

Politics and Society, 1971–1986

Even without representative institutions, our revolutionary state is and always was democratic. A state like ours which represents the interest of the working class, no matter what its form and structure, is more democratic than any other state in history.

Raúl Castro
August 1974

The Cuban Revolution failed to take advantage of the rich experience of other peoples who had undertaken the construction of socialism before we had. Had we been humbler, had we not overestimated ourselves, we would have been able to understand that revolutionary theory was not sufficiently developed in our country . . . to make any really significant contribution to the theory and practice of socialist construction. . . . It was not a matter of mere imitation, but of the correct application of many useful experiences.

Fidel Castro
December 1975

We have to avoid compromising our communist *conciencia* with socialist formulas. . . . It is good that people work harder because they earn more. . . . We produce more, but it is not a communist attitude. . . . The development of communist society must go hand in hand with increasing our wealth . . . otherwise it may be that our wealth increases and our *conciencias* are weakened.

Fidel Castro
April 1982

Institutionalization imprinted Cuban socialism with a familiar face. The Communist party expanded its membership, broadened its leadership, and established a formal apparatus. Between 1975 and 1986, three congresses were held. The Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions and the Federation of Cuban Women likewise held congresses on a regular

basis and fulfilled their role as “transmission belts” between the PCC and the people. Vanguard party politics allowed for the limited expression of sectorial interests. In 1976, the party adopted an economic management and planning system of relative decentralization and material incentives. In Popular Power assemblies, the citizenry had the means to exercise a modicum of control and supervision over local matters. The delegates, moreover, were elected by means of secret ballots and multiple candidacies. In a 1976 referendum, 97 percent of the electorate approved a new constitution. Under Communist party control, voting secured a place within Cuban socialism.

The Cuban government established closer ties with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Cuba joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and obtained new credits, debt postponement, and preferential terms of trade. New realities in Latin America and Africa provoked transformations in Cuban foreign policy. State-to-state relations—not guerrilla movements—characterized emerging links with Latin America. With Soviet support, professional military expeditions marked Cuban internationalism in Africa. Novel means guided the pursuit of original purposes. Activism in world affairs gained the Cuban government a measure of security and independence. For a time, even the outlook for relations with the United States seemed optimistic.

Revolution and Institutionalization

The outcome of the radical experiment had underscored the importance of institutions. Without them, there had been no check on public officials, the economy had gone into chaos, and workers had become demoralized. Mobilization had been no substitute for participation; cadres with *conciencia*, no surrogate for organization. Drawing upon the legitimacy of Fidel Castro and the social revolution, the Communist party pursued a process of institutionalization. As it had during the early 1960s but more thoroughly and systematically, Cuba turned to the Soviet Union for models of economic and political organization. Cuba was not the Soviet Union, however.¹ The Cuban Revolution had come to power only in 1959, and the government still commanded substantial popular support. Although without quite the same fervor with which he had promoted the radical experiment, Fidel Castro embraced the institutionalization. The dynamic of Fidel-*patria*-revolution nonetheless continued at the center of Cuban politics.

The Cuban leadership never considered that pluralism and divergence would mark the new directions. On the contrary, the purpose of the institutionalization was to confirm socialism and the leading role of the PCC. The citizenry did not have the right to opt out of socialism or to challenge the party and the leadership. The social revolution itself continued to be the fount of legitimacy. Liberation from a past of national

subordination and social inequity validated the present. One of the principal charges of institutionalization was the differentiation of political leadership, administrative responsibility, and popular involvement: the PCC was to rule, the state to administer, the mass organizations to maintain “contact with the masses.” The armed forces played a crucial role in the initial period of institutionalization. As the only institution to survive the 1960s virtually intact, the military offered “civic soldiers,” who assumed numerous and varied assignments in civilian life.² A constitution sanctioned the new order. During the 1970s, Cuba assembled a socialist polity.

The Organs of Popular Power (OPP) embodied the process of institutionalization. After a 1974 pilot in Matanzas, the OPP were structured nationwide in 1976. Popular Power was similar to the old *poder local* that the 1960s had never quite instituted. Municipal, provincial, and national assemblies were constituted to supervise the state administration. Thus, supervision of schools, clinics, grocery stores, garbage collection, maintenance shops, movie theaters, and small local industries was transferred to municipal assemblies. By the early 1980s, more than a third of the national economy was under local Popular Power intendance.³ Between 1977 and 1983, local industries under OPP supervision tripled their output in value.⁴

Unlike *poder local*, the party did not appoint delegates to municipal assemblies. Although no campaigning was allowed, citizens elected their local delegates through secret ballots and multiple candidacies every two and a half years. Municipal assemblies elected the membership of provincial assemblies and the latter elected the delegates to the National Assembly. At least 55 percent of the delegates to the National Assembly were supposed to have been elected in the municipalities. The other 45 percent were selected from a list of candidates proposed by the party leadership. One of the duties of the National Assembly was confirmation of members of the Council of State and Council of Ministers submitted by the Politburo. The councils and Popular Power were under tight party control. Nearly 50 percent of the Council of State and about 25 percent of the Council of Ministers were Politburo members. Over 80 percent of the members of the Council of State and 65 percent of the members of the Council of Ministers were members of the Central Committee. More than 90 percent of National Assembly delegates were members of the Communist party. About 75 percent of all local delegates were PCC or Communist Youth militants.⁵ The separation of political leadership, popular supervision, and state administration was not achieved.

Municipal assemblies and local delegates constituted the most important link between the state and the citizenry. Three times a year, delegates engaged their constituencies in assemblies of *rendición de cuentas* (rendering of accounts). Two years after the establishment of Popular Power, the National Assembly heard a report that noted the local meet-

ings had become formalistic “to such an extreme that at times delegates prepare their presentations beforehand and do not fully express their opinions.”⁶ Too often delegates used the same rationale as ministers and managers to justify problems. They were not doing their job, and attendance to *rendición de cuentas* had consequently declined. The National Assembly did not receive the report well. National delegates argued that local delegates were being held responsible for problems originating with state functionaries. Ministries, government agencies, and enterprise administrations refused to recognize the authority of local delegates, who in turn had no power to force compliance with their requests for information.

A “duality of centralization and decentralization” characterized Popular Power.⁷ Too often local meetings were no more than the “fulfillment of a liturgy.”⁸ At their best, they addressed immediate and concrete issues: local Popular Power allowed the citizenry a voice in the conduct of local affairs, a potential arena for self-government. At their worst, local assemblies became rote events that did not empower the citizenry. Moreover, the OPP were inaugurated amid growing economic constraints after a period of relative expansion during the mid-1970s. Popular expectations had closely identified the promise of democratization with improvements in standards of living. Local assemblies, however, did not have the power or the resources to enhance their legitimacy by extending material benefits. Between 1976 and 1984, elections turned over about 50 percent of the delegates. Some 5 to 10 percent of incumbents were recalled during their tenure.⁹ High turnover rates could well have been an indication of the vitality of Popular Power because more ordinary Cubans were partaking in public responsibilities. Frequent rotation, however, could also have been a signal that many local delegates had declined renomination because their offices carried much frustration and no power.

Meeting briefly twice a year, the National Assembly had more formal and symbolic purposes. Although it was not a permanent legislature and consequently did not have an actual role in governing Cuba, the assembly regularly heard reports on the provinces and national ministries, and approved annual budgets, economic plans, and a myriad of laws. Often there was debate among the delegates, especially among those with pertinent expertise or historic revolutionary merits. The way the agenda was worded, however, revealed the nature of the debate: discussion and approval of the items at hand. Debate could modify but never reject proposals. The assembly approved most matters unanimously, or nearly so. Yet, the number of delegates participating in discussions increased over time.¹⁰ Invariably, however, once President Castro spoke definitively on an issue, discussion stopped.

Nonetheless, the National Assembly provided a forum for widened elite participation and an avenue for regular disclosure of information to

the public. The contrast with the 1960s was quite evident. Sometimes the National Assembly heard singular discussions on the nature of socialism. One of its 1980 sessions witnessed a debate on a proposition to revoke the stipulation that provincial assemblies discuss and approve provincial budgets. In practice, the executive committees discussed and approved annual budgets, and thus the pragmatic solution was to designate them as the appropriate level for presenting the budgets. No one agreed. Vice-President of the Council of State Carlos Rafael Rodríguez voiced the most forceful opposition:

Practical difficulties should in no way lead us to put principles aside. . . . [T]he construction of socialism and communism lays upon us the maximum possible participation of all citizens in all aspects of state administration. And lays upon us, the maximum participation of all workers in elaborating and implementing the plan. We have to work in that direction and whatever we fail to accomplish is a weakness in the functioning of socialism.¹¹

Rodríguez likewise warned that because the dictatorship of the proletariat could easily degenerate into the “dictatorship of the secretariat,” technical imperatives should not compromise democratic principles.

