondary schools and fired almost every member of staff. Only primary schools remained open and even they were "purged", the vacated posts filled by friends and family of members of the army. The Secretary of Public Instruction, renamed the Secretary of Education, received the power to appoint, remove and transfer all primary school personnel. Decree-Law no. 79 of 10 April dissolved the school boards and centralized administrative functions in the Department. The number of school inspectors and

46 El Crisol, 1 March 1935, pp. 4-5.
47 Law 78, 8 March 1935.
48 Thomson, p. 274. See also Baldomero Expósito Rodríguez et. al., Apuntes del movimiento de los trabajadores de la educación, 1899-1961 (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1985), p. 72. Current History also reported that only primary schools remained open. See Current History (June 1935), pp. 303-304.
49 Herminio Almendras, La inspección escolar: exposición crítica de su proceso en Cuba y sugestiones para una readaptación posible (Santiago de Cuba: Universidad de Oriente, 1952), p. 147.
Inspections were increased.\textsuperscript{50} Law 179, passed in May, abolished the existing secondary system and created twenty-four new schools with a new plan of study in place of the six \textit{institutos}.\textsuperscript{51} It was two years, however, before secondary institutions reopened.

The crushing of the 1935 strike marked the end of the revolutionary movement of the late 1920s and early 1930s in Cuba, and the beginning of the state's successful effort to repress opposition and incorporate that which survived into a new social and political arrangement. The assassination in May of Antonio Guiteras by Batista's soldiers deprived the left of an important leader and further secured Batista's victory. The defeat of the strike also marked the end, for a time, of efforts by the Communist Party to oppose the state. Although it had not led the strike, it was declared illegal, its members arrested and dispersed. The party would soon trade cooperation with Batista for recognition.

There is little agreement among historians as to the degree of communist organization and influence in Cuba during this period. To a certain extent, this disagreement reflects contemporary accounts which also indicate differences of opinion on the importance of communist activity. Political agendas undoubtedly influenced perceptions of events. The "threat" of communism could be invoked to encourage a particular result, say the intervention of the United States; or played down, perhaps laid at the door of "foreign agitators", if the situation appeared potentially explosive. "Scores of informants" assured the Commission on Cuban Affairs that "there is no communism in Cuba, only hunger".\textsuperscript{52} Poverty in Cuba certainly lay at the heart of the revolutionary momentum of the time. It would be wrong to argue that this negated communist influence and ideas, however; it is more likely to have fostered them. The activities of workers and the membership of communist unions are certainly testimony to the influence of communist ideas, if not necessarily the Communist Party itself; and while many individuals, particularly Batista, were to remain important players in Cuban politics, the fact that the Communist Party was the only political association to survive this period speaks volumes as to its organization and its ability to attract and maintain sympathizers.

The Militarization of Education

Although Batista was indisputably in political control of the island following the 1935 strike, unrest and violence continued. Opposition was only temporarily defeated; the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[50] Ramiro Guerra, \textit{La educación primera en el siglo XX: proceso histórico de la misma en Estados Unidos de América, Gran Bretaña y Cuba} (La Habana: 1955), pp. 174, 180, 182.
\item[52] Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 199.
\end{footnotes}
pattern of Cuban history suggested it would at some point regroup and reemerge. Batista proved more ambitious and more capable than his predecessors in his attempt to prevent this. In September, he judged conditions calm enough and himself sufficiently in control of the country to grant a political amnesty and to announce that elections would be held. The fact that U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt faced an election campaign in 1936 led to pressure from Washington for Batista to hold national elections to overcome the widely held, and accurate, impression that the United States had helped to negotiate the end of one dictatorship only to install another. Batista's concessions, however, were granted within a context of continuing militarization on the island. The military received 22.3 per cent of the national budget in 1935-36, with an additional sum of nearly $2 million granted to the police force in Havana. This contrasted with a peak under Machado of 19 per cent. The Foreign Policy Association reported that Batista had over twenty-two thousand men under his command, excluding his newly created military reserves.\(^53\)

Having repressed the revolutionary drive, Batista determined to win the loyalty, or at least acceptance, of the country through social reforms combined with the rhetoric of revolution. Areas to which he turned his attention included the formation of an assembly to consider a new constitution, public education, and the pacification of the countryside. The constitutional assembly provided a forum for the expression of political ambitions and the promise of controlled political debate which would undermine the attraction of direct confrontation. The reform of public education offered an opportunity to divert the energies of teachers, students and their supporters from active opposition. More importantly, the government sought legitimacy and support by claiming that its professed commitment to public education fulfilled the ideals of *Cuba Libre*. Rural education became central to this claim.

Secondary education had been largely unavailable for six years as the *institutos* and normal schools had effectively been closed since 1930.\(^54\) The brief periods in which they had been permitted to open did not allow for the resumption of regular education. As the country returned to a semblance of order after the strike of March 1935, the provision of secondary education was clearly imperative. In January 1937, the government passed a new educational law, the Ley Docente, which reorganized secondary and higher education and reopened the University, normal and secondary schools. The new law replaced all previous legislation, specifically that passed in 1935 following the strike. It reduced the number of new *institutos* to fifteen, taking the total to twenty-one. It created a commission charged with implementing a new plan of studies for all forms of secondary and higher primary education, academic and vocational, the first since the Plan Varona of the first U.S. occupation.\(^55\) Some protested that the Plan Varona did not need replacing but rather

\(^{53}\) Thomson, pp. 274-275. Batista also created a women's reserve with five thousand members.

\(^{54}\) The University of Havana had also remained largely closed.

\(^{55}\) *Reglamento General de la segunda enseñanza* (La Habana: Secretaría de Educación, 1936).
proper implementation. Nonetheless, in August 1939, the new plan - known as Plan Guzmán after the Secretary of Education - came into effect. Students pursuing academic rather than vocational education were required to complete eighth grade before entering the institutos, and in addition were required to specialize in either science or arts in their final year. History and geography of Cuba were introduced to the secondary curriculum for the first time.56

In addition, the Ley Docente authorized the formation of a Consejo Nacional de Educación y Cultura. Educationalists had been demanding such a body for years, arguing that it should oversee the technical requirements of the educational system, and remove this function from the politicians. Proponents believed that the separation of the political from the technical aspects of public education would overcome many of the problems of incompetence and corruption which beset the system. The Ley Docente required the council to study all aspects of public education and related matters, including organization, plans of study, material conditions, libraries and museums, and to advise the Secretary of Education accordingly.

The Ley Docente did not provide the resources necessary to carry out the plans for secondary education.57 While the government authorized the opening of new schools, for example, it did not provide the buildings to house them. New construction was reserved primarily for army projects. Once again secondary institutions found themselves located in whatever edifices could be found, usually rented or donated, regardless of their condition or suitability. Not all the schools created by the legislation actually opened. However, those that did undoubtedly provided a new impetus in secondary education. In addition to the institutos, secondary students could choose normal schools, normal schools for kindergarten, business schools, technical industrial schools and art schools, although the widest choice remained available only to those who could afford private education.

The dismissal and imprisonment of so many teachers after years of conflict with the state led to very poor morale among the teaching body. In 1936, the government, having discharged those it believed to be troublemakers, re-established job tenure. Teachers paid a price for this concession; the same decree-law placed their appointment in the hands of the Secretary of Education. They continued to press for the release of their colleagues in prison. By 1938, their leaders, including veterans of the 1935 strike, formed a new organization known as the Asociación Educacional de Cuba.58 Professional organization and morale received a boost when the International Congress of American Teachers met in Havana in 1939. More than five hundred delegates from ten countries attended.

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57 The University was authorized a sum of money for buildings and material by the law.
58 Julio Quintana Díaz was named president and Eduardo García Camero Secretary-General.
Non-formal and private education continued to supplement public instruction. While affected by protest in the educational sector, private schools had remained open throughout the tumult of the early 1930s. This fact alone led many supporters of public education to conclude that the private system played an important role in providing educational opportunities during times of political upheaval. In 1926, Ramiro Guerra had reported that Cuba enrolled 29,600 students in private primary schools. The Statesman's Yearbook recorded 30,293 private students between 1927 and 1931, 32,450 in 1932, a drop to 26,622 in 1933 and 31,023 by 1939. The Commission on Cuban Affairs stated in 1934 that a maximum of twenty-five thousand pupils attended private school. A study carried out in the 1940s suggested that over forty-two thousand students attended private schools of all levels in 1939. While there is no exact agreement, it is not unreasonable to assume that enrolment remained roughly constant during this period, with some decline during the worst years of the depression. The 1930s also witnessed the establishment of new private secondary institutions, with normal schools and home economics schools proving particularly popular. Such schools were oversubscribed in the public sector and provided promising business opportunities for those with the means to establish private institutions.

The government had good reason to be grateful for private facilities. The preamble to a new decree-law of 1935 which regulated private education argued that private institutions relieved congestion in public schools and helped to eliminate illiteracy without cost to the state. Confirming the existing status of private institutions, the decree-law reiterated the right of anyone to open a school, and the right of the state to authorize, inspect and close schools, and to allow them to grant degrees recognized by the state.

The discussions and debates attendant on the development of the new Constitution by the Constituent Assembly reawakened the simmering tensions between public and private education on the island. Liberals campaigned for the nationalization of private education to be incorporated in the new charter. As the debate intensified, the state provided further protection for private schools. The Código de Defensa Social of 1938, ostensibly defending the right of freedom of teaching in Cuba, criminalized the closure by a public functionary of a private school without cause expressly provided for by law; the

59 Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Adelantos en el año escolar próximo pasado (La Habana: Secretaria de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, Superintendente General de Escuelas, 1927), pp. 6, 9.
60 See The Statesman's Yearbook for years 1927 to 1940.
61 Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 130. The report is not clear whether this refers to all levels or primary students only.
62 Turosienski, p. 8. Over thirty-seven thousand were enrolled at the primary level.
63 Even the wife and children of Arturo Montori, who had been so vocal in his opposition to private education, opened a private school in 1935, four years after Montori's death. They named the school after the famous educator. It seems unlikely that the Colegio Cubano Arturo Montori was a monument to his work which its namesake would have appreciated.
failure of a public functionary to inform judicial authority within twenty-four hours of such closure; or the interference by a public functionary in any other way with the "normal development" of private institutions. These offences were punishable by prison terms.65

Batista's boldest plan of educational reform stemmed from the recognition that rural disaffection and the vacuum in rural public education were intertwined. His primary interest lay in putting an end to rural resistance and both intellectual and popular criticism. Cognizant of widespread complaints about public education in general and rural education in particular, as well as the clear alienation in rural areas which the previous years had demonstrated, he implemented radical change in rural public education.

A comprehensive network of rural public schools had never been established in Cuba. The Commission on Cuban Affairs was the latest in a long line of observers to note that "schools in Cuba are failing entirely to meet the needs of the rural population".66 Parts of the country were not served by either a school or an itinerant teacher. Where rural schools existed they were generally in poor condition, staffed by teachers working with few or no resources, irregularly paid, badly housed and anxious mainly to find a new post in a city. In the 1930s, economic depression, political conflict and rural poverty, and the uncertain authority of the state, including the absence of public schools, provided an opportunity for communist activists to spread their message to a receptive audience. As the World Bank report on Cuba later remarked, "nearly all the popular education of working people on how an economic system works and what might be done to improve it came first from the anarcho-syndicalists, and most recently - and most effectively - from the Communists".67

The Commission on Cuban Affairs, along with many Cuban educationalists, supported the specialization of rural education. While it agreed that schools should have equal resources, be equally accessible and that "the persons who attend schools must be equally well served", the Commission argued that "the differences between life in Havana and life in rural Cuba are too great to enable a single type of school adequately to meet the needs of the two situations,". "To insist," it claimed, "that 'equal educational opportunity for all' means 'identical schooling for all' is as erroneous as to insist that equal medical service for all means the same prescription for everyone."68

Again in agreement with many educationalists, the Commission advocated an educational extension service for rural homes, promoting "a type of instruction specifically

66 Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 137.
68 Commission on Cuban Affairs, p. 138.
designed to redeem rural Cuba from its present pitiful condition". The Commission suggested that rural areas needed teachers "willing to devote their lives to work in the country - more interested in the progress of their work than in salaries, more inspired by the direness of the need than discouraged by the magnitude of the task". To this end, it recommended that rural teachers should receive a specialized education, tailored to work in the countryside.

In February 1936, the government passed Law 620 which proclaimed its intention to "bring primary education to those places where it had not previously existed and where prospects for its establishment were remote". For the successful accomplishment of this task," Batista later wrote, "it was necessary that we plan the operation very carefully and concentrate on creating the sort of teacher who would blend the art of pedagogy with the discipline and dedication of the soldier." Batista aimed for no less than the construction of a network of rural public schools entirely under the control of the army. Law 620 enabled the government to appoint soldiers to the post of teachers in these schools. The soldiers, whom Batista reported had "for the most part...high school diplomas, university degrees or at least a teacher's diploma", were granted the rank of sergeant. The Secretary of Education had no authority over the sergeant teachers, who answered only to the army command. Although the vast majority had no teaching experience, no training whatsoever was offered to them until July, when seven hundred attended a one month course. The army devised the new rural school curriculum, wrote the accompanying textbook, appointed staff and inspected the schools. Everything to do with civic-military-rural education, as it became known, was coordinated by bodies within the military. Ultimate authority rested with Batista and four of his close associates, including three military men. This expansion of the army's responsibilities coincided with Cuba's nominal return to civilian rule after the elections of January 1936.

To implement Law 620, the army divided Cuba into forty zones. Each misión educativa, as the zones were named, incorporated eventually about twenty-five schools, known as civic-military-rural schools. Eight members of staff were assigned to each misión educativa and were expected to travel between schools, remaining at each for a

69 Ibid., p. 140.
72 Ibid., p. 77. In addition, observers reported that some existing teachers were given the rank of sergeant in the army.
73 These included Aristides Sosa de Quesada, in charge of one of the bodies which administered the programme, and Juan Remos who later became Minister of Education during Batista's presidency.
74 The elections took place in January and the inauguration of the victor, Miguel Mariano Gómez, occurred in May. Meanwhile, José A. Barnet, appointed by Batista, remained provisional president. These elections were the first in which Cuban women were able to vote.
75 This process began in June 1936.
Staff were required to specialize in either pedagogy, hygiene, manual trades, veterinary medicine, dentistry, agriculture, laboratory work or domestic arts. All schools offered four years of primary education, teaching children during the day and their parents and other adults for two hours, two evenings per week. Social clubs met in the schools twice a month to listen to radio broadcasts by the army.

Each zone contained a hogar infantil campesino, higher primary boarding schools for boys from rural areas. Refusal to expand higher primary education into the countryside in the past had been justified by successive governments on the grounds of expense and the inappropriate nature of academic education for rural children. The hogares infantiles, like the civic-military-rural schools, were designed to provide the education deemed appropriate to rural life. They offered both academic and practical courses, but emphasized agriculture. "This new system," as Batista described it, "was adapted to the realities of rural life. It made it possible for graduates of these schools to cultivate more efficiently, increase crop yields and improve their housing." The boarding schools recruited the best students from the civic-military-rural schools and cared for all the children's needs for the two year duration of the course.

The boarding schools were intended to remove rural children from what was assumed to be the negative impact of their families and community. According to one researcher, "the homes were able to exercise a strong influence over the living habits of these pupils. Whereas the regular civic-military-rural schools were constantly confronted with the restricting influence of the home environment, the boarding pupils were admirably situated to be led away from a low level of living and an inferior cultural life to higher planes without great shock and without alienating the rural children from their parents". Another observer was even more frank. "The rural children's boarding homes were an excellent idea," he judged, "because they enabled the child to get away from his home, parents and friends who otherwise might have discouraged him in his efforts to learn modern methods of agriculture and living".

The separation of civic-military-rural education from mainstream public education was reinforced by the establishment of the Rural Normal School José Martí. Prior to its opening, only two training courses of two months each had been held for new sergeant-teachers and other members of the misiones educativas. Described by one outside observer

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76 In practice this did not always occur. Gerald H. Read reports that some schools were only visited once a year. See Gerald H. Read, "Civic-Military Rural Education of Cuba: Eleven Eventful Years (1936-1946)", Ph.D. thesis, Ohio State University, 1950, p. 287-288.

