

2009-08-24

Tension under the Sun: Tourism and Identity in Cuba, 1945-2007

John Andrew Gustavsen
University of Miami, johndo1313@yahoo.com

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

TENSION UNDER THE SUN: TOURISM AND IDENTITY IN CUBA, 1945-2007

By

John Andrew Gustavsen

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

August 2009

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

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John Andrew Gustavsen

Approved:

Steve Stein, Ph.D.
Professor of History

Terri A. Scandura, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Robin Bachin, Ph.D.
Professor of History

Eduardo Elena, Ph.D.
Professor of History

Bruce Bagley, Ph.D.
Professor of International Studies

GUSTAVSEN, JOHN

(Ph.D., History)

Tension under the Sun: Tourism
and Identity in Cuba, 1945-2007

(August 2009)

Abstract of a dissertation at the University of Miami

Dissertation supervised by Professor Steve Stein
No. of pages in text. (368)

My dissertation on Cuban tourism links political, economic, social, and cultural history to show how the development of tourism on the island between 1945 and 2007 has been crucial in helping to cultivate identities for Cuba and the Cuban people on multiple levels. I focus on three distinct periods – 1945 to 1958, 1959 to 1979, and 1980 to 2007. While significant shifts occurred within each of these three phases, this periodization best illuminates the relationship between tourism development and identity. The fall of the Soviet Union, for example, certainly altered the pace of the industry's growth. Arrivals soared beginning in the 1990s, yet much of the institutional framework for conditioning the relationships between touristic actors had been established years earlier. Cuban planners had begun to target a range of specific markets by 1980, over a decade before the economic strife of the 'Special Period' in the early 1990s virtually forced them to move in this direction. For the entire period between 1945 and 2007, tourism and Cuban identity were linked in two very important ways. Tourism provided a lens for foreign visitors to view the island, its people, and its culture; *to know* what it meant to be Cuban. As well, the industry offered a framework for powerful interests to control the behaviors of Cuban citizens; *to instruct them* on how to be Cuban.

Dedicated to my parents and brother,
John, Dianne, and Matthew

Acknowledgements

It would be impossible to thank all of the people who contributed in some way to the completion of this dissertation. During the six months I spent in Cuba, I spoke with hundreds of Cubans who were in some way connected to the tourism industry. Some of their names appear throughout this work. For their insight, I am extremely grateful. Yet I am just as grateful for the perspective provided by the scores of people whose names do not appear within these pages. In all cases, it was just as crucial to my analysis.

I thank every archivist and librarian who assisted me in either Cuba or the United States – from Myra Somonte in Cuba’s Escuela de Altos Estudios Hotelería y Turismo to Annie Sansone in the University of Miami’s Cuban Heritage Collection. Without their dedication and patience, I could never have located many of the sources that I utilized to write this dissertation. Doreen Yamamoto, the University of Miami’s dissertation editor, also provided key assistance during my final days of revising and formatting.

Of course, none of my research could have been undertaken without the support of the University of Miami’s History Department and its Center for Latin American Studies. They provided me with several grants that supported my extensive research in Cuba as well as in places such as Miami, New York, and Houston. The University’s College of Arts and Sciences also provided me with generous support to complete my writing over the course of this last year.

It is unlikely that I could acknowledge all of the professors, peers, and students of mine who contributed in some way to this work. In a variety of ways, they challenged me to think about this project in ways that I had previously not considered. I offer my thanks to Professors Martha Few, Robert Levine, Michael LaRosa, Edmund Abaka,

Laura Matthew, Donald Spivey, Erica Windler, Guido Ruggiero, and David Dent. I would like to thank former fellow graduate students Lina Del Castillo, Jenny Lambe, Octavio Ramos, Malcolm Frierson, Simonetta Marin, Ashley Atwell, and Jim Walter. I also offer collective thanks to all of my former students as well as all of the professors and peers that I have not mentioned here.

I would like to extend a special thanks to the four members of my dissertation committee who provided me with unwavering support over the course of several long years of research and writing. Robin Bachin, Bruce Bagley, and Eduardo Elena all offered crucial advice throughout the research and writing process, pointing me towards new sources and helping me to think about my analysis in different ways. In addition to their valuable help, Steve Stein, my dissertation supervisor, not only spent countless hours reading drafts of my (quite long) chapters, he also helped me better understand the relationship between tourism and identity in Cuba. He pushed me to write a meaningful dissertation, and it is in large part because of his guidance that I was able to do so.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents. Without their support, this endeavor would have scarcely been possible.

Miami, Florida
August 2009

JAG

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Chapter One – Introduction:
The Significance of Tourism as a Marker of Identity in Cuba

The sun shines down hard on Cuba. Cubans sweat; tourists tan. Cubans work; tourists play. Both groups eat, yet infrequently with one another. This touristic paradigm is by no means new, nor is it unique to Cuba; it has existed throughout the world for centuries. Within today's Revolutionary Cuba though, this paradigm – like those associated with agriculture, education, the military, or the police – is one of several basic frameworks within which Cubans can base their existences. The presence of tourism has been uninterrupted since World War II, but the Cuban Revolution unquestionably transformed the nature of its impact. This was due to both the massive changes the new government implemented, and the reactions to those changes from outside Cuba. The confluence of these forces altered the established organization of the tourism industry. Nevertheless, the history of tourism in Cuba since 1945 is a singular story; one of uninterrupted planning, contention, and development that in 2006 culminated in Cuba's ascension to the position of the second most visited island in the Caribbean.¹ Within this history, the tourism industry in Cuba has impacted every facet of life on the island, serving as a major marker of Cuban identity.

My dissertation on Cuban tourism links political, economic, social, and cultural history to show how the development of tourism on the island between 1945 and 2007 has been crucial in helping to cultivate identities for Cuba and the Cuban people on multiple levels. I focus on three distinct periods – 1945 to 1958, 1959 to 1979, and 1980 to 2007. While significant shifts occurred within each of these three phases, this

¹ Cuba, with 2,220,567 arrivals, was second only to the Dominican Republic in 2006, which hosted 3,965,055 tourists. Caribbean Tourism Organization, "Latest Statistics 2006" (June 11, 2007), 1.

periodization best illuminates the relationship between tourism development and identity. The fall of the Soviet Union, for example, certainly altered the pace of the industry's growth. Arrivals soared beginning in the 1990s, yet much of the institutional framework for conditioning the relationships between touristic actors had been established years earlier. Cuban planners had begun to target a range of specific markets by 1980, over a decade before the economic strife of the 'Special Period' in the early 1990s virtually forced them to move in this direction. For the entire period between 1945 and 2007, tourism and Cuban identity were linked in two very important ways. Tourism provided a lens for foreign visitors to view the island, its people, and its culture; *to know* what it meant to be Cuban. As well, the industry offered a framework for powerful interests to control the behaviors of Cuban citizens; *to instruct them* on how to be Cuban.

Several key conclusions emerge from my research. Foremost among them is that radically different Cuban governments have approached tourism in strikingly similar ways. Both before and throughout the Revolutionary era, state planners vigorously promoted tourism using nearly parallel strategies. Before and after the Revolution, the state utilized the industry to expand its powers, asserting hegemony over private property as well as over Cuban citizens in the name of continued development. Pre-Revolutionary governments were openly concerned about interactions between Cubans and foreigners, although perhaps not to the degree that Fidel Castro has explicitly stated on numerous occasions. Yet despite these continuities, the Cuban Revolution certainly prompted crucial shifts within the tourism/identity relationship. Because of tourism's importance as a generator of profits and as a source of employment in the pre-Revolutionary era, Castro's ability to affect change within certain sectors of the industry was limited at first.

In fact, the young leader initially strove to keep the industry he inherited largely intact despite the preponderance of threats to a “new” Cuban identity, such as widespread gambling and prostitution. It was only when the U.S. and other countries restricted their citizens’ ability to visit Cuba that the Revolutionary government began intensely targeting these and other perils to *Cubanidad*. In doing so, the country’s leaders utilized what remained of Cuba’s tourist world in order to tell people who worked within – or were even remotely linked to – the industry how to live their lives. During the Revolution, tourism also gained a central place on the ideological crossroad between Cuba and the rest of the world, first serving to promote a distinctive Revolutionary image abroad and later to bring about a rapprochement between the island and the market-economy countries from which it had been separated. Whether in moments of continuity or change, tourism was critical in shaping Cuban identity both before and throughout the entire Revolutionary period.

State strategies for defining Cuban identity through tourism can be separated into two distinct levels. The first is based on the creation of strict legal frameworks designed to regulate what Cubans, foreign tourists, and companies linked to tourism can and cannot do on the island. In terms of identity, the state’s power to set policy has directly impacted the relationships between all touristic actors – Cubans and foreigners alike – regarding who they can see, where they can go, who they can conduct business with, and more. Both pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary regimes created specific sets of rules aimed at placing controls on the island’s residents vis-à-vis the industry. Considering tourism’s enormous presence and the socio-economic opportunities it has offered Cubans, these controls have had profound impacts on the shaping of Cuban identity.

The second level of state-sponsored identity explored in this dissertation involves the visual and textual constructions of the island produced by successive Cuban governments. From promotional material to guidebooks, these are intended for consumption abroad to entice foreigners to visit Cuba. They are also present on the island, designed to lead tourists to certain sights, and eventually back to Cuba. While continuities can be found spanning the entire period from WWII to 2007, I also show how complex political changes in Cuba have shaped these state-sponsored representations of the nation and its people. Non-Cubans' access to these images has, of course, varied across time and space, conditioning who is permitted to visit or feels comfortable visiting the often times politically controversial island. These representations are important not only for their ability to attract tourists, but also for their power to influence what tourists see and with whom they interact. Tourism related opportunities for Cubans were, thus, very much linked to how the state portrayed the island for tourists.

Cuban identity has also been heavily shaped by non-state entities linked to the tourist sector, both Cuban and non-Cuban. For example, the island's hotels, airlines, nightclubs, and other entrepreneurs have created their particular visions of the island and its people. While often similar to state-produced representations, these privately funded constructions have occasionally countervailed those of the Cuban state, focusing on themes that the state has been loath to promote. Prominent examples include the nightclubs that advertised within publications such as *Playboy Magazine* and the numerous postcards that have featured images of wretched poverty.

Other non-state actors are the individual Cubans who have been able to work with varying degrees of autonomy from official legal and extralegal structures to construct identities within tourism for themselves and the nation. I examine how they have been able to communicate those identities to the rest of the world through tools ranging from business cards to the Internet. Non-Cubans too, particularly travel guide writers, have also contributed significantly to the construction of Cuban identity. As one of the most powerful groups of foreign intermediaries within the context of tourism, they have been particularly influential in conditioning the relationships between foreign tourists, the island, and its inhabitants.

Based on the combined actions of these touristic actors, Cuban identity has taken shape in two very distinct ways. Through promotional material, guided tours, and cultural displays, the Cuban state, private investors, guidebook writers, and individual Cubans have all helped to create the ‘idea’ of Cuba within the foreign imagination, in effect, a *national identity* for the island. Through legislative measures, broad use of the island’s security forces, and strict spatial divisions, the state has simultaneously created a unique set of realities for Cuban citizens, in essence, guidelines for *individual identity* within the realm of tourism. In Cuba though, radical political change prompted a major shift in the ways in which both national and individual identity were conceived. In particular, new ideas regarding the nation and citizenship shaped the ways in which identities were created within the world of Cuban tourism. As this dissertation illustrates, both before and during the Revolutionary era, Cubans occasionally modified their individual identities in response to foreign expectations regarding the island’s carefully constructed national identity.

The links between tourism and identity in Cuba have been profound for several primary reasons. First, and perhaps most importantly, the island possesses various ideal core conditions for attracting tourists and, as a result, has historically done so. Within the culture of leisure, Cuba has always been considered a prime destination. Its natural infrastructure of beautiful beaches and marvelous landscapes has been complemented by that which has been made by man – luxury hotels and resorts, golf courses, casinos (at times), and extravagant cultural spectacles. The presence of relatively inexpensive and readily available rum, cigars, and women has been and continues to be an additional draw. Without these tourist offerings, Cuba's reputation as a captivating, at times notorious, getaway would have never developed, and the industry's relationship to identity would have been far less conspicuous.

Like all nations choosing to embrace tourism, Cuba has done so within a highly competitive market in which a wide array of potential hosts fiercely vie for visitors from a far smaller number of wealthy nations. The nature of the industry has thus encouraged promoters in Cuba to create a unique identity for the island, which after all, sits amidst a sea of competitors that possess similar offerings. In this context, tourism's advertising of *Cubanidad* has factored heavily into the construction of Cuban identity. In an attempt to maximize arrivals and profits, a variety of interests have implicitly and explicitly gone about defining what it means to be Cuban. This has involved a variety of activities including advertising abroad and in Cuba as well as designing cultural displays for tourists that reflect the island's past, present, and future. In essence, the industry has defined itself in response to the need to promote a distinct idea of both Cuba and Cubans.

The strong links between tourism and identity have also been based on the industry's influence on politics, both international and domestic. Between 1945 and 1959, tourism guided domestic policy in a number of areas including the construction of roads, highways, and other important infrastructure plus the establishment of national parks, museums, and even spectacles such as bullfighting. In the most recent period, tourism has played a truly seminal role in altering the government's relationships with both other countries and its own citizens. In the 1980s, Cuban planners changed the country's economic direction as they developed a series of international agreements to welcome foreign investment and managers; touristic pursuits were frequently at the heart of these cooperative ventures. Then in the 1990s, Cuban citizens, by the sheer scale of their involvement in the clandestine economy of *paladares* and *casas particulares*,² gave their government almost no choice but to legitimize their endeavors that were largely aimed at serving tourists. The links between tourism and identity at the political level were also strong between 1959 and 1979, but tourism played a different role in this period. During these years, the protagonist of influence in terms of the tourism/identity relationship was the government. Before and after, tourism itself has been the protagonist.

Tourism also affects the geography of Cuban cities, often times prompting the creation of separate zones specifically designed for Cubans, for tourists, and less frequently, for both. Foreign tourists – and particularly the shops and boutiques that almost invariably arrive simultaneously to serve their needs – have played an important

² *Paladares* are small, privately run restaurants found throughout Cuba that for the most part serve foreign tourists. *Casas particulares* are homes in Cuba that rent rooms to a similar clientele. Both are found throughout most of the island, but *casas particulares* have become more widespread than *paladares*.

role in conditioning the clothes, household items, and services available for purchase or use by the local population. In fact, few aspects of daily life in Cuba have remained untouched by tourism. It has and continues to affect everything from politics and the economy to society and culture. Obviously, events such as the Cuban Revolution and the fall of the Soviet Union have exerted enormous influence on Cuban history since 1945; their legacies, after all, impact the lives of all Cubans. So too though, has the tourism industry. Indeed, within modern Cuban history, tourism should be placed with these phenomena as a powerful influence on the island and in the lives of its inhabitants. Using tourism as a lens for examining Cuban history since World War II does not diminish the significance of traditionally recognized watershed events. Instead, it adds a new and important element to the analysis of modern Cuban history and provides insight into themes that have too long been ignored.

Conducting the research that led me to these conclusions was a challenging endeavor. Much of my work was done in Cuba. Scholarly research in Cuba can be frustrating – as an academic from the U.S., it was excruciatingly arduous. All academics researching on the island face long waits, “misplaced” documents, and cancelled appointments. Additionally, those from the U.S. commonly face initial attitudes of mistrust that compound these problems. These feelings may be prompted by the Revolutionary government’s historic suspicion of any action taken by the U.S. government. Yet while most Cubans do not blame the U.S. people for the perceived injustices committed by Washington, Cuban archivists’ mistrust may emanate from their knowledge that U.S. academics must receive a special visa from their government before traveling to Cuba. Since Cuban archives and libraries closely monitor prospective

researchers, those from the U.S. who present state-issued visas are potentially viewed as agents of the U.S. government and therefore face additional scrutiny. Remarkably, time after time, Cuban institutions received my credentials from the University of Miami attesting to my status as a graduate student far more graciously than any of my documents from the U.S. Departments of State or Treasury.

Once I was able to get by the daily scrutiny of my academic credentials, the island's archivists and librarians worked with me to the best of their abilities. They showed me valuable materials that had not been catalogued, allowed me to take photos when photocopiers were unavailable or broken, and let me utilize several Cuban search engines that were not designed for use by independent researchers. I received valuable help from several institutions, perhaps more from the Escuela de Altos Estudios Hotelería y Turismo than any other. My time conducting research in their library was spent alongside Cubans, not academics, but current and future tourism employees studying various aspects of the industry – everything from cuisine and art to hotel management and foreign languages. The texts and manuals that are housed in the Escuela and used by the government to educate the island's tourism workers have been an invaluable source for my examination of Cuban identity. The Biblioteca Nacional José Martí also provided me with a number of these manuals as well as a wide-ranging (and surprisingly well-indexed) collection of tourism-related Cuban periodicals, articles, and speeches. Many of these were aimed at the broader Cuban population, not just those who were closely linked to the industry, and therefore provided an understanding of how governments in Cuba have utilized tourism to interact with the citizenry at large. While at both the Escuela and the Biblioteca I found valuable statistical information, the holdings of the Ministerio de

las Estadísticas were crucial. The Revolutionary government has shown a penchant for data-collection, and while the accuracy of some figures should be questioned, many are easily corroborated and were quite useful for my study.

Somewhat refreshingly, my research on the tourism/identity relationship necessarily led me away from the prying eyes of the Cuban state. My project required speaking with the everyday Cubans and foreigners who comprise the island's tourist world. While Cubans who worked in restaurants, bars, shops, or the limited private sector did not ask to see my credentials before discussing how the industry impacted their lives, earning their trust was not always easy, particularly as the government often scrutinizes citizens who have contact with foreigners. Yet I successfully built relationships with waiters, bartenders, people who rent rooms, artists, and others. Individually and as a group, they revealed the realities of Cuba's tourist world, particularly the economic opportunities found within the industry's micro and underground economies. Their stories also shed light on the limitations placed on Cubans vis-à-vis tourism. Additionally, a number of tourists recounted their experiences for me, providing glimpses of how foreigners have perceived, understood, and even helped to fashion Cuban identity.

When I returned from my research trips in Cuba, I was able to access truly outstanding research archives in the U.S. The Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC) at the University of Miami is an extremely valuable source for information. Its collections of government documents, private papers, postcards, guidebooks, newspapers, and other files provided important insight on the tourism/identity relationship. In the same way that nearly all of my Cuban sources were only available on the island, many CHC materials

can only be found in Coral Gables. Beyond the CHC, the Archives and Special Collections of University of Miami's Richter Library, particularly its voluminous Pan American Airways Collection, proved to be extremely valuable. Pan Am was the primary carrier to Cuba prior to 1959, and one of its subsidiaries managed several hotels on the island. My research also took me to the University of Houston, home of the Conrad N. Hilton Library and Archives. Prior to the Cuban Revolution, the Hotel Havana Hilton was one of the most important tourist installations on the island. Afterward, it remained so for a time as its managers strove to stay in business amidst the increasing tension on the island. The Hilton Archives' collections provided insight on a number of tourism-related themes and shed important light on how the hotel's presence shaped Cuban identity, particularly at a moment of deep change.

Perhaps because of these difficulties associated with conducting research in Cuba, only a limited number of scholars have dealt with the tourism industry's development in the Revolutionary era prior to the fall of the Soviet Union. Despite the uninterrupted importance of tourism in Cuba since (at the very least) the mid-twentieth century, nowhere within the existing literature is the impact of tourism on the island examined in a way that shows the historical linkages between the tourism development from each of these three periods (1945-1958, 1959-1979, and 1980-2007) and the construction of identity. In fact, few works on Cuban tourism utilize a chronological framework that is both broadly construed and balanced. Guided by the standard periodization, many scholars have focused their work largely within either the first (pre-1959) or the third (1991-present) period, largely ignoring what happened in between.

Nevertheless, two works stand out as the most broadly constructed. In *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (1997), historian Rosalie Schwartz does an excellent job of showing how tourism impacted Cuba prior to 1959, particularly the industry's divisive role in politics and its ability to shape development on the island. Yet her work glosses over the Revolution and condenses an analysis of contemporary Cuban tourism into eight pages. Andrea Colantonio and Robert Potter's *Urban Tourism and Development in the Socialist State: Havana During the 'Special Period'* (2006), on the other hand, is temporally weighted in a different direction. This, of course, is implicit in their work's title, which locates it in the post-Soviet era. Nevertheless, these two geographers do spend roughly twenty pages dealing with the development of tourism prior to the fall of the Soviet Union before moving on to examine a number of significant issues that have arisen since then. That their work is limited to Havana does not diminish its importance. Comprehending the urban nuances of the industry in the capital is critical for understanding tourism's role in shaping smaller cities such as Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara, or Trinidad. These books are unquestionably two of the most important resources for understanding the history of tourism in Cuba.

Between Schwartz on one hand and Colantonio and Potter on the other lie a number of more sharply focused studies dealing with the years either before the Revolution or on those following the fall of the Soviet Union. Historian Enrique Cirules (1993) and journalist T.J. English (2007), for example, have both written extensively on the U.S. mafia's deep links to tourism in pre-Revolutionary Cuba. Ted Henken (2002) has written about the micro-economy of tourism in post-Soviet Cuba; sociologists Julia O'Connell Davidson and Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor (1995), and anthropologist Nadine

Fernandez (1999) have all addressed prostitution on the island in this era. Beyond works that deal with tourism-related activities in one period or another, several authors examine subjects relating to tourism that in some cases span more than one period. These studies deal with topics that include entrepreneurial opportunity within the realm of tourism during the entire Revolutionary era (Ritter, 1998) and photography of Havana before, during, and after the Soviet-subsidized period of the Revolution (Dopico, 2002). Only a small minority of works recognizes the meaningful levels of touristic development between 1959 and the fall of the Soviet Union. When they do, it is only with brief descriptions, which usually appear within broader studies of economic development (i.e. not wholly focused on tourism) in Revolutionary Cuba (Mesa-Lago, 1978; Brundenius, 1984). None of these works use tourism as a lens for studying how the industry's development in years past – including the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s – was critical in shaping the construction of identity for Cuba and Cubans in contemporary Cuba. Thus, my dissertation seeks to go beyond these studies of singular periods or issues within Cuban tourism.

Looking back to the early 1960s, the reasons why foreign tourists had all but ceased visiting the island are abundantly clear. But consulting the relatively small number of works that deal with Cuban tourism between 1959 and 1989, the reasons why and exactly when they began to come back are not. Two scholars who have made reference to the roots of this redevelopment are professor of business Maria Dolores Espino and economist Carmelo Mesa-Lago. Espino dates tourism's resurgence from roughly a decade earlier. She looks to the early 1980s to provide keen insight as to precisely why Cuba chose to return to its roots as a Caribbean tourist destination, linking

the resurgence of international tourism in Cuba most closely to the problems the island had servicing foreign debts in the early 1980s. These had to be paid in convertible hard currency, and Espino argues that the government began to see tourism as a means for obtaining it.³ Mesa-Lago focuses his view of the tourist resurgence on the last five years of the 1970s. In his study of the Cuban economy during these years, he argues that it was through a strategy of pragmatic economic development that the government slowly began to once again promote tourism. He points to the hotel construction and increasing numbers of tourists from the mid- to late-1970s as the signs of the government's ambitious tourism plans.⁴

Based on my research, it is clear that the Revolutionary government's apparent neglect of tourism began to change substantially in 1970, which was, economically speaking, one of the worst moments in the Revolution's history. The goal of harvesting ten million tons of sugar in that year (which was in fact not reached) was embarked upon "at the cost of a sharp decline of production in the nonsugar sector and overall economic dislocation."⁵ The broad failure of the effort and its diverse impacts sparked a shift from the idealistic Sino-Guevarist model to significantly more pragmatic economic planning based on the Soviet model. Thus, beginning in 1970, the government was more open to new strategies for development, and one of them became the promotion of traditional forms of tourism, many of which closely resembled those of the pre-Revolutionary era.

³ Maria Dolores Espino, "Tourism in Socialist Cuba," in *Tourism Marketing and Management in the Caribbean* (London: Routledge, 1993), 101.

⁴ Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Cuba in the 1970s: Pragmatism and Institutionalization* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1978).

⁵ Mesa-Lago (1978), 9.

Upon closer examination though, it becomes clear that the Revolutionary government was not entirely closed to tourism development even in the 1960s. In fact, I argue that the Revolutionary government never lost the will to host foreign tourists. Tourism has always been a part of Castro's developmental strategy for Cuba. After realizing that it would be impossible to maintain traditional tourism profits without the island's traditional tourist market, the young leader quickly found other value in the industry. Even limited tourism could be useful in promoting the Cuban Revolution abroad and in showcasing the benefits it had bestowed upon the island's people. In the 1960s, tourism took on an ideological value distinct from its traditional economic value. The crumbled industry also served as an arena for Revolutionary leaders to redefine the culture of work. While the failed harvest of 1970 may have directly compelled the government to resurrect certain pre-Revolutionary models for generating tourism profits, and while changes in Western (not U.S.) attitudes towards Cuba once again prompted a rise in arrivals, the Revolutionary government by no means "discovered" tourism in the early 1970s. Indeed, its leaders had never lost sight of the industry's utility.

This conclusion has defined the periodization, and in turn, organization of my dissertation. Scholars often organize the island's past – and tourism development – in the following fashion: pre-1958, 1959-1990, 1991-present. While this chronology may be the most useful for understanding general Cuban history, it assumes that the Revolutionary government immediately turned its back on tourism until the fall of the Soviet Union triggered an economic crisis on the island so massive that it was forced to develop the industry against its will. Not only did the new government not abandon tourism, large-scale redevelopment of the industry began prior to the 1990s. While the

withdrawal of Soviet subsidies certainly did alter the ways in which tourism developed on the island (particularly the pace), there are also a number of continuities spanning the ten years preceding and the seventeen years following this economic shock (1980-2007). The ways in which tourism was developed and organized after the fall of the Soviet Union did not simply materialize in a vacuum. These strategies were devised decades earlier and continued to persist, albeit in sometimes altered forms, through the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. The Revolutionary government's development and expansion of tourism, which had already reached a fevered pitch by the early 1990s, were in fact set in motion by a host of actions taken by the Cuban state between 1959 and the fall of the Soviet Union.

This introduction has thus far identified some of the most profound links between tourism and the formation of identity in Cuba since 1945. Yet it is important to note that the tourism/identity relationship underwent distinct changes during this period. In part, these changes were based on shifting perceptions of citizenship on the island. 'Being Cuban' came to mean something very different during each of the periods I examine. These changing ideas regarding citizenship have had particularly significant consequences for individual identity in Cuba, exerting a great deal of influence over both personal freedom and economic opportunity.

The second chapter of my dissertation examines how tourism in Cuba shaped the construction of identity for the island and its citizens between 1945 and 1959. Arrivals skyrocketed during this period, accompanied by important consequences – increased corruption, racial exclusion, cultural tension, and the segregation of space were several of these. Most of the island's tourists were from the U.S., but the links between the two

countries extended far beyond travel and other trade. ‘Being Cuban’ often involved attending school, traveling, and investing in the U.S.,⁶ and as Chapter Two illustrates, these connections were frequently revealed throughout the island’s tourist world. Yet for many less fortunate people, being Cuban meant facing poverty and unemployment; for all, it meant daily reports of political corruption. Impunity from the law also became a part of Cuba’s tourist world. The privileges bestowed upon the wealthy and powerful, not to mention the island’s foreign guests, contributed to the deep sense of nationalism that fueled the fires of rebellion during the 1950s. As ideas regarding Cuban nationalism changed, so to did the meaning of being Cuban.

Chapter Three explores the years 1959 to 1979 and focuses primarily on the intersection of Revolutionary political culture and the institutional forms of the tourism industry. The reasons for the continued pursuit of tourism, the changes wrought by the Revolution throughout the industry, and why the number of visitors plummeted are of central concern. In order to best understand how Cuba’s complex political upheavals influenced the links between tourism, identity, and citizenship, this chapter pays particular attention to issues that were of major concern to both pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary governments, for example, casinos and prostitution. Chapter Three also examines how the Revolutionary government utilized the industry to help carry out its broader programs of change, which were frequently aimed at completely reshaping what it meant to be Cuban. Tourism offered the regime an arena to stage its ‘new Cuba.’ In the midst of such efforts, the tourism/identity relationship underwent significant change. This chapter reveals that as citizenship took on new meaning in the Revolutionary era,

⁶ Louis Perez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Cubans encountered new limitations on their freedom and opportunity within the island's tourist world.

In Chapter Four, I examine how tourism impacted the construction of Cuban identity between 1980 and 2007. As arrivals rose yet again during the 1980s, the state developed a number of the structures for organizing tourism that it would later employ in the post-Soviet period. I explore how Cuban leaders limited citizens' access to the island's tourist world, both as employees and as tourists. I also consider how the massive expansion of tourism that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s presented a number of threats to the ideas regarding Cuban identity that the Revolutionary government had tirelessly promoted for over two decades. Despite the state's attempts to maintain the island's Revolutionary identity (and firm control over the Cuban people), the official notion of citizenship once again underwent a significant shift. In light of the state's inability to provide Cubans with even the most basic supplies in the early 1990s, leaders permitted the development of a limited private sector on the island, much of which was directly linked to tourism. Notwithstanding this and other changes, the state has been unwilling to remove a number of the constraints that continue to stifle economic opportunity. Nevertheless, broadening the scope of 'acceptable' activities has had important consequences for not only the formation of Cuban identity at the individual level, but for individual survival as well.

For all three periods, I first examine the political economy of tourism, tracing how deep political shifts had profound impacts on the activities of all parties – Cuban citizens, tourists, and foreign investors – within the structures of the industry. I then turn in each chapter to the industry's most significant socio-cultural implications for the formation of

identity. As a social history of tourism, my dissertation examines the individual restrictions as well as rights and freedoms created for Cuban citizens through tourism, working conditions and compensation within the industry, tourism's impact on public space in Cuba, class schisms that have arisen as a result of tourism, and the ways in which the touristic experience has conditioned specific roles for different groups within Cuban society. As a cultural history of tourism, in each period I consider topics including the content of museums, international advertising, cultural tour packages, the historical preservation of architecture, and more.

The conclusion of my dissertation draws together all of the preceding categories of touristic analysis to present a clear idea of how tourism has conditioned the construction of Cuban identity differently over time. It also briefly considers how intermediary forces from outside the tourist realm, namely Hollywood and the Cuban Diaspora, have shaped potential tourists' perceptions of the island and its people. Foreign tourists have often learned something of Cuba before arriving. Their expectations, of course, are not necessarily based on any definitive Cuban reality. Yet whether true or false, the ideas that tourists formulate before reaching the island impact what cities they visit, where they stay, what they see, in essence, everything they do including to whom they give the majority of their foreign currency – the Cuban state or the Cuban people.

In sum, based on over six decades of diverse data on the political, the economic, the social, and the cultural realms of Cuba's tourist world, the ultimate goals of my dissertation are fourfold. The first is to present the varying ways in which pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary governments have conceptualized the nation within the

context of tourism, and in doing so, how they have presented foreigners with unique touristic realities, and Cubans with similarly unique (if often limited) touristic opportunities. Secondly, I illustrate how Cuban businesses and individual Cubans have defined both the nation and their personal existences within the context of tourism, and examine how those visions are different from (or similar to) those of the state. Thirdly, I highlight the further divergence that exists when the conceptualizations of non-Cubans are considered, for example foreign investors and travel guide writers. Finally, I show how the separate actions of all these groups have been crucial to the construction of Cuban identity over time. As this dissertation shows, Cuban identity can be proud or subordinate; inclusive or exclusionary; nationalistic or global. In any case, Cuban identity has been in continual flux, and all things have certainly not been equal within Cuba's tourist world.

Chapter Two: “Everyone’s Going to Cuba”⁷

In 1945, as World War II came to an end, Cuba prepared for guests. Planners believed that the advent of peace, coupled with rapidly expanding air networks, would usher in a period of “grand development.”⁸ This was not a new phenomenon on the island. Cubans were already seasoned hosts. Beautiful beaches, luxury hotels, casinos, and racetracks had lured visitors to the Caribbean isle for decades. U.S. prohibition and the expansion of gambling on the island prompted spikes in arrivals. Nevertheless, monumental disruptions such as the Independence Wars of the late-nineteenth century, the Great Depression, violent political unrest, and WWII prevented Cuba from attracting a more steady flow of holidaymakers. Still, following each calamity, the tourists returned. In the post-War era of expanding travel opportunities, planners hoped that they would not vanish once again.

As it turned out, opportunities proliferated for over a decade. This chapter examines how the expansion of tourism was critical to the ways in which Cuban identity developed between 1945 and 1959. The first part shows how the state utilized the industry to both expand and legitimate its own power; Cuban politicians simultaneously offered large rewards to the industry’s wealthiest investors, a number of whom were from the U.S. The second part illustrates the ways in which tourism created cleavages in Cuban society, as well as how the industry exacerbated certain pre-existing social divisions on the island. The final part examines the culture of Cuban tourism. Pre-Revolutionary governments, private investors, and guidebook writers, among others,

⁷ Cuban Tourist Commission Advertisement, *Miami Herald*, June 2, 1957.

⁸ Corporación Nacional del Turismo, “*Plan Mínimo para la Preparación Turística del País*” (La Habana, 1945), 13.

construed Cuban culture in a variety of ways, utilizing their respective constructions to lure visitors to the island, to explain Cuban history and culture, to sell souvenirs, and of course, to earn profits.

While the links between tourism and identity became more pronounced than ever before in the mid-1950s, it was the peace of the mid-1940s that allowed for the rapid growth of the industry to begin. Yet even amidst the chaos of WWII, large numbers of U.S. servicemen stationed at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base and elsewhere added a new dynamic to Cuba's familiar boom-bust pattern of tourism. As would-be tourists refrained from international travel, soldiers utilized the island not only as a base for Naval operations, but as a sinful playground as well.⁹ While these men were not officially on holiday, they interacted with Cubans in many of the same ways that tourists have with local populations throughout the underdeveloped world. They ate; they drank; they paid for sex with native women.¹⁰ Soldiers joined a sizeable community of U.S. businessmen and expatriates who represented the strong political and economic ties that had existed between the two countries for decades. As will be shown, these individuals often enjoyed a privileged status much like that afforded to tourists. Thus, even during times of economic catastrophe or war, Cuba retained a prominent place in the U.S. psyche.

⁹ I spoke with Dr. Robert Cohen about his experiences in Cuba during World War II. He, like almost all servicemen who passed through the island, was stationed in Guantánamo. Unlike many of the others who were stationed there with him, he was not able to visit Havana. He remembers that, "They wouldn't let us go to Havana. I guess the boys already tore it up pretty good." Dr. Cohen, telephone interview by author, July 27, 2007.

¹⁰ Louis Perez examines this phenomenon in the city of Guantánamo and nearby town of Caimanera. See Perez (1999), 238-242. As my conversation with Dr. Cohen suggests though, this phenomenon took place elsewhere on the island as well.

Several broad shifts within the world of international tourism emerged during the 1940s and further enhanced Cuba's ability to attract tourists. Most traveled to Cuba by sea in the first half of the twentieth century. While ships continued to ply the Florida Straits following WWII, air travel rapidly emerged as an effective means of reaching the island. In response to growing demand, Pan Am doubled its flights between Miami and Havana to six a day for the winter of 1945/1946.¹¹ They and other carriers also began flying from New York, New Orleans, and Chicago to Havana, Varadero, and Camagüey. In 1946, its first year providing international service, Compañía Cubana de Aviación, S.A. (commonly referred to as simply Cubana) flew 105,370 miles abroad. Five years later in 1951, it flew 1,244,132 – an increase of over 1,000% percent.¹²

As passenger volume to Cuba and elsewhere increased, airfares decreased. Discounted rates on flights from the U.S. to the Caribbean began in 1948 when Pan Am inaugurated tourist class prices on flights between New York and San Juan, cutting the fare from \$133 to \$75.¹³ Other destinations, including Cuba, soon followed. The cost of a ticket to Puerto Rico is significant not only for what it illustrates about the increasing accessibility of the Caribbean, but also because it provides a glimpse of the regional competition Cuba would face in the future, not only from Puerto Rico, but from Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, and others. Carving out a unique identity amidst a sea of competitors would be a difficult task. Still, by 1957, U.S. tourists could find discount airfares to Cuba for as cheap as ten dollars each way.¹⁴ While transportation

¹¹ "Air Schedule Doubled," *New York Times*, September 24, 1945.

¹² Compañía Cubana de Aviación, "*Memoria Anual de 1951*" (La Habana, 1952), 11.

¹³ Pan American Airways, Inc., "*The First 50 Years of Pan Am: The Story of Pan American World Airways from 1927 to 1977*" (New York, 1977), 20.

¹⁴ *Miami Herald*, November 17, 1957.

networks expanded and holidays in Cuba became less expensive, U.S. tourists were becoming wealthier in the post-WWII era. Real wages for U.S. citizens – who still served as Cuba’s primary tourist market – had gone up thirty percent between 1940 and 1950.¹⁵

Several dominant themes emerge from the massive touristic growth that took place following these broad shifts. As the Cuban government, airlines, hoteliers, restaurateurs, club owners, and others gained a stake in not only tourism’s success, but in the construction of a marketable Cuban identity as well, a number of competing conceptions of *Cubanidad* emerged. In order to successfully establish its own vision, the state utilized the industry’s institutional forms to exert control over Cubans in a number of ways. Foreign visitors came to understand Cuban identity through tourist offerings; the large presence of U.S. tourists allowed that particular market to shape the ways in which Cuban history and culture were presented to visitors. Sights and spectacles were designed to cater to these visitors’ tastes. Within this context, tourism affected groups of Cubans differently, offering greater opportunities to some and putting severe limitations on others.

This chapter demonstrates that a high level of continuity characterized the planning that drove this touristic growth between 1945 and 1958. Yet Cuban politics were far from stable during this period. In March of 1952, General Fulgencio Batista deposed the democratically elected government of President Carlos Prío Socarrás, cancelled June elections, and assumed control of the country for a second time. Batista expanded the already broad powers that the state had reserved for itself within the realm

¹⁵ Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 109, 220.

of tourism. In doing so, he and his supporters were able to increase arrivals as well as profits, however, not without important consequences for the formation of Cuban identity. In light of this growth (much of which had been meticulously planned by others prior to the 1952 coup), as well as the profound ways in which the industry affected people's lives, Batista was the first Cuban President to oversee the crystallization of the island's touristic identity on a national scale. In 1957, the Cuban Tourist Commission (CTC) ran an ad in the *Miami Herald* claiming that, "Everyone's Going to Cuba."¹⁶ The feverish planning of the mid-1950s seems to indicate that both Cuban and foreign promoters believed this to be true.

The Political Economy of Tourism in Pre-Revolutionary Cuba

Politicians, economists, and other leaders have long regarded tourism as a possible boon to developing economies. Based on their natural tourist appeal and close proximity to one of the world's largest tourist markets, both state and private promoters early on targeted the islands of the Caribbean. As far as Cuba was concerned, the island's politicians and developers found support for their touristic designs from U.S. lawmakers. In 1935, a Cuban delegation visited Washington D.C. to meet with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt regarding economic assistance for the island. Roosevelt advocated the expansion of tourism and advised them to promote the island's history and natural beauty as opposed to its casinos and cabarets. When Axis propaganda began to permeate Latin America and the Caribbean in the late 1930s, FDR recognized his country's own interests in the expansion of tourism in Cuba and created the Office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in 1940. This agency, headed by Nelson A.

¹⁶ *Miami Herald*, June 2, 1957.

Rockefeller, went further in supporting travel to Cuba, creating films that highlighted the island's identity as sultry getaway, for example, *Cuba: Land of Romance* and *Week-end in Havana*.¹⁷

Fighting in Europe and the Pacific completely distracted U.S. leaders from Caribbean tourism, but afterwards, their interest in Cuba's world of leisure returned. When Prío visited President-elect Harry Truman to seek investment in 1948, tourism was cast as having almost limitless economic potential. In 1950, the U.S. once again began to officially endorse tourism to Cuba, this time as a way to counter the perceived growth of Soviet influence in the region.¹⁸ In a 1953 petition to the U.N., President Dwight Eisenhower echoed these calls for the further development of tourism in Cuba. He saw the industry as an effective means for the island to diversify and promote economic growth, strengthen regional ties, and share technological expertise. Perhaps fearing that an economically weak and politically isolated Cuba would be more easily influenced by the Soviet Union, Eisenhower declared that international tourism was "an important part of national development."¹⁹

In conjunction with this active encouragement from abroad, each of the island's post-War administrations (Grau, Prío, and Batista) spent considerable energy and millions of pesos developing tourism. As powerful political interests fostered growth, individual Cubans and foreigners also saw immense opportunity. Airlines, restaurateurs, people who rented rooms, and others committed themselves to facilitating the industry's growth. Thus, as influential foreigners (for example, Hilton Hotels International and Pan

¹⁷ Armando Maribona, *Turismo en Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial "LEX," 1959), 21-22. Schwartz, 95, 106.

¹⁸ Schwartz, 114-115.

¹⁹ Maribona, 23.

American Airways) advocated the expansion of tourism, they found many cooperative Cuban counterparts.

Bold Initiatives

Post-War planners were often acting on the impulses of ambitious pre-War strategies for touristic development that had never been carried out. In 1937, the Corporación Nacional del Turismo (CNT) had presented an ambitious plan to the government that proposed the creation of “a beautiful city of recreation...the most attractive after Miami Beach in the Atlantic world.”²⁰ Planners had hoped to construct this tourist city on the coast between Havana and Varadero – the island’s two most well established tourist centers. Their eventual goal was to link this new city to a number of similar yet smaller scale projects along the northern coast between the island’s capital and its most famous beach.²¹ To say that these new facilities would have created a ‘tourist zone’ is an understatement. In effect, these joined projects would have created a one hundred forty kilometer long ‘tourist region.’ The CNT’s was a phenomenally impressive goal that had the potential to fundamentally alter life for hundreds of thousands of Cubans. Between 1937 and the end of the War though, large parts of the land between the capital and Varadero were settled by, in the lexicon of the Cuban state, “*poblaciones con pocas o ningunas posibilidades turísticas*” (populations with few or no touristic possibilities).²² While CNT planners did not elaborate on what this negative

²⁰ “*Plan Mínimo*,” 3. The authors actually used the term “Atlantic Zone.” This was noteworthy; the “*Plan Mínimo*” was published just as scholars first began to examine the complex ways in which Atlantic states interact with one another. Bernard Bailyn examines the development of this conceptual framework during and immediately after WWII. See “The Idea of Atlantic History,” *Itinerario* 20, no. 1 (1996): 19-44.

²¹ “*Plan Mínimo*,” 3.

²² “*Plan Mínimo*,” 3.

designation entailed, their proposal is illustrative in that it reveals the primacy of tourism within the state's vision of Cuban society. They were essentially prepared to hand over huge swaths of the island to foreign guests. Designs for this heavily populated space were also hampered by a lack of financial resources and the disruption of WWII.

Even with their grand hopes dashed, as peace renewed opportunities for tourism development, planners sought to guide growth in a different fashion. Rather than focusing on one grand developmental project, the CNT proposed a number of far less intense smaller projects. This new strategy, which was still unquestionably pro-tourism, was based on the realities of the 1940s. U.S. investment was flowing to places such as Western Europe and Japan, and Cuban investors – despite the wartime rise in sugar prices – were still wary of seemingly risky tourism ventures. Thus, CNT planners presented their revised ideas to President Grau in the “*Plan Mínimo para la Preparación Turística del País*” (Minimum Plan for the Touristic Preparation of the Country).

The authors of the “*Plan Mínimo*” did not completely discard plans for the spectacular *Zona de Turismo* (Zone of Tourism), but they did modify the original plan in several ways. Instead of a vast network of closely interconnected tourist centers extending from Havana to Varadero, the new plan called for one very intense center of development, much like the “beautiful city of recreation” that had been planned in 1937. Since the “*pequeño Centro Turístico*” (small Tourist Center) would offer many of the same sun- and sand-based activities as Varadero, planners chose a site that neighbored the capital, offering urban tourists a more proximate beach experience. It was to occupy a five-kilometer stretch of land between the beaches of Tarará and Boca Ciega, roughly twenty-kilometers east of Havana. There were to be four hotels, a casino-theater, an

administrative facility for the new center, information offices for the CNT, a structure for the local police force, a cinema, a golf course, and a park for “popular spectacles.”²³

State participation was critical to the CNT’s strategy. Constructing the proposed Tourist Center required “the expropriation of all the land”²⁴ necessary for the various facilities. While working within a more limited scope than was proposed in 1937, the CNT once again validated the use of extreme state power in order to facilitate tourism development. Tourism, for example, clearly trumped private property. In fact, the 1940 Constitution had broadened the acceptable terms of expropriation. No longer did confiscated lands have to provide a “public utility.” Instead the Cuban authorities could expropriate land if it was in the “social interest”²⁵ – a far more vague requirement.

Yet the state did not intend to take full responsibility for the development of this new tourist enclave. Confiscated land that fell outside the scope of their “minimum plans” for development was to be sold off to individuals who would be responsible for its complete urbanization. Moreover, the government offered new incentives for private investment. Investors were exempt from paying national, provincial, and municipal taxes for five years on profits from hotels, casinos, theatres, golf courses, tennis courts, and more. For the ensuing five years they received a fifty percent exemption.²⁶ Tourism was sufficiently important to grant special privileges to both the state and the private sector. Nevertheless, the state lacked sufficient funds to carry out such massive projects and the

²³ “*Plan Mínimo*,” 5, 13.

²⁴ Anglo-American Caribbean Commission, “Caribbean Tourist Trade: A Regional Approach” (Washington, D.C., 1945), 45, Pan American World Airways, Inc. Records, University of Miami Library (hereafter cited as Pan Am UM).

²⁵ American Chamber of Commerce in Cuba, “Analysis of Principal Articles of the Cuban Constitution of 1940,” (Law Firm of Lazo y Cubas, 1940), 4, Pan Am UM.

²⁶ “*Plan Mínimo*,” 16-18.

necessary private investment was not immediately forthcoming. Despite bold intentions and attractive incentives for investors, many of the planned projects had not been completed by the 1950s.

Amidst these centralized planning strategies, the Cuban state granted limited power to a variety of regional interests. At the First National Convention for Local Tourism Committees that took place in 1942, representatives from across Cuba met to discuss ways to incorporate the island's regions, cities, and towns into the national planning process.²⁷ While the cultural dynamics of this regional differentiation will be dealt with below, these committees served an important political purpose. As anthropologist Robert Foster writes: "The proclamation of each new national community is coeval with the inscription of its official history, often in the narrative form of a precolonial past culminating in a struggle for freedom."²⁸ In other words, tourism offered state planners an excellent platform to present their own narrative of Cuban history. Museums, festivals, monuments, and even travel guides told the step-by-step story of how the Cuban nation was created. Placing stress on Trinidad's uniquely colonial character or Viñales' historic tobacco production helped forge strong local identities. As planners included these areas within the historical narrative presented to tourists, each region became more closely linked to the government's nation building project and part of the Cuba imagined by the outside world.

Government funded local participation in the planning process validated this regional differentiation further. The nation's parts were temporally disassociated from

²⁷ Maribona, 159.

²⁸ Robert J. Foster, "Making National Cultures in the Global Ecumene," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20 (1991): 241.

the whole, organized chronologically in order to cast the sitting government as the culmination of an inevitable historical process. The government thus legitimized itself through its presentation of history within the tourist world. Significantly, Local Tourism Committees were deemed to be strictly non-political entities.²⁹ In this way, local culture could not subvert the political hegemony of the national government. Locals could promote their individual identities, but only insofar as they occupied a place on the linear progression of events that led to the founding of the Cuban nation. Through tourism the government affirmed local identity – but only insofar as the public supported its programs. Of course, planners hoped that economic benefits resulting from tourism would further encourage locals to accept the official narrative.

On a more concrete level (literally), this and subsequent conventions drew disparate regions together by integrating them into national and international transportation networks. Local participation in cultural planning would be of little consequence if tourists could not easily access destinations outside Havana and Varadero. Moreover, a national transportation system would theoretically allow Cuba's domestic economy to develop in a more integrated fashion. Because of the massive capital needed for such projects, individuals, villages, and even smaller cities were dependent on the state for assistance in opening their locales up to the outside world. It was hoped that providing regions with links to tourist markets would provide respective locals with further incentive to support the state's national building project.

At the eight National Tourism Conventions organized between 1942 and 1957, transportation was always a matter of concern for attendees. Beyond the basic

²⁹ Maribona, 159.

infrastructure required to bring visitors to Cuba, planners at these conventions focused on building highways to link the island's cities, ports, parks, and other attractions. Nevertheless, when Armando Maribona, the Vice President of the Instituto Cubano del Turismo (ICT) from 1952 until 1958, looked back on the goals of the eight conventions, he recounted just as many failures as successes. For example, while a highway from Sancti Spíritus to Trinidad proposed in 1942 was completed in 1953, another from Cienfuegos to Hanabanilla proposed in the same year had not been started as of 1959. Several resolutions to improve the island's roads, as well as two to upgrade port installations, were never begun either.³⁰ Thus in terms of the island's transportation infrastructure, tourism helped to foster cohesion between a limited number of cities, regions, and groups, but fell short of creating a fully integrated Cuba. After all, while projects such as the highway between Sancti Spíritus and Trinidad promoted economic integration within the domestic economy that was not reliant on tourism, improving the island's facilities for yachts certainly did not benefit most Cubans.

Tourism provided a framework for Cuban leaders to think about the nation's overall development in other contexts, as broader planning strategies became linked to the tourism industry. In looking beyond Cuba's cities and beaches, the *Plan Mínimo* advocated the use of tourism as a means to pressure for the institutionalization of park-related legislation that had been passed in March of 1936. *Ley-Decreto No. 681* stipulated that each province was to have its own *Parque Forestal*, but as of 1944, little action had been taken. The CNT advised that this plan be carried out in conjunction with

³⁰ Maribona, 157-176.

complementary rural tourism development.³¹ This was yet another sign that tourism had assumed a privileged place in the mind of Cuban planners. Cubans would theoretically get the parks their politicians promised, but this was largely in an effort to appeal to non-Cubans – much like the transportation infrastructure linking the island’s tourist centers to peripheral areas. Despite the persistence of high hopes and good intentions, in December of 1958, one of the island’s top planners wrote: “In Cuba the national parks only exist written in the *Gaceta Oficial*.”³² The rhetoric surrounding the development of parks never became a reality in the pre-Revolutionary era.

The CNT tried to foster additional growth in rural tourism – growth that was less susceptible to political lassitude. In 1947, it sponsored a competition amongst the students of the Cátedra de Proyectos de la Escuela de Arquitectura de la Universidad de La Habana. Competitors were asked to design camping facilities to serve both Cuban and foreign tourists. The CNT selected the top three designs to present to possible investors.³³ This competition was noteworthy for several reasons, but most importantly, it reflected the CNT’s multifaceted approach to development, reinforcing the shift from largely urban- and beach-based planning to a broader utilization of all the island’s potential tourist offerings.³⁴ By the post-War era, CNT planners had already begun to extend their gaze beyond Havana and Varadero, promoting the industry in cities such as Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spíritus, Trinidad, Santa Clara, and

³¹ “*Plan Mínimo*,” 8-9.

³² Maribona, 152.

³³ Corporación Nacional del Turismo, “*Campos Turísticos: Proyectos*” (La Habana, 1947).

³⁴ In 1919, President Mario Menocal prescribed that tourism development be restricted to *municipios* with at least 25,000 citizens. See *Legislación Vigente Sobre Turismo* (La Habana, 1933), 1.

Guantánamo as well.³⁵ Mineral baths such as La Mina, El Tigre, La Condesa, El Pocito, and Pola had drawn visitors to Cuba for years, but the island's wide array of other natural offerings prompted planners to promote tourism growth in the expansive space between Cuban cities.³⁶

Other promoters, without direct links to the CNT, were equally, if not more, determined to draw foreign tourists away from Cuba's cities. In 1948, the Cuban Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Cuban Industries jointly sponsored the *Conferencia para el Progreso de la Economía Nacional*. Members of these two groups formed the Permanent Commission for the Progress of the National Economy; tourism was one of their central concerns. In "*La Industria Turística Cubana*," economist and member of this Commission Victor Santamarina argued that Cuba should not aspire to mirror Rome, Paris, New York, London, or Berlin. Planners should instead focus on the island's "*riquezas naturales*" (natural riches).³⁷ Santamarina, despite his seemingly minimalist approach, sought to maximize arrivals. If Cuba could not compete in terms of art or history, it did have beaches, mineral baths, and mountains. In fact, he believed that each of the country's provinces should offer tourists all three. Instead of cities and culture, Santamarina favored a total onslaught upon the island's natural

³⁵ "*Plan Mínimo*," 8.

³⁶ This competition also showed the CNT's willingness to develop links with some of Cuba's technical experts, in this case, architectural students from the Universidad de la Habana; the CNT valued local knowledge. Local investors were also given precedence. Winning designs did not require massive capital investment, and judges openly acknowledged their intention to extend the investment potential of tourism to smaller-scale investors – the "*pequeños capitalistas*." Finally, the winners were selected on their ability to serve both Cuban and foreign tourists. Two tourist markets existed, and CNT planners were okay with them interacting and utilizing the same facilities.

³⁷ Victor Santamarina, "*La Industria Turística Cubana*" (paper, *Conferencia para el Progreso de la Economía Nacional*, La Habana, Cuba, November 15-20, 1949), 7.

attractions. Additionally, he suggested the development of specific niche markets. He hoped, for example, to attract ‘health tourists’ from around the world. With a focus on biological and medical tourism, he hoped to take particular advantage of the U.S. market’s seven million “*reumáticos*.”³⁸

Independently published guidebooks also helped to reinforce this alternative way of touring the island. Erna Ferguson, who worked with Cuban planners in writing her 1946 guide, noted their growing desire “to advertise Cuba’s remoter beauties and to attract travelers who seek to know a country’s real quality, and to enjoy quieter vacations.”³⁹ Thus, in the post-War period, planners in Cuba were basing their broader strategies on hopes to capture certain niche markets that included health tourists as well as those interested in the island’s natural world.

Despite these attempts to promote tourism outside of the island’s main tourist centers, growth in Havana and Varadero continued to take precedence over rural development. For private investors, the densely occupied hotels of these destinations offered far greater financial rewards than camping facilities in rural Pinar del Río or the Sierra Maestra Mountains – particularly within their casinos. Yet after being elected President in 1948, Prío was reluctant to allow widespread gambling on the island, believing that Cuba could profit from a more positive brand of tourism. Several casinos existed, but nightclubs and hotels sought to open their own gaming rooms. Seeing better opportunities for profit elsewhere in the Caribbean, international hotel developers often bypassed Cuba.⁴⁰ Despite planners’ grand hopes, the industry floundered. In the eyes of

³⁸ Santamarina, 21.

³⁹ Erna Ferguson, *Cuba* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 306-307.

⁴⁰ Schwartz, 112, 115.

others, particularly Prío's political enemies such as Batista, the President's domestic agenda was having a negative impact on international arrivals and limiting tourism profits.