A year earlier, President Castro had addressed the National Assembly in what became popularly known as the *exigencia* (exigency) speech. The transportation minister had earlier suggested that ministers attend local renderings of account of Popular Power to respond to popular complaints. Castro contended that national government officials could not participate in these local meetings without jeopardizing their national responsibilities. These proposed visits would compound, not resolve, problems:

We are not going to the heart of the matter. . . . We are not dealing with our system’s—our socialism’s—deficiencies. . . . There is a problem of *conciencia*. . . . To what extent do we really manifest political, revolutionary, social *conciencia*? We manifest it often . . . incredibly, admirably, extraordinarily. . . . But, in day-to-day life we are lacking in *conciencia*.¹²

Emphasis on *conciencia* notwithstanding, Castro manifested a concern with procedure and order foreign to the late 1960s. Nonetheless, in his view, the deficiencies of socialism required more conscious cadres at all levels. *Conciencia*, not autonomous institutions and participation, was the essence of good politics.

Popular Power exemplified the politics of Cuban socialism. Local assemblies took public opinion into account more systematically than the politics of mobilization had during the 1960s and thus enhanced popular involvement in the administration of daily life. They did not, however, bestow upon the population the opportunity—let alone the power—to discuss and decide matters of substance. Their mandate was to supervise the state, not to debate investment policies or resource

allocation. Involvement—not substantive participation—was the key characteristic of Popular Power at the local level. Moreover, involvement was to be as individuals, not organized groups. Local assemblies were, nonetheless, a significant institutional advance after the debacle of the radical experiment. At the national level, Popular Power allowed for broadened elite participation. Although the Communist party leadership made all fundamental decisions, the National Assembly did discuss issues of substance. Fidel Castro, however, decidedly marked the proceedings: his word was always the last. The politics of “democratic centralism” under which higher institutional levels prevailed over lower ones and the Communist party was the ultimate repository of power characterized the functioning of Popular Power. Moreover, the reality of Cuban socialism added the dimension of charismatic authority.

Institutionalization also entailed economic reorganization. In 1975, the party congress approved the economic management and planning system. JUCEPLAN president, Humberto Pérez—a technocrat without significant credentials in the anti-Batista struggle—spearheaded the implementation of SDPE. The antithesis of the experience of the late 1960s, the new system was an attempt to introduce relative decentralization, profitability criteria, material incentives, and self-financed enterprises. The SDPE instituted financial controls and greater enterprise autonomy, and recognized the role of the law of value—“independently of our will and desires”—in the socialist economy.¹³ SDPE implementation, however, moved forward erratically. Making order out of chaos was not easy in the face of continued economic uncertainties, insufficient numbers of trained personnel, and limited political will to assume the full range of consequences of market socialism.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the economy began to acquire a new face. With more variety, better quality, and higher prices, the parallel market regularly supplemented rationing for people with higher incomes and for most Cubans on special occasions. Between 1980 and 1986, peasant markets operated and offered a variety of fruits and vegetables the public had not seen in years. By 1979, over 45 percent of workers labored under output norms and quotas, albeit these were unrealistically low and their revisions slow.¹⁴ In 1980–1981, the state implemented wage and price reforms; except in the two Havana provinces, enterprises were permitted to contract labor directly. In 1984, a new law allowed the market to regulate the buying and selling of housing. Daily life in socialist Cuba was assuming less baneful dimensions.

From the outset, the SDPE was in tension with the visions of the 1960s. Although in essence the system repudiated them, the revolutionary experience precluded their overt dismissal. Efficiency and rationality had not inspired the Moncada, the *Granma* landing, the general strike of January 1, the victory at Playa Girón, the Literacy Campaign, nor

Guevara and his comrades in Bolivia. The recognition that material incentives were necessary to motivate a majority of workers was accompanied by the insistence that only moral incentives could counteract individual selfishness. At the 1975 party congress, Fidel Castro warned that the new “mechanisms” were not meant to solve all problems:

We can[not] do without moral incentives, we would be making a great mistake, because it is absolutely impossible for economic mechanisms and incentives to be as efficient under socialism as they are under capitalism, for the only thing that functions under capitalism is incentive and economic pressure brought to bear with full force, namely, hunger, unemployment, and so on.¹⁵

The SDPE was not to be a substitute for the party or the state. Politics and ideology were still paramount, and the economy could not be divorced from the legacy of the revolution.

The economic management and planning system undoubtedly operated under special circumstances. A trade-dependent and embargoed economy could not guarantee the flow of resources required by the organization of planning and relative decentralization. Moreover, full implementation of the SDPE carried the danger of broadening inequalities in the population and among regions. Small pockets of unemployment developed as enterprises eliminated underemployment to meet profitability criteria. In other ways, the Cuban experience was similar to that of state socialism. Enterprise autonomy was, for example, resisted by central ministries, and consequently neither self-financing nor improved economic efficiency happened as anticipated. In 1983, an arbitration official in Pinar del Río province succinctly described the SDPE dilemma:

We evaluate enterprises by the system, but they do not operate according to the system. . . . SDPE mechanisms and resorts are not used. . . . We are still implementing the compulsion mechanism of [material] stimulation. There are no pressures on enterprise managers. They do not bear the consequences of their actions. Nothing happens to them.¹⁶

JUCEPLAN echoed his complaints.¹⁷ The duality of centralization and decentralization also plagued the SDPE. Although investment decisions were never decentralized, control over the wage fund was. Like other centrally planned economies, the state faced demands for greater investment flexibility from local enterprises and protest from central agencies for excessive salaries.

The Trade Unions as Mass Organizations

The radical experiment had exacted a heavy toll on the trade union movement and the working class. The late 1960s had turned the unions

into adjuncts of management and the party. Grass-roots organizations had responded largely to vanguard workers. In 1970, Labor Minister Jorge Risquet had acknowledged that

theoretically, the administrator represents the interests of the worker-peasant state. . . . Theory is one thing and practice another. . . . The party is so involved with management that in many instances . . . it has become somewhat insensitive to the problems of the masses. . . . If party and administration are one, then there is nowhere the worker can take his problems. . . . The trade union does not exist or it has become a bureau for vanguard workers.¹⁸

The first step toward the revitalization of trade unions was their reconstruction as mass organizations. “*El sindicato es todos*,” Lázaro Peña told the CTC congress in 1973. Indeed, “the union belongs to all” was potentially more democratic than the appeals to vanguardism and *conciencia* of the late 1960s.

Following the call for democratization in 1970, local elections, conducted by secret ballot rather than acclamation, resulted in a nearly wholesale turnover of trade union incumbents; only 27 percent were reelected. The party subsequently removed from office some leaders “who did not have sufficient merits.”¹⁹ By the early 1980s, trade unions functioned in nearly 40,000 enterprises, and elections regularly selected more than 280,000 local leaders.²⁰ The CTC held congresses in 1973, 1978, and 1984. In 1973 and 1978, rank-and-file representatives accounted for 50 percent and 68 percent of the delegates respectively. In 1973, local leadership turnover figures were not released; in 1978, 54 percent of local trade union leaders were newly elected.²¹ The 1984 congress’s grass-roots composition was again 68 percent; information on electoral turnover was not available.²² Nonetheless, CTC General Secretary Roberto Veiga reported that labor leaders with more than 10 years experience had increased from 28 percent to 47 percent between 1978 and 1983.²³ Given the dismemberment of the labor movement during the late 1960s, continuity and experience were notable accomplishments. By the mid-1980s, the CTC faced problems of a different order: responsiveness and accountability to the nearly 50 percent of workers who had been children in 1959 or had been born after the revolution.²⁴

Institutionalization meant revitalizing the unions as mass organizations under party leadership. Cuban socialism followed the lead of state socialism: the dictatorship of the proletariat was under the auspices of the vanguard party. In 1973, Raúl Castro underlined the rationale behind party preeminence:

It is necessary to keep in mind that the working class considered as a whole . . . cannot exercise its own dictatorship. . . . Originating in

bourgeois society, the working class is marked by flaws and vices from the past. The working class is heterogeneous in its consciousness and social behavior. . . . Only through a political party that brings together its conscious minority can the working class . . . construct a socialist society.²⁵

Thus, the party guided and directed the unions. Trade unions were a “vehicle for orientation, directives, and goals which the revolution must convey to the working masses” and the “most powerful link” between the party and the people.²⁶ However, the Communist party was the sole guarantor of socialism.