77 Although farm schools and garden schools were included in the initial plans, so defined according to size and the amount of land attached, no farm schools and only a small number of garden schools actually opened.

78 Most opened in 1939.

79 Batista, p. 78.

80 Read, p. 322.

81 Paul Tate, the U.S. consul in Camagüey, quoted in Read, p. 331.
as a "semi-military boarding school under the control of the Army", places in the normal school were open to members of the army and the military reserve and graduates of rural boarding schools. Designed to train future sergeant-teachers, the course lasted four months. A complementary institution for young women, the School of Rural Home Economics, opened the same year, offering a three year course. Although a few graduates would take up posts as home economics teachers with the educational missions, most were expected to become housewives and spread their knowledge informally in their community.

The flagship of the civic-military-rural programme was the Instituto Cívico Militar at Ceiba del Agua outside of Havana. Opened in 1938, it was hailed as a new type of vocational institution, combining primary, secondary and vocational education for boarding students, principally for rural orphaned children and orphans of the military, police and other public employees. Batista later boasted that it "became the most brilliant educational institution of the Continent". One of the few schools located in a building designed for its purpose, the institution "trained hundreds of young men and women, who were then returned to their homes fully versed in some trade, to replace the deceased head of the household or else they were returned, trained to become good housewives". One writer reported that "sociologists have suggested that an equal sum of money spent...in improving general education would have much greater and more wholesome results. But the size of the Escuela Cívico-Militar is what appeals".

No reliable educational statistics existed with which to ascertain the best location for the new civic-military-rural schools; nor was any educational survey carried out. Although civic-military-rural education boasted a bureau of statistics, a contemporary researcher found the bureau unable to provide reliable statistical information. Nonetheless, within two months of the passage of Law 620, three hundred new schools had been established, most in remote areas. By August 1936, nearly four hundred additional schools had opened. According to one of Batista's admirers, rural guard stations determined the location of many of the schools. Senior figures closely associated with the programme, such as Aristides Sosa de Quesada and Batista himself, praised its success; however, their claims that rural illiteracy was reduced to 20 per cent are not supported either by reliable data or future trends.

82 Turosienski, p. 41.
83 Batista himself had been orphaned at the age of eleven.
85 Batista, The Growth and Decline of the Cuban Republic, p. 79.
87 Read, pp. 377-378.
90 Aristides Sosa de Quesada, 3 Charlas en México (La Habana: P. Fernández, 1939), p. 10.
The army provided specifications for the construction of new schools, but it did not provide the land or materials necessary. The old practice of using available buildings, whatever their design or condition, continued. The state of the schools thus varied enormously, with poor communities unable to finance adequate structures. The army also placed responsibility for equipping the schools on the Department of Education, which in practice meant the onus rested upon the community. In many cases, the students made their own furniture.

The stated goal of civic-military-rural education was the improvement of rural life by eliminating illiteracy and teaching agriculture, home economics and construction. "The immense and immediate task that confronted us was to bring education to the peasant masses so that they could be equipped to improve their miserable living conditions," Batista declared. The intention was to teach rural people the skills deemed necessary for life in the countryside, and nothing more. Civic-military-rural education was explicitly designed "to make agriculture attractive to the child." It placed responsibility for economic and social improvement on the individual and at the same time insisted that only by working on the land (men) or as good housewives (women) could this responsibility be fulfilled.

Batista used the rhetoric of revolution (what he called the revolution of September 1933) to justify the aims of civic-military-rural education. Drawing on a long Cuban tradition, the programme stressed the importance of education to patria, particularly in forming good citizens. At the same time, the works of nineteenth century Cuban pensadores linking education and the democratic nation were reintroduced to the country. In 1937, Batista associated the memory of José Martí with civic-military-rural education by initiating the Flor Martiana. The top boy in each school each year received an artificial white pansy, representing Martí and the flag of 4 September. The boys were sent to Havana for a week where, on the anniversary of Martí's death, they participated in a ceremony in which each laid a white rose on Martí's monument. Girls performed a similar ritual in the provincial capitals.

The nationalist message went further than instilling love of patria and reverence for Martí, however. It was intended to inculcate not only loyalty to the nation but also pride in the role of agricultural workers in the economy; "to defend the decent work of the field labourer as being useful to the entire collective whole," in the words of one article. "To educate a child to cultivate [land] and make it fertile," the article went on, "is to contribute to national progress."

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91 The Rural Normal School José Martí and the Instituto Cívico Militar were exceptions.
92 Batista, The Growth and Decline of the Cuban Republic, p. 77.
93 Batista quoted in Read, p. 190.
94 See, for example, Félix Varela, Educación y patriotismo (La Habana, Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1935).
95 See Sosa de Quesada, pp. 20-21.
96 "La obra del Coronel Batista en favor de la democracia", Cultura Militar y Naval (abril de 1938), p. 8, quoted in Read, p. 191.
Comparisons have been made between civic-military-rural education and the rural schools established in Mexico in the 1920s under Minister of Education José Vasconcelos.\(^7\) Batista himself denied this comparison, claiming instead José Martí as the true founder of his educational programme. Martí had indeed advocated the creation of "maestros misioneros" to take education to rural areas.\(^8\) The Cubans acknowledged the Mexican example, and that of cultural missions in Spain under the Republic, but insisted that civic-military-rural education was unique to Cuba. While both the Mexican and Cuban programmes contained a strong nationalist element, the military component of the Cuban programme marked the major difference between the two. In addition, the Mexicans appear to have supported their educational drive with materials (particularly books) on a far larger scale than the Cubans.

From the time of its inception, civic-military-rural education aroused controversy in Cuba. The presence of the army, at least in urban Cuban schools, was not new, but it was associated with the repression of dissent. Opponents of the programme observed that the army had tripled in size in less than three years and increasingly involved itself in areas of national life outside its proper purview. Hospitals and orphanages, as well as schools, were created under army auspices. It is also worth noting that not only did the army intrude on an area of middle class employment through civic-military-rural education, but male sergeants encroached on a traditionally female profession. Opponents expressed the fear that the army's extension into social and political arenas would inevitably lead to military dictatorship. Many argued that that the army was using sergeant-teachers to undermine the political strength which civilian teachers had demonstrated during the 1935 strike. Batista's personal commitment to the programme nourished widespread anxiety that he intended to use it to consolidate his own power.

In contrast, Batista claimed that "the establishment of these schools in the remote corners and mountains of the Island and the self-sacrificing conduct of those Cuban teachers who dedicated themselves to a gallant and victorious fight for rural education are a bright page in the history of my country".\(^9\) Defenders of the programme insisted that only the army had the necessary discipline and organization to undertake effective rural education. One writer visiting Cuba in the 1940s reported that she frequently heard comments such as: "[Batista] did a good job on education. The guajiro has no appreciation of education; he would never bother to send his child even if there was a school nearby. But when Batista put the schools in charge of sergeants...guajíros sent their children right along. Anybody has respect for a uniform".\(^10\)

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\(^7\) See, for example, Thomas, p. 702.
\(^9\) Batista, The Growth and Decline of the Cuban Republic, p. 84.
\(^10\) Fergusson, p. 74.
This argument, as did so much of the civil-military-rural educational programme, rested on the assumption that rural education had languished due to the resistance of rural people, either because they failed to understand the importance of education or because they were too lazy to attend school or to study. A further assumption underpinned the first: that the laziness and ignorance of rural people caused the poverty in which they lived. Therefore, teaching them literacy, practical skills, morals and citizenship was all that was required to pull them out of rural squalour. While some proponents of civic-military-rural education acknowledged the economic conditions that lay at the heart of poverty, they nonetheless claimed that rural education alone would allow the next generation to improve its standard of living.101

Such claims were misconceived, if not disingenuous. Cuba's economy relied upon the presence of a large rural labour force. It required rural labourers to remain in the countryside, rather than migrate to the cities in search of a better life, and to live in sufficiently constrained economic circumstances that they would accept temporary work at low wages as the preferred alternative to destitution. Cuba's economic dependence on sugarcane, and the labour market and rural conditions which followed from this dependence, were never acknowledged by the supporters of civic-military-rural education. Instead, they blamed rural Cubans for their poverty and attempted to divert the struggle for economic change with empty promises of a brighter future through educational reform.

The imposition of a new sugar tax to fund the civic-military-rural schools provoked an open confrontation between civil government and the military. In December 1936, the Cuban Congress, under pressure from Batista, approved the new tax; the proceeds were specifically designated to finance new civic-military-rural schools. President Miguel Mariano Gómez vetoed the bill, arguing that the army had gone beyond its jurisdiction in setting up an educational programme for civilians. In a democratic republic, he maintained, civilian education properly fell under the control of civilian authority.102 Whatever the merits of his argument, the reality of the Cuban political situation left Gómez ill-equipped to take on Batista and the military. Within days of the veto, Gómez had been accused of constitutional infractions and an impeachment trial began. Within a week, Vice-President Laredo Bru became the new president of Cuba and signed the bill authorizing the new tax.

Once the tax had been imposed, the vast majority of the funds collected went to paying salaries, rather than building schools or providing educational materials.103 Thus

101 See, for example, Sosa de Quesada, pp. 33-35. Batista argued that the very example of the programme in the community would teach people. If, for example, under the sergeant-teacher's direction, the community built a good schoolhouse, community members would admire the building and desire similar solid and healthy housing for themselves. The unspoken assumption was that rural people did not understand what their housing lacked until something better was shown to them. 102 See "Mensaje del presidente Miguel Mariano Gómez al Senado" in Hortensia Pichardo, Documentos para la historia de Cuba, tomo 4, segunda parte, 2nd ed. (La Habana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1986), pp. 100-103. 103 Read, pp. 372-373. 83 per cent of expenditure in 1937 was for salaries.
the expansion of the army cost the army nothing. Batista had achieved a considerable
triumph. Not only had he succeeded in extending both the army's presence and influence
on the island, at a time of pressure for the return to civilian, constitutional rule, he had also
secured the labour of local communities, the Department of Education and an additional tax
to pay for it, leaving the military's budget, which already amounted to an estimated one
quarter of national income, intact. The educational function of civic-military-rural
education was clearly secondary to its political objectives. Its legacy bears out this claim.
In the ten years of its existence the programme failed to improve the quality of rural
education, but it did help Batista to control the countryside and to launch his successful
presidential bid.

By 1939, Batista had consolidated his position sufficiently to run for president
himself. The island had been pacified; opposition had been either coopted or crushed.
Communist Party policy had changed from the promotion of revolution to partnership with
government in the struggle against fascism, which coincided with Batista's desire for an
alliance in support of his presidential ambitions. The government offered welfare, labour
reforms and legalization of the Party in exchange for cooperation. After ten years of
violence, an exhausted nation could fight no longer. Instead, Cubans turned their attention
to the drafting of a new constitution to construct *Cuba Libre*. 
The promulgation of the Constitution on 5 July 1940 inaugurated a decade often described by historians as one of "democratic" government in Cuba. So it was, if the meaning of democracy is confined to holding elections every four years. Fulgencio Batista, under pressure from the United States, relinquished his position to Ramón Grau Martín after four years as president. Grau in his turn surrendered the presidency to Carlos Prío Socarrás. Such transitions were not new in Cuban presidential politics. However, when considered within the framework of Cuban nationalist aspirations, many limitations on a democratic ideal remained. Cuba's educational system continued to call attention to those limitations. The renewed debates over private and rural education exposed inequality of access and opportunity, while persistent venality in the Ministry of Education proved representative of systemic government corruption on the island.

In 1940, however, optimism prevailed. The struggle for an independent, democratic nation, built upon a system of free, universal, secular, public education, appeared to have been won. Cubans welcomed the return to constitutional rule, not least in the area of education. "Cuban teachers as a whole," educationalist Diego González y Gutierrez told an audience in Puerto Rico, "are convinced that democracy is not anarchy; that discipline is not a question of military authoritarianism...that democracy - the only solution to save the world - is acquired only through the practice of democracy."1

The new Constitution reflected, to some extent, the political and social changes which the island had undergone over the previous fifteen years; it enshrined many of the reforms implemented during the crisis of the 1930s. Thus, for example, it declared all Cubans equal before the law, including women with men, blacks with whites, illegitimate children with legitimate; it guaranteed workers minimum wages, maximum hours, equal pay for equal work, pensions, compensation and the right to strike; it granted the sick and invalided social security and pregnant women job security. Article 60 pronounced the inalienable right to work of every individual, and promised that the state would use its resources to ensure the necessary economic conditions to provide a job and a dignified existence for each worker. Article 90 committed the legal system to stipulating the maximum amount of property which could be owned by an individual or company, to restricting the acquisition and possession of land by foreign companies, and to finding ways to return land to Cuban ownership.2

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1 Puerto Rico Week Journal, 4 June 1940.
Education and its role in Cuban society featured prominently in the deliberations over the new Constitution. The Catholic Church had lobbied for the introduction of religious instruction in public schools, a possibility resisted by Protestants, liberals and communists defending the tradition of secular education in independent Cuba, who took the opportunity to raise again the themes of nationalism and education debated following Ismael Clark's reports on private schools in 1915. In addition to maintaining secular instruction in public schools, they argued in favour of restrictions on the nationality of teachers and regulations which would ensure that only those with qualifications recognized by the Cuban state would teach. "Almost all the teachers in private schools are foreigners, and religious foreigners," claimed one commentator. "This demonstrates...that the supervision of the foreign teacher is unacceptable for developing in children patriotic sentiment, the basis of a perfect national education."

The second section of the Constitution, entitled "Culture", contained the articles concerning education and made a number of commitments designed to appease the education lobby and liberal opinion. It clarified the rights of Cubans to education and the role of the state in its provision. Article 48 reaffirmed the obligatory nature of primary instruction for all children of school age and promised that kindergarten, primary and vocational education provided by the state, including all necessary materials, would be free. State secondary education was also to be free, with the important exception of pre-university and university studies. Articles 49 and 50 allocated responsibility to the state to provide schools designed to combat illiteracy in adults, particularly in rural areas.

Article 47 affirmed that "culture in all of its manifestations constitutes a primary interest of the State". Subsequent articles suggested the economic nature of that interest, reflecting the important strand of nationalist belief which held that education should promote the economic development of the country. Article 51 stated that "the official system shall provide vocational stimulus and development in the light of the multiplicity of the professions, and taking into account the cultural and practical necessities of the Nation". National economic concerns were expressed even more explicitly in Article 49, which stipulated that the organization of adult, vocational and technical schools must be "oriented in a manner to respond to the necessities of the national economy."

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3 See Chapter III.
4 María Corominas de Hernández, "La nacionalización de la enseñanza en Cuba", Revista Bimestre Cubana, 37, no. 1 (1936), p. 70. She originally argued this point in a speech during the Fiesta Intelectual de Mujer in July 1935. Many commentators reported that most teachers in Catholic schools were Spanish, whereas those in Protestant schools were Cuban. See, for example, Ciro Espinosa y Rodríguez, La crisis de la segunda enseñanza en Cuba y su posible solución (La Habana: Cultural, 1942), pp. 42, 45.
5 Fees for the institutos were to be moderate and designated for the upkeep of the school.
6 "La Constitución de 1940" in Pichardo, 4, p. 341.
7 Ibid., p. 340.
8 Ibid., p. 341.
9 Ibid., p. 341.
importance which the country attached to education was emphasized further by Article 52 which declared that the Ministry of Education should never have a budget less than that of any other Ministry, unless the state declared an emergency and authorized an exception.\textsuperscript{10}

The third paragraph of Article 52 contained perhaps the most unusual constitutional requirement. This paragraph proclaimed that "the monthly salary of a teacher of primary instruction must not be...less than a millionth part of the total budget of the Nation".\textsuperscript{11} That the Constitution contained such a commitment reflected the impact of the teachers' lobby, important even after the 1935 strike, and the strength of feeling aroused by the unsatisfactory conditions in which teachers worked. It promised financial reward in exchange for cooperation, in an effort to ease the tense relationship between government and the teaching body.