In 1949, Prío relented and allowed more casinos to open in Cuba.⁴¹ The island's arrivals were already beginning to lag behind those of Mexico, a more recently developed tourist destination.⁴² Merely attracting increased investment was not enough though. In Prío's view, the island's tourism industry needed a massive influx of capital. Thus, when his administration decided to pursue a \$200,000,000 loan in the U.S.; officials cited the development of tourism as one of their main objectives.⁴³ In the end, Prío was unable to secure the funds he sought; U.S. banking firms had been unwilling to grant his requests, and the U.S. government now had more pressing concerns in not only Europe but Korea as well. Cuba's President also faced obstacles at home. Several groups vehemently opposed its issuance. Communists and followers of General Fulgencio Batista joined with the Ortodoxo Party (led by the fiery young politician Eduardo Chíbas) to block the loan.⁴⁴ Their objections were not necessarily related to tourism, but rather the enormous burden that such a loan would place upon the Cuban nation. Ironically, Batista would generate money for tourism in ways that were likely far more harmful to the nation than Prío's loan would ever have been.

⁴¹ Schwartz, 115.

⁴² Schwartz, 115.

⁴³ "Cuba Asks \$200,000,000," *New York Times*, October 30, 1949.

⁴⁴ Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 1012.

Batista, Tourism, and the “New Deal”

After Batista overthrew Prío in March of 1952, the new leader utilized tourism to further accentuate the disjuncture between his and prior administrations. Shortly after assuming power, the reinstated dictator proclaimed to the media that his government would not only bring benefits to the Cuban people, but to the island’s tourists as well. He boasted that it was, in effect, “a New Deal for tourists.”⁴⁵ In June of 1952, the new Cuban government passed one of its first tourism-related initiatives. *Ley-Decreto No. 137* created the Instituto Cubano del Turismo (ICT) to assume the functions of the CNT. Working through the ICT, the new regime set out to both standardize and gain control of as much of the industry as it could. The ICT’s President, Martial Facio, boasted that his institute would effectively manage the island’s roads, gambling machines, and taxis – something he claimed that the CNT had never been able to do.⁴⁶ Moreover, the island’s new directors of tourism development expanded their promotional programs in the U.S. The ICT established permanent offices in Miami, New York City, and Key West. The Institute also stepped up the production of promotional material written in English, not only in an effort to appeal to U.S. tourists, but to those in Canada as well. It printed guides, brochures, and newsletters, and produced a number of short movies to showcase the island’s offerings (a number of which are examined below).⁴⁷ The ICT sought to control the ways in which visitors experienced Cuba – from the moment they chose to visit the island to the time when they stepped in their first taxi and until they decided to return.

⁴⁵ R. Hart Phillips, “Cuba’s ‘New Deal’ for Tourists,” *New York Times*, October 26, 1952.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Banco Nacional de Cuba, “*Programa de Desarrollo Económico*” (La Habana, 1958), 48-49.

Not only did Batista proclaim that his administration would usher in “a New Deal for tourists,” his takeover signaled a new deal for tourism promoters and investors as well. In some cases, the new arrangement was less than positive. Pan American Airways had been doing business in Cuba for decades and was in the midst of negotiations with its partial subsidiary company, Cubana, when Batista took power in 1952. Hoping to establish a relationship with the new leader, Pan Am sent two representatives from Cubana to meet with him. They soon learned that Batista would not see their representatives or have any dealings with their company as long as Sergio Clark remained President of Cubana. According to a Pan Am executive, Clark had “enjoyed...an inside track with the previous Administration and...occupied two other posts to which he was named by the Government.”⁴⁸ Faced with an inability to operate freely and fairly with Clark as President, Pan Am had “no recourse other than to ask for his resignation.”⁴⁹ The adversarial nature of Cuban politics created problems for Pan Am – and likely others – long before Fidel Castro took control of the island in 1959.

Despite what appeared to be a new path for tourism development highlighted by attempts to exert tight control over the industry, a close examination of ICT programs for touristic expansion reveals that many were in fact borrowed from the CNT and other planners. For example, the CNT and ICT each focused on widespread diversified development; they each sponsored several National Conventions for Local Tourism Committees; and they each acknowledged their heavy dependence on the U.S tourist market. Aside from these general similarities, worldwide growth in tourism meant that as Batista assumed power, his government had to adapt to the potential and the problems

⁴⁸ Wilbur L. Morrison to Erwin Balluder, April 14, 1952, Pan Am UM.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

associated with both increasing arrivals and Caribbean competition. Other islands, particularly Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Jamaica, as well as Mexico and parts of Central America, were also promoting the rapid growth of their own tourism industries. Hence, as the ICT both appropriated and revised aspects of the CNT's domestic agenda, it continued the practice of looking abroad to promote programs of regional cooperation as a way of offsetting competition.

In September of 1953, delegates from Cuba, eleven other Latin American and Caribbean nations, and Puerto Rico met in Havana for the Third Regional Inter-American Congress of Tourism.⁵⁰ Attendees spent much of their time thanking one another, invoking the names of José Martí and Miguel Hidalgo, and seeing Cuba's tourist offerings firsthand. Beyond informational programs and social events, the delegates discussed several key elements for future tourism growth. They stated that their basic goal was the exchange of touristic knowledge. As they encouraged congeniality and solidarity among friends, the representatives resolved to increase tourism between their countries by eliminating immigration constraints, improving transportation and hotel networks, and developing cultural ties.⁵¹

Some of their resolutions were easier to implement than others. Dropping immigration requirements and scheduling arts festivals were considerably easier than coordinating intercontinental communications for air and ferry travel. Establishing a professional golf circuit between the U.S., Mexico, Central American, and the Caribbean

⁵⁰ The other nations were Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haití, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panamá, República Dominicana, and Venezuela. The first Congress was held in Mexico, the second in Guatemala.

⁵¹ Instituto Cubano del Turismo, "*Memoria: Tercer Congreso Interamericano Regional de Turismo*" (La Habana, 1953), 17-18.

would be equally difficult, as would be constructing the *Carretera Panamericana José Martí* – a network of highways and ferries, connecting Florida, Cuba, the Yucatán, and Veracruz. Difficulties aside, it was hoped that when taken together, their bold initiatives would lead to the creation of a “*Bloque Turístico Interamericano*.”⁵²

In the end, their efforts were largely symbolic, as the absence of the U.S. suggests. As the attendees focused much of their attention on increasing tourism between one another, the U.S. still represented the most significant market for many of the participants. Additionally, U.S. investors and technicians would certainly have been critical to the development of transportation and hotel networks. U.S. sportsmen would also have played a large role in the region’s golf circuit and other sporting events. And key aspects of the proposed transportation mega-plans were wholly contingent on U.S. participation. Ship and air networks were of far less use if they were not directly connected to the U.S.; as was the *Carretera Panamericana José Martí*. Considering how many tourists the U.S. provided, not to mention the country’s role within cooperative proposals, it is surprising that its representatives were conspicuously absent. Nevertheless, Cuba’s continued participation in these international conferences reflected tourism’s importance within the island’s foreign policy in the region as a whole.

Amidst these cooperative efforts, Cuban planners, like their Caribbean counterparts, proposed a wide range of incentives to make their particular island the most attractive to foreign investors. Eusebio Mujal – leader of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, the island’s largest union at the time – claimed that his members had a stake in the development of the tourism industry. It is therefore notable that when

⁵² Ibid., 54, 85-87, 89.

he proposed a series of bold initiatives to promote growth across the island, they were directed less at helping union members than supporting or promoting the largest possible investors, many of which were foreign. He believed that Cuba needed a huge influx of capital aimed at promoting mass tourism on the island. In many ways, the legislation he proposed complemented the planning strategies found in the “*Plan Mínimo*.” Like CNT planners, Mujal focused on large-scale tourism ventures; he was particularly interested in the construction of large hotels. His plan offered investors a series of attractive concessions if they were willing to spend over one million pesos and build hotels with no fewer than one hundred fifty rooms.⁵³ It called for the one-year suspension of some annual taxes, a ten-year suspension of others, and the absolute exemption from several more. While a one-year tax break may not seem to be much of a reward, these concessions were almost exclusively linked to the actual construction process. For example, taxes on construction costs and the importation of building materials were to be suspended for one year. By limiting this generous concession to a single year, the government ensured that its investors would also be concerned with hastening the pace of the industry’s development. To allay investors’ concerns over more long-term expenses, Mujal proposed to suspend taxes on water and other utilities for ten years.⁵⁴

In April of 1953, soon after Mujal submitted his plan, the Cuban government passed *Ley-Decreto No. 813*, establishing a package of concessions for tourism investors that, in some cases, was even more generous than those proposed by Mujal.⁵⁵ Batista-era officials were giving investors a further incentive to enter the island’s tourism market. In

⁵³ Eusebio Mujal, “*Proyecto o Iniciativa de Ley*” (La Habana: Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, 1953), 2.

⁵⁴ Mujal, 4-5.

⁵⁵ “*Programa de Desarrollo Económico*,” 26.

some cases, the Cuban state joined with powerful private interests to provide developers with much – if not all – of their necessary start-up capital. As a result, higher profits seemed to be on the horizon for the growing list of investors. Unlike Prío, Batista showed little restraint in allowing casinos to open on the island. With their phenomenal cash flows, casinos offered the highest economic returns for investors (and incidentally, became breeding grounds for corruption). The lure of casino profits led not only to a focus on large-scale tourism development, but to reckless investment by both the government and non-governmental actors. In 1952, for example, the leaders of Cuba’s hotel and restaurant workers union decided to participate in the “bonanza” by investing huge sums of money in an urban-based tourism initiative. They emptied the *Caja de Retiro y Asistencia Social de los Trabajadores Gastronómicos* (Savings Fund for Retirement and Social Assistance of Food Industry Workers) of US\$6 million, allowing Hilton Hotels International (HHI) to utilize the funds for the construction of their massive hotel.⁵⁶ Thus while Batista had been adamantly opposed to borrowing money from abroad to pursue tourism-related initiatives advocated by Prío, he had no problem with borrowing from people who had far less power to reclaim their funds.

HHI received generous terms for repayment of the *Caja’s* US\$6 million investment. In order to further entice Hilton developers, the Cuban government awarded them an additional loan based on even more advantageous terms for the firm. Cuba’s Banco de Desarrollo Económico y Social (BANDES) provided HHI with a further US\$7 million to cover the costs of construction. The repayment of BANDES money was less

⁵⁶ For the company’s president, Conrad Hilton, Havana was the only suitable location for his proposed hotel. See Arthur E. Elmiger to Pbro. Jaime Genesca y Rovira, July 17, 1956, Conrad N. Hilton Library and Archives, University of Houston (hereafter cited as CNHLA).

clear than the schedule of payments that had been established to repay the *Caja*. Batista created this developmental agency by legal decree in mid-1954. Vague language explained that BANDES' objective was to provide "short, medium, and long-range" support to "state run, quasi state run, or privately run" companies.⁵⁷ In effect, BANDES money could be given to *any* company to build *anything*. Repayment was not immediately addressed. As far as the Havana Hilton was concerned, BANDES ensured that HHI did not have to fund the construction of its own hotel.

Hilton's hoteliers were not the only tourism related interests to benefit from the new regime's generosity; BANDES and other financial institutions distributed hundreds of millions of dollars to a wide range of developers. Even though members of BANDES' Directing Committee were required to be "of recognized and solid moral reputation,"⁵⁸ they had no compunctions in granting US\$6 million to the notorious mafia boss Meyer Lansky and his partners for the construction of Havana's Riviera Hotel.⁵⁹ Like the Hilton, it would also house a casino.

It is noteworthy that BANDES underwrote the construction of tourism projects explicitly linked to casinos. Many of these projects were hotels, and while it is true that the island needed more guest rooms to remain competitive among its Caribbean competitors, casinos offered Cuban politicians greater rewards than any other tourism-related venture. According to Frank Ragano, the lawyer of Havana mob boss Santo Trafficante, Batista's wife received ten percent of all slot machine profits from the Mafioso's casinos. Even a gaming license generated over \$200,000 in under the table

⁵⁷ Enrique Cirules, *The Mafia in Havana: A Caribbean Mob Story* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2004), 107, 109.

⁵⁸ *Artículo 24, Ley-Decreto No. 1947*, Banco de Desarrollo Económico y Social.

⁵⁹ Schwartz, 156.

payments to Cuban gaming officials.⁶⁰ In sum, creating an agency to provide state funds to hotel investors certainly had benefits – particularly when their properties offered games of chance. Along these lines, the *Banco de Fomento Agrícola e Industria de Cuba* provided the International Hotel Corporation with the necessary funds to renovate the government-owned Hotel Nacional, which would also house a casino. In total, US\$61 million was set aside for hotels and motels.⁶¹

It is true that BANDES funded some tourism-related projects that could potentially benefit Cubans as well as tourists. The bank provided almost US\$100 million for roads to these tourist centers. Some Cubans benefited from this; tourism employees as well as Cuban holidaymakers were able use the roads leading to and from the island's posh hotels and resorts. Yet politicians pursued other projects that were of far less public utility. The government issued US\$300 million in promissory notes and bonds, US\$8 million of which was given to the *Compania Terminal de Helicópteros*. Most outrageously, US\$80 million was reserved for a project called *Canal Via Cuba*. This would have sliced the island in two with a north-south canal.⁶² Once again, the government was willing to fund projects that would fundamentally alter Cuban society.

Batista-era planners seemingly did their best to distribute these concessions for tourism development throughout the island. The ICT maintained the programs of regional expansion that had been developed by the CNT, formalizing them through the creation of specific zones for tourism development throughout the island – Trinidad in 1954; Varadero, Isla de Piños, Cojímar, San Diego de los Baños, and Cienfuegos in 1955;

⁶⁰ Frank Ragano and Selwyn Raab, *Mob Lawyer* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 41-42.

⁶¹ Schwartz, 152, 156. Cirules, 108.

⁶² Cirules, 107-110.

and Soroa in 1958.⁶³ As opposed to Cuba's chief industries of sugar, coffee, tobacco, and nickel, which were only viable in certain geographical zones, tourism was an adaptive industry. This 'second harvest' could survive in Cuba's cities, its mountains, on its beaches, or within its forests – and it could produce year-round. From 1945 to 2007, all Cuban governments attempted, with varying degrees of success, to spread the industry throughout the island to take advantage of its dynamic nature. Yet Batista's own record of decentralization remains questionable. Government spending on public works in support of tourism in Havana and Varadero soared between 1951 and 1957, far outstripping that of other areas. Excluding money spent on highways, greater Havana received 132.7 million pesos, Varadero 15 million. Santiago de Cuba received 9.2 million, and other zones received a total of 15.7 million.⁶⁴ Moreover, despite Batista's previous opposition to incurring massive debt, his administration's strategies were clearly no more sound than those of Prío's.

There were other tangible signs that, during this era, tourism was assuming a place of permanence in Cuba, for example, within the island's educational system. The Ministry of Education had created classes to train hotel industry workers prior to WWII, but the authors of the *Plan Mínimo* argued that these were not sufficient to support the island's expanding world of tourism. The classes were only available through Cuba's School of the Home and School of Arts and Crafts in Havana; there were not yet any 'experts' in tourism studies. The authors opined that Cuba needed several "*Escuelas Hoteleras*" in order to foster "satisfactory development" within the industry. The first was to be established as soon as possible in Havana with others to follow in Santiago de

⁶³ Maribona, 231.

⁶⁴ "*Programa de Desarrollo Económico*," 46.

Cuba and Camagüey.⁶⁵ None of the schools were immediately built. It took over three decades for Camagüey's to open in 1977. The importance attached to these schools within the minds of Cuban planners is nonetheless significant. While certainly practical in terms of their ability to train tourism workers, the schools represented something much broader in terms of tourism and identity. The establishment of *Escuelas Hoteleras* furthered the institutionalization of tourism throughout Cuban society and had particular significance for the industry's relationship to identity. Through them, a portion of the island's education system was devoted to the fostering of tourism-related expertise among sectors of the Cuban population, explicitly affording legitimacy to careers in tourism. Both materially and ideologically, this initiative created linkages of increasing numbers of Cubans to the industry.

In 1952, the new government continued this process through its own educational and professionalization initiatives. The ICT began to regulate interpreters, putting them through national exams. The state began to license tourist chauffeurs, and created a corps of specially trained guides for the capital's Palacio de Bellas Artes, historic castles, and other tourist sights. Finally, the ICT created a special bus service reserved for tourists.⁶⁶ While these programs promoted tourism-related careers, they also increased the divide between the island's residents and tourists – one that would only become more pronounced over time. Such initiatives signaled that the government was creating a privileged place for tourists on the island. Moreover, the state made it vividly clear that it intended to control the ways in which foreign tourists interacted with the island and its

⁶⁵ "Plan Mínimo," 11.

⁶⁶ Fulgencio Batista Papers, "Realizaciones del Gobierno de FBZ – Statistics: Tourism, 1947-1958," CHC UM.

people. The specifics of these official programs of control are examined in the following sections.

In 1955, amidst these efforts by the state to guide the industry in a very specific direction, construction began on the Hotel Havana Hilton. Company officials projected profits beyond those of any other hotel – \$800,000 or more a year from its opening in 1958 through 1964.⁶⁷ Their goals, however, were never realized. In December 1957, four months before the hotel opened, Hilton officials were fraught with concern regarding their ability to fill their Havana hotel. The company’s expansion into Cuba came at a time when competition within the global tourism market was becoming more intense. Nearby destinations such as Puerto Rico had already been overbuilt, and the hotel business in Cuba itself was becoming more competitive.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the hotel opened in March of 1958 amidst the widening Revolutionary conflict. Later that year, Hilton officials wondered whether or not their hotel would even be open long enough to recoup pre-opening expenses.

The government faced difficult political decisions as November elections loomed. Batista tightened his grip on the island, and Hilton officials searched for ways to cut costs.⁶⁹ The firm certainly benefited from a fresh round of tax breaks the government offered to developers in May of 1957. In that month Batista issued Presidential Decree

⁶⁷ Hilton Hotels International, Inc., “Projection of Cash Income and Requirements 1956 through 1964, Exhibit A., CNHLA.

⁶⁸ On overbuilding in Puerto Rico and concerns for Hilton elsewhere, see John W. Houser to Conrad N. Hilton, December 31, 1957, CNHLA. As far as the Cuban market was concerned, Hilton was faced with competition from established hotels such as the Sevilla, Nacional, and Inglaterra.

⁶⁹ Charles L. Fletcher and Benno M. Bechhold to Conrad N. Hilton, June 26, 1958. Conrad N. Hilton to Sidney Willner, August 23, 1958, CNHLA.

1371, which extended almost all of the one-year tax suspensions for a total of ten years.⁷⁰ Perhaps it was no coincidence that the government granted these concessions in the face of increasing opposition of Castro, his band of guerilla fighters, and many others. Notably, if Conrad Hilton or others in the company made a connection between the spiraling discontent and the preferential treatment bestowed upon his (as well as many other) non-Cuban companies, they certainly left no traces of it within the company's archival collections.

As Batista faced his final months in power in late 1958, his government began to withhold some of the generous tax exemptions that had been promised to Hilton.⁷¹ The U.S. had cut off military support to Batista, and continued fighting was beginning to cause significant disruptions within the Cuban economy, particularly for tourism. While the government was often quick to disregard the interests of its own citizens, it apparently had become equally quick to disregard the privileges it extended to foreign investors. For these and a myriad of other reasons, the Batista government fell on December 31, 1958.

Shortly after Batista fled Cuba, the former dictator reflected on how tourism had changed Cuban society during the years in which he oversaw the industry's development. Among his conclusions was that the creation of the ICT had been crucial for the expansion of the industry that took place during the 1950s. Furthermore, Batista saw public works as one of the industry's biggest contributions to Cuban society. Batista boasted about his grand projects, particularly the large highways spanning the island and

⁷⁰ "Programa de Desarrollo Económico," 28.

⁷¹ Robert J. Caverly to Conrad N. Hilton, December 5, 1958, CNHLA. While I have been unable to find evidence of the Batista government withholding tax exemptions from other tourism-related firms, it is likely that Hilton was not the only company to face such disregard for prior agreements.

the tunnel linking Havana to the western suburbs of Playa and Miramar, as part of his enduring legacy. In his recollections, Batista also noted that his government was responsible for “*la creación de una nueva ciudad*” (the creation of a new city), the tourist centers of Havana’s Playas del Este.⁷²

Notwithstanding these claims, it is not fair to give full credit to the ICT for the touristic growth that took place following Batista’s takeover in 1952. As has been shown, ICT planners continued to guide the industry in many of the same ways that the CNT had in earlier years. Batista’s new city was located precisely where the CNT had proposed to build its “*pequeño Centro Turístico*.” The Batista government was able to accomplish substantial development projects, but it was only through the utilization of public funds for the benefit of the few. Furthermore, he personally profited enormously from the expansion. And if Cuba was developing, it was largely because visitors demanded it.

Access and Exclusion in Cuba’s Tourist World

Considering how pre-Revolutionary planners offered foreign tourism developers a privileged position within Cuban society, it is not surprising that this preferential treatment was extended to individual foreign tourists as well, most notably those from the U.S. Succeeding administrations from 1945 to 1958 did their best to make the island as accessible for them as possible. After all, nearby Puerto Rico offered similar tourist amenities, and since it was a U.S. territory, U.S. citizens were free to enter the island as they pleased. For tourism to be a viable contributor to the national economy, Cuban planners needed to make it equally easy for foreigners to visit their island. While the

⁷² Fulgencio Batista Papers, “*Realizaciones del Gobierno de FBZ – Statistics: Tourism, 1947-1958*,” CHC UM.

island was thrown open to outsiders, many Cubans' access to tourism – as both employees and tourists – was severely limited. The literal exclusion of Afrocubans from the island's tourist world gave credence to the imagined Cuba that officials were trying to create – a dualistic Cuba that was modern, familiar, and white on one hand and timeless, unfamiliar, and African on the other.

Politics of (Necessary) Preference: U.S. Tourists

In the post-WWII era, U.S. travelers were not required to provide a passport upon entering Cuba. A Cuban Tourist Commission (CTC) newspaper ad from 1949 beckoned potential visitors by highlighting the ease with which one could enter Cuba: “No passports required for U.S. citizens.”⁷³ In fact, almost all CTC ads from the pre-Revolutionary era included this crucial bit of information. Cuban authorities wanted it to be clear that tourists faced absolutely no bureaucratic barriers. Private interests reinforced this fact in their own advertising. Havana's Hotel Nacional boasted, “No passport or visa required.”⁷⁴ A *Miami Herald* advert for the Internacional Hotel in Varadero informed would-be guests of Cuba's accessibility declaring: “No Passports Required.”⁷⁵ And guidebooks echoed the message. A 1948 publication explained how it was merely necessary to sign a tourist card, which cost “next to nothing” and enabled a visitor to remain on the island free of bureaucratic matters for six months.⁷⁶ While the price of a Cuban tourist card rose slightly in 1955 (to \$2.50), U.S. travelers were still permitted to bring their cars into Cuba duty-free. They needed only to present a signed

⁷³ Cuban Tourist Commission Advertisement, *New York Times*, October 23, 1949.

⁷⁴ Hotel Nacional Advertisement, *New York Times*, December 25, 1955.

⁷⁵ International Hotel Advertisement, *The Miami Herald*, November 17, 1957.

⁷⁶ Sydney Clark, *All the Best in the Caribbean* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1948), 32. In terms of passports, Cuba was no different than most of the other Caribbean islands. See Clark (1948), 32-33.

tourist card, license, and registration in order to drive freely for one hundred eighty days.⁷⁷

Cuban administrations reinforced the privileged status of U.S. visitors in several other ways. The economy of pre-Revolutionary Cuba was organized in a way that favored U.S. tourists. In the years immediately following the war, not only was the Cuban peso pegged to the U.S. dollar at a rate of one-to-one, the two currencies were actually interchangeable.⁷⁸ While on July 1, 1951 the dollar ceased to be legal tender on the island (a phenomenon that was repeated in 2004), the two currencies remained on par with one another, and Cuban banks did not charge to exchange either currency.⁷⁹ As a result, U.S. tourists did not have to worry about confusing conversions. While the Cuban economy was made more accessible to U.S. tourists, Cuban banks missed an opportunity to generate additional profits through exchange charges from the hundreds of thousands of tourists who needed Cuban pesos for their stays on the island. A U.S. tourist writing home to the state of Ohio via postcard in 1956 effectively captured the point of view of typical visitors to the island in terms of “tourism value.” Bill wrote: “Prices are right for people here.”⁸⁰

On Cuba’s roads as well, visitors were made to feel as at home as possible. Part of Batista’s “New Deal” for tourists involved, “hav[ing] all the highways in Cuba marked similarly to those of the United States.”⁸¹ The foreign-focused strategies of the Cuban

⁷⁷ Eleanor Cowles Gellhorn, *McKay’s Guide to Bermuda, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc.), 65-66.

⁷⁸ Clark (1948), 47.

⁷⁹ “Cuba Substitutes Pesos for Dollars,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1951.

⁸⁰ Havana; Airports; Rancho Boyeros Airport. Cuban Postcard General Collection, CHC UM (hereafter cited as Postcards, CHC UM).

⁸¹ *New York Times*, October 26, 1952.

government coupled with massive touristic growth served to remap the dynamics of power and identity across the island. In short, politically, economically, and spatially, Cuba was made as familiar as possible for U.S. tourists and other visitors. Sydney Clark captured the situation well with the title of his Cuba guidebook's first chapter, "This is Your Island."⁸²

The decentralized nature of the tourism industry made extending this preferential treatment to tourists difficult at times. Tourism generates foreign income just as sugar, tobacco, or citrus, but its components occupy disparate spaces that are often not connected to one another. Further complicating the tasks of planners, touristic offerings are often interwoven with the urban landscape. Hotels may contain restaurants, shops, and bars, but they are far less likely to house museums, monuments, or parks. In Havana, for example, the district of Habana Vieja is a densely populated living museum, replete with castles, fortresses, colonial churches, Spanish colonial buildings, plazas, and of course, tens of thousands of Cubans. The city of Trinidad, while smaller than the capital's colonial district, enjoyed a similar status; the city itself was marketed as a tourist sight. It was thus necessary for the Cuban government to take several broad measures in order to ensure the privileged status of visitors when they drifted from their hotel lobbies or tour groups.

The spaces most frequented by tourists became "contact zones" between Cubans and the outside world. Mary Louise Pratt examined the process of transculturation that took place as Europeans encountered native populations in Latin America and Africa

⁸² Sydney Clark, *All the Best in Cuba*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1946), 3-6.

with the emergence of international travel beginning in the eighteenth century.⁸³ While the cultural implications of these zones will be dealt with below, the forms of social control used to regulate contact during this period held important implications for Cuban society, and in turn, Cuban identity. Just as travel writings and stories served to “give us our [and others’ their] place in the order,”⁸⁴ judicial checks were firmly established during the late 1940s and 1950s that delineated the respective places of foreigners and natives within the tourist world, particularly in highly toured areas such as Havana. Mike Davis offers a dark vision of the many ways in which city officials and private interests have regulated space in Los Angeles, another notorious tourist destination.⁸⁵ Similarly, Cuba’s hotels, shopping malls, parks, promenades, and other frequently toured urban sights have been a constant concern for the industry’s planners. As tourism spread across the island, so too did corresponding forces of social control.

Guidebooks as well as promotional material framed these forms of control as extremely beneficial for visitors. In his 1946 *All the Best in Cuba*, guidebook writer Sydney Clark pointed to the Tourist Policeman as “a specialty of Havana.”⁸⁶ These specially trained officers wore white armbands marked “Tourist Squad,” spoke and wrote English, and could be found near the capital’s major intersections and most important tourist sites. In Clark’s words, they existed for the sole purpose of serving the island’s

⁸³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁸⁴ Pratt, 3.

⁸⁵ In a chapter titled “Fortress L.A.,” he examines the intense regulation of things such as shopping malls, libraries, streets, and even park benches, arguing that, “the universal and ineluctable consequence of this crusade to secure the city is the destruction of accessible public space.” To a certain extent, this has been done in order to appeal to L.A.’s tourists. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 226.

⁸⁶ Clark (1946), 16-17.

foreign guests. Even ordinary police officers tended to put the needs of tourists above those of Cuban citizens. Clark recounts a telling experience for his readers. Upon finding himself lost, he approached an officer who was in the midst of directing traffic. Clark explains how the gentleman totally disregarded his duty to maintain the flow of traffic in an effort to serve the needs of a foreigner. For Clark, the officer's implicit message was clear: "This was 'my island,' my city, and the bus was my bus. He [the officer] merely proposed to see to it that I secured that which was mine."⁸⁷ This example illustrates that tourists were first class "citizens" in Cuba with special privileges.

Police officers were highly visible figures in controlling "unpleasantness" from impeding the enjoyment of foreign tourists, but pre-Revolutionary governments also utilized other means to ensure the safety and comfort of foreigners when Tourist Squad Officers were not immediately within reach. A CTC guidebook proclaimed that Cuba's Tourist Law protected visitors "from annoyances and abuses of every kind." It assured potential tourists that complaints to the CTC would "be given prompt attention."⁸⁸ Upon making accusations against Cubans, tourists were not required to appear in Court. The CTC would, in fact, speak for the foreign plaintiff.⁸⁹ Even the *words* of tourists – in this case, spoken through a Cuban proxy – were likely to be valued above those of Cubans. During the 1950s, the CTC ran a daily ad (see 2.1) in the *Havana Post* that gave similar reassurances to visitors. It is noteworthy that the CTC chose to address this ad to Cuba's "visitors." These protections extended beyond tourists to foreign businessmen, their families, and other non-residents.

⁸⁷ Clark (1946), 17.

⁸⁸ Cuban Tourist Commission, *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land: Tourist Information, 1949-1950* (La Habana: Cuban Tourist Commission, 1949), 16-17.

⁸⁹ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1949), 17.



Figure 2.1. Cuban Tourist Commission Newspaper Advertisement. (*Havana Post*, December 14, 1955.)

Catering to the U.S. market had obvious advantages. It was geographically proximate, enormous, and backed by a strong currency. Nevertheless, there were also disadvantages to this strategy of mono-tourism. By drawing over ninety percent of its visitors from the U.S., Cuba's tourism industry ran the risk of total collapse if problems developed within this market. This, of course, is exactly what happened soon after Castro's rise to power. In light of the impact that U.S. tourists had on Cuban society during these years, their absence created a conspicuous void in the post-Revolutionary era.

Tourism and Cuban Workers

Opportunities for tourism-related employment grew in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, but some people clearly had greater opportunities than others. Geography constituted one major limitation. Even though the government had been promoting island-wide tourism for over a decade, by 1957, there was still only minimal development outside of Havana and Varadero. In terms of locales, there were 4,108 rooms in the capital and its suburb of

Marianao. Varadero had 3,006. The city of Camagüey was third with 458, followed by Las Villas with 248. Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos, and Holguín had 173, 138, and 122 rooms respectively.⁹⁰ The island also boasted a small network of roadside motels, but these were often far from the island's population centers. The concentration of tourism activity within several massive tourist centers led to a situation where employment in the industry – one of the most profitable on the island – was contingent on one's geographical location on the island, or one's ability to relocate to a new part of the island.

Deeper limitations on employment existed for Cubans who either lived in or migrated to any of the island's centers of touristic activity. Race, for example played a major role in regulating who was able to work in tourism. The overwhelming majority of foreign tourists in Cuba, U.S. and otherwise, were white. They joined a large community of businessmen, expatriates, and their families who were just as often from the U.S. and white. Ads appearing in the *Havana Post*, an English-language daily from the capital that targeted the local English-speaking population and tourists, show that Cubans perceived that these groups largely preferred the services of white people. As daily ads appeared for cleaners, servants, cooks, and even masseuses seeking employment, they typically made specific mention of the race of the job seeker: "White lady offers her service as cleaner." "Young white lady...seeks work." "White girl offers her services as servant." Whether or not it was her true name, "Miss Blanco" felt it beneficial to prominently display her title and name within her ad (see 2.2). Cubans clearly believed that English speakers on the island preferred the services of white Cubans.

⁹⁰ Maribona, 97-98.



Figure 2.2. “Miss Blanco” Solicitation. (*Havana Post*, October 3, 1957.)

It may be tempting to blame the racism found in Cuba’s tourism industry on the tastes and desires of foreign travelers, particularly the majority who were English speaking whites from the U.S. Yet, racism existed in Cuba far away from the world of tourism. Cuban employers and employees reinforced the system of discrimination. When upper and middle class Cuban families sought out domestic help in Spanish-language dailies, their classified ads often specified a desire to hire white women. “*Solicito criada blanca para limpiar*” (Seeking white servant to clean).⁹¹ Domestic workers offering their own services were often equally specific. “*Ofrecese muchacha joven blanca criada*” (Young white servant girl offers herself).⁹² Such racial preferences were unsurprisingly found within classified ads for jobs more directly related to tourism as well. Those seeking chauffeurs often sought out “*blancos*,” and driver services frequently let it be known that they could provide white drivers. “*Se ofrece chofer blanco*” (White chauffer offers self)⁹³ was repeated on a daily basis in the *Diario*. Employers even sought out white cooks. One *Diario* solicitation read “*Cocinera Blanca*”

⁹¹ *Diario de la Marina*, June 1, 1956.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

(White Cook) in bold large font (see 2.3). Others were slightly less discriminatory, willing to hire a “*blanca o parda clara*”⁹⁴ (white or lighter skinned person).



Figure 2.3. “*Cocinera Blanca*” Solicitation. (*Diario de la Marina*, June 2, 1956.)

Bars and clubs as well offered limited opportunities. A 1956 *Diario* classified ad for the Club Nuevo Bar read: “*Se solicitan muchachas jovenes y blancas para trabajar*” (Seeking young white girls for work).⁹⁵ Establishments without a desire to be as openly racist – for example, the Bar Palacios, the Hércules Club, and the Bar Alcoy – simply requested applicants of a “*buena presencia*”⁹⁶ (good presence). Images from the tourist world suggest what “*buena presencia*” meant, shedding further light on this atmosphere of discrimination. A postcard photo of the American Bar in Nuevitas (see 2.4) reveals much about what tourists perceived Cuba to be like on one hand, and the type of Cubans with which they were comfortable interacting on the other. Set high on the wall, the words “American Bar” beckoned U.S. tourists with a touch of the familiar. A quintessentially North American jukebox revealed a connection to the modern world.

⁹⁴ *Diario de la Marina*, June 1, 1956.

⁹⁵ *Diario de la Marina*, June 2, 1956.

⁹⁶ *Diario de la Marina*, June 1, 1956.



Figure 2.4. American Bar Postcard. (Nuevitas; American Bar. Postcards, CHC UM.)

Nevertheless, between these two very non-Cuban markers of identity appear the figures of four Cubans. The shadowy figures possess exaggerated features and are clearly meant to be Afro-Cuban, a stark contradiction from the bar's Americanness. The inclusion of these figures should not be taken as evidence that foreign tourists interacted with Afro-Cubans. The same postcard illustrates that the bar's employees were exclusively non-African. Afro-Cubans were acceptable – but only insofar as they remained on the touristic periphery. Tourists were not meant to confront these elements of Cuban society in person if they did not so desire. Instead, they would be greeted by familiar figures like the eight white women in the photo. In this way, the white waitresses from the American Bar in Nuevitas acted as a link between these two ends of the tourist world. Once foreign visitors left the safety of private establishments though, there were no more guarantees as far as what type of people they would encounter.

In June of 1956, a Havana bar called the Surf Club placed a classified ad seeking waitresses. The bar, which was “*bajo gerencia americana*” (under American management), was part of the city’s tourist world. Its bosses specifically sought “*muchachas bellas*” (beautiful girls).⁹⁷ They were most likely envisioning women like those pictured in the photo of the American Bar. Other ads, such as those for Cubana, paralleled these patterns of linguistics and imagery. A 1956 ad (see 2.5) focused on the airline’s stewardesses, featuring pictures of eleven.



Figure 2.5. Cubana Newspaper Advertisement. (*Diario de la Marina*, June 1, 1956.)

All of the women can be described as white and lack any visible trace of African descent; there is no racial ambiguity. Using the images of these eleven women, Cubana boasted

⁹⁷ *Diario de la Marina*, June 2, 1956.

that its stewardesses were the “*más linda*” (most beautiful). In sum, within the world of Cuban tourism, employers and promoters regularly equated beauty with whiteness.

Political discrimination also limited employment opportunities in the tourist sector; it too had deep roots in Cuba. The first half of the twentieth century was wrought with internal disputes as Cubans navigated newly won Independence on one hand, and deepening ties to the U.S. on the other. Intense conflict persisted into the 1950s, at times spilling into the tourist realm. One important element of this conflict revolved around the presence and activities of Cuban communists. Eusebio Mujal, boss of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba under Batista, was notoriously anti-communist prior to taking control of the island’s largest union. In the mid-1940s, he met with others – including Francisco Aguirre, leader of the Waiters’ and Restaurant Workers’ Union – to discuss how to exclude all Communists from the organization, which was “in effect, the state trade union.”⁹⁸ As key workers in Cuba’s hotels, resorts, and casinos, members of Aguirre’s union were certainly likely to have ‘tourist jobs.’ To keep their jobs, they had to conceal their political beliefs – far easier than concealing one’s race. As the threat of losing one’s job loomed, tourism employees were forced to police themselves in pre-Revolutionary Cuba.

Tourism and Cuban Tourists

Considering the employment limitations in pre-Revolutionary society, it is not surprising that a number of constraints limited Cubans’ ability to tour their own island. Cuba’s domestic air networks were as old as those that linked it to the rest of the world. Compañía Aérea Cubana (not to be confused with the contemporary airline referred to as

⁹⁸ Thomas, 713, 748, 785. Somewhat ironically, the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba had been in part established by Cuba’s Communist party. See Thomas, 712-714.

Cubana), a Cuban-French joint venture established in 1920, was the island's first airline, offering domestic service between Havana and Santiago. The experiment lasted only several months,⁹⁹ but by the 1940s, there were a number of airlines operating domestic flights in Cuba. The most important of these, Compañía Nacional Cubana de Aviación Curtiss, S.A. (today's Cubana), was established in 1929. It principally served Cuba's largest cities, but expanded to include Holguín and Victoria de las Tunas after WWII.¹⁰⁰ Cubana also began offering daily service between Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo; between Havana and Guantánamo, Camagüey, Baracoa, and Santiago de Cuba; and between Baracoa and Cienfuegos in 1945.¹⁰¹ By the 1950s, Cubana served almost twenty domestic destinations.

As air networks expanded and offered Cubans greater chances to see their country, the fact remained that many of them could not afford to access modern transportation systems. An examination of the costs associated with touring Cuba on one hand, and the distribution of wages in Cuba on the other, reveals much about tourism access for nationals. In 1952, the price of roundtrip airfare from Havana to Santiago was roughly \$46.00, by train \$36.00, and a return trip via bus cost \$25.00.¹⁰² A look at average incomes in Cuba for 1953 illustrates that many Cubans could not afford such a journey no matter what form of transportation. 49.4% of working Cubans earned 1,500 pesos (equivalent to \$1,500) or less in that year. While this amount was still above the national average of 1,019 pesos per year, it did not afford most Cuban families the

⁹⁹ R.E.G. Davies, *Pan Am: An Airline and its Aircraft* (Twickenham, England: Hamlyn, 1987), 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Foreign Air News Digest*, November 5, 1945.

¹⁰¹ *Foreign Commerce Weekly*, March 17, 1945.

¹⁰² Lyman Judson and Ellen Judson, *Your Holiday in Cuba*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 262-263.

opportunity to travel across the island.¹⁰³ Based on the above pricing system, return bus fare from Havana to Santiago for a family of four cost \$100. For roughly half of the island's employed residents, this amounted to 80% or more of monthly earnings. This of course, is not to mention that many Cubans received far less than \$1,500 per year and many others were unemployed and not represented within official statistics. At these rates, there was little hope for many of the Cubans living in Havana to explore Santiago, nor for those living in the east to travel west. Fares to Havana from more proximate cities were less, but in the 1950s, the price for one night's stay at some hotels in the capital started at \$10.00.¹⁰⁴ Others were certainly cheaper, but this broad lack of accessibility illustrates that a great deal of tension existed within the island's tourist world and in turn created a tension within Cuban identity.

This tension was similarly evident on Cuba's beaches, which were a major draw for foreign tourists. While holidaymakers frolicked carelessly in the sea, opportunities for public beach access in the capital were almost nonexistent. La Concha, at La Playa de Marianao, was the city's only beach not claimed by a private club, but even there, beachgoers were required to pay a small fee to enter.¹⁰⁵ Hence, the chances for Cubans to indulge in even the simplest pleasure enjoyed by the island's tourists or wealthier citizens were extremely limited. Just as Cuba's most attractive locales were open to foreigners, they were certainly closed to many of the people who lived there. And the possibilities for AfroCubans were even more restricted, as their testimonials suggest. Non-white

¹⁰³ Claes Brundenius, *Revolutionary Cuba: The Challenge of Economic Growth with Equity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 180.

¹⁰⁴ R. Hart Phillips, "Cuba's New Deal for Tourists," *New York Times*, October 26, 1952.

¹⁰⁵ W. Adolfe Roberts, *Havana: The Portrait of a City* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1953), 208.

Cubans were forced to remain on the peripheries of the tourist world, if not totally invisible. Years later, citizens were often willing to relate their personal stories of the segregation and exclusion that took place on Cuba's beaches. As V.R. Krishna Iyer toured the island, his interpreter recounted that, "Negroes had no entry into these privileged places."¹⁰⁶ Another Afrocuban, Arturo Menendez, recounted for a group of tourists that prior to 1959, he "couldn't bathe on Cuba's beautiful beaches."¹⁰⁷ The U.S. writer Joseph North met with several Afrocubans while traveling in Cuba during the late 1960s. One of them, Luis Felipe Carneado explained to North that Batista's "National Society of Beaches for Blacks Only" served to reinforce the divisions between the races.¹⁰⁸ Memories of racially based exclusion from the pre-Revolutionary tourist world were still fresh in the minds of Cubans years later.

Postcards helped to reinforce the reality of this racially exclusive domain. Those featuring beach scenes during this period pictured no one of visible African descent. Three examples (see 2.6-2.8) appear below and on the following page.



Figure 2.6. Beach Postcard. (Author's collection.)

¹⁰⁶ V.R. Krishna Iyer, *Cuban Panorama* (Trivandrum: Prabath Book House, 1967), 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Democracy in Cuba* (New York: Educational Commission of the Venceremos Brigade, 1976), 26.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph North, *Socialist Cuba: As Seen by a U.S. Communist Delegation* (New York: New Outlook Publishers, 1971), 31.



Figure 2.7. Beach Postcard. (Author's collection.)



Figure 2.8. Beach Postcard (Author's collection.)

The individuals who produced them assisted other promoters in helping tourists to imagine a wholly white Cuba. Within these snapshots of Cuban society, Afrocubans were nowhere to be found.

Foreign travel for Cubans was, of course, even more expensive and thus significantly more limited. Just as the U.S. provided most of Cuba's tourists during these years, the island's northern neighbor also served as the primary destination for those Cubans who did travel abroad. Those who went north did so for a variety of reasons – “on short holidays and long vacations, on day trips and weekend excursions, as sightseers

and honeymooners.”¹⁰⁹ In Havana’s *Diario de la Marina*, the Ward Line advertised “*servicio rapido*” (rapid service) to destinations such as New York and Baltimore.¹¹⁰ It featured ads for the Hotel Taft, “*el hotel más popular en Nueva York*” (the most popular hotel in New York).¹¹¹ Promotional material for Cubana not only highlighted the airline’s daily service to Miami, but its “*conexiones inmediatas*” (immediate connections) to New York, Washington, Chicago, and other major U.S. cities.¹¹² *Viajes* was a seasonal publication specifically aimed at Cubans traveling abroad. Its pages featured a number of similar options – flying to U.S. destinations with Pan Am, National, or Chicago and Southern Airlines. *Viajes* also advertised bus routes. Greyhound Lines, for example, joined with the Cuban American Touring Company to offer Cubans express service from Miami to over forty major U.S. cities.¹¹³ Beyond the U.S., the *Diario* provided readers an array of international holiday options. Pan Am plied flights to Mexico, Braniff, to Panama, Lima, Rio, and Buenos Aires. Compañía Trasatlántica Español offered cruises to Spain, Companhia Colonial de Navegacao to Portugal as well. The “K” Line linked the island to Asia.¹¹⁴ Cubana flew to London, Paris, Madrid, and Bermuda.¹¹⁵ Cuba was well connected to the world.

Still, while there were networks ready to disperse Cubans worldwide, their principle destination was still Miami, and it was in Miami where their presence was felt most acutely. In 1948, according to a *New York Times* article, Cuban visitors revitalized

¹⁰⁹ Perez (1999), 434.

¹¹⁰ *Diario de la Marina*, December 1, 1957.

¹¹¹ *Diario de la Marina*, December 3, 1957.

¹¹² “*Memoria Anual de 1951*,” 16.

¹¹³ *Viajes*, (La Habana: Cuban American Touring Company, 1948), 2-11.

¹¹⁴ *Diario de la Marina*, December 3, 1957.

¹¹⁵ *Diario de la Marina*, June 1, 1956.

the Miami market during the traditional summer lull. Not only were Cuban tourists in Miami spending an estimated \$500,000 per month that summer, they were playing a role in shaping the city's growing Hispanic presence. Just as English was being used more and more in Cuba, Spanish was already becoming a part of life in Miami. By 1948, the city's police officers were required to take forty hours of Spanish classes before joining the force and another forty after receiving their badge. Furthermore, *guayaberas* (shirts typically worn on the island) were becoming increasingly visible. So too were the growing number of signs that read, "*Se habla espanol aqui* [sic]" (Spanish is spoken here).¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, venues in Miami marketed *Cubanidad* to potential guests. The Hotel Lucerne's Club Chalet offered a "Havana Mardi Gras" at its "Authentic Latin Review."¹¹⁷ As Cubans began to both physically and linguistically invade Miami, Cuban identity became a marketable commodity abroad. During the 1950s, the number of Cubans visiting the U.S. only grew larger. 34,388 visited in 1955, 41,927 in 1956, and 45,000 in 1957.¹¹⁸ While processes of Americanization came to a near-halt in Cuba after 1959, the Cubanization of Miami, of course, intensified and continued unabated throughout the twentieth century.

Despite the exclusion of many Cubans from the island's tourist world, ICT planners nevertheless envisioned a role for all citizens within the industry. Everyone had a role to play in constructing a Cuban society that was not only accepting of foreigners, but that coddled them, virtually catering to their every desire. The ICT outlined these

¹¹⁶ R. Hart Phillips, "Cubans Enliven Miami Season," *New York Times*, September 5, 1948. One must wonder how well Spanish was spoken considering Phillips spelled the word "*aqui*" incorrectly.

¹¹⁷ *Miami Herald*, November 15, 1957.

¹¹⁸ Maribona, 197.

roles in a 1954 report on the tourism industry, titled “*Doctrina, proyecciones y actividades del Instituto Cubano del Turismo.*” The Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government were charged with guiding the pace of development. The Cuban press represented the “fourth power” and was responsible for publicizing the island, as well as for providing the foreign press with relevant information about visiting Cuba. The Armed Forces were also critical, particularly the police who were responsible for protecting the island’s tourists. In fact, everyone on the state payroll had a role to play – ministers were to direct tourism development, provincial governors were to eliminate existing barriers, and the foreign consular corps was to create promotional material to entice foreign guests.

The ICT proclaimed that “*las clases economicas*” (the economic classes) were to cooperate with state-sponsored propaganda and offer their own stimuli to touristic growth. Those with a lesser stake in the industry also needed to recognize its importance. The laboring classes were supposed to help maintain the industry just as they would any other. Finally, the “*ciudadania*” as a whole was supposed to help foster a successful tourism industry. All citizens were to help in “*manteniendo una clima de orden, de limpieza, de respeto y de cortesía*” (maintaining a climate of order, cleanliness, respect, and courtesy). “*Educación ciudadania*” was also crucial in this regard; here too, the ICT viewed the media and private sector as crucial partners. Planners enlisted the help of a number of publications and companies in order to spread awareness of citizens’ responsibilities to the island’s tourism industry. *The Havana Post*, the magazines *Carteles* and *Cinegráfico*, Esso Standard Oil, and “La Polar” Brewery were among the others who generously contributed to this campaign of informing Cubans how to behave

towards the island's visitors.¹¹⁹ In sum, it was a campaign to remind all Cubans – even those who were excluded from every sector of the island's tourist world – that they had a critical role to play in helping to successfully maintain the tourism industry.

Culture and Tourism: Competing Conceptions of *Cubanidad*

Tourism and culture were profoundly linked in a number of ways during the pre-Revolutionary era. To recall Dean MacCannell once again: “Underdeveloped countries can ‘export’ their culture...by attracting tourists.”¹²⁰ Cuba's state planners did this in several ways – through the content of museums, monuments, and castles as well as through state-sponsored advertising programs that utilized Cuban culture as a means to attract guests. The private sector also marketed the island using pieces of cultural iconography. Both state and private promoters inscribed Cuban identity with those cultural markers that could most effectively ‘sell’ the island and generate profits. At the same time, independently published guidebooks, narratives, and other publications highlighted those cultural points of interest that they deemed to be most important. In doing so, they sometimes challenged the vision of Cuba's cultural identity put forth by the state. While tourism opened a space for actors to define Cuban culture in different ways, the industry also allowed tourists to shape the island's linguistics, architecture, sexuality, and more. Moreover, souvenirs enabled visitors to bring bits of culture home in their bags, as mementos for themselves or others.

¹¹⁹ Instituto Cubano del Turismo, “*Doctrina, proyecciones y actividades del Instituto Cubano del Turismo*” (La Habana, 1954), 43-45.

¹²⁰ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 29.

The Lure of Cuba

In the 1950s, an array of Caribbean destinations challenged Cuba for foreign tourists. Much like Cuba, these competitors did their best to appeal to the U.S. market, making their own islands as accessible and attractive as possible. U.S. citizens did not need a passport to visit Puerto Rico. In 1954, the Dominican Republic eliminated its requirements.¹²¹ Hence, Cuba could never establish itself as ‘more accessible’ than these and the numerous other destinations with beautiful Caribbean coasts and luxurious hotels. In terms of Cuban society and culture though, the island could be unique. State promoters, the private sector, guidebook writers, and others all created unique visions of Cuba in order to lure foreign tourists to the island. Not infrequently, these groups presented drastically different visions of Cuban society. The state and the private sector were largely aligned in their desire for profits, and thus portrayed the island as invariably safe and welcoming to everyone in the family. Alternatively, the writers of guidebooks, narratives, and other independent publications such as magazines had latitude to portray the less pleasant and more controversial aspects of Cuban society.

More than anyone else, the Cuban government strove to portray the island as an idyllic destination for international travelers. Holidaymakers were encouraged to feel safe, at ease, and carefree. A 1948 CTC advertisement from the *New York Times* offered visitors “a warmer welcome” than other places; Cuba was “gayer than ever this season.”¹²² A CTC ad from 1950 invited tourists to experience “Latin gaiety... color... charm.” The island was like “another world – sunnier, happier, more friendly.”¹²³ In

¹²¹ “Dominican Republic Opens Door,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1954.

¹²² Cuban Tourist Commission Advertisement, *New York Times*, December 5, 1948.

¹²³ Cuban Tourist Commission Advertisement, *New York Times*, January 8, 1950.

1952, an ad from the *New York Times* ad encouraged potential tourists to plan their “fun-filled holiday in light-hearted Cuba.”¹²⁴ In 1957, amidst the conflict brewing in the country’s eastern provinces, the CTC assured would-be tourists that Havana was still “all singing hearts and dancing feet.”¹²⁵

Private sector advertising closely followed suit, but was much more widespread. Like those produced by the CTC, the aim of these ads was to create a sense of what the island was like in the minds of visitors before they reached the island. Unsurprisingly, private interests went out of their way to cast Cuban society in a positive light. The Hotel Inglaterra invited *New York Times* readers to visit “carefree Cuba.”¹²⁶ The Hotel Nacional promised potential visitors “carefree holiday pleasure”¹²⁷ in its promotional material. The Sevilla-Biltmore professed to be “surrounded by the gay atmosphere of Old Havana.”¹²⁸ The Varadero Oasis offered a “vacation paradise.”¹²⁹ Another Varadero hotel simply named itself “Casa Happiness.”¹³⁰ A number of companies utilized imagery to sell the idea of an idyllic and welcoming Cuba, as was the case with Mackey Airlines, just one of many firms that chose to make leisure the dominant theme of its ads. Mackey’s promoters stressed that Cuban society offered a number of leisurely pursuits (see 2.9) – fine dining, dancing, sunbathing, carriage rides, golf, and music. A uniformed figure in the right foreground suggests that tourists would have protection from any unsavory aspects of Cuban society that would infringe upon their fun.

¹²⁴ Cuban Tourist Commission Advertisement, *New York Times*, April 13, 1952.

¹²⁵ Cuban Tourist Commission Advertisement, *New York Times*, January 4, 1957.

¹²⁶ Hotel Inglaterra Advertisement, *New York Times*, October 23, 1949.

¹²⁷ Hotel Nacional de Cuba Promotional Material, c. 1958, CHC UM.

¹²⁸ Hotel Sevilla-Biltmore Advertisement, *Miami Herald*, November 14, 1957.

¹²⁹ Varadero Oasis Promotional Material, c. 1958, Pan Am UM.

¹³⁰ Casa Happiness Advertisement, *Miami Herald*, December 10, 1957.



Figure 2.9. Mackey Airlines Advertisement. (*Havana Post*, October 1, 1957.)

Part of making tourists feel welcome was achieved by offering them something familiar. Eliminating passport requirements and Americanizing Cuba's roads were several ways, but there was no warmth in these actions. These were bureaucratic matters. Promotional postcards from hotels such as the Hotel Capri (see 2.10) extended a far more meaningful welcome to potential guests – one from someone with whom they were most likely familiar. George Raft, a prominent Hollywood actor, invited tourists to spend time at the “breathtaking” Capri.

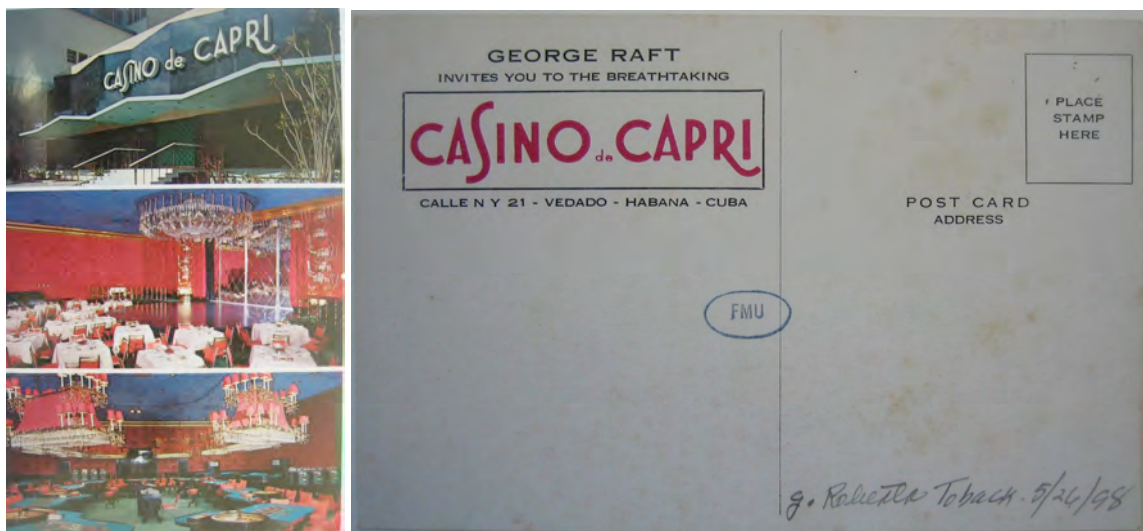


Figure 2.10. Hotel Capri Postcard. (Havana; Hotels; Capri. Postcards, CHC UM.)