The 1973 CTC congress elaborated the functions of trade unions as mass organizations marked by “fundamentally cooperative relationships for a superior common objective” with the party, the state, and enterprise management. Each component of socialist society had its own “sphere” and “method” of action. The late 1960s had revealed “grave errors” in the functioning of the unions.²⁷ Unions were a counterpart to management, and union leaders were charged with defending the “legitimate” interests of workers. “A petit-bourgeois spirit still permeates public administration,” Fidel Castro had cautioned in 1970. “An anti-worker spirit, a bit of disdain for workers exists among some managers.”²⁸ Although unions were responsible for keeping this antiworker spirit in check, the “superior common objective” of increasing production compelled workers, unions, and management to cooperate. Indeed, interviews with union leaders and rank-and-file workers in 1975 indicated that most defined production as the most important union task. Only 2 in 57 mentioned defense of worker interests. Eight workers referred both to increasing production and defending workers.²⁹

Institutionalization similarly did not mean unions had the power to control the economy. Determining plan priorities, the wage fund, and personnel policies were not within union authority. The top echelons of the party and the state decided these substantive matters, and management was entrusted with their implementation. Unions, however, were represented at all levels of the policy-making process. CTC Secretary General Roberto Veiga became a Politburo alternate in 1980 and a full member in 1986. Although trade union leaders accounted for 19 of 148 full Central Committee members in 1980, their numbers fell drastically in 1986 to only 10 of 146 full members.³⁰ Veiga was also a member of the Council of State and participated in meetings of the Council of Ministers. Trade unions were likewise represented at the provincial and municipal levels of the party and the state. Local union general secretaries were members of enterprise councils. Workers did not elect or recall managers, however. In conjunction with Popular Power, the ministries appointed and dismissed administrators. Although impressionistic evidence suggested workers influenced the dismissal process, influence was

a far cry from an established procedure enabling workers to throw out managers who were *hijos de puta*, as Carlos Rafael Rodríguez had expressed it in 1969.³¹

The unequivocal and primary objective of unions was to increase production. Without capitalist exploitation, improvements in living standards depended on economic development. The fundamental activity of the labor movement was “fostering and consolidating the economy.” Cuban workers, “keenly aware that we own our national wealth,” were more than willing to “sacrifice immediate and particular interests . . . for the benefit of the collective good.”³² Strong unions under vanguard guidance were a requisite for the pursuit of economic development. The economic management and planning system defined a “space” for local enterprises. The SDPE defined the rights and responsibilities of management, workers, and unions.

Workers and the Economy

During the early 1970s, stricter enforcement of labor discipline, establishment of output norms, linkage of wages to performance, and greater availability of goods and services improved labor productivity and rendered material incentives meaningful. In 1971, an antiloafing law contributed to curbing absenteeism. Although the 1973 CTC congress focused largely on economic issues, its documents restored the trade unions under vanguard party leadership. CTC theses and resolutions constituted de facto condemnation of the radical experiment. “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work” clearly departed from the goal of equalizing wages from the bottom up regardless of work performed. The CTC congress also eliminated the so-called historical salaries and full-pay retirement in vanguard enterprises and approved the use of volunteer work only after the normal work load was finished.³³ During the early 1970s, Cuban economic performance improved markedly.

In 1976, the economy again began to slow down. After an all-time high in 1974–1975, sugar prices plummeted and subsequently remained generally low. Worsening hard-currency trade forced a readjustment of development plans. Even though the supply of consumer goods declined, wage raises soon equaled or surpassed productivity increases. New wage policies could not be fully instituted because they were economically “irrational.” “Increasing money in circulation without providing an adequate supply of goods and services,” Roberto Veiga told the 1978 CTC congress, “would have constituted a step backwards to the situation we faced between 1967 and 1970.”³⁴ “Socialist inflation” and fiscal constraints were, moreover, aggravated by the emergence of unemployment—the *disponibles* (available ones). The state guaranteed

laid-off workers 70 percent of their salaries until they found other employment.

Nevertheless, a general wage reform went into effect in 1980. By November 1981, 94 percent of the labor force was benefiting from the reform. The new wage scales widened the ratio from 4.33:1.00 to 5.29:1.00. Using 1977 as the base, salaries increased an average of 15 percent while productivity improved 35 percent. The wage reform stipulated that 15 to 25 percent of salaries be “mobile,” that is, dependent on bonuses and other incentive payments.³⁵ By 1985, slightly more than 1,000 enterprises employing about 1 million workers were creating the year-end bonus funds. In practice, incentive payments constituted only around 10 percent of average basic wages.³⁶ In 1981, reform of retail prices raised the cost of more than 1,500 products. The average increase on sixty-four sample items listed in the newspaper *Granma* was 60 percent.³⁷ Ten days after the reform was announced, the internal commerce minister and the head of the State Committee on Prices were dismissed. Students and workers had protested hikes in restaurant prices.³⁸

The 1984 CTC congress gathered under what appeared to be relatively auspicious economic circumstances. The economy was registering reasonable growth rates; consumption was likewise experiencing improvement. Moving forward with the SDPE and its “undeniable” accomplishments was the order of the day.³⁹ As a party meeting on the economy earlier in the year had done, the congress emphasized economic efficiency and narrowing the gap between profitable and unprofitable enterprises. In 1983, unprofitable enterprises had increased their losses, and profitable ones their gains.⁴⁰ The delegates discussed the particularly sensitive law granting laid-off workers 70 percent of their salaries; the economy could not sustain these benefits and their future reduction was augured.

Workers and Management

Improving production and defending worker interests were the twin objectives of trade unions. The demise of capitalism allowed for “cooperative relations” between workers and managers. At the 1978 congress, President Castro observed:

Today a manager does not belong to another class, he is not the workers’ enemy; he came forth from the workers’ ranks and is friend, relative, neighbor of those who work with him. . . . We have to demand him to be demanding . . . his job is to be demanding and to control.⁴¹

The withering away of trade unions during the 1960s, however, required that the terms of union-management relations be carefully delineated.

The SDPE, moreover, created the potential for significant tensions. The organization of enterprises on the basis of profitability often resulted in contradictions between workers and managers on work conditions and other matters. The 1978 CTC congress noted:

Undoubtedly, we need to develop our economy in order to improve our working and living conditions. But differences and even contradictions can arise. In those cases, trade unions are obliged to seek an honest clarification . . . on the basis that the rights of workers be respected. . . . The defense of worker rights, correctly interpreted, strengthens proletarian power.⁴²

After the 1973 congress, collective work agreements regulated worker-management relations. Management was bound to enforce safety regulations, maintain worker lounges, and establish vacation timetables. Workers were supposed to be punctual and disciplined, and to care for their work equipment. The implementation of collective agreements was often lax. Vague commitments, weak procedures for determining their breach, and poor publicity of their content among workers were typical difficulties. Occasionally, managers refused to contract the agreements. The 1984 congress was particularly sensitive to violations of safety conditions because job-related accidents were on the rise. The CTC partially attributed the increase to the use of safety funds to meet more pressing production needs. Unions demanded and obtained the nontransferability of funds earmarked for safety equipment.⁴³ Most accidents, however, were caused by reasons other than the lack of proper equipment, such as ignorance about rules and regulations, worker refusal to use the equipment, and generally indifferent attitudes about enforcing safety regulations on the part of both trade unions and management.⁴⁴

Monthly production and service assemblies were meant to promote worker participation in “the struggle to improve economic efficiency” and to advance their *conciencia* as owners.⁴⁵ The assemblies were called upon to check plan fulfillment, analyze production quality, and discuss labor discipline. Trade unions were encouraged to seek worker criticisms. At the same time, union leaders were also expected to educate workers not to “pry into things which are not their concern” and to express “concrete” and “precise” suggestions for solving problems.⁴⁶ The 1978 CTC congress noted that monthly assemblies often turned into “meetings in which a mechanical rattling off of figures is presented and where the analysis of fundamental problems is omitted.”⁴⁷ Two years later, Roberto Veiga sounded a comparable theme:

There are work places in which workers express their concerns and disagreements in these assemblies . . . and they are not heard by management. . . . [A] climate of malaise and indifference is generated to the considerable detriment of our economic endeavors.⁴⁸

Interviews conducted in 1975 among vanguard workers underscored similar tendencies. Although forty-nine in fifty-seven workers said that management was obliged to consult them about enterprise matters, only thirty-three referred to their input as influential and thirty indicated management had to respond to worker inquiries and suggestions.