In response to an old and frequently repeated demand, the Constitution separated the political and technical aspects of education by creating the Consejo Nacional de Educación y Cultura.\textsuperscript{12} Article 59 defined the new body as "in charge of promoting, directing technically and inspecting the educational, scientific and artistic activities of the Nation".\textsuperscript{13} The same article obliged Congress to take into account the CNEC's assessment of all bills which fell within CNEC jurisdiction.

The Constitution contained ambiguities, in particular regarding the role of local government in the public educational system. Article 48 stated that the obligation for provision rested with central government, "without lessening the co-operative responsibility falling to municipal initiative".\textsuperscript{14} Yet Article 213 of the Constitution expressly required municipal authorities to establish and administer schools.\textsuperscript{15} Article 214 further stated that the municipality was "obliged" to ensure that a school functioned at least in the principal town. Article 52 advised that public instruction would be funded from "the budgets of the State, the Province, or the municipality, and shall be under the technical and administrative direction of the Minister of Education".\textsuperscript{16} The commitment of Article 49 to the maintenance of a system of adult, vocational and technical schools included a declaration that the provinces and municipalities should "collaborate in their maintenance to the extent of their means".\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 341. At this time, government departments became known as ministries, headed by ministers.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p. 341.
\textsuperscript{12} The Ley Docente of January 1937 made provision for a CNEC, but the organization had never been formed.
\textsuperscript{13} "La Constitución de 1940" in Pichardo, 4, p. 342.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 340.
\textsuperscript{15} This point is made in Lowry Nelson, Rural Cuba (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 237 (originally published by the University of Minnesota in 1950); "La Constitución de 1940" in Pichardo, 4, p. 382.
\textsuperscript{16} "La Constitución de 1940" in Pichardo, 4, p. 341, emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 341.
Thus, the municipalities were assigned a level of responsibility regarding both the provision and financing of educational infrastructure, with little control over the means of discharging their duty or voice in the running of the educational system. Central government had steadily usurped local authority over public education since school boards had first been created by Order 226 in 1899. The 1909 school law, the administrative reorganizations following the political confrontations of the Machado years and the 1935 strike had been the principal, but not the only, means of effecting this change. The Constitution of 1940 completed and formalized the centralization of education.18

Responses to Regulation of Private Education

In spite of the hopes which the new Constitution excited, its achievements remained largely on paper. In many ways it served only to accentuate the contrast between nationalist conceits and Cuban reality, as the renewed attempt to supervise private education illustrated. The Constitution bestowed on the state the right to regulate private schools. The principle of state regulation of primary private education was not new in independent Cuba, and had a precedent in Spanish law.19 However, the introduction of the required legislation by communist senator Juan Marinello in 1941 gave rise to ferocious opposition.

The Constitution encapsulated the nationalist aims of education around which the debate of 1915 had centred. "All instruction, public and private," it proclaimed, "shall be inspired by a spirit of cubanidad and human solidarity, forming in the minds of those being educated love of patria, its democratic institutions and all who have struggled for one or the other".20 Indeed, the Constitution included many of the principles contained in the ill-fated legislation proposed by Fernando Ortiz almost twenty-five years earlier. Article 55 pronounced private institutions subject to regulation and inspection by the state. Article 56 insisted that civics, history and geography of Cuba be taught by native-born Cubans, from books written by the same. Article 50 declared that only graduates of state normal schools could teach in primary schools in the public system.21 Both private and religious education were protected by the Constitution, however. Article 54 confirmed that "official or private universities and any other institutions and centres of higher learning may be created". Article 55 pledged that, while official instruction must be secular, "in all cases the right

18 Local school boards continued to exist, but consisted of members chosen by the provincial superintendent and appointed by the Minister.
19 Both Decree 301 of March 1926 and Decree-Law 241 of September 1935 contained this principle. See Cuba, Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, Reglamento para los estudios privados de enseñanza primaria obligatoria (La Habana: Rambla y Bouza, 1926) and Cuba, Secretaría de Educación, Enseñanza privada: decreto-ley reorganizando la decreto reglamentando la primaria e inferior (La Habana?: Secretaría de Educación, Superintendencia General de Escuelas, 1935). See also Chapters IV and V.
20 "La Constitución de 1940" in Pichardo, 4, p. 341.
21 Ibid., pp. 341, 342.
shall be preserved of imparting, separate from technical instruction, the religious education that may be desired".22

The legislation which Juan Marinello proposed asserted the state's right to authorize and inspect private schools, to approve textbooks,23 and to ensure that teachers held both Cuban citizenship and appropriate qualifications; and stipulated that any infractions of Article 20 of the Constitution, which declared illegal discrimination on the basis of sex, race or class, be reported and punished.24 Article 4 reiterated the right of schools to impart religious education. No aspect of the proposal contravened any of the Constitution's principles; Marinello argued that it in fact provided the legislative framework within which to execute those principles. Each clause identified the clause of the Constitution to which it related, and in many cases the same wording was used.

Marinello's attempt to enforce the requirements of the Constitution revealed the limits of subordination to the state which conservative and religious, mainly Catholic, leaders would tolerate in private education. They objected strongly to the appointment of Marinello as head of the CNEC's committee for private education because of his membership of the Communist Party and because he had argued against the principle of private education in the Constitutional Convention. His opponents made unsuccessful efforts to expel Marinello from his position on the CNEC.25 They directed their attention principally, however, to blocking Marinello's proposed legislation. A plan by Salvador García Agüero to impose sanctions to end racial discrimination in education became enmeshed in the same battle.

Early in May 1941, the conservative newspaper Diario de la Marina advertised a forthcoming meeting under the title "Por la Patria y por la Escuela". "Free Man," thundered the first announcement on 9 May, "liberty is the most precious treasure of man. Without freedom of teaching, Cuba in the future will be a nation of slaves. There are some who seek to interfere with the freedom to teach and to learn recognized in the Constitution. You must prevent this."26 "Cuban Mother," a second announcement, on Mothers' Day, appealed, "on this day dedicated to you, a moment of meditation on the future of your children...You can do something...in order that your children tomorrow will be free men, honourable and patriotic".27 A separate appeal to fathers asked for their assistance in protecting "your freedom to teach your children where you want, because the conscience of your children will not be poisoned with foreign ideologies".28 The paper also printed the

22 Ibid., p. 342.
23 Textbooks did not have to be the same as those used in public schools, only approved by the Ministry.
24 A copy of the proposed legislation may be found in Juan Marinello, Por una enseñanza democrática (La Habana: Editorial Páginas, 1945), pp. 20-24.
25 At the same time, some members of Congress were attempting to make the Communist Party illegal.
26 Diario de la Marina, 9 May 1941, p. 3. See also El Mundo on 8 and 9 May.
27 Ibid., 11 May 1941, p. 3. See also El Mundo on 11 May.
28 Ibid., 14 May 1941, p. 3. See also El Mundo on 15 May.
manifesto of a group calling itself the Comité Nacional de Padres de Familia Pro-Libertad de Enseñanza, entitled "The Private School as a Factor in Popular Improvement".\textsuperscript{29}

\emph{Diario de la Marina} published announcements, letters of protest against Marinello's position and instructions for action every day, until the meeting took place on 25 May 1941. Thousands attended the gathering, held in the National Theatre in Old Havana.\textsuperscript{30} Seats were placed outside for those who could not fit into the theatre, with the speeches broadcast through loudspeakers. The assembly attracted support from the Asociación de Escuelas Privadas, the Asociación de Maestras Católicas, alumni of private schools and some prominent Cubans, including Miguel Mariano Gómez and Alfredo Aguayo. The latter had clashed openly with Marinello at the CNEC meetings. The British-owned private school St. George and the U.S.-owned Ruston Academy also supported the meeting.

The campaign declared its complete support for private education, asserting that Cuba's private schools were amongst the best in the world, and claiming, somewhat dubiously, that they provided benefits to all social classes, without regard to race.\textsuperscript{31} One supporter argued that government attention should be focused on improving the public system, which bordered on chaos, rather than regulating private educational institutions; certainly private schools should not be placed under the care of the public authorities, which had proved themselves so much less competent than those who ran private institutions. Rather than regulating private education, he argued that the government should emulate private education in the public sector.\textsuperscript{32}

Supporters maintained that endorsement of private education did not imply opposition to the Constitution. Nonetheless, they resisted every aspect of state control over private education granted by the charter. They warned that passage of Marinello's legislation would result in a communist (i.e. Marinello), not the state, regulating private schools and religious instruction. Such a situation, they claimed, would amount to religious persecution. They opposed standardization of teaching between public and private schools, maintaining that this would destroy freedom of teaching, and rejected state approval of textbooks on the grounds that approval equalled censorship and was therefore anti-democratic.

It was primarily the Catholic elite which felt threatened by Marinello's labours, although the \emph{Diario de la Marina} denied that the movement represented an official Catholic position. It could not do otherwise, given the widespread adherence to the concept of a secular state and its long associations with nationalism and independence in Cuba.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 13 May 1941, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{30} Reports of attendance varied between eight thousand and twenty thousand. The latter figure, cited only by supporters, seems high.
\textsuperscript{31} \emph{Diario de la Marina}, 28 May 1941, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{32} Ponencia presentada por el Senador Marcelino Garriga a la Comisión de Derechos Constitucionales y reformas sociales del senado de la República sobre la proposición de Ley para reglamentar la enseñanza privada del Dr. Marinello, (1945), passim.
Nonetheless, the newspaper argued that Marinello's presence on the relevant committee of the CNEC symbolized an act of aggression against Catholics, and it made frequent references to the Catholic nature of the campaign. The day of the meeting, announced the newspaper, somewhat defensively, "was a great day, not only for Catholics, but for all Cubans".\(^{33}\)

Marinello's proposed legislation was attacked on the grounds that it represented an attempt by communists to infiltrate education and to destroy the family. Por la Patria y por la Escuela supporters deemed it sufficient merely to make an accusation of communism to justify their position; they judged it unnecessary to explain why the proposals were communist or why communism should be opposed, other than to equate it with lack of freedom. "In a great demonstration of courtesy and patriotism," exhorted a *Diario de la Marina* headline, "the Cuban family must voice its most energetic rejection of communist interference in education and teaching."\(^{34}\) The movement's manifesto concluded, "we oppose the participation of communism in the formation of the [Marinello] school law...because the law attempts to regulate freedom of teaching and communism, as a totalitarian tendency, is an enemy of free individuals and of democracy".\(^{35}\) This point was repeated in the *Diario de la Marina* five days later.\(^{36}\) Cuban democracy, institutions and national honour, freedom of teaching and Christian morality must be defended against the onslaught of communism, supporters claimed. *The Havana Post* headlined its account of the meeting on 25 May, "Thousands support anti-communist movement", and recorded that the meeting's resolutions pledged to remove Marinello and to outlaw the Communist Party, making no mention whatsoever of education.\(^{37}\) Dark hints suggested that the resignation of Aguayo from the CNEC a few days later was not due to ill health, as repeatedly cited, but in protest at having to combat bolshevism in the CNEC.\(^{38}\) As Fernando Ortiz later observed, Por la patria y por la Escuela subsumed all its arguments into the one argument of combatting communism.\(^{39}\)

Supporters of the Constitution's provisions reacted swiftly. On 28 May, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring placed an advertisement in the newspaper *El Mundo* warning that anti-Cuban and anti-national elements were attempting to prevent the institutions and laws of the Republic from discharging their functions.\(^{40}\) He called for a meeting to be held at the National Theatre on 22 June, the anniversary of the birth of José de la Luz y Caballero.\(^{41}\) "Por la Escuela Cubana en Cuba Libre", a coalition of liberal and left-wing

\(^{33}\) *Diario de la Marina*, 25 May 1941, p. 4; 27 May 1941, p. 4.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., 25 May 1941, p. 3.
\(^{35}\) Ibid., 15 June 1941, p. 5.
\(^{36}\) See ibid., 20 June 1941, p. 3.
\(^{38}\) *Diario de la Marina*, 29 May 1941, p. 1.
\(^{39}\) Fernando Ortiz Fernández, *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre* (La Habana: 1941?), p. 24.
\(^{40}\) *El Mundo*, 28 May 1941, p. 3.
\(^{41}\) José de la Luz y Caballero (1800-1862) was a renowned Cuban pensador and teacher.
groups, formed in response to his call. Thousands attended the June meeting, which also spilled into the park and streets outside the theatre. Among other well-known Cubans, Fernando Ortiz, who had been prominent in the earlier debate over private education, joined Emilio Roig in the new campaign. Leading educationalists, many non-Catholic private schools, and public school students and their teachers voiced their support.

As did its opponents, Por la Escuela Cubana en Cuba Libre declared itself to be a non-partisan movement, open to all without regard to race, class or political affiliation. It affirmed its loyalty to the Constitution, in particular the undertaking in Article 51 that "all instruction, public and private shall be inspired by a spirit of cubanidad and human solidarity, forming in the minds of those being educated love of patria, its democratic institutions and all who have struggled for one or the other". "Cuba will have democratic education," declared Marinello, "not because a socialist senator wants it, but because the Constitution orders it."^2

Por la Escuela Cubana en Cuba Libre pledged its support for public education, at all levels, urban and rural, academic and technical, and called on the government to end the tradition of neglect under which the system suffered. According to Emilio Roig, the decay of the public school system was linked to the fact that the politicians who had the means and the duty to improve it had themselves been educated in private schools, and in turn educated their children privately. He sought assurances that no government money would be granted to private institutions until public schools were judged satisfactory. At no time, however, did the movement attack either the principle of private education or the right to receive or impart religious instruction. Some members were quite explicit in declaring their acceptance of private education (many actively supported it), and their commitment to freedom of worship. The cause they championed was the continued separation of Church and state, and the provision of secular state education.

At one level, the battle for regulation was a battle for the economic improvement of less privileged sectors of Cuban society. The belief that all Cubans should be taught by Cubans, from textbooks written by Cubans, under the direction of the Cuban state, stemmed not only from nationalist pride but also from economic necessity. The claim that thousands of Cuban teachers remained unemployed while private schools hired foreign teachers, some with allegedly dubious qualifications, underpinned the insistence on the employment of Cuban teachers. Private schools were also accused of forcing staff to work long hours for low pay and in poor conditions. The stipulation that only graduates of state normal schools could work in public primary schools was designed to protect the poor teenagers who used normal schools as free secondary education and a route to future employment. The movement also stressed the issue of race and access to education, with

Marinello arguing that black Cubans faced prejudice in their quest for education and training, and later in finding jobs in the education sector.

Supporters of Por la Escuela Cubana en Cuba Libre declared that their opponents aroused fears of communism to divert attention from the presence of anti-Cuban foreigners, falangists (Spanish fascists) and Jesuits in their opponents' ranks. The movement warned of the dangers to Cuban independence of succumbing to Church dogma. Juan Marinello argued that his concerns about the regressive aspects of Church teaching came directly from José Martí. Emilio Roig devoted part of his speech at a meeting on 1 June to demonstrating his belief that the Church remained anti-Cuba. This accusation resonated in Cuba, where the Church had long been associated with Spain's attempts to prevent Cuban independence; radical opposition had deepened following Church support of the fascists in the Spanish Civil War.

Claiming to be a nationalist coalition, the movement attacked its opponents for being "anti-national". Picking up one of the important themes of 1915, El Mundo described the campaign as demanding the "nationalization and Cubanization of teaching in our country". It represented a positive affirmation of what its supporters believed to be the finest aims of Cuba's educational system: confirmation of the Cuban state's secularism; economic opportunities for Cubans, students and teachers, black and white, poor and rich; respect for democracy; the fostering of a love of patria and a spirit of cubanidad. Por la Patria y por la Escuela, however, rejected the allegation that it was anti-nationalist. Supporters vigorously denied the charge that they had been organized by Spanish falangists (although the editor of the Diario de la Marina had connections with both falangists and Nazis). Their movement, they maintained, was organized by Cubans and open to Cubans of all races and classes; they opposed only communism, and communist interference in education.