In this case, Cuban tourism was given a personal face, and that face was that of a U.S. citizen. Raft sometimes even greeted gamblers and other guests in person as they

arrived.¹³¹ The Cuba Mail Line described the warmth found on the island in far more general, but yet similar terms. “In the very greeting of the Cuban people, courtesy takes on a new, more sincere meaning.”¹³²

State and private sector planners also did their best to portray the island as clean, modern, efficient, and technologically advanced. In order to ensure that tourists could expect the best, the CNT (and later the ICT) proposed initiatives to improve public sanitation services throughout the city’s parks and established requirements for cafes and restaurants to be kept in a state of perfect cleanliness.¹³³ The CTC’s aforementioned “Seal of Ethics” aimed to achieve similar ends. According to one of the Commission’s adverts from 1952, Havana was “smart.”¹³⁴ Amenities abounded at the Hotel Riviera – it possessed “every facility.”¹³⁵ The Hotel Deauville offered “modern luxury.”¹³⁶ The same theme was present in Cubana’s marketing strategy. An advertisement from November 1958 noted that it would be the first Latin American airline to own Boeing 707 jets. The ad stressed the company’s role as “an outstanding example of growth and free enterprise,” as well as that of an industry leader that trained pilots, crews, and maintenance personnel in Chile, Uruguay, Colombia, and elsewhere.¹³⁷ In short, tourism provided the state, Cubana, and others a context to cast the island as a truly modern nation. In the eyes of the CTC, the reasons for this were clear. In *Welcome to Cuba*, the

¹³¹ Schwartz, 159.

¹³² Cuba Mail Line Promotional Material, “Take a Trip to Cuba: The Year ‘Round Paradise,” n.d. (c.1945), Vertical Files, CHC UM.

¹³³ “*Plan Mínimo*,” 6-8.

¹³⁴ Cuban Tourist Commission Advertisement, *New York Times*, April 13, 1952.

¹³⁵ Hotel Riviera Advertisement, *Miami Herald*, November 17, 1957.

¹³⁶ Hotel Deauville Advertisement, *Miami Herald*, December 10, 1957.

¹³⁷ Compañía Nacional Cubana de Aviación Advertisement, *New York Times*, November 2, 1958.

CTC explained that Havana had become a “modern cosmopolitan city through its contacts with European and American countries.”¹³⁸ In this case, Afrocubans were implicitly removed from the island’s tourist world in order to lure foreign visitors to the island.

Familiar aspects of Cuban culture targeted certain niche markets. Armando Maribona, Vice President of the ICT from 1952 through 1958, proposed several initiatives to capitalize, for example, on the island’s Catholic heritage. He recognized that many of the almost forty-four million Catholics in the U.S. – as well as the roughly nine million in Canada – would enjoy exploring the broader history of their faith. He recommended that the government train young men and women for these Catholic heritage tours. They would be best suited to deal with the families who would likely make up a large portion of the island’s religious tourists. He suggested that important Catholic celebrations – for example, the *Semana Santa de Trinidad*, the drama of the *Passion en Güines*, etc. – be made part of the national calendar of tourist events. He added that the Catholic Church should produce promotional material noting the most significant points about Cuban Catholicism. Furthermore, Catholic organizations were urged to begin working directly with the ICT, as well as encourage Catholic groups in the U.S. and Canada to organize tours through their respective tourism agencies.¹³⁹

Part of Cuba’s appeal for U.S. tourists was its safety and familiarity, but the lure of Cuba was based on more than this. State and private interests promoted a clear dualism within their advertising campaigns. In these cases, state and private sector

¹³⁸ Cuban Tourist Commission, *Welcome to Cuba* (La Habana: Cuban Tourist Commission, 1955), 21.

¹³⁹ Maribona, 154-155.

publications and promotional materials expressed common messages as they actively marketed the island. A CTC advertisement in the *New York Times* recommended: “Choose an unforgettably ‘different’ kind of vacation.”¹⁴⁰ Another informed potential tourists that they would “meet another world.”¹⁴¹ The Cuba Mail Line proclaimed that, “you’ll find everything entirely different from life at home.”¹⁴² Price tours, a Key West company, described the island as “so near and yet so foreign” (Figure 2.14).¹⁴³ Thus while Cuba was cast as safe and modern, the Cuban state and private sector fashioned a clear dualism for the island within the media. Cuba simultaneously offered a familiar and an unfamiliar experience.

A CTC advertisement from 1949 is a case in point: “Cuba beckons with foreign fascination.”¹⁴⁴ The Commission’s promotional material from the 1950s described the island as “a foreign land where history still lives,” a place where “strange customs and costumes” were part of the “REAL Cuba.”¹⁴⁵ Ads featured men donning traditional Spanish wears and tropical linens; women with fruit hats and flamenco dresses (see 2.11-2.14). The private sector followed suit, focusing on the island’s difference and highlighting Cubans’ status as exotic ‘others’ within their promotional material. Ads for steamships, buses, and airlines all featured images of scantily clad exotic women, many dancing provocatively for potential visitors. Varadero’s Internacional Hotel began a

¹⁴⁰ CTC Advertisement, *New York Times*, December 5, 1948.

¹⁴¹ CTC Advertisement, *New York Times*, January 8, 1950.

¹⁴² Cuba Mail Line Advertisement, “Take a Trip to Cuba: The Year ‘Round Paradise,” n.d. (c.1945). Vertical Files, CHC UM.

¹⁴³ Figure 2.14, which was used in promotional campaigns beyond postcards, has become iconic, a marker of not only Cuba’s identity as a notorious tourist destination, but a symbol of Caribbean exoticism as well. In 2003, a souvenir shop in the Bahamas was selling ‘new’ postcards with this image on the front.

¹⁴⁴ CTC Advertisement, *New York Times*, October 23, 1949.

¹⁴⁵ CTC Advertisement, “Cuba: Gay Havana,” n.d. Vertical Files, CHC UM.

1957 advert with one simple word – “foreign” (see 2.13). The language utilized by Price Tours (see 2.14) conveyed a similar message. In her travelogue, Erna Ferguson reinforced these competing visions of Cuba. She titled one section “Sophisticated Cuba” and another “Primitive Cuba.”



Figures 2.11-2.14 (clockwise from top left). P.&O. Steamship Company Advertisement. (*New York Times*, July 14, 1957.) Greyhound Advertisement. (*Miami Herald*, December 10, 1957.) Varadero Internacional Hotel Advertisement. (*Miami Herald*, December 10, 1957.) Price Tours Advertisement. (Cuba; Price Tours. Postcards, CHC UM).

Postcard imagery further supported Ferguson's notion of a dualistic Cuban society. On one hand, postcards revealed all that modern Cuba had to offer – dams, bridges, skyscrapers, and other technological achievements. They featured restaurants, hotels, shopping districts, and the most popular promenades. Modern Cuba was safe and familiar. On the other hand, numerous postcards revealed a more distant time. They not only portrayed the colonial buildings of Habana Vieja, Trinidad, and elsewhere, but also the island's agricultural economy, its large rural population, and a general sense of timelessness. These postcards showed sugar fields, rural dwellings, and Cubans wearing shabby or little clothing.

Postcards featuring images of 'modern Cuba' and other tourist destinations such as beaches and casinos showed a world that was seemingly comprised wholly of Caucasians and totally devoid of African influence. They suggested to the timid tourist that he or she would not brush elbows with Cubans of a darker complexion within the island's modern spaces. By implication, they stated that AfroCubans did not spend their time in the same places that visitors came to relax and enjoy their time. While some postcards showed that AfroCubans could be found selling milk fruit, shoes, and more on the streets of Havana and other cities (see 2.15 and 2.16), they clearly demonstrated that theirs was a limited realm. More commonly, postcard imagery implied that AfroCubans' place was outside of the island's urban areas, part of traditional Cuba. In them, men tend the fields and animals in between their cockfights. Women take care of the home, letting their babies drink milk straight from the goat's teat. Also, AfroCubans are shown at work producing the items consumed by tourists, for example, cigars, rum, or sugar (see 2.17 and 2.18). Other times, they simply posed amidst impoverished conditions (see 2.19).



Figures 2.15-2.17 (clockwise from top left). Shoe Vendor Postcard. (Cuba; Havana; Street Scenes. Postcards, CHC UM.) Milk Vendor Postcard. (Cuba; Havana; Milk Vendor. Postcards, CHC UM.) Cutting Sugar Cane Postcard. (Cuba; Sugar Cane Industry. Postcards, CHC UM.)



Figures 2.18-2.19. Cutting Sugar Cane Postcard. (Cuba; Sugar Cane Industry. Postcards, CHC UM). Rural Life Postcard. (Oriente Province; Village. Postcards, CHC UM).

While some promoters fostered this notion of a divided Cuba, some specific venues offered tourists a very different vision of Cuban society – one that celebrated African culture and heritage as a critical part of Cuban identity. The Tropicana Nightclub has been one of Cuba’s most frequented tourists offerings since opening in 1939. The club’s proprietors consistently advertised both at home and abroad. Nearly every state and independently published guidebook has suggested visiting the notoriously lavish sight. Common to all was the emphasis placed on the floorshow, the focus of which was beautiful scantily clad women, or more precisely, scantily clad mulatas. According to Theatre scholar Elizabeth Ruf, “At Tropicana, the mulata embodies Cuban imaginings of a nation created through a process of transculturation.”¹⁴⁶ The renowned Cubanist Fernando Ortiz developed this term in his seminal work, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. In 1947, Ortiz argued that the union of multiple groups – Native Americans, Spaniards, Africans, Jews, French, Anglo-Saxons, and Chinese – created a uniquely Cuban culture through transculturation. One group did not merely acquire the cultural traits of another. He explained that the process “necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation.”¹⁴⁷ The Cuban state apparently agreed with Ortiz’s interpretation of Cuban history and culture. Significantly, they also encouraged tourists to learn about

¹⁴⁶ Elizabeth Ruf, “¡Qué linda es Cuba! Issues of Gender, Color, and Nationalism in Cuba’s Tropicana Nightclub Performance (*The Drama Review* vol. 41, no. 1, 1997): 86. Significantly, Ruf notes that the Tropicana’s performance was not solely designed for tourists. The *mulata rumbera* (rumba-dancing mulata) was idealized before the tourist boom, and as Ruf shows, is still celebrated on the island far from the eyes of foreign tourists. See Ruf, 95-96.

¹⁴⁷ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 97-103.

these ideas. One CTC guidebook, *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land*, actually recommended that tourists read *Cuban Counterpoint*.¹⁴⁸

The show at the Tropicana and brief CTC proclamations regarding Ortiz may have celebrated Cuban society's shared heritage, but these examples contrasted sharply from the island's discriminatory job market, popular tourist sights, and promotional imagery where people of visible African descent were excluded rather than celebrated. Tourism thus revealed the tension between the efforts of some to hide the island's African heritage on one hand and the celebration of African culture within carefully choreographed spectacles on the other. In terms of how Cuban identity was presented to visitors, when Afrocubans were not being assigned roles far from the tourist world, they were consistently objectified as tourist sites, evidence of Cuba's 'otherness.'

Tourists may have been drawn by Cuba's hospitality, safety, and acceptable levels of difference, but the Tropicana beckoned with something more – a raw sensuality. The CTC strongly recommended visiting the club in all of its guidebooks, but state promoters could only go so far in terms of advertising the island's sexual identity. In *Welcome to Cuba*, the CTC described Havana's clubs and cabarets as "high class [with] excellent shows."¹⁴⁹ The Tropicana was simply "first class" and "famous the world over."¹⁵⁰ Private interests though, had free reign to utilize more risqué strategies. In their guidebook, for example, de Gamez and Pastore used language similar to that of the CTC to describe the Tropicana, but the authors also note the particularly "exotic" nature of the

¹⁴⁸ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1952), 88.

¹⁴⁹ *Welcome to Cuba*, 41.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

club's floorshow.¹⁵¹ Mackey Airlines as well, offered holidaymakers a chance to experience the island's "exotic nightlife."¹⁵² Pan Am invited potential guests to enjoy Cuba's "torrid entertainers...and scintillating night clubs."¹⁵³ According to the Cuba Mail Line, Havana's elaborate shows featured dancers with "savage momentum."¹⁵⁴ The Hotel Nacional described the capital as an "exotic city of play."¹⁵⁵

Sex clearly sold, but too much exposure might be bad for business. An overly racy reputation could drive away potential tourists of the mild-mannered sort. In fact, the author of one 1950s travelogue noted that when the police got wind of a scintillating burlesque show frequented by large numbers of tourists, "the place is closed, on the theory that it will give Havana a bad name abroad."¹⁵⁶ Conversely, some travel guides went out of their way to discuss the issue of sex. Consider this description from a 1954 guidebook.

No male tourist walking around Havana at night can close his eyes to the wide-open soliciting that goes on. It's one of those things that has always been in existence and probably always will be. So don't be surprised at the whispered invitations coming from the shuttered windows along the side streets, the enticing glances from behind the grillwork windows, the actual sales approach by men practicing the *second* oldest profession. ... You may be annoyed by this very common practice of streetwalking, but remember you're in a foreign country where such a trade is still a trade and will continue whether you approve of it or not. Different countries, different customs—remember?¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Tana De Gamez and Arthur R. Pastore, *Mexico and Cuba on Your Own* (New York: R.D. Cortina Company, 1954), 208.

¹⁵² Mackey Airlines Promotional Material, "Fly Mackey Airlines to Nassau, the Bahamas, and Cuba," n.d. (c.1955). Vertical Files, CHC UM.

¹⁵³ Pan American World Airways Promotional Material, 1952. Vertical Files, CHC UM.

¹⁵⁴ Cuba Mail Line Promotional Material. Vertical Files, CHC UM.

¹⁵⁵ Hotel Nacional Advertisement, *New York Times*, July 14, 1957.

¹⁵⁶ Roberts, 227. Roberts also suggests that such an establishment would be "sure to reopen somewhere else." See *Ibid.* Authorities made some lackluster attempts to rid the city of prostitution, but were largely unsuccessful in their efforts. See Roberts, 225.

¹⁵⁷ De Gamez and Pastore, 210-211.

In his 1953 guidebook, Roberts casts sex as an almost compulsory component of Havana's tourist world. "The male night-hawk is likely to want to round out his flitting with a look at the houses of prostitution."¹⁵⁸ On the Prado, politicians, nursemaids, and people finishing their morning papers brushed elbows with "girls of the demimonde who have not yet gone to bed."¹⁵⁹ Regardless of whether or not guidebooks approved of the island's sexual markets, their frequent and explicit references aroused the expectation that one could easily and would likely have a sexual encounter while in Cuba.

Private companies could not plainly state that attending a striptease or obtaining a prostitute in Cuba was a simple matter. Yet they could strategically place their advertisements in order to reach market segments attracted to these forms of entertainment. For example, in 1957, the Tropicana Nightclub prominently placed an advert (see 2.20) on page ten of the January issue of *Playboy*. Amidst naked and scantily clad women, cartoons celebrating promiscuity, and directly above an ad for sexually themed cocktail napkins, readers found three scenes from a venue that was beyond their "fanciest dreams."¹⁶⁰ The images offered a glimpse of the magnificent floorshow, the club's casino, and its starlit terrace. Still, the inclusion of an image featuring several nude women with their hands clasped (see 2.21) did more than hint at the sexuality that visitors could expect to find.

¹⁵⁸ Roberts, 224.

¹⁵⁹ Roberts, 150-151.

¹⁶⁰ Advertisement for Tropicana Nightclub, *Playboy Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1957, 10.

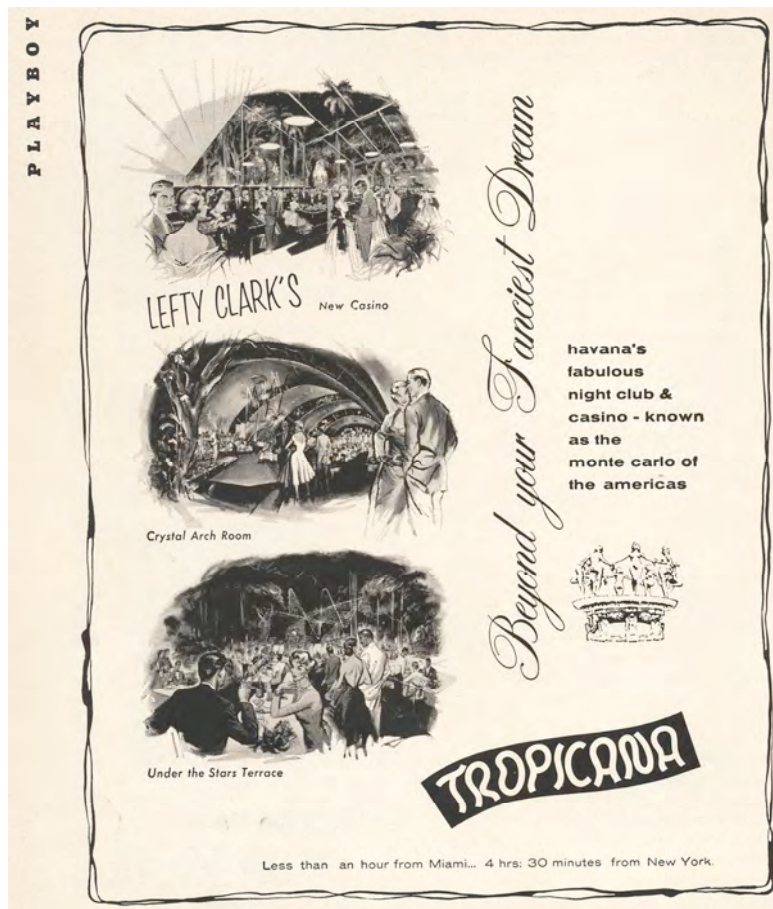


Figure 2.20. Tropicana Magazine Advertisement. (*Playboy Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1957, 10).

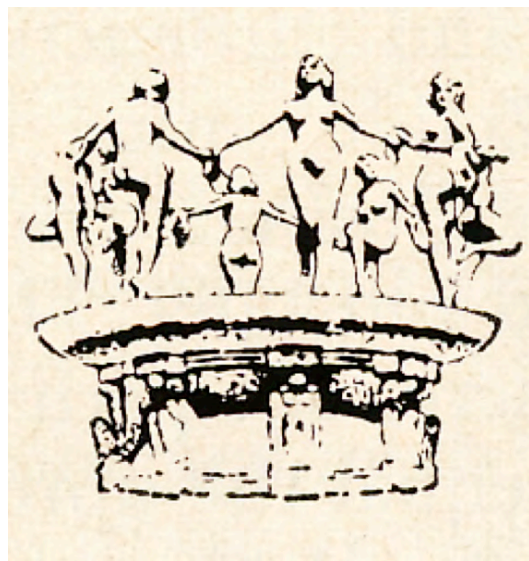


Figure 2.21. Tropicana Magazine Advertisement (close-up view of 2.20).

While the Tropicana seems to be the only Cuban establishment to have run an ad in *Playboy*, the magazine's "International Datebook," which appeared in many issues from late-1956 onwards, regularly promoted the entire island as a swanky getaway for single – at least while on holiday – men. In May of 1957, the column's author, Patrick Chase, wrote that "simplest and nearest to home of all foreign-flavored cruises are the overnight runs from Miami to Havana."¹⁶¹ Six- and eight-day cruises calling in Havana were also highly recommended. In the column's earliest months, Chase provided a simple listing of destinations; given *Playboy's* sexually charged content, Cuba's inclusion clearly implied that beautiful and available women would abound on the island. As the size of Chase's column grew, so too did his descriptions. In October of 1957, amidst suggestions for events such as a "Nude Year's Eve" party at London's Chelsea Arts-Ball, Chase highlighted a seventeen-day cruise calling in Cuba, which he described as one of "the better isles." He wrote that passengers would call in "Cuba's Havana for after-dark fun."¹⁶² The following month, Chase recommended a specific destination in the capital, one that met the standards of *Playboy* readers. He described the Havana Riviera as, "a pleasure palace Kubla Khan would have envied – with gambling, posh nightclubs, luxurious restaurants, [and a] gigantic pool stocked with fetching females."¹⁶³ In December, he noted that the island's offerings – particularly the chorus line at the

¹⁶¹ Patrick Chase, "Playboy's International Datebook," *Playboy Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 5, May 1957, 14.

¹⁶² Patrick Chase, "Playboy's International Datebook," *Playboy Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 10, October 1957, 22.

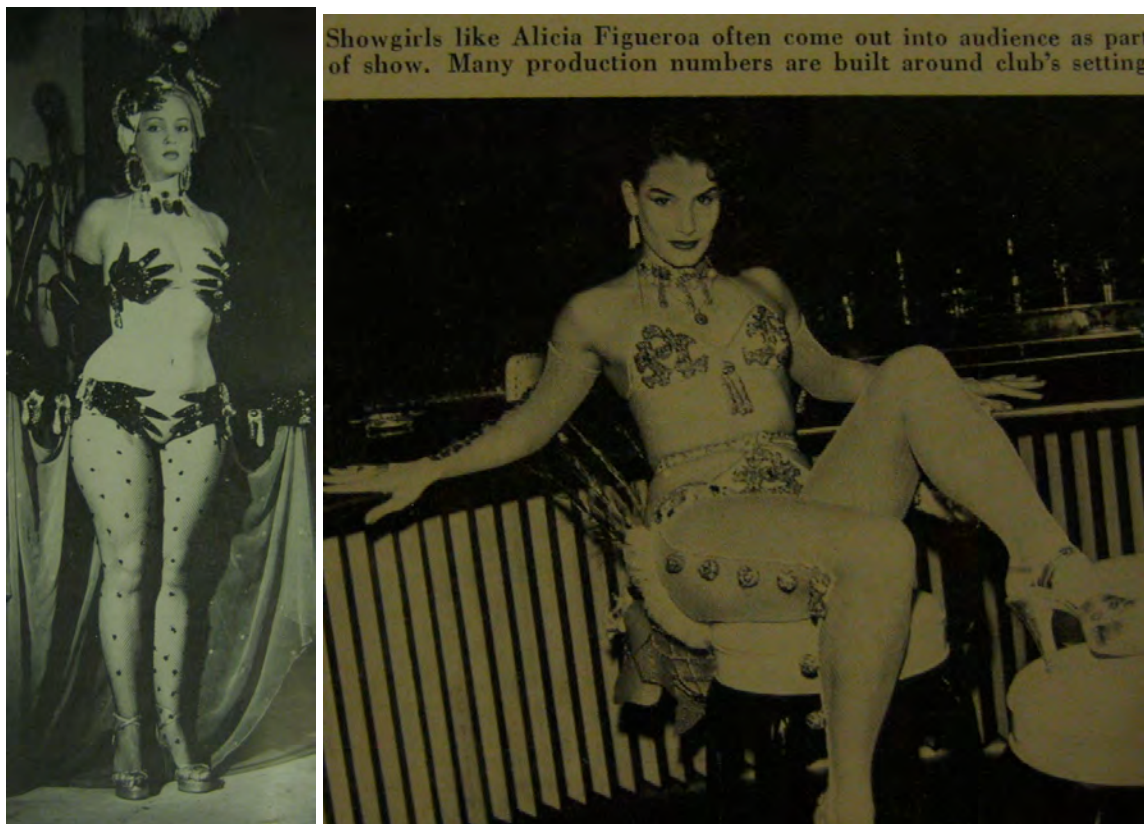
¹⁶³ Patrick Chase, "Playboy's International Datebook," *Playboy Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 11, November 1957, 88.

Tropicana – were worth experiencing whether one had “a few hours or a few days.”¹⁶⁴ While the Tropicana only paid for one month of advertising in the 1950s, by 1957 its promoters were effectively reaching an important market – U.S. men. This free advertising provided by *Playboy* served to further cement Cuba’s identity as a sexual playground for foreign men.

Other men’s magazines featured articles that promoted the island’s sexual offerings in ways similar to *Playboy*. In July of 1956, *Cabaret* ran an article on the Tropicana titled “World’s Most Beautiful Nightclub.” The author, Jay Mallin, provided some basic information on the extravagant show, particularly its history and costs. Opened in 1939, the club had recently undergone a US\$500,000 renovation and expansion. By 1956, it cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 per day to operate the club and its staff of 350 employees, 150 of who were performers. Perhaps of greater interest to *Cabaret*’s readers were the pictures that Mallin offered (see 2.22 and 2.23). In each of the captions, Mallin provided some information about the Tropicana’s female performers. Not only did they often stride through the audience during their performances, they were “more broad-hipped than [the] average U.S. chorus girl.”¹⁶⁵ According to Mallin, Cuban choreographers and dancers combined to innovate productions involving this type of interaction with spectators.

¹⁶⁴ Patrick Chase, “Playboy’s International Datebook,” *Playboy Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 12, December 1957, 88. Despite the consistently rave reviews of Cuba found in the “Datebook” throughout 1957 (it was generally uncommon for a destination to receive so much coverage) not a single installment from 1958 onwards advised visiting the island. Chase suggested places such as Miami, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Mexico instead.

¹⁶⁵ Jay Mallin, “World’s Most Beautiful Nightclub,” *Cabaret*, July 1956, 28.



Figures 2.22-2.23. Cuban Showgirls. (Jay Mallin, “World’s Most Beautiful Nightclub,” *Cabaret*, July 1956, 26-30, 42.)

In contrast to this innovation, Mallin also offered insight as to how the tastes of U.S. tourists were influencing the content of the show, specifically the identity of the women who performed at the Tropicana.

Until a few years ago Cuban chorus girls tended to be on the chubby side, thus catering to Latino tastes. But the U.S. influence has lately prevailed, and the girls are now far more shapely. American showgirls are often used at Tropicana.¹⁶⁶

In this way, the large presence of U.S. tourists on the island was effectively making a notoriously Cuban production less Cuban.

Several months later, Mallin wrote an article for *Cabaret* that promoted the island’s sexuality in a far more explicit manner. “The World’s Rawest Burlesque Show”

¹⁶⁶ Mallin (July 1956), 42.

focused on Havana's Shanghai Theater. Its three performances per day were so racy that "weak-stomached Americano maidens have had to be carried from the house in a semi-hysterical state."¹⁶⁷ The show was a combination of dancing, humor, burlesque, and nudity, all interspersed by an assortment of foreign stag films. *Cabaret* did not feature any images of completely nude women in the article, but it did offer a glimpse of some Shanghai performers in various states of undress (see 2.24).



Figure 2.24. Group of Cuban Showgirls. (Jay Mallin, "The World's Rawest Burlesque Show," *Cabaret*, September 1956, 22.)

Mallin assured readers that the Shanghai's women were in fact more authentically Cuban than those found at the Tropicana. They had the "tendency to be very beefy like many of Cuba's girls."¹⁶⁸ Despite the immense popularity of the Tropicana, the large number of tourists who visited the Shanghai Theater suggests that the island's visitors were still quite interested in watching native women perform as well.

¹⁶⁷ Jay Mallin, "The World's Rawest Burlesque Show," *Cabaret*, September 1956, 22.

¹⁶⁸ Mallin (September 1956), 22.

Cabaret took additional measures to sexualize the island in the minds of potential tourists, particularly U.S. men. Its Winter Resort Yearbook for 1956/57 provided a complete guide to nightclubs in Miami, New Orleans, Las Vegas, and Havana. All offered beautiful women. All offered nudity. Only Havana though, could be referred to as “The sexiest city in the world.” The section’s introduction explained:

In the shadow of the presidential palace, in the capital’s narrow ancient streets, there is indeed the open practice of the world’s oldest profession. But sex in Havana is not cheap and tawdry. Sex is rather in the beat of city life, in the tropical scent of this vast metropolis, in the cosmopolitan outlook of its people.¹⁶⁹

The section on Havana continued with a brief examination of the Tropicana, an article on the “hippy but natural” look of Cuba’s women, and a glimpse of the completely nude burlesque that was available at the Shanghai Theater. There was even a picture of U.S. stripper Bubbles Darlene walking semi-nude down the streets of Havana (see 2.25).



Figure 2.25. Bubbles Darlene in Havana. (*Cabaret*, Winter Resort Number, Volume One, c.1956, 66.)

Cabaret provided its readers with an extensive list of bars, clubs, and burlesque that seemingly validated its sexualized vision of life in the capital. In a number of cases,

¹⁶⁹ *Cabaret*, Winter Resort Number, Volume One, c.1956, 61.

the magazine offered specific details about the “types” of girls that performed at each venue. The Bambu’s show consisted of “local talent.” The Sans Souci had “good-looking U.S. show girls.” El Dorado had an “all-girl orchestra for entertainment.” Prices were “tourist-aimed” at the “frequently risqué” Colonial. A night at Johnny’s Bar could include time “with ‘bar’ girls.”¹⁷⁰

Guidebooks and travelogues offered potential visitors other alluring visions of Cuba that were not necessarily suitable for the government’s promotional campaigns. Authors recounted numerous descriptions of the capital’s plentiful bars. “Havana is reputed to have more bars per square mile than any other city in the world.”¹⁷¹ Bars can be found within “every other doorway all over town. It is said that there are over 7,000 liquor selling establishments in the Havana area.”¹⁷² Another explained that, “the choice of bars is almost as wide as that of beverages.”¹⁷³ The result of this plethora of bars for Cuba was “that no place on earth [could] offer cocktails like those the well-known Cuban bars prepare.”¹⁷⁴ Perhaps realizing that it would be difficult to counter this vision of Cuban society, at least one top-level planner from this era acknowledged the island’s reputation in regard to spirits. In his analysis of tourism development in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, the former Vice-president of the ICT boasted that Cuba’s bartenders were the world’s best preparers of cocktails.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ *Cabaret*, Winter Resort Number, Volume One, c.1956, 68.

¹⁷¹ Judson and Judson, 104.

¹⁷² Gellhorn, 73.

¹⁷³ Roberts, 153.

¹⁷⁴ De Gamez and Pastore, 106-107.

¹⁷⁵ Maribona, 99. It is highly unlikely that anyone at this level of state planning could have even tacitly endorsed two other widely available intoxicants. Absinthe, which had been banned in most countries, could be found easily in Cuba. Opium too could be obtained without difficulty in Havana’s Chinatown. See Roberts, 153, 229.

At the same time that guides helped establish Cuba's (in this case, Havana's) identity as a place of drunken revelry, they served to focus the tourist's gaze on particular establishments within the Cuban capital's immense network of bars. Many writers considered a visit to one particular Havana bar as compulsory. "Probably no visit to Havana is complete without at least a brief look in on Sloppy Joe's."¹⁷⁶ The tourist "inevitably buys a drink at Sloppy Joe's."¹⁷⁷ "It [Sloppy Joes's] is undoubtedly the bar best known to the general run of tourists."¹⁷⁸ The bar became a bastion of U.S. culture, a place dominated by tourists. Occasionally, guides offered advice to counter the institutionalization of tourist drinking at the very un-Cuban Sloppy Joe's. "I do sincerely deplore the tourist psychology which lures Americans...straight to this bar and leaves them there for practically the whole of their visit...seeing almost nothing at all of the island they have presumably come to see."¹⁷⁹ Even *Cabaret* noted that the bar was "a mecca for tourists [with] few locals (Cuban or American)."¹⁸⁰ The establishment was a place for tourists to rub elbows with other tourists.

Sloppy Joe's offered its patrons the opportunity to take home mementos from the bar – souvenirs to remind them of their American experience in Cuba. Some of these, for example postcards, reinforced this popular sight's lack of an authentically Cuban identity. A postcard showing a crowded Joe's features absolutely no one of visible African descent (see 2.26). The customers, while some may be Cuban, are all white. So too are the bartenders, as is the supervisor who carefully watches both them and the crowd. By

¹⁷⁶ De Gamez and Pastore, 209.

¹⁷⁷ Ferguson (1946), 5.

¹⁷⁸ Roberts, 249.

¹⁷⁹ Clark (1946), 24.

¹⁸⁰ *Cabaret*, Winter Resort Number, Volume One, c.1956, 68.

defining the agendas of tourists, guidebooks helped to create the idea of Cuba in the minds of tourists. As guidebooks pushed tourists into Sloppy Joe's, the establishment became part of the imagined Cuba that existed in the minds of tourists.



Figure 2.26. Sloppy Joe's Postcard. (Author's collection.)

Even though the Cuban state did not openly advertise the copious amounts of sex and alcohol that were available on the island, private establishments and guidebook writers often highlighted these aspects of Cuban society in order to lure tourists to Cuba. Yet amidst these descriptions, the authors of guidebooks and narratives defined what it meant to be Cuban in ways that the state and private sector would have considered not only controversial, but unflattering and negative as well. Descriptions such as these served to warn rather than lure potential visitors. One guidebook writer described Havana as a place where, “beggars huddle in doorways, asking alms with ‘for the love of

God' and whining their thanks with 'may God repay you!'"¹⁸¹ Another warned: "One should not be too startled, perhaps, to find a young child sleeping at night in the doorway of a shop."¹⁸² These were hardly the images that Cuban officials or other investors wanted to promote.

Language and Cuban Culture

The linguistic dualism present in Cuba during this period was a further draw for U.S., Canadian, and other English-speaking tourists. This was not a new phenomenon. While the island had been a Spanish colony for roughly four centuries, the presence of English became increasingly conspicuous towards the end of the nineteenth century as the links between Cuba and U.S. grew. It was particularly visible within the world of leisure. From its founding in 1886, the Havana Yacht Club used an English title to identify itself – never a Spanish equivalent. By the 1920s, a number of hotels were advertising the English-speaking ability of their employees, with a number of restaurants doing the same for their waiters.¹⁸³ Even the prestigious *Diario de la Marina* ran a set of headlines in English on its front page in the early twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century, the capital had a well-established English-language daily; the *Havana Post* was in fact older than the Republic itself.

Following WWII, growth in tourism helped English become even more conspicuous within Cuban society. One of the most notorious tourist destinations, as we have seen, had an English name – Sloppy Joe's Bar. Promoters and travel guide writers continued to highlight the presence of English, suggesting that English-speaking

¹⁸¹ Ferguson (1946), 7.

¹⁸² De Gamez and Pastore, 63.

¹⁸³ Perez (1999), 75, 171-173.

foreigners had a place in Cuba – a place where things were familiar to them, a place where they belonged. By 1958, Sloppy Joe’s was merely one among many. *This is Cuba*, an in-flight magazine aimed at tourists, suggested a number of familiar sounding establishments – the Red Coach Club for dinner, Curly’s Flamingo Bar for drinks, and Rudy’s Store for shopping.¹⁸⁴ Another promotional guide provided an extensive list of English language churches.¹⁸⁵ One visitor noted that even in Cuba’s department stores and shops, “many...clerks speak at least some English.”¹⁸⁶

Promoters let it be known that the use of English extended far beyond private clubs, bars, or complementary tourist services. A CTC travel guide informed potential visitors that, “English is very widely spoken throughout the country, especially in Havana.”¹⁸⁷ The emphasis on English was in some cases carried to the extreme, as certain Cubans were not permitted to speak Spanish when interacting with tourists. State authorized guides and chauffeurs, as well as members of the Police Department’s special Tourist Squad were “required to speak English” at all times.¹⁸⁸

The author of a 1955 travel guide hinted that CTC efforts to remove Spanish from Cuba’s tourist world were largely successful. She noted: “English is spoken freely; you will have few problems.”¹⁸⁹ In his travelogue, Colonel Etherton provided an example from his time spent traveling the island by train. “Not speaking Spanish, I used to write on a piece of paper where I wanted to go and, not infrequently, the conductor would tell

¹⁸⁴ V. Merino, ed., “This is Cuba,” Organización de Revistas y Publicaciones Asociadas IV, no. 1 (March 1958): 18, 19, 30.

¹⁸⁵ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1949), 39.

¹⁸⁶ Clark (1946), 102.

¹⁸⁷ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1949), 18-19.

¹⁸⁸ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1949), 19.

¹⁸⁹ Gellhorn, 66.

me in English the exact spot at which he would put me down.”¹⁹⁰ Clearly the island was linguistically accessible for non-Spanish-speaking guests. In fact, many of the travel agencies registered with the CTC had English names, for example, the Cuban American Touring Company, the Gray Line of Cuba, Happy Joe’s 100% Service Tours, Star Tours, and United Tours.¹⁹¹

Considering these examples, it is not surprising that the English language began to permeate the strategies of some Cuban planners. Not only did the state require some workers to communicate with foreigners in English, in considering how to develop the industry for a largely English-speaking market, Cuban planners actually appropriated the language of their clients in order to communicate amongst their fellow Spanish speakers. Spanish words were frequently eliminated in favor of their English equivalents. During its competition to design camping sites in Cuba, the CNT had absolutely no problem with entrants who employed English within their submissions. In fact, the winning entry by Carlos Miranda utilized several English words in one of his designs. He provided an aerial view illustrating what services his tourist camp would offer. “Softball,” “tennis,” and “parking” were all labeled and prominently placed within the award-winning plan.¹⁹² The designer ignored the Spanish equivalents that would have been equally fitting – *sófbol*, *tenís*, and *estacionamiento*.

The use of English can also be seen in elements of Eusebio Mujal’s intense hotel-building program. As it awarded large concessions to developers, there were several

¹⁹⁰ Colonel P.T. Etherton, *Haunts of High Adventure: Sidelights and Cameos on Travels in Venezuela, Panama, Mexico, Cuba, and the West Indies* (London: John Long Limited, 1950), 114.

¹⁹¹ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1949), 94-95.

¹⁹² “*Campos Turísticos: Proyectos*,” 6.

minor restrictions placed upon them. One of these forbade wagers with bookmakers in hotels constructed under the accords of his plan. Rather than use the Spanish term “*corredor de apuestas*,” Mujal utilized the English equivalent – “bookmakers.”¹⁹³ In each of these examples, tourism provided a context for Cuban planners *to think* in English. Ultimately, this is unsurprising, as tourism employment clearly put a premium on English.

Internal correspondence from Hilton International illustrates that the use of English persisted within Cuba’s tourist world into the early Revolutionary period. In October of 1959, tourist Godofredo Torres Neda wrote Conrad Hilton regarding the use of English in his Havana Hotel. While the patron was generally satisfied with his stay at the hotel, he offered some criticism.

A grave difficulty presents itself to the guest in the fact that all of the employes [sic] address the guests in the English language. ... Then the registration card that we must sign; the propaganda for the hotel about its services; the card or menu found in the room and all the literature available to us is also in English. I consider this an error on behalf of hotels in Latin American territory where the national idiom is Castellian [sic]... I make this statement because even though I understand English I found this system very disagreeable.¹⁹⁴

Shortly after this letter was written, probably more as a response to political changes in Cuba than the concerns of the letter writer, Hilton planners began printing their forms and literature in both languages.¹⁹⁵ In any case, English would inevitably remain in Cuba as long as there were large numbers of U.S. tourists on the island. Despite the intense nationalism of Revolutionary leaders, their desire to keep Cuba’s tourism industry intact and largely unchanged led them to tolerate the widespread use of English.

¹⁹³ Mujal, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Godofredo Torres Neda to Conrad N. Hilton, October 19, 1959, CNHLA.

¹⁹⁵ Roberto Lugo Rigau to Conrad N. Hilton, November 13, 1959, CNHLA.

In short, Cuba's tourist zones had become transnational areas where foreigners – most of whom were from the U.S. – and English-speaking Cubans interacted with one another. As Cubans catered linguistically to tourists, visitors' experiences became less foreign and more like those they might have at home. This was not simply a case of linguistic imperialism though. Many islanders welcomed this cultural invasion, reinforced it, and in turn transformed the Cuban 'other' encountered by English-speaking tourists into something quite familiar. Guidebook writers De Gamez and Pastore succinctly summarized this situation in 1954, stressing the familiar in their efforts to entice tourists:

Spanish culture is being rapidly supplemented and replaced by everything American that can possibly travel there by ship, air, or wireless. When the Cuban goes shopping, he invariably specifies, "*Americano, por favor,*" even when buying such things as wines and laces, which are European specialties. Only the old families will insist on the made-in-France or made-in-Spain label on certain purchases. Of course, this tremendous admiration for everything American works to the advantage of the tourist, who finds himself very much at home the moment he sets foot in Havana, where he is received and welcomed everywhere.¹⁹⁶

For the authors, these linguistic and cultural intrusions were seen as a boon for U.S. tourists. Ironically, their recommendation to visit Cuba was based on its diminishing *Cubanidad* and its becoming more like the U.S. Whether or not tourism involves a conscious element of cultural imperialism, this quote clearly demonstrates that it was present as part of the enormous North American presence on the island.

Culture on Display: Touring Cuba's Past and Present

Between 1945 and 1958, the government's tourism planners were primarily concerned with the political economy of the industry. They focused on making the island

¹⁹⁶ De Gamez and Pastore, 76.

as accessible as possible in order to generate the highest returns. Culture was often an afterthought. As noted in the first part of this chapter, the economist Victor Santamarina advocated for nature-based tourism because he thought Cuba to be lacking in culture. Havana could never replicate the historic sites of Paris or Rome. Cuba's castles could never rival those of Britain. Yet the CNT, and later the ICT, believed that cultural offerings were necessary to satisfy the intellectual and artistic needs of certain visitors as well as add to the overall tourist experience in Cuba.¹⁹⁷ In order to maximize their own profits, private companies, organizations, and individuals joined the state in creating cultural displays for the island's visitors. Creating cultural displays that were "acceptable" to this market was no simple matter. Notwithstanding this difficulty, these displays were found in hotels, clubs, and elsewhere. Ultimately, to some degree, economic and cultural development became closely linked. These cultural displays were more closely linked to the formation of Cuban identity than they were to generating profits though. Whatever the purpose, they allowed promoters to not only showcase Cuba's present, but to retell the island's past as well.

Since most tourists arrive in Cuba (or wherever else) with little knowledge of the country they are visiting, the idea of "Cuba" is often open to interpretation, left for definition by industry promoters. In many cases, visitors represented a captive audience, held in place by their own lack of curiosity, ignorance about other options, dependence on organized tours, or fear of the unknown. To be sure, notions of Cuba's cultural past and present were used to lure tourists to the island. As soon as tourists were on their way to the island though, promoters began to thrust a number of cultural displays upon them.

¹⁹⁷ "Programa de Desarrollo Económico," 41. "Plan Mínimo," 6-7.

This was particularly the case on Cubana's "Tropicana Special" – a Cuban-themed flight leaving Miami every Thursday night for Havana. Dancers invited passengers to join mambo lines that formed in the plane's aisle, sing along with performers, or simply enjoy the five-piece Cuban band. There was even a six-foot square stage where the boldest of patrons were welcomed to dance. Gloria and Rolando – two top performers from the original Tropicana in Havana – led the hour-long show that foreshadowed what visitors would find in "the land of daiquiris and sex."¹⁹⁸ In this case, visitors were introduced to the island's hedonistic culture before they ever set foot in Cuba.

Of course most people did not arrive on the "Tropicana Special," and promoters paid far more attention to cultural offerings that were actually available on the island. At the highest levels of state planning, individuals placed much less emphasis on daiquiris and sex than on forms of more traditional culture. Yet instead of holding a privileged place in the minds of industry planners, cultural displays were seen as one of many necessary components of a competitive tourism industry. The authors of the *Plan Mínimo* believed that Cuba needed a Museo Nacional, a centrally located building to house important historic, scientific, and artistic works. Particularly, it should showcase Cuba's "*historia colonial y libertadora*"¹⁹⁹ (colonial history and liberation). Much like national parks, some of the country's leading figures had been pushing for a permanent home for a national museum for decades. Tourism would provide much of the impetus to finally act.

¹⁹⁸ Henry Durling, "Night Club in the Sky," *Cabaret*, January 1957, 32-36, 45.

¹⁹⁹ "*Plan Mínimo*," 6-7. In addition to the Museo Nacional, the CNT called for an aquarium, a zoo, a large central park, tennis clubs, and an eighteen-hole golf course.

As the CNT gave way to the ICT in 1952, the island's new corps of planners also continued to locate Cuban culture within the realm of other tourist offerings. Once again, cultural displays were, while in a separate category, on par with cabarets, casinos, theatres, and both sport and health tourism. The Banco Nacional de Cuba (BNC) agreed with the island's tourism planners, pointing to the Palacio de Bellas Artes, the Biblioteca Nacional, and the Teatro Nacional as ways of offering visions of Cuban identity to the island's guests.²⁰⁰ Once again, these sights were not offered to tourists in order to specifically promote Cuban culture. Instead, in the words of BNC planners, their function was "*satisfacer*"²⁰¹ (to satisfy) tourists – the implication being that if tourists were not interested in Cuban culture, Cuban planners may not have taken sufficient pains to display it effectively. Like parks, it was largely in an effort to meet the needs of tourists that the Cuban government decided to build cultural installations in the capital and elsewhere.

Amidst efforts to satisfy the curiosity of foreign tourists, the Cuban government did its best to control what types of cultural displays tourists saw and how they in turn perceived Cuban identity. State-sponsored professionalization campaigns provided for the training of 'official tour guides' who directed the tourist's gaze to specific sights, reinforcing the government's notion of what was important within Cuban society. Above anything else, the CTC recommended utilizing these guides to explore the city. The guidebook *Welcome to Cuba* advised: "Foreigners are recommended not to accept the services of guides or interpreters who cannot prove that they have been duly authorized to

²⁰⁰ "*Programa de Desarrollo Económico*," 41-46.

²⁰¹ "*Programa de Desarrollo Económico*," 41.

act as such by the Cuban Tourist Commission.”²⁰² Unsurprisingly, all CTC guides contained similarly phrased advice. By offering its services free of charge,²⁰³ the CTC gave visitors an added incentive to utilize its tour guides, further ensuring that many guests would only see the parts of the island that the Cuban state deemed appropriate for their viewing. In a final attempt to control tourists’ experiences while in Cuba, the CTC awarded certain establishments its “Seal of Ethics.” Only businesses fully abiding by Cuban tourism regulations for service received the Seal. In turn, the CTC recommended only patronizing those that had it.²⁰⁴

Independently published guidebooks, once again, generally reinforced the state’s advice, in this case, specifically recommending that tourists utilize state-sanctioned CTC guides while on the island. In *Mexico and Cuba on Your Own*, for example, de Gamez and Pastore advised: “On the question of guides, be sure that you hire one who is licensed by the tourist bureau.” They suggested that tourists simply say: “I want to see the most important sights.”²⁰⁵ In *Your Holiday in Cuba*, the authors only provided the names of tour agencies registered with the CTC; there were more than two-dozen.²⁰⁶

State-published guidebooks are a good measure of what sights government planners believed to be the most representative of Cuban identity. The CTC used guidebooks to direct those tourists who did not accept the services of its tour guides to certain sights. Visitors were resolutely told what they should see while in Cuba. Not surprisingly, state guidebooks suggested seeing Havana above any other city;

²⁰² *Welcome to Cuba*, 8-9.

²⁰³ *Welcome to Cuba*, 8.

²⁰⁴ *Welcome to Cuba*, 8.

²⁰⁵ De Gamez and Pastore, 128-129.

²⁰⁶ Judson and Judson, 117-118.

independently published guides followed suit. In fact, most guides dedicated half or more of their pages to the capital. Other destinations – for example, Viñales, Varadero, Trinidad, the Island of Pines, and Cienfuegos – usually received a few pages each. The CTC guidebook *Welcome to Cuba*, published in 1955, reflects this pattern. Of its ninety-eight pages, twenty-six provide general information on touring the island. Of the remaining seventy-two, forty-one were dedicated to Havana. Within those pages, writers first suggested visiting Habana Vieja. They steered tourists to the Plaza de Armas and the Plaza de la Catedral, which were conveniently surrounded by sights deemed important by the CTC. Just across the bay, the authors encouraged readers to visit the Fortaleza de la Cabaña and the Castillo del Morro. Outside of the old city, *Welcome to Cuba* recommended visiting sights such as the Maine Monument, the Presidential Palace, the Malecón, the Prado, and the University of Havana. Following suit, authors not writing for the Cuban state recommended all of these as well as other similar sights.

Both state and independent guidebook writers recommended that tourists visit Cuba's Museo Nacional, which played a critical role in creating a sense of Cuban identity in the minds of foreigners. The museum had a fractured road to completion, but found a permanent home in December of 1955. The principal function of the Museo Nacional was to tell the story of how the Cuban nation was formed. It contained several sections dedicated to island's historical and ethnological development. Curators organized the museum's collections chronologically, presenting visitors with three epochs of Cuban history. Guests first saw archaeological objects used by the island's pre-Columbian inhabitants living in Camagüey and Pinar del Río. The colonial era followed. Exhibits focused on scenes from daily life – everything from homes and the decorative arts to the

workspace of the enslaved in Cuban cities. Lydia Cabrera organized another dedicated to the “*cultos sincréticos africanos*” (syncretic African cults) (see 2.27).



Figure 2.27. Afro-Cuban Museum Exhibit. (*El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* [La Habana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2003], 57.)

The third section was dedicated to the “great patriots” of the wars of Independence. Busts of José Martí and Antonio Maceo loomed over various artifacts, for example, Martí’s revolver and a small wooden boat used by Maceo (see 2.28). Tourists clearly had an interest in viewing exhibits such as these. Schwartz reports that museum attendance rose sharply during the winter tourist months, up to 400% in the early twentieth century.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ *El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* (La Habana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2003), 54-60. For museum attendance, see Schwartz, 96.



Figure 2.28. Antonio Maceo Museum Exhibit. (*El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes [La Habana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2003], 56.*)

The content and organization of the museum communicated several messages to those who viewed its exhibits. First, the three epochs of Cuban history were wholly separate. One began the moment another ended. Pre-Columbian inhabitants were removed from the historical timeline after Europeans arrived (despite the fact that some indigenous communities in Cuba persist until today). The heroes of the Independence wars were depicted as having unilaterally ended the colonial era (despite the fact that U.S. dominance replaced Spanish colonialism). Second, within the colonial and Independence eras, Cuba's Europeans and Africans occupied separate realms. These characterizations of Cuba's races showed that they did not intermingle. Cabrera's exhibit on Afro-Cuban history was cast as a mere sidebar to mainstream Cuban history. It was far removed from the huge exhibits focusing on people such as Martí and Maceo. Even displays of colonial furniture also overshadowed the presence of Afro-Cubans in the museum. One of the very few exceptions to this pattern of racial separation appears below (see 2.29).



Figure 2.29. Afro-Cuban Museum Exhibit. (*El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* [La Habana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2003], 57.)

This exhibit, however, assigned a clear role to the island's people of African descent – one that was obviously subservient to other Cubans.

Museums elsewhere on the island commonly housed exhibits similar to those found in the Museo Nacional. Both state and independently published guides suggested that tourists visit Santiago's Museo Municipal Emilio Bacardí Moreau. Smaller than the capital's Museo Nacional, it focused on two periods of Cuban history – the colonial era and the struggle for Independence. It contained scenes from everyday colonial life as well as various portraits and personal items from Independence heroes.²⁰⁸ Even tiny Cárdenas (eighteen kilometers southeast of Varadero) had a municipal museum with authentic relics from famous generals who fought against the Spanish. Impressively, the entire room in which General Máximo Gómez died was moved from the Havana suburbs to the city's municipal Museo y Biblioteca. Camagüey's municipal museum was named after Ignacio Agramonte, an anti-Spanish lawyer who died in battle during the Ten Years

²⁰⁸ *Welcome to Cuba*, 82. Judson and Judson, 52-53.

War in 1973.²⁰⁹ Within the island's museums, colonial life was certainly worth celebrating – even if few individuals from the era were identified. The period was significant because of how it had shaped Cuban society and culture, not because it produced important historical figures. In contrast, important individuals certainly emerged from the Independence struggle. Only those from the colonial era who wanted an end to Spanish rule became part of the historical narrative presented to tourists.

In some cases, festivals and guidebooks combined to create regionalized identities for specific destinations. In fact, the CNT (and later the ICT) promoted a degree of regional 'otherness' within Cuba's tourist world. Local Tourism Committees created to develop and promote local cultural programs, particularly in the form of festivals, were critical to this strategy. Viñales, for example, had festivals for tobacco, sugar, and coffee. The city of Trinidad, with its colonial heritage, hosted festivals based on that aspect of its history.²¹⁰ Guidebooks also helped to create a sense of timelessness for each locale. In their 1954 guide, de Gamez and Pastore described Viñales as being "as unspoiled as it was in Spanish colonial days."²¹¹ Trinidad, much like Habana Vieja, was presented to tourists as a living museum. A state guidebook wrote: "Time seems to have laid a mantle over Trinidad to protect it from change."²¹² Independent viewpoints were much the same. "Almost all of Trinidad...belongs to the past, and the whole place is something of a museum."²¹³ Notwithstanding the singularity of these Cuban destinations, local identities were at all times to reinforce broader conceptions of Cuban history and culture,

²⁰⁹ Judson and Judson, 192, 235-236.

²¹⁰ Maribona, 146-150.

²¹¹ De Gamez and Pastore, 219.

²¹² *Welcome to Cuba*, 72.

²¹³ De Gamez and Pastore, 223.

for example, those found in the Museo Nacional. In timeless Trinidad, a high percentage of the city's most important buildings from the Spanish colonial era overlooked parks and squares that had been renamed after Independence heroes such as Martí and Carlos Manuel Céspedes.²¹⁴

Yet whether they were thinking nationally or locally, Cuba's planners also had to consider what aspects of the island's history and culture were most acceptable to the country's tourists – the majority of whom were from the U.S. In terms of Cuban identity and the island's relationship to the U.S., both state and independent promoters purported deep links between the two countries. State planners in Cuba were perhaps the most forthright in making this claim. A CTC guidebook from the mid-1950s explained that Cuba won its Independence because of “a noble impulse of the people of the United States to identify themselves with the Cuban cause for liberty.”²¹⁵ U.S. visitors were led to believe that their hosts owed them a debt of gratitude. The Instituto Cultural Cubano-Norte Americano reinforced this idea through cultural programs, exhibitions, and a lending library, all of which were focused on the strong ties between the two countries.²¹⁶ A physical manifestation of the bond could be found at the Maine Monument, described by a travel guide as “a place of pilgrimage for American visitors.”²¹⁷ The Museo Nacional held some artifacts from the ship, as did the municipal museum in Santiago.

A 1952 guidebook romanticized another U.S.-inspired monument from across the island that stood atop San Juan Hill where the flags of Cuba and its northern neighbor flew side by side. “The interlocking history of Cuba and the United States will walk with

²¹⁴ Judson and Judson, 222-223.

²¹⁵ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1952), 16.

²¹⁶ Judson and Judson, 79-80.

²¹⁷ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1952), 25.

you as you slowly climb the steps to ascend the crest of San Juan Hill.”²¹⁸ Aside from these very explicit characterizations of the island’s past, sights such as the Teddy Roosevelt Monument, another dedicated to American soldiers, and others suggested to the tourist that Cuba and the U.S. were inextricably bound through the benevolence of the small Republic’s neighbor.