Between 1974 and 1978, 85 percent of the labor force participated in assemblies to discuss production plans. Like monthly assemblies, these meetings were plagued with difficulties. Many ministries released only partial information to enterprises. Management often failed to consider worker input. In 1978, Roberto Veiga warned that such practices resulted in the “mere formality of discussing plans with workers and their unions.”⁴⁹ JUCEPLAN President Humberto Pérez subsequently disclosed salient information on plan discussions. In 1978, 35 percent of all enterprises never held assemblies to discuss the 1979 plan, and only 42 percent revised it by incorporating worker suggestions.⁵⁰ The 1980 plan manifested some improvement: only 9 percent failed to discuss the plan and 59 percent included rank-and-file input.⁵¹ Nonetheless, in his main report to the 1986 party congress, Fidel Castro noted that worker participation in the elaboration of plans was just beginning to improve.⁵²

The CTC had no formal recourse to obligate management to consider the input of unions and workers. Before an audience of managers, Roberto Veiga noted in 1980: “To a true manager, reliance on the opinions of workers is not just a question of work style . . . of attitude, neither is it a matter of courtesy. It is an indispensable part of the managerial ability of socialist administrators.”⁵³ Meaningful participation was supposed to promote the *conciencia* of workers as owners as well as advance enterprise performance. Good socialist managers needed to acquire *conciencia* of the double function of participation. The 1984 congress was especially critical of the absence of feedback to rank-and-file suggestions that “irritates” workers and “conspires” against the objective of attaining their “active” and “conscious” participation.⁵⁴

The SDPE, however, also created a concurrence of immediate interests between management and unions. Self-financing underscored the interest of workers and managers in enterprise profitability. Individual bonuses and collective funds for social projects, for instance, depended on the generation of “profit.” Because bonuses were salary-based, managers received larger stipends than workers. Nonetheless, the SDPE structured a potential collusion of interests among workers, unions, and management. Local control over the distribution of centrally allotted wage funds and the creation of bonuses promoted cooperation between management and labor in enterprise performance. Both had an interest in defeating the resistance of central ministries to enterprise autonomy and in maximizing the resources disbursed locally. Thus, the SDPE reinforced the immediate *conciencia* of workers and managers without also supporting *conciencia* about the national economy and *la patria*.

During the late 1960s, procedures for arbitrating worker-management disputes had weakened. Between 1974 and 1978, work councils handled an average of 80,000 cases a year, 25 percent of which dealt with worker grievances. Yearly numbers had nearly doubled from the early 1970s.⁵⁵ The revitalization of unions, the introduction of material incentives, and the establishment of the SDPE caused the increases in labor-management grievances. In 1977, the National Assembly placed the councils under CTC jurisdiction. The 1978 CTC congress pledged to strengthen them as instruments of arbitration and labor justice. Problems of indiscipline and low productivity persisted, however. Wage increases, the *disponibles*, and work stoppages caused by shortages of raw materials were undermining efforts to attain greater economic efficiency. Labor discipline became a central focus of public discussion. In 1979, Fidel Castro told the National Assembly: "Today our labor laws are actually protecting delinquency . . . the lazy, absenteeist worker . . . not the good worker."⁵⁶

In 1980, the Council of Ministers divested work councils of their power to hear labor discipline cases because they were extremely slow in settling disputes and were failing to improve discipline and productivity. Decree No. 32 granted management full authority to enforce labor discipline: managers could now sanction and even dismiss workers. Workers had the right to appeal management actions in municipal courts. The Council of Ministers simultaneously enacted Decree No. 36 to regulate management. Managers, however, were sanctioned by their ministries, not the workers. By 1984, these decrees were deemed highly effective: productivity increases surpassed projected rates.⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, Decree No. 32 was initially enforced with vigor and in excess. Not infrequently, management resorted to dismissal as a first sanction against a worker. Also not unexpectedly, Decree No. 36 was unevenly enforced.

The unions, however, implemented some corrective measures. Union inspections and worker appeals attained compensation out of enterprise funds for workers who had been unfairly sanctioned. Although some worker assemblies suggested that indemnification be taken out of manager salaries, their suggestion was unequivocally dismissed.⁵⁸ Disciplinary rules and regulations were elaborated to curb management arbitrariness in enforcing labor discipline. Decree No. 36 was more regularly applied, especially against managers who exceeded their authority under Decree No. 32. In 1984, nonetheless, the CTC congress took note of continued worker dissatisfaction with the more lenient application of discipline measures against managers.⁵⁹ At no time, however, did the CTC acknowledge that enactment of Decree No. 32 contravened stated intentions of widening worker participation. Granting management full authority over labor discipline did not contribute to empowering workers and fostering in them *conciencia* as owners. On occasion, relations

between managers and workers turned less than cooperative as evidenced by the demand that managers pay unjustly disciplined workers out of their salaries. Although it improved labor discipline, the decree was incompatible with the call in 1970 for a collective body to manage enterprises.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the unions were revitalized under the guidance of the Communist party. The working class bore the burden of legitimating socialism, but workers did not have the power to make national policies. Their charge was to work hard. The Communist party exercised power on their behalf, and Fidel Castro was the premier expositor of their welfare. The correct proletarian *conciencia* was to abide by party directives and charismatic authority. In that sense, Cuban socialism was like the other contemporary socialist experiences: the working class wielded power vicariously.

The Federation of Cuban Women and Gender Equality

Institutionalization brought significant changes to the FMC and Cuban women. Like the CTC, the FMC also celebrated three congresses after 1970: 1974, 1980, 1985. At the 1974 congress, Fidel Castro succinctly stated: “Women’s full equality does not yet exist.”⁶⁰ A year later the party congress formulated an affirmative action policy toward women, pledged to “eliminate all vestiges of the past,” and charged the FMC with defending the interests of women.⁶¹

A crosscut view of the party, mass organizations, and Popular Power in the mid-1970s revealed a modest representation of women leaders. Women constituted 13 percent of party membership; only 6 percent occupied national cadre positions. Six of the 112 full members of the Central Committee were women. No women sat on the Politburo or the Secretariat. In the Communist Youth, women accounted for 10 percent of the national leadership and 29 percent of the membership. Only 7 percent of national trade union leaders were women. With 50 percent of the membership, women held 19 percent of the national leadership of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. In Popular Power, women delegates were 8 percent at the local level, 14 percent at the provincial level, nearly 22 percent in the National Assembly. Except for the Communist Youth and the CTC, the policy of affirmative action resulted in more women in national leadership positions than among local cadres (see Table 6.1).

By 1979–1980, the number of women in leadership positions had grown. Available data do not permit exact comparisons with the mid-1970s, but adequate parallels can be drawn. In 1980, women accounted for 19 percent of PCC membership. The party, however, had pledged to match the share of women in the labor force, which was then 32.4 percent. Of 148 full members of the Central Committee, 18 (12.2

Table 6.1. Female Membership and Leadership in the Party, Mass Organizations, and Popular Power Assemblies, Cuba, 1975–1986 (in percentages)

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>PCC</i>	<i>UJC</i>	<i>CTC</i>
1975–1976			
Members	13.2	29.0	24.0
Leaders			
Local	2.9	22.0	24.0
Provincial	6.3	7.0	15.0
National	6.0	10.0	7.0
Central Committee	5.4	—	—
1979–1980			
Members	19.1	41.8	32.4
Leaders			
Local	16.5	n.a.	42.7
Provincial	15.0	n.a.	17.8
National	9.0	14.3	16.1
Central Committee	12.2	26.4	7.7
1984–1986			
Members	21.5	41.0	38.0
Leaders			
Local	23.5	47.6	45.1
Provincial	16.9	28.9	14.7
National	12.8	19.5	17.7
Central Committee	12.3	27.1	2.4

Sources: Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba, *Tesis y resoluciones* (Havana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria, 1976), p. 585; *Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba: Documents and Speeches* (Havana: Political Publishers, 1981), pp. 66, 74, 78, 415–421; Fidel Castro, *Informe Central: Tercer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Havana: Editora Política, 1986), p. 92; *Cuban Women, 1975–1979* (Havana, 1980), pp. 26, 29; *XV Congreso de la CTC: Memorias* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1984),

percent) were women. FMC President Vilma Espín was promoted to alternate status in the Politburo. Forty percent of Communist Youth militants were female. More than 40 percent of local trade union leaders were women. There were slightly more female delegates in the National Assembly (22.6 percent) and slightly fewer in the local assemblies (7.2 percent). By the end of the 1970s, women were increasing their numbers at all levels of these organizations and institutions.