The debate between the two groups thus transformed itself into a battle to define nationalism in Cuba, and was frequently reduced to competing protestations of nationalist fervour. Part of the responsibility for this outcome lies with the liberal nationalists who focused the debate primarily, although not exclusively, on the consequences of private education for nationalism, rather than on the reasons why private education flourished in Cuba and its specific effects on the nation's political economy. Discussion of the deplorable state of public education led not to analyses of the way in which private education contributed to that state, but agreement that private education must continue in

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43 Jesuits were accused of acting as agents for the Vatican in an attempt to intervene in Cuba's affairs.
44 Marinello, *Por una enseñanza democrática*, p. 8.
45 *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba Libre: Trabajos, acuerdos y adhesiones de una campaña cívica y cultural* (La Habana: 1941), p. 33.
47 *Diario de la Marina*, 21 June 1941, p. 3.
order to take pressure off the public system. The argument that private education put pressure *on* the public system was not adequately addressed. Conservative nationalists largely avoided the substantive issues raised and concentrated instead on inflaming fears of communism and destruction of family and nation; the liberal nationalist emphasis on nationalism allowed the conservatives to evade the issues unchallenged.

The clash over the state's right to regulate private schools was in effect a contest over who would become the country's future leaders, and who would control their education. It had little to do with implementing the vision of public education intrinsic to *Cuba Libre*. The resistance to regulation represented the determination of one class to retain its privilege. By locating the debate in private education, rather than the decay of state education, nationalists failed to examine fully the substantive conflicts and inequalities at the heart of the educational system, and consequently of their society. This failure, and the focus on nationalism in private education, allowed the fundamental issues involved in compromised sovereignty, its consequences for Cuba's educational system and the impact on Cuban society to be deflected and contained.

In the end, although liberal nationalists addressed themselves to the issues far more diligently and concretely, conservative nationalists won the struggle. Despite strenuous efforts by supporters, the proposed legislation was rejected. In practice, the regulatory rights of the state remained substantially unchanged, although a new post of Inspector General of Private Schools was created. Private school inspections were incorporated into the Reglamento General de Instrucción Primaria of 1946, the first since 1922. As before, the purpose of inspections was to assess the suitability of building and location, and to ensure the employment of qualified teachers. Conservative nationalists claimed victory, and liberal nationalists acknowledged defeat. "Schools run by foreigners," complained Roig, "continued, and will continue, enjoying privileges and protection decided by officials and the wealthy classes of the country."^48

While private institutions officially recognized the authority of the state and the Minister of Education, in practice they could disregard the stipulations of the Constitution. It is doubtful that legislation would have increased observance, but certainly its absence was taken as a signal that the Constitution could be ignored. Even where it was quite specific, such as the requirement that teachers of certain subjects be Cuban-born, the possibility of punishment for infractions remained remote. The final defeat of Marinello's legislation in 1945 encouraged the Confederación de Colegios Cubanos Católicos to expand its efforts in favour of private education. It lobbied against catchment zones, state control over normal school education and examiners who did not conform to "Christian

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^48 Roig de Leuchsenring, p. 162.
morality',' as well as campaigning for freedom from the slight pressure applied by school inspectors regarding curriculum and textbooks.

Enrolment in private schools continued to grow, as did their numbers. From twenty-five thousand pupils in 1934, they educated seventy-one thousand in 1943. The Confederación de Colegios Cubanos Católicos reported that schools affiliated with it educated sixteen thousand girls and young women and fourteen thousand boys in 1946. By 1949, eighty thousand Cubans were enrolled in 580 authorized private schools, with perhaps another ten thousand in those operating without Ministry of Education approval.

The influence of U.S. culture remained strong in many schools, particularly in the Protestant and non-religious schools. Two U.S.-owned schools, the Ruston Academy in Havana and the American School on the Isle of Pines, between them received nearly $18,000 in U.S. government funds in 1951. The Ruston Academy prospectus proudly declared one of its functions to be "that of instructing Cuban boys and girls in the English language and under American educational methods", estimating that 90 per cent of its graduates went on to colleges in the United States. Even the British-owned school of St. George's followed a U.S. curriculum in English, noting that "owing to the proximity of the United States, parents want their children prepared to enter American schools and colleges".

The World Bank noted in its Report on Cuba of 1951 that private schools had "expanded very much more than public schools in the last quarter century". The public school, claimed the World Bank, was "in danger of becoming a 'poor man's school'. This not only intensifies social class divisions. The public school also loses the interest and support of some of the most energetic segments of the community, and the process becomes a vicious circle". It could certainly be argued that public schools were not "in danger of becoming" schools of the poor, but had already become so at the time the World

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49 It will be recalled that private schools could not independently bestow accreditation recognized by the state; they were therefore "incorporated" into public schools, which provided examiners for the private students.

50 República de Cuba, Censo de 1943 (La Habana: P. Fernández, 1945), p. 484. Estimates of private school enrolment for the late 1930s vary between 30,000 and 40,000 pupils.


54 Letter from Margaret L. Hannan, headmistress of St. George's School, Havana, to the British Council, Records of the Foreign Office, Political Correspondence, Cuba, Cultural Relations from 1944, FO924 354 (1944), 29 June, 1946.

55 IBRD, p. 414.

56 Ibid., p. 414.
Bank mission visited Cuba. Private institutions remained the domain of wealthy, white Cubans.

Public Education 1940-1952

The 1940s, in spite of inflation, was a decade of relative prosperity; it might, therefore, be assumed that the educational system benefited. Unfortunately, argued the World Bank in 1951, "it was the misfortune of Cuba - and especially of Cuba's children - that much of the educational investment which the Cuban people were able and willing to make was wasted. This was the result of unstable administration, poor planning, political patronage and maladministration of funds." "It is not primarily for lack of expenditure," the report concluded, "that educational opportunities in Cuba are poorer than they should be", adding that "administrative faults have been the most important cause of Cuba's educational deficiencies." These "faults" - principally corruption - stemmed from the economic insecurity which persisted on the island.

Fulgencio Batista's pact with labour and the communists lasted throughout his presidency but unravelled under Ramón Grau San Martín. The advent of the Cold War presented an opportunity for the government to undermine the influence which the communists enjoyed even as Cuba's Communist Party abandoned the Browder thesis, which maintained that labour and capital could work together on a long-term basis, and committed itself instead to class struggle. Communist leadership had weakened with years of accommodation; the party also provided a route to political power for those who could not afford to become lawyers, but whose adherence to power over principle rendered their loyalties weak. Consequently, Grau's Auténtico Party had little difficulty in taking over the Confederación de Trabajadores Cubanos, the national trade union, in 1948. This action did not diminish labour power within the Cuban economy, nor the influence of communism at a popular level. Grau's successor, Carlos Prío, also of the Auténticos, pursued Grau's anti-communist stand but proved unable to control labour to an extent sufficient to satisfy foreign investors generally and Washington in particular.

The presence of the United States continued to overshadow Cuba, although the abrogation of the Platt Amendment had rendered its political influence less direct. Speedier transportation and communication links intensified contact between the two countries, expanding and deepening the spread of U.S. culture. The number of U.S. citizens living on the island grew with U.S. business interests, as did the number of Cubans employed by

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57 Ibid., p. 405.
58 The Browder thesis was named for a communist leader in the United States who advocated this position.
U.S. companies. World War II cemented renewed economic dependence upon the United States as Cuba's trade with Europe declined and trade between Cuba and the United States increased. The slump in sugar production in Asia and Europe intensifying the advantage to Cuban sugar production, deepening economic reliance on the old monoculture and its primary market, the United States.

The United States recognized the island's dependency both on sugar and on itself. "Cuba, because of its nearness to and historical ties with the United States, its status as principal sugar supplier of the U.S. and its American investments - which are among the largest in amount in any country - possesses an importance to the U.S. much greater than the island's size and its five million population would indicate," read a State Department memorandum.60 U.S. government estimates put U.S. investment in Cuba at $750,000,000 in 1947.61 "Cuba's one-crop economy is almost entirely dependent on the United States," the memorandum added; "we could, by manipulation of tariff or quota affecting sugar, plunge the entire island into poverty. Cuba must continue to have a substantial share of the U.S. sugar market in order to avoid serious political and economic problems." Brief post-war prosperity disguised the stagnation and structural problems at the heart of the Cuban economy. Corruption persisted in political life; the threat of economic crisis and its consequences stalked the majority of Cubans, particularly in rural areas; diversification and independence eluded the island still.

Fulgencio Batista's transition from military strongman to elected president required an evolution in the civic-military-rural educational programme as well. In the autumn of 1940, he issued decrees transferring control of the military's educational institutions to the Ministry of Education, under a new division of rural education. The location, the personnel and the curriculum of the civic-military-rural educational programme remained unchanged. Officially, the 1940 reorganization brought all rural schools under the control of the new section of rural education, although in practice lack of resources prevented the takeover of civilian rural schools. However, in spite of the fact that little had changed in terms of content, structure or personnel, it was deemed prudent to drop the word "military" from the title of the programme; thus the new title, civic-rural education. By that time, over one thousand civic-rural schools existed.63

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62 Memorandum prepared in the Department of State, Washington, 29 July 1948, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1948, 9, p. 563.
What impact did Batista's professed commitment to public education, particularly rural education, have? Lowry Nelson, a sociologist who studied rural Cuba in the 1940s, commented that the data of the 1943 census indicated that throughout Cuba, and especially in rural areas, "the implementation of [the education] provisions of the constitution have been delayed". While recognizing the disruption which had been the fate of public education as a consequence of the political upheavals and the depression of the 1930s, he added that "there appears to be little rational explanation for the apparent neglect of education in more recent years". This neglect had serious consequences. "The conclusion appears warranted," Nelson argued, "that little if any progress has been made since 1907 in providing school opportunities for the nation's children."

The census of 1943 confirmed Nelson's assessment. According to the census, the literacy rate in Cuba stood at 71.3 per cent. Although this rate placed Cuba, according to one study, second in a Latin American league table of literacy, the figure was disquieting in two respects, as Nelson reported. Firstly, the rate was slightly lower than the 71.7 per cent recorded in the census of 1931, which could arguably be accounted for by a fall in the number of literate immigrants to Cuba. Secondly, and far more important, the recorded literacy rate among ten to thirteen year olds, the rate which indicated future literacy trends, had decreased since 1931 to 59 per cent from 70.5 per cent. A large gap also existed between age groups in the 1943 census, with nearly 73 per cent of fifteen to nineteen year olds and 69 per cent of fourteen year olds recorded as literate, but only 50.2 per cent of ten year olds.

The school attendance figures gave additional cause for concern. In spite of the fact that Batista claimed to have increased significantly the number of classrooms, government statistics provided to Nelson revealed that only 35 per cent of the school-age population attended school in 1942-43. This figure included students attending private school. It compared unfavourably with Ramiro Guerra's figure of 63 per cent for 1925-26.

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64 Nelson, p. 242.
65 Ibid., p. 242.
66 Ibid., p. 239.
67 Censo de 1943, pp. 926-930. Nelson comments that the total figure recorded as "unknown" in the census is high at 6.6 per cent and therefore constitutes a "statistical weakness". He adds, however, that "well-informed Cubans" did not believe the true literacy figure was much higher. Nelson, pp. 239-240. The high number of unknowns explains why some people, including Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring in the 1950s and Hugh Thomas in the 1970s, record a literacy rate of 77.9 per cent for 1943. If, however, one apportions the unknowns so that 71.3 per cent are assumed to be literate, Cuba's literacy rate for 1943 becomes 76 per cent.
69 Note that if 71.3 per cent of the unknowns are assumed to be literate, the literacy rate would in fact show an increase over 1931, from 71.7 per cent to 76 per cent.
70 Nelson, p. 243.
71 Censo de 1943, p. 926.
72 Nelson, p. 228. See José D. Cabus, Batista: pensamiento y acción 1933-1944 (La Habana: Prensa Indoamericana, 1944) for a glowing account of Batista's accomplishments.
73 Of the 35 per cent, 29.5 per cent attended public schools and 5.5 per cent attended private schools.
comparison observed by many commentators.\textsuperscript{74} In Oriente, only 20.4 per cent of the school-age population was recorded as attending school, compared with 68.6 per cent in Havana. A full one third of the primary school-age population lived in Oriente, yet only 20 per cent of the total number of children attended primary school. Less than 19 per cent of the total primary school-age population, but nearly 37 per cent of those in primary school, lived in the province of Havana.\textsuperscript{75}

Batista's first Minister of Education, Juan J. Remos, an important ally in the civic-military-rural educational programme, inaugurated a new plan of secondary education in 1941. Plan Remos, as it became known, extended the course of the \textit{institutos} from five to six years, but at the same time dropped the entrance requirement from grade eight to grade six. In addition it specified that youths could be no younger than twelve and no older than fifteen upon beginning their secondary studies. The six year programme divided into two: a four year general course, or \textit{bachillerato elemental}, which led to a diploma, and an additional two years' specialization in preparation for university.\textsuperscript{76} By 1952, with the exception of funds for music teachers, the financial support required for specialization had not been provided.

The new plan exacerbated divisions within the secondary system. Pre-university education remained available only in provincial capitals. The division of academic secondary education into general and pre-university, combined with the grade six entrance requirement, undermined the principle behind the higher primary schools set up by Ramiro Guerra in 1926. Two types of schools now purported to offer a general secondary education and a hierarchy in terms of the value attached to each inevitably formed. In addition, the twelve year minimum age requirement was widely criticized for being too low, and rumoured to have been changed in order to accommodate the ambitions of politicians for their children. The maximum age limit of fifteen had been designed to unify the students at secondary level; those older than fifteen who wished to undertake pre-university studies were encouraged to do so at night school. The provision of night schools, however, remained minimal.

In 1944, Batista was persuaded to relinquish the presidency and the nation elected Ramón Grau San Martín, leader of the Authentic Revolutionary movement or Auténticos, to succeed him. Cubans greeted Grau's election rapturously; at last, it seemed, the revolutionary promise of 1933 would be fulfilled. No president of Cuba could maintain credibility without articulating enthusiastic support for education and promising plans for

\textsuperscript{74} The World Bank appears to be principally responsible for disseminating this figure. As discussed in Chapter IV, Guerra's assertion must be treated with suspicion, given previous statistics, Guerra's support of Machado, Machado's early emphasis on improved schooling and its political importance to him, and Guerra's role in Machado's government. Realistically, a school enrolment of 35 per cent was possibly a slight improvement over the recent past. However, the perception of decline contributed to pessimism.

\textsuperscript{75} Nelson, p. 228. The Ministry of Education supplied Nelson with the attendance figures.

\textsuperscript{76} The two year pre-university requirement was soon reduced to one year. See García Tuduri, p. 87.
educational reform. Grau duly undertook a school building programme in rural areas, which at that time, in spite of Batista's reforms, had become the focus of much public concern. Grau claimed by the end of his term of office to have built 1,500 rural schools, and, improbably, to have increased enrolment by over 100 per cent. In addition, he enacted extensive new regulations governing primary education in 1946.

The old animosity between Batista and Ramón Grau San Martín spilled over into the education sector. Amidst much criticism of the militarization of education and the creation of a dual educational system, Grau dismantled Batista's rural educational programme, both to end Batista's work and to free the money which it absorbed. In particular, he converted four schools, including the flagship Instituto Civico-Militar of Ceiba del Agua and the Rural Normal School José Martí, into polytechnics. Given the widespread reservations held about civic-military-rural education, these changes were broadly welcomed.

Nonetheless, no substantial or lasting improvements were made in public education under Grau's presidency. Corruption and the lack of administrative continuity in the Ministry, as political maneuvering and scandal drove out one minister after another, left Grau with the distinction of appointing six ministers of education during his four years in office. It was widely believed that education funds were being diverted to buy weapons for Grau's supporters even as local communities were forced to raise money for equipment and to patch up buildings nearly beyond repair.

The constitutional provision regarding the budget for education, combined with the centralized system in which the Ministry was the source of all appointments and supplies, resulted in the Ministry of Education becoming one of the major centres of graft. The forms which corruption took were numerous. Employment, location of posts, rental of buildings, construction, provision of supplies; all provided ways of diverting the education budget for personal profit. Participants stood to gain a great deal, from a lucrative contract, to a job which required little or no work, to a posting in a preferred area. Such acquisitions were possible because, as one commentator remarked, "if there are teachers who buy classrooms, it is because there are ministers and functionaries who sell them". At the top, the potential rewards were vast. José Manuel Alemán, one of Grau's ministers of education, and a good friend of the president, provided the most infamous example. At the

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77 Emma Pérez, La política educacional del Dr. Grau San Martín (La Habana: Ministerio de Educación, 1948), pp. 78, 88.
78 Decree no. 2726, Reglamento general de instrucción primaria, 26 October 1946. The regulations aroused the hostility of the teachers' lobby, as they effectively allowed for the appointment of teachers regardless of qualifications. Teachers accurately predicted that such a situation would fuel patronage.
end of Grau's presidency, Alemán left Cuba for Miami taking with him a reported $20 million of government money in a suitcase.  