U.S. tourists were not only drawn to Cuba by the island’s links to their own country. They were lured by its differences as well. Thus, promoters had to offer tourists cultural displays that reflected this dissimilarity. Both state and independently published guidebooks held Havana’s Carnival in very high esteem, particularly its *Comparsas*. A state-sponsored travel guide from 1949 identified *Comparsas* as the premier component of Carnival.²¹⁹ CTC material from 1953 referred to them as “the special feature of the Carnival season.”²²⁰ Another labeled them, “typical Afro-Cuban pageants...unequaled in this Continent.”²²¹ In her 1955 guidebook, Gellhorn recommends Carnival above all other experiences on the island. Like state planners, she considered the *Comparsas* to be their most important element.

The *comparsa* is an Afro-Cuban pageant based on the traditional slave celebrations of the one-day-a-year when slaves were given a day of freedom. Each *comparsa* is made up of a group of persons all from one tribe who have kept their individuality throughout the years; each has its own dances and music.²²²

Similarly, guidebook writer Erna Ferguson advised taking in some of the island’s Afro-Cuban culture outside of the Carnival context. She explained that a typical tourist’s

²¹⁸ Judson and Judson, 272.

²¹⁹ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1949), 40.

²²⁰ *Welcome to Cuba*, 45.

²²¹ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1952), 35.

²²² Gellhorn, 76.

night in Cuba should consist of “dining well and watching a nightclub adaptation of Afro-Cuban dances.”²²³ Certainly, the Tropicana was the choice of most tourists, but there were a number of other options as well. Yet Ferguson openly acknowledged the tension that existed between Cuban planners’ desire to promote Afro-Cuban culture and their anxiety about how the world viewed the island. “To see dances done ceremonially as they were in Africa is very difficult. Cubans, both blacks and whites, fear that the United States will get the impression that their country is all Negro.”²²⁴ The Tropicana’s choice of dancer for its African-inspired dance reveals this fear (see 2.30).



Figure 2.30. Tropicana Dancer. (*Cabaret*, Winter Resort Number, Volume One, c.1956, 65.)

²²³ Ferguson (1946), 5.

²²⁴ Erna Ferguson, “Afro-Cuban Religious Beliefs, 1946,” in *Travelers’ Tales of Old Cuba* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2002), 146.

Despite this example, and even though the CTC only mentioned Afrocuban culture in the context of Carnival, Erna Ferguson purported something far different in her 1946 travelogue; she wrote that “colored people are everywhere.”²²⁵

Tourists also experienced Cuban culture in less structured ways than museums, monuments, and spectacles. In his study of Mexican identity, historian Jeffrey Pilcher illustrates that food plays a major role in the formation of national identity. “Cuisine and other seemingly mundane aspects of daily life compose an important part of the cultures that bind people into national communities.”²²⁶ In the Cuban case, while guidebooks contained a number of culinary options, they did not necessarily reflect the foods that most locals ate. They did represent what tourism promoters believed to be the island’s best options for tourists. CTC guidebooks from this period described the most important elements of Cuban cuisine for potential visitors. *Arroz con pollo* (rice with chicken), *cangrejos moros* (Stone Crabs in the U.S.), *congrí* (rice with black beans), *picadillo* (beef hash with rice and fried eggs), and avocado salad were just several of the dishes that were described as “typical and delicious.”²²⁷ Despite these local recommendations, the tension between ‘Cuban’ and ‘international’ was as evident in the food of Cuba’s tourist world as it was in the rest of its cultural offerings. State planners explicitly expressed this tension when, in addition to praising Cuban cuisine, promoted “delicate artistic French cookery; the Spanish, so savoury [sic] and varied; [and] the American, simple and hygienic.”²²⁸ Independently published guidebooks also noted that foreign restaurants rivaled those

²²⁵ Ferguson (1946), 7.

²²⁶ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 2.

²²⁷ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1952), 79-80. See also, *Welcome to Cuba*, 88-89.

²²⁸ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1952), 79.

featuring Cuban fare.²²⁹ It is interesting to see how Cubans behaved with regard to Pilcher's assertion that cuisine "has the power to exclude ethnic minorities or the lower classes by designating their foods as unfit for civilized tables."²³⁰ State guidebooks all noted European and U.S. influences, but excluded any direct mention of the influence of Afrocubans on Cuba's culinary world.

In the end, despite the availability of Cuban food, from beginning to end, U.S. tourists could spend their whole visit without ever having to sample the island's local delicacies. Passengers aboard the Peninsular & Occidental Steamship Company, for example, were able to enjoy Wheaties, Texas Figs, and V-8 Juice for breakfast as they plied the Florida Straights on their way to Cuba.²³¹ For breakfast on the island, they could find numerous varieties of Kellogg's cereals – Corn Flakes, Rice Krispies, Shredded Wheat, and others. Oranges were flown in from Florida, pears and apples from California. Many breakfasts were served with "American Coffee" instead of the Cuban variety.²³² The restaurant menu of the well-known Hotel Capri, for example, featured a heavy U.S. influence, with entrees such as "U.S. Chopped Tenderloin, Yankee Pot Roast with Potato Pancake's, American Ham Steak, U.S. Pork Chops, and Prime American Sirloin." For dessert, "Flaming Baked Alaska and Hot Apple Pie" were available to satisfy the timid taste buds of the island's visitors.²³³ Perhaps of broader significance, the

²²⁹ W. Adolphe Roberts identified the island's two best restaurants as *La Zaragozana* and *Restaurant Paris*. The first served Cuban cuisine, the second mostly French. See Roberts, 245-246.

²³⁰ Pilcher, 2.

²³¹ The Peninsular & Occidental Steamship Company, "Breakfast Menu," Vertical Files, CHC UM.

²³² Menu from *Miami Restaurant*, La Habana, c. 1955. Vertical Files, CHC UM.

²³³ Menu from *Casino de Capri*, La Habana, c. 1958. Vertical Files, CHC UM.

overwhelming presence of “American” food within Cuba’s tourist world was a stark reminder that the overwhelming majority of the island’s imports came from the U.S.

At the national level, other cultural displays held complicated implications for Cuban identity. In 1948, a Cuban Senator proposed to offer U.S. tourists a wholly foreign cultural experience. Bullfights were forbidden in the U.S., and in 1900, they had been made illegal in Cuba as well. A half century later though, Senator Federico Fernandez Casas argued that U.S. tourists could be nonetheless drawn to Cuba by “the wish to see bullfights.”²³⁴ His proposal was rooted in what he believed to be the bloodlust of foreigners in addition to the island’s Spanish heritage. But this suggestion was problematic for more than a few Cubans.

The debate over bullfights had raged during the Independence period of the late-nineteenth-century. Louis Perez illustrates how several influential Cubans juxtaposed bullfighting and baseball at the turn of the twentieth century, associating the former with Cuba’s backward past and the latter with modernization and progress. Newspaper writer Antonio Prieto had described bullfighting as “a disgraceful reminder of the barbaric times of paganism.”²³⁵ For José Martí, bullfighting was simply “a futile bloody spectacle... against Cuban sentiment as being intimately linked with our colonial past.”²³⁶ Enrique Jose Varona illustrated bullfighting’s negative influence on Cuban identity most explicitly. Of the dizzied throngs, he wrote: “They come together to witness a spectacle in which the spilling of blood is the inducement that arouses their sensibilities. [They]

²³⁴ “Bullfights in Cuba Urged,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1948.

²³⁵ Antonio Prieto, quoted in Louis Perez, “Between Bullfighting and Baseball: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898,” *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 2 (1994): 506.

²³⁶ José Martí, quoted in Perez (1994), 506.

become accustomed to the craving for blood. ... The people who become accustomed to seeing blood, spill it easily.”²³⁷ These men – who often pointed to the exclusion of women at bullfights as another critical issue – cast bullfights as barbaric reflections of colonialism that encouraged violence throughout society. In their eyes, bullfighting was incompatible with a modern enlightened Cuba. Despite the impassioned arguments of Cubans, this identity crisis was ultimately settled by outside forces. At the moment of Independence, United States General Adna Chaffee - with likely little concern for Cuba’s internal debates – banned bullfighting.²³⁸ Whatever the means, the vision of a Cuba without bullfights had been fulfilled. For Martí, Varona, and other ‘Fathers of Cuban Independence,’ this was a critical step in the nation-building process, and a positive step in terms of shaping Cuban identity.

It did not take until 1948 for profit-minded Cubans to seek the resumption of bullfighting. Certainly, some had never supported the ban. In March of 1909, a bill was introduced in Cuba’s House of Representatives to repeal the U.S. ban on bullfighting. Tellingly, the issue of tourism was addressed in the preamble; bullfighting would “attract many American tourists to the island.”²³⁹ The bill was eventually defeated. In early 1931, Cuban promoters attempted to hold a fight between a bull and a lion. It was met with extreme opposition from Cuba’s only humane society, the Band of Mercy.²⁴⁰ In 1934, the issue of traditional bullfights was raised again, and a group of forty people representing various educational and social welfare associations protested to President

²³⁷ Enrique Jose Varona, quoted in Perez (1994), 506.

²³⁸ Perez (1994).

²³⁹ *New York Times*, March 13, 1909.

²⁴⁰ *New York Times*, December 19, 1931.

Carlos Mendieta insisting that he uphold the ban.²⁴¹ Bullfighting had not resumed three years later, when Cuban businessman Samuel Tolon proposed to spend \$1,000,000 on a bullfighting arena in Havana and a yacht club in Varadero.²⁴² Yachts found their way to the posh resort area; bulls returned as well, although not in the way Tolon intended.

Influential groups had continued to oppose bullfighting in all of its forms. The Band of Mercy fought successfully against the “sham bullfights” (spectacles in which the bulls were tormented but not slaughtered) that were planned for 1934,²⁴³ but the government eventually relented and allowed them to take place. The scene from the second of these fights, which took place several years later in 1941, evoked the warnings of Martí and Varona. The bull gored Rafaelillo, a renowned Spanish *matador*, and trampled a *picador* who had been thrown from his horse. As the wounded men were given help, a frenzied crowd chanted “*matalo, matalo*” (kill it, kill it).²⁴⁴ When Senator Fernandez eventually presented his bill in 1948, Cuba’s Band of Mercy once again petitioned the President.²⁴⁵ The bill did not pass, but the fight was not over. In February of 1953, a consortium of Cuban and Spanish planners tried once again to overturn the five-decade ban. This time it was Cuba’s Ministry of Agriculture that blocked the bulls’ return. They banned the importation of bulls from countries where hoof and mouth disease existed, namely Mexico and Venezuela. These, in fact, were the two countries from which promoters had hoped to import their bulls.²⁴⁶ Despite the expressed desire to appeal to tourists by offering them bullfights, this wide range of opponents prevailed and

²⁴¹ *New York Times*, February 22, 1934.

²⁴² *New York Times*, April 19, 1937.

²⁴³ *New York Times*, December 19, 1931.

²⁴⁴ *New York Times*, May 5, 1941.

²⁴⁵ *New York Times*, December 7, 1948.

²⁴⁶ *New York Times*, February 8, 1953. *New York Times*, February 12, 1953.

prevented them from being reestablished on the island. This mattered little to some of the industry's promoters. Intercontinental Hotels Corporation, the firm that managed Havana's historic Hotel Nacional, continued to use bullfighting imagery in its promotional material into the 1950s.²⁴⁷

The Culture of "Cuban" Souvenirs

Souvenirs allowed for notions of Cuban identity to be reinforced in the minds of tourists even after they had left the island. Given as gifts, mementos from one's journey can even help to fashion an idea about Cuba in the minds of people who have not visited the island. Regardless of why they were purchased in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, souvenirs served as important markers of Cuban identity. At the most mundane level of holiday shopping, thousands of tourists purchased and sent home postcards – small airborne markers of Cuban identity. Thousands of postcards were produced prior to the Cuban Revolution in a broad variety of forms. They reinforced the duality found throughout the island's tourist world. On one hand, a number of postcards showcased a Cuba that was modern, Western, and familiar, one with bridges, highways, and modern buildings. Others depicted scenes of rural Cuba, featuring pristine beaches, mountains, and valleys. Some cards merely featured palm trees, a typical rural home, or an anonymous Cuban village. They revealed the island economy's agricultural foundation, highlighting various stages of sugar, tobacco, and rum production.²⁴⁸ These portrayals characteristically romanticized the natural world of Cuba. Not unsurprisingly, these images, produced for

²⁴⁷ Intercontinental Hotels Corporation Promotional Material, Pan Am UM.

²⁴⁸ Cuba; Trees; Palm. Cuba; Views. Cuba; Villages. Cuba; Dwellings. Cuba; Country Scenes. Cuba; Beaches. Cuba; Sugar Cane Industry. Cuba; Sugar Cane Industry; "Carmen." Cuba; Sugar Cane Industry; Chaparra. Cuba; Tobacco Industry. Cuba; Rum Factory; Bacardi. Postcards, CHC UM.

tourists, consciously ignored the underlying tensions found within Cuban agriculture – a deep urban-rural divide, the poverty that arose from wretched pay and seasonal employment, and massive deforestation.

Other postcards (see 2.31-2.33) such as those shown below reinforced the widely purported idea that Cuba and the U.S. were inextricably linked. The first example is a postcard from Santiago de Cuba. Shown are three monuments dedicated to the “*Soldado Americano*,” the “*Soldado Español*,” and the “*Soldado Mambi*.” Another focused on a monument to Theodore Roosevelt. Unsurprisingly, the Maine Monument was featured in another. In effect, postcards such as these one reinforced the idea that the U.S. played a role in shaping Cuban identity.

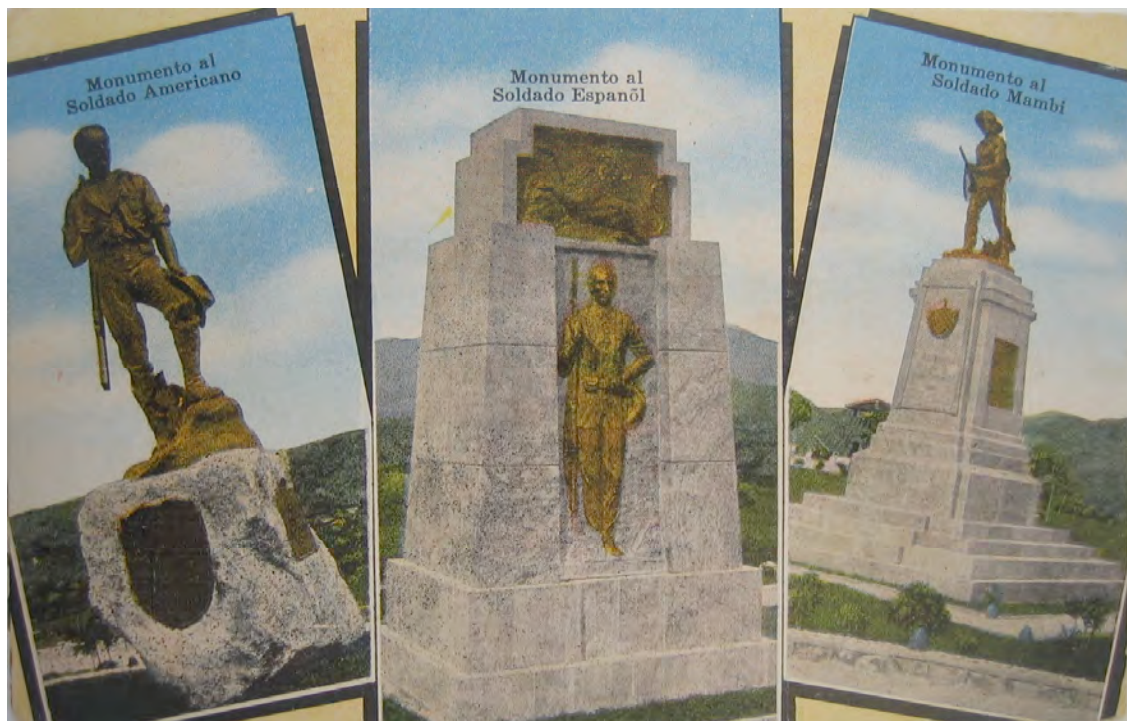


Figure 2.31. Military Monuments Postcard. (Santiago de Cuba; Monuments. Postcards, CHC UM.)



Figure 2.32. Theodore Roosevelt Monument. (Santiago de Cuba; Monuments; Roosevelt, Theodore Monument. Postcards, CHC UM.)



Figure 2.33. The Maine Monument Postcard. (Author's collection.)

Postcards, of course, represented only a small part of Cuba's souvenir market. Yet for tourists, finding a truly unique product to take home proved to be rather difficult. While a *New York Times* article from 1949 advised tourists on purchasing “native” handicrafts in Cuba and elsewhere in the Caribbean, Cuba seemingly offered one of the worst selections. “On the Isle of Pines off Cuba one may purchase beautiful ashtrays of

grenadillo wood,” wrote the author, Marjorie Dent Candee. But her article suggested that there was little to choose from in this regard. If Caribbean authenticity was what one wanted from Cuba, her recommendation was to pick up a set of postage stamps.²⁴⁹ In essence, according to the *Times*, there was almost nothing Cuban to buy in Cuba.

Cuban officials acknowledged this problem. As the ICT took over from the CNT in 1952, worries over Cuba’s souvenir market cast shadows on the hopes for the continued expansion of this touristic sector. According to ICT planners, the limited number of commercial establishments created two problems for tourist shoppers – high prices and limited variety. It was thus difficult to satisfy the demand for “*objetos típicos*.” To remedy this problem, the ICT worked through the *Casas de las Américas* in order to set up a permanent exhibition-sale of locally made souvenirs. This project was designed to not only serve the island’s tourists, but also to offer the island’s poor a chance to develop homegrown micro-industries.²⁵⁰ A look at the souvenir options that became available in the years leading up to the Revolution illustrates that despite the ICT’s attempts, little was accomplished to address this perceived problem. A ninety-eight-page CTC guidebook from 1955 practically acknowledged defeat. While *Welcome to Cuba* featured ads for three establishments that sold souvenirs (Sloppy Joe’s as well as the Partagás and H. Upmann Cigar Factories), the guide offered absolutely no advice on shopping or souvenirs.²⁵¹

Despite the state’s pessimistic view of the island’s souvenir market, travel guides and narratives did describe some souvenir options for tourists looking to take a piece of

²⁴⁹ Marjorie Dent Candee, “What to Buy and How to Shop in the Caribbean Islands,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1949.

²⁵⁰ “*Doctrina, proyecciones y actividades del Instituto Cubano del Turismo*,” 40.

²⁵¹ *Welcome to Cuba*.

Cuba back home, but most offered an equally narrow view of the market. In her 1946 guide, Erna Fergusson advised that, “Cuba has no handicraft, but one can lay in a supply of rum and cigars, and there are curios in leather, tortoise-shell, or gourd.” Tourists could also purchase, “French lingerie, silks, and perfumes.”²⁵² Consider also the “tips on shopping” provided by de Gamez and Pastore in their 1954 travel guide.

Much of the merchandise will have “Made in the U.S.A.” stamped on it, and there will also be many articles of European manufacture. However, although French perfumes and laces are no longer dirt cheap in Cuba, it is still possible to buy such articles, as well as French-made fine embroideries, unusual trimmings, and small pocket items, for less than what you would pay for them at home. ... Jewelry, decorative and useful objects, paintings, small sculpture, textiles, porcelain, ceramics, straws, leathers, copper and gold items of native manufacture mingle here with fine things from Europe. ... Unlike Mexico, Cuba has few native handicrafts of the so-called “primitive” sort. The Cuban aborigine is extinct and has left few examples of such types of craftsmanship. Most likely, in Havana you will find the harvest of contemporary artists who have looked toward Spain, France, and the United States for an inspiring school of art. This applies to handicrafts as well as fine arts.²⁵³

Non-Cuban guidebook writers clearly did not see creative inspiration as a part of Cuban identity. Instead, islanders were deemed stylistically reliant on Western traditions. In a *New York Times* advertisement, the Varadero Internacional assured visitors that they could shop in the hotel’s “famous New York, London, and Paris shops.”²⁵⁴

De Gamez and Pastore (as well as a number of other authors) do note that men could buy *guayaberas* “made by Cuban hands.”²⁵⁵ They also suggest that one might wish to purchase rum, native fruit preserves, or *maracas*. Finally, since Cuba is “the home of fine cigars,” it is important to “buy enough to use as gifts for the cigar smokers back

²⁵² Fergusson (1946), 5.

²⁵³ De Gamez and Pastore, 123-124.

²⁵⁴ Varadero Internacional Advertisement, *New York Times*, October 23, 1949.

²⁵⁵ De Gamez and Pastore, 124. In the words of the authors, *guayaberas* were “those white linen shirts that are worn outside the trousers instead of a coat.” See Ibid.

home or for your own pleasure.”²⁵⁶ These became the quintessential Cuban souvenir during this period – long before Fidel Castro appeared on the cover of *Cigar Aficionado*.

The idea that Cuban-made cigars were of the highest quality – and that one should buy cigars while on holiday in Cuba – was driven into the minds of U.S. citizens who were perhaps not even planning to visit the island. A postcard produced by the National Commission for Propaganda and Defense of Cuban Tobacco, and sold at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City (Figure 2.34), linked haute culture to Cuba and its tobacco. It proclaimed: “Smoke Havana Cigars, a sign of good taste.”



Figure 2.34. “Smoke Havana Cigars” Postcard. (Cuba; Tobacco Industry. Postcards, CHC, UM.)

On the front of the card, its creators link this suggestion to the notion that Cuba’s cigars are world famous. On the reverse though, a second reason for smoking Cuban cigars is provided. The Commission states clearly that, “Cuba is a good neighbor. 75% of its imports are from the United States.”²⁵⁷ Cubans bought U.S. wares; U.S. citizens should return the favor.

²⁵⁶ De Gamez and Pastore, 125-126.

²⁵⁷ Cuba; Tobacco Industry. Postcards, CHC UM.

Cigars remained at the heart of guidebook shopping advice throughout the 1950s. According to *McKay's Guide*, the “best and/or most popular buys” are cigars; Cuban rum, liqueurs, and cordials; French perfumes; embroidered linen blouses, skirts, and dresses; *guayaberas*; and alligator bags.²⁵⁸ Aside from cigars and rum, the author of *Havana: Portrait of a City* suggests picking up something made from local alligators – a handbag, belt, or shoes.²⁵⁹ The authors of *Your Holiday in Cuba* wrote: “Besides cigars...the other purchase an average tourist is likely to make in Havana is rum.”²⁶⁰

Aside from cigars – which contained native tobacco cultivated by the island’s people – it is difficult to consider many of the other widely sold souvenirs as authentically Cuban. French silks and perfumes were clearly not of the island. *Guayaberas*, while they have been defined as Cuban on the island and within the U.S. imagination, did not necessarily originate on the island. They could possibly have a Mexican, possibly pre-Spanish, origin. While Cuba’s rum may be of world-renowned quality,²⁶¹ it is by no means a uniquely Cuban product. It is a colonial derivative of sugar, an imported crop and an historic mainstay of the Spanish economy in not only Cuba for centuries, but in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic as well. Moreover, the English, Portuguese, Dutch, and French all grew sugar. Rum is no more Cuban than it is Puerto Rican, Dominican, Bahamian, or Jamaican.

²⁵⁸ Gellhorn, 74-75.

²⁵⁹ Roberts, 244.

²⁶⁰ Judson and Judson, 57.

²⁶¹ Information on purchasing Cuban cigars and rum can be found in almost every Cuban travel guide or narrative. The authors of *Your Holiday in Cuba* write: “Besides cigars ... the other purchase an average tourist is likely to make in Havana is rum.” See Judson and Judson, 57. Colonel Etherton considered cigars a compulsory component of touring Cuba and marveled at his exploration of the Romeo y Julieta factory: “As a keen and discriminating cigar smoker, this tour was an inspiration...” See Etherton, 115-116.

At the end of Batista's rule, state planners were still showing concern regarding the state of the souvenir industry in Cuba. In addressing the problem, the long-time ICT Vice President Armando Maribona revealed a great deal about how Cuban leaders viewed both their country's history as well as its place within the broader Caribbean community. Maribona noted that Mexico's large indigenous population had created a rich tradition of handicrafts, one that could not be replicated in Cuba. Most striking was his lack of confidence in Cuba's ability to compete with the Bahamas, Haiti, or Jamaica – islands where the residents were creating lots of their own native goods for tourists, albeit limited in variety.²⁶² There were a number of implications from Maribona's assertion. If there was no native population in Cuba with a history of handicrafts, there was no native culture to reflect within the island's broader cultural institutions. Even though Cuba had a similar background to all of the nations Maribona mentioned, except Mexico, planners had emphasized the need to construct an enlightened past for tourists and in doing so, they had disavowed any "primitive" holdovers within a modern Cuba that could be distinguished from its neighbors.

Conclusion: Space, Authenticity, and Change

Some tourists, of course, bought no souvenirs. They strayed from Cuba's beaten paths, saw sights not recommended by the CTC, or maybe, no sights at all. Perhaps they visited more classic Cuban *cantinas*. After all, Havana was supposedly replete with thousands. Some visitors passed on the island's posh hotels to board within the city's residential areas, in private rooms and apartments. This was a well-established practice in Cuba. On the availability of rooms in 1920s Havana, W.M. Miller wrote that: "One

²⁶² Maribona, 138-139.

needs only to look for the sign ‘*Se alquila un cuarto*’ to find such a room. Such signs abound all over the city.”²⁶³ After the War, the practice continued with newspapers providing a number of options. Every day, the *Diario de la Marina* offered scores of rooms to potential tenants, many of which cost anywhere from fifteen to thirty dollars per month. A similar number of apartments were available for slightly more, anywhere from roughly forty to eighty dollars. Knowing that some U.S. visitors preferred this option, one renter advertised his (or her) apartment as an “American guest house.”²⁶⁴ Of course, this and other renters would have likely accepted foreigners or Cubans – just as long as they paid their rent. Yet this example (much like that of the American Bar) shows how even at the micro level, Cubans advertised by offering tourists the familiar.

While Cuba is an island sharing no political borders with other nations, the large foreign presence on the island created internal borderlands across the island.²⁶⁵ It is tempting to view contact zones such as beach resorts, large hotels, the Prado, and the Malecón as the borderlands between the “real Cuba” and the outside world, specifically the U.S. Often overwhelmingly foreign as opposed to Cuban, these were instead foreign enclaves, mini-fiefdoms where islanders were cowed by foreign passports. State-sanctioned authorities (in this case, the Cuban state) enforced a clear rule of law. Tourists were given privileged status. Cubans were required to operate on *their* terms.

²⁶³ W.M. Miller, “Cuba for Foreign Experience,” *Hispania* 10, no. 2 (1927): 92.

²⁶⁴ *Diario de la Marina*, June 1, 1956.

²⁶⁵ In his study of surfing, space, and identity in Hawaii, Isaiah Helekunihi Walker identifies borderlands as “place[s] where differences converge and social norms are often fluid,” where “state-sanctioned authority is often absent.” Isaiah Helekunihi Walker, “Hui Nalu, Beachboys, and the Surfing Borderlands of Hawai’i,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2007): 90. I believe this is an effective definition and well suited to describe borderlands in Cuba. As far as Cuban space is concerned, the question is where borderlands begin and where they end.

Cubans were controlled according to the wants and desires of foreigners, given a subordinate status, and forced to forgo the use of Spanish in some cases. The notion of ‘Cuban space’ lost meaning within these foreign enclaves.

The real Cuban borderlands began where these foreign enclaves ended – across the street from the Hilton, at the edge of the beach, or just to the side of wherever tourists chose to congregate. It was the peripheral space near these sites that made up Cuba’s borderlands. They existed not in Sloppy Joes, but in the capital’s other 6,999 bars; not in the exclusive boutiques found on Calle Obispo, but in stores found on the less traveled streets of Neptuno and San Lazaro; not on the Prado, but just outside the gaze of the Tourist Police; not in Cuba’s exclusive hotels, but in the hundreds of individual rooms and apartments that were easily accessible. These were the true borderlands. Here Cubans were not required to speak English. Here the stores were less frequently given Anglo-based names. Here foreigners could learn about what it really meant to be Cuban.

The period between World War II and the Cuban Revolution witnessed massive tourism-related growth on the island. As hundreds of thousands of foreigners came to know Cuba through a touristic lens, the implications of this growth were complex and varied. In terms of politics, the Grau, Prío, and Batista administrations all worked feverishly to foster the expansion of tourism in Cuba. Batista was the least averse to risk and showed a greater willingness to utilize public funds to further development – particularly because he personally profited from certain projects. Profits and corruption aside, the island was completely thrown open to foreigners. Yet the influence of tourism was hardly universal. Geography, race, and political ideology limited elements of the Cuban population from accessing the tourism industry as either tourists or employees.

Meanwhile, certain areas were completely given over to tourists. As tourist spaces became foreign enclaves, new roads were created to promote the inflow of foreign culture, most notably that of the U.S. Cuban culture flowed out as well though, accompanying Cuban tourists abroad, amidst the souvenirs sold to foreign tourists in Cuba, and in the carefully constructed memories of its visitors.

The tourism/identity relationship was also defined by the utilization of Cuban public services to serve foreigners. As many of these were designed with tourists in mind, they may have never been designed at all were it not for touristic demands. Legislation related to the development of parks in Cuba that had sat idle for years was only reevaluated in light of its ability to serve touristic needs. A number of other internal “improvements” were also undertaken with the island’s visitors in mind. In many ways, tourism revolutionized transportation networks on the island, providing Cubans with more effective ways of moving throughout the country. Pan Am modernized Cubana’s fleet, replacing its small Curtiss aircraft with Ford Tri-Motors, and later, with Lockheed Model-10 Electras.²⁶⁶ In order to support the new planes, Pan Am provided significant infrastructural assistance to the island, constructing a new runway in Baracoa; building landing barges, docks, and a warehouse in Cienfuegos; and extending the runway in Santiago.²⁶⁷ Yet as was also seen, a number of factors limited who was able to take advantage of these opportunities. Taking such limitations into consideration, some projects were not useful to Cubans even though they were funded with Cuban money.

²⁶⁶ Davies, 25.

²⁶⁷ Gene Banning, *Airlines of Pan American since 1927: Its Airlines, Its People, and its Aircraft*, ed. R.E.G. Davies (McLean, VA: Paladwr, 2001), 281, 284.

After January 1, 1959, the tension that existed between these two Cuba's was replaced by the tension between Revolutionary and pre-Revolutionary conceptions of *Cubanidad*. This tension eventually affected the tourism industry in several ways. The new government identified several detrimental aspects of the tourism/identity relationship. Problems though, were identified to be the result of corrupt deals between the Batista government on one hand, and business and mafia interests from the U.S. on the other – not the tourism industry in and of itself. The economic opportunity presented by touristic development led the new government to continue the actions of its predecessors and feverishly pursue visitors. Despite concerns about the more hedonistic facets of pre-Revolutionary tourism, planners' ability to reform the industry was initially limited by tourists' demand for vice that had been consistently conditioned between WWII and the Cuban Revolution. Soon, however, the new government's choices were made moot by the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba.

Whatever the motivations, concerns, and hopes of Castro and other Revolutionary leaders, there were a number of constraints on the tourism industry that had been imposed by the previous government. Because of the massive investments (in capital, manpower, etc.) that are required for successful tourism development, it is difficult for newly established governments – no matter how radically different they are from previous administrations – to deviate very far from the planning strategies that were employed immediately prior to their assumption of power. As a result, thousands of Cubans continued to work in what were considered 'anti-Revolutionary' jobs. Tourism's profound socio-economic importance prevented the mass layoffs that might have been expected in a 'Revolutionary' overhaul of the industry. Constraints were also based on

the new government's dependence on old markets. Regime change in Cuba – or any other tourist destination for that matter – does not automatically trigger a corresponding shift in the tastes of tourists in the U.S., Mexico, or Canada.

Some Cubans – and foreign interests as well – undoubtedly hoped that little would change after January 1, 1959. Perhaps recognizing the potential for tension amidst the unfolding struggle, less than two months before Castro took control of the island, Cubana's president, José López Vilaboy, described the company as “an outstanding example of growth through free enterprise.”²⁶⁸ Putting the accuracy of his claim aside, it seems to contain some additional messages. It is very possible that López foresaw the course the Cuban Revolution would eventually take. Even so, perhaps the immensely successful airline he ran could cooperate with the new regime. If the new government would not work with Cubana though, there was also a message for the U.S. – as a successful free enterprise, the airline was part of the fight against Communist subversion in the Americas – perhaps that is why the U.S. accepted so many Cubana pilot refugees as they fled the island, frequently in planes that belonged to an increasingly radical Revolutionary government.

²⁶⁸ Advertisement for Compañía Nacional Cubana de Aviación, S.A., *New York Times*, November 2, 1958.

Chapter Three:
The Fall and Rise of Tourism in Revolutionary Cuba

In April of 1959, Walter, a U.S. traveler in Cuba, sent a postcard with a short message to a friend back home. There was certainly nothing extraordinary about his actions, or his postcard for that matter. It featured traditional images – beautiful blond women bathing and playing shuffleboard, a Cuban quartet serenading tourists who appear to be from the U.S. The message Walter wrote was similarly mundane. “Hi Ted: Average temperature on Trip 82° – Ocean smooth – Quite a few scrap dealers aboard!”²⁶⁹ It seems as though tourists were still able to enjoy Cuba just as they always had – luxuriously isolated from the Cuban population. Furthermore, tourism still seemed to offer industrious individuals – whether Cuban or foreign – the opportunity for micro-level employment, as evidenced by Walter’s reference to the plentiful scrap dealers on his ship. He by no means indicated that people were any less free to pursue personal profit within the industry. These several images and short message – Walter’s vision of Cuba – did not suggest in any way that radical change was sweeping the island, let alone the tourism industry.

Despite this apparent sense of touristic continuity, by 1961 arrivals had dropped from their pre-Revolutionary peak of nearly 300,000 to less than 5,000. Yet this staggering collapse of the industry did not occur because the Revolutionary government actively deterred foreigners from visiting Cuba. Castro initially tried desperately to preserve the old tourist system, and for brief moments it seemed as if Cuba’s tourism industry would be able to coexist with the radical changes being carried out by the new regime. Within the context of the heightening Cold War, the tension between Cuba’s

²⁶⁹ Cuba; Cruise Ships. Postcards, CHC UM.

traditional role as a host for U.S. tourists and its new status as an ally of the Soviet Union proved too great. While counterrevolutionary violence and negative publicity surrounding the nationalization of foreign properties contributed to the rapid decline in tourism, the critical moment came in January 1961 when the U.S. government severed diplomatic relations with Cuba and subsequently banned its citizens from visiting the island.²⁷⁰ This travel ban – and the corresponding pressure applied by the U.S. to nations with potential replacement markets – removed the decision to maintain large-scale pre-Revolutionary style tourism from the hands of Cuban planners. Tourists vanished, and during the 1960s, there was absolutely nothing Cuba could do to get them back. It was only at this point – when there was no reason to consider the tastes of finicky foreign tourists – that Castro began to extend his programs of Revolutionary change to Cuba’s tourism industry. The island’s few tourists who remained – the majority of whom were “political” tourists – certainly did not mind. They were there to witness Cuba’s example of deep institutional change first hand.

This chapter examines how – after being unable to maintain the islands pre-existing tourism system – Revolutionary planners reengineered the industry, establishing new touristic relationships abroad and a strict code of behavior for those linked to the industry at home. New dimensions of the industry also began to influence the tourism/identity relationship in Cuba. The intense nationalism of the Revolution immediately thrust the issue of Cubans’ access to tourism upon the island’s new leaders.

²⁷⁰ In 1962, President Kennedy invoked the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 to prohibit U.S. citizens from spending money in Cuba, which essentially prevented anyone without direct permission from the U.S. Department of Treasury from legally visiting the island. The Cuban Assets Control Regulations codified this in 1963. See Michael Bellows, *Cuba Information Manual: The Definitive Guide to Legal and Illegal Travel to Cuba* (Key West, FL: Kettle Publishing, 2009), 155.

As Western tourists trickled back into Cuba in the 1970s, foreign visitors became one of the island's only links to the outside world – a fact that leaders hoping to isolate the Cuban population were well aware of. Changes in the tourism industry influenced the construction of Cuban space in new ways. As well, planners utilized tourist offerings to present the island's visitors a new version of Cuban history – a Revolutionary history with new 'heroes' and 'villains.' By expanding on these and other examples, this chapter will show that the Revolutionary government altered the tourism/identity relationship and actively utilized the industry to redefine what it means to be Cuban. By no means did tourism become insignificant between 1959 and 1980.

While the growth in tourism following the fall of the Soviet Union has certainly – and justifiably – garnered increasing levels of attention from scholars in recent years, an examination of the scarcely studied tourism in Cuba between 1959 and 1980 can offer valuable insight on the origins of the developmental strategies employed decades later. Moreover, this chapter illustrates the contradictions between achieving Revolutionary goals and catering to international clients within the global capitalist system. Most importantly, it offers a glimpse of how the tourism industry became entwined with Revolutionary politics. Life changed drastically in Cuba in 1959. In turn, tourism offered new opportunities and challenges to both Cubans leaders and citizens. Changes in the industry also created an entirely new reality for those foreigners able to reach the island.

Despite this sharp break from the past, the pre-Revolutionary tourism industry came to influence Cuban society even after it had been completely destroyed. Between World War II and the Cuban Revolution, Cuba's dependence on the U.S. fostered

malleability within Cuban society to the nature of U.S. touring patterns. At the zenith of U.S. tourism to Cuba, everything from architectural forms to perceptions of race arrived with the thousands of guests from the north. Such was the perceived impact of these relations of dependency that Conrad Hilton, the founder of Hilton Hotels, viewed the spread of U.S. culture within the context of tourism as a critical component of U.S. foreign policy. In order to prevent developing countries from falling into the Soviet sphere of influence, Hilton argued that the U.S. needed to provide “trade, not aid.”²⁷¹ For Hilton, tourism had the ability to shape the trajectory of national politics.

Revolutionary leaders highlighted this perceived vulnerability to the imperialist designs of the U.S. as they quickly took control over many aspects of the island’s tourism industry in 1959. Yet retaining traditional markets and maintaining profits required leaving much of the pre-Revolutionary industry intact. Once the U.S. travel ban removed the initial constraints on Cuban leaders’ ability to implement programs of touristic change, planners’ desire to shed the island’s past identity as a sinful playground for the U.S. led them to pursue a developmental strategy that was more in line with island’s socialist identity. The state’s desire to guide tourism in a very specific direction led to severe constraints within the industry – on foreign investors, on Cubans linked to the tourism industry, and in some cases on individual tourists. As a result, those legally or illegally involved in tourism continue to operate under extreme scrutiny. Their actions are constantly monitored, and access to the tourist world is severely restricted. Since the beginning of the Revolution, it has by no means been an open market.

²⁷¹ Conrad Hilton, quoted in Bill Cunningham, “Hilton Spreading Right Type of Aid,” *Boston Sunday Herald*, June 24, 1956.

The New Politics of Cuba's Tourist Economy

The widening Revolutionary conflict disrupted Cuba's flow of foreign tourists even before Castro assumed power in 1959. As the fighting escalated ahead of the 1958/1959 winter season, holiday travelers stayed away. Revolutionary planners worked to convince many U.S. tourists to return before Washington forbade them from visiting Cuba. The initial obstacles facing the new regime were not insurmountable. Even in January of 1960 – after a full year of Revolution – the *New York Times* was still running articles that praised the island as a great holiday destination.²⁷² Despite support from the *Times*, various groups in the U.S., and several other countries, planners' efforts were in vain. Cold War politics quickly complicated touristic matters beyond repair.

Desperately Seeking Tourists

Within minutes of Batista's fall, it became obvious that a seamless transition from pre-Revolutionary to Revolutionary tourism would not be possible. As rebel soldiers flowed into Havana, their presence provided a new and unique obstacle to tourism development. The scene from the Hotel Havana Hilton on New Years Day in 1959 is particularly revealing. Cuba's new arbiters of power immediately occupied the hotel as they entered the capital. A letter written to Conrad Hilton from a guest who had witnessed these events illustrates several of the immediate obstacles that stood in the way of Revolutionary tourism development.

I was a guest in the Habana Hilton Hotel on January 1st of this year when Batista fled the country and the Castro forces took charge. I write this letter in special commendation of the Resident Manager, Mr. Frank Brandstetter. In common with all of the other U.S.A. nationals who were in the hotel at that time and those who came into the hotel from other

²⁷² R. Hart Phillips, "Yankee Tourist Now a V.I.P. in Cuba," *The New York Times*, January 24, 1960.

establishments which were not regarded as being safe, I was very much impressed by the immediate and energetic manner in which Mr. Brandstetter took charge of the situation and of our destinies. He was able to almost immediately reestablish the food services and the elevators continued to operate, as did the telephones; this was not true of other hotels in Havana.²⁷³

While most of the fighting had ended, the hotel was seemingly under siege. Victorious but homeless, Castro and several hundred of his soldiers occupied a number of Hilton guest rooms, and for a time, the hotel lobby. Today, this temporary occupation has become a part of Revolutionary lore. Tourism planners present the story through a series of framed photographs prominently placed in the since remodeled lobby. Two of these photos appear below (see 3.1 and 3.2).



Figures 3.1-3.2. Soldiers in the Havana Hilton. (Photos are from the Hotel Habana Libre. The caption under each photo reads: “After arriving to Havana, on January 8, 1959, Fidel and some of his comrades settled temporarily at this hotel.”)

²⁷³ Letter to Conrad N. Hilton, President, Hilton Hotels International from Curtice Rosser, M.D., February 20, 1959, Conrad N. Hilton Library and Archives, Houston (hereafter cited as CNHLA). Several other letters to both Mr. Hilton and the Havana Hilton’s manager at the time, Frank Brandstetter, reflect similar experiences. Within them, individuals mention the hotel having done “a marvelous job,” its managers showing “diligence, patience with and sympathy for guests, general understanding and efficiency” in dealing with a “taxing” and “trying period.” See Letter to Conrad N. Hilton from Lyman Sherwood, February 6, 1959, CNHLA. Letter to Frank Brandstetter, Manager, Hotel Havana Hilton from Elizabeth A. Robinson, February 4, 1959, CNHLA.

These images suggest to tourists that not only are they spending their holidays inside an historic hotel, but that the Revolution was deeply entwined with every level of Cuban society from its very beginning.

This air of militarization persisted throughout Cuba's tourism industry even as Revolutionary leaders consolidated their power. Batista's supporters and Castro's opponents did not simply fade away. As will be shown later in this chapter, many continued to violently oppose the new regime. Moreover, the Revolution immediately put Cuba at odds with the U.S. Aggression from the north (both real and perceived) reinforced the tension between promoting an open tourism industry and protecting *Cubanidad*. While the Hilton was able to survive longer than other major hotels in the capital, it too eventually succumbed to the problems that were afflicting others from that New Years Day. The particularities of the industry's collapse reveal a great deal about the nature of Cuban Revolution, its programs of change, and its leaders' perceptions of Cuban identity.

Despite the clear obstacles to touristic continuity, in February of 1959 Castro proclaimed that, "We want a prosperous tourism here...we want many Americans to visit us to fill the hotels and go to Varadero and buy Cuban products."²⁷⁴ Affirming the young leader's rhetoric, the Revolutionary government worked with the United Nations to conduct extensive research on the potential for touristic growth. Svein Winge Simonsen, a representative from the UN's Technical Assistance Administration, released his report on the future of Cuban tourism in April of 1959. While Simonsen began his research under Batista, the report nonetheless reflects the early goals of Revolutionary leaders.

²⁷⁴ Fidel Castro, interview by Cuban Press Corps, CMQ Television, February 19, 1959.

His work is prefaced with a number of accolades from the Minister of the Economy, Regino Boti. Boti referred to the report as a “*valioso informe*” (valuable report) and an “*elocuente ejemplo del valor de la cooperación y la asistencia técnica, en el ámbito internacional*” (eloquent example of the value of cooperation and technical assistance at the international level).²⁷⁵ Simonsen stressed that above all else, Cuba must maintain its touristic ties with the U.S. He felt that Cuba should open itself further to the outside world, eliminating the \$2.50 tourist tax that all visitors had to pay upon arrival. This created a “*mala impresión*” (bad impression) in the minds of tourists before they even reached Cuba.²⁷⁶ While the particularities of Simonsen’s advice are dealt with throughout this chapter, the new government’s willingness to accept this report illustrates its desire for outside assistance. That it was carried out in conjunction with the UN also reflects the new regime’s desire to use tourism to maintain Cuba’s pre-Revolutionary links to the global community.

In line with Simonsen’s recommendations, the Instituto Nacional de Industrias Turísticas (INIT) pledged \$400,000 of its four-year \$200 million tourism development program to advertising.²⁷⁷ Promotional material from this campaign was designed to illustrate that nothing revolutionary was taking place within the island’s tourist world. A September 1959 Cuban advert from the *New York Times* reveals this strategy (see 3.3). The ad featured a family – mother, father, and children – enjoying themselves in the pool of a Cuban hotel. Its creators informed potential visitors that: “You’ll be HAV-AN-A lot

²⁷⁵ Regino Boti, “*Presentación*,” in Svein Winge Simonsen, “*Estudio sobre el turismo en Cuba*” (La Habana: Banco de Fomento Agrícola e Industrial de Cuba, 1959).

²⁷⁶ Svein Winge Simonsen, “*Estudio sobre el turismo en Cuba*” (La Habana: Banco de Fomento Agrícola e Industrial de Cuba, 1959), 5, 112-113.

²⁷⁷ Schwartz, 200.

more family fun SOONER when you fly CUBANA.” In fact, according to the ad, things were tranquil in Cuba and there was nothing that would prevent foreign visitors from enjoying themselves while there.

TRAVEL TRAVEL

You'll be
HAV-AN-A lot more
family fun **SOONER.**

WHEN YOU FLY
CUBANA
 BRITANNIAS
 TO HAVANA

New York—Havana
\$73⁸⁰
 each way—round trip
 tourist class

Fastest and only daily jet-prop flights
 See Your Travel Agent or call **CUBANA AIRLINES**
 342 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.
YUkon 6-7878

Fly Cubana
 jet-prop Viscounts
 Miami-Havana

YOUR TRAVEL AGENT KNOWS . . . HE'LL BE AT THE ASTA 29TH WORLD TRAVEL CONGRESS, HAVANA, CUBA, OCTOBER 17-25, 1959.

Figure 3.3. Cubana Advertisement. (*New York Times*, September 27, 1959.)

One of the earliest (if not the earliest) of the state-produced travel guides from the Revolutionary era reveals this touristic continuity. The new government did not alter the political status of U.S. tourists. They were still not required to obtain visas to enter the country. Economically, the Cuban peso and U.S. dollar were still closely tied. The guidebook read: “U.S. money, especially coins, is widely used, and may be exchanged at par.”²⁷⁸ The new government left Cuba’s doors wide open for U.S. tourists. Regardless of how young Revolutionary idealists might have really felt about international tourism in Cuba, they realized that they could not ignore the very real implications that radical change would have on the industry, and hence, its survival and profitability on the island.

It was not only Cuba’s Revolutionary planners who sought continuity within the tourism industry. Private investors by no means wanted to see a prolonged downturn in international arrivals to the island. Those that survived the initial shock to the industry continued to advertise alongside the government’s own promotional campaign. Airlines pursued passengers; hotels pursued guests; casinos pursued players. “Q” Airways, the Hotel Riviera, and Nacional’s casino are several examples of companies that ran ads in the *Miami Herald* throughout the winter and into the spring of 1959 (see 3.4-3.6).²⁷⁹ “Q” maintained a traditional approach, highlighting the island’s proximity to Key West. The Riviera directly addressed concerns about tourists’ safety, assuring them that normalcy had returned. Certain of this fact, the Nacional’s casino offered to pay for guests’ roundtrip flights.

²⁷⁸ Cuban Tourist Commission, *Cuba* (La Habana, 1959), 5.

²⁷⁹ *Miami Herald*, January to April 1959.

See your travel agent for...

HOLIDAY TOURS TO

Havana

FROM KEY WEST

"Q" AIRWAYS

YOUR TRAVEL AGENT HAS A LARGE SELECTION OF UNFORGETTABLE HAVANA TOURS—VIA "Q" AIRWAYS—AT LOW PACKAGE RATES

You travel down the scenic over-seas highway to historic old Key West. Visit Key West's points of interest before flying on to gay Havana—"Paris of the Americas." Stay at one of Havana's finest hotels while enjoying the never-ending, gay attractions of this capital city. On "Q" Airways, you return either via Key West or The Palm Beaches. A never-to-be forgotten trip at a low, low price.

FOR DIRECT FLIGHTS TO HAVANA OR THE ISLE OF PINES, CALL Franklin 1-2972 OR Franklin 1-9918

AIRWAYS
Q
A SCHEDULED AIRLINE

Call your travel agent now!

The thrill of Havana... in the Grand Manner... in Cuba's finest luxury hotel—the Havana Riviera! Completely air-conditioned... 400 exquisite ocean-view rooms... every facility for sophisticated pleasure seekers!

EVERYTHING'S FINE AND FUN AGAIN IN HAVANA!

MIKE McLANEY'S CASINO
HOTEL NACIONAL DE CUBA
BUYS YOUR AIRLINE TICKET ROUND TRIP TO A
3 DAY GALA HOLIDAY
MIAMI . . . HAVANA . . . MIAMI
HAVANA
(4 FLIGHTS DAILY . . . MAJOR AIRLINE)
(\$75.00 VALUE)
\$49⁹⁵
Per Person
2 Days — 1 Night

INCLUDES: FREE ROUND TRIP VIA AIR
MIAMI . . . HAVANA . . . MIAMI
3 DAYS, 2 NIGHTS AT WORLD FAMOUS HOTEL NACIONAL IN HAVANA . . . FABULOUS SHOW & DINNER AT THE CASINO PARISIEN
\$54⁹⁵ Per Person
2 Days — 2 Nights

YOU'LL THRILL WITH EXCITEMENT SEEING INTERNATIONAL STARS AND A TREMENDOUS CUBAN REVUE . . . NEVER BEFORE HAS SO MUCH FUN AND ENTERTAINMENT BEEN OFFERED AT SUCH A LOW, LOW PRICE.

CALL YOUR TRAVEL AGENT
CHARLES SCHWARTZ, Casino Mgr.
MIKE McLANEY'S CASINO OFFICE: Union 5-0211 — Union 6-5411

Figures 3.4-3.6 (clockwise from top left). "Q" Airways Advertisement. (*Miami Herald*, February 8, 1959.) Hotel Riviera Advertisement. (*Miami Herald*, February 1, 1959, March 22, 1959.) Mike McLaney's Casino Advertisement. (*Miami Herald*, 26 March 1959.)

Yet calls for continued tourism to Cuba did not only come from the Revolutionary government, technical experts, and private investors. In several cases, the U.S. media provided Cuba with a certain amount of free advertising. During his show on October 12, 1959, Jack Paar echoed what others had been saying since January.

Tourists have stopped going to Cuba in the most part. For instance, in the Havana Hilton there were 35 people. This is one of the most beautiful hotels in the world. It's because of the scare. I can tell you that I saw nothing but a friendship and a welcome out to all Americans, there are so few. But they need tourism very, very badly. And there's been all kinds of things printed about Cuba that I feel are completely untrue. They need tourism...²⁸⁰

While Paar's efforts did little to rekindle the interest of U.S. tourists, his remarks illustrate that continued tourism to Cuba was by no means incompatible with Revolutionary rule. Paar was one of the most notable proponents of continued tourism to Cuba during this period. For him, the island was just as perfectly suited for your average U.S. tourist as it had been a year earlier.

Paar suggested that despite perceptions of a changed Cuba, a great deal of continuity existed within the island's touristic world. He remarked during the same October broadcast that the new government was initially willing to compromise regarding what it thought was suitable for Cuban society on one hand, and what was necessary for competitive tourism on the other. "Castro is opposed to gambling... But Americans want to do these things, want to gamble, so there's gambling there."²⁸¹ While the issue of gambling will be dealt with at length below, Paar's comment illustrates that at this point – after nine months of Revolutionary rule – the economy still held primacy

²⁸⁰ Jack Paar, *The Jack Paar Show*, National Broadcasting Corporation, October 12, 1959, CNHLA.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

over morality. In terms of further continuity, Paar offered another useful comparison between pre- and post-Revolutionary Cuba. “I have never seen Havana so beautiful or so clean,”²⁸² he stated. Paar believed that not only was the young regime preserving Cuba’s pre-Revolutionary identity as a premier tourist destination, in terms of cleanliness and aesthetics, the new government was improving the island’s identity as well. As Cuba was becoming more and more politically isolated, this media giant provided Castro’s Cuba with a resounding endorsement.

While Paar pled with U.S. travelers, Castro remained outwardly hopeful that Cuba could maintain a touristic relationship with the U.S. As the political tension between Havana and Washington escalated though, Castro began to focus his attention on particular groups of potential tourists. In September of 1959, Castro claimed that the new government “aimed at promoting tourism by persons [of] modest means.”²⁸³ Roughly one month later, he stressed that: “We should maintain friendliest relations with *people* [author’s influence] of United States.”²⁸⁴ After nine months in power, and amidst worsening ties between the two countries, Castro increasingly made this distinction between Washington and the elite on one hand and ‘ordinary’ U.S. citizens on the other. He emphasized: “The American workers can spend a month in Cuba like millionaires.”²⁸⁵ In drawing this sharp distinction among people from the U.S., Castro simultaneously reinforced one of the dominant themes of tourism in the pre-Revolutionary era – that foreigners enjoyed a significantly higher quality of life when visiting the island than most Cubans did in their daily lives. Despite these hopes, the

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Fidel Castro, “Four Hour TV Appearance,” September 29, 1959.

²⁸⁴ Fidel Castro, “Impromptu Appearance Before Meeting,” October 20, 1959.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

young leader also recognized that larger political issues offered obstacles to retaining any segment of the U.S. tourist market. In regards to attacks against Cuba in the U.S. press, Castro urged: “We must be clear and not blame the American people for the interferences of those groups in our affairs.”²⁸⁶ Two days later he continued in a similar vein. “We must seek the solidarity of the American people. ... Many of them can help us by visiting us.”²⁸⁷

Amidst this hope, other changes in the tourism industry offered more conspicuous examples of the increasingly troubled relationship between Cuba and the U.S. Revolutionary politics were becoming entwined with tourism development at all levels. In a letter to Conrad Hilton, a company vice president expressed concern over a memo he received regarding shifts in the Cuban department of tourism. It read:

Oscar Ramirez, who was until present the Director of Tourism, has just resigned (or forced to resign) as well as his closest associates, and a new organization of tourism has been formed as follows: “Junta de Fomento Turístico”, presided by Dr. Fidel Castro...²⁸⁸

For private investors with a stake in Cuba’s tourism industry, this was a troubling development. Castro was already head of the CTC. Indeed, the new government’s links to the industry could not have been much closer. Former administrations were closely linked to the industry, but the intense centralization of touristic power that took place during the first months of the Revolution linked Castro to the industry closer than possibly any leader or politician in Cuba’s history.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Fidel Castro, “Speech – Castro Conciliatory Toward Americans,” October 22, 1959.

²⁸⁸ Memo to Robert J. Caverly, Vice President, Hilton Hotels International from Jose A. Menendez, August 5, 1959, CNHLA.