By 1984–1986, women were continuing to make some inroads. At the 1986 party congress, Vilma Espín became a full Politburo member. Two other women were included as alternates. The share of women in full Central Committee membership remained the same as in 1980. Female PCC members increased slightly to 21.5 percent. The proportion of women party cadres rose to 23.5 percent, local Communist Youth leaders to 47.6 percent. The share of women delegates to local (17.1 percent)

Table 6.1. (continued)

	CDR	Popular Power
1975–1976		
Members	50.0	—
Leaders		
Local	7.0	8.0
Provincial	3.0	14.0
National	19.0	21.8
1979–1980		
Members	50.0	—
Leaders		
Local	41.0	7.2
Provincial	31.0	17.4
National	30.0	22.6
1984–1986		
Members	49.4	—
Leaders		
Local	37.5	17.1
Provincial	37.5	21.4
National	31.8	22.4

pp. 268–269; Vilma Espín, “La batalla por el ejercicio pleno de la igualdad de la mujer: acción de los comunistas,” *Cuba Socialista* 20 (March–April 1986): 50, 54–55; *Granma*, February 8, 1986, Supplement, and December 29, 1986, p.3; *Granma Weekly Review*, January 4, 1976, p. 12, and November 16, 1986, p. 3; *Bohemia*, November 16, 1976, p. 48, and September 17, 1985, p. 82.

and provincial (21.4 percent) Popular Power assemblies increased but stagnated at the national level. More than 45 percent of local union leaders and about 38 percent of local CDR leaders were women. The relative success of affirmative action reflected party commitment and FMC diligence in pursuing equality. Nonetheless, material and cultural obstacles stood in the way of full equality.⁶²

Educationally, as was the case before 1959, Cuban women did not differ significantly from men. By the early 1980s, close to 5 percent of all men and 4 percent of all women had achieved a university degree. Moreover, educational trends pointed to an even greater leveling in the potential pool of women available to assume positions of responsibility. Careers such as economics and engineering had, respectively, 55 percent and 27 percent female enrollment. Women constituted 81 percent of philosophy majors, a politically selective field conducive to cadre positions.⁶³ In 1986–1987, women accounted for 55.2 percent of total enrollment in higher education.⁶⁴ Lack of education was thus not an obstacle preventing women from attaining leadership positions.

There was some evidence, however, that in at least one career access to women was being limited. After 1984, medical school enrollment was

subjected to a 52 : 48 ratio of women to men. Without it, women medical students would outnumber men 3 : 2. Civilian medical aid was a crucial component of Cuban foreign policy. Quotas were necessary, Castro argued, for two reasons. Women had greater family and personal responsibilities and found it harder to go abroad for extended periods. Also, the recipient countries had not undergone the changes with respect to the position of women in society that Cuba was experiencing.⁶⁵ When in apparent conflict, national goals subordinated particular interests: Cuban foreign policy required male doctors. The state did not allow individual women to make their own decisions about bearing the burden of extended tours abroad or facing sexism in other societies. Medical school quotas contradicted the commitment to equality and opened the possibility that other careers could be limited if national imperatives so dictated. The FMC did not challenge the quota policy. Establishing it had been a matter of national concern that precluded the pursuit of gender equality. Vanguard party politics allowed the FMC to defend the interests of women—like the CTC those of workers—only within its sphere.

In the mid-1970s, the party conducted a survey among 302 men and 333 women in Matanzas. The PCC sought to understand the reasons for the small number of women elected as local Popular Power delegates. When asked why women did not hold leadership positions, nearly 60 percent answered that a woman was responsible for taking care of home, children, and husband. When women were asked about their willingness to serve if elected, 54 percent answered they could not because of family responsibilities. When both men and women were asked why fewer than 10 percent of the candidates had been women, one-third once again pointed to household and child-care obligations. Finally, a question was asked about the personal characteristics expected of a delegate. About 45 percent responded “moral, serious, decent” for women; 20 percent alluded to the same virtues for men.⁶⁶ By the mid-1980s, the percentage of women elected as local Popular Power delegates had doubled. Nonetheless, cultural and material factors surely limited women’s fuller involvement in Popular Power and other aspects of public life. If the average female worker was also enrolled in an adult education course, was a party and/or trade union activist, and spent over four hours a day on domestic chores, she would have been unlikely to have the time or the disposition to assume additional responsibilities.⁶⁷

After the early 1970s, Cuban women made impressive advances in their access to leadership positions; by the mid-1980s, women held approximately 25 percent of these posts. Between 1968 and 1974, the average had been 6 percent. PCC affirmative action policies and FMC advocacy yielded positive results. Women themselves assumed a more activist stance, as indicated by their willingness to accept positions of responsibility. Holding public office was not tantamount to the exercise

of power, however. If they were going to be more than a token presence, women leaders needed to advance the interests of women. And the institutions and organizations in which they were leaders needed to have the power to articulate these interests. The broader issue was the nature of vanguard party politics. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the FMC succeeded in revising employment policies to favor the interests of women workers. The dynamic between the party and the FMC seemed to be more effective for women than that of the party and the CTC was for workers.

Women and Work

After 1970, women significantly expanded their share of the labor force. By 1986, women were 38 percent of the labor force and had attained a notable degree of stability. For every hundred women entering the labor force, fewer than four dropped out.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the 1970s witnessed tensions between national economic prerogatives and the expansion of female employment. The Cuban leadership saw the incorporation of women into the labor force as fundamental to overcoming gender inequalities. The SDPE, however, placed a premium on efficiency and rationality. In the mid-1970s, women accounted for nearly 26 percent of the labor force. The two 1968 resolutions regulating female employment, passed when Cuba faced a rural labor shortage, continued to reserve some jobs for women and proscribe others. The 1974 FMC congress criticized the restrictive resolution and demanded its revision, arguing that prohibition implied discrimination and that women themselves should decide whether or not to perform these jobs.⁶⁹ The PCC thesis on full equality supported the FMC position; the SDPE emphasis on efficiency that was creating some unemployment did not.

In 1976, the Labor Ministry passed a new resolution that, contrary to FMC expectations, barred women from nearly three hundred job categories. The ministry allegedly based the selection on the health hazards the jobs presented for women.⁷⁰ The resolution, however, had more to do with the problem of unemployment than with the health of women. Banning women from those job categories—in some of which women were then working, and the resolution prescribed their transfer—opened employment opportunities for surplus male workers. Women without jobs did not constitute the same kind of social problem that unemployed men did, or so the resolution seemed to imply. That female employment would stagnate or even decrease was also implicit in the resolution. In 1977, Vilma Espín acknowledged the FMC was seeking its modification.⁷¹ The share of women in the labor force continued to increase. New women entrants, however, tended to have technical, skilled, or professional qualifications.⁷² The employment of educated women comple-

mented the national interest. At a time of growing unemployment, however, the state deemed an unqualified policy of equality of employment unsalutary for the economy.

By the mid-1980s, the original list of "off-limits" job categories had been whittled down to about twenty-five.⁷³ The FMC had generally succeeded in the struggle against job discrimination. Espín, moreover, reasserted the 1974 FMC position on job prohibitions for women: "The establishment of prohibitions for women in general is indeed negative, because they constitute a violation of the principle of equality."⁷⁴ Recognizing the controversy, Fidel Castro noted: "If we fall back with respect to jobs, if we fall back in the economic field, we will start going back on everything else we have gained."⁷⁵ The practical denouement of the 1976 resolution established that women were necessary for the economy, and work was essential for full equality. The FMC successfully defended the particular interests of women amid pressures to sidetrack them for the sake of national development. The FMC, however, did not succeed in having the resolution repealed; its discriminatory intent remained in effect.

In contrast to the medical school quota, the FMC lobbied and won a *de facto* victory on the 1976 resolution. In both cases, however, the issue of gender equality was secondary to the national interest as understood by the party and state leadership. The quota case affected a smaller number of women and the very sensitive area of foreign policy that was a sacrosanct reserve of the top PCC leadership. The FMC did not intervene. More revealing of the potential mass organizations had under the post-1970 institutionalization was the FMC lobby with respect to the 1976 resolution. The federation argued successfully for the expansion of female employment—albeit at the skilled, technical, or professional levels—in the face of increasing unemployment. The specific interests of women and the SDPE were reconciled. In practice, nonetheless, the principle of gender equality was not redeemed because even if severely constrained, the resolution remained in effect.

In the mid-1980s, the question of employment appeared to be pointing in a different direction. The 1976 resolution had sought to alleviate the SDPE-originated unemployment. Declining fertility, however, pointed to a relative shortage of young workers during the 1990s.⁷⁶ Demographic changes might thus augur a new area of concern for the incorporation of women into the labor force. Fertility trends, however, seemed to emphasize the importance of women as childbearers. Would the state adopt a policy to encourage women to stay home and have more children? Were that to be the case, how would the FMC react? Without doubt, new challenges await the FMC. Addressing these challenges on whatever terrain they might arise will surely test the organizational efficacy of the FMC and the commitment to the principle of gender equality.