A contemporary symbol of the link between corruption and Cuba's educational system was the infamous Inciso K, a clause contained in the Ley de Ampliación Tributaria, passed in April 1943, during Batista's presidency. The law imposed several new taxes, ostensibly to pay the salaries of public employees, and specifically to make up the difference between the actual salaries paid to teachers and the millonésima promised in the Constitution. This difference had become a source of teacher grievance. Inciso K allocated monies specifically for educational appointments. Its real effect, however, was to fuel the sale of botellas, or sinecures, in the Ministry of Education and to provide a fund for politicians to plunder.

Teachers supported the passage of the Ley de Ampliación Tributaria because of its provisions to improve their salaries. When the increased corruption it generated became apparent, some argued that revoking Inciso K would only lead to unemployment among teachers and yet more students without schools. In pursuit of short-term economic improvements, the teaching lobby failed to recognize that the law's practical effect on the political nature of teaching appointments would, in the long-term, result in decreased job security. As a consequence of the law, mass dismissals took place after each change of government in the 1940s, in order for politically inspired appointments to be made. The law thus created a tension between the teachers' old battle for job tenure, waged precisely in order to overcome such political dismissals, and salary increases. Job tenure also led to corruption, with some Cubans prepared to pay handsomely for posts which could mean salaries for life and little or no work.

Corruption became central to public discontent under the presidency of Grau San Martín, with students in the forefront of protest. The term Bloque Alemán y Grau Alsina, or BAGA, specifically identified Alemán, Grau and Grau's sister-in-law and mistress Paulina Alsina de Grau as the main perpetrators of the massive fraud at the heart of Cuba's political culture. BAGA came to symbolize this corruption, and both BAGA and corruption were linked to the problems which plagued Cuba's educational system. BAGA was denounced on banners hung from the institutos and in speeches and articles. "While the government continues to speak of cubanidad," complained the newspaper Hoy, "the money of the education budget is spent in maintaining BAGA, diversionistas and other immoralities, and Cuban schools...are ejected for failing to pay their rent." The slogan 'Cubanidad' was at best a formless rallying cry, the U.S. Ambassador informed

80 Hugh Thomas, Cuba or The Pursuit of Freedom (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), pp. 748, 845. Thomas reported that Alemán left $5 million of the stolen money in his will to build an infant hospital in Cuba, "the final insult to public morality". Thomas, p. 765.
81 Noticias de Hoy, La Habana, 2 April 1948, p. 5.
Washington, "and the great expectations which seemed justified in the beginning of the present administration have faded..."82

Carlos Prío attempted to manage the problem of corruption by naming Aureliano Sánchez Arango, a widely respected politician, as Minister of Education. Sánchez Arango fired a large number of teachers appointed under the previous regime, generating considerable protest among both teachers and politicians for the contravention of inamovilidad. He then appeared before the Senate to justify his actions. Sánchez argued that he had not violated the principle of tenure, as the dismissed teachers had all been hired in a four month period near the end of the previous administration. The appointments had been justified on the basis that over six hundred new rural schools had been constructed and required teaching staff. However, argued Sánchez, the posts had in some cases been purchased, and had primarily been for urban positions; they therefore did not merit the protection of the laws of inamovilidad.83

In the course of the hearing, Sánchez, who had promised he would be completely open about previous irregularities in the Ministry of Education, revealed many aspects of government corruption. Even allowing for exaggeration, he presented a bleak picture. Sánchez alleged that only thirty-seven of the 628 schools which had been constructed under Grau had been located where they were needed. Teaching positions sold for between $1,000 and $2,000. Particularly popular for purchase were specialist posts, such as music or English, which in practice required few teaching hours and guaranteed an assignment in an urban area. Teachers destined for rural schools often paid for an urban post, or to be moved from a rural to an urban school, sometimes resulting in the closure of the former. Of over 1,300 teaching appointments made at the end of the previous administration, 918 had been to urban areas and 357 had no specific assignment, i.e. probably had no work; only forty teachers went to rural areas, although there was no guarantee they would remain there.84 Specialist teachers made up 63 per cent of the appointments.85 The posts of inspectors were open to similar abuse.

Sánchez Arango addressed corrupt practices in teaching appointments by allowing local school boards to name teachers, rather than the Ministry. However, the boards were required to choose teachers from a central list provided by the Ministry. Given that school board members owed their position to the Ministry, this step did not amount to a notable reform. Educationalists had long requested that Cuba return to a competitive system of appointing teachers by merit, but the Ministry of Education proved reluctant to surrender control.

82 The Ambassador in Cuba to the Secretary of State, Havana, 18 July 1947, no. 4177, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1947, 8, p. 621.
83 See Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, Información ante el Senado ofrecido por el Dr. Aureliano Sánchez Arango, Ministro de Educación (La Habana, 1949), pp. 35-38.
84 Ibid., p. 54
85 Ibid., p. 47.
Prio won the presidency in 1948 on a platform which included a promise to provide improved technical and other educational facilities, in rural as well as urban areas, and school breakfasts for children. By then, public education had once again become a focal point of national concern. A steady stream of speeches and pamphlets described a lack of basic infrastructure and material, and argued the need to expand access and to make the content more relevant. Complaints abounded about administrative centralization, incompetence and corruption, the short school day, the multiple problems in rural education, lack of a reliable school census, the shortage of adult education and the need to improve the selection of teachers. Teachers pressed for the determination of their salaries in accordance with the Constitution and a satisfactory pension fund which would allow the elderly to retire and new teachers to obtain jobs. Some educationalists urged a literacy campaign. The dissatisfaction spilled over to students. Student activism, which had increased under Grau, particularly at the secondary level, once again disrupted schools.

The anxieties concerning education appeared justified. In 1951, the World Bank announced that its examination of Cuba's educational system yielded findings which were "disquieting". "It was evident," the Bank reported, "that Cuba's educational system had steadily deteriorated over a period of years". The Bank observed that quantitative data indicated that Cuba ranked "high in education" among the countries of Latin America, although it compared unfavourably to Western Europe and North America. However, it added, "the disturbing point is that Cuba seems to have made relatively little progress in basic education during the last two decades and, in important respects, has even slipped backwards...Some progress was made in the thirties and forties...But the general trend in the school system as a whole has been one of retrogression".

Most schools still lacked sufficient materials, including furniture, books and paper. Provision of supplies sometimes had little to do with the needs of the school. "We were told," read the World Bank report, "...of a small school provided with six automatic drinking fountains but no seats, and of a new high school...with thirty-seven spare automatic drinking fountains but no teaching materials." It remained common for teachers to purchase their own supplies. An advertisement placed by the government in the magazine Bohemia in 1950 proudly announced that "Now the teacher does not have to buy school materials!". Even so, the World Bank related the story of a teacher in Oriente who said she had received no books from the government in ten years of teaching; all the books in use in the school she had purchased herself. Her supplies for the new school year consisted of twenty-four pencils and one pad of paper.

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86 IBRD, p. 403.
87 Ibid., p. 404.
88 Ibid. p. 431.
89 Bohemia, 42, no. 40 (1 octubre 1950), p. 57.
90 IBRD, p. 419.
The island remained short of schools. The state continued to rent a large number of school buildings; in 1949 the government owned only 452, while renting 1,370 (at a reported cost of $235,375 per annum). Private owners provided 4,426 others at no charge.\textsuperscript{91} Designed as they were for different purposes, buildings in the latter two categories often proved unsuitable as schools. Complaints about unhygienic buildings persisted. One educator told the World Bank mission that "when a building is no longer fit for people to live in, it is turned into a school".\textsuperscript{92}

The World Bank received reports of schools being evicted when the government failed to keep up rental payments. A headline in the communist newspaper Hoy in 1948 described the same. "A school in the street" it read, recording, underneath a photograph of desks on a city road, that in spite of energetic local protest, Escuela No. 2 in Palma Soriano, Oriente, had literally been put out on the street. "Here," lamented the paper, "is the most objective proof of the official abandonment of Cuban children. Desks, blackboards, cupboards, books!, and other tools of a school of four hundred pupils, in the street, out in the open, after being ejected because the government had not paid the rent for the premises."\textsuperscript{93}

The World Bank criticized the polytechnics created by Grau. The polytechnic in Holguín, built for 1,200 students, had an enrolment of 830. The site was impressive, with the notable exception of the building intended for instructional shops, "possibly added as an afterthought". Although the polytechnic had been open for six years, "these shops are not prepared for instruction and, up to the present, have never been used for this purpose; nor would they be large enough if they were. There are no work benches, vises, or hand tools. The only equipment consists of an assortment of machines, some of which are of unnecessarily expensive types, more suitable for advanced work or large-scale production". These included "a large, high-production, power-driven pipe-threading machine which the average plumber would not need in a lifetime of practice". A second polytechnic promised little better, and both, through corruption, had become no more than free elementary boarding schools for children whose families had political connections. The remaining two operated well, "distinguished," according to the report, "by the fact that they are doing what they are supposed to do".\textsuperscript{94}

In spite of the emphasis which both Batista and Grau had placed on secondary education, the World Bank estimated that fewer than one in ten Cuban teenagers enrolled in schools at this level. While this figure indicated an improvement on the estimate of one in twenty provided by the Commission on Cuban Affairs fifteen years previously, it was clear

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, p. 432. The rental figure is an improvement on that quoted by the Commission on Cuban Affairs in 1935 of $295,761. See Commission on Cuban Affairs, Problems of the New Cuba (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1935), p. 147.
\textsuperscript{92} Quoted in IBRD, p. 431.
\textsuperscript{93} Noticias de Hoy, 2 April 1948, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{94} IBRD, pp. 165-166.
that "there is a long way to go...before the opportunity to attend a high school or other secondary school can be available to a sizeable fraction of Cuban young people". In addition, the World Bank repeated educationalist Ciro Espinosa's figures which suggested that over one third of secondary school students were enrolled in private institutions.

Not surprisingly, given that longstanding problems in the public educational system showed little evidence of being addressed, large numbers of Cubans still failed to complete primary school. Official figures recorded 180,370 children as having started first grade in 1949, while only 4,852 began eighth grade. Repetition of grades remained a problem - in 1949, one educator claimed that only 9 per cent of children in first grade were new matriculations. The half day continued; in many cases children were in school for only two hours a day. This in turn created a childcare problem for working parents. Ramiro Guerra reported that poor families made great financial sacrifices to send children to private schools of dubious pedagogical credentials as the preferred alternative to the children being in the street or left unattended in the home.

The Problem of Rural Education

Poverty continued to afflict the rural areas of Cuba in the 1940s and 1950s. While journeying by bus from Santiago de Cuba to Bayamo, in Oriente, a traveller watched as "a man thin to emaciation staggered up the step and stood swaying, it seemed as much from weakness as from the motion of the bus. In his arms was a child, pitifully limp, five or six years old. Holding her as an exhibit the man began a tirade, nothing weak about his voice or his ideas. What sort of country was this, he demanded, in which a sick child could have no help, in which a man could find no work, in which all those overfat Cubans he saw refused help?"

In El Cobre, near Santiago de Cuba, the traveller reported that "ill-clad children played in front of hideous shacks along rutted roads piled with refuse, blowing with dust. One store showed a few fly-specked articles in a dirty window. There was no school". Her companion remarked that "when the mines closed, nobody thought of them; there they

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95 Ibid., pp. 412-413.
97 IBRD, p. 409.
98 Ana Moya de Perera, "El analfabetismo en Cuba", Bohemia, 41, no. 39 (septiembre 25 de 1949), p. 103. The author was Superintendent of Schools in the province of Havana in the 1950s.
are, starving". "Nothing has really reached the guajiro yet," the traveller added later, "neither labor unions, civic organizations, nor, to any extent, schools."\(^{101}\)

The education of those children who had access to school often suffered due to the ill health common among the poor. The principal of the school in Media Luna, also in Oriente, "had seen much of the shocking condition of plantation and central workers between zafra. 'It's tragic,' she said, 'to see how the children decline. When wages stop, food gets less and less until finally they are living on yuca and malanga. They get thin and languid; there is nothing one can do; they can't learn; they catch all the diseases.'\(^{102}\) Poor children were still identified as such; thirty years after the practice had outraged school inspector Ismael Clark, some schools continued to label themselves as para niños pobres.

Lowry Nelson related the story of a tenant farmer who desired an education for his children. The area did not have a school because "the owner would not give the land on which to build it". Instead, "an itinerant teacher came to the farm homes and taught the children, and for this the parents paid $1.00 a month for each pupil". In an interesting if unintended comment on militarization in Cuba and Batista's reforms, the farmer observed that "in all his fifty years...he has never needed a soldier or a policeman, but of these there are plenty. What are really needed, he thought, are teachers for the children of the people, and of these there are few".\(^{103}\)

Uneven distribution of public school teachers, particularly in rural areas, exacerbated the shortage in their numbers in rural areas compared with children in school. Certainly, rural posts held few attractions for teachers, given the low standard of living, the few resources of rural schools and the difficulty of travel to urban areas.\(^{104}\) Of 9,515 teachers recorded by the 1943 census, 3,100, or nearly one third, worked in the province of Havana; yet less than 19 per cent of the country's school-age children lived there. 73,708 children of primary school age, or 7 per cent of the national total, lived in Matanzas, the province with the second largest urban population; but it was home to 12 per cent of the nation's teachers. Meanwhile, Oriente, where one third of Cuba's school-age children lived, boasted less than 18 per cent of its teachers.\(^{105}\) Furthermore, it was not unusual for teachers in rural areas to reside in urban centres, often far from their schools, a situation caused either by the lack of somewhere suitable in the rural community to live or a desire not to live there at all. Teacher absenteeism was a common result of the difficulties in travelling long distances each day.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., pp. 41, 71.  
\(^{102}\) Ibid., p. 52.  
\(^{103}\) Nelson, p. 4.  
\(^{104}\) Accusations circulated of black teachers in particular being sent to rural posts in disproportionate numbers. See, for example, Alberto Arredondo, El negro en Cuba (La Habana: Alfa, 1939), p. 49. Resistance to a rural post was likely to be especially strong when the individual concerned had used the teaching profession as a means of escape to the city.  
\(^{105}\) Calculated from the table in Nelson, p. 238.
The distribution of schools failed to reflect the distribution of students. In 1948, one writer recorded that in the municipio of Bueycito, near Bayamo in Santiago de Cuba, fourteen schools were located near the highway and none at all in the interior. Another wrote the following year that it was not unknown for schools to be located only thirty metres apart in some places, while populated areas of four or five square kilometres had not so much as a single classroom. The consequence of such maldistribution meant that children coming to school from the interior often had long distances to travel, sometimes crossing roads and railway tracks, and over ground that could become impassable during the wet season. Lowry Nelson recounted that "in some places there are school buildings, but no teachers, in other places there are teachers, but no school buildings...In still other cases, buildings have been constructed but have not been furnished with desks and other necessary equipment, and no books have been provided for the pupils. It is not unusual," he added, "to see two children sitting in desks which were designed to accommodate one".

The comparative lack of education in rural areas became particularly acute at the secondary level. While the expansion of secondary education after 1936 improved the numbers of teenagers attending over the years, the total remained small. "In the rural areas," the World Bank reported, "secondary education is at present almost entirely unavailable." Public primary school ended at grade four, leaving rural children dependent on public education without the qualifications to enrol in many secondary schools. Secondary schools were still located mainly in the provincial capitals or other urban centres, making access difficult and adding lodging expenses to the costs of those students who resided outside commuting distance. According to government figures, in 1943, 26,222 students matriculated in the institutos. Of those, 12,297, or nearly 47 per cent, attended school in the province of Havana. In the same year, the province boasted 40 per cent of normal school matriculations, or 1,459 of 3,631 enrolled.