By the end of 1959, officials from Hilton were openly acknowledging their own fears regarding this high level of centralization. In October, Hilton Vice President Robert Caverly wrote one of the hotel's restaurant operators that, "concerning Havana, we certainly share your concern about operating losses there."²⁸⁹ Only two months after Castro's consolidation of touristic power, Hilton's inability to "exercise fairly good control"²⁹⁰ became emblematic of the situation for private investors in Cuba. Only a month later, Conrad Hilton asserted that Castro "has destroyed all business and is rapidly destroying all future business."²⁹¹ Days later, Senior Vice President Arthur Elmiger, seemed to confirm this, warning Hilton that, "it is not impossible for Fidel Castro to see fit to frown at the Habana Hilton."²⁹² Elmiger's recent claim that following the ASTA Convention, "the Habana Hilton which served as headquarters, will reap the benefits of its efforts and magnificent performance,"²⁹³ had been terribly shortsighted. The fears of Caverly and Hilton had been proven true. The Revolution had become anathema to their operations within Cuba's tourism industry. By this time, the difficulty of expanding – let alone maintaining – the industry had become very apparent.

Over the next several years, tourism's entire private sector watched as centralization gave way to nationalization. The island's well-established network of domestic air carriers provides an excellent example. Cuba's airlines – much like its labor unions, education system, and the business world in general – underwent a process of

²⁸⁹ Letter to Victor Bergeron, Trader Vic's from Robert J. Caverly, Vice President, Hilton Hotels International, October 12, 1959, CNHLA.

²⁹⁰ Letter to Victor Bergeron from Robert J. Caverly, October 12, 1959, CNHLA.

²⁹¹ Letter to Arthur E. Elmiger, Senior Vice President, Hilton Hotels International from Conrad N. Hilton, November 21, 1959, CNHLA.

²⁹² Letter to Conrad N. Hilton from Arthur E. Elmiger, November 23, 1959, CNHLA.

²⁹³ Letter to Conrad N. Hilton from Arthur E. Elmiger, October 26, 1959, CNHLA.

consolidation whereby one state-run carrier eventually took over all of the island's others. In August of 1961, the Transportation Ministry resolved that Cubana was to take control of the assets of Compañía Aerovias Q, S.A., Compañía Cubana Aeropostal, S.A., Compañía Cubana de Aviación, S.A., Carga por Avión, S.A., Expreso Aéreo Interamericano, S.A., and Viajes a Plazos, S.A.²⁹⁴ While the new government had been willing to follow the recommendations of the UN advisors in regards to casinos – and in doing so, put its principles temporarily aside – the massive state intervention and centralization that took place went directly against what Simonsen suggested: Cuba needed private investors; Cuba needed decentralization.²⁹⁵ With almost no hope of foreign investment, Castro had begun calling for Cubans to invest their own money in the tourism industry. “Savings certificates” would be used for, among other things, the promotion of tourism and the improvement of beaches and vacation centers.²⁹⁶

Before the situation became this dire though, the new regime offered potential tourists a number of incentives in an attempt to increase arrivals. In December of 1959, the Revolutionary government instituted what it termed as the “friendship airlift.” Transportation rates were cut in half and hotel rates were lowered. This short-term promotion was met with some success. 2,500 tourists visited Cuba during the holiday season, but arrivals fell sharply as 1960 began.²⁹⁷ The *New York Times* tried to help the still-young regime repair its tourist identity, running several articles praising the island as

²⁹⁴ Cuban Chamber of Commerce in the United States, October 2, 1961, Pan Am UM.

²⁹⁵ Simonsen, 111-115.

²⁹⁶ R. Hart Phillips, “Import Reduction Urged by Castro,” *New York Times*, September 19, 1959.

²⁹⁷ R. Hart Phillips, “Cuba Cuts Rates to Spur Tourism,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1960.

a topnotch travel destination. The title of one proclaimed: “Yankee Tourist Now a V.I.P. in Cuba.” According to the author:

That secretary of a number of years ago who went to Havana on one of those cruises for \$49.50 to spend a few days may be able to do so again. Maybe not for \$49.50, but for not too much more than that. This is because Premier Fidel Castro has launched a crash program designed to attract American visitors to Cuba...²⁹⁸

Planners took other actions to make the island more accessible to tourists. Leaders opened formerly private establishments like the Villa Real golf course to tourists. More broadly speaking, the author of a *Times* article assured potential visitors that the U.S. tourist “is welcomed everywhere he goes.” Cuba was “a peaceful island,”²⁹⁹ and according to the author, still perfectly suited for its traditional guests. In these instances, the new regime was following Simonsen’s advice about making the island and its tourist offerings as accessible to foreign guests as possible.

After the success of the “friendship airlift,” Cuban planners developed a similar promotion based on the island’s Carnival celebration that March. The plan was simply titled “Carnival Special” but went far beyond the holiday season discount that had been offered. With paid airfare, tourists received:

One night’s stay at any hotel in Havana or Varadero Beach; dinner at any of the hotels; a visit to the Tropicana night club with the first drink free; admission to the Jockey Club of Oriental Park, and one day’s golfing at the Villa Real course with greens fees paid.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ R. Hart Phillips, “Yankee Tourist Now a V.I.P. in Cuba,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1960.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ R. Hart Phillips, “Cuba Cuts Rates to Spur Tourism,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1960.

With this deal, the state planners offered tourists an entire holiday at almost no cost. Of course, that it was such a good deal underscores the difficulty that the Revolutionary government was having attracting tourists.

Amidst these efforts, the new government promoted the island in places other than the U.S., building upon touristic relationships that had been established prior to 1959. In April of 1960, Cuba hosted the third Congreso de la Confederación de Organizaciones Turísticas de la América Latina (COTAL). The tourism division of Cuba's Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores organized the meeting and distributed a promotional brochure, titled "*Turismo en Cuba*," to attendees. It began by recounting earlier COTAL meetings and highlighting the historic links between Cuba and other Latin American destinations. Hopes for the future were high; a year earlier, 1960 had been deemed the "Latin American Tourist Year."³⁰¹

In order to impress their Latin American guests, Cuban planners highlighted the positive accounts of other visitors. They showcased a wide array of guests, including racecar driver Stirling Moss, CBS journalist Robert Taber, French intellectuals Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, movie director Cesare Zavattini, the president of Peru's National Association of Travel Agents, several religious leaders, and the Mayor of Oakland Alexander Potash. All parties agreed that Cuba was beautiful, tranquil, and perfectly suited for international tourism. Bishop Roy Short provided a ringing endorsement of the island's religious freedom. Mayor Potash spoke directly to the overwhelmingly negative accounts of Cuba that dominated the U.S. press. "*El Gobierno*

³⁰¹ Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, "*Turismo en Cuba*," (La Habana, March 1960), 1-3.

de Fidel Castro es de libertad y no de terror.”³⁰² (The government of Fidel Castro is of liberty and not terror).

The high praise for Cuba found in the COTAL brochure may have come from a variety of visitors, but it is important to note that the Cuban government was responsible for publishing these accounts. It should come as no surprise that they were overwhelmingly positive. Yet, these accounts cannot simply be dismissed as components of a Revolutionary propaganda campaign. These individuals visited Cuba on their own accord, and some, for example Taber and Sartre, published thoughts on their experiences within mediums that were in no way controlled by the Cuban government. In fact, this diverse cross-section of tourists was part of the broader chorus of voices that were calling for continued U.S. tourism to a destination that they believed to just as ideally designed for tourists as it had been prior to 1959. Jack Paar and the *New York Times* were simply two of the most important of the outspoken supporters.

Aside from celebrities, leaders, and major media outlets, individual tourists clearly expressed a favorable view of the “new” Cuba. Walter’s postcard message cited in this chapter’s introduction provides one example. Writing from Cuba to the U.S. while on holiday in February of 1960, Francis Gardner expressed a similar opinion. “Having a very nice time, as always. Hope you all do not freeze up there. My best to all.”³⁰³ The first part of this short message reveals a great deal. Sent from Havana, her note suggests that all was well in the capital. In fact, since Ms. Gardner implies that she had traveled to Cuba several times before this visit, it seems as if after a year of being in power, the

³⁰² “*Turismo en Cuba*,” 4-7.

³⁰³ Havana; Aerial Views. Postcards, CHC UM.

Revolutionary government had changed very little within the industry from the average tourist's point of view.

Yet one seemingly trivial aspect of this postcard does reflect the deep changes that were taking place on the island. The postmark stamped on the card's reverse did more than simply provide the date of the items departure from Cuba. It offered a directive for those who took the time to closely examine their souvenir: "By [sic] Cuban Sugar." Not only had sugar accounted for 82% of Cuban exports in the four decades before Batista's overthrow, the island enjoyed preferential access to the U.S. sugar market throughout this period and even into 1960.³⁰⁴ Sensing that the heightening political tension could threaten this sector of the economy (much like it had harmed tourism), the new government utilized this touristic form to wage its ideological battle against an increasingly hostile Washington. U.S. tourists were its unknowing proxies in this battle. After all, the postmark was only applied after the card had left their hands. This effort to win the hearts and minds of U.S. consumers was in vain. The U.S. Congress approved a measure that allowed President Eisenhower to cut the sugar quota early that summer.³⁰⁵

By mid-1960, Castro had begun to indicate that this sugar-related postmark was more reflective of Cuba's touristic future than Ms. Gardner's message. He increasingly spoke of touristic threats that Cuban planners could scarcely control. That June, he accused the U.S. State Department of funneling spies into the country alongside

³⁰⁴ Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 1152.

³⁰⁵ Thomas, 1288-1291.

tourists.³⁰⁶ Castro even went so far as to accuse tourists who visited the island in good faith of unknowingly undermining the new regime. Cubans who had fled the island with large numbers of pesos – and who had no intention of returning to the island – were selling this currency to tourists at extremely preferential rates. As tourists arrived in Cuba with *pesos* in hand, they left not a dollar on the island.³⁰⁷ For a young government with a number of recently made domestic commitments and very little foreign currency, this practically defeated the purpose of tourism development.

After Castro's relationship to the Soviet Union became apparent, the U.S. severed diplomatic ties with Cuba and banned its citizens from traveling to the island as tourists. This devastating event – perhaps with more bearing on the collapse of tourism in early Revolutionary Cuba than any other – underscores the link between politics and tourism. As long as Cuba's political system remained overtly objectionable to Washington, the immense travel market located just to the north was (and remains) far out of reach. The travel ban, imposed as a reaction to the deep shift in Cuba's political culture, highlights the links between national identity (i.e. socialist or communist) and the possibilities for touristic development. Cuba's desperate attempts to attract guests were of no consequence in light of its profound shift in identity.

Beyond the travel ban, by 1961 a number of other significant problems were inhibiting Revolutionary leaders' ability to maintain the industry. The Cuban economy was in disarray. Shortages of toothpaste, soft drinks, and beer began in the spring, and by summer, the same could be said for basic foodstuffs. The government introduced general

³⁰⁶ Fidel Castro, "Reunion of the Revolutionary Leaders of 1930," June 23, 1960.

³⁰⁷ Fidel Castro, "Radio Interview of Castro on Currency Reform," August 9, 1961.

food rationing in March of 1962.³⁰⁸ No longer could the new government pursue costly developmental strategies like tourism without being assured of an economic return. Even if Cuba had been suited for international tourism at this point, finding tourists in places other than the U.S. would have proven difficult. Europe was one potential market, but airfares would not decrease substantially for over a decade, and many European travelers continued to holiday closer to home. Latin American and Caribbean nations could have supplied Cuba with a small number of tourists; however, ties with many of those countries were strained by Castro's desire to spread Cuban-style revolution throughout those regions.³⁰⁹ Significantly, the U.S. also worked (in ways that will be examined below) to prevent Cuba's neighbors from visiting the increasingly isolated island.

With so few people visiting the island, many hotels remained empty.³¹⁰ The government utilized some to support other programs. Members of the 1961 campaign against illiteracy resided in some, students training to become better Revolutionaries in others.³¹¹ Without the discriminating tastes of tourists to force upkeep and innovation within the industry, much of Cuba's tourism infrastructure fell into disrepair. Years later, this situation served as an impediment for a state with little capital to rebuild an industry

³⁰⁸ Brundenius, 47-49.

³⁰⁹ Particularly problematic for other Latin American nations was Cuba's role in arming revolutionaries operating in Venezuela in the mid-1960s. See Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 150.

³¹⁰ Cuba's former competitors stepped in to fill the void created within the Caribbean leisure market. Conrad Hilton provides a clear picture of these shifting markets. Writing in November of 1959, he remarked: "Here we are in Puerto Rico completely booked up and no one wants to go to Havana anymore." Cuba's loss was turned into others gain. See letter to Arthur E. Elmiger, Senior Vice President, Hilton Hotels International from Conrad N. Hilton, President, Hilton Hotels Corporation, November 21, 1959, CNHLA.

³¹¹ Richard Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969).

and much reluctance to allow private enterprise to use its own within Cuba. In light of these challenges, Cuba turned inward, found ways to utilize the crumbled industry to serve Revolutionary ends, and used the travel restrictions imposed by Kennedy as an anti-U.S. propaganda tool.

Militarization and Conflict on the Battleground of Tourism

Prior to victory in 1959, the exposed nature of the tourism industry offered those fighting against Batista a host of excellent targets for disrupting Cuban society and the economy. While few tourists were put in physical danger while on holiday in Cuba (Arrivals increased from 1956 to 1957, and would have decreased by far more from 1957 to 1958 had this been the case.), the opposition displayed a willingness to attack soft targets from the inception of their armed struggle. Rebels placed a bomb at the Tropicana on New Years Eve in 1956. Later that week, eight members of the United Revolutionary Opposition confessed (likely under severe duress) their plans to target other cabarets.³¹² After two men kidnapped Argentine auto racer Juan Manuel Fangio from the lobby of the Lincoln Hotel in February of 1958, a rebel spokesperson claimed responsibility. The act was strictly designed to garner attention; they released Fangio unharmed the following day.³¹³ Anti-Batista forces also kidnapped several U.S. citizens that year. More often than not though, the victims were temporary residents who lived or worked on the island, not tourists.³¹⁴ Thus while limited, Cuba's tourists did face rare instances of danger amidst the heightening tension of 1957 and 1958.

³¹² "Cuba Plot Bomb Foiled," *New York Times*, January 6, 1957.

³¹³ "Cuban Rebels Seize Fangio, Auto Racer," *New York Times*, February 24, 1958. "Argentine Driver Released," *New York Times*, February 25, 1958. R. Hart Phillips, "Kidnappers Kind, Fangio Asserts," *New York Times*, February 26, 1958.

³¹⁴ Peter Kihss, "3 More Americans Released in Cuba," *New York Times*, July 6, 1958.

These threats though, were just one aspect of the pre-Revolutionary militarization of Cuba's tourism industry. Even before Castro and others took up arms against Batista, the same air networks that brought tourists to Cuba were a critical component of the government's strategies for regional and domestic defense. The island's flagship carrier, Cubana, had years of military aero-experience, subcontracting for the U.S. government since 1950. The airline "furnish[ed] maintenance, overhaul and repair services for Douglas Model C-47 aircraft of the Caribbean Air Command of the United States Air Force."³¹⁵ The CIA conducted its own study on the importance of Latin American and Caribbean civil air networks to U.S. security. Amidst the growing fears over war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the agency concluded that Cuba's civilian aircraft were critical for transporting U.S. troops in the event of a global conflict. In fact, as "the gateway to Middle America," the analysts believed that Cuba was particularly important.³¹⁶ Over the next several years, the Cuban air force began joint activities with the island's commercial airlines. In 1957, Oscar Cicero wrote an article for the *Diario de la Marina* calling for increased coordination between these two groups. He argued that similar arrangements proved critical for the Allies during WWII and might once again in an era of "Sputniks." Significantly, Cicero also noted that civilian aircrafts should be used in times of national crisis.³¹⁷ This was a timely assertion. At that very moment, the

³¹⁵ Memorandum to VP Balluder from Joseph A Mannion, September 18, 1950, CHC UM.

³¹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Importance to the US of Latin American Civil Air Transport," October 2, 1950, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Digital Archive (hereafter cited as CIA FOIA).

³¹⁷ Oscar Cicero, "*Indispensable la aviación civil en planes de defensa*," *Diario de la Marina*, December 3, 1957.

Batista regime was fighting a strengthening rebellion roughly five hundred miles east of the capital.

In response to these strategies, Cuban rebels specifically warned the island's citizens to avoid flying on Cubana planes. They argued that the government had indeed been coordinating with commercial carriers to move troops from Havana and elsewhere to the eastern battlefield. In light of the extensive planning that had been carried out prior to the outbreak of Revolutionary fighting, it is difficult to imagine that the Batista regime did not follow through with these plans. Aside from air travel, even by mid-1957 many Cubans reported being afraid to gather in public places.³¹⁸

Commercial carriers serving Cuba found themselves drawn into the island's ongoing conflict in another way, particularly as the fighting escalated in 1958. Like the Cuban armed forces, the opposition needed airplanes to support their own military efforts. They too had long distances to travel, troops to transport. In October of 1958, Castro supporters seized a commercial airliner; on November 1, another group of "rebel agents" struck a Cubana plane flying from Miami to Varadero.³¹⁹ The plane crashed and seventeen of its twenty passengers died. Initial reports – as well as survivors' testimonies – suggested that another group of rebels had struck a Miami-Varadero plane in an attempt to divert it to Castro-controlled territory in the Oriente. Whether or not Cubana ever transported a single troop for Batista's army, this company's links to tourism prescribed that it – and the tourists its planes carried – remain on the battleground of tourism. Yet

³¹⁸ "Miami-Cuba Plane Seized by Rebels," *New York Times*, November 2, 1958. Luther Evans, "Cuba's Political Unrest 'Killing' Sugar Kings at Gate," *New York Times*, June 2, 1957.

³¹⁹ "Miami-Cuba Plane Seized by Rebels," *New York Times*, November 2, 1958.

while tourists faced occasional danger in the air, this was not based on the opposition's desire to harm tourists.

Cuba's transportation networks afforded those fighting Batista other opportunities to further their cause. The same ferries that were used to transport the island's guests and their cars played a role in arming opposition soldiers. Pedro Latour and his son Daniel, the owners of a car parts store, were arrested for importing hundreds of guns – all in the gasoline tanks of automobiles they shipped to Cuba.³²⁰ The “open” nature of the tourism industry allowed for these weapon-filled cars to be ferried into Cuba alongside the island's unknowing visitors.

The militarization of the industry continued in another way. Tourists bore witness to increasing levels violence, particularly as the scope of fighting widened in the summer and fall of 1958. After Batista banned journalists from the province of Oriente, several travelers contacted the *New York Times* to offer outsiders a valuable glimpse of the island's ongoing conflict. They chronicled incidents when government troops bombed and burned towns in Oriente, when rebels executed women suspected of being informers near Bayamo, and when trains and buses became targets for the opposition.³²¹

Even though the dynamics of power in Cuba shifted radically on New Years Eve of 1958, the island's tourism industry continued to provide an arena for the island's competing factions to confront one another. This process was tied to Cuban identity in several ways. Tourism provided a medium for each side to communicate their respective visions of what it meant to be Cuban. As individuals and groups waged a propaganda

³²⁰ “Arms Shipped into Cuba in Cars' Gasoline Tanks,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1958.

³²¹ Homer Bigart, “Batista's Drive to Crush Rebels Called Failure,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1958.

war against the Castro regime, they sometimes appropriated touristic forms, utilizing the industry as a platform to further their cause. I explore the nature of these ideological strategies later in this chapter, presenting them as a counterpoint to the ‘new history of Cuba’ that the Revolutionary government constructed for foreigners (and Cubans, of course) within the cultural realm of tourism. Castro noted the obstacles that these strategies posed to tourism development. “We know that these powerful agencies with their monopoly on information, intervene in the problems of our country, place obstacles in the path of tourism, and create many problems for us.”³²² Aside from daily media reports about ongoing problems on the island, the intense flow of refugees pouring out of Cuba into Miami, New Jersey, New York, and elsewhere also considerably tarnished the island’s image. If so many Cubans did not want to be there, why should tourists? Washington, of course, took the decision from their hands.

Tourism offered Castro an opportunity to fashion his own attacks on enemies of the Revolution. The leader has continually criticized the U.S. government for denying its citizens the right to travel to Cuba. Washington’s actions also allowed Castro to blame the U.S. for the destruction of Cuba’s tourism industry and the corresponding blow to the economy. This is merely one of many ways in which the leader has been able to cast his country as a victim of U.S. aggression.

The violence carried out by anti-Revolutionary forces within the realm of tourism also had a significant impact on the tourism/identity relationship. Attacks enabled the new regime to further project the image of a martyr. They were designed to economically strike at the new regime and as punishment for those who worked with the

³²² Fidel Castro, “Castro Gives Details of Counterrevolution,” August 17, 1959.

young government. Enemies found a particularly useful target in October of 1959 during the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) convention in Havana. Attendees were trying to assess whether the conditions in Cuba were once again appropriate for international visitors. In an effort to influence their decisions, anti-Castro terrorists threw bombs from planes while the agents visited the capital.³²³ Travel agents who witnessed violence while in Cuba would probably be less likely to recommend the destination to potential travelers.

For tourists who visited Cuba in subsequent years, there was no escaping this reality. An account from Mohammed Rauf sheds valuable light on the world into which foreigners were stepping during the 1960s.

On every other street corner there is a broken-down and abandoned car. The posters and the militia, the anti-aircraft guns and the shore batteries, the searchlights sweeping the sky at night, and soldiers being transported in carriers—all these things give Havana the appearance of a city under siege.³²⁴

Such fears were justified. In fact, counterrevolutionary terrorists broadened their campaign of violence beyond the island. The conflict was no longer confined to Cuba, or even Miami. Rather, it became borderless, fought on a global scale. Counterrevolutionaries targeted government agencies and private businesses that maintained diplomatic, economic, or touristic ties with Cuba. Individuals targeted a number of buildings in Canada, including the Cuban embassy in September of 1966.³²⁵

³²³ Schwartz, 201.

³²⁴ Mohammed Rauf, *Cuban Journal: Castro's Cuban as it Really Is – an Eyewitness Account by an American Reporter* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964), 164.

³²⁵ John M. Kirk and Peter McKenna, *Canada-Cuba Relations: The Other Good Neighbor Policy* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1997), 76.

Terrorist attacks such as these continued into the 1970s. As travel to Cuba slowly increased during the 1970s, visitors put themselves in harm's way. One of the most heinous attacks against the Revolution took place on October 6, 1976. A group of Cuban exiles destroyed Cubana Flight 455 en route from Barbados to Jamaica, killing all 73 people aboard. In talking about the eleven Guyanese and five North Koreans who were aboard, Castro drew a distinction between the island's pre-Revolutionary tourists on one hand and its new visitors on the other. "They were not millionaires on a pleasure trip. They were not tourists with the time and money to visit other countries. They were humble workers."³²⁶ These individuals died as a result of their choice to travel to Cuba. They, much like the Cubans who perished with them, are often presented to tourists as martyrs for the Revolutionary cause, particularly in places such as the Museo de la Revolución.

Cuba, Travel, and Foreign Relations

Tourism became entwined with Cuba's foreign relations in other ways during this period, even putting a strain on foreign relationships that did not directly involve the island. In terms of Cuba's relationship to the global community, the island's ties to the U.S. were certainly the most strained. Once again the airlines played a major role in creating this tension. Even though the FAA did not completely stop commercial U.S. flights to Cuba until May 2, 1961, many U.S. carriers had already suspended their service. The Revolutionary government controlled Cubana, but the island's flagship

³²⁶ Fidel Castro, "Funeral Oration for Cuban Victims of Cubana Flight 455," October 15, 1976.

carrier could not avoid being drawn into Cuba's conflicts.³²⁷ A wave of hijackings plagued Cubana flights between 1959 and 1961. Newspapers in the U.S. frequently ran stories with titles such as, "Cuban Defectors From Air Line Granted Asylum,"³²⁸ or "Cubana Pilot Flies Plane to Miami, Defects."³²⁹ These hijackings struck at Cuba's tourism industry in several ways. Some of the hijackers were Cuban airline pilots. They were part of a broader exodus of middle class technicians who deprived the new regime of their valuable technical expertise. In some cases though, these pilots robbed the Revolutionary government of something else. The airplanes they left in sometimes remained in the U.S. Moreover, these hijackings contributed to the ongoing militarization of the tourism industry, further discouraging tourists from visiting Cuba.

The heightening tension between Havana and Washington made it difficult to find places to land what remained of Cubana's fleet. The embargo and travel ban certainly prevented them from landing in the U.S. Washington did its best to make sure that they were not able to land elsewhere either. Even Canada, one of Cuba's closest allies in the Americas, bowed to U.S. pressure when it came to permitting commercial flights from Cuba landing rights. In the summer of 1963, Ottawa denied a request from Havana to operate tourist flights from Canada.³³⁰ Commenting on how this decision was reached, the Cuban ambassador to Canada, Americo Cruz, wrote of Alfred Pick, the head of Canada's Latin American Division:

³²⁷ Castro seems to have realized this. By October of 1959, the leader had mandated "the routine search of all passengers on internal flights." See "Cuba Tightens Controls Over Flights," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 4, 1959.

³²⁸ "Cuban Defectors From Air Line Granted Asylum," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 11, 1961.

³²⁹ "Cubana Pilot Flies to Miami, Defects," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 5, 1960.

³³⁰ Kirk and McKenna, 74.

He indicated to me that Canada could not afford to irritate the U.S. government by granting favors to Cuba, and noted I had to understand that relations between Canada and the United States were very close—as well delicate, given both the huge U.S. investments in Canada and the constant media propaganda against Cuba originating from the United States.³³¹

Cuban officials recognized the difficulty of having touristic ties with their country. Earlier that year, Cruz had already written to Havana once regarding Canada's stance on tourist flights. "...it would be politically embarrassing [sic] for the [Canadian] government, in the midst of an electoral campaign, to have Canadians travel to Cuba—especially because those who would go would be 'communists and fellow travelers,' to use their words."³³² Cruz acknowledged that the U.S. was not always to blame for the lack of tourists, but his thoughts were muted by Castro's vehement exhortations against the U.S. Thus, while Canada maintained other links with Cuba, Washington continued to influence Ottawa's decisions regarding tourism to the island nation.

The U.S. government also pressured Latin American countries to change their touristic relationships with Cuba. In fact, President Kennedy was quite explicit about what he expected of them. Speaking just before a three-day meeting with Central American leaders, the President identified travel to Cuba as one of the topics he intended to discuss. "Now it is up to the Latin American countries, I would hope in common consultation as well as individually, to take those steps which will control the movement of people in and out [of Cuba]."³³³ Central American countries were not the main targets of Kennedy's request though; it was Mexico. Despite intense pressure from the U.S.,

³³¹ Americo Cruz to Raul Roa, July 29, 1963, 2-3, Archives, Ministry of External Relations, Havana, quoted in Kirk and McKenna, 74.

³³² Americo Cruz to Raul Roa, May 26, 1963, I, Archives, Ministry of External Relations, Havana, quoted in Kirk and McKenna, 63-64.

³³³ Tad Szulc, "President Seeks Curbs by Latins on Trips to Cuba," *New York Times*, March 7, 1963.

Mexico never eliminated its own citizens' right to travel to Cuba and permitted commercial flights to continue operating between the two countries.

Aside from Mexico though, whether influenced by U.S. pressure or not, American governments generally agreed with the U.S. regarding their touristic relationships with Cuba. Jamaica and Curacao maintained their air links to the island longer than most others, but both severed these ties in 1963. In the same year, the Mexican government ceased issuing re-entry permits to some non-Mexicans who sought to transit through the country to Cuba. Political scientist Miles Wolpin noted that this change in the relationship between Havana and Mexico City greatly impacted Chileans. In the years immediately following this shift in Mexican policy, "the flow [of Chileans] was reduced substantially as compared with the 1959-1962 period."³³⁴ Similarly, upon his return from Cuba in 1963, journalist Jack Scott noted that the Mexican immigration officials regularly detained Canadians who transited through Mexico on their way to and from Cuba, sometimes confiscating film and other items.³³⁵ Thus, while Mexico stopped short of impairing its own citizens' ability to visit Cuba, its policies greatly impacted people from other countries, detracting further from their ability to visit the increasingly isolated Caribbean island.

Across the Atlantic, Spain maintained some of its commercial flights to Cuba. In fact, Iberia was the only western European airline to maintain commercial flights with the island. Yet as the following section illustrates, gaining passage from Spain was no easy matter. Despite the difficulties traveling to Cuba from Canada, Mexico, and Spain

³³⁴ Miles D. Wolpin, *Cuban Foreign Policy and Chilean Politics* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1972), 44, 322.

³³⁵ Jack Scott, *Jack Scott Takes a Second Look at Cuba* (Toronto: Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 1963), 26.

between 1961 and 1970, the fact that these countries maintained at least some of touristic ties with Cuba throughout this period led Cuba to pursue their nationals more aggressively as it feverishly worked to rebuild its status of a renowned tourist destination in the 1980s and 1990s. In terms of their ability to travel abroad, Canadians were in a better economic position than Mexicans and a better geographic position than Europeans to fill Cuba's tourist void.

As old ties were broken, Cuba established new relationships abroad. No country saw its touristic links to Cuba grow more during the 1960s than the Soviet Union. While Soviets would never come to dominate the island's tourist world in the way that the U.S. had, the deep ties forged by the Soviets would lead to large increases in the number of Soviet visitors to the island. Certainly there were tourists, but to an even larger extent, there were technicians and soldiers. Historian Hugh Thomas reports that by early 1960 there were at least 20,000 Russian soldiers in Cuba.³³⁶ The relationships between these new arrivals and Cubans paralleled those that existed between U.S. visitors and Cubans in the pre-Revolutionary era. People from the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries remained isolated from Cubans. Not only that, the island's new guests enjoyed benefits that still eluded many Cubans. In her book *Adiós al Cañaveral: Diario de una Mujer en Cuba*, the prominent Chilean poet and socialist Matilde Ladrón de Guevara asserted that foreign communists received better treatment from the Revolutionary government than Cuban communists.³³⁷

The classic Revolutionary film *Lucía* suggests that the tension between these new visitors and Cubans was far greater than that which existed between the island's former

³³⁶ Thomas, 1408.

³³⁷ Wolpin, 45.

visitors and Cubans. In one scene, Russian tourists encounter a group of Cubans at a bar. As several Russians dance, the Cubans react in a way that reflects the distance between the two groups. They seem surprised, even bewildered, at the Russians' behavior. With the release of this film, the Cuban government acknowledged the cultural rift that existed between Cubans and their new allies.

Soviets were not the only new guests. In the early years of the Revolution, a number of flights began to operate between Cuba and the Eastern Bloc. By 1962, Cubana had two weekly flights to Prague. In February of the same year, a Czech airline inaugurated the first Bloc service to Cuba. The limited number of bloc citizens who were allowed to travel abroad also had the option of making the much longer voyage to the Caribbean aboard one of the hundreds of ships that called in Cuban ports each year.³³⁸

Amidst these new touristic relationships, the U.S. travel ban remained firm. Nevertheless, there were attempts to steer relations in a different direction. At a meeting with Robert F. Kennedy in 1963, McGeorge Bundy suggested that in regards to the situation with Cuba, the U.S. should seek "some form of accommodation."³³⁹ Yet despite Bundy's status as a national security advisor to President John F. Kennedy, others in the administration rebuffed him, and his suggestions went unheeded. While Robert Kennedy may be better known within modern Cuban/U.S. history as the brother of a President who attempted to hire the mob to kill Castro, it appears that he took the somewhat

³³⁸ Thomas, 1408. Central Intelligence Agency, "Soviet Bloc – Cuba Air Passenger Traffic: January to June 1963," September 6, 1963, CIA FOIA. Central Intelligence Agency, "Bloc Economic Activity in Cuba: 1960 through June 1963," October 1963, CIA FOIA.

³³⁹ Robert Kennedy memo to John Kennedy, March 14, 1963, quoted in William B. Breuer, *Vendetta! Fidel Castro and the Kennedy Brothers*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 207.

contradictory step of trying to soften restrictions on travel to the island as much as he could. Robert Kennedy argued that ending the travel ban was “more consistent with our [U.S.] views of a free society.”³⁴⁰ He made these statements in December 1963, less than a year after his brother established the restrictions and less than a month after the President had been killed.

As the U.S. travel ban remained in place into and beyond the 1970s, other American countries renewed their political and commercial ties with Cuba, broadening the island’s pool of potential tourists in the region. Chile’s Salvador Allende normalized relations upon his election to the presidency in 1970, and Peru followed suit in 1971. Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago renewed ties in 1972. By 1973, an agreement had been signed with Argentina, and within two more years, with Venezuela, Panama, and Colombia.³⁴¹ While these countries did not provide Cuba with as many tourists as the U.S. had, these renewed ties suggest that the Revolutionary government did not want to be wholly dependent on the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc. Nevertheless, it certainly could not depend on tourists from these places.

*Challenging Exclusion: “Free Cuba Welcomes You”*³⁴²

While citizens from Soviet bloc countries (those with permission from their own governments, at least) could gain access to Cuba quite easily, it was an entirely different

³⁴⁰ Memorandum from Robert Kennedy to Honorable Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, December 12, 1963, National Security Archive (hereafter cited as NSA).

³⁴¹ Rosemary Werrett, *Cuba at the Turning Point: How the Economy Works, Changes in the Offing, New Opportunities for MNCs* (New York: Business International Corporation, 1977), 85-86.

³⁴² This is the sign that greeted arriving passengers at the José Martí International Airport in 1964. The sign also featured a Cuban warrior ready to attack and the words “Cuba—the Free Territory of Latin America.” The quote is taken from the travelogue of Mohammed Rauf, who ironically found the island almost inaccessible. See Rauf, 22.

matter for others. At this point, following the U.S. travel ban and collapse of the ‘traditional’ industry, the Cubans saw no need to facilitate easy access for all of those who wanted to visit. Mohammed Rauf, for example, a reporter for the *Cleveland Press* who visited the island in 1964, was an Indian national residing in the U.S. who did not need permission from the State Department to visit Cuba. He did, however, require a Cuban visa. In trying to obtain a tourist visa (not wanting to reveal his status as a reporter), he first visited the Czech embassy in Washington D.C., the agency responsible for dealing with Cuban matters.³⁴³ His description of this experience reads: “...a rather uncooperative aide sullenly told me that I would have to wait several months for an answer. I suspected that he knew I was a reporter.”³⁴⁴

Consider Rauf’s suspicion – that the aide working in the Czech embassy believed him to be a reporter. Certainly, this was a possibility. After all, a number of reporters from around the world were attempting to gain access to the island in order to view and report on the radical changes that were taking place. But what if Rauf was mistaken? Perhaps the aide did not believe that he was a reporter. He was told that he would have to wait quite some time to receive an answer, one that seemingly might not be positive. The validity of his suspicions aside, the “several months” of waiting he faced clearly indicated that Cuba was no longer eagerly welcoming all those who sought entry.

Rauf’s odyssey continued. He was told by the Cuban mission at the United Nations – whose members also had the power to issue visas to visit the island – that all requests were being denied. Following this obstacle, he attempted to transit through

³⁴³ Rauf, 2-3.

³⁴⁴ Rauf, 3.

Mexico, but was unable to obtain the various visas necessary for entry and re-entry into Mexico. He was left with several choices.

I learned that two Cuban planes, carrying medicine, flew every week from Toronto. I failed to get passage on any of them. I learned of a weekly KLM flight from Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, to Havana. KLM in Montreal did their best to get me on it but were told that it was for diplomats only. ... I learned that there were no passenger ships going to Havana from any port in the world, but that with luck I might secure passage on a freighter. ... He [Captain R.J. Ligtermoot] traced for me two freighters, the *Camaguey* and the *Bahia Santiago*, of the Cuban Lineas Mambisas, both due to sail that month from Quebec to Havana. Consul [Rogelio] Guillot, though, refused to give me passage on either of them. He suggested that I could apply to Havana, but warned that I would have to wait a long while for an answer...the idea came to me to fly to Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, and take my chance on a fishing boat or trawler from there to the Cuban port of Santiago de Cuba, about fifty miles away. I returned to Ottawa and obtained a Haitian visa...but an experienced officer in the Canadian Ministry of External Affairs warned me that even if I found the boat—and it was by no means certain that I would, he said—the chances were that I would be arrested by the Cubans as a CIA agent or that Cuban gunboats would blow my vessel out of existence. I inquired about freighters from Kingston, Jamaica, which is also not far from Cuba. I was told by the British High Commission that no contact by sea existed between the two islands.³⁴⁵

Rauf explains how he also considered traveling to Cuba on shipping boats leaving British Guiana, on Czech Airlines flights from Prague, and on those of Russian Aeroflot from Moscow. Czech planes landed in Newfoundland, but he was unable to obtain the necessary permit from the Canadian government to board one of these flights. In the end, Rauf secured a ticket to Havana – one that cost him \$1,600. He was forced to travel from Montreal to Paris. He flew to Madrid where he stayed for three days before boarding his plane bound for Cuba, which stopped in the Azores and Bermuda before reaching Havana.³⁴⁶ Canadian Journalist Jack Scott spoke with a tourist in Cuba who was about to

³⁴⁵ Rauf, 16-17.

³⁴⁶ Rauf, 17-18.

endure a similar experience on his way home to Honduras. He would travel from Havana to Prague and then from Prague to London. After two connections, he would reach Montreal. From there it was on to Kingston where he would finally board a plane for Honduras.³⁴⁷

Cuba's inaccessibility and isolation are also revealed in John Clytus' extensive travel narrative, *Black Man in Red Cuba*. Like many hopeful visitors in the 1960s, Clytus hoped to reach Cuba by traveling through Mexico. He visited the Cuban Consulate in Veracruz and professed his desire to see "if blacks and whites in Cuba had, under communism, truly had become one big, happy family."³⁴⁸ The Cuban consul tried to discourage him from visiting the island, saying that he could do more in the ongoing "Negro" Revolution in the United States. After writing an autobiography for the authorities in Havana to review alongside his visa application, and after waiting four months in Veracruz for an answer, Clytus finally arranged passage on a Cuba-bound ship.³⁴⁹

Clytus actually found it more difficult to leave Cuba; he tried for over a year. Upon asking an immigration official why it was so hard for a foreigner to leave the island, he was simply told that as far as departure rules were concerned, "we're different." After months of frustration, Clytus found himself unable to exit the country through official channels. "I believed the only way for me to get out of Cuba was to escape or be deported." With an eyebrow pencil and a piece of cardboard, he made a sign that read: "ON HUNGER STRIKE UNTIL THEY DEPORT ME FROM THIS

³⁴⁷ Scott, 26.

³⁴⁸ John Clytus, *Black Man In Red Cuba* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1970), 62.

³⁴⁹ Clytus, 10.

COUNTRY.”³⁵⁰ Following his arrest and incarceration, he tried to stow away on a ship docked in the Havana harbor. He was found waiting for the ship to depart after hiding for twelve nights in a lifeboat. The crew summarily returned him to the island.³⁵¹ After several more incidents, he was finally expelled from Cuba. The examples of Rauf, Scott’s Honduran traveler, and Clytus illustrate that by the mid-1960s, Revolutionary leaders had totally abandoned their efforts to maintain the island’s openness that was so characteristic of the tourism industry in the pre-Revolutionary era.

While Cuban officials made it extremely difficult for some to gain access, they welcomed others – particularly those who were likely to shower the new government with praise. Certainly many of these invitees faced scrutiny from their own governments (and possibly peers) upon returning home, but Cuban planners did what they could to help the *invitados* come and go with ease, and in some cases, much more. Cuban authorities organized entire itineraries and sometimes provided all-expense-paid trips for its most ardent supporters. The experiences of forty-five Canadian students who visited Cuba in 1964 are particularly telling. One of them, Michael Brown, recounted that:

The ICAP (Institute of Friendship of Foreign Peoples) of the Cuban government handled the tour and provided us with two buses and four tour guides and made all arrangements as far as necessary for hotel reservations. Upon our request they made plans for us to see the things we wanted to see, and set up interviews with government officials.³⁵²

Sharon Wood builds on this explanation, explaining that the trip was “completely paid for by the Cuban government.”³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Clytus, 87, 89, 137.

³⁵¹ Clytus, 145-148.

³⁵² Michael Brown, *Canadian Students in Cuba* (Toronto: Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 1964), 24.

³⁵³ Sharon Wood, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 52.

Cedric Cox, a Canadian politician who wrote extensively about his time in Cuba, also received an entirely free trip courtesy of the new regime. As he explored the island, he met people from throughout Europe and Latin American who were also in Cuba at no monetary cost.³⁵⁴ Certain countries offered the Revolutionary government a larger and pool of willing *invitados*. Amidst Salvador Allende's numerous trips to Cuba (at least six between 1959 and 1963), the Cuban government invited a number of Chileans to visit the island. While not all of their trips were paid for, many were.³⁵⁵

The Canadian students' advantage was in part linked to the fact that there were forty-five of them. They were part of a controlled group with a discernable identity – one that was acceptable to Revolutionary leaders. The same idea applied to the left-leaning Cox and certainly to Chile's numerous *invitados*. Yet while some were welcomed to the island with open arms, "free Cuba" did not open its doors to all of those who challenged the Soviet ally's exclusion from the global community. While Rauf claims to have seen "visitors in Havana from at least twenty countries, not including the Iron Curtain countries," he was nearly denied access after investing over two thousand of his own dollars.³⁵⁶

Domestic Socialism with International Capitalism

Despite this foreign presence in Cuba during the 1960s, the island's rapprochement with the global tourist market did not truly begin until the 1970s. The process was slow, disjointed, and still has not yet been completed. While Revolutionary planners welcomed more tourists every year from 1970 until 1978, there appears to have

³⁵⁴ Cox, *Four Canadians who Saw Cuba* (Toronto: Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 1963), 5.

³⁵⁵ Wolpin, 44-47.

³⁵⁶ Rauf, 165.

been no urgency to rapidly expand the industry. The island was still being supported by the Soviet Union and its links to other members of the Eastern Bloc's Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Yet as the country continued in the midst of its socialist revolution, the way that Cuba planned the development of tourism since 1970 has been almost wholly based on achieving access to the *global capitalist market*. While this seemingly contradicted the island's domestic socialist agenda and betrayed its new allies, over the next two decades – the two decades prior to the fall of the Soviet Union – international visitors from market-economy countries began to, albeit slowly, make their way back to Cuba. Amidst their slow return during the 1970s, two “touristic systems” emerged on the island. The government's pursuit of both socialist and capitalist ends has considerably shaped the relationships between actors in Cuba's tourist world and in turn Cuban identity.

The drive to implement these competing systems began following the failed push to harvest ten million tons of sugar in 1970. As noted above, Cuba's new allies from the Soviet sphere provided some tourists in the 1960s. But these countries could do little to help rebuild the island's tourism industry into anything resembling that which existed in the pre-Revolutionary era. After all, less than 3,000 Eastern European tourists had visited in 1968.³⁵⁷ If Cuba truly wanted to make tourism a meaningful component of its economy, it was obvious that the island would not be able to rely solely on visitors from Eastern Bloc or other socialist nations. Efforts to rebuild the industry with tourists from these countries were futile and should be seen as part of the failed period of idealist planning that dominated much of the mid- to late-1960s. As part of the shift to more

³⁵⁷ Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *The Economy of Socialist Cuba: A Two-Decade Appraisal* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 74.

pragmatic economic planning following the failure of the 1970 sugar harvest, the Cuban government once again began to court visitors from non-socialist countries. The market for potential visitors in these nations far outstripped those socialist nations, and the room for growth was enormous.

Throughout the 1970s, Castro's tourism rhetoric became both more frequent and more pronounced. While addressing the Plenum of Basic Industry Workers in 1970, he stressed the importance of tourism to the Cuban economy. In light of the state's massive agricultural failure earlier that year, Castro noted that tourism could help to foster local participation and decision-making. Speaking in 1972 about resorts in Varadero and elsewhere, Castro proclaimed: "We do not have the right to build in 1973 and 1974 those projects which we can build this year."³⁵⁸ Even though tourists were still only trickling into Cuba in the mid-1970s, Castro often visited tourism-related projects as he crisscrossed the island. During a visit to Pinar del Río in 1976, he stressed that the region's natural beauty would make tourism a significant generator of profits.³⁵⁹ The following year in Camagüey, Castro expanded his calls for increased tourism development. He declared that the cities of central Cuba – for example, Camagüey, Santa Clara, and Moron – needed more hotels. So too did the region's beach areas. Cuba had to exploit all of its touristic resources.³⁶⁰

In general, he argued that tourism was a valuable developmental tool, and that Cuba needed more of it. While speaking in Jamaica in 1977 though, Castro asserted that Cuba was not simply trying to reproduce the island's pre-Revolutionary tourism industry.

³⁵⁸ Fidel Castro, "Castro Praises Construction Work of DESA," February 14, 1972.

³⁵⁹ Fidel Castro, "23rd Anniversary of the Assault on Moncada Barracks," July 26, 1976.

³⁶⁰ Fidel Castro, "24th Anniversary of the Assault on Moncada Barracks," July 26, 1977.

There was tourism [before the Revolution], a tourism based on gambling casinos and prostitution on many occasions. We do not want that type of tourism and we will not accept it. We will accept tourism under different bases and not on the basis of drugs, gambling and vices.³⁶¹

It is possible that these limits placed upon tourists discouraged more from returning. As is shown below, Cuba lacked many things that were far more crucial than the island's old vices for maintaining a successful tourism industry during the 1970s.

By 1974, roughly 8,400 of Cuba's 19,517 tourists came from capitalist countries. By 1978, the total number of foreign tourists visiting Cuba had climbed to 96,152 total tourists with 69,429 coming from the capitalist world. Thus, even though 68% of Cuba's overall trade was conducted with the Soviet Union and other socialist nations,³⁶² 72% of the island's international tourists arrived from market economy countries in 1978.

In "Capitalist Constraints on Cuban Socialist Development," sociologist Susan Eckstein notes that the decision made by Cuban planners to encourage tourists from capitalist countries to return to the island was not solely a matter of economics. In part at least, the policy was based on Castro's willingness to cease his outward support of socialist revolution throughout regions such as Latin America. It was also premised on other non-Latin American nations' acceptance of Cuba as a trading partner – something that had not been the case in the 1960s.³⁶³ Thus, Cuba's ability to reassume its identity as a popular tourist destination was influenced by the actions of other nations.

³⁶¹ Fidel Castro, "Castro's Jamaica Press Conference," October 30, 1977.

³⁶² For capitalist tourist arrivals, see Espino, 101. For total tourist arrivals, see Comité Estatal de Estadísticas, "*Estadísticas de Migraciones Externas y Turismo*" (La Habana, 1982). On trade see Patricia Ruffin, "Dependency, Development and Underdevelopment: A Study of the Economic and Political Relations Involving the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba" (Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research, 1986), 351.

³⁶³ Susan Eckstein, "Capitalist Constraints on Cuban Socialist Development," *Comparative Politics* 12, no. 3 (1980): 259.

Tourism was not the only sector of the economy in which the Revolutionary government pursued links with market economy countries during the 1970s. Eckstein explains, for example, that the Soviet Union allowed Cuba to sell its products (almost exclusively sugar) to a variety of Western capitalist nations. High sugar prices made these relationships most profitable in the mid-1970s, as Cuba received the high prices that capitalist countries paid to all producers of sugar in those years.³⁶⁴ Similarly, there were no Soviet obstacles blocking Cuba's entry into the international capitalist order when it came time to redevelop the island's tourist industry.

As the government re-established its capitalist connections abroad, it pursued an entirely different course at home. The "revolutionary offensive" of 1968 led to the expropriation of over 60,000 small businesses.³⁶⁵ A number of these, for example, restaurants and street vendors, could have experienced an upsurge in business as arrivals increased throughout the 1970s. Instead, amidst this steady growth in arrivals, the Revolutionary government instituted a clear plan for managing the industry's redevelopment that withheld the benefits of tourism from large numbers of people. Its strategy reflected two very different and in many ways contradictory concerns. The government sought to compete within the global capitalist tourist economy on one hand, but leaders barred Cubans from utilizing capitalist forms to serve the island's tourists. A number of other strategies to reconcile the broader identity of Revolutionary Cuba with tourism development will be examined in the following sections. On a second level, and to best keep intact its ability to serve domestic socialist needs (for instance, universal

³⁶⁴ Eckstein, 263-264.

³⁶⁵ Consuelo Cruz and Anna Seleny, "Reform and Counterreform: The Path to Market in Hungary and Cuba," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 2 (2002): 220.

health care and education), Cuban planners initially sought to spend as little as possible on developing the tourist industry. During the 1970s, when the demand for Cuban tours was still low and Soviet subsidies were plentiful, it was largely able to accomplish its goals of controlled growth.

One way in which leaders did this was through the utilization of as much of the pre-existing tourist infrastructure as was possible, promoting many of the same destinations that had been popular decades earlier, particularly in Havana. Some of these included the Hotels Sevilla (established in 1908), Victoria (1920s), Nacional (1930), Riviera (1957), and Habana Libre – formerly the Havana Hilton (1958).³⁶⁶ In addition to a number of less notable hotels in the capital, the government also included several restaurants in its redevelopment plans. Government support also extended to hotels constructed prior to 1959 in other locations, such as Varadero, Santa Clara, Holguín, Santiago de Cuba, and Camagüey, included in the government’s redevelopment plans.³⁶⁷ It was through these actions that the government spent as little as it possibly could on foreign tourists. Redevelopment often included little more than reopening a hotel. By the 1980s, most hotels in these cities were still in need of significant refurbishing in order to meet the demands of leisure-seeking western tourists.

While the island’s preexisting touristic infrastructure was a factor that positively influenced the government’s ability to develop tourism with little cost to the construction of domestic socialism, other factors negated these gains. Aside from basic infrastructure,

³⁶⁶ For a list of these and other already existing hotels that were utilized in the government’s tourism push of the early 1970s, see Marta G. Sojo, “*Instalaciones del Instituto Nacional del Turismo. Lo poetico en la economica,*” *Bohemia*, April 25, 1977, 17. For information on the dates in which they were built, see Conner Gorry, *Cuba 3rd ed.* (Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2004), 88-92.

³⁶⁷ Sojo, 17.

Cuba had neither what was necessary to build a successful industry nor the ability to manufacture those things itself. Few luxury goods had been needed to satisfy the tastes of the islands' Spartan political tourists. Beach-seeking holidaymakers from Canada required much more: specialty foods and liquors; supplies like film, sunscreen, and batteries; expensive consumer goods to purchase as souvenirs. In this context, the significance of the U.S. trade embargo cannot be overlooked. The embargo meant (and continues to mean) that Cuba was forced to purchase the necessary components of a competitive tourism industry elsewhere, driving up the prices Cubans paid and pushing down their economic returns. Moreover, Cuba's new trading partners could do little to help the island develop its fledgling tourism industry. Much of what Cuba received through its various trade agreements with COMECON members was in the form of Soviet or Eastern European imports – not often suited to satisfy the tastes of international tourists – and the remaining in credits that could be used for Soviet construction or industrial projects.³⁶⁸ Within the competitive market of the 1970s, the Soviets certainly did not possess the necessary resources to help Cuba succeed in the world of tourism.

New arrangements within the political economy of Revolutionary Cuba compensated for some of these losses. Unlike pre-Revolutionary times when large portions of tourism profits were sent abroad to the United States, “the Soviet Union owns not an acre of Cuban land or a single mine, factory, bank, or utility company. It also does not siphon off profits from Cuba through direct investments, as multinational corporations tend to do in Third World capitalist countries.”³⁶⁹ Therefore, within the context of this relationship with the Soviet Union, the tourism development pursued by

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 17, 19.

³⁶⁹ Eckstein, 269.

Cuban planners during the 1970s allowed for Cuba to retain a higher percentage of the profits than it earned before, profits that could now be used to further implement socialism on the island. Yet considering the minimal development of the 1970s, tourism profits did not become meaningful within the Cuban economy for roughly a decade.

Other Revolutionary measures helped to extend these minimal benefits across the island. After taking power, the new leaders redrew the island's provincial boundaries, increasing the number of provinces to fourteen. Speaking in the 1970s, Castro commented that, "In the new political-administrative division, the provinces are more or less equal."³⁷⁰ Hoping to maintain the sense of balance found within this bold proclamation, Cuban planners did their best to establish the industry uniformly across the island. In 1973, when the island embarked upon its largest tourism development campaign in over a decade, projects were undertaken throughout nearly every region of the island, including Pinar del Río, the City of Havana, the Province of the Havana, the Island of Pines, Varadero, Matanzas, Santa Clara, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus, Camagüey, Holguín, and Santiago de Cuba.³⁷¹ Besides Havana and Varadero, however, it would take until the 1980s, and in some cases the 1990s, for these locations to draw any significant numbers of tourists.

Change and the Moral Battleground of Tourism in Revolutionary Cuba

Tourism provided a context for competing forces in Cuban society to debate the path of the nation's development long before the Cuban Revolution. In terms of identity, these debates were often about more than economic development; they were about defining what it meant to be Cuban and about outlining the moral trajectory of the nation.

³⁷⁰ Fidel Castro, "23rd Anniversary of the Assault on Moncada Barracks," 26 July 1976.

³⁷¹ Sojo, 17.

Schwartz recounts several of these exchanges that took place prior to WWII. They involved gambling, workers' compensation, and urban development.³⁷² Conflicts continued into the post-WWII era, as evidenced by the controversial ban on bullfighting that was opposed time and time again. As the Revolutionary government tried to redefine what it meant to be Cuban, the tourism industry provided leaders with a number of moral dilemmas, particularly regarding casino gambling, the issue of tipping, and the island's role as a sexual playground for U.S. tourists.

Casinos

Pre-Revolutionary guidebooks and travelogues often highlighted the conspicuous presence of gambling on the island. After spending considerable time on the island, Colonel P.T. Etherton plainly explained in 1950 that, "the Cuban is a gambler, and lottery tickets are everywhere on sale. Men, women, and children love a gamble and will stake their all to get a ticket."³⁷³ Another visitor observed in 1953 that: "Gambling is a major passion among the Cubans. ... Moralists regard it as the country's chief vice."³⁷⁴ Writing about gambling in Havana just after World War II, Erna Ferguson informed potential visitors that: "No Cuban is too illiterate to read numbers."³⁷⁵ A 1954 travel guide elaborated this point. "Gambling is a passion with the Cuban. Children, little old ladies, respectable matrons, the Chinese who sells vegetables... all share this one national trait or vice, however you may want to classify this dedication to games of chance."³⁷⁶

³⁷² Schwartz, 24-27, 31-34, 87.

³⁷³ Etherton, 113.

³⁷⁴ Roberts, 200.

³⁷⁵ Ferguson (1946), 7.

³⁷⁶ De Gamez and Pastore, 230.

As noted in the previous chapter, casinos were centers of social activity. In turn, many visitors saw them as a permanent component of Cuban identity.

For many in Cuba, this “devil’s bargain”³⁷⁷ was not worth the perceived consequences it held for Cuban society. Yet by the end of the 1950s, it was clear which side had won out. Casinos had seemingly become a permanent fixture within the urban landscape of Havana. Forbidden in the early twentieth century, casinos could be found in the Hotel Havana Hilton, the Hotel Plaza, the Nacional, Riviera, Capri, and the Sevilla Biltmore. There were two in both the Sans Souci and the Deauville. Even the Tropicana had its own gaming area.³⁷⁸ Amidst this spectacular growth in gaming, some Cuban leaders had been questioning whether or not casinos were worth the associated risks for years. President Prío closed a number of casinos in 1950, but eventually allowed them to reopen as pressure mounted.³⁷⁹ Dr. Manuel Urrutia, the moderate who Castro installed as Cuba’s new President in January of 1959, described all forms of gambling as, “one way of corrupting the people.”³⁸⁰ Speaking about a year before taking over as Cuba’s President, the retired judge remarked that there should be no exceptions made for tourists, stating that, “visitors should be attracted by more decent features.”³⁸¹

The aforementioned accounts from guidebooks and travelogues, as well as the actual presence of so many gambling establishments, seemed to confirm that Urrutia and

³⁷⁷ This is a reference to Hal Rothman’s book entitled *Devil’s Bargain: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*. Rothman examines the sacrifices that communities face when they choose to pursue tourism development. See Hal Rothman, *Devil’s Bargain: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 1998).