At the time, institutionalization highlighted attention to the interests of working women. In coordination with the CTC and Popular Power provincial assemblies, the FMC established commissions to analyze job opportunities for women and supervise hiring practices under the economic management and planning system. The SDPE increased the costs of female employment and the likelihood of discrimination.⁷⁷ Women were sometimes considered a hindrance to enterprise “profitability”: they were more likely to stay home to care for a sick child or an elderly family member, or to be late because of children and family obligations. Managers were sometimes reluctant to promote qualified women for similar reasons. Although women managers were probably more sensitive to the problems of female workers, they accounted for less than 23 percent of all management posts, and most were in junior positions.⁷⁸ In 1981, there were only 246 women enterprise directors (8.7 percent) in a total of 2,815.⁷⁹ The 1984 CTC congress rejected a proposal to lower the retirement age for women from 55 to 50. Managers would be all the more hesitant to hire women workers if their retirement were allowed even earlier,⁸⁰ but early retirement for women would open up jobs for unemployed men. Evidently, the tendency to increase employment at the expense of women had not receded.

Between 1970 and 1985, the structure of female employment underwent further transformations (see Table 6.2). The proportion of women in agriculture and communications declined slightly and that in commerce significantly. The share of women in industry remained approximately the same. Significantly more women were working in construction and transportation. Nearly half of all working women were employed in the nonproductive services. Women workers were generally better educated than men workers: 46 percent had at least a high school education; only 34 percent of the men did. Women constituted more than 45 percent of the labor force with a high school education or above.⁸¹ Both indices were above their 38 percent share of the labor force. Even so, women tended to earn significantly less than men: 62.6 percent of men were employed in sectors where wages were above the national average of 2,252 pesos; only 38.6 percent of women were so employed.⁸²

Women needed an infrastructure of support services in order to work. Although a new *conciencia* in men would also alleviate the overload borne by women, such awareness developed slowly. The 1975 Family Code had stipulated equality between sexes at home and at work, but nearly a decade later Vilma Espín was still emphasizing that men and women were supposed to share child care and household chores: “If we use the term ‘help’ we are accepting that these are women’s responsibilities and such is not the case: we say ‘share’ because they are a family responsibility.”⁸³ In 1986, Espín also asserted that sharing was a party directive: men who evaded their responsibilities at

Table 6.2. Distribution of Men and Women by Economic Sector, Cuba 1985

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Salary</i> ^a	<i>Men</i> ^b	<i>Women</i> ^c
Culture	2,689	22,500	17,100
Transportation	2,589	161,800	35,900
Science	2,531	14,400	13,300
Other productive	2,454	7,400	6,400
Construction	2,442	275,700	43,900
Administration	2,404	88,800	73,000
Industry	2,329	660,000	260,000
Other nonproductive	2,257	11,300	10,100
Finances	2,235	5,900	13,400
Education	2,178	127,900	260,300
Agriculture	2,155	249,300	70,300
Communications	2,137	14,400	12,600
Public health	2,124	62,200	139,700
Silviculture	2,120	24,300	5,100
Commerce	2,023	190,800	179,100
Personal services	1,955	67,700	48,700
% Above average salary		62.6	38.6

Sources: Comité Estatal de Estadísticas, *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba*, 1986, pp. 196, 200.

^aAverage salary = 2,252 pesos.

^b*N* = 1,983,800.

^c*N* = 1,189,500.

home were exploiting women and discriminating against them.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, family and household obligations fell disproportionately on women. One of the most important elements in the support infrastructure was the day-care program. Between 1970 and 1986, day-care enrollment more than doubled, from more than 47,000 to nearly 110,000 children.⁸⁵ Demand, however, outstripped existing capacity, and the economy had limited resources.

The PCC as a Vanguard Party

“Men die, the party is immortal!” exclaimed Fidel Castro in 1974. “The Party is the soul of the Cuban Revolution,” he told the party congress in 1975.⁸⁶ The 1980 congress heard him say that the party was “the Revolution’s finest expression and guarantee par excellence of its historic continuity.”⁸⁷ At the 1986 gathering, he reiterated the centrality of the party:

During these years of tense struggle, the party has continued its development as the great force of leadership and coherence in our society. The party represents with excellence the authority, the morale, and the princi-

ples of the watchful *conciencia* of the Revolution. . . . [The party] has fulfilled with dignity its responsibility to give always the best example in organization, exigence, determination to improve, discipline, revolutionary austerity, disposition to sacrifice, and close, permanent bonds with *el pueblo*.⁸⁸

The process of institutionalization consolidated the idea of vanguardism that had guided Fidel Castro and the *rebeldes* in the struggle against Batista, empowered the social revolution against the domestic opposition and the United States during 1959–1961, supported the incipient order of the early 1960s, and sustained the radical experiment of the late 1960s. Having failed to forge alternate forms of vanguard politics, the Cuban leadership embraced the process of institutionalization.

Strengthening and broadening the Communist party became central to the politics of the 1970s. The first step was the activation of party leadership bodies. During the late 1960s, the Politburo, Secretariat, and Central Committee had barely functioned. After the early 1970s, they began to operate regularly and integrated a broadened Cuban leadership. The split between old and new communists started to lose significance. After the debacle of the late 1960s, all tendencies agreed on the course Cuban socialism was taking: Cuba no longer had the political and economic resources for advocating a *sui generis* model. Old communists were reinstated to the Politburo and retained about a 20 percent share of the Central Committee through the early 1980s. By the 1986 congress, the historic split was no longer relevant. Old communists were dying, and the issues that had divided Cuban elites had largely been surpassed. The politics of socialism was now more important in determining elite dynamics than the history of revolutionary struggle.

Central Committee composition was indicative of these changing dynamics. Whereas in 1965 the armed forces and the Interior Ministry had accounted for 58 percent of CC membership, their share declined steadily to 17.8 percent between 1975 and 1986. Reduced military presence—often more formal than substantive because of the transition many officers made to civilian life—symbolized the emergence of a broadened governing elite. Representatives of the party apparatus increased from 10 percent to 28.6 percent between 1965 and 1975, declining sharply in 1980 (20.3 percent) and gaining again in 1986 (24.7 percent). State functionaries were about 17 percent of the Central Committee until 1986, when their share increased to 26 percent. The mass organizations experienced marked fluctuations: about 6–7 percent in the first two Central Committees, nearly 20 percent in 1980, and down to 13 percent in 1986. After 1975, individuals working in other sectors—most of whom were ordinary citizens—hovered around 15 percent (see Table 6.3). In 1986, the category of member of the *Comandante en Jefe's* advisory commission was introduced. Under charismatic authority, the process of institutionalization included innovative bodies in addition to

Table 6.3. Central Committee (Full Membership), Cuba, 1965–1986
(in percentages)

	1965	1975	1980	1986
Total	100	112	148	146
PCC	10.0	28.6	20.3	24.7
State	17.0	17.9	16.9	26.0
Military	58.0	32.1	24.3	17.8
Mass Organizations	7.0	6.3	18.9	13.0
Other	8.0	15.1	19.6	13.7
Advisory Commission	—	—	—	4.8

Sources: Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 312, and “The New Demand for Orderliness,” in Jorge I. Domínguez, ed., *Cuba—Internal and International Affairs* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982), p. 24; 1986 figures computed from *Granma*, Supplement, February 8, 1986.

the orthodox structures of vanguard parties. The more formal bodies did not fully meet the needs of Fidel Castro for governing Cuba. Real elite turnover did not occur until 1986, when approximately 50 percent of the Central Committee was newly elected.⁸⁹ Before then, the party had expanded the size of the CC to accommodate new members.

Although the weight of the Central Committee in actual policy-making was difficult to determine, the formal appearance of elite politics in Cuba had changed significantly from the 1960s. If only symbolically, varying CC composition was a recognition of the increasing complexity that socialism was forging in Cuban society. That—even at the height of Cuban internationalism—the share of the military continued to decline was illustrative of the weight civilian and domestic imperatives had in the conduct of daily affairs. In 1980, following the Mariel exodus and the Polish Solidarity movement, Cuban leaders saw some reason to be concerned with their relationship to the “masses” and, consequently, the presence of the mass organizations and ordinary citizens in the Central Committee grew. In 1986, however, when elite turnover happened, the beneficiaries were the party and state apparatuses. Thus, the politics of socialism accorded particular importance to PCC cadres and high-level bureaucrats over other sectors. Nonetheless, Cuban socialism never fully functioned like state socialism: the *Comandante en Jefe’s* advisory commission was the foremost indication of its distinguishing characteristics.