In 1949, an article in Trimestre magazine argued that the problem of rural education and the problems of the nation were inextricably linked. The state of rural education, the author claimed, was symbolic of the need to raise the standard of living in the countryside generally and to incorporate campesinos into national life. Rural life would change for the better with the improvement of rural education. A representative of the Federación de Maestros de Cuba, which included many left-wing and communist teachers, proved a somewhat lonely voice in locating the source of rural poverty in the capitalist landowning system in Cuba. Nonetheless, he argued that improved technical education would secure

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107 González del Campo, p. 16.
108 Nelson, p. 236.
109 IBRD, p. 413.
110 Cabús, pp. 429, 351.
111 González del Campo, p. 2.
Cuba's economic liberation.\textsuperscript{112} The poverty of rural life would be remedied through educational reform alone.

Throughout the republican period, but with particular intensity in the 1940s, Cuban educationalists and politicians debated whether rural children should receive a general education or one specifically designed to meet the perceived demands of life in the countryside. Most favoured the latter course. Advocates emphasized the teaching of skills designed to improve agricultural production and the quality of rural life, both to increase national production and to slow or stop the move of rural people to urban areas, thereby maintaining an adequate labour force in rural Cuba. Black Cubans comprised large numbers of those moving to the cities to escape rural poverty and to benefit from urban public schooling, a fact not unrelated to the desire in some quarters to keep people in the countryside.\textsuperscript{113} "In Camagüey they [black people] provide a problem," complained one landowner. "The trouble is they gather in towns and insist upon going to school, bettering themselves, trying to be as good as whites."\textsuperscript{114}

Arguments by Cubans such as José Martí and Enrique José Varona in favour of incorporating agricultural and technical education appropriate to national needs into the educational programme had been subsequently narrowed by others to specialization of rural education only. Yet the rewards of a rural, specifically an agricultural, education in Cuba were few. The Commission on Cuban Affairs had observed in 1934 that the course in the Ministry of Agriculture's six provincial schools required boys to study for only one year less than those who went on to university. Not surprisingly, at the end they opted for employment on large sugar plantations, rather than returning to tenant farming or possible landlessness. The World Bank confirmed that the situation in the agricultural schools remained much the same fifteen years later, adding that the best students went on to the University of Havana, after which they became sugar chemists or joined businesses. In spite of the rhetoric, agricultural study was not valued in Cuba. Agricultural subjects were not highly regarded, few studied them, and those who did often did so only because other fields were closed to them. The World Bank reported that vocational schools catered to industrial trades, rather than agricultural specialties. As the existing facilities could not

\textsuperscript{112} José Carillo, \textit{La educación y los campesinos} (La Habana: 1945), passim. Carillo also expressed considerable support for Batista's educational reforms, in apparent contradiction of his analysis, and urged Grau to continue them. He may not have been representative of the Federation, although he was on the executive; certainly the Federation found itself in occasional conflict with Batista, primarily over salaries. However, the Federation may have been an example of the left leadership's widespread alliance with Batista at this time, in exchange for economic benefits and security.

\textsuperscript{113} The rate of black literacy increased steadily between independence and the 1940s. According to the 1943 census, it jumped from 64.7 per cent in 1931 to 74.6 per cent in 1943. See \textit{Censo de 1943}, p. 777. Note that Nelson gives the 1943 figure as 67.4 per cent, which is a significant difference. See Nelson, p. 241.

\textsuperscript{114} Fergusson, p. 70.
accommodate all the students enrolled in industrial training, selection occurred by transferring those who did poorly to agricultural subjects.\textsuperscript{115} The advocacy of specialized rural education highlighted a conflict between the educational measures deemed to promote national economic growth, a desirable educational aim in the nationalist perspective, and individual fulfillment through education. Accepting the case for a curriculum based on the geographical location of the child entailed accepting that neither ability nor inclination would determine the education children received; instead their place of birth - city or country - would decide their future. In addition, rural teachers were expected to endure deprivations and conditions worse than their urban counterparts out of professional devotion, deflecting the case for making their working conditions more attractive.

Arguments in favour of specialized rural education were often based on paternalistic assumptions. "Where will the guajirito go with his reading, his counting, his writing and his grammar, which he neither understands nor uses, his geography which he learned from memory?" queried the National Association of Agricultural Teachers. "He is only going to suffer because he now knows that the child of the city enjoys the better things of a civilization and has within his reach the agents of progress, and in a little while he wishes to attain a higher culture...he would be happier if he knew that the soil that is under his feet...is the principal agent of his welfare and his wealth."\textsuperscript{116} The reality, of course, was quite different: the "soil under his feet" was the principal agent of the welfare and wealth, not of the guajirito, but of large landowners.

The argument for specialized rural education rested on an assumption that people born in rural areas had only one place in society, albeit a place declared to be of importance to the nation. Only their own lack of education, often described as a result of indifference or laziness, and lack of understanding of the conditions in which they lived, condemned them to poverty and the nation to poor economic performance. This assumption, however, did not derive from economic and political reality. Rural life and rural education were not valued in Cuba in spite of protestations about the importance of agriculture, and no amount of exposition on health, hygiene and agriculture would overcome the poverty which caused rural destitution or the economic conditions which caused the poverty. Furthermore, only poor children were intended to be the recipients of this type of education. No one advocated that the heirs of wealthy Cubans should have restrictions placed on their education.

There is little evidence to suggest that rural people were indeed indifferent to education or too lazy to attend school, and much evidence to the contrary. One traveller described a visit to a rural school in Jibacoa on the north coast between Havana and

\textsuperscript{115} IBRD, pp. 164, 119. 
\textsuperscript{116} Asociación Nacional de Maestros Agrícolas de Cuba, La necesidad de la reforma de la escuela rural en Cuba (La Habana: P. Fernández, 1939), p. 7.
Matanzas. She spoke to an old man who told her that the school, a *bohío*, "was his life's work. This building was the third. The first was carried away in toto by a hurricane twenty years or more ago. He got the neighbours together and they built another, trying to anchor its posts more securely. But the hurricane of 1940 lifted it, posts and all, and deposited it, so far as anybody knew, in the Caribbean. This, the third, was pretty badly shaken in the fall of '44: its roof sailed away and landed in someone's tobacco field. But here it is again." This type of persistence alone attested to the commitment to education, but the old man added a personal testimonial. "'We'll have a school here,' he boasted, 'as long as I live and I think longer...I never learned to read but all my children can, and my grandchildren are here.'"

The old man's resolve was characteristic of rural dwellers who placed education second in priority only to new roads. Lowry Nelson reported that more education went on in the country than indicated by official figures, "due to the determination of farm people to see that their children receive instruction, even if they have to provide it entirely from their own resources". In some areas "parents constructed school buildings at their own expense, contributing money, labor or materials for the purpose". "Rural children, especially, are the victims of poor schools or the absence of any schools at all," Nelson wrote. "Conditions vary throughout the island, getting relatively worse as the distance from Havana increases." However, he declared, "this situation is not due to opposition to education among the rural people. On the contrary...campesinos are anxious for better educational facilities for their children".

Ramiro Guerra was amongst the few who disputed the case for specialized rural education. "I do not believe that rural teachers destined to be permanently attached to supposedly peasant schools ought to be formed in Cuba," he argued. "There does not exist in Cuba a peasant class tied to the land in a permanent way since ours is a democratic society and very changeable, in which the peasant of today may have an urban residence tomorrow...Such a social structure makes it improper to try to impart to children residing in the country a specialized education which may make them peasants forever. Primary instruction, elementary as well as higher, is an instruction of a general type, directed to give the future citizen the basic instruction essential for capacitating him in the best form possible for fulfilling his duties as such." As he remarked more succinctly elsewhere, "I do not know a single person who advocates a rural education chained to forming workers who, if he has sons, desires for them that education."
At the popular level, both inequality of access and corruption in the educational system caused particular affront because of continued faith in the links between education and national development, repeatedly emphasized by politicians as well as educators and other intellectuals, which expressions of Cuban nationalism usually stressed. The contrast between the noble principles proclaimed in the Constitution and the reality of Cuba's educational system proved to be a source of considerable frustration and disillusionment. Cubans had been told again and again that a distinguished system of secular public education must be the foundation of their nation; that both individual and national aspirations would be realized through this means. Yet the educational system continued to give rise to distress and apprehension, in spite of years of promises, recommendations and warnings. The disjuncture between what politicians professed and how they performed increasingly appeared beyond reconciliation. By 1952, Cubans were forced to commence a serious reappraisal of the state of Cuba Libre.
Chapter VII

Dictatorship, Stagnation and Armed Struggle, 1952-1958

The year 1952 marked a significant milestone in Cuban history: the fiftieth anniversary of Cuban independence. José Martí's centenary approached in the following year. If there seemed little enough cause for celebration under Carlos Prío, however, soon the nation could no longer boast even superficial democratic credentials. On 10 March 1952, Fulgencio Batista preempted forthcoming elections and launched a successful military coup. The ease with which Batista seized power betrayed the fragility of Cuba's democratic institutions. The opposition also proved frail; the labour leadership had largely been coopted, the communists had been weakened by government oppression and cooption, the Auténticos, indeed most of Cuba's politicians, were mired in corruption. Batista was thus able to take power with the support of the army, but without a political base his survival depended upon the enervation of opposition. It fell to students to take the lead in resisting the dictatorship, even as Batista attempted to legitimate his rule by once again turning his attention to public education.

The United States, once convinced of Batista's anti-communist credentials, accepted the coup, caring less for the formalities of constitutional rule than the security of its business interests. Cuba's economic dependency on its relationship with the United States continued, symbolized by the importance of the annual sugar quota announced by Washington. Sugarcane accounted overwhelmingly for the country's economic output and the unemployment, underemployment, stagnation and uncertainty associated with its production had become features of Cuban society. Impeded by the 1934 Reciprocity Treaty, industrial expansion remained limited. While Cubans were integrated into the U.S. economy and U.S. culture, they did not enjoy the standard of living prevalent in the United States, nor benefit from the same social services, employment prospects or consumption levels. Although in the latter they surpassed much of Latin America, Cubans did not often look south in defining their ambitions and frustrations, but always northward.

U.S. culture had deeply penetrated Cuba by this time, assisted by the expansion of both U.S. investment and tourism. With the tourists came the U.S. mafia, and both contributed to gambling, prostitution, pornography and drug and alcohol consumption in Cuba. Cubans imported their consumer goods from the United States, or bought them from the subsidiaries of U.S. firms located on the island. Many of the professionals and technicians on the island came from the United States, or had been trained there. Cubans copied U.S. fashions and watched Hollywood films; the number of cinema seats expanded from 280,000 in 1947 to over 360,000 in 1952. Those who could afford to went to the United States on shopping expeditions. Direct translations of U.S. textbooks continued to

1 See The Statesman's Yearbook for years 1949 to 1952.
be used in Cuban schools. Hugh Thomas records one example: "What is the odd man out in this list: rocks, fox, cocks, socks, locks? The translation was direct: peñas, zorro, gallos, calcetines, cerrajas".\(^2\) Drunken U.S. sailors who urinated on the monument of José Martí in 1949 came to symbolize the tension engendered by the myriad ways in which the United States had become entwined in Cuban life.

A general orientation toward the United States coexisted uneasily with both persistent nationalist sentiment on the island and the continued existence of the radical left. "Cubans resent any tendency on our part to minimize their own contribution in gaining their independence," warned a 1951 Washington policy statement. "They still criticize us for having reserved and used the right to intervene in their domestic affairs under the Platt Amendment despite the fact it was repealed in 1934. They are also concerned over their overwhelming economic dependence upon the United States." Yet, reflecting Cuban ambivalence towards its neighbour, the report went on, "at the same time they are inclined to assume that their problems are our problems and that we are under a special obligation to solve them".\(^3\)

The United States singled out this nationalist sentiment as an obstacle to be overcome. "Cuba's economic development in recent past has been retarded less by inadequate technical assistance than by official corruption and demagoguery and by nationalistic and restrictive laws and practices, which have discouraged private investment," declared the U.S. Ambassador in Havana. He put forward this position in spite of incontrovertible evidence that "discouraged" U.S. investment had reached massive levels: between $750,000,000 and $1 billion, according to Washington's own estimates.\(^4\) "The Cuban Government must take effective steps to improve the climate for foreign capital investments," insisted the Department of State's 1951 policy statement.\(^5\)

Although the investment climate could hardly be described as unfavourable, the statement went on: "favorable climate would involve protecting U.S. interests against discriminatory treatment, removing, within the limitations of the Cuban Constitution, burdensome restrictive measures (such as those related to employment) and deterring unfair

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and irresponsible practices of labor, in so far as they constitute a barrier to the legitimate operation and development of American investments in Cuba. Cuban failure to implement such measures demonstrated "uncooperativeness", which was due in part to "a spirit of nationalism fanned by extremists and a vocal communist minority". Thus, it seemed, the extreme dependence of Cuba upon the United States did not satisfy the latter party, which appeared to desire Cuba prostrate. Batista proved willing to accommodate this desire.

Problems in Education, 1952-58

In an attempt to legitimate his seizure of power, Batista placed renewed emphasis on public education. He blamed the "humiliating picture of the state of national education and culture" revealed by the 1953 census on Grau and Prió, asserting that his own "attempts to carry education to the far corners of the Republic had been virtually ignored by the two successor regimes of the Auténtico Party". According to the census, the literacy rate, at 76.4 per cent, had not improved. This figure placed Cuba amongst the top four of Latin American countries in terms of literacy, but it did not reflect overall educational achievement. In fact, it disguised significant inequality within the educational system.

Wide variations in access to education and different types and levels of education continued to exist, in particular between urban and rural areas. Urban dwellers boasted over 88 per cent literacy, compared with only 58.3 per cent in the countryside. In Oriente, 32 per cent of the population was illiterate (over 46 per cent of the rural population there) compared with only 9 per cent in the province of Havana (and only 7 per cent in the city). Total school enrolment of six to fourteen year olds, in both public and private schools, had increased favourably, to nearly 56 per cent, from 35 per cent in 1943, but down slightly from the year 1949-1950, when recorded enrolment reached nearly 59 per

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6 Ibid., pp. 846, 852. These requirements were listed as conditions for the establishment of a Point Four mission in Cuba (see below). The other causes of Cuban "uncooperativeness" are given as "a psychological feeling of inferiority on the part of a small and comparatively underdeveloped country lying next to a large, powerful and highly developed neighbor" and "the low moral and ethical standards of the Cuban governing classes". Ibid., p. 852.


8 74.1 per cent of males and 78.8 per cent of females were literate. Cuba, Censos de Población, viviendas y electoral, 1953, Informe General (La Habana: P. Fernández, 1955), p. 143. If the same percentage of "unknowns" as the population as a whole in 1943 are assumed to be literate, then literacy between 1943 and 1953 remained constant, as stated above. The 1953 rate is an improvement of 5 per cent over 1943 if the "unknowns" of 1943 are assumed to be illiterate. The improvement is lost if the "unknowns" are assumed to be literate, which accounts for the assertion by some that literacy decreased slightly during this period.


10 Censos de 1953, p. 143.

11 Ibid., pp. 148, 144.
cent. Of the 56 per cent enrolled in primary schools in 1953, 46 per cent were enrolled in public institutions. In urban areas, 73 per cent of six to fourteen year olds attended school, compared with only 39 per cent who lived in the countryside. In Oriente, 41 per cent of school-age children attended school, compared with over 77 per cent in the province of Havana. Less than 10 per cent of fifteen to nineteen year olds on the island had completed grade six. Of fifteen to nineteen year olds who resided in urban areas, 14 per cent passed grade six, compared with less than 4 per cent of those who lived in the countryside.

The 1953 census indicated that 17 per cent of fifteen to nineteen year olds attended school, although only 6 per cent had completed secondary school. This average concealed frustrated individual aspirations, because it disguised inequality of access, including a significant urban/rural disparity. In 1953, 30 per cent of fifteen to nineteen year olds in the province of Havana attended school. 13 per cent had completed secondary school. In the urban areas of Cuba as a whole, 27 per cent of fifteen to nineteen year olds attended school, compared with only 7 per cent of fifteen to nineteen year olds living in the countryside.