³⁷⁸ Cirules, 121.

³⁷⁹ Schwartz, 115.

³⁸⁰ “Urrutia Assails Batista,” *New York Times*, January 15, 1958.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

others had reason to be concerned. While the real links between Cuban identity and casinos were debatable in the minds of Cubans, they were explicitly clear in the eyes of foreigners. These accounts are revealing – not for what they tell us about what life on the island *was like*, but for what they tell us about what people in that era *perceived* life on the island to be like. They frequently described the island and its citizens as they might appear in Urrutia’s nightmares. Clearly, foreign visitors perceived gambling to be a part of Cuban identity. Unfortunately, the authors of guidebooks were people whose paid purpose was to inform others about what Cuba and its people were like.

The issue of casino gambling presented Revolutionary leaders with their first and perhaps most profound test of how far they were willing to compromise ideology for the sake of economics. Once Urrutia took office in January of 1959, he soon moved to rid the city of gambling’s influence. His radical stance and idealistic goals put him directly at odds with a still cautious Castro and were part of what eventually cost him his job. Unlike Urrutia, the true leader of the Revolution initially put economics ahead of ideology. After Havana’s thousands of casino and hotel workers besieged Castro with their concerns regarding future employment, he made the decision to allow gambling to continue. During an interview on *Meet the Press* that February, Castro proclaimed that gambling would remain in Cuba, if only to whet the appetites of tourists. The government moved quickly to bring all the island’s casinos directly under its control, decreeing that illegal gambling was punishable by death. Eventually, Castro proclaimed that anyone entering a casino had to show a foreign passport.³⁸² Despite his and others’ misgivings, the young leader seemed to have struck a balance between profit and vice. A

³⁸² Fidel Castro, *Meet the Press*, February 19, 1959.

year later, he spoke about this touristic conflict. “There was a time when we had a number of workers unemployed because we tried to do away with gambling here, and we had to correct that orientation in order to help those threatened workers.”³⁸³ This time, economics trumped ideology. Yet Castro was by no means sanguine about the presence of casinos on the island. At the same press conference, he spoke of the need to eliminate Cubans’ desire to gamble. Not only did gambling lead people to squander their savings, it “promote[d] the tendency to regard life as a matter of luck.”³⁸⁴ If gambling was good for Cuban tourism, it was bad for Cuban society. Notwithstanding Castro’s noble intentions, the leader’s initial policies towards gambling indicate that, much like pre-Revolutionary planners, he too was prepared to create two separate notions of Cuba – one with casinos for foreigners and one without casinos for Cubans.

Internal correspondence from Hilton Hotels suggests that Castro’s personal gamble still had a chance of paying off as late as October of 1959. Havana Hilton officials reported to Conrad Hilton, the company’s president, that: “The boys are not making millions, but they are certainly making all their expenses plus a handsome profit... As a matter of fact they are saying that if things become stabilized in Cuba, the Hilton Casino will be the biggest money maker in the Caribbean.”³⁸⁵

Over a year later, almost all of the necessary parties were still prepared to keep Cuba’s casinos open – Castro, investors, and certainly employees. The only missing component was tourists. A June 1961 report on the Havana Hilton stated that, “the casino is still open, but tis a rather sad affair, with a few Cubans here and there playing

³⁸³ Fidel Castro, “Castro Press Conference,” July 26, 1960.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Letter to Conrad N. Hilton from Robert Caverly, October 8, 1959. CNHLA.

roulette and back jack.”³⁸⁶ According to this account, Castro had failed in two ways. Not only was he unable to keep the hotels filled with foreigners, his drive to keep them free of Cubans was also unsuccessful. Despite Castro’s best efforts, Urrutia’s vision appears to have sadly persisted into the Revolutionary era. Gambling was not helping the economy, and it was still a negative component of Cuban identity.

By the time of the rather depressing account of the Hilton mentioned above, the Cuba’s traditional flow of tourists had been disrupted. The exodus of Cubans, continuing counter-Revolutionary violence, and negative reports in the U.S. media contributed to this. There were still some ways in, but they were immensely complicated, involving three, four, or even five countries. For many, it just wasn’t worth it. As a result, Cuba’s casinos closed. It was only at this point that Castro truly began his virulent attacks on gambling, claiming that it had shaped the nation in negative ways, and of course, never mentioning that he had desperately tried to preserve it for over two years. And he definitely never mentioned how he allowed gambling on cockfighting to persist even longer. While all gambling was made illegal by 1978 (punishable by eight years in jail), cockfight wagers continue largely unchecked in some areas of Cuba even today.

The Revolutionary government’s efforts to prevent Cubans from entering casinos and eventual ban on gambling were also aimed at ridding the island of drug trafficking, another prevalent vice from the pre-Revolutionary era, one that was explicitly linked to both the island’s broad network of mafia-controlled casinos and its high levels of foreign tourists. Not only did traffickers (who often controlled casinos) exploit Cuba’s proximity to the U.S. to smuggle drugs north, the island’s holidaymakers provided a wealth of

³⁸⁶ Letter to Earle Palmer Brown from Al Shuster, May 21, 1961. CNHLA.

customers for domestic dealers. It was impossible for Revolutionary leaders to ignore the widespread presence of drugs on the island prior to 1959. Historian Eduardo Sáenz Rovner notes that while Castro initially permitted some *campesinos* to grow marijuana, he prohibited its cultivation in the areas he controlled in October 1958. Upon taking power, Castro and other leaders imposed stiff sentences on Cubans convicted of drug possession or use that ranged from one to six years. A Cuban official reported that one trafficker was executed in April 1959. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics immediately demanded that the new government deport several mafia bosses who were accused of utilizing Cuba to import drugs into the U.S. While some escaped or were never apprehended, the government did deport others to the U.S. and elsewhere. Notwithstanding numerous prosecutions of both Cuban and foreign traffickers and a 1962 United Nations report that noted the Revolutionary government's success in curbing domestic drug use, Washington continuously accused the regime of facilitating the shipment of drugs across the Florida Straights.³⁸⁷ Of course, the U.S. effort to maintain Cuba's identity as a narco-state was motivated less by hard evidence than by Cold War tensions. Nevertheless, drugs would remain a distant part of Cuba's tourist world until the 1990s when the state's security apparatus collapsed amidst the financial crisis of the Special Period.

Tipping

The Revolutionary government's approach to tipping provides valuable insight on the tourism/identity relationship, shedding light on how seemingly mundane practices can

³⁸⁷ Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*, trans. Russ Davidson (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 113-140.

create tension for administrations seeking to impose radical programs of socio-cultural change. Prior to 1959, tipping was customary. A 1954 guide suggested tipping, “at least ten percent, fifteen percent if that’s what you leave back home, and if the service has been particularly good, add another five percent.”³⁸⁸ A 1955 guide advised giving, “ten percent as a rule; fifteen percent at the better hotels and night clubs.”³⁸⁹ Chambermaids, porters, and taxi drivers were among the other workers who also received and often times depended on their small tips to survive.

In a 1959 guidebook published by the Cuban Tourist Commission – one that begins with a warm welcome from its new President, Prime Minister Fidel Castro – the practice of tipping is dealt with explicitly. “Tipping is not regulated, but it is usually about ten percent of the bill.”³⁹⁰ A guidebook published privately outside of Cuba in 1960 advised that the situation was still the same a year later. The authors of *Fodor’s Guide to the Caribbean* wrote: “You will be safe with twelve to fifteen percent in most restaurants, perhaps a bit more in the very plush places.”³⁹¹ While there was likely some lag time between the authors’ investigation and their book’s publication, these two accounts suggest that pre-Revolutionary tipping practices persisted at least through 1959, and likely several months into 1960. Pre-Revolutionary norms for tipping were, of course, not based on state proclamations, and at this point, neither were those of Revolutionary Cuba. The new government initially promoted previously accepted and socially mandated tipping rates.

³⁸⁸ De Gamez and Pastore, 54.

³⁸⁹ Gellhorn, 67.

³⁹⁰ *Cuba*, 7.

³⁹¹ Eugene Fodor, *Fodor’s Guide to the Caribbean, Bahamas, and Bermuda* (New York: D. McKay, 1960), 246.

The initial impetus for reform did not, as one might expect, extend from the government's ambitious program of change. Rather, the official move to eliminate tipping was a calculated economic measure to attract more tourists to the island. The government believed that by eliminating the need to tip, tourists would be more likely to visit the island. This was actually part of a broader effort to reduce the cost of vacationing in Havana. In 1961, a desperate Cuban government began offering a number of enticements to foreign tourists – a fifty percent rebate on flight costs, reduced hotel rates, as well as “a general ban on tipping.”³⁹²

Much like the government's decisions related to casino gambling, the steps it took in regards to the practice of tipping consistently reflected pragmatic economic needs, not an ideological agenda. The initial scope of the Revolutionary government's tourism plans did not reflect the deep changes in Cuban identity that the new regime sought to implement elsewhere. There were simply too many people economically tied to the old system. Revolutionary leaders seem to have realized that too sharp a break from the established system would alienate huge groups of people. Only as a last resort, as a means of keeping hotels open, would tipping be eliminated.

As the island's tourists vanished, its hotels closed and its casinos disappeared. Thousands of Cubans who worked in these establishments lost not only their jobs, but their stake in the established tipping system as well. As the industry's workforce crumbled, Castro gained an opportunity to change the meaning of his ban on tipping in order to suit the needs of his nation-building project. No longer were tips not accepted as a way of luring tourists to the island more cheaply. Instead, Cubans were not supposed to

³⁹² Eugene Fodor, *Fodor's Guide to the Caribbean, Bahamas, and Bermuda* (New York: D. McKay, 1961), 247.

accept tips because doing so was not in line with the actions of a true Revolutionary. Beyond a basic salary, pride in one's work was supposed to suffice. In light of the severe shortages of consumer goods that plagued the island during the 1960s, the government recognized that some who worked in tourism might be tempted to take gifts in other forms than cash. Hence, an Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (ICAP) manual from 1964 specified that Cuban tour guides were forbidden from taking all forms of gifts.³⁹³

The effectiveness of the ban on tipping seems to have been mixed. Rauf visited Revolutionary Cuba in 1964 just as ICAP was releasing this manual for tour guides. As he exited the cab that he took from the airport to the Hotel Nacional, he paid his five-dollar fair and then offered the driver a dollar tip. The man accepted the small gift. Rauf, knowing of Cuba's ban on tipping, cynically noted that, "Tipping in Red Cuba has almost gone out of fashion."³⁹⁴ It soon became clear to Rauf that Cuban workers did not blithely accept tips. When he showed up unaccompanied at Havana's Morro Castle, he was given a guard/guide. (Rauf himself uses the descriptions interchangeably.) After being shown much of the interior, he "tipped [his] guide three dollars, which made him very happy, but I noticed that he glanced to his right and left to make sure that nobody was looking before he accepted the money."³⁹⁵ Clearly not everyone favored the new system. Cedric Cox encountered a hotel employee who openly criticized it. The man claimed to have made a far better living under the old tip-based system.³⁹⁶ Even a chamberman who

³⁹³ Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos, "*Manual del Guía*" (La Habana, 1964), 58.

³⁹⁴ Rauf, 25.

³⁹⁵ Rauf, 108.

³⁹⁶ Cox, 15.

professed to Ernesto Cardenal that he was a true Revolutionary admitted that getting a job in a hotel “was almost impossible, because these jobs were much sought after on account of the tips.”³⁹⁷

Employees who worked in crowded establishments had to be particularly cautious when it came to accepting or even talking about tips. Cardenal encountered two waiters at the Hotel Nacional who, even if they still desired to earn tips, outwardly projected the state’s new discourse on tipping. One commented that, “tipping was evil... because it was like buying a worker.”³⁹⁸ The other elaborated why the new system was even better for tourists. “A rich diner would give you maybe a two dollar tip, and then you gave him better service than the others got who didn’t have enough money to give two-dollar tips.”³⁹⁹

WHERE . . .
 can you get a week of sun, one of the best beaches
 in the Caribbean, a villa just steps from the sea,
 all your meals, wine included, your flight,
 your transportation, and an excitingly
 different country you'll never forget.
 Where tipping does not exist.

DIRECT VIA AIR CANADA ✈
 DEPARTURES EVERY
 THURSDAY
TO APRIL
\$339—\$359

CUBA

FREE
 TOURISTIC PRESENTATION
 TUESDAY, FEB. 4
 7:30 P.M.
 SHERATON MOUNT-ROYAL HOTEL
 FOR RESERVATIONS
871-8696

UNITOURS
 (CANADA) LTD.
 the name that brought back tourism to CUBA

Figure 3.7. Unitours Newspaper Advertisement. (*Montreal Star*, January 11, 1975.)

³⁹⁷ Cardenal, 142.

³⁹⁸ Cardenal, 59.

³⁹⁹ Cardenal, 58.

While there were still only several thousand tourists in Cuba at this time, as more soon returned, the government's policy remained in place. In her 1977 travel guide, written with direct assistance from the Cuban National Tourism Institute, Paula DiPerna wrote: "Tipping is no longer the custom in Cuba and is officially discouraged, the idea being that pride in work ought to be incentive."⁴⁰⁰ As the above figure illustrates (see 3.7), private companies advertised that, "tipping does not exist" in Cuba as an enticement to potential guests during the 1970s.

Sexuality and Prostitution

Like the island's casinos, Cuba's scintillating nights were also a major draw for tourists prior to the Cuban Revolution. The 1959 guidebook *Cuba* highlighted the sensuality that remained. In a section entitled "Havana at Night," the authors made a deliberate attempt to create a hedonistic image similar to that of pre-Revolutionary Cuba. Havana nights were comprised of breathtaking views, drinks over authentic Cuban music, decadent meals, and exciting sporting events. They were also brimming with the raw sexuality of Cuban women.

A group of beautiful girls move to the rythms [sic] of a rapid cha-cha-cha. The swaying of their hips merges with the beat of the drums and the blare of the brasses on a top orchestra. They are dancing under the imposing glass arches of Tropicana, which let through the sparkling stars and the cold, pale moon.⁴⁰¹

Much like in the pre-Revolutionary era, private sector writers sexualized the island in a more explicit manner than the Cuban state. The August 1959 issue of *Plush* featured a story about Cuba's "sinful cabarets." Raymond Gonzales reported that:

⁴⁰⁰ Paula DiPerna, *The Complete Travel Guide to Cuba* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 16.

⁴⁰¹ *Cuba*, 30.

Cuba's lavish cabarets are booming again, with the most beautiful girls showing more of their physical charms in elaborate settings than is permitted in other parts of the world. Even bearded Castro's high minded austerity couldn't deprive the passionate Cubans of their spectacular pleasures—and that goes for the visitors as well. In Havana, where the girls are concerned, everything goes—off: and what goes on after the show is no-body's [sic] business but your own. If you happen to be hungry for dames, Havana may be your dish.⁴⁰²

Plush offered a variety of images to support the sultry claims of Gonzales. Topless women were shown doing the “Voodoo Chant” and “Peacock Dance.” Others posed erotically in various states of undress. It seemed as though Cuban women were still primordially sexual beings at the outset of the Revolutionary era (see 3.8-3.11).



Figure 3.8. *Plush* Magazine Cover. (*Plush*, August 1959, cover.)



Figure 3.9. Cuban Dancer Performing the “Peacock Dance.” (Raymond Gonzales, “Cuba’s Sinful Cabarets Flame Again,” *Plush*, August 1959, 11.)

⁴⁰² Raymond Gonzales, “Cuba’s Sinful Cabarets Flame Again,” *Plush*, August 1959, 9.



Figures 3.10-3.11. Cuban Dancer Performing the “Voodoo Chant.” (Raymond Gonzales, “Cuba’s Sinful Cabarets Flame Again,” *Plush*, August 1959, 10.) Blond Birdie Performing in Cuba. (Ibid.)

Despite these attempts to capitalize on Cuba’s past identity as a sexual playground, the island’s overt hedonism had vanished by the time that Canadian journalist Jack Scott visited the island in 1963. By this time, the state had become more socially conservative than it had been under Batista; Scott’s account suggests that the mood on the island had indeed shifted from the pre-Revolutionary era. While the Tropicana never closed its doors, and several other nightclubs also remained open, the wild vibrancy of pre-Revolutionary Cuba ultimately disappeared. Scott, who spent extensive time in Cuba in the early 1960s, never saw more than “soft and furtive hand-holding” in Cuba’s nightclubs. As for the former stars of the island’s scintillating show, he commented that, “the statuesque chorus girls are almost prissily sedate.”⁴⁰³ Upon Rauf’s arrival in the mid-1960s, and in an admitted attempt to provoke a reaction from

⁴⁰³ Scott, 15.

the customs employee, Rauf immediately began to eagerly inquire about the possibility of seeing a striptease while on the island. The man curtly replied that in Cuba, “We have no striptease anymore.”⁴⁰⁴ Certainly, it appears as if Cubans were trying to construct a new identity for their island.

It was not only stripteases that the island’s new leaders wanted to eliminate. Castro devoted considerable effort to eliminating prostitution. The government sent thousands of women who worked as prostitutes during the pre-Revolutionary era to re-education camps. Some visitors echoed Castro’s claims that the practice had been eliminated. Indian writer V.R. Krishna Iyer noted this several times in his 1967 travelogue.⁴⁰⁵ Despite Clytus’ criticisms of the Revolutionary government, he observed that the Revolutionary government actively policed the island for prostitution. Women who were too friendly with strangers on the streets of Havana or any other city could be arrested for soliciting.⁴⁰⁶ One of Ernesto Cardenal’s first observations during his trip in 1970 was that there were no prostitutes walking the streets of Havana.⁴⁰⁷

While there is no question that the new government closed down hundreds and hundreds of brothels, there is less evidence suggesting that officials fully eliminated the well-established practice of selling sex to foreign men. To a large degree, Cuba’s brothels could be easily eliminated because there were so few tourists; demand had plummeted. Yet evidence suggests that a small number of these establishments remained open to serve the island’s limited number of visitors. Rauf found that even in 1964, at least one brothel remained in Havana. Located in Habana Vieja, it was reserved for

⁴⁰⁴ Rauf, 23.

⁴⁰⁵ Iyer, 12, 28.

⁴⁰⁶ Clytus, 66.

⁴⁰⁷ Cardenal, 6.

Russians. A young woman in Havana informed him that the women working in this brother could be shipped anywhere on the island in order to satisfy the needs of the island's Eurasian patrons. Taxi drivers too, provided Rauf with information on where Cuban women could be had.⁴⁰⁸

Sometimes supporters were confronted with the fact that the Revolutionary government had not fully eradicated prostitution. In 1970, a group of Cuban poets told Ernesto Cardenal that, "There are whores," women willing to have sex with foreigners for money or even clothing.⁴⁰⁹ In the interest of full disclosure (or perhaps the Seventh Commandment), Cardenal revealed this fact to his readers amidst the rest of his high praise for what was happening in Cuba. It is quite possible that many other ardent supporters of the Revolution did not report on such unflattering aspects of Cuban society.

While Cardenal did not offer an explanation as to why some women continued working as prostitutes, Alberto Cervera Espejo did. He discussed the matter in his travelogue titled *Un Yucateco en Cuba Socialista*. He said that while the government had eliminated all of the reasons to be a prostitute, there would always be some women who practiced it. According to him, you could not change their souls.⁴¹⁰ A decade later, when the economic motivations for prostitution returned, Castro stood by a similar explanation for its existence. This obstinate stance is examined in the following chapter.

Society and Tourism

Revolutionary leaders sought to reshape more than the morality of tourism. Once the traditional market collapsed, they did their best to control who could access Cuba,

⁴⁰⁸ Rauf, 88, 170.

⁴⁰⁹ Cardenal, 20.

⁴¹⁰ Alberto Cervera Espejo, *Un Yucateco en Cuba Socialista* (Yucatan, Mexico: Maldonado Editores, 1985), 50.

where those people could go while on the island, and whom they would interact with while they were there. The limited number of tourists in Cuba between 1959 and 1979 allowed planners to align tourism with their broader agenda for social change. The state's efforts had several important consequences for the construction of Cuban identity as well as for the Cubans and foreigners linked to Cuba's tourist world. In fact, all parties faced entirely new touristic realities. Thus, despite the absence of mass tourism, the industry was profoundly linked to changes that were taking place throughout Cuban society.

National Tourism

Pledges regarding equality for Cubans required that Castro quickly address the issue of Cubans' access to the island's tourism infrastructure. The young leader initiated a number of programs designed to extend the benefits of pre-Revolutionary tourism to the Cuban masses. This was one of the most important ways that the new government utilized tourism to actively shape its vision of what Cuban identity ought to be. Cuba was to be for Cubans, and the island's tourist offerings had been denied to many of its citizens for their entire lives up until that point. National tourism was important for other reasons than its propaganda value. In fact, it was an important economic tool as well. Thousands of Cuban tourists had left millions of dollars in Miami and elsewhere during the pre-Revolutionary era. According to Castro, this money had been wasted.⁴¹¹

In March of 1959, Castro proclaimed that Cuba's most popular beaches, certainly some of the island's most impressive and previously least accessible tourist offerings, were now open to all Cubans. Nevertheless, the adjoining facilities (i.e. restaurants, bars,

⁴¹¹ Fidel Castro, "Impromptu Appearance Before Meeting," October 20, 1959.

and clubhouses) at many of these beaches retained their status as private establishments. Many poor Cubans, and in particular Afrocubans, thus remained on the fringes of Cuba's newly opened tourist world. Revolutionary leaders, despite their intense focus on equality for all Cubans, pursued a similarly cautious approach to the island's private clubs and parks.⁴¹² These facilities were not as closely linked to Cuba's tourism industry as were its beaches, but the problems associated with fully integrating them reflect the considerable obstacles to change within the island's world of leisure. This exclusion further signaled the new regime's willingness to create two separate Cuba's within the island's world of leisure.

By the end of 1960, Castro was providing plans for the reorganization and expansion of the island's national tourism infrastructure. In a speech that he began with the words, "Revolution means destruction of all privileges," Castro outlined how he intended to bring tourism to the Cuban masses. Not only did he intend to expand the tourist services available to Cubans, he had a detailed system of subsidized rates for hotels. Access to this world of subsidized rates was based on one's acquiescence to other government programs, in this case, the newly designed workers' social circles. Membership in these circles would bring a number of touristic benefits. As far as vacations were concerned, Castro explained that "if a worker makes less, then it is only fair that he should pay less."⁴¹³ He specifically noted how this program would work in hotels that had been economically out of reach for most Cubans. He went on to provide a

⁴¹² Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 268-273.

⁴¹³ Fidel Castro, "300 Workers' and Children's Social Circles," December 17, 1960.

detailed rate schedule that had one express purpose – making the island’s world of tourism and leisure accessible to all Cubans.

In effect, workers’ circles were becoming the new private clubs of the island. Members would be permitted to travel throughout the island, receiving the rights in other recreation centers that they received in their own. By this point, the U.S. market had been effectively destroyed, and in turn, so had the island’s tourist past. As far as the Cuban market was concerned, one group’s privilege was replaced with that of another. Workers loyal to the Revolution replaced the wealthy. In 1962, Castro announced that the government was preparing one hundred new guesthouses for Cuban tourists in Varadero. The rates were three and a half pesos for adults and two pesos for children under six. To facilitate the movement of tourists from the most heavily populated area of the country, the government also developed plans for a Habana-Varadero automobile line charging three pesos per person.⁴¹⁴

Beaches were only one part of the Revolutionary government’s expansion of national tourism programs during this period. They also embarked on an ambitious museum-building program. One of the most well-known tourist sites in Havana was developed early in the Revolutionary period. The Museo de la Revolución opened with its first exhibit to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Moncada attack in Santiago de Cuba. It was designed to be a “*tributo agradecido del pueblo cubano a sus heroes y mártires, y fuente de vivo ejemplo, inspirador y educativo*”⁴¹⁵ (grateful tribute from the Cuban people to their heroes and martyrs, a living example, inspiring and educational). Its content is dealt with in the following section, but it was only one of many museums

⁴¹⁴ Fidel Castro, “Castro Visits Law Students, Professors,” October 13, 1962.

⁴¹⁵ Raúl Castro, “*Exposición del Museo de la Revolución*” (La Habana, July 1963), 1.

established at a time when the primary type of tourism in Cuba was domestic. The government created museums dedicated to a wide range of topics – from fine art and history to stamps and playing cards.

The new government also worked to level the cost of international tourism for Cubans. In 1962, at an award ceremony for sugar workers in Varadero, Castro discussed how vacations to Moscow and other Eastern Bloc cities would be financed. “If a credit must be given, it will be given; part will be covered by the unions and part by the worker from credit given him by the state for as long as his income requires.”⁴¹⁶ The following year, Jack Scott reported the cost at roughly “\$1,000 with a down payment of \$100 and the rest spread over two or three years.”⁴¹⁷ Yet Castro had already alluded to the fact that one’s financial power would not be the sole determinant of who gained access to the outside world. At the same award ceremony in Varadero he explained: “That seat on the plane for a trip to Europe, let it be for an exemplary worker.”⁴¹⁸

Thus, while the prices for these vacations were within the reach of a number of Cubans, all residents with such financial capabilities were by no means free to travel abroad. Castro’s emphasis on helping “exemplary workers” to travel abroad indicates that there were restrictions on who could leave the island on holiday from the beginning of the Revolutionary era. Castro reiterated this numerous times throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Meanwhile, government-controlled travel agencies and airlines produced promotional material that seemed to indicate that any Cuban with sufficient funds could

⁴¹⁶ Fidel Castro, “Varadero Beach Award Ceremony for Sugar Workers,” July 17, 1962.

⁴¹⁷ Scott, 19.

⁴¹⁸ Fidel Castro, “Varadero Beach Award Ceremony for Sugar Workers,” July 17, 1962.

travel abroad.⁴¹⁹ While a non-Cuban who saw this ad may have believed as much, Cubans living under Revolutionary rule knew otherwise. Cubans knew that they had to meet the requirements laid down by the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba in its “*Metodología para la Selección de los Trabajadores que Disfrutarán de los Viajes de Turismo Social de Exportación.*” Work Heroes of the Republic of Cuba, National Heroes of Work, winners of the Jesús Menéndez Medal, and other outstanding citizens had the best chances of traveling abroad. Hopeful travelers also had to fill out an extensive application, indicating their interest in traveling abroad, their level of Revolutionary integration, any work-related awards they received, as well as any outstanding achievements that had been overlooked. For those who did qualify, credit and other forms of financial assistance were available.⁴²⁰

Both national and international tourism programs became effective tools for eliciting support from certain groups of Cubans, particularly AfroCubans. They had been the most clearly excluded from the island’s pre-Revolutionary tourist world. When people wanted to illustrate the Revolution’s gains in terms of race, they often pointed to the fact that “blacks could now go into the big hotels.”⁴²¹ John Clytus visited the Havana Libre with an entire group of African students to have “a couple of beers.”⁴²² Despite AfroCubans’ newfound ability to tour their own island, John Clytus – who spent three years on the island in the mid-1960s – noted that while black Cubans were in fact visible

⁴¹⁹ Promotional Material for Cubana and CUBATUR, “Eurocuba,” 1977.

⁴²⁰ Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, “*Metodología para la Selección de los Trabajadores que Disfrutarán de los Viajes de Turismo Social de Exportación*” (La Habana, 1984).

⁴²¹ Clytus, 17.

⁴²² Clytus, 43. Despite these allowances, Clytus was far more critical of the Revolutionary government for hindering black people from identifying with blackness. See Clytus, 44.

working in the island's hotels, they were still conspicuously absent from managerial positions. He also observed that they had not begun to gain wide access to the restaurant industry.⁴²³ Pre-Revolutionary forms of exclusion persisted within Cuba's travel industry into the Revolutionary era despite the intentions of Castro and other leaders.

Tourism and the Confines of Revolutionary Space

As Cuban society was entirely subsumed by deep change, the difference between private space and public space became moot. The government transformed all space into Revolutionary space. Leaders tried to exert control over Cubans at home, at work, in public, truly over every aspect of their daily lives. While Cubans certainly felt the impacts of this change almost immediately, it took longer for the spatial dynamics of Cuba's tourist world to undergo such radical change. Strategies to manipulate the actions of tourists were not an entirely new phenomenon in Cuba though. Pre-Revolutionary administrations attempted to control guests' movements by encouraging them to utilize state-trained guides and to patronize state-licensed establishments. And the initial approach of planners in the Revolutionary era largely mirrored these strategies. Throughout most of 1959, foreign tourists were no more or less free to explore the island than they had been prior to that January. *Cuba* invited potential visitors to bring their automobiles, their boats, and even their planes. They were free to explore the island at their leisure.⁴²⁴

As the new government began to reengineer Cuban identity, however, planners stepped up their efforts to control what tourists saw and did in Cuba. Sociologist Paul Hollander notes that Revolutionary planners – much like those in other socialist

⁴²³ Clytus, 24.

⁴²⁴ *Cuba*, 5-12.

economies – strove to exert total “control over resorts, hotels, means of transportation, the training of guides and interpreters, funds for prestige or show-case projects (e.g., model prisons, farms, housing, clinics, schools, child-care centers, etc.).”⁴²⁵ Period accounts reveal a much more complex situation. In fact, foreign perceptions of space and freedom in Cuba varied widely.

Many of those who visited Cuba found no restrictions placed upon their movements. Jack Scott indicated that while the Cuban government provided him with a number of “official-arranged tours,” he had absolutely no problem ignoring these options during his three weeks on the island. Scott, with the help of his young driver, was able to explore the island, as he wanted, on his own terms.⁴²⁶ Ernesto Cardenal had a similar experience on the island. He believed that he was free to travel wherever and speak with whomever he wanted. He spoke with several vehement critics of the government – people who felt as though their own freedoms had been severely curtailed – but nowhere within his three-hundred-thirty-three-page travelogue did he offer a criticism of his own.⁴²⁷

Similarly, a group of Canadian students who visited Cuba in 1964 did not feel as though they were denied the right to go where and talk with whom they wanted while in Cuba. Several of them wrote extensively of their trips. Brian Rands commented: “With help from the Cubans who arranged our trip, we traveled around most of the island and were free to see what we wanted. We talked with peasants on the farms, workers in the

⁴²⁵ Paul Hollander, *Political Hospitality and Tourism: Cuba and Nicaragua* (Miami: Cuban American National Foundation, 1986), 5.

⁴²⁶ Scott, 6, 22.

⁴²⁷ Cardenal.

cities, and people of all occupations and backgrounds.”⁴²⁸ About an his eight week visit to the island, Paul Copeland wrote:

Spare time was allowed in the program and all tours were optional. We were free to travel and talk and do as we wished. The only places that were off limits were the missile bases, Guantánamo Naval Base, and the political prisons.⁴²⁹

Like Scott and Cardenal, these students were brought to Cuba by the Revolutionary government. Sometimes though, people who traveled to Cuba independently offered very similar experiences.

In the late-1960s, Frank Mulville and his family sailed aboard their family yacht from England to Cuba, calling at numerous ports along the way. They plied the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and heard warning after warning to not visit the island. “Just why Cuba?” “You’re crazy...they’ll flay you alive.” “Do you know Cuba is a communist country?” “Your boat will be taken away from you, that’s for sure.”⁴³⁰ Foreigners that Mulville encountered viewed the island with hesitation, if not outright disdain. Upon arrival though, Mulville immediately found the country to be nothing like it had been described. After a brief interrogation, a Cuban officer shattered the image that had been presented to him of an isolated and repressive nation. He said to Mulville and his family, “You’re welcome to Cuba. This is a free country—you may go ashore now—go where you like—talk to anyone you like. We hope you enjoy your stay in Cuba.”⁴³¹

The group wandered Santiago at their leisure. They explored its streets and talked with its residents. After several weeks, their boat remained tied to a quay in Santiago’s

⁴²⁸ Brian Rands, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 6.

⁴²⁹ Paul Copeland, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 50.

⁴³⁰ Frank Mulville, *In Granma’s Wake: Girl Stella’s Voyage to Cuba* (London: Seafarer Books, 1970), 80, 100, 116.

⁴³¹ Mulville, 125-126.

harbor. When Mulville decided to lift anchor so that they might explore the adjoining bay, he was shocked to find that a soldier had been appointed to accompany the ship. In his own words, he “thought it best to accept it as a matter of course.”⁴³² Despite this show of force, it was not long before the young man (he was only eighteen) was swimming alongside Mulville’s children. They all returned to Santiago the next day and soon resumed their journey along Cuba’s southern coast. As the group made stops in Chivirico, El Pilon, Cienfuegos, and elsewhere, a clear pattern emerged. Just as in Santiago, they faced tight scrutiny upon their arrival in each city or town. Repeatedly though, they soon found themselves free to explore their destination at their leisure. Ironically, upon arriving in the Bahamas after months in Cuba, customs authorities said that people who came directly from Cuba were not allowed into the country.⁴³³

While Scott, Cardenal, Mulville, and others seemingly believed that they were able to explore the island on their own, other accounts provide a very different image of the confines of Revolutionary space. Upon arrival in the mid-1960s, Mohammed Rauf noted an airport sign bearing a similar greeting to that given to Mulville by the customs officer: “Free Cuba Welcomes You.”⁴³⁴ Yet he seems to have felt anything but free or welcome while on the island. Rauf’s goal was to visit the island appearing as someone with no connection to the U.S., particularly the U.S. media.⁴³⁵ He felt that this would enable him to get closest to the “true” nature of how the Revolution had impacted society and culture. Prevented from easily accessing what he felt were many of the island’s most important sights, Rauf ended up visiting the Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos

⁴³² Mulville, 143-144.

⁴³³ Mulville, 258.

⁴³⁴ Rauf, 22.

⁴³⁵ Rauf, 2-3, 19-20.

(Cuban Institute of Friendship for the Peoples) (ICAP) in search of assistance. He was told that there was nothing they could do for him. Since he was not a guest of the government, they could not help with sightseeing. They told him to visit the National Tourist Institute (INIT).⁴³⁶

INIT arranged several tours for Rauf, but he suggests that people were unable to access Cuban sights without a state tour guide. INIT officials encouraged him to see sights such as factories, housing projects, and state farms. Rauf also felt slighted by the fact that he was not allowed to put his feet up on a bench while visiting the beach in Miramar. A militiaman had told him to take them down.⁴³⁷ Despite the perceived limitations on his freedom, Rauf seemingly failed to recognize when Cubans went out of their way to help him see what the island had to offer. The National Museum was closed when he visited. Rauf told the curator that he was leaving the next day, and the man promptly arranged a special tour.⁴³⁸ Of course, this was the *National* Museum; its exhibits were wholly controlled by the state. It would appear that Cuban officials were willing to bend their own rules for foreigners seeking the “official” history of Cuba.

Rauf was by no means the only visitor to feel as if his or her freedom had been limited while in Cuba. A litany of foreigners saw past the stated “openness” of the Revolutionary government. In truth, there was not far to see. Hollander cites a number of these accounts in his dual case study, *Political Hospitality and Tourism: Cuba and Nicaragua*. Published by the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), several visitors’ experiences reflect more of what one might expect from a Hollywood film than a

⁴³⁶ Rauf, 30.

⁴³⁷ Rauf, 35, 37.

⁴³⁸ Rauf, 165.

holiday abroad. Motorcycle escorts followed tour buses; security men proceeded tour groups into restaurants; even elevator operators checked visitors' identification.⁴³⁹ CANF, however, as the largest and most powerful anti-Castro exile group, had little interest in publishing anything that did not disparage the Revolution.

Paula DiPerna offered potential visitors a counterpoint to these accounts. In her 1979 guidebook, she conceded that the Cuban government still felt it necessary to restrict the movements of foreign tourists on the island.

The visa granted to tour members covers only the areas and cities in Cuba which are included in the tour package. Therefore you may not deviate from your preplanned itinerary without the express permission of the Ministry of Immigration in Cuba. This does not mean that you may not move freely during the tour – it simply means that if you take a tour that provides eight days' accommodation in Havana, you may not desert the tour on arrival and spend eight days somewhere else.⁴⁴⁰

The author of this guidebook, perhaps sensing that potential visitors may be disheartened to hear about such measures, goes on to provide readers with a justification for this seemingly contradictory policy.

Some critics have alleged that these restrictions are enforced so tourists can be monitored. Actually, the regulations are designed to keep tourists out of difficulty, as Cuban tourist facilities – hotels, transportation, foreign language services – cannot yet handle large numbers of visitors.⁴⁴¹

While DiPerna tries to cast these actions as those of a concerned host for his or her guests, one must consider another explanation – particularly in light of the “noxious influences” the Cuban government had explicitly warned its citizenry about only one year earlier. In fact, probably neither DiPerna nor the critics she cites were correct. These restrictions served much more as constraints on Cubans than on tourists. Moreover,

⁴³⁹ Hollander, 14-15.

⁴⁴⁰ DiPerna, 6.

⁴⁴¹ DiPerna, 6.

DiPerna does not respond to some of the more egregious limits placed on tourists by the government, for example, the prohibition from taking pictures of the island's rationing lines. Hollander recounts the story of several tourists who were detained for several hours after doing so.⁴⁴²

Amidst these varying perceptions of Cuban freedom, one group of visitors unquestionably saw their access to the island's tourist world improve. African Americans (as well as people of African descent from other countries) found that as AfroCubans' access widened, so too did theirs. Cuban planners tried to capitalize on the fact that African Americans still faced segregated resorts and beaches in the U.S. Castro even tried to build a relationship with former world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis in order to develop this market.⁴⁴³ Louis came under great pressure in the U.S. for his perceived ties to a socialist nation, and this experiment in niche marketing never materialized.

This racial leveling of tourist space was not reflected in an equal leveling of the tourist world in gender terms. In an early Revolutionary guidebook aimed at U.S. tourists, the CTC informed female guests that even though they were on vacation, they were still required to observe Cuban customs. They were told to "note that women do *not* wear slacks or shorts on city streets in Cuba."⁴⁴⁴ As will be shown in the following section, Revolutionary planners were as equally (if not more) concerned with regulating the clothes of Cuban women as they were those of foreign women.

⁴⁴² Hollander, 13.

⁴⁴³ Schwartz, 202.

⁴⁴⁴ *Cuba*, 7.

Regulating Contact

While the perceived boundaries of Cuba's tourist space may have varied from observer to observer, Revolutionary planners were quite unified in their approach to regulating contact between the island's citizens and its guests. As leaders tried to reshape Cuban society along socialist lines, visitors – particularly those from capitalist societies – represented a potential threat to their programs of social and cultural change. Cubans who worked within the limited realm of international tourism, particularly tour guides, were subject to particularly frequent contact with capitalist visitors. As a result, Revolutionary planners began thinking about how to best manage the contact between the guides and foreigners soon after the industry collapsed between 1959 and 1961. An ICAP manual from 1964, for example, contained nearly sixty pages of rules and restrictions that all Cuban tour guides were expected to follow. The message was clear: guides were required to be more than good Revolutionaries; they were required to be ideal Revolutionaries. The manual's introduction opened by stating: "*Un Guía del Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos tiene que ser una persona consagrada a nuestra gloriosa Revolución.*"⁴⁴⁵ (A guide of the Cuban Institute of Peace with the People has to be a person dedicated to our glorious Revolution.) Planners wanted to present foreigners with Cubans who were wholly dedicated to the Cuban Revolution. Guides were not only supposed to explain Cuba's sights; they were supposed to actively promote the Revolution and its countless contributions to Cuban society. Since tour guides often met guests at the airport, tourists were just as often presented with an unquestioning acceptance of and enthusiasm for Revolutionary rule.

⁴⁴⁵ "*Manual del Guía,*" 5.

Cuban tour guides needed to be dedicated Revolutionaries for another reason; they had an important domestic function. The sights that guides showcased were not only vital to the new government's image abroad, they were critical to its ability to successfully govern at home as well. As guides led visitors to industrial projects, farms, schools, and elsewhere, they were instructed to watch more than their respective tour groups. Each Cuban travel guide was supposed to function as a "Revolutionary inspector," noting "any outstanding deficiency." Their job was to then report back to the correct superior so that they could remedy the problem.⁴⁴⁶ International tourism – limited as it was – thus helped to further the institutionalization of the Revolution on the island. Tour guides served as roaming checks on the behavior of other cogs in the Revolutionary machine.

According to ICAP planners, working as a tour guides afforded Cubans special opportunities to become better Revolutionaries. In fact, it was part of their duty. The first of twenty-two "*Deberes del Guía*" (Duties of the Guide) was simply, "*Superarse política y culturalmente.*"⁴⁴⁷ Yet this had relatively little to do with broadening one's knowledge of simply any political systems or cultures. Although ICAP trained its tour guides to be well versed in the affairs of other nations, their global studies were extremely limited, focusing almost solely on the history of the left, socialism, and communism.⁴⁴⁸ Tour guides in Cuba not only played a role in constructing a new Cuban identity, they helped to fashion the idea of a global socialist community.

⁴⁴⁶ "*Manual del Guía*," 8.

⁴⁴⁷ "*Manual del Guía*," 14. This was merely one of the manual's lists of rules and restrictions. Others included "*Funciones del Guía*," "*Prohibiciones a los Guías*," "*Algunos Principios de Cortesía y Urbanidad*," etc.

⁴⁴⁸ "*Manual del Guía*," 10.

By looking at other restrictions, it is clear that leaders wanted as little interaction between workers and foreign guests as possible. Certainly tour guides were not meant to remain silent, but conversations with visitors were not meant to be stimulating exchanges. ICAP's training manual closed with a list of eight actions that were absolutely prohibited for guides. The second of these forbid them from disclosing their opinion on the national or international politics of Cuba without proper authorization. In fact, aside from what was said during the actual tour, guides were not supposed to interact with guests at all. There was no drinking with guests, no discussing one's work with guests, and certainly no going into guests' hotel rooms. This fervent effort to limit the interaction between Cubans and foreigners led planners to implement one prohibition aimed strictly at female guides. At no moment were they permitted to wear tight-fitting pants.⁴⁴⁹ Apparently, Revolutionary planners believed that the fewer overtures their female guides received, the better.

Lest guides forget to effectively carry out their directives, the twelfth of their twenty-two duties reminded them, "*Mantener en todo momento una conducta moral.*"⁴⁵⁰ (Maintain moral conduct at all times.) Being moral meant far more than being an effective tour guide; it meant being an ideal citizen, a true reflection of the island's Revolutionary identity. Tourists' most direct links to Cuba were thus likely to be not only ardent supporters of the government, but people who worked to most effectively institutionalize the regime's continued programs of radical change. Thus, even the limited international tourism of this period was a crucial part of the new regime's national-rebuilding strategy. At the same time that it helped to project the island's new

⁴⁴⁹ "*Manual del Guía,*" 58.

⁴⁵⁰ "*Manual del Guía,*" 15.

identity (as well as its new place within the global socialist order) abroad, it helped to build socialism at home.

Despite the government's intense focus on controlling the ways in which Cubans and foreigners interacted, visitors sometimes encountered tourism workers who did not necessarily support the regime. Cedric Cox recalled that he encountered:

...a man working right there in the Riviera Hotel who was opposed to the regime – working right there – and the people he is working with kid him about it. They ask him, why? He says because before he used to be able to get a lot of tips and he liked working for the capitalist boss.⁴⁵¹

This is quite surprising given the attention given to presenting the image of a united Revolutionary Cuba. Yet reconsidering the strict controls placed upon all forms of Cuban-foreign interaction, this gentleman may have been another part of the government's carefully staged tourist experience. After all, planners manufactured dissent for some of the island's visitors to observe while in Cuba. Visitors were occasionally brought to Cuban prisons. According to a former inmate though, foreigners never actually encountered political prisoners. Officials also sometimes distributed baseball equipment for prisoners to use when important delegations visited.⁴⁵²

Planners' desire to regulate contact between Cubans and non-nationals was made far easier by the fact that there were very few foreign visitors in Cuba for much of this era. A Canadian student who visited Cuba during the 1960s noted: "People stared. Everywhere out[side] of Havana people stared. They weren't used to foreigners."⁴⁵³ Although the end of pre-Revolutionary tourism patterns had clearly led to less contact

⁴⁵¹ Cox, 15.

⁴⁵² S.L. Nall, "Prisoner says Cubans fooled Jackson on jail," *Washington Times*, July 2, 1984. Jole Brinkley, "70 Innings of Baseball, Then Freedom," *New York Times*, June 30, 1984.

⁴⁵³ Christopher Fahrni, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 3.

with the outside world, tourism remained one of the primary arenas in which Cubans defined their relationship with the outside world.

The importance of tourism in this regard increased greatly as arrivals began to increase throughout the 1970s, bringing a higher percentage of Cubans into contact with international guests, particularly growing numbers from Western countries. Several groups of Cubans came closer than others to the new visitors. Prominent among them were the so-called “good Revolutionaries” who received their own vacations at tourist resorts as a reward for their support of the regime. Vacations to beach resorts were used as part of the government’s shift from the moral incentives of the 1960s to a series of material incentives more frequently utilized in the 1970s.⁴⁵⁴ Worried that these and other Cubans would be visiting sites designed (or priced) with foreign guests in mind, the Cuban government took steps to make sure that new tourist projects reflected the tastes of both national and international tourists on the island.⁴⁵⁵ Even amidst Cuba’s “successful” socialist society of the 1970s, contradictions within the island’s expanding tourist world were becoming increasingly conspicuous. Without government subsidies, many Cubans could not afford the most exclusive hotels and restaurants, which were becoming more expensive as interest in the island grew. While international tourism was still limited in the 1970s, the emerging economic gulf between Cubans and foreigners – a direct result of the government’s efforts to regulate contact between these groups – was an important

⁴⁵⁴ Mesa-Lago (1978), 47.

⁴⁵⁵ *Estadísticas de Migraciones Externas y Turismo* (La Habana: Editorial ORBE, 1982), 94. While the plan offered here by the Communist Party of Cuba is vague, there are examples of this in today’s Cuba. Museums, baseball games, and other cultural installations in Cuba are offered to Cubans at no cost or extremely discounted rates compared to those paid by tourists.

precursor the highly divisive dual economy that emerged out of mass tourism in the post-Soviet era.

A number of other Cubans managed to enter the island's hotels as part of their touristic training, and in turn, encountered foreign visitors on a regular basis. The Hotel Sevilla housed two hundred live-in students at a time, preparing them to work in tourism through almost constant on-site training. Meanwhile, they literally lived amongst some of the island's foreign guests.⁴⁵⁶ More tourists meant that the island needed more tourism workers. More workers meant more contact. More contact meant more chance for corruption from abroad. Thus, it was not long before Castro began warning all Cubans about this new foreign threat – one that he and other leaders curiously welcomed to the island.

In June of 1978, an article in *Joven Comunista* offered perspective on how to regulate the competing systems present within Cuba. In June of that, the publication recognized that some of those Cubans who had direct or indirect contact with tourists from capitalist nations might be confronted with what were termed “*influencias nocivas*” (noxious influences).⁴⁵⁷ Therefore, it became necessary to reinforce certain political tenets in these individuals' minds – tenets that were designed to ensure their loyalty to the socialist cause.⁴⁵⁸ Within Cuba's expanding tourism industry, all tourism-sector workers had to be strong Revolutionaries, not only the island's tour guides.

⁴⁵⁶ Promotional material from the Hotel Sevilla, “Something From its History” (no date, c. 2000).

⁴⁵⁷ “*Atencion al Turismo Internacional*,” *Joven Comunista*, June 1978, 61.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.* The article does not elaborate on exactly what types of Revolutionary behavior should be reinforced or how these messages should be conveyed to those individuals who are working in close contact with tourists.

Planners' efforts to regulate Cuban-foreign contact during this era illustrate that the central government alone was allowed to employ or consider making use of capitalist strategies within the context of tourism. There were, as yet, no capitalist opportunities for individual Cubans. Thus, while macro level planners in 1970s Cuba seemed to operate under the assumption that, as Dean MacCannell wrote in 1976, socialism could not be the negation of capitalism within the development of the island's tourism industry,⁴⁵⁹ they still aimed to create separation between Cubans and the island's capitalist guests. Socialism, after all, was designed to be the negation of capitalism at the micro level. So while the government sought links to the global capitalist community, Cuban citizens were as of yet forbidden to do so.

Perceptions and Realities of an Industry under Siege

Travelers' tales of Revolutionary Cuba provide valuable insight on the government's desire to reshape Cuban identity. As has already been suggested in this chapter, people who visited Cuba during this period had very mixed feelings about the "new" society that the island's leaders were trying to build. Some people were thoroughly impressed; others were utterly disgusted. In fact, the Revolution occasionally became nearly as polarizing for outsiders as it was for Cubans. Yet whether travelers' feelings were positive or negative, strong or weak, everyone who visited Cuba faced the same realities.

It was hard for supporters of the Revolution to ignore the difficulties associated with traveling to Cuba. For this group, however, the often complicated and indirect journey often pushed them to sympathize further with the Cuban Revolution. The

⁴⁵⁹ MacCannell, 86.

account of Sonia Puchalski reveals how U.S. interference in Cuba's international touristic relationships influenced those who sought entrance to the island, reinforcing Cuba's status as a martyr. "It is rather ironic that, due to American government policy of harassment and attempted prevention of travel to Cuba, any Canadian who wants to go to Cuba has to go through Mexico City first."⁴⁶⁰

A number of statements made by members of a group of Canadian students who visited the island in 1964 illustrate their ardent approval of the Cuban state and its actions. "The people of Cuba are well cared for by the state."⁴⁶¹ "The Cubans are not a captive people."⁴⁶² For some of them, the Revolution not only made Cuban society better, it truly made the Cuban people better – in some cases, better than Canadians themselves. Consider the following statements. "In Cuba, it is the mind and the spirit that count, and not money."⁴⁶³ "So they are more simple than we [Canadians] are, and better. Because they can and will act. Because they put their sincerity in their hands."⁴⁶⁴ "In Cuba today race is no longer an issue."⁴⁶⁵ "No wonder the young people of Cuba have such a wonderful, alive spirit—when five years ago they had nothing, nothing but hunger, sickness, and want."⁴⁶⁶ In the eyes of these individuals, Revolutionary society was nearly perfect.

⁴⁶⁰ Sonia Puchalski, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 15. Her comparison of the two countries is also interesting. She wrote: "It is something as simple as this: dirty, then clean. You notice that about Cuba and Mexico. Mexico smells. Cuba doesn't." See *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ Fred Stevenson, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 11.

⁴⁶² Bill Johnston, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 18.

⁴⁶³ Sonia Puchalski, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 16.

⁴⁶⁴ Christopher Fahrni, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 5.

⁴⁶⁵ Lionel Kearns, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 46.

⁴⁶⁶ Sharon Wood, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 53.

Supporters were even able to dismiss perceived problems of Revolutionary rule with relative ease, often putting the blame on Cuba's northern neighbor. According to Brian Rands, who visited the island in 1964, "when the Americans decide to get off Cuba's back and give her a chance, Cubans will be happy to remove some evils forced on them by her powerful neighbor."⁴⁶⁷ Paul Hollander notes how this desire to defend the Revolution at all costs extended beyond the casual political tourist. Economist Andrew Zimbalist argued that, "Cuba should...be judged by different standards of personal freedom...Cuba does not have the luxury of allowing the kind of political openness that we have in the U.S."⁴⁶⁸

Beyond these perceptions, both supporters and critics sometimes encountered the same fervent support for Castro and the Cuban Revolution. Take for instance a 1964 description from Canadian student Christopher Fahrni:

The first questions people asked you in the street were always: "You like Cuba?" "You like Fidel?" "You like the Revolution?" They are so proud of their Revolution. They identify with it. Often on meeting us, they would pull out their militia card to show. At a beach near Santiago, in mock water-horseback fights, excited Cuban boys would mob us, crying "Con Fidel! Con Fidel!"⁴⁶⁹

One of the island's far more critical visitors, Mohammed Rauf, also met and spoke with a number of people who he believed were genuinely "ardent supporters" of Fidel. Unlike the overwhelming majority of those who visited Cuba with organized groups, Rauf sought out dissenters, of which he found quite a few. He was surprised to find that despite these Cubans' opposition to Castro, many of them still viewed him as the only suitable leader; anyone else would have meant a return to the corruption of the pre-

⁴⁶⁷ Brian Rands, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 7-8.

⁴⁶⁸ Hollander, 19.

⁴⁶⁹ Christopher Fahrni, *Canadian Students in Cuba*, 4.

Revolutionary era.⁴⁷⁰ That someone who was so critical of the Cuban Revolution attested to this popularity of Castro suggests that most visitors likely encountered similar feelings amongst Cubans. Nevertheless, it is likely that many of the people encountered by Fahrni, Rauf, and others were simply saying what was expected of them. Whether they supported Castro or not, all Cubans were supposed to help stage the experiences of foreigners. Moreover, as one former resident put it, “no Cuban who is really discontented will talk to a stranger.”⁴⁷¹

While the reality of support for Fidel during this period was debatable, the island’s crumbling tourism infrastructure and general lack of supplies were not. There was little for sale outside of the island’s major hotels. And even when it came to hotels, only several years after the Revolutionary government’s assumption of power, the formerly long list of these had been slashed to three – the Habana Libre (formerly the Havana Hilton), the Nacional, and the Riviera. Furthermore, by the time that Mulville and his family visited the Libre in 1969, not all of its rooms had hot water or working lavatories, and its elevators broke down on a regular basis.⁴⁷² Examining the accounts of Mulville and others who visited Cuba during this period, it is clear that the island was in no position to host the visitors it had so yearned for only several years earlier.

Rauf offers some poignant descriptions of what awaited (or did not await) foreigners who visited Cuba during this period. He was greeted by airport equipment bearing the logos of TWA and Pan-Am, two U.S. airlines that had suspended service to the island prior to the U.S. travel ban. Rauf discovered more of what Cuba lacked as he

⁴⁷⁰ Rauf, 38-40.

⁴⁷¹ Hollander, 11.

⁴⁷² Mulville, 188, 233.

moved through the airport. He purchased some coffee; there was no milk to be had. His raincoat impressed the customs agent; there were none on the island. She explained to him that it was, ““Because of them crazy Americans. They stop everything.””⁴⁷³ Despite these limited offerings, Cuban officials informed Rauf that he was still required to spend ten dollars a day during his stay in Cuba.⁴⁷⁴

Out of the airport, at least Rauf’s experience with Cuban cuisine improved. Upon waking on his first day in Cuba, Rauf was able to find breakfast at the Hotel Riviera consisting of “two eggs, one small piece of bread, and one real cup of coffee with condensed milk in it, all for \$1.20.”⁴⁷⁵ Yet he also noted that outside of the Riviera and Havana’s few other remaining “luxury” hotels, there was little in the way of food and supplies that could be bought by foreign guests. Before eating breakfast at the Riviera, he had scoured the streets of Vedado looking for eggs, milk, toast, or butter. The only options he found were coffee and cans of mango juice. Later that day, he managed to find a beach restaurant serving lunch in Miramar. For \$2.50, he was served a steak, a roll, some avocado, and a small cup of coffee. Rauf noted of the Havana Libre: “The shopping arcades, decorated with the inevitable slogans, don’t have anything to sell.”⁴⁷⁶

Even those people who offered generally favorable accounts of Cuba had to concede that the island’s stores had little to offer foreign guests. Commenting on a Havana shopkeeper’s entire stock, Jack Scott noted that it contained only several of the most basic necessities – baby food, light bulbs, disinfectant, cornstarch, and lard. There

⁴⁷³ Rauf, 22-24.