The relationship between vanguard parties and the populations they claimed to represent was always indirect. Popular elections did not mediate the selection of national leaders. Rather, the presence of the vanguard throughout society and the profile of its members supposedly constituted the guarantee of responsiveness to popular interests, espe-

cially those of the working class. Initially, the PCC experienced slow growth and then stagnation. In 1969, the party began a period of rapid expansion, and a year later membership totaled about 100,000 (1 percent of the population). During the 1970s, the party underwent extraordinary growth: membership more than quadrupled. In 1980, militants numbered 434,943 (4.5 of the population). Like the Central Committee, the number of members remained fairly stable between 1980 and 1985. At 523,639, membership grew about 20 percent (5.2 percent of the population). Rank-and-file turnover, however, was also significant. In 1985, 39 percent had been in the party for five years or less.⁹⁰ After the late 1960s, the educational levels of party members notably improved. In 1975, a majority of party cadres had achieved junior high school, but more than 60 percent of the membership had only a primary education.⁹¹ By 1985, nearly 75 percent of the membership had at a minimum finished the ninth grade and most party cadres had some university education.⁹² Contrary to the 1960s, party cadres and members now had the educational qualifications to govern.

After the sectarianism crisis in 1962, the party had adopted the method of selecting members from among vanguard workers. Although the vanguard-worker method remained a path to party militancy after 1975, the Communist Youth increasingly became the standard avenue for PCC membership. In 1985, nearly 60 percent of the party members entered through the Communist Youth. Final approval for party and youth membership nonetheless required “consultation with the masses.”⁹³ Moreover, PCC policy emphasized growth among production workers. Progress, however, was erratic. Production workers represented 30.2 percent (1975), 39.8 percent (1980), and 37.3 percent (1985) of PCC militants. Service workers had a similarly variable record. In contrast, professional/technical personnel and administrative workers experienced steady increases in their share of PCC composition (see Table 6.4). The relative decline of political and administrative cadres from 42.1 percent in 1975 to 23.7 percent in 1986 was notable.

Comparisons between PCC social composition and presence among the different groups in the state civilian labor force further underscored the problem of remaining the vanguard of the working class while other sectors were better represented in PCC ranks (see Table 6.5). Between 1975 and 1985, the share of production workers in the labor force declined slightly. The number of party members among them nearly tripled but PCC workers were still less than 13 percent of the labor force. Service workers’ share of the labor force first declined and then increased; their PCC proportion followed a pattern similar to that of production workers. Professional/technical personnel and administrative workers experienced increases in their share of the labor force, and more of them entered the party. Although administrative workers moderately in-

Table 6.4. Social Composition of PCC Membership

	1975	1980	1985
Total membership	211,642	434,943	523,639
Production workers ^a (%)	30.2	39.8	37.3
Service workers ^a (%)	5.7	7.5	5.9
Professional and technical (%)	9.2	15.0	16.5
Administrative cadres ^b (%)	33.4	23.6	20.7
Political cadres ^b (%)	8.7	4.3	3.0
Administrative workers ^b (%)	4.1	4.3	7.2
Peasants ^b (%)	1.8	1.2	2.0
Others ^b (%)	6.9	4.3	7.4

Sources: Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba. *Tesis y resoluciones* (Havana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria, 1976), p. 23; Isidro Gómez, "El Partido Comunista de Cuba" (Paper presented at the seminar of the Institute for Cuban Studies, Washington, DC August 16–18, 1979, p. 28; Fidel Castro, *Main Report: Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba* (New York: Center for Cuban Studies, 1981), p. 27; Massimo Cavallini, "La revolución es una obra de arte que debe perfeccionarse," *Pensamiento Propio* (May–June 1986): p. 42.

^aIn 1975 and 1980, production and service workers were reported jointly—35.9 percent and 47.3 percent respectively. I estimated the breakdown based on the 1985 figures which were given separately.

^bI estimated 1980 percentages of these categories based on the Gómez 1978 figures.

Table 6.5. Occupational Distribution of State Civilian Labor Force, Cuba, 1975, 1980, 1985

	1975	1980	1985
Workers (%)	1,343,300 (56.7)	1,354,300 (52.1)	1,604,400 (50.6)
Services (%)	378,200 (16.0)	348,000 (13.4)	431,400 (13.6)
Professional and technical (%)	314,500 (13.3)	484,500 (18.6)	635,100 (20.0)
Administrative (%)	125,700 (5.3)	180,300 (6.9)	248,500 (7.8)
Cadres (%)	207,600 (8.8)	232,800 (9.0)	253,900 (8.0)
Total	2,369,300	2,599,900	3,173,300

Sources: Comité Estatal de Estadísticas, *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 1979*, p. 58, and *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 1986*, p. 205.

creased their share of the labor force, their presence in the PCC advanced fastest and steadiest to about 15 percent. Between 1975 and 1985, cadres accounted for 8 to 9 percent of the labor force. At each party congress, about half of all cadres were PCC militants; they had the highest proportion of party members in relation to their group totals (see Table 6.6). The vanguard party of the working class was thus becoming more representative of other sectors.

By the mid-1980s, the PCC had acquired the basic profile of the old Communist parties in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Party membership had expanded significantly and, thus, more ordinary citizens were involved in the daily conduct of PCC affairs in their workplaces and neighborhoods. During the 1970s and early 1980s, moreover, the Cuban economy experienced modest growth, and living standards improved noticeably from their trough of the late 1960s. The accomplishments of socialism were beginning to legitimate the rule of the Communist party. The legacy of revolution, however, still weighed significantly, and central to that legacy was the authority of Fidel Castro.

Crossroads at Three Party Congresses

The first congress of the Communist party adopted a political and economic program very different from the radical experiment. With institutionalization, the PCC had acquired all the trappings of a vanguard party. Popular Power assemblies were about to be constituted, and a referendum would shortly approve the new constitution. The economic management and planning system of relative decentralization and material incentives most clearly embodied the retreat from the late 1960s. The 1975 congress also underscored a broadened unity among elites: old and new communists came together in what turned out to be the demise of their historic split. Cuban leaders likewise felt satisfied

Table 6.6. PCC Members as Percentage of Total in Occupational Categories, 1975, 1980, 1985

	1975	1980	1985
Workers	5.0	12.8	12.2
Services	3.2	9.4	7.2
Professional and technical	6.2	13.5	13.6
Administrative workers	6.9	10.4	15.2
Cadres	42.9	52.1	48.9

Computed from Tables 6.4 and 6.5.

about their relationship to *el pueblo cubano*. Mass organizations were attaining their “proper” level of functioning in a vanguard-led political system. Popular Power assemblies would give citizens the opportunity to voice their immediate concerns. Moreover, the economy had at last registered respectable growth. The year 1975 was a good one.

The Cuban leadership could also look outward with satisfaction. Guerrilla movements in Latin America had faltered, and in 1970 the Chilean electorate—not force of arms—had finally broken Cuban isolation. In 1971, Salvador Allende had warmly welcomed Fidel Castro on an extended visit to Chile—his first to Latin America in more than a decade. Between 1970 and 1975, eight countries in Latin America and the Caribbean established diplomatic relations with Cuba. While shunning the organization of American States, Cuba became active in other regional organizations. The impact of the U.S. embargo appeared to be lessening. The Cuban government also became more active in the Non-Aligned Movement, and Fidel Castro promoted the idea of confluent interests between the Soviet Union and the Third World. In 1975, with Soviet logistical support, Cuban and Angolan government troops scored an extraordinary victory against the forces of rival Angolan groups and South Africa. In 1977, with even greater Soviet support, the Cuban armed forces came to the aid of Ethiopia when Somalia invaded the Ogaden Desert. Cuban prestige in the Third World was never stronger.

After 1968, relations with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries improved noticeably, and a year later Soviet economic aid began to increase. CMEA membership secured long-term commitment to Cuban development. The Cuban leadership accepted the new dependence as the price for maintaining socialism ninety miles from the United States. The Soviet Union, moreover, renewed its assurances on Cuban defense, increased the supply of armaments, and upgraded the quality of military aid. In 1972, all the capitals in Eastern Europe welcomed Fidel Castro. Between 1972 and 1975, Castro reciprocated by hosting his fellow communist leaders. In early 1974, Leonid Brezhnev visited Cuba and addressed a large congregation of citizens in the Plaza of the Revolution. The Soviet leader emphasized the soundness of the new course in Cuban domestic and foreign policies. In symbolic recognition of the broadened Cuban leadership, Brezhnev concluded by jointly raising the arms of Fidel and Raúl Castro.