Corruption continued to undermine the system. Sinecures remained commonplace. Having acquired a classroom, some teachers proceeded to draw their salaries without ever going to work; they hired replacements at a lesser rate and retained the difference. The prevalence of corruption in part accounted for the fact that, of the 85,909 people recorded

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14 *Censos de 1953*, p. 99.
15 Ibid., pp. 100, 104.
16 Ibid., p. 119.
17 Ibid., pp. 99, 119. If the numbers who completed university are included, the total becomes 6.2 per cent. Slightly more young women than young men in this group had completed secondary education - 6.2 per cent against 5.8 per cent - but more men completed the *bachillerato* which allowed access to university - 3.8 per cent against 2.8 per cent of women. The figure of 12 per cent in secondary education recurs but can only be reached if those attending grade eight are included. Richard Jolly and Rolland G. Paulston, for example, cite this figure. See Richard Jolly, "Education: The Pre-Revolutionary Background" in Dudley Seers, ed., *Cuba: The Economic and Social Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), pp. 170, 173; and Rolland G. Paulston, "Education" in Carmelo Mesa-Lago, ed., *Revolutionary Change in Cuba* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 379. Grade eight was, however, categorized as higher primary, not secondary education. Hugh Thomas, unaccountably, gives both 17 and 12 per cent. See Thomas, pp. 1,130-1,131, 1,135.
18 *Censos de 1953*, p. 99.
19 Ibid., pp. 119, 122, 123. The figure for Matanzas is 6 per cent. See ibid., p. 121. Some fifteen to nineteen year olds would, of course, still be in the midst of their secondary education. Examination of the figures for twenty to twenty-four year olds who had completed secondary education reveals a similar, though slightly less severe, national imbalance. The figures are: Cuba - 6 per cent; Pinar del Río - 4 per cent; La Habana - 11 per cent; Matanzas - 6 per cent; Las Villas - 5 per cent; Camagüey - 4 per cent; Oriente - 4 per cent. See ibid., pp. 119-123.
by the 1953 census as professionals and technicians, over forty-two thousand were listed
as teachers and professors.21

The shortcomings in the public educational system continued to fuel attendance at
private school. In 1952, Cuba had 776 authorized private schools, teaching 105,000
pupils; some estimates indicated that another two hundred operated without authorization,
enrolling an extra thirty-five thousand students.22 The official figure represented a 31 per
cent increase over the eighty thousand students enrolled in authorized private schools in
1949. Nearly thirty more authorized private schools had opened by 1955.23 The majority
of private school attendance occurred in the province of Havana. Of those enrolled in
private primary education, 55 per cent lived in Havana province, as well as an estimated 55
per cent of those studying privately for the bachillerato.24 Private school graduates who
did not go on to U.S. or European universities competed with public school students for
entry into the publicly funded university in Havana. Graduates of private normal schools
competed with graduates of public normal schools for employment.

In an endeavour to capitalize on his 1936 rural educational reforms, Batista referred
back to them as a glorious period in Cuba's educational history. Maintaining that the
island's economic and cultural future lay in the countryside, he once again focused attention
on rural education. "Intellectual work, as important as it is," declared Minister of
Education Aureliano Fernández Concheso, "is not everything."25 In May 1952, the
government passed a law which emphasized "better farming and practical skills and trade
and, for the girls...home economics, hygiene and the practical problems of childbirth and
child care".26 Batista reinstated his rural educational programme, complete with the Flor
Martiana, the practice of bringing children to Havana to place flowers on Martí's statue.
He reopened the boarding schools in the countryside and organized new educational
missions, this time without the use of army personnel. This work was carried out under a
new section for rural education within the Ministry of Education, created by the 1952 law,
under the leadership of Blanca Rosa Urquiaga.

Batista's regime repeated the practice of calling on outsiders to assist with plans for
educational reform. Educational initiatives were implemented with the collaboration of the

Pérez, p. 295.
22 Manuel Angulo Monteagudo, "Evolución de la enseñanza primaria, 1902-1952", Libro de Cuba (Edición
Conmemorativa del Cincuentenario de la Independencia 1902-1952 y del Centenario del Nacimiento de José
23 Cuba, Ministerio de Educación, Estadística de la enseñanza oficial y privada, curso escolar 1954-55 (La
Habana: Ministerio de Educación, 1955), p. 81. According to this report, of 804 authorized private
schools, 256 were Catholic, 66 Protestant, 478 secular and 4 Jewish.
24 Ministerio de Hacienda, Dirección General de Estadística, Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 1956 (La Habana:
P. Fernández, 1957), p. 567; Ciro Espinosa, Verdades y mitos de la enseñanza en Cuba (La Habana:
25 Aurelio Fernández Concheso, El problema educacional cubano: fundamentos y urgencias de una reforma
26 Batista, p. 81.
OAS and UNESCO. The projects were mainly comprised of a series of seminars in Havana for technicians in the Ministry, teachers, and other educationalists, although an adult literacy project was also undertaken. The seminars sparked protest against continued foreign influence, forcing Minister of Education Femández Concheso to argue that educational reform undertaken through seminars for specialists, under the auspices of outside experts, was a more democratic method of proceeding than commissions appointed by government.

The Point Four technical assistance programme of the United States also stationed a mission in Cuba at this time. The programme, named after the fourth point in the 1949 inaugural address of U.S. President Harry Truman, was designed to provide expanded technical aid to other nations. In order to benefit, recipients were required to take "fiscal and administrative measures designed to stabilize economic and financial conditions, measures to attract foreign private capital and to encourage local capital accumulation and investment". Although principally active in agricultural work in Cuba, the programme included an educational component. An extensive study of rural education in Las Villas province, undertaken by the Catholic University Marta Abreu de Las Villas, was carried out with Point Four collaboration.

New promises to improve public education and appeals to (disputed) past educational glory were not sufficient inducement to the public to accept the dictatorship. Once again, it was Cuba's youth which articulated national frustrations. Normal and secondary school students across the country joined those at university in early protests against Batista's rule. Only one month after the coup, secondary and university students, in a message to youth, denounced Batista's actions and demanded a return to constitutional rule. In January 1953, three hundred young Cubans representing a wide spectrum of organizations, including the Ortodoxos and socialists, attended a three day Martiano Congress for the Rights of Youth, where they demanded an end to tyranny and exhorted Cuba's young people to unite for a free country. Three weeks later, the death of a student shot by police intensified student resistance. In May 1953, the Second National Assembly of Secondary Students met in Oriente to discuss the role of students in

28 Femández Concheso, p. 43.
29 The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Cuba, Washington, 23 February 1949, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1949, 2, p. 624.
30 See Universidad Central Marta Abreu de Las Villas, La educación rural en Las Villas: bases para la redacción de unos cursos de estudios (Las Villas: Departamento de Relaciones Culturales, Escuela de Pedagogia, 1959).
31 Ortodoxo was the common name for the Partido del Pueblo Cubano, founded by Eduardo Chibás in 1947 in opposition to the Auténticos and the corruption and mismanagement they had come to represent.
promoting democratic rights, overcoming educational problems and understanding what it called the national economic crisis.\(^{33}\)

In July 1953, Fidel Castro launched an audacious armed assault on the Moncada garrison in Santiago de Cuba. The attack represented the return to national politics of the nation's youth and reintroduced organized armed struggle as a means of achieving political aspirations. Batista's response in turn emphasized the bankruptcy of Cuba's political and legal institutions. The imprisonment, torture and murder of captured rebels and the subsequent state of emergency served only to demonize further the regime. The rigged elections of 1954 deepened the political crisis by accentuating the sham of democratic rule on the island.

Although only a formality, the 1954 elections prompted educationalists once again to plead the cause of public education before the government. Ciro Espinosa urged Batista "to examine carefully the vast and complex crisis of the Cuban school". Espinosa insisted that the education budget needed at least to be doubled, probably tripled, that many more schools had to be built and that the different levels of education must be properly coordinated, as a chaotic number of decrees, laws and decree-laws then governed Cuba's educational policy and practice.\(^{34}\) Ramiro Guerra also complained that since 1944 laws governing education had increased to excess.\(^{35}\)

In 1954, Guerra published a book in which were reprinted articles by leading Cuban educationalists dating from 1912 until 1953. Each piece outlined the problems confronting public education and offered recommendations to overcome them. Many had titles which reflected the urgency the authors attributed to their topic, such as "The School Crisis" and "A National Programme for Action". The historical approach of the book emphasized the continuous nature of the crisis. Guerra chose to name the collection *Rehabilitation of the Public School: A Vital Problem for Cuba in 1954*.\(^{36}\) Whether he intended them to or not, the book's title and contents made a damning statement about Cuba's public educational system. After all the years of warnings and advice, no long-term or widespread improvement had been made, or even attempted. In 1954, "rehabilitating" the public school system remained a "vital problem" for Cuba.

The sense of imminent calamity, if education were not improved, had not been so intense since the 1920s. In 1955, Minister of Education Aureliano Fernández Concheso was forced to concede that "we have to declare without reservations, that education in Cuba

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34 Espinosa, pp. 2-5.
has entered an acute period of crisis". Zoila Mulet de Fernández Concheso, who followed her husband as Minister of Education after his sudden death, "of acquiring an educational system in rhythm with the progress and the characteristics of our economic reality, is too evident." A lecturer at the Rotary Club declared that Cubans "have arrived at the moment in which something has to be done if we wish to save our nation from the most complete disaster". As the political crisis intensified with the landing of the Granma in Oriente in 1956 and the establishment of guerrilla warfare in the Sierra Maestra, the strategies of promises, cooption and repression which had preserved the political and economic arrangements of the republic collapsed. The nation moved ineluctably towards radical change.

**Nationalism, Anti-imperialism and Education**

In a period of political bankruptcy, nationalism inevitably remained central to the rhetoric surrounding education. The powerful visions of Cuba Libre, education and progress remained inextricably entwined. "We must not forget," warned Ciro Espinosa, "that the foundation of nationality, in all civilized countries, is found in the school." In a change from his previous tenure in office, however, Batista incorporated the threat of communism into his nationalist position in an endeavour to consolidate his power and retain the support of the United States. Disturbed by his previous association with the communists, Washington sought Batista's assurance of his anti-communist credentials before agreeing to recognize his government. In addition to providing such assurance, Batista continued the anti-communist drive begun under Grau San Martín. To Washington's gratification, he broke off relations with the Soviet Union. In 1954, he outlawed the Communist Party and promulgated a decree-law which declared that communism and public service were not compatible.

These measures were discussed with the United States before publication. On 25 July 1953, Aurelio Fernández Concheso, then Cuban ambassador to Washington prior to his appointment as Minister of Education, outlined for the Office of Middle American Affairs the possible scope of the law and the problems anticipated in its implementation. While expecting that the removal of communists from trade unions could be accomplished, the Cuban ambassador "declared that there would be more difficulty in eliminating communists from education, particularly from teaching in the public schools," according to a U.S. government memorandum. "He said that while many communists in the field of

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37 Fernández Concheso, p. 51.
40 Espinosa, p. 1.
41 Decree-Law 1456, 3 June 1954.
education are well known, e.g. Marinello," the memorandum continued, "others are not known. He also observed that an attempt to have Marinello and other communist teachers dismissed because they are communists would provoke a mixed reaction. He said that some might criticize such action as another example of Batista tyranny." Nonetheless, it was agreed that the attempt would be made. The ambassador also accepted that "reports of current activity by communists in positions in the Ministries of Labor and Education should be looked into". The attack on the Moncada barracks the following day no doubt gave urgency to the matter. On 6 August, the Minister of Education, Andrés Rivero Agüero, suspended Marinello, then head of the Partido Socialista Popular, from his teaching position.43

"My Government placed a great deal of stress on reviewing the educational system...to be continuously on guard in defense of the patriotic and Christian traditions of the Cuban people", Batista assured the readers of one of his books.44 He himself remained personally vigilant. The perusal of a geography textbook used by one of his children led him to conclude that it contained "unadulterated Communist calumny...It was filled with skillful incitements to Communist subversion directed at the Cuban youth and farmers. In tracing the history of the relations between the United States and Cuba, history was cruelly falsified and our friendly neighbour vilified on all occasions." This textbook, a "libel on our traditions, our aspirations and our history" he intoned, "was an example of the perfidious manner in which Communist agents had been infiltrating the educational field in order to poison the minds and hearts of our children".45

In his emphasis on anti-communism, Batista found himself out of step with contemporary anxieties. Most Cubans were not as preoccupied with communism as were the United States and Batista; instead, their resentment was directed against foreign influence in Cuba, economic insecurity and poverty. Complaints about importing foreign concepts and methods continued. The case for implementing Cuban ideas and experience was put again.46 Espinosa urged the importance of overcoming foreign mimicry and influence in Cuban education in order to preserve the essential role of the school in creating and maintaining a sense of national identity. "Those who copy others," warned another, paraphrasing Martí, "end up as the slaves of others."47

The decree-law which forbade communist affiliation among public employees removed the job tenure which had been a consistent source of professional militancy and

44 Batista, p. 82.
45 Ibid., pp. 82, 83.
46 See, for example, Bonilla-Sosa, p. 4.
47 Ibid., p. 4.
grievance among teachers. They complained that anti-communism was simply a pretext for attacking freedom of thought and the long-cherished libertad de enseñanza, which had been a battlecry since the days of Alexis E. Frye. Political divisions among the teaching body split the Colegio de Maestros de Cuba, which had united the majority of Cuba's teachers since 1945, into a socialist splinter group, the Comité Socialista de Maestros, and the Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales y Equiparados which supported Batista. The former argued that the issue before teachers was patriotism, and that the challenge to overcome was Cuba's submission to foreign power.

Juan Marinello incorporated the renewed wave of nationalism and anti-imperialism into his analysis of the problems in the educational system. He argued that the orientation of Cuban education towards that of the United States, the acceptance of U.S. educational philosophy and methods, and the use of U.S. educational experts operated as a form of intervention by the United States in Cuba. The channels through which the interests and influence of the United States were extended included scholarships to the United States for teachers and students, the extensive cultural activities - Marinello called them "pedagogical and cultural propaganda" - of the U.S. embassy and, reminiscent of Arturo Montori, the educational specialists from the United States who had advised on Cuban education. The Cuban educationalists who accepted this situation, contended Marinello, singling out Alfredo Aguayo and Ramiro Guerra, failed to heed the insights of Martí regarding the imperial threat posed by the United States, and thus served U.S. interests.

Marinello argued that the Batista government's announcement that major educational reform would take place under the auspices of the OAS and UNESCO continued this pattern of imperialism. The new private catholic university at Las Villas, Marta Abreu, also fit this pattern, given its close association with the Point Four technical mission stationed in Cuba. Marinello criticized the Point Four programme for advocating the stimulation of Cuba's economic development through specialized rural education. Such a route served only landowners and capitalists, he maintained, not the miserable inhabitants of rural Cuba. To what end, he asked, did Cuba's rural poor learn to preserve delicate fruits when they did not have enough food? He recognized that rural poverty could only be overcome in conjunction with agrarian reform. Nor was poverty confined to rural areas. A 1958 study by the Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales y Equiparados of 1,669 public school students in Havana in grades one to eight, revealed that 42 per cent of those in grade three were over ten years old. "Many of the children," the study reported,

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48 See, for example, Raúl Ferrer Pérez quoted in Expósito Rodríguez, p. 118.
49 Ibid., pp. 116-117.
50 Juan Marinello, La penetración imperialista en la enseñanza cubana (1957), pp. 11, 19-22.
51 Ibid., pp. 22-28.
52 Ibid., pp. 28-31.
explaining the slow progress of so many students, "do not receive adequate sustenance for their age and their school work."\(^{53}\)

Marinello had by then campaigned for twenty years for the renovation of Cuba's educational system. He had an extensive understanding of its conditions, as well as the solutions favoured and the limits to change which Cuba's economic and political structure, and elite, would tolerate. It is not surprising that he denounced the Batista government's proclamation of educational reform as further imperialist intervention which would be of little benefit to Cuba's poor or the Cuban nation. He refused to analyse public education in a vacuum; rather, he placed it in a context which required the examination of the motivations for reform, the connections between public education and Cuba's political economy, and the role of the United States in the island's development.