⁴⁷⁴ Rauf, 24.

⁴⁷⁵ Rauf, 30.

⁴⁷⁶ Rauf, 29, 33, 163.

was no meat. There was no beer. There were, of course, huge sacks of sugar for sale.⁴⁷⁷ Santiago had an equally limited selection of goods. Mulville wrote: “Most shops were closed...there seemed to be no bars or restaurants open...shop windows were empty or perhaps had one or two rather dowdy articles in them.” His wife Celia commented that it was “like England was just after the war.”⁴⁷⁸

For visitors who ventured outside the island’s major cities, supplies were even more limited. The experiences of Mulville and his family are once again illuminating in this regard. As they tacked Cuba’s coasts in their yacht, they found gracious hosts everywhere they went, but almost nothing in the way of supplies. In El Pilon, all they could find was bread and vegetables. On the Isle of Youth, there was “nothing to be had from the shops.”⁴⁷⁹

As far as recreation was concerned, Rauf found that Cuba was still reliant on what had been built prior to the Revolution. There was an amusement park beside the beach in Miramar with some rides, but its roller coaster required maintenance and was not working.⁴⁸⁰ This lack of parts for rides was a reflection of far more critical shortages – for example, of car, tractor, and factory parts. Even in the mid-1960s, much of Cuba’s infrastructure was of U.S. origin. The embargo severely impacted the government’s ability to maintain essential parts of infrastructure, much less attractions like roller coasters.

Of course, many of those who visited Cuba during this period did not care about the minimal supplies (or lack of hedonism). These political tourists came to Cuba for

⁴⁷⁷ Scott, 24.

⁴⁷⁸ Mulville, 128-129.

⁴⁷⁹ Mulville, 174, 209.

⁴⁸⁰ Rauf, 34.

other reasons. As Joseph North suggested after his visit to Cuba in 1970, “Cuba today is home to every revolutionist, every forward-looking individual regardless of his country of origin. And as patriotic as the Cubans are, they are equally internationalist in their outlook, welcoming people from every corner of the world.”⁴⁸¹ As revolution engulfed parts of the underdeveloped world, it became part of mainstream culture in the West. Thus, in the 1960s Cuba became a shining example for a number of people, and as North suggests, some of them visited the island, for example, the eighteen aforementioned Canadian students. For them, Cuba’s industry under siege was just another spectacle from the Revolutionary struggle to witness while on holiday.

Tourism and Revolutionary Culture

As mentioned in the last chapter, Cuba was culturally suited to U.S. visitors during the pre-Revolutionary era. English was widely spoken, major tourist sights celebrated the role of the U.S. in Cuba’s Independence, and the island’s shops ably satisfied the tastes of U.S. consumers. Food from the north was widely available, and even the island’s roads were designed with U.S. holidaymakers in mind. The Hotel Havana Hilton represented a particularly conspicuous example of this influence, the culmination of promoters’ efforts to provide U.S. visitors with a completely familiar experience. In fact, all segments of the island’s tourist world were aimed at pleasing this traditional market.

In contrast, from the moment Castro took power, he and other Revolutionary leaders put a premium on strong expressions of *Cubanidad* and the primacy of *La Patria*. Yet in terms of aligning the cultural sector of tourism with a newly vaunted

⁴⁸¹ North, 10.

Revolutionary consciousness, Cuba's past once again represented the biggest obstacle to planners' ability to carry out their programs of change. The island's touristic links to the U.S. and corresponding cultural offerings had been developed over the course of decades; they could not simply be transformed overnight. Indeed, between 1959 and 1960, officials approached the 'culture of tourism' in a very similar manner to pre-Revolutionary planners. But as the island's traditional tourists all but vanished in succeeding years, planners were freed from the constraints of the past and could make adjustments to the cultural realm of tourism. By the mid-1960s, the tourism/culture relationship had taken on a new and different importance within the realm of tourism. While tourism and culture still intersected in significant ways, planners utilized the industry as a platform to showcase Cuban culture, and particularly Revolutionary achievements, to the world. As the state assumed complete control over the industry, it utilized touristic forms to reshape and control Cuban culture as much as possible. While some of these changes would be eroded in the post-Soviet era, many have remained intact. Despite the initial constraints, planners began to utilize the tourism industry to rewrite the island's history almost immediately.

Cuba's New Past

As was noted in the previous chapter, both Cuban planners and foreign promoters such as guidebooks writers highlighted many of the same figures and moments as they tried to offer tourists information on Cuban history and culture. Martí, Gómez, and Roosevelt; Spanish colonialism, Independence, and the sinking of the Maine – these were all cast as critical components of Cuban identity for promoters in the pre-Revolutionary era. While some of these would retain their importance within the new regime's revised

interpretation of Cuban history, others certainly did not. Revolutionary planners could by no means change what actually happened in the past, but the strict and near control they soon gained over the entire tourism industry allowed them to present foreigners with a version of Cuban history that would go unchallenged, at least until they left the island.

Cuba, the extensive guidebook released by Revolutionary planners in 1959, outlined the island's history for potential visitors. Planners clearly viewed history to be an important matter. The book opened with a welcome from Castro and the CTC, which was immediately followed with a summary of the island's past. In this early example of Revolutionary historicism, the links between Cuba and the U.S. had already undergone considerable change. No longer was the U.S. credited with aiding in Cuban Independence. In fact, other than geographic proximity, there seemed to be only one significant connection. In this new version of Cuban history, Cuba was credited with helping the U.S. achieve its Independence from England. There was no mention of U.S. influence in Cuba, just Spanish and French.⁴⁸² While the U.S. had been almost totally removed from the "official" history of Cuba, the two countries' relationship had not yet been totally severed within the island's tourist world. Potential or actual visitors who read beyond this introduction did find brief references to touristic manifestations of the historic links between Cuba and the U.S. that had been regularly celebrated prior to 1959, for example, the Maine Monument and San Juan Hill. As far as the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine was concerned though, there was no mention of it having played a role in Cuban Independence. Thus, although the U.S. had not yet assumed a negative image within the

⁴⁸² *Cuba*, 1-2.

Revolutionary vision of Cuba's past, the now minimal connections between the two countries were cast in a very neutral light.

Period accounts illustrate that projections of a harmonious Cuban past vanished with the island's foreign tourists. Indeed, Revolutionary planners actively promoted an entirely new version of Cuban history within the tourist realm. Rauf's account of the Habana Libre is particularly revealing. The main dining room featured several Revolutionary depictions of the island's past. A drawing showed "a thin farmer being whipped by a fat landowner. A priest with a crucifix, instead of trying to stop the whipping, is telling the farmer not to scream."⁴⁸³ In an attempt to explain to tourists the course of humankind on the island, planners vilified Cuba's landowners as well as the church. These scenes were reinforced in the hotel's cafeteria, which was "decorated with pictures of farmers being whipped to death by the bourgeois."⁴⁸⁴ The Libre and other tourist destinations also offered visions of the island's new heroes. The Floridita Bar featured a large fresco of Castro and other guerrilla soldiers behind its mahogany bar.⁴⁸⁵

Revolutionary tour guides reinforced these images as they led guests throughout the island. Tour guides were expected to broaden their own historical knowledge in an effort to provide visitors with the correct version of Cuban history. In particular, these individuals were expected, "*ampliar [sus] conocimientos sobre la penetración imperialista en los países subdesarrollados*"⁴⁸⁶ (to broaden their knowledge of imperialist penetration in underdeveloped countries). No longer was the U.S. viewed as having

⁴⁸³ Rauf, 154.

⁴⁸⁴ Rauf, 164.

⁴⁸⁵ Rauf, 163.

⁴⁸⁶ "*Manual del Guía*," 10.

helped Cuba to modernize effectively. Within Cuba's new past, the U.S. unsurprisingly played the role of the villain.

Even though the Cuban Revolution was still quite young at this point, leaders still paid considerable attention to its brief history. Revolutionary anniversaries and other socialist holidays were utilized to counter this image of youth with one of deep substance. These moments offered the new government excellent opportunities to illustrate the cohesive nature of the Cuban masses. *Invitados* were thus often brought to Cuba on days such as January 1st (the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution), May 1st (International Workers' Day), or July 26th (the anniversary of Castro's attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953).⁴⁸⁷ Visitors often overlooked this critical timing, chalking it up to luck and perceiving the massive choreographed spectacles that took place on these days as clear reflections of Cuban sentiment.

Museums were also a critical part of the Revolutionary government's effort to write a new Cuban history. While Cuba's Museo de la Revolución became a "must-see" for the island's millions of foreign tourists in post-Soviet era, it opened as a largely domestic attraction in 1963 when there were few foreigners to admire its exhibits. Of course, the government directed many of those who did visit the island during this era to view this official history of Cuban Revolution. Certainly these museum visits were intended to provide tourists with the Revolution's essential story, just as it fulfilled its purpose to help legitimize the new regime. The museum provided a deep sense of history for a still young movement. While the new government had not yet been in power for five years, the Museo opened to honor the tenth anniversary of the attack on the Moncada

⁴⁸⁷ Wolpin, 45-46.

Barracks, often considered the event that officially sparked the Cuban Revolution. The museum helped to make four years of Revolution into ten.

The Museo de la Revolución contained a number of exhibits focusing on the military conflict – uniforms, firearms, artillery, and even an airplane. Others showcased personal items from Revolutionary heroes like Fidel, his brother Raúl, Camillo Cienfuegos, and others (see 3.12-3.14).

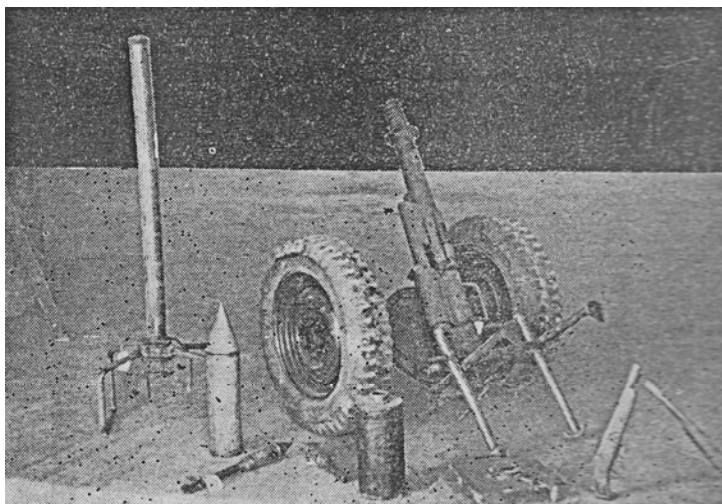
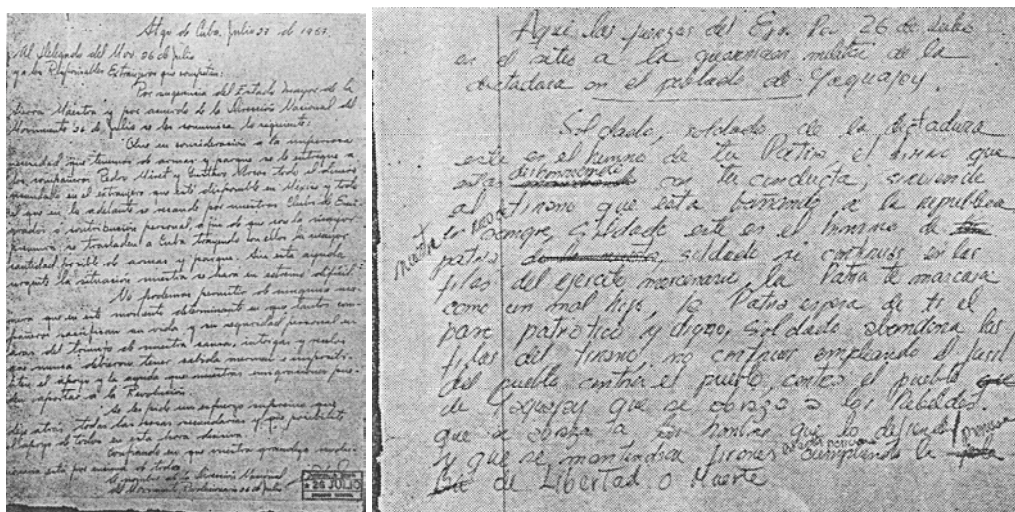


Figure 3.12. Revolutionary Weaponry Exhibit. (“Exposición del Museo de la Revolución,” La Habana, July 1963.)



Figures 3.13-3.14. Letter from Frank Pais. (“Exposición del Museo de la Revolución,” La Habana, July 1963.) Letter from Camillo Cienfuegos. (Ibid.)

Cuba's Revolutionary planners thus utilized the island's museums to put forth their visions of Cuban identity in the same way that planners had prior to 1959. Revolutionary heroes and battles were given the same (if not greater) attention that those from the Independence era were given.

The Sights, Spectacles, and Experience of Revolutionary Cuba

Promoters can only attract tourists by offering them the idea of an enjoyable holiday experience. Of course, the realities of one's experience weigh just as heavily on whether or not a tourist will return to a given destination. Tourism planners in Cuba during this era considered both of these facts as they sought to build on and transform the pre-Revolutionary industry. Yet because of the ongoing political tumult, convincing tourists that an enjoyable experience awaited them on the island was just as difficult as providing them with an enjoyable reality upon arrival.

Simonsen, the UN envoy who advised Revolutionary planners on tourism-related matters, thought that the best strategy for luring tourists to Cuba was by making the island unique. His report warned that in terms of the island's tourist offerings, there was a "tendency of servile imitation of the U.S." He argued that the idea should not be to transform Cuba into Florida or simply one large Miami. Instead, he advised planners to highlight the island's Spanish colonial past, criollo culture, and Afrocuban heritage. He pressed for sentiments of inferiority (which led to buildings like the U.S.-inspired Havana Hilton) to be discarded and for *Cubanidad* to be celebrated within every sector of the industry.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ Simonsen, 91-92.

This is not to say that Simonsen thought Cuba should ignore the preferences of U.S. tourists; he certainly did not. In his view, Cuba should develop vacation packages based on U.S. holidays such as the 4th of July. Planners should continue promoting youth summer camps in the U.S., a market that had been growing prior to 1959. Even at the early date of his report in April 1959, Simonsen believed that the ICT could utilize Revolutionary culture as a way to more successfully market such camps. They could have a Revolutionary theme and make use of educational and recreational infrastructure that the rebels-turned-leaders had constructed throughout the Sierra Maestra Mountains, a location that was now well known in the U.S. thanks to Castro and others.⁴⁸⁹ It is noteworthy that a technical advisor from outside Cuba (a UN envoy, at that) supported the commodification of Revolutionary culture so early on. At this point, a fully crystallized notion of a Revolutionary identity had not even taken shape.

A look at the cultural experiences that were offered to tourists in the early Revolutionary era suggests that the new regime was initially hesitant to change the industry to which U.S. visitors had grown accustomed. Planners realized that some U.S. tourists might not come to Cuba for its *Cubanidad*, and that radically changing the dynamics of the pre-Revolutionary industry could dissuade the island's traditional guests from returning. The extensive guidebook *Cuba* made it clear that the island still offered plenty of the familiar. For those who yearned for a sense of home while on holiday, "the latest Hollywood or European productions" played throughout the capital. For those with tame palates, Cuban restaurants still offered international menus full of T-bone steaks,

⁴⁸⁹ Simonsen, 30, 53.

lasagna, and chow mein.⁴⁹⁰ In fact, Revolutionary planners were very concerned with providing tourists with familiar cuisine. An INIT orientation manual for cooks from several years later focused almost solely on beef and its preparation in the U.S. and England.⁴⁹¹

Cuba went further in highlighting the sights and spectacles that were initially viewed as most important by the new regime. Just as in the pre-Revolutionary era, Havana had the most to offer. In a section on the capital entitled “Cultural Activities,” planners suggested seeing the Pro-Arte Museum, the Havana Philharmonic Orchestra, the Ballet de Cuba, the Palace of Fine Arts, the National Library, and any number of the island’s theaters (in that order). The sights and spectacles of Revolutionary Cuba were outlined in several other sections as well. “Historical Buildings and Churches” pointed tourists towards the island’s castles, the Capitol building, and unsurprisingly, a number of churches. “Parks and Monuments” focused largely on such sights that had been dedicated in memory of Cuba’s struggle for Independence. The Maine Monument too is briefly mentioned here. The authors also offer several examples of “Sports Amusements” before moving onto their final subject, “Havana at Night.”⁴⁹²

At the Casino Parisién, El Caribe, Copa Room and Capri Casino lavish floor-shows are also taking place with world-famous headliners. These are Havana’s famed luxury cabarets (luxury in everything but price) with their elegant casinos, where the sound of clicking chips merges with the hop-and-skip of the ball on its way around the roulette wheel or the muted roll of dice on the green cloth of the gaming tables.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹⁰ *Cuba*, 24-26.

⁴⁹¹ Escuela Nacional de Hotelería y Turismo, “*Orientaciones para la Superación Técnica del Gastronómico*” (La Habana: INIT, c. 1966).

⁴⁹² *Cuba*, 17-23.

⁴⁹³ *Cuba*, 30.

Thus, while the Revolutionary government put far less stress on the historic links between Cuba and the U.S., planners initially did very little to change the ways in which U.S. tourists experienced the island.

State-sponsored promotional material from 1960 also points to cultural continuity from the pre-Revolutionary era. In the brochure given to attendees of the COTAL meeting that spring, state planners still promoted many traditionally “Cuban” activities – Havana’s Grand Festival of Ballet, touring the capital’s Plaza Cívica, exploring Cuba’s national parks, and deep-sea fishing. The authors also suggested that visitors see other cities, although they offered no suggestions on specific sights.⁴⁹⁴ Certain omissions from this brochure are noteworthy and allude to how the new regime was subtly reshaping the sights and spectacles offered to Cuba’s foreign tourists. There is no mention of Cuba’s historic churches or its colonial heritage. Instead, it seems as if the authors are trying to project a sense of cultured modernity.

There were several interesting additions to this survey of the island’s tourist world. Situated between a section on the importance of tourism to the Cuban economy and one on the island’s cultural offerings, readers could find a section entitled “*millares de cubanos se convierten en propietarios*” (thousands of Cubans converted into property owners). This section focused on the newly established Instituto Nacional de Ahorro y Viviendas (INAV) and its programs aimed at providing homes and services for Cubans. It offered more statistics than typical leisure-seeking tourists likely sought as well as several images of the housing that was being provided to so many Cubans. It detailed the creation of “*Ciudad del Pueblo*,” which housed a large residential tower, several large

⁴⁹⁴ “*Turismo en Cuba*,” 18-23.

apartment buildings, as well as a number of small single-family homes. The city also contained schools, a library, recreation centers, banks, and other social necessities.⁴⁹⁵ The state did not present these manifestations of its egalitarianism in the same section as Cuba's other sights and spectacles. Instead, they received their own section. Even though this section was presented as a summary of current events in Cuba, it was really a celebration of the island's new reality, of its Revolutionary identity, of one of the most unique tourist offerings in the Caribbean. It was not long before sights such as these became part of the mainstream tourist experience in Revolutionary Cuba.

As the industry collapsed during the 1960s, the Cuban government began promoting sights and spectacles that were radically different from those that had existed prior to (and even throughout) 1959. While some popular pre-Revolutionary attractions retained their importance as meaningful components of Cuban identity, planners altered others in order to reflect Cuba's new socialist identity. Aspects of some sights had to be destroyed, much like negative aspects of the island's past. Havana's monument to the U.S. battleship *Maine* was drastically altered. A large American eagle was torn from the top, and the new government added a new inscription to the monument's side. It read: "*A las víctimas de el Maine que fueron sacrificados por la voracidad imperialista en su afán de apoderarse de la Isla de Cuba.*" (To the victims of the *Maine* who were sacrificed by voracious imperialism in its desire to gain control of the island of Cuba.) In a similar renunciation of the past, the name of the conspicuously U.S.-inspired Hotel Havana Hilton was changed to the Hotel Habana Libre.

⁴⁹⁵ "*Turismo en Cuba,*" 12-17.

Beyond plaques and names, as Cuba's sole tour operator, the government exerted a high degree of control over what tourists saw and how they experienced the island – regardless of how some visitors may have perceived their own freedom while in Cuba. With no taxis and few other guest services, foreigners were largely dependent on Cuban officials for their travel arrangements.⁴⁹⁶ Beyond the Museo de la Revolución, V.R. Krishna Iyer provides several examples of the island's new attractions in his travelogue. By 1967, the Ernest Hemingway Museum was already an established tourist sight. The museum was (and remains today) little more than Hemingway's former residence, replete with furniture, books, and hunting trophies. Iyer and other international visitors were brought to places of Revolutionary significance – the Moncada Barracks and the Siboney farm where rebels planned the attack. Unsurprisingly, Iyer visited the tomb of José Martí.⁴⁹⁷ His opposition to both Spanish rule and U.S. interference in Cuban affairs won him a firm place within the Revolutionary version of the nation's history.

Revolutionary Cuba offered visitors a number of museums in addition to the Museo de la Revolución, some of which were closely tied to the island's new identity. One of these was on the beach at Playa Girón, the location of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. The museum featured photos, descriptions of the battle, as well as captured U.S. weapons. A tank used to defend the island and parts of shot-down U.S. aircraft were two of its highlights. In general, the exhibits were largely focused on the extent of U.S.

⁴⁹⁶ Even in 1964, Mohammed Rauf found state-run gift shops selling Havana guidebooks from 1956. A store attendant told him that it was “unimportant. Havana is still the same.” Cuba in the 1960s though, was very different from what it had been like in the 1950s. See Rauf, 25.

⁴⁹⁷ Iyer, 37-40.

involvement.⁴⁹⁸ Santiago was home to the Museo de Clandestinidad (Museum of the Underground), which offered visitors a detailed look at the activities of the July 26 Movement. A small museum was also erected in the former Santiago home of the Pais brothers, both of whom were killed during the struggle against Batista.⁴⁹⁹

Revolutionary Cuba also offered its visitors spectacles unlike anything that was available in pre-Revolutionary Cuba. Ernesto Cardenal wrote of being overcome by excitement when he was given an opportunity to witness Cuba's "People's Courts." In fact, he was not the only foreigner to feel this way. Other tourists he met at the Hotel Nacional asked him to attend.⁵⁰⁰ He and several foreigners watched attentively as Cubans dispensed Revolutionary justice to their peers.

Other parts of Revolutionary society became spectacles for tourists. Reading the accounts of Canadians who visited in the early 1960s, state farms seem to have been a compulsory part of all state tours. Iyer visited a pre-fabricated housing factory, a thermal plant, several farms, a cattle ranch, a dairy farm, and two dams under construction.⁵⁰¹ Many of the individuals who toured the island alone also chose to take in Cuba's new sights. Jack Scott, for example, made it a point to visit a rural clinic.⁵⁰²

As Revolutionary planners rewrote Cuba's past and packaged it for foreign tourists, the island's future also became a spectacle. In the earlier years, there was a great deal of hope for the Revolution. The increased opportunities for education and expansion of social programs led many Cubans to believe that they were helping to erect a new

⁴⁹⁸ Mulville, 193.

⁴⁹⁹ DiPerna, 226.

⁵⁰⁰ Cardenal, 39.

⁵⁰¹ Iyer, 65-68.

⁵⁰² Scott, 10.

society. Without a doubt, the island's youth were critical to this endeavor. Cuba's future identity hinged on the paths they chose to take. The schools used to instruct these children themselves became tourist sights. It seems as if everyone who visited Cuba during this period stopped in at one of the island's many primary schools – whether they were coddled guests of the government or independent travelers struggling to gain personal insight on Cuban society and culture.⁵⁰³

Still, the presence of U.S. forms persisted within the realm of tourism. The Revolutionary government would have likely found it impossible to completely eradicate all traces of U.S. influence. The recent economic dominance of the U.S. was visible in the Pan Am airport equipment that was still used to facilitate arrivals in Cuba as well as in the U.S. cars that sped (and still often creek) through the streets of Havana and elsewhere. Even the cultural influence of the U.S. remained part of Cuba's tourism industry even after the country's tourists had disappeared from the island. In 1964, Rauf was shocked to enter a Havana bar with a mural painting of the New York skyline and the Statue of Liberty.⁵⁰⁴ In fact, the U.S. penetration was so deep that the government would eventually exploit the legacies of this influence, packaging various aspects for consumption by the island's tourists. These programs are dealt with in the following section.

Revolutionary Souvenirs

Much like other sectors of the tourism industry, it seems as if there was little initial change within Cuba's souvenir market. As the Revolutionary government assumed control of the island's tourism infrastructure, it also inherited the souvenirs that

⁵⁰³ Rauf, 44-54. Iyer, 69.

⁵⁰⁴ Rauf, 35.

had been offered to tourists prior to 1959. This was economically convenient for the young regime. Spending capital on developing new postcards or other items would have been difficult, particularly as the economy came under continuing strain. Since the new government was restrained in its efforts to affect change in other sectors of Cuba's tourist world, it would have made little sense to radically alter the island's souvenir offerings. It was much easier to appropriate those of the previous regime – no matter how much they clashed with the image of what Revolutionary Cuba was supposed to look like.

While Cuba's tourist markets shifted during the 1960s, those markets expanded in the 1970s. Both of these trends can be seen in the postcards from the 1970s. Not only were there more postcards being produced than in the 1960s, more languages could be found on them. Prior to the Revolution, postcards were written in Spanish and/or English. In some cases, English phrasing actually preceded Spanish translations. By the 1960s and 1970s, the hierarchy of language had shifted to Spanish, English, followed by Russian.⁵⁰⁵ Postcards with Russian translations showing fishing, towns, beaches were available on the island.⁵⁰⁶ Visitors from other countries also began arriving in Cuba, as evidenced by the French translations that would also soon begin appearing on postcards.⁵⁰⁷

Prior to 1959, a number of postcards featured images of prominent and famous Cubans – from presidents and priests to doctors and businessmen. In line with the Revolutionary government's focus on the collective as opposed to the individual, postcards began to depict the nameless heroes in Cuban history. While José Martí would

⁵⁰⁵ Cuba; Fishing. Cuba; Hydrofoil. Postcards, CHC UM.

⁵⁰⁶ Cuba; Fishing. Baracoa; Aerial View. Isla de Pinos; Beaches; Playa Bibijagua. Postcards, CHC UM.

⁵⁰⁷ Varadero Beach. Postcards, CHC UM.

never disappear, presidents and businessmen did. The void was filled with postcards dedicated to sights such as Santiago de Cuba's Park of the Fallen Heroes.⁵⁰⁸ The Revolutionary government utilized postcards to project a new vision of Cuba's past. Colonial castles and fortresses were still pictured,⁵⁰⁹ colonial churches were infrequently shown.

In some cases, it was not the images, but descriptions on the backs of postcards that helped to fashion a new version of Cuban history. Consider a postcard showing the "top-tree cabanas" of La Güira National Park in Pinar del Río. The cabanas, while quite innocuous themselves, were utilized as a counterpoint to the immense disparities that existed between rich and poor in the pre-Revolutionary era. According to the postcard, La Güira National Park's 9,900 acres "was segregated from a former 56,100 acres estate known as 'Hacienda Cortina.'"⁵¹⁰

Canadian travel writer Zoe Bieler offered a telling description of the island's souvenir market in 1975. "Apart from liquor and cigars...there is nothing much to buy. ... Handicrafts are limited, often expensive."⁵¹¹ According to Bieler, it seemed as if Cuban planners were doing little to address what had also been a concern of pre-Revolutionary planners.

⁵⁰⁸ Santiago de Cuba; Parque de los Mártires. Postcards, CHC UM.

⁵⁰⁹ Havana; Ruins; Muralla de la Habana. Postcards, CHC UM.

⁵¹⁰ Pinar del Río (Province); Parks; La Güira. Postcards, CHC UM. Amidst the changes that were taking shape on the island, another Cuban community was taking shape overseas. The exile community, largely based in Miami and New Jersey, was committed to maintaining its own identity. They viewed themselves as the true representatives of *Cubanidad*. Thus, while Cuba's postcard designers were busy learning Russian, the Cuban exile community was creating its own postcards that reflected its own vision of Cuban identity.

⁵¹¹ Zoe Bieler, "Now for something different – Cuba," *Montreal Star*, February 1, 1975.

By the end of the decade though, the situation was slowly beginning to change. In Paula DiPerna's 1979 guidebook she provides an excellent survey of the items available for purchase by tourists, many of which mirrored those sold in pre-Revolutionary Cuba – "cigars, rum, records, Cuban T-shirts, ceramics, woven items, papier-mâché, *diablito* dolls, books, and posters."⁵¹² The content of items such as books and posters, however, had undergone a profound shift since the pre-Revolutionary era. Books celebrated Revolutionary heroes instead of the relationship between Cuba and the U.S. Posters and artwork often served as another means of spreading Revolutionary propaganda abroad.

DiPerna also suggested buying *guayaberas*, particularly the "original cotton model[s] with the Criolla label saying 'Hecho en Cuba.'" Perhaps realizing that foreigners might want to take home an 'authentic' piece of Revolutionary culture, she noted that, "political posters are usually not for sale." DiPerna also pointed out that not only was the government in the process of restructuring prices for tourist items, "most tourist items were not available outside the tourist shops."⁵¹³ This suggests that Cuba's souvenir market was becoming separated even further from the island's domestic market. The dual economy that has become so characteristic of the post-Soviet era was actually beginning to take shape as the 1970s came to a close.

Conclusion: A New Identity?

There was a distinct pattern that could be observed in every sector of the industry during this period. Initially, there were few changes within Cuba's tourism industry. Yet as Cold War politics complicated life on the island, tourism as it had existed in Cuba

⁵¹² DiPerna, 17.

⁵¹³ DiPerna, 17.

became unsustainable, and change ensued. As Revolutionary planners tried to affect radical change throughout Cuban society, they extended their designs to the tourist realm. While some aspects of Cuban identity were clearly altered in this period, the question of whether or not the new regime was able to successfully forge a new identity for the island within the tourist realm is more difficult to answer. The fact that the island's tourists disappeared complicates this question, and makes it more difficult to see some of the continuities that persisted within the tourism/identity relationship.

In examining how identity was constructed within the touristic realm during these years, it is important to remember that broader and potentially more significant identities were being forced upon Cubans. In fact, it can be argued that the overarching political and cultural identities that the Revolutionary government ultimately imposed upon the Cuban people were so radically different from those formerly fostered by the Cuban state, it was impossible to conduct tourism along the same lines as it had been prior to 1959. Therefore, between 1959 and 1980, the national identity of Cuba and the Cuban people was impacted less by tourism than it was by other matters.

It is evident that even though there were a number of continuities that persisted within Cuba's tourist world between WWII and 1980, there were also many differences in the way that the industry was structured as well. These changes were, of course, dictated by large political shifts on the island, particularly the success of the Cuban Revolution. Beyond this obvious conclusion, however, the changes within the industry that took place through the 1960s and 1970s illustrate something important about the nature of the Revolution. They show that there was room for negotiation within the strategies of those who planned socialist development in Cuba. Despite the authoritarian

nature of the regime, it possessed a degree of fluidity that allowed for large-scale change in the light of failures such as the sugar push of 1970. Thus, in addition to the revealing capitalist forms at work within a socialist system, the planning of tourism that took place in 1970s Cuba is significant because it served as an arena for change where the identity of the Revolution could be drastically altered – in this case shifting away from an idealistic and rigidly socialist view to a pragmatic willingness (if not desire) to negotiate with capitalist nations.

Despite these multiple levels of planning, however, tourism was clearly an economic decision rather than a political one for the Cuban government. Certainly the government could have used tourism to promote the Revolution by showing off certain achievements, but its most significant political concerns related to its own citizens. As evidenced by the separation that was sought between capitalist visitors and socialist Cubans, the government was extremely concerned with the political consequences of its economic decision to pursue the development of the tourism industry. Only the Cuban government was permitted to make forays into the capitalist economy, and only those with a strong enough revolutionary consciousness were allowed to interact with or play host to tourists from abroad.

Moreover, by the 1970s, the tension that had previously existed between Cubans and foreigners was becoming more visible. In *The Complete Travel Guide to Cuba* (1979), Paula DiPerna alludes to this. In her section entitled “Eating Out,” she writes: “Dining out in Cuba is an extremely pleasant and rewarding experience, but reservations in well-known restaurants are recommended, and essential on Saturday nights. In hotels,

guests are given preference.”⁵¹⁴ While she does not say that foreigners are necessarily given preference over Cubans, policies such as these can be seen as precursors to the more overtly exclusionist policies that were developed in years to come. At the very least, this policy provided those Cubans who could afford to stay in first class hotel with privileges over those who could not. In fact, so too does DiPerna’s statement that “all hotels have bars available to hotel guests only.”⁵¹⁵ Both of these examples support the assertion that over a decade prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, the Special Period, and massive increases in the number of arriving foreigners, tourism had already begun to, if not actually create class divisions, foster the divisions that were already in existence within Cuban society at the time these restrictions noted by DiPerna were implemented.

There were other signs that it had never really disappeared. Clytus wrote about special stores for foreigners that existed in the mid-1960s. “A special food store, with the best food, and a special clothing store, with the best clothing, catered to their desires and were off-limits to Cubans.”⁵¹⁶ Rauf encountered a beach that was reserved exclusively for Russian visitors.⁵¹⁷ When travel writer Zoe Bieler visited Cuba in 1975, she noted that tourists paid less for their drinks at bars than Cubans paid. Foreigners received their drinks for half price as long as they presented their tourist card. Tellingly, she was only able to observe this situation “in bars which are also open to Cubans.”⁵¹⁸ Separate worlds for tourists and Cubans clearly existed at this time.

⁵¹⁴ DiPerna, 28.

⁵¹⁵ DiPerna, 135.

⁵¹⁶ Clytus, 48.

⁵¹⁷ Rauf, 31.

⁵¹⁸ Zoe Bieler, “Now for something different – Cuba,” *Montreal Star*, February 1, 1975.

Maintaining tourism in its pre-Revolutionary forms would have meant maintaining the subordinate status of Cubans in relation to the island's foreign guests. Surely this was unacceptable to those who expected change, and particularly so to leaders who needed to justify their increasingly venomous attacks on every aspect of pre-Revolutionary society. The continuance of this style of tourism would have discredited the new regime in the eyes of the hopeful. In some ways then, the collapse of pre-Revolutionary tourism was critical in validating the legitimacy and value of the Revolution as well as Castro as the island's supreme leader.

Chapter Four: Tourism, Change, and Preserving the Revolution

By 1980, foreign tourists visiting Cuba sought more than insight into a rogue American state. Many sought sun, sand, and the same luxuries offered in other Caribbean destinations. Notwithstanding tropical storms and hurricanes, the first two were easy to provide. The last was more difficult, but during the 1980s the Cuban government did its best to fashion the island into a first-class Caribbean tourist destination. A 1981 guidebook indicated to visitors that, at the very least, prices on the island had begun to reflect those found in far more notorious hotbeds of tourist activity. Holidaymakers could now spend \$100 on dinner for two just as they might in Paris, London, or New York.⁵¹⁹ After twenty-one years of Revolution, Cuba seemed poised to once again emerge as a prime tourist destination.

Just as planners were beginning to change the trajectory of the Cuban economy with the increased promotion of international tourism, the early 1980s presented the Revolutionary government with several crises. Between April and September of 1980, roughly 125,000 Cubans left the island in what became known as the “Mariel Boatlift.” This mass exodus produced a plethora of negative press coverage for the Cuban government, particularly in the U.S., but in places such as Mexico as well. The fact that Castro placed 4,000 to 5,000 “hard-core criminals” among the *Marielitos* did not help the island’s international reputation either. In 1981, Ronald Reagan took office as President of the U.S., putting an end to the mildly conciliatory period inaugurated by his

⁵¹⁹ There was not, however, an abundance of such establishments. Margaret Zellers, *Fielding’s Caribbean* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1981), 232.

predecessor Jimmy Carter.⁵²⁰ Notwithstanding these seemingly major setbacks, the 1980s were an important decade for Cuban tourism. Arrivals increased steadily throughout the decade, and by 1989 Cuba was hosting the same number of people as it had in the pre-Revolutionary era.

As the decade came to an end, Revolutionary leaders had crystallized their framework for how they intended to regulate the industry. But then came the fall of the Soviet Union, presenting Cuban leaders with a serious challenge to the controlled growth that had taken place throughout the 1980s. The financial crisis that ensued following the withdrawal of Soviet subsidies (upwards of US\$5 billion per year) prompted the government to take measures that would maximize arrivals. In this way, the crisis of the 1990s reinforced the tourism-related goals and policies of the 1980s. The state immediately began to invest massive amounts of cash into the construction of airports, hotels, and other basic infrastructure. Leaders permitted Cubans to enter the private sector in increasing (albeit still limited) numbers. Yet more than anything else, this watershed event represented a change in the pace of development on the island. The fact is that Cuba was well on its way to once again becoming a major center of Caribbean tourism *prior to* the fall of the Soviet Union, and a system for managing the industry's development was already in place by the 1990s. It had been developed in the 1970s and fine-tuned throughout the 1980s.

⁵²⁰ President Reagan suspended the limited U.S. travel to Cuba that had begun under Carter and initiated several programs designed to topple Castro, including Radio Martí. He increased funding to the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), and as a staunch enemy of the Revolutionary government, made constant references to the threat of Cuban influence in the region, particularly in Nicaragua and Grenada. See Thomas Leonard, *Castro and the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 74-75.

Each section of this chapter begins by examining themes from the period of controlled tourism development during the 1980s, a decade that closed with Cuba attracting roughly the same number of foreigners as it had at the pinnacle of pre-Revolutionary tourism in 1957. The numbers may have been similar, but several major changes had occurred during that span of just over two decades. The nationalities of the island's new tourists were completely different than they had been in the 1950s. Moreover, the wide range of tourist markets that Cuba pursued helped to foment broader political and economic ties with foreign governments and firms than the U.S. dominated pre-Revolutionary years. During the 1980s, Cuba's patron – the Soviet Union – was still providing the island with significant economic support. Therefore, at this point Cuban planners were still able to comfortably restrain the industry's growth while at the same time steadily increasing profits. The situation changed significantly after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The economic shock resulting from the collapse of Cuba's preferential trading sphere was profound. By 1993, oil imports to Cuba had decreased by 90%. Imports of fertilizers and animal feed plummeted by 80% and 70% respectively. Trade of other essential consumer goods ceased. Meanwhile, the price of oil rose just as the price of sugar fell.⁵²¹ Unlike when Cuba's relations with the U.S. were severed in 1959, there was no other superpower willing to subsidize Cuban development. The island was politically adrift and economically crippled. Only tourism was able to provide the necessary short-term capital to replace some of the financial resources that had been lost. A clear indicator of its importance is the fact that in 1997, the industry surpassed sugar as

⁵²¹ Leonard, 45.

the largest contributor to the Cuban economy, its revenues comprising 6.1% of the country's GDP.⁵²² Between 1989 and 2004, annual arrivals skyrocketed from roughly 300,000 to just over two million. The steady expansion of the industry during the 1980s, coupled with the dramatic growth that followed in the 1990s and early twenty-first century amplified the connection between tourism and identity to a degree that eventually reached far beyond that of the pre-Revolutionary era. Much like the pre-Revolutionary though, a distinct dualism surrounded the tourism industry, and two separate Cuba's emerged – one for Cubans and one for foreigners.

Tourism and the Political Economy of Global Reintegration

By 1980, Cuba had normalized relations with most of the countries that had considerable potential as tourist markets with the significant exception of the U.S. Reagan's election had dashed any hopes of reconciliation. Meanwhile, Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union began to deteriorate in some important respects. The rise of Mikhail Gorbachev, for example, threatened Cuba's privileged status among Soviet partners. His *perestroika* reforms led to major structural changes within the Soviet economy, including a review of its far-flung global network of Cold War projects. The Soviet leader also sought to relax constraints on personal freedoms through his *glasnost* reforms. These programs contrasted sharply from Castro's political hardening during the 1980s, when he aimed to purge the Revolutionary leadership of would-be reformers.

As Cuba drifted farther away from the U.S. and the USSR alike, economic planners continued their attempts to expand the array of the island's trading partners as

⁵²² Andrea Colantonio and Robert B. Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development in the Socialist State: Havana during the 'Special Period'* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 38-39.

well as the products and services it could offer them. In nominal terms, these new partnerships still only represented a fraction of GDP during the 1980s, but they allowed the Cuban government to develop new frameworks for engaging foreign nations and firms. In terms of Cuba's new ties to Western nations, tourism often lay at the heart of these reconciliatory efforts. The following three sections of this chapter examine shifts in the political economy of tourism between 1980 and 2007 as well as the consequences of these changes for the tourism/identity relationship.

New Markets

The Cuban government dedicated significant energy towards cultivating new markets during the early 1980s. Between 1980 and 1984, Cuban planners conducted extensive surveys of several potential sources of tourism, including Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. Canada offered the most obvious replacement market for the island. Trade between Cuba and Canada had consistently increased during the Trudeau years (1968-1984), slowing only briefly after a spy scandal involving several Cubans at the island's consulate in Montreal in 1981. Revolutionary matters enthralled Canadian journalists during these years,⁵²³ and Canadian citizens were prominent among the limited number of foreigners who visited the island as tourists in the 1970s. Advertisements from the *Montreal Star* indicate that Canadian promoters focused on the uniqueness of Cuba. According to a 1975 advert for Unitours (see 4.1), Cuba was "an excitingly different country." Another Unitours ad implied that Cuba really was different by implicitly acknowledging that some people might be hesitant to travel to the Caribbean isle. The company offered potential visitors a "Free travel

⁵²³ Kirk and McKenna, 63.

presentation on Unitours Cuba” for those who wanted more information about traveling to the island.⁵²⁴



Figure 4.1. Unitours Newspaper Advertisement. (*Montreal Star*, January 11, 1975.)

In February of 1975, the *Montreal Star* featured an article titled “Now for something different – Cuba.” According to the author, Cuba offered classic U.S. cars, visits with students doing agricultural labor, lessons in Cuban rationing, and people who were “obviously adequately fed” – all things the author believed to be rather unique for the Caribbean or Latin America. This was not to say that Cuba did not resemble other Caribbean destinations; the country had a wide range of beautiful beaches.⁵²⁵

Unitours adverts also highlighted the economic advantages of visiting Cuba. A 1975 ad noted that, “If you come to the right place, \$339 goes a long way.”⁵²⁶ All of the

⁵²⁴ Unitours Advertisement, *Montreal Star*, January 4, 1975.

⁵²⁵ Zoe Bieler, “Now for something different – Cuba,” *Montreal Star*, February 1, 1975.

⁵²⁶ Unitours Advertisement, *Montreal Star*, January 4, 1975.

company's ads from this year highlighted the fact that Cuba was a place, "Where tipping does not exist."⁵²⁷ In Cuba, "Even the tips are taken care of. Tipping just isn't allowed."⁵²⁸ The *Montreal Star's* travel writer affirmed these claims. A byline in an article on Cuba read: "No hidden extras and no tipping."⁵²⁹ A 1975 advertisement for Sunflight, a Canadian travel agency, clearly illustrated the affordable nature of the island. Few package tours to other Caribbean destinations were as cheap as those offered to Cuba.⁵³⁰

While the election of Brian Mulroney as Canada's Prime Minister in 1984 presented some challenges to this still young bilateral relationship – his government promoted a foreign policy similar to that of the U.S., which distanced Canada from Cuba⁵³¹ – the cooling of relations did not have a significant impact on Canadian tourism as the table below clearly illustrates (see Table 4.1). To some degree, Cuba assumed the status of a 'normal' tourist destination for Canadians during the 1980s. The island may have offered Revolutionary sights and spectacles unavailable elsewhere, but Canadian tour operators listed their flights and packages to Cuba just as they for other destinations. There was no longer a need to provide potential visitors with a "free travel presentation."⁵³²

⁵²⁷ Unitours Advertisement, *Montreal Star*, January 11, 1975.

⁵²⁸ Unitours Advertisement, *Montreal Star*, January 4, 1975.

⁵²⁹ Zoe Bieler, "Now for something different – Cuba," *Montreal Star*, February 1, 1975.

⁵³⁰ Sunflight Advertisement, *Montreal Star*, January 11, 1975.

⁵³¹ Kirk and McKenna, 86, 107, 125-127.

⁵³² Club Tropicque Advertisement, *The Gazette* (Montreal, Canada), January 3, 1987. Voyages General Tours Advertisement, *The Gazette* (Montreal, Canada) January 3, 1987. Unitours offered free presentations on travel to Cuba during the 1970s.

Table 4.1. Canadian Arrivals to Cuba, 1980-1990

Year	Arrivals	Share of Market Economy Arrivals
1980	21,996	28%
1981	22,793	35%
1982	28,634	38%
1983	32,261	35%
1984	24,765	19%
1985	39,725	28%
1986	46,822	30%
1987	-	-
1988	-	-
1989	66,724	20%*
1990	74,435	22%*

* – Denotes share of total arrivals.

Source: Instituto Nacional de Turismo (INTUR), “Foreign Tourist Arrivals in Cuba, 1977-82” (Havana, 1983), 34. INTUR, “Foreign Tourism in Cuba, 1982-1986” (Havana, 1988), 31. Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, “*Anuario Estadístico de Cuba, 1996*” (Havana, 1998).

Cuban planners pursued the Canadian tourist market for several reasons, principally its size and affluence. By 1980, Canada’s population had reached nearly 25 million people, and with a high per capita income, many Canadians could easily afford to travel abroad. They were not far from the Caribbean, and had a history of visiting places such as the Bahamas and Jamaica. Other important factors prompted Canadians to increasingly consider visiting Cuba. Decades of limited contact between Cuba and Canada aroused a curiosity in many potential travelers. In 1985, Deborah Joselin, a tourist from Toronto, concisely captured this interest as well as another important factor for those considering a holiday in Cuba. “It’s cheap and it’s different.”⁵³³ Advertising campaigns from the 1970s that focused on the unique nature of Cuba had clearly been effective in luring Canadians to the island.

⁵³³ Joseph B. Treaster, “Cuba Hopes to Cash in on the West’s Wanderlust,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1985.

Cuban planners took a slightly different approach in their pursuit of Mexican tourists. In 1980, the Instituto Nacional de Turismo (INTUR) conducted an extensive investigation of the potential for growth in this market. While it lacked the potential of Canada, Mexico's demographics – as well as its proximity to Cuba – made it a logical choice for Cuban planners. Mexico had almost sixty million residents, and it had produced roughly 2.2 million tourists in 1978. Cuban planners knew that they could not compete with the U.S., which drew over 90% of the country's tourists, most of whom traveled north on the many land links that existed between the two countries. Cuban planners instead focused their attention on Mexicans who traveled abroad by air; 448,300 had done so in 1977. Since it was only a short flight from Mexico to Havana or Varadero – and since unlike most other countries, Mexico had never severed its commercial air links with the island – planners believed that Cuba could attract between 150,000 and 175,000 of these individuals annually within several years.⁵³⁴ They believed that the cultural connections that existed between the two countries – particularly their shared language – would lead many Mexican tourists to choose Cuba over other Caribbean destinations. Yet despite these high hopes, after a decade of promotion, Cuba hosted only 34,465 Mexican tourists in 1990. Nevertheless, arrivals from Cuba's western neighbor continued to grow throughout the 1990s, and Mexico became one of the island's principal markets by the twenty-first century.⁵³⁵

Cuban planners had to use a different approach to the Argentine market. Mexico had never broken relations with the island; Argentina had. Yet INTUR's survey of

⁵³⁴ Instituto Nacional de Turismo, “*Estudios Sobre Mercados Turísticos Hacia Cuba: Mexico*” (La Habana, 1980), 28.

⁵³⁵ Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, “*Anuario Estadístico de Cuba, 1996*” (La Habana, 1998).

Argentina acknowledged the importance of that country's tourists within the government's broader strategy for reengaging with its Latin American neighbors. In the case of Argentina, trade was the most important component of this reengagement, and tourism was seen as being a potentially significant part of that trade. Once again, it was believed that the common language shared by the two countries could help to divert tourists away from places such as the U.S. and South Africa, two popular destinations for Argentine travelers. Noting the rise in Argentine travel to the Soviet Union, Cuban planners believed that they too could capitalize on people's curiosity "*conocer una isla del Caribe con un regimen socialista*" (to know a Caribbean island with a socialist regime). The idea to approach groups such as the *Juventud Comunista Argentina* was considered good strategy.⁵³⁶ Cuban planners tried to capitalize on the fact that Argentina's military government had violently repressed the country's socialists (not to mention many others). As freedoms were restored in the mid-1980s, Cubans hoped that Argentine tourists would choose to visit a country where socialism had been practiced for decades.

INTUR pursued Scandinavian tourists for two central reasons – the high standards of living enjoyed by citizens of these countries and the lengthy vacation periods granted to workers. Cuban planners hoped to benefit from Scandinavians' waning interest in the Canary Islands but found that they were competing against other emerging destinations that were able to provide similar offerings, particularly Yugoslavia and Tunisia. For those Scandinavian tourists who were bent on visiting the Americas instead of Europe though, Cuba aimed to capitalize on Miami's problems attracting Scandinavian tourists.

⁵³⁶ Instituto Nacional de Turismo, "*Estudio Sobre Mercados Turísticos Hacia Cuba: Argentina*" (La Habana, 1984), 68, 87.

South Florida had been gaining in popularity as a tropical destination for the region's travelers, particularly Swedes, but a rise in the dollar created an unfavorable exchange rate that dampened the demand for holidays in Miami.⁵³⁷ Cuban planners hoped to fill this Caribbean-American niche. Also, INTUR officials believed that Cuba could become a regular stop for Scandinavians on multi-destination trips.⁵³⁸

These examples reflect the keen interest and diverse strategies of Cuban planners regarding new tourist markets that also included Spain, France, England, and others. The search for these new markets represented a radical shift in the dynamics of Cuba's tourism industry. The continued expansion of the country's international air networks highlighted this diversification strategy. Much unlike when Rauf, Clytus, and others found it extremely difficult to reach the island, by the mid-1980s, Cubana and eight non-Cuban airlines linked Havana to twenty-five cities worldwide. Charter flights linked Cuba with three additional international destinations.⁵³⁹ Cuba was still not as easily accessible as other Caribbean islands, but it was quickly assuming the status of a 'normal' destination for almost everyone except citizens of the U.S. or its territories.

⁵³⁷ Instituto Nacional de Turismo, "*Estudio Sobre Mercados Turísticos Hacia Cuba: Países Escandinavos*" (La Habana, 1984), 15, 19.

⁵³⁸ "*Estudio Sobre Mercados Turísticos Hacia Cuba: Países Escandinavos*," 53.

⁵³⁹ Jose Antonio Tamargo and Alberto Riaza, *Cuba Travel Guide* (Havana: National Institute of Tourism, 1986), 32. The twenty-five cities were Baghdad (Iraq), Berlin (GDR), Bridgetown (Barbados), Frankfurt (FRG), Georgetown (Guyana), Kingston (Jamaica), Lima (Peru), Lisbon (Portugal), Luanda (Angola), Luxembourg (Luxembourg), Madrid (Spain), Managua (Nicaragua), Merida and Mexico City (Mexico), Montreal and Toronto (Canada), Moscow (USSR), Panama (Panama), Paris (France), Port-of-Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), Prague (Czechoslovakia), Rabat (Morocco), St. George's (Grenada), San Jose (Costa Rica), and Tripoli (Libya). The three cities connected by charter flight were Cologne (FRG), Milan (Italy), and Miami (USA).

This pursuit of varied markets offered the island a degree of economic security. Whereas in the pre-Revolutionary era U.S. tourism was concentrated in the winter months, tourism of the 1980s and thereafter became more steady year round. By the 1990s, Cuba had established firm links to a variety of tourist markets, and many of them peaked at different times of the year. A look at monthly arrivals for 1998 – a year in which Cuba hosted 1,415,832 foreign tourists – is particularly illuminating. Canadian arrivals reached their zenith in March, as did those from France. Both Spanish and Italian arrivals peaked in August. November and December were equally popular for Germans. Other principal markets such as Argentina, Mexico, and England peaked in January, July, and December respectively.⁵⁴⁰ There were still months during which Cuba attracted less tourists than others, but the island's low season was not as prolonged nor as deep as it had been during the pre-Revolutionary era.

The emergence of a mixed tourist market offered Cuba another form of economic security. By attracting no more than 15.2% of its tourists from a single country (Canada) and more than 7% from four additional countries (Italy, Germany, France, and Spain),⁵⁴¹ Cuba was clearly more protected from the complete collapse of any of its major tourist markets than it had been in the pre-Revolutionary era when roughly 90% of arrivals were from the U.S. Annual arrivals between 1993 and 1999 confirm this trend. The total number of arrivals to Cuba rose substantially in each of these years. This occurred in spite of the fact that arrivals from a number of Cuba's largest tourist markets decreased from one year to the next during this span. German arrivals decreased by 9% between

⁵⁴⁰ Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, “*Visitantes en el Año 1998 por Area Geografica y Países Seleccionados*” (La Habana, 1999).

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

1993 and 1995. English arrivals decreased by roughly a fifth in 1995. Spain's did slightly in 1997. Italian arrivals decreased substantially in 1998 and again in 1999. Those from Argentina shrank three times, in 1995, 1996, and 1999. Several smaller markets experienced drastic negative growth. Mexican arrivals shrank by 43% between 1993 and 1995, those from Colombia by almost 50% between 1997 and 1999.⁵⁴² Nevertheless, overall arrivals did not slow down until the global downturn in international travel following the September 11 attacks on the U.S. in 2001.

The growth rate of new markets provided clear advantages, but at the same time planners found that hosting such a varied lot of tourists presented new problems. Each market, for example, exhibited its own unique preferences. Jorge Debassa, the general manager of the Cuban tourist agency Cubatur, highlighted these differences with his rye comment in 1985: "With the Italians, if you shut the music off before 1 A.M. they complain. However, with the Germans, if you continue the music after 10 P.M., they protest."⁵⁴³ Planners were also concerned about the linguistic challenges posed by tourists from some of its new markets, for example, the Scandinavian countries.⁵⁴⁴ Nevertheless, these concerns were diminished by the immense opportunities that a global pursuit of tourists offered the island's government.

New Frameworks for Development

A clear indicator of tourism's significance to Revolutionary leaders was the prominence it was afforded in Cuba's Second Five Year Plan (1981-1985).⁵⁴⁵ Planners

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Joseph B. Treaster, "Cuba Hopes to Cash in on the West's Wanderlust," *New York Times*, June 8, 1985.

⁵⁴⁴ "Estudio Sobre Mercados Turísticos Hacia Cuba: Paises Escandinavos," 25.

⁵⁴⁵ Colantonio and Potter, 109.

realized that they needed to devise new frameworks to effectively capture new markets. Following the virtual isolation from western tourist markets in the 1970s, capital as well as technological and professional expertise were sorely lacking. In order to fill these voids, Cuba's Revolutionary government made the surprising declaration that for the first time since Hilton and other firms left the island, it would pursue tourism projects based on shared ownership and management.⁵⁴⁶ The government legalized Cuban-foreign joint ventures with Decree Law 50 the following year. Despite this sharp new direction for Revolutionary Cuba, Colantonio and Potter note that this measure sparked only mild interest from foreign firms given that their share of the joint venture was limited to 49%. Moreover, the law offered them minimal protection for their investments.⁵⁴⁷

Despite these apparent limitations, Decree Law 50 represented a decisive acknowledgement that the country was moving in a new direction. To help foster this shift, Cuba hosted its first travel tradeshow in 1982, signing contracts with twenty European and American (non-U.S.) travel agents.⁵⁴⁸ By 1985, Cuban hotel workers were traveling to Spain to train in the country's hotels for periods of five to six months.⁵⁴⁹ Throughout the decade, just prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, foreign cooperation became increasingly critical to Cuba's new tourism industry at a variety of levels. In 1987, the Revolutionary government created Cubanacán, its first "autonomous state enterprise." The corporation took over almost one-third of the island's state-owned enterprises and was given considerable leeway to create partnerships with foreign

⁵⁴⁶ Jo Thomas, "Cuba Is Moving to Broaden Trade in Bid for Dollars," *New York Times*, June 25, 1981.

⁵⁴⁷ Colantonio and Potter, 42.

⁵⁴⁸ Schwartz, 205.

⁵⁴⁹ Joseph B. Treaster, "Cuba Hopes to Cash in on the West's Wanderlust," *New York Times*, June 8, 1985.

investors. Cubanacán's most important objectives were "to attract foreign capital and encourage the modernization of the Cuban tourist sector."⁵⁵⁰ In 1988, the government created Gaviota. This corporation had a similar purpose, but the Cuban Army controlled it. Surprisingly, Cuba's Armed Forces actually had experience in the leisure industry. In the 1960s, the Army had managed recreational centers for Soviet advisors on the island.⁵⁵¹

The frameworks for tourism development in Cuba that emerged during the 1980s were not born of dire necessity. They were an extension of the pragmatic tourism-related policies that were implemented during the 1970s. The fall of the Soviet Union and subsequent loss of the generous subsidies drove Revolutionary leaders to abandon whatever restraint remained in their pursuit of new markets for the development of the island's tourism industry. In 1992, for example, Cuba intensified its quest for FDI by "clarifying the concept of private property and providing the legal basis for transferring state property to joint ventures."⁵⁵² In 1995, Decree Law 77 replaced Law 50, changing the ways in which foreigners interacted with their Cuban partners. The new law went beyond past measures, permitting foreign interests to control virtually 100% of the joint ventures.⁵⁵³

These changes in Cuban law clearly appealed to a growing number of foreign investors. An indication of the increased interest was a 1997 book by Mark Miller and Tony Henthorne, *Investment in the New Cuban Tourist Industry: A Guide to*

⁵⁵⁰ Colantonio and Potter, 106.

⁵⁵¹ Mark M. Miller and Tony L. Henthorne, *Investment in the New Cuban Tourist Industry: A Guide to Entrepreneurial Opportunities* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1997), 80-81. Colantonio and Potter, 106.

⁵⁵² Colantonio and Potter, 42.

⁵⁵³ Colantonio and Potter, 42.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities, which was entirely dedicated to foreign investment opportunities. Their work provided potential investors with a brief overview of the history of tourism in Cuba, an analysis of Cuban tourism within the broader Caribbean context, an examination of the island's infrastructure, regulations facing foreign firms that were doing business in Cuba, and a list of the major players from Cuba's tourist realm. Written at a time when the survival of the Revolutionary government was anything but certain, their book was actually intended for U.S. investors. But with or without this group, *Investment in the New Cuban Tourism Industry* not only contains substantial information about the conditions for foreign investors during the mid to late 1990s, but also represents a revealing example of the optimism of its authors, experts in geography and marketing, in Cuba's tourist potential: "Investors and entrepreneurs...likely will find the Cuban process to be investor-friendly, reasonably efficient, and navigable with assistance."⁵⁵⁴

In addition, Colantonio and Potter provide a look at how these new frameworks for development influenced the Cuban economy. FDI skyrocketed, with the overwhelming majority of it located in the tourism sector. Cuba was reconnecting with the world, and tourism lay at the heart of this reconciliation. During the spectacular growth of the late 1990s, the state forged partnerships with companies that were almost exclusively located in Western Europe and Canada. Several of these firms included Sol Meliá, Accor, Club Med, LTI, and Golden Tulip.⁵⁵⁵ By the twenty-first century though, the Cuban government had diversified its trading partners to include firms in nations that had only recently emerged as important tourist destinations. In 2008, the state-owned

⁵⁵⁴ Miller and Henthorne, 115.

⁵⁵⁵ Colantonio and Potter, 42-43.

Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) pledged US\$70 million to build a five-star resort on Cayo Largo. QIA's partner is Gran Caribe, which is owned by the Cuban Ministry of Tourism.⁵⁵⁶ In 2009, the Dominican Republic announced that it would offer Cuba technical assistance for the development of golf tourism.⁵⁵⁷

The changes that took place within the political economy of tourism in Cuba between 1980 and the present day represented a major departure from the strategies employed during the 1960s and 1970s. The Revolutionary government's pursuit of joint ventures, FDI, and a wide range of Western markets contradicted the nationalist message of the Revolution. These strategies also diminished the regime's ability to fully control the economic, social, and cultural consequences of tourism development in Cuba. As the next section shows, this growth presented the Cuban government with a variety of security concerns.

The Politics of Security in Cuba's Tourist World

As was shown in the previous chapters, Cuba's tourism industry provided opposition groups with a wide range of targets to disrupt the economy and create fear, whether it was Castro and others attacking the Batista government or Cuban exile groups attacking the Castro government. The growth in tourism that took place during the 1980s and 1990s sparked a reaction in the exile community (which was largely based in the U.S.) that led to an increase in terrorist attacks directed at the tourist sector. Violent elements of this group increasingly targeted non-Cubans who supported the

⁵⁵⁶ Amy Glass, "Qatar to Build \$70mn Cuba resort," ArabianBusiness.com, April 29, 2008, <<http://www.arabianbusiness.com/517917-qatar-investment-authority-signed-70mln-deal-with-cuban-republic>> (June 3, 2008).

⁵⁵⁷ President Leonel Fernandez speaking at the 11th Meeting of Economists in Havana, Cuba, March 4, 2009, <<http://www.presidencia.gob.do/app/article.aspx?id=10496>> (June 20, 2009).

Revolutionary government in any way. The growing numbers of Western tourists were a particularly conspicuous and bothersome link between Castro and the outside world.

After the attack on Cubana Flight 455, there were no significant attacks during the 1980s, but during the 1990s, Cuba's financial crisis, the huge influx of foreigners, and deep hatred of the Revolutionary government combined to present Cuban security forces with a range of new threats. Anti-Castro groups took advantage of the island's visibly poor defenses, which were symbolized by fuel shortages that prompted leaders to stage a military parade using bicycles instead of jeeps, tanks, and other motorized vehicles.

In 1991, a militant exile group fired mortars at a Cuban resort in Varadero. No one was killed, but that was not the case when exiles carried out a more widespread bombing campaign in 1997. Luis Posada Carriles took responsibility for organizing that summer's wave of blasts that killed one and injured eleven. On July 4, a bomb exploded in the lobby of the Cohiba Hotel. On July 12, bombs exploded in the Capri and Nacional Hotels. On September 5, a blast at the Copacabana Hotel killed Fabio Di Celmo, an Italian tourist. Two other bombs exploded the same day at the Chateau and Triton Hotels, as well as in the Bodeguita del Medio.⁵⁵⁸ In 1998, Posada claimed that he received active support from major exile groups such as the powerful Cuban American National Foundation. In defense of these terrorist attacks, he claimed: "We didn't want to hurt anybody. We just wanted to make a big scandal so that the tourists don't come

⁵⁵⁸ Enrique Bernales Ballesteros, "Report on the question of the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights" (United National Economic and Social Council, 1999), 9-10. Larry Rohter, "Cuba Sees American Link to Hotel Bombs," *New York Times*, July 14, 1997. "Man Killed in Havana as Blasts Hit 3 Hotels," *New York Times*, September 5, 1997. Steven Erlanger, "Cubans Blame Exile in U.S. for 4 Bombings in a Single Day," *New York Times*, September 6, 1997.

anymore.”⁵⁵⁹ Tourism had clearly affected the mood of the exile community. The attacks did not impact arrivals in any noticeable way, but they did illustrate the need for extreme vigilance within the island’s security apparatus.⁵⁶⁰

The Expanding Economy of Tourism

Terrorist attacks had no noticeable impact on Cuba’s ability to steadily increase tourism profits. In 1997, less than a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union, tourism became Cuba’s most profitable industry, displacing sugar as the largest generator of income. By the turn of the century, Cuba’s gross income from tourism was US\$ 1.95 billion, the industry was responsible for 7% of Cuba’s GDP and it officially employed over 100,000 Cubans.⁵⁶¹ (Many more worked in the informal sector.) By this time, tourism was contributing 43% of Cuba’s balance of payments, up from 4% in 1990.⁵⁶² Tourism not only enabled the Revolutionary government to survive the economic strife of

⁵⁵⁹ Luis Posada Carriles, quoted in Ann Louise Bardach and Larry Rohter, “A Bomber’s Tale: Taking Aim at Castro; Key Cuba Foe Claims Exiles’ Backing,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1998.

⁵⁶⁰ The expansion of tourism in Cuba during the 1990s created other unique security challenges for the Revolutionary government. The economic crisis facing Cubans, as well as their inability to travel freely abroad, highlighted other safety concerns within the island’s expanding world of tourism. The growing air links between the island and other nations provided Cubans with an illegal – and potentially dangerous – way to leave the island. In late 1999, a British Airways (BA) jet arrived at Gatwick Airport with the frozen body of a Cuban in its undercarriage. A year later, two more Cubans died after stowing away on another BA flight flying from Havana to Gatwick, one while falling from the aircraft’s undercarriage as it landed. See Rodney Wallis, *How Safe Are Our Skies?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 89. While stowaways have arrived at Gatwick from elsewhere in the world, for example, Baku, Nairobi, and Dar-es-Salaam (see Wallis, 88-89), the increasing levels of British tourists visiting Cuba calls for particular concern. Since 2000, arrivals from Britain have increased by a significant degree.

⁵⁶¹ Some Cuban sources estimate that tourism has created upwards of 200,000 or even 300,000 jobs during the 1990s. Also, Colantonio and Potter’s conclusion that profits from tourism represent 7% of GDP may be too low. They reach this by using two currencies, U.S. dollars and Cuban pesos. See Colantonio and Potter, 38-39.

⁵⁶² Colantonio and Potter, 37.

the Special Period, it offered individual Cubans their own economic salvation, leaving those with access to the tourist economy in a considerably advantageous position versus those without access. Yet when tourists began to flood the island in the 1990s, leaders found that they had to rewrite the rules that governed what Cubans could and could not do within the realm of tourism. Their decisions prevented many Cubans from reaping the benefits of the island's lucrative travel industry.

The state created a complicated web of restrictions to limit Cubans' actions within the tourist realm. Thousands of others pursued work in the informal economy, often at great risk to themselves and their families. Many working in the tourist sector – whether legally or illegally – found ways to challenge the state's strict control of the island's tourism apparatus. Cuban entrepreneurs built strong – and often quite broad – networks to help ensure their survival. Cubans working in tourism also exploited the government's inability to regulate one of the most informal aspects of the state-controlled tourist economy – the practice of tipping.

Expanding Opportunities for Employment

Even before Cubans were faced with the unprecedented socio-economic crisis of the Special Period, tourism was beginning to offer economic rewards that were far greater than those of other industries. The previous chapter already examined some of the benefits bestowed upon Cubans who worked within the state-controlled tourist sector during the 1970s. During the 1980s, employees still had the opportunity to earn tips, receive small gifts, and chat with foreign visitors, despite the fact that these actions were officially discouraged.

The expansion of employment opportunity within the tourist sector – like practically everything else in Cuba – was initially wholly controlled by the state. In the early 1980s, the industry was unquestionably state-owned, and in truth, the state did not need an abundance of workers to support the several hundred thousand foreigners who were at this time visiting Cuba each year. Yet even by this point in time, Revolutionary leaders were beginning to experiment with a limited number of private enterprises, many of which were directly linked to the island’s world of tourism. Aimed largely at serving domestic needs, Havana’s Cathedral Square market became an instant draw for not only Cubans starved of consumer goods, but for international tourists as well. Cubans could obtain licenses to sell their wares for \$31 a month. Of course, finding materials to work with was not an easy endeavor. Leather sandals with soles cut from car tires cost \$56. Still, even in 1981, a man who trained for six years to be a physicist claimed that he could never make as much money as a scientist as he could selling sandals in the Cathedral Square market. According to one Havana artist though, it was almost impossible to obtain new permits. It is little wonder that this was the case. One vendor claimed to make \$750 each Saturday, which was over three times the average monthly salary in Cuba.⁵⁶³ Thus, even though these opportunities were apparently quite limited, the formal micro-economic mechanisms through which thousands of Cubans would survive during and after the Special Period were established nearly a decade earlier.

While on a less grand scale, by the 1990s, the industry did offer Cuban citizens a wide range of tourism-related ventures to explore. The state was in constant need of hotel workers, waiters, taxi drivers, tour guides, and others as foreign arrivals

⁵⁶³ “Capitalism Alive and Well at a Havana Market,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1981.

skyrocketed throughout the decade. These and other tourism-related jobs provided Cubans with a range of benefits, most significantly, the opportunity to earn cash tips in foreign currency. During the Special Period, when the Cuban peso became virtually worthless, the government was forced to redefine the links between tipping and Cuban identity. Leaders could not ignore the fact that tips represented a lifeline for thousands of Cubans, citizens that the government was no longer able to support. The shift back to this view is dealt with at length below.

As the industry became increasingly crucial to the national economy – and hence, the Revolutionary government’s survival – officials had to ensure the steady and seamless flow of tourists on and off the island. Certain enterprises, for example Cubana, were critical to this endeavor.⁵⁶⁴ To ensure that pilots and other key workers did not abandon their jobs for higher paying careers in either the private or informal sectors of the industry, the state was forced to pay these employees far more than Cubans working in most other industries. By the early twenty-first century, these state employees earned far more each month than many of their countrymen and women could hope to earn working other state jobs over the course of their entire careers. Consider the Cubana salaries illustrated below (see Table 4.2). These salaries, while less than those of airline employees working elsewhere in the world, were far greater than those of Cuba’s state-employed doctors and teachers. Some of these professionals made as little as 480 Cuban pesos per month, the equivalent of roughly ten U.S. dollars.

⁵⁶⁴ As opposed to other critical tourism-related enterprises in Cuba, the Revolutionary government never allowed foreign interests to gain control of Cubana. It is one of only two wholly state-owned airliners in the Americas. Air Jamaica is the other. Hanlon, 17.

Table 4.2 – Yearly Salaries of Cubana Employees

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Yearly Salary (USD)</u>
Pilots and Co-Pilots	9059
Cabin Attendants	3885
Maintenance Personnel	4066
Ticketing, Sales, and Promotional Staff	1501

Source: Pat Hanlon, *Global Airlines: Competition in a transnational industry*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 39-40.

Note: Despite earning far more than other Cubans, Cubana employees still earn far less than their counterparts in the Caribbean, Latin American, North America, Europe, and Asia. In fact, out of seventy airlines operating in these regions, only three employ pilots and co-pilots who earn less than double than those in Cuba. Most, even in the Caribbean and Latin America make five to fifteen times as much as those in Cuba.

While other jobs within state-controlled sectors of the tourist economy were not nearly as lucrative as those offered by Cubana, the dual economy that emerged in Cuba during the Special Period made any tourism-related job extremely valuable. The Cuban peso lost much of its value in the early 1990s. The exchange rate climbed from ten pesos per dollar to 100 pesos per dollar by 1993, dropping to a still crippling twenty-eight by 1997. Amidst this financial crisis, in 1993 the government legalized U.S. dollars in recognition of their widespread use within the Cuban black market. Many basic necessities were only available in dollars despite the fact that the Cuban state paid the overwhelming majority of citizens in Cuban pesos. While the peso lost value, salaries remained static. Cuba's minimum wage has since been slightly raised, but in 1997, salaries at hotels ranged from 100 to 530 pesos per month.⁵⁶⁵ Even though 'regular' tourism workers such as waiters, drivers, bartenders, and tour guides did not receive U.S. dollars like Cubana employees, these and other tourism sector jobs were highly coveted. With massive inflows of foreigners, the island was adrift in dollars. Despite low salaries,

⁵⁶⁵ Leonard, 47. Miller and Henthorne, 134.

many workers gained opportunities to earn tips and other small “bonuses” to supplement their official pay, several of which are examined throughout the following sections. When the Cuban government made U.S. dollars illegal in 2004, Convertible pesos emerged as the new dominant currency within Cuba’s tourist world.⁵⁶⁶ (Euros could also be used in resorts areas such as Varadero and Cayo Coco.) These were valued similarly to U.S. dollars; the exchange rate between the two Cuban currencies still hovered around twenty-four Cuban pesos to one Convertible peso in 2007.

It is important to note that several factors limited who was able to gain access to the economic benefits found within the formal sector of tourism. Two of the most important of these factors were ideology and race. During the 1960s and 1970s, Revolutionary planners had done their best to strategically place supporters of the government in tourist jobs where employees had frequent contact with foreigners. Unsurprisingly, this practice continued into the 1980s. As arrivals skyrocketed though, the government could not possibly hope to fill every job with someone who visibly supported the regime. Planners still guarded access to the industry, and keeping one’s political views to one’s self was often a prerequisite of employment in hotels, restaurants, and other establishments frequented by tourists. In light of the island’s crumbling economy, the financial benefits accrued from a job in tourism made it likely that employees would follow the rules prescribed by the government.

⁵⁶⁶ Not only were U.S. dollars made illegal, a ten percent penalty was applied when exchanging dollars for convertible pesos. Essentially, one hundred dollars was only worth ninety dollars of convertible pesos. On the Cuban government’s official tourism website, planners claimed that this was done “to protect Cuba’s economic interests.” See the Cuban Portal of Tourism, “We accept only Convertible Pesos,” n.d., <Cubatravel.cu/client/cuc/index.php> (October 27, 2006). Another explanation is that the government was looking for another way to punish people who receive dollar remittances from family and friends in the U.S.

While Cubans could keep their political views to themselves, the same could certainly not be said for their racial backgrounds. Castro called for an end to racial discrimination upon taking power in 1959; he encouraged the formation of a “new *patria*,”⁵⁶⁷ one that was free of such exclusion. Despite these hopes, Alejandro de la Fuente notes that, “black members of the Rebel Army were being discriminated against and denied accommodation and service in the same hotels that housed their white comrades.”⁵⁶⁸ Thus, as the new government began to implement its programs of social reform, planners faced entrenched racism, not least from elements of the tourism industry.

The extent to which Cuba was desegregated during the Revolutionary era is debatable. Afrocubans did encounter expanded opportunities during the 1960s, 1970s, and even 1980s. Yet in most cases they were unable to gain access to the highest echelons of civil, military, or communist party leadership. Since Western tourists (who are generally white) have begun to return to Cuba en masse, Afrocubans have found increasing difficulty gaining employment within the formal sector of the tourist economy. Upon taking over management of the Hotel Habana Libre in the early 1990s, the Spanish firm Guitart Hotels quickly fired many of the hotels darkest-skinned employees.⁵⁶⁹ De la Fuente notes that as the state lost its control of both the economy and its ability to control “people’s heads,” Cuban officials began “reproducing these practices, at least in the most desirable sectors of the [tourist] economy.”⁵⁷⁰ In her examination of Cuban tourism, Professor of Women’s Studies Amalia Cabezas notes that in terms of the island’s hotels,

⁵⁶⁷ De la Fuente, 261.

⁵⁶⁸ De la Fuente, 261.

⁵⁶⁹ Miller and Henthorne, 135.

⁵⁷⁰ De la Fuente, 326.

“While most of the front desk workers are lighter-skinned Cubans, entertainment workers and back-kitchen help are mainly black.”⁵⁷¹ In terms of Afro-Cuban exclusion, the post-Soviet era quickly came to resemble the pre-Revolutionary era. De la Fuente notes that this discrimination had the effect of driving people who were visibly Afro-Cuban into the illegal tourist economy at far higher rates than whites.⁵⁷²

Geographer Sarah Blue, however, has argued that the gap between white and black participation in the informal economy is narrower than de la Fuente and others have suggested. In fact, based on her extensive fieldwork carried out in Havana in 2000, Blue argues that participation in Cuba’s informal economy is nearly equal for whites and blacks, 38% and 40% respectively. She did find that black Cubans entered the illegal tourist economy at higher rates than whites. Yet only 7% of blacks working in the informal sector engaged in such activities, as opposed to 2% of whites.⁵⁷³ Nevertheless, the perception of a large Afro-Cuban presence in Cuba’s informal tourist economy has had important consequences for this group’s identity in Cuba. Blue found that Cubans in general believed that blacks were more likely to work in the informal economy. 36% thought it was more likely for a black Cuban to have such a job as opposed 8% believing that it was more likely for a white Cuban to work an informal sector job (56.5% thought that there was no difference).⁵⁷⁴ This has led to racial discrimination at other points within Cuba’s tourist world, several of which are discussed later in this chapter.

⁵⁷¹ Amalia Cabezas, “Between Love and Money: Sex, Tourism, and Citizenship in Cuba and the Dominican Republic,” *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 29, no. 4 (2004): 998.

⁵⁷² De la Fuente, 326-327.

⁵⁷³ Sarah A. Blue, “The Erosion of Racial Equality in the Context of Cuba’s Dual Economy,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 49, no. 3 (2007): 50, 53.

⁵⁷⁴ Blue, 50.

Opportunities for legal self-employment also grew tremendously as foreigners flooded the island in the early 1990s. The state legalized self-employment in a wide range of trades and services in 1993, many of which were directly linked to tourism. While jobs from the state-controlled tourist sector were some of the most lucrative in Cuba, the foreign currency that could be earned directly from tourists far outstripped the salary that could be earned from almost any state job. Even minimal profits from one's own private enterprise could exceed the small salaries paid by the Cuban state. As a result, thousands of Cubans pursued legal employment within the private sector, hoping to find a new career, or at the very least something to subsidize their meager salaries. Cubans could soon be found driving taxis, selling artwork, opening restaurants, renting rooms, and playing music almost everywhere that tourists in Cuba went. By the twenty-first century, it seemed as if every family in Cuba had at least one person working in this sector of the island's tourist world.

Two forms of private employment in Cuba that have become directly linked to the tourism industry are *paladares* (small restaurants often limited to a dozen seats) and *casas particulares* (homes with rooms for visitors to rent). Both emerged in the mid-1990s as legitimate forms of employment. Each type of establishment had been well established throughout the island before its respective legalization in 1995 and 1997. Ted Henken provides a detailed examination of both of these institutions in his 2002 dissertation, "Condemned to Informality: Cuba's Experiments with Self-Employment during the Special Period." He illustrates that the proprietors of each type of enterprise have faced extreme scrutiny from Revolutionary leaders. During the 1990s, Fidel Castro made numerous references to the possible threat posed by a class of self-employed small

businessmen and women. Others echoed his concerns, including Raúl Valdés Vivo, a Communist Central Committee member in charge of the Party's ideological school, and Ricardo Alarcón, the President of Cuba's National Assembly since 1993. Summing up their views, Henken writes: "The Cuban state sees itself as an enormous, if generous landlord who has permitted his unappreciative tenants to go into business in what, after all, is not really their property, but the patrimony of the Revolution."⁵⁷⁵

My own research has led me to agree with many of Henken's central arguments. The month I spent in the *casa* of José Ricardo García was particularly enlightening. During that time, I talked at length with José, his friend, roommate, and business partner Salvador, as well as their part-time employee Ivan. The first obstacle facing José and Salvador is the onerous tax schedule imposed by the state. Whereas entrepreneurs in other countries pay taxes on their income, Cubans working in the private sector must pay a number of taxes regardless if they are making profits or not. All *casa* owners must pay a monthly tax in order to operate legally. Non-payment for even one month can lead to heavy penalties or the revocation of one's license. In Havana, the price of a monthly license is based on one's location within the city. Licenses to rent rooms are most expensive in the areas most popular with tourists; in Habana Vieja and Vedado they range from 220 to 300 convertible pesos per month. In the less popular area of Centro Habana, which is where José lives, a monthly license cost 140 convertible pesos per month in 2007. This permitted him to rent one bedroom to foreigners, to serve meals to his guests, as well as to offer them use of the living room and balcony. José could have simply paid 100 pesos per month to rent a room, but he felt that with such stiff

⁵⁷⁵ Ted Henken, "Condemned to Informality: Cuba's Experiments with Self-Employment during the Special Period" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 2002), 262-263.

competition among Cuban *casa* owners, the ability to serve his patrons meals (respectively, three, five, and eight pesos for breakfast, lunch, and dinner) was worth an extra thirty pesos per month. In his opinion, offering them others places to relax besides their bedroom was also worth another ten.⁵⁷⁶

Competition has made finding clients extremely difficult for some proprietors. Thus, maintaining steady occupancy can be difficult at times. Even though there is less distance between Cuba's 'high' and 'low' tourist seasons than there was in the pre-Revolutionary era, there is still a summer lull in arrivals. With scores of empty *casas*, foreigners can often negotiate for prices that are less than the average of roughly twenty-five to thirty-five convertible pesos per night. These factors compound José's problem of living just outside Havana's main centers of tourist activity. He sometimes goes several weeks without a guest, and often has to settle for twenty to twenty-five pesos per night. (He always begins by asking for thirty or thirty-five.) No matter what though, he needs to earn 1,680 pesos per year in order to meet his licensing obligation.

Anything that José earns above this 1,680 is also subject to heavy taxation by the state. He hopes to gross 4,000 convertibles each year, a lofty goal considering it would require him to host a guest for 150 to 160 nights during the year. Table 4.3 illustrates the additional expenses that José would face upon reaching this goal. There are, of course, additional costs. The soap, detergent, and other supplies provided by the state are wholly inadequate to meet José's needs; they are poor quality and in short supply. He must buy

⁵⁷⁶ In Cienfuegos, the Cuban government experimented with basing the cost of a license on the square footage of rooms into which one wanted to permit his or her guests (i.e. bedrooms, living rooms, balconies, kitchens, etc.). This program was discontinued and never extended to other areas, but this strategy reveals the state's intense commitment to regulating opportunities for entrepreneurs in Cuba.

his own. Even though he charges guests for their meals, purchasing food also negatively impacts his bottom line. It is also noteworthy that if José were to gross more than 4,000 convertible pesos per year, the final 20% tax levied on him would be even higher. This rate is based on what a person is left with after paying for licenses, soap fees, and the additional 10% flat tax that all *casa* owners must pay. It can range from 10% to 50%. More than anything, this final tax is designed to limit the overall profitability of a *casa particular* and prevent some proprietors from earning far more than their countrymen and women.

Table 4.3. Tax Schedule for Centro Habana *Casa Particular*

	Gross Income	4,000
-	Licensing	1,680
		2,320
-	10% for state provided soap, detergent, etc.	232
		2,088
-	10% Tax	208.80
		1,879.20
-	20% Tax	375.84
	Net Income (less other expenses)	1,503.36

Source: Interview with José Ricardo García, June 1997.

After lengthy discussions with José and others, it became clear that the reality of opportunity for Cubans in the formal private sector is tempered by a number of factors beyond the taxes levied by the Cuban state, including geographic location, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to take risks. Access to domestic and national networks is also significant, but these factors are dealt with separately in the next section.

In Cuba, one's geographic location is fixed. One cannot simply move to Havana from the countryside in hopes of opening a *casa particular*. Moreover, there is an acute housing shortage – particularly in Havana – which makes it difficult for individuals to

move freely from one part of a city to another.⁵⁷⁷ For decades, newly married couples have had the choice of living in the house of either the husband's or the wife's parents. Along these lines, generations have lived in the same home for decades. Thus, one's family history determines his or her location, and by extension, the chances one has for running a successful *casa* or *paladar* in Havana or elsewhere. In some cases, spacious and beautiful homes have proven to be of little utility in terms of their touristic value because they are far from the sights and other attractions that visitors want to see. A slightly more run-down residence can be comparatively quite valuable if it is located in the center of an area such as Habana Vieja or Trinidad.⁵⁷⁸ The residents of Varadero, for example, reside in an excellent geographic location for renting rooms in Cuba. Yet the state has forbidden Cubans from renting rooms in this extremely popular destination.

Geography exerts less influence over other sectors of the tourist economy though. For example, an artist living in an out-of-the-way or unsafe area of Havana can still obtain a license to sell small works of art on the streets of the capital. Discussions with several sketch artists in Habana Vieja's Plaza de la Catedral indicate that geography was not as important for these individuals as it was for people who hoped to rent rooms to tourists. The artists (all men) hailed from various parts of the city. Each paid a weekly licensing fee of five convertible pesos to operate legally. They were then free to work in

⁵⁷⁷ In recent years, greater numbers of Cubans have begun to illegally rent their apartments to other Cubans.

⁵⁷⁸ For example, a large home on the outskirts of the capital may offer sufficient space and relief from the congestion of downtown areas, but it will not attract tourists in the same way that a far smaller and/or crowded apartment or home in the center of Habana Vieja or very close to the Universidad de la Habana will do so.

the Plaza or close to other tourist sights, such as along the Malecón or in Plaza Vieja.⁵⁷⁹ Oscar, for example, was from Marianao, a western district of the capital far from the island's centers of tourist activity. He traveled to Habana Vieja five or six days a week for one simple reason – that's where there are the most tourists. Unlike Oscar and the others, a person seeking to open a *casa* or *paladar* was restricted by his or her location within the city. Their products are highly immobile.

For many people who are self-employed within Cuba's tourist sector, cost-effectiveness and risk taking are directly linked. Sometimes these two factors for success have intersected within the parameters of Cuban law. *Casa* owners face difficult decisions when negotiating with foreigners over the price of rooms, particularly people who only have one room to rent. One must often accept a lower than hoped daily price in order to guarantee a long-term guest as opposed to holding out for multiple – and more profitable – short-term guests. Cubans must be sure to earn enough during the 'high' season in order to maintain their payment of monthly licensing fees during the 'low' season.

Other times, cost-effectiveness and risk taking intersect outside the purview of the law. Individuals who have been willing to take the greatest illegal risks have been some of the most cost-effective. Monthly licensing fees can range from roughly 20% to 25% of one's gross at times, to 100% or even more during the summer lull. Thus, individuals who do not pay licensing fees have significantly lower operating costs. Many Cubans

⁵⁷⁹ Oscar's story is particularly illuminating. I met him in the Plaza de la Catedral. He was one of about five young men busily sketching scenes of the centuries old Catedral de San Cristóbal and other historic buildings that surrounded the Plaza. He, several of the other artists, and I spoke for roughly an hour. They were gracious with their answers about the restrictions placed upon them by the Cuban state. Interview with Oscar Ramos, January 2007.

who risk breaking Cuban law do not run entirely illegal operations though. Since Cubans must purchase licenses based on the number of beds they intend to offer to tourists, many have risked purchasing a license for only one bed even though they also rent out a second (or even third) bed. Others serve food without a license for that. A limited number of *casa* owners can offer guests use of the Internet, which is forbidden. Some even illicitly sell souvenirs.

As the Revolutionary government seemingly did its best to deter Cubans from pursuing self-employment within the tourist sector, the economic opportunities presented by tourism intersected with the dire economic need of the Special Period, leading thousands to eschew considerations about cost-effectiveness and risk for survival. They flouted the law in order to rent rooms, serve food, and provide a wide variety of other services to tourists. As arrivals continued to grow in the twenty-first century, these practices only became more widespread. Some Cubans gave illicit tours of the island. Many decided to drive illegal taxis. Some sold counterfeit low-quality cigars, others their bodies. The state rarely tolerated such informal employment. Instead, leaders have exhibited increasing intolerance towards such practices. Penalties range from steep fines to the loss of one's home for illegally renting rooms to foreigners.

The state did not only scrutinize those operating in the informal economy. Many state employees were charged with monitoring those Cubans who operated legally in the private sector. The enormous and poorly paid bureaucracy of '*los inspectores*' (the inspectors) further revealed the high degree of tension that had arisen amidst the explosion of foreign tourism in Cuba. Well aware of the power they hold over even those Cubans operating in accordance with Revolutionary directives, many of these *inspectores*

have helped to institutionalize the notion that legitimate private entrepreneurs, particularly *casa* owners, must pay for the right to not be reported for breaking code – even if one is operating completely within the extensive regulatory measures imposed by the state. Three or more *inspectores* per month can visit a *casa*, and each one of them can expect up to twenty convertible pesos per visit.

Cubans have reacted differently to this situation, as evidenced by the various terms they use to describe visits from the state’s corps of *inspectores*. Some *casa* owners referred to these unauthorized fees as “bribes,” but a greater number referred to such fees as a “tax.” To some degree, this reflected their acceptance of being extorted by those with power over them. Cubans have thus come to expect corruption within the world of tourism.

A very limited number of Cubans have been able to navigate the small space between the worlds of legal and illegal employment in the private sector of Cuba’s tourist realm. Some musicians and artists have been able to avoid both the onerous restrictions of a daily, weekly, or monthly license and the threat of extortion from Cuba’s security and regulatory apparatuses. Entrepreneurs willing to venture into this space faced several challenges. They must remain mobile, and they must keep their performances short. Drawing a crowd can draw the ire of Cuban authorities.

If one sits down along the Malecón after dusk for more than a few minutes, he or she will be serenaded by one if not several of the many individuals who ply the seawall with their aging instruments. These musicians, who usually work in pairs and are almost always men, are not required to obtain licenses to offer their product to Cubans or foreigners. While they might only earn five to ten Cuban pesos for playing for a group of

Cubans, they might earn one or two convertible pesos (twenty-five to fifty Cuban pesos) for playing for a tourist couple, possibly more. On clear nights during the high season for tourism, it's often hard to find a seat along the Malecón. It is no wonder that there are often scores of duets pacing the sidewalks, searching for a gig. After all, several untaxed convertible pesos can go a long way in Cuba.

Much like these musicians, there are some very small-scale artists who have also managed to escape the rigors of private sector licensing. These individuals concentrate in areas close to where tourists converge. They do not compete with formal sketch artists like Oscar and those who work in areas such as the Plaza de la Catedral. Instead, they carry a simple notebook of small white paper, or in some cases, a handful of scraps. They move quickly through areas where tourists sit – at bars, restaurants, and sometimes along the Malecón. They sketch quick likenesses of people who are enjoying themselves, offering them quick snapshots of their holidays for usually no more than one or two convertible pesos. Since simple sketches of one tourist are not easily sold to another, these artists will often accept any change that the subjects of their works might offer. In some cases, they give tourists a sketch for free, which can prompt people to offer a small payment in return.

Despite these obstacles and limitations, the fact that so many Cubans see tourism as a panacea of sorts indicates the lack of opportunities on the island and the truly dysfunctional nature of the Cuban economy where almost any skilled worker can earn more working in many tourism-related jobs. Tourism not only sparked tension between those Cubans with access to the tourist economy and those without such access, the

industry has also fostered significant tension between Cubans working in the tourist sector and the Cuban state.

Tourism and the Social Economy: Networks

Private sector entrepreneurs working in the tourist economy have found ways to collectively challenge state-imposed restrictions by forming networks with other Cubans. The massive shortages of necessities and the inability of the government to provide even basic services during the Special Period forced many Cubans to rely on one another rather than their traditional benefactor – the state. These networks of family, friends, and associates took on new importance as the tourist economy rapidly expanded during the 1990s. Tourism-based networks in Cuba vary in both their size and scope. Some are comprised of several people in one city or town while others span the entire length of the island. In all cases, these networks were created to help counter the state's attempts to stifle the success of private entrepreneurs. Networks rarely made people rich, even by Cuban standards, but they did help people to survive. Networks were formed to counter the tension between touristic opportunity and the state's onerous restrictions and general lack of support for most of those working in tourism's private sector.

With no privately owned media in Cuba and access to the Internet severely restricted, there were (and continue to be) few opportunities to advertise one's product. Many people have turned to one another in order to help spread awareness about their product. This has particularly been the case for Cubans running *casas particulares*, many of whom are able to offer their guests rooms in other cities, usually with a family member or friend. José, for example, is able to arrange *casas* in cities such as Trinidad, Viñales,

and Cienfuegos. Isabel ‘Concha’ Pérez, who also runs a *casa* that I lived in for one month, can help arrange rooms in Viñales, Varadero, Santiago and elsewhere.

Concha is also part of a noteworthy network within her own city, Havana. Her *casa* is roughly one hundred meters from the University of Havana and thus an ideal location for students from abroad who are taking classes in Cuba. Many other people in her building run *casas* as well. In recognition of this large concentration of rooms, she and many of her neighboring proprietors began referring to theirs and the two surrounding buildings as the ‘Meliá Marzón.’ In their view, their street, Calle Marzón, had as many rooms for rent as a Sol Meliá hotel. (In 2007, it had at least forty different *casas*, many of which had two rooms for rent.) Concha played a particularly important role within this network. Lonely Planet featured her *casa* in their 2004 edition of their Cuban guidebook. Concha is part of the small minority in Cuba who has a computer in her home, and to her advantage, the guidebook’s author included her email address as well. She was thus able to quickly respond to the many inquiries that she received, and as a result, has often had a full *casa*. In turn, Concha and several others whose *casas* are often full often refer visitors to others renting rooms in the ‘Meliá Marzón,’ many of whom charge the same price. Concha though, often reserves the right to serve meals to the people she places in other *casas*.⁵⁸⁰

Casa owners helping other *casa* owners fill their rooms represents an example of horizontal networks. In other instances, *casa* owners provided the base of vertical networks as well. An example of this can be seen in José’s *casa*. Not only can he refer people to other *casas* throughout the island, he can arrange other services for tourists

⁵⁸⁰ Concha’s *casa* was not included in the subsequent edition of Lonely Planet’s *Cuba*. She has noticed a slight downturn in her business since that time.

during the course of their stay. In fact, José has arranged everything from taxi rides and meals to tours of other cities and language instructors. Concha arranges similar services; her daughter-in-law will even exchange foreign currencies for either Cuban or convertible pesos.⁵⁸¹

Other networks have developed as a response to the geographical limitations facing some Cuban entrepreneurs. Some artists, such as the aforementioned Oscar, specialized in small sketches that could be easily transported to and from Plaza de la Catedral or elsewhere. Others though, worked in larger mediums and had much more merchandise for sale. These individuals required galleries to sell their works. Without direct support from the state for one's work, the only way to have a gallery is in one's home. For those who do not live in tourist zones though, running a successful in-home gallery is extremely difficult. Licensing costs are high, and without steady foot traffic, profits can be low. In these instances, networks helped to bring the art to the tourists. While the financial benefits for the artist were slightly diluted, they were simultaneously extended to others. Orestes Jesús González Rodríguez is an artist who lives in Havana. He does not, however, live in a tourist zone. In order to bring his work to the tourists, he has established a business relationship with a woman living on Calle Obispo, perhaps the

⁵⁸¹ Broad networks sometimes offered other benefits. Concha received more than increased business from some members of her network. On two separate occasions, she referred me to *casas* in other cities. Before leaving Viñales, my host gave me a large bag of coffee beans for Concha. Before leaving Varadero, my host gave me a large block of several hundred individually wrapped butter packages and six convertible pesos for Concha. While these can easily be construed as simple gifts, the block of butter represents something that is of legitimate concern to the Cuban government – that is, people stealing supplies from hotels in order to support their own enterprises. Since my Varadero host did not host a high volume of tourists in her illegal *casa*, she felt the butter would be of more use to Concha.

street most crowded with tourists in all of Cuba. He paid for the license (1,000 convertible pesos per month), and she and her family ran his gallery.

Networks have taken shape at other points within the island's tourist-driven art world. A second network developed around the gallery of González Rodríguez, one that made his enterprise more cost-effective and employed several others. He uses recycled materials in many of his paintings. His gallery features a number of unframed non-canvas works, most of which are done on wood, paper, or cardboard. Many of them have been painted on the blank backsides of old signs or advertisements. He purchases the materials for these works from a range of people, some who he sees on a regular basis and others who he does not. While these materials are not free, they are almost always cheaper than those procured in Cuban stores. This arrangement reveals a further level of tension that has arisen between private sector entrepreneurs and the Cuban state. The complexity of the tourist economy has transferred people's reliance on their traditional benefactor, the Cuban state, to not only artists like González Rodríguez, but to *casa* owners like José, Concha, and others who employ several domestic workers to help with the cleaning and cooking as well.

For some self-employed Cubans from the tourist sector, international networks have proven to be just as crucial for success. While having family or friends abroad does not guarantee success,⁵⁸² any assistance that one receives can be extremely valuable. International networks can also provide valuable help with advertising one's product

⁵⁸² Salvador, the business partner of José, has three brothers and one sister abroad in the U.S. He does not expect anything from them, but concedes that José and he could certainly use help when business is slow. Like many Cubans, he says that the most difficult times are between May and October, with the worst months coming between August and October.

abroad. International connections can often supply items for *casas* and *paladares* quite easily. Family in particular can provide a lifeline to deal with the onerous licensing fees that face almost all self-employed Cubans.

Tourism and the Cultural Economy: Tipping

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Cuban government prohibited the practice of taking tips in order to make its citizens into better Revolutionaries. Generally speaking, this practice continued into the 1980s. As arrivals slowly but steadily increased throughout the decade, the state remained steadfast in its ideological ban on tipping. While policies shifted in the early 1990s, it was the economic crisis of the Special Period that prompted this change, not the decisions of Cuban leaders. In fact, they have at times attempted to restrain or even reverse this change. Thus, tipping is indeed a very useful window into some of tourism's impacts on contemporary Cuba.

An instructional manual for Cuban tour guides from the early 1980s was quite explicit regarding the state's policy on accepting tips. The manual spoke directly to Cubans workers, in effect, telling them how they should think. "In Cuba tips are not accepted. The employees...have as their objective to offer good attention to all customers, and it is not necessary to offer them tips to obtain good service."⁵⁸³ Several travel guides from the mid-1980s reinforced this state directive, suggesting to potential tourists that not only had the practice of tipping ceased, Cuban workers no longer wanted tips. A West German guidebook for Cuba from 1985 warned tourists to "be prepared for

⁵⁸³ Instituto Nacional de la Industria Turística (INIT), "*Manual del Guía de Turismo*" (La Habana, 1983), 51.

a polite, but definite, refusal.”⁵⁸⁴ Even in 1988, a guidebook informed readers that, “tipping is not expected.”⁵⁸⁵ The author continued by suggesting that moral rewards were sufficient for Cuban workers. Not a tip, “but a kind word or compliment to the server or chef, is appreciated.”⁵⁸⁶

Other guides – particularly those not published by the Cuban government – present a different picture of the state’s ability to sustain its tipping Revolution into the 1980s. A clear tension was emerging between the practices of foreign tourists and state prescriptions of ideal Revolutionary behavior. A 1980 guidebook informed potential visitors that, “although there is no tipping in this socialist/communist country...tips will not be refused if you leave the change from the bills on the tray or table.”⁵⁸⁷ A 1985 writer explained that, “many a hand will not refuse a tip.”⁵⁸⁸ In 1989, only one year after a state published guidebook claimed that Cuban workers do not expect to receive tips, a guidebook written without consultation from the Cuban state advised the opposite: “Tips are expected.”⁵⁸⁹ In terms of being a good citizen in the eyes of the Revolutionary government, tipping reemerged as a source of tension prior to the fall of the Soviet Union and the onset of the Special Period.

As the government tried to cope with the financial crisis of the early 1990s, it was impossible to hide the fact that the practice of tipping had clearly returned. According to

⁵⁸⁴ Heidi Rann and Peter Geide, *Hildebrand’s Travel Guide: Cuba* (Frankfurt, West Germany: K+G, Karto+Grafik, 1985), 173.

⁵⁸⁵ A. Gerald Gravette, *Cuba: Official Guide* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), 82.

⁵⁸⁶ Gravette, 82.

⁵⁸⁷ Zellers, 220.

⁵⁸⁸ Rann and Geide, fold-out map.

⁵⁸⁹ Jane McManus, *Getting to Know Cuba: A Travel Guide* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 16.

a guidebook written in 1995, workers in the tourist sector not only “expect[ed] tips,”⁵⁹⁰ but they expected them in dollars as well. This is unsurprising; at this point one Cuban peso was only worth about one U.S. penny. The authors continued by noting that others – the hotel chambermaid, in particular – could be awarded for their service “with a gift of some scarce essential such as shampoo, soap, or detergent.”⁵⁹¹ Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, this was the message regarding tipping that guidebooks offered readers. The 1997 guidebook *Fodor’s Cuba* suggested tipping 10% of restaurant bills, one dollar to chambermaids each night, and one dollar for each bag a bellhop carries.⁵⁹² The 2004 edition of Lonely Planet’s guidebook on Cuba extended the list of recipients to washroom and parking attendants. The author also suggested offering workers tips in order to persuade them to bend minor rules.⁵⁹³

The government’s reticence to continue battling against the practice of tipping should not be viewed as a strictly ideological choice though. Allowing workers to collect tips in dollars also increases the stake that these individuals have in the stability of Cuba’s tourism market. Political turmoil is notoriously bad for tourism. Batista learned this as his government fell apart in 1958. Workers who receive cash tips – be it dollars, euros, or convertible pesos – thus have a stake in Cuba’s political stability. For the government then, deregulation within the realm of tipping serves two purposes. Not only does it provide much needed (and deserved) compensation for workers who receive

⁵⁹⁰ Tony Perrottet and Joann Biondi, eds., *Insight Guides: Cuba*, 1st ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 266.

⁵⁹¹ Perrottet and Biondi, 266.

⁵⁹² Rob Andrews et al., *Fodor’s Cuba* (New York: Random House, 1997), xxv.

⁵⁹³ Brendan Sainsbury, *Cuba*, 4th ed. (Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2004), 460.

dismal wages, but it provides the government with tacit accomplices in maintaining political stability.

Tourism has provided a wide range of workers from Cuba's tourist realm with the opportunity to collect tips. Many employees, including tour guides, drivers, dance teachers, and restroom attendants, all expect tips from tourists. The final group can be the most firm in their position, withholding valuable bathroom tissue if not properly compensated. Like many of the island's hotel and restaurant workers, the large majority of these individuals were earning Cuba's minimum wage in the early twenty-first century, and tips have become a crucial part of their incomes.

Nevertheless, Revolutionary policies – often implemented by foreign managers – frequently serve to dilute workers' tips. Today, in almost all cases, Cuban wait staffs share a portion of their tips with at least one other person working in the restaurant – usually a bartender or host. Within this context, the Hotel Inglaterra's internal policy on tipping is particularly revealing. The centrally located hotel features a street-side seating area where patrons can relax with a mojito, a Cuban sandwich, or just about anything else. An ideal location for catching a glimpse of Cuban life, it is regularly filled to capacity. During most shifts – which are about twelve hours long – two to four people work the roughly twenty-four tables that can seat several people each. During a particularly good shift, a server might earn up to eighty convertible pesos – during a slow shift, perhaps only ten or less. One server claimed the average was roughly twenty to thirty convertible pesos. No matter what the amount though, servers are required to give fifty percent of their tips to the rest of the hotel's staff. Doormen, electricians, bellhops, laundresses, plumbers, and even people who work in the hotel's Internet café receive a

portion of the tips given to the Inglaterra's waiters and waitresses. In effect, the entire staff has acquired a stake in the hotel's continued success. I observed similar tipping systems at the Hotel Ambos Mundos as well as the popular Havana restaurant Prado y Neptuno. Through the implementation of systems such as these, the government has attempted to promote political stability by trying to increase worker solidarity.

Despite the government's paranoia that tourism is slowly creating a new economic class – in fact, it is – it is unlikely that this group will hasten the end of the Revolution. In truth, individuals working in tourism should be considered the least likely to disrupt the island's stability. Discontent over state policies aside, the tips earned by these workers leave them far better off than their countrymen and women who do not. Their limited prosperity requires tourists. Tourists require political stability.

The economic turmoil of the 1990s made the reinstatement of tipping a pragmatic – if not obvious – choice for the government. Tips in foreign currency sustained Cuban families at a time when the state found itself unable to do so. As support waned, the creation of a new privileged class served Castro in an additional way. Anti-Castro tourism workers who earned tips did not suddenly become Revolutionary zealots, but they did become stakeholders in the continued stability of the Cuban government at a time when it was appearing increasingly unstable. Tips came with tourists; tourists came with stability. This quickly gave way to a situation that closely mirrored that of pre-Revolutionary and early-Revolutionary Cuba. Tipping became the norm, and some restaurants began to include gratuity in the bill.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹⁴ In recent years, the Cuban government has begun to disregard some of these potential stakeholders. The recent growth of “Ultra All-Inclusive” resorts where tipping is not

Imagining Cuba: Freedom, Maps, Society, and Sex

In an effort to limit contact between Cubans and foreigners, as well as to condition how outsiders viewed Cuba, officials continued their efforts to tightly control the movements of tourists during the 1980s. Throughout the decade though, several factors diminished the state's ability to exert such tight control over whom tourists interacted with and what they saw while in Cuba. The number of foreigners visiting the island steadily increased during the 1980s. It was also during this period that intermediary figures, for example guidebook writers, began to increase their influence over the minds of foreigners visiting Cuba. Revolutionary Cuba's inability to distribute the guidebooks it publishes on a global scale has allowed foreign publishers of Cuban guidebooks to put their mark on the tourist psyche, impacting the ways in which visitors and Cubans interacted and shaping the tourism/identity relationship in several ways. In some cases, these interests challenged the state's vision of the island, particularly since they have been far less concerned with presenting a very specific vision of the Cuban nation, its people, and the Revolution.

Space, Order, and Freedom

Despite continued proclamations of a "free Cuba" within the realm of tourism, Revolutionary planners maintained their efforts to exert strict control over how Cuba's foreign visitors experienced the island. Evidence of this can be found within some of the state's most basic planning strategies of the early 1980s. Planners' approach to the geography of tourism is particularly illuminating. Cuba is more than a single island. The country is actually made up of over four thousand smaller islands and coral reefs. The

allowed provided the state with an opportunity to regulate the tips allotted to workers – awarding any amount that it sees fit, including nothing.

insular nature of these is ideally suited to promote on some an effective separation between Cubans and foreigners.

Amidst leaders' desire to significantly boost arrivals in the 1980s, the government established its first joint venture on Cayo Largo, one of the country's least accessible islands. Instead of harnessing foreign expertise to further develop an already popular area such as Varadero, the government chose a development site far from Cuba's centers of activity – and similarly far from the island's citizens. The island lies 80 kilometers off Cuba's southeastern coast, accessible to tourists only by plane. Figure 4.2 illustrates the island's distance from mainland Cuba; figure 4.3 offers a close-up.



Figures 4.2-4.3. Cuba's Cayo Largo. The narrow strip of land appears in the lower right of the first map. It lies east of the larger Isla de la Juventud and due south of Matanzas off the mainland's southern coast. (Google Maps, July 2009.)

In 1981, Cayo Largo was home to one 59-room hotel, the Hotel Isla del Sur. By 2005, there were roughly 1,100 rooms divided between the island's five major hotels, two of which had been built by Sol Meliá.⁵⁹⁵ More have opened in the last several years; still more are planned. Yet aside from tourists and the staff who run the island's hotels, Cayo Largo was (and remains today) uninhabited. Even the Cubans employed there live in their own community, El Pueblo. This effort to separate Cubans from Cayo Largo's visitors seems to have worked. While the state published guidebook *Cuba Sí* presents Cayo Largo as just another part of the 'Cuban experience,' foreign authors paint a different picture of the resort island. In 2004, the author of Moon Handbooks guide to Cuba wrote that, "everything here [in Cayo Largo] is a tourist contrivance and you are totally cut off from the mainland."⁵⁹⁶ A description from a 2006 Lonely Planet guidebook similarly noted: "What Cayo Largo...is not, is Cuba."⁵⁹⁷

The state exploited the island's physical geography in other ways to promote separation between Cubans and foreigners. Planners connected several of Cuba's more nearby offshore islands to the mainland via lengthy causeways. As shown below in Figure 4.4, the state linked Cayo Coco and neighboring Cayo Guillermo to the mainland via a 27-kilometer causeway in 1988. As of 2005, the islands respectively boasted 2,529 and 1,096 hotel rooms.⁵⁹⁸ And much like on Cayo Largo, construction has slowed little on Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo. More recently, in 1996, the government linked another set of islands off the central north coast, the Cayerías del Norte, to the mainland

⁵⁹⁵ Instituto Nacional de Turismo, "Instalaciones Hoteleras al Cierre de 2005" (La Habana, 2005), 7.

⁵⁹⁶ Christopher P. Baker, *Cuba* (Emeryville, CA: Avalon Travel Publishing, 2004), 571.

⁵⁹⁷ Sainsbury, 189.

⁵⁹⁸ "Instalaciones Hoteleras al Cierre de 2005," 5.

via a 48-kilometer causeway. Here too the government has shown its desire to concentrate foreign visitors far from Cubans. By 2005, four massive hotels on these islands combined to offer 1,358 rooms.⁵⁹⁹



Figure 4.4. Cayo Coco Causeway. (Google Maps, July 2009.)

Yet despite these efforts to steer tourists towards remote areas, planners could not ignore the fact that many visitors were interested in Cuba's densely populated capital. And as Table 4.4 illustrates, the volume of foreigners visiting the country steadily increased during the 1980s.

Revolutionary planners also had to face the fact that Western tourists had certain expectations regarding their freedom to tour while on holiday. In her 1981 guidebook, Margaret Zellers acknowledged that Cuba did not have the best reputation for allowing people to move freely throughout the island. At a time when most people came to Cuba

⁵⁹⁹ "Instalaciones Hoteleras al Cierre de 2005," 4. Sainsbury, 284.

to visit either Havana or Varadero, she informed her readers that it was possible to visit other parts of the island. Yet since there were no car rental agencies in Cuba in the early 1980s, and since buses and flights between Cuban cities were still extremely limited, arrangements for travel independent of one's pre-planned tour had to be made through Cubatur offices. This was often rather complicated. Changes had to be made in advance and travelers were required to have "a good reason"⁶⁰⁰ for wanting to visit anywhere they were not already scheduled to see in advance. According to Zellers' description, the Cuban government was attempting to maintain a delicate balance between its need to satisfy the curiosity of Western tourists in order to generate hard currency on one hand, and its desire to control the ways in which foreigners interacted with Cubans and experienced the island on the other.

Table 4.4. Total Volume of Foreign Arrivals to Cuba, 1980-1990

Year	International Arrivals	% Change on Previous Year
1980	129,591*	-
1981	126,965	-2%
1982	142,581	12%
1983	164,126	15%
1984	206,575	26%
1985	240,479	16%
1986	281,908	17%
1987	293,400	4%
1988	309,200	5%
1989	326,324	6%
1990	340,300	4%

* – Arrivals in 1980 were higher because of a temporary change in U.S. policy

Source: Instituto Nacional de Turismo, "Statistics: Foreign Tourist Arrivals in Cuba, 1977-1982" (La Habana, 1983), 31. Instituto Nacional de Turismo, "Foreign Tourism in Cuba: Statistics, 1982-1986" (La Habana