The Cuban-Soviet rapprochement was complete. Although under terms radically different from those anticipated during the late 1960s, Cuban economic and security needs were apparently satisfied. The Soviet Union saw in Cuba a valuable link to Latin America and the Third World. Growing relations between Cuba and Latin America, the defeat of the United States in Vietnam, and the demise of the Nixon presidency also helped to convince the Soviet Union of Cuban commitment to the

emerging détente between the two superpowers. In 1973, Cuba and the United States signed an antihijacking agreement. Although prospects for improved relations dimmed with the Angolan expedition, the United States did not pose the same threat to a more consolidated Cuban government that it had during the early years of the revolution. Indeed, the 1975 party congress gathered in good times. Whatever qualms some Cuban leaders—especially perhaps Fidel Castro—might have had about the new course, the promise of success at home and abroad probably assuaged them.

Sending troops to Angola underscored a series of characteristics of Cuban politics after 1959. Named Operation Carlota after a rebellious slave in the nineteenth century, the Angolan expedition was a Cuban initiative possibly only because of Soviet support. To a significant degree, Cuban foreign policy attained an extraordinary triumph because the Vietnam War and Watergate had left the United States in a relatively weakened position. Ultimately, Fidel Castro and his closest associates made the decision to send troops to Angola. Elite opposition was highly unlikely; popular support was assumed and probably materialized after the fact. After so many setbacks in Latin America, victory in Angola replenished national pride. No other leader except an audacious visionary like Fidel Castro would have been likely to take advantage of the opportunity that the special circumstances of the mid-1970s afforded. Because of him, Cuba enjoyed the prestige and security that—at least for a time—resulted from an activist foreign policy.

Involvement in Angola also highlighted the primacy of political over economic considerations in Cuban politics since 1959. The economic costs of Operation Carlota and what turned out to be a fifteen-year stay in Angola were secondary to the goals of internationalism and greater maneuverability for Cuba in world affairs. Similarly, these higher national objectives obscured the multiple tolls support for the Angolan government would take on ordinary citizens. By all accounts, nonetheless, most Cubans who served in Angola did so voluntarily, with great distinction, and notable valor. The Angolan chapter of Cuban foreign policy focused once again on the ability of the leadership to mobilize the population to answer extraordinary challenges. More notable was thus the failure of Fidel Castro and the PCC to engage the citizenry to meet the exigencies of daily life and work.

When the second congress met in 1980, the outlook was considerably less auspicious. After 1976, the economy fell into recession, and expectations for rapid improvements in living standards were disappointing. Implementing the SDPE was more complex than anticipated. The trade-dependent economy—particularly when sugar prices fell—limited the imports needed to support more autonomous enterprises. The political will to assume the consequences of the SDPE was also weak. The problem of the *disponibles* and the relative decentralization of authority

ran counter to the Cuban experience. Unemployment before 1959 and the social revolution had rendered full employment and centralized authority two of the principal mainstays of Cuban socialism. The answer to waning efficiency and growing corruption was, thus, to exercise greater *conciencia*. In troubled times, Cuban leaders, especially Fidel Castro, resorted to the recourse that their own experience had nurtured. The material incentives and market mechanisms of the SDPE were not an easy appeal within that experience.

The year 1980 tested the Cuban government like no other since 1970. In April, 10,000 Cubans flocked to the Peruvian Embassy. Between April and September, 125,000 Cubans left Cuba via the Mariel boatlift. The unrealized prospects of the 1970s and the visit of more than 100,000 Cuban-Americans in 1979 had fueled a tense situation. The government labeled those wanting to leave “scum” who renounced the ideals of *la patria* for the lures of consumerism. The PCC organized *mítines de repudio*—meetings to repudiate the “scum”—in front of the homes of those intending to leave. Two decades after the revolution, there was still no room for dissent: *Con Cuba o contra Cuba* continued to define Cuban politics. Ninety miles away from the United States and the prosperous Cuban-American communities, the Cuban government surely had to contend with unreasonable comparisons and inordinate expectations. Still, the challenge for Cuban leaders lay in satisfying basic needs—especially in the supply, diversity, and quality of food and other consumer nondurables—more efficiently, and they had barely met it. Happening at the same time as the Solidarity movement in Poland, the Mariel exodus impressed upon the Cuban leadership the need to reinforce its links with *el pueblo cubano*.

Internationally, Cuba also faced mixed prospects. Relations with the Soviet Union continued on terms largely beneficial to the Cuban government. The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 created new opportunities for dialogue with the United States. In 1977, interests sections opened in Havana and Washington, and rapprochement proceeded slowly but significantly. Regular communications on varied topics, the end of the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba, and the release of 3,000 political prisoners were among the most notable accomplishments. In 1979, when Cuba hosted the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, Fidel Castro became its president. By then, Cuba had an impressive network of military advisors and civilian missions in numerous Third World countries. In September, President Castro addressed the United Nations on behalf of the non-aligned nations. Cuba, however, was not elected to the UN Security Council, as would have been expected because of its presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement. In December, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and Cuba joined the minority of the United Nations against Soviet censure. In Latin America, relations with

Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru deteriorated while they grew with the revolutionary governments of Grenada and Nicaragua. In Maurice Bishop and the Sandinistas, the Cuban government at last had truly kindred allies in the Western Hemisphere.

With the 1980 inauguration of Ronald Reagan, a hostile U.S. administration again confronted Cuba. Although the interests sections remained open, much of the progress made during the Carter presidency was lost. The Reagan administration reinstated the travel ban thereby prohibiting U.S. citizens' travel to Cuba at a time when tourism was emerging as an important source of hard currency. The threat of military aggression also loomed large. The U.S. obsession with Central America included frequent references about going to the "source" of outside intervention, and the Cuban government turned to the organization of popular militias. Institutionalization notwithstanding, Cuban politics could not remain "normal" for long: the United States contributed to maintaining the politics of mobilization and charismatic authority. In 1984, the two countries nonetheless reached an important immigration agreement. Cuba, however, suspended it a few months later when the Reagan administration began the transmissions of Radio Martí.

On balance, relations with Latin America remained good. In 1982, the Cuban government supported the Argentine generals in the war over the Malvinas Islands: Latin American unity took precedence over ideological differences. Cuba also launched a campaign against paying the Latin American debt, which did not gain much official support but garnered the endorsement of numerous opposition groups, intellectuals, social movements, and religious base communities throughout the continent. In 1983, the overthrow of Maurice Bishop and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Grenada were setbacks for Cuban foreign policy. An ally was gone, and Cuban military personnel stationed in Grenada had not fought the U.S. invaders very forcefully. The response of Cuban construction workers gave the Cuban leadership cause to reconsider the established doctrine of national defense. A professional military alone would never suffice: national defense ultimately depended on *el pueblo cubano*, and thus the militias were its first rampart.

The early 1980s, saw greater economic liberalization in Cuba since 1968, when the revolutionary offensive had eliminated the last vestiges of private enterprise. Peasant markets, arts and crafts fairs, self-employment, and a housing market gave the population opportunities to earn and spend more. Outright corruption and what the Cuban leadership deemed to be corrupt practices undoubtedly spread. Many functionaries exploited the perquisites of office for personal gain. Ordinary citizens took full advantage of the market to make money, and goods and services were often sold at exorbitant profit. Many workers and man-

agers used factory inventories for private gain. As early as 1982, Fidel Castro had begun to revive the idea of a communist *conciencia* in the construction of socialism.

The Cuban economy, moreover, was once again facing deteriorating international conditions. Foreign exchange earnings were declining, trade deficits were growing, hard-currency debt was stringently renegotiated, and the prospects for the same levels of trade, credit, and aid from the socialist countries were dim. When the Central Group was created to supervise the economy in 1984 and Humberto Pérez was removed from JUCEPLAN in 1985, the defeat of the economic reformers was imminent. The SDPE and its prescriptions of greater decentralization and material incentives were running counter to the legacy of revolution. *Conciencia* and charismatic authority did not. When the Communist party congress met in 1986, winds of change were decidedly stirring. Although Fidel Castro told the February session that the SDPE encouraged capitalist solutions to the problems of socialism, he did not offer an alternative.⁹⁴ The concluding session in December, however, sanctioned a new program of moral renewal and economic restructuring: a process of rectification that Castro had launched in April. That the rectification was his initiative and not the Communist party's was testimony to the relative weakness of the process of institutionalization. In the Soviet Union, the reform program of Mikhail Gorbachev was then in its incipient stages.