Nearly sixty years after Cuban independence, the problems which confronted public education had not substantially changed. Cuba had too few school buildings and even fewer boasted adequate ventilation, light and sanitary facilities; furniture, books and other materials continued to be in short supply; only half the school-age population enrolled in primary school, less in rural areas, and even fewer reached fourth grade, particularly in rural areas; the school day remained short, as little as two hours in some places; secondary education largely remained an urban, and private, facility; practical and vocational education were undervalued. A centralized, corrupt administrative system exacerbated these conditions. On paper the budget for education appeared adequate, if not generous, but graft continued. In rural areas, children of different ages and abilities were taught in the same class by one teacher. Rural teachers continued to receive little material support and to suffer inadequate housing and transportation. Race and class persisted as significant factors in access to education, to higher levels of education and to different types of education, with sex being a third important determinant in the latter case.\(^{54}\)

Unlike 1933, the 1959 revolution was not precipitated by economic crisis. The underfunding of agriculture and industry; the inability of all but a very few Cubans to establish a secure economic base; heightened political oppression; the failure to institutionalize the Cuban army, which remained largely mercenary in nature; the weak spiritual influence of the Catholic Church; a decrepit, largely landless elite; and the failure of political institutions; all combined with the frustrated aspirations embodied in the dream of *Cuba Libre*, including the promise of education, to create the possibility of resistance recognized and fostered by Fidel Castro and those who followed him.

\(^{53}\) Colegio Nacional de Maestros Normales y Equiparados, *Investigación sobre la realidad normativa en cuanto a grados y edades* (La Habana: Cenit, 1958), pp. 23, 26, 29. The other reasons given for poor performance were the unsatisfactory conditions in the schools, lack of parental interest and an overly abstract educational programme.

\(^{54}\) Sex was also a factor in the transition from secondary to tertiary education.
When the insurrection against Batista gathered momentum following the *Granma* landing in 1956, education in Cuba was still a major cause of dissatisfaction. Jean Paul Sartre observed of the revolutionaries that "they all complained about Cuban education".\(^{55}\) It was too late for the announcement of OAS/UNESCO projects and similar palliatives to contain the demands for radical change. In scenes reminiscent of the early 1930s, Cuban students took to the streets to protest against the dictatorship. They campaigned for amnesty for political prisoners and free elections. Some went to the Sierra Maestra, and others joined the urban underground. The underground in Oriente, which became particularly important given the establishment of the guerrillas there in 1956, was led by a young teacher, Frank País, who had been instrumental in organizing normal school students and graduates in the province.\(^{56}\) The Directorio Revolucionario, led by José Antonio Echeverría, leader of the university students, and Castro's 26 July Movement, drew heavily on Cuba's young people for their base of support. "Castro has gained a considerable following, particularly among the youth of Cuba during his year of resistance in the Sierra Maestra Mountains," read one Washington report in 1957. Meanwhile, it warned, "the political situation in Cuba has deteriorated to such an extent in recent months that the safety of our citizens and our substantial investments in the country (about $1 billion) is seriously threatened".\(^{57}\)

In 1956, in response to student demonstrations, Batista closed all the secondary schools and universities on the island. He also unleashed the army and secret police upon Cuba's population, particularly its youth. Once again, the tortured bodies of young Cubans appeared on the streets. Batista tried to blame the deaths on the rebels; however, the U.S. ambassador in Cuba telegraphed Washington, "we here now convinced recurrent killings of persons government maintains are oppositionists and terrorists are actually work of police and army".\(^{58}\) Frustrations mounted, disillusionment turned to anger, protest spread. José Antonio Echeverría and Frank País were killed by the police and joined Julio Antonio Mella on Cuba's growing list of martyred youth.

By 1958, the dream of *Cuba Libre* lay in ruins. Batista's military coup had ended the imposture of liberal democracy which had limped along painfully since 1902. A diversified, stable economy had never materialized; Cuba still relied almost entirely on the sugarcane and U.S. capital which fed the seemingly endless economic cycles of boom, bust and stagnation. Havana acquired a reputation as a whorehouse and gambling den for

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\(^{56}\) Like Floro Pérez in the early 1930s, País opted for teaching because he could not afford to finance secondary and university education, and needed to earn an income as quickly as possible. He had entered the *instituto* in Santiago de Cuba in 1948, but was forced to leave for financial reasons. He enrolled in normal school in 1949.

\(^{57}\) Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Middle American Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Washington, 19 December 1957, in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957*, 6, pp. 871, 870.

\(^{58}\) Telegram from the Ambassador in Cuba to the Secretary of State, 15 February 1957, in ibid., p. 840.
U.S. tourists, run by U.S. crime syndicates. The abrogation of the Platt Amendment had not marked the end of U.S. intervention on the island, it had merely effected a shift in methods. Deliberate attempts by the United States to influence the course of events on the island continued, as in 1958 when Washington endeavoured to prevent Fidel Castro's victory by withdrawing support from Batista, in the hope that a more acceptable leader would emerge. The United States continued to hover over Cuba, distorting not only political culture and economic development, but also the very attempt to define an independent national identity as the split between those who admired the United States and those who decried U.S. imperialism deepened.

Free, universal, secular public education, proclaimed as the cornerstone of Cuba Libre for so long, remained a cherished but unfulfilled aspiration. No serious attempt at implementing this vision of education had ever been made. Private schools multiplied extraordinarily, impervious to state direction or control. Cuba's middle class struggled to finance secondary and university education for its children. For Cuba's miserable poor, the completion of even primary education continued to be only a remote possibility. Meanwhile, the official neglect of education contrasted with the promotion of schooling by the rebels in the Sierra Maestra.

Fidel Castro and his followers understood the disillusionment, cynicism and frustration afflicting the country. They took up the cry of the nation's past liberators and, when futile peaceful protest against Batista exposed the sham of the republic's institutions, they turned to the long tradition of armed struggle for the sake of Cuba Libre. Castro claimed for his movement the legacy of Cuba's apostle, José Martí. He reminded the country of Martí's words. "An educated people," Martí had believed, "will always be strong and free". 59

During his trial after the unsuccessful assault on the Moncada barracks, Castro exposed the island's misery. "Our educational system is a perfect complement to our other problems," he declared. "In a country where the farmer is not the owner of the land, why should any man want agricultural schools? In a city where there is no industry, what need is there for technical or industrial schools? ...Less than half of the children of school age attend rural public schools, and those who do are barefoot, half naked, and undernourished. Many times it is the teacher who buys the necessary school materials with his own salary. Is this the way to make a nation great?" 60 Cubans agreed that it was not. When the fidelistas offered them a new dream of Cuba Libre, it is little wonder they followed.


Miracles are not to be expected from schools: they cannot themselves compensate for everything that is wrong in a society. But what must be emphasized is that, whether by default or by explicit action, every society chooses either to perpetuate and intensify its divisions in its schools or to make some effort to overcome them.

For many years, theorists of different disciplines have argued that a country's school system "reflects the greater issues of economic and political power in the society". Whoever determines educational aims, however oblique they may be, and controls access to education, however indirectly applied, exercises significant power "over the quality of life, the work opportunities of men and women, and the ultimate question of how to utilize...human resources". If the educational system is defined as important within a society where one group or class imposes its interests on another, it will, however egalitarian the principles upon which it is founded, become a forum for the application of those interests. Clearly, the imposition of power through the educational system is not straightforward. It is equally clear, however, that the presence of an educational system in an unequal society does not in itself establish or even promise equality. "Throughout the whole history of human society," a Cuban government report to UNESCO in 1962 argued, "education has been a product of the social classes which dominated at each stage. The context and orientation of education are therefore determined by the social classes which are in power."

In capitalist societies, education (usually defined as schooling) is popularly believed to be a means of overcoming economic and social disparities, allowing even the most disadvantaged a chance of success, should they work hard enough and demonstrate ability. In other words, the responsibility for success or failure within the educational system is placed upon the individual. This belief assumes that schooling is somehow neutral, objective, context free, capable of operating in a detached way, separate from the world around it. Allocation of responsibility in this way obscures the power relationship between classes, the conflict between class interests, and how these factors impact upon the educational system. Individual ability cannot guarantee success in a system where some

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participants begin with, and retain throughout their lives, material and social advantage over others. Therefore, "rather than being the means through which individuals fulfill their potential...schools are reduced to being largely selectors and socializers".5

In a capitalist society, the assumption that education equals progress, that it is somehow neutral and objective, means that any dislocation between the educational system and the economy, such as high levels of unemployment or low numbers in school, is blamed on the educational system, rather than on economic relationships. In the Cuban case, reformers argued that rectification of the shortcomings in public education would provide Cuba with the means to overcome economic weakness. The World Bank mission concluded that "unless and until drastic improvements [in the educational system] are effected, the Cuban people cannot hope effectively to develop their country".6 Yet, within a dependent economic order, higher levels of educational attainment are no more likely to diversify the economy or promote national development than to improve the lot of the individual.

José Martí warned that the nation that buys, commands and the nation that sells, serves - that only diversified trade would guarantee liberty, or independence. Cuba's overwhelming reliance on one crop to generate wealth, and the sale of that crop to one country, proved Martí's point. The fact that Cuba's economic base was dominated by foreign capital compounded her dependence. In addition to one class imposing its interests on another within a national context, the economy, with the collusion of the dominant national class, was geared to external interests and benefit. No amount of training could compensate for the absence of employment opportunities which resulted from this arrangement. No amount of administrative reform could overcome systemic corruption.

Had Cuba been able to fulfill José Martí's vision of universal and relevant education, or the World Bank's prescription of better technical and vocational instruction, she might well have lost her newly trained sons and daughters to other lands where employment prospects could more realistically meet their expectations and exploit their skills. With such an education, "discontent and an aversion to agriculture might be instilled in those whose proper role in life was to use their muscles and not their minds".7 Yet, in the context of economic dependence, Cuba's educational system performed its function successfully. As Martin Carnoy and Jorge Werthein have argued, "education in Cuba was organized to reproduce a dependent capitalist organization of production, both through meeting the needs of that system for a limited quantity of skilled labor and domestically trained managers and professionals, and through socializing the mass of workers into an

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5 Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, p. 57.
economy dominated by foreign capital, foreign products, high unemployment, and a highly unequal distribution of income.*

Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain included an analysis of the relationship between education and colonialism. *Independentistas* accurately identified the role education played in preventing Cubans from recognizing the possibility of change. Even with this history, Cubans were slow to make the same connections once the republic had been established. They tended to believe, at least initially, that political independence equalled national sovereignty as defined by the vision of *Cuba Libre*. From this assumption flowed a number of others. Belief in the power of education as a force for liberation, rather than control, was directly associated with the understanding that independence had been achieved. Cuba's insertion into the world capitalist system under the aegis of the United States did not receive widespread attention for the same reason. When awareness of compromised sovereignty grew in the 1920s, the political implications of the Platt Amendment consumed nationalist energy, and many were wrongly assured of self-determination following the "revolution" of 1933 and the abrogation of the Amendment.

The association of secular public education with *Cuba Libre* was so strong in republican Cuba that support for public instruction became a vital component of nationalism. It is significant that when Ramiro Guerra warned of increasing illiteracy in 1910, he was pilloried not for inaccuracy, but for being *unpatriotic*. Nationalism alone could not provide the political analysis capable of making sense of the failure of public education, however. Although the growth of nationalism potentially involved a challenge to the political and economic order, competing claims to the nationalist vision meant that it also acted as a diversion.

The conflicts over private education highlight the limits of the nationalist response in identifying the causes of the problems in Cuba's educational system and thus in proposing strategies to overcome them. The primary focus of anxiety was not private education *per se* but religious, Catholic education, so closely associated with colonial subjugation. Consequently, rather than addressing how public and private education reflected power imbalances in Cuban society, the debates centred on the extent of nationalist expression within private schools; hence the proposed solution of regulation. Given the acceptance of the *principle* of private education, however, no amount of nationalist teaching or regulation could overcome the economic and racial divisions which private schools exemplified and propagated. Had Fernando Ortiz' bill, or the legislative framework to implement the provisions of the 1940 Constitution, been passed, and proved enforceable, the prejudice and privilege reinforced by private institutions would nonetheless have remained untouched. Regulation did not address the fact that in practice private

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*Carnoy and Werthein, p. 10.*
schooling was open only to those who had the financial resources to purchase it. This condition alone conflicted directly with the establishment of the genuinely democratic educational system, and nation, promised by *Cuba Libre*.

The real issue in the debate over private education was not nationalism or the lack of it in private schools, but the abysmal conditions in the public system and why those who could afford to, and many who could not, opted out of it; why even bad private schools were regarded as preferable to education in the public system, and why the latter ultimately provided schools for working class and rural children only. To maintain, as did many nationalists, that the public system required good, regulated private schools as a complement, particularly in times of political and social upheaval, was to beg the question of why the public system needed complementing at all. The enthusiasm and commitment which went into the nationalist battle to regulate private schools, in spite of its good intentions, was in itself an excellent example of how private education diverted the energies of those best placed to pressure successfully for meaningful change in public education.

In many ways, however, the dispute over private education presaged the national struggle between those who argued for reform of the existing system and those who called for revolution. The repeated frustration of nationalist ambitions contributed to the revolutionary drive, and those frustrations were consistently evident in the debates over the role of private education in Cuban society. The failure of the public educational system to fulfil nationalist demands, the inequalities and class conflict which the public/private educational split revealed so starkly, and the implacable resistance of powerful elements in Cuban society to any change, contributed to the general perception of the failure of reforms in the republic, and thus of the failure of the republic itself.

Assumptions about the neutrality of education break down if the educational system or other agents create aspirations on a scale which the economic structure cannot meet. An educational system embodies a contradiction between schooling as capable of fostering change (although not designed to) because of the very meritocracy which it espouses, while at the same time perpetuating and reproducing inequalities in society. Cuba's educational system contributed to one of the tasks demanded of it by *Cuba Libre*: fostering love of *patria* and commitment to an independent, democratic nation amongst the island's inhabitants. As this vision remained so blatantly unfulfilled by the leaders who claimed to support it, to the immense cost of the majority of their compatriots, it was only a matter of time before Cubans would recognize the lies upon which the republic was based. Revolution swept across Cuba in 1958 because Cubans understood that only by dismantling the island's existing structures could the vision of *Cuba Libre* ever be fulfilled.

In pre-revolutionary Cuba, in spite of the fact that educational provision and excellence had been a primary and widespread concern throughout sixty years of independence, the educational system remained a source of bitter complaint. One of the
extraordinary aspects of the debates over education was that, despite the range of opinions and ideologies expressed, nobody truly believed the educational system to be satisfactory. By the standards set by the myth of education within the context of Cuba Libre, public education in Cuba between 1899 and 1958 failed miserably to measure up. Although literacy improved, the educational system did not provide Cubans with regular, sustained work with adequate remuneration in their own country, nor did it ensure the island's equitable economic development, or guarantee political democracy. If progress could be assessed by the number of television sets per capita, then Cuba did indeed progress in sixty years. Such a measurement, however, is misconceived. As Hugh Thomas has argued, ownership of consumer durables reveals "less about the actual standard of living in Cuba than the ease with which the Cuban market could be penetrated by North American salesmanship". The vision of Cuba Libre required more exacting standards in determining accomplishment.

Cuba's educational system was a product of its political economy, and its political economy was shaped by the island's relationship with the United States. Just as labour's disputes in pre-revolutionary Cuba ultimately involved taking on the might of U.S. capital, so too did a genuine transformation of the Cuban educational system. The education demanded by Cuba Libre could not exist within the context of a dependent relationship upon another country and the inequalities inherent in such a relationship. The revolution's emphasis on education as the key to creating a new Cuba, through its role in promoting national goals and values, stems from a long Cuban tradition. In less than thirty years, the revolutionary government transformed Cuba from a country of failed educational aspirations to one which not only meets its own educational needs but exports educational expertise. This metamorphosis, one of the widely acknowledged successes of the revolution, simply could not have occurred without a concomitant transformation of the island's political economy. Without a revolution, the quest for Cuba Libre and the fulfillment of its vision of education could never have been anything more than a dream.

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Table 1
Percentage of literates
10 years old and over
by race and sex

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<th>1931</th>
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2 Figures given in brackets are "unknown".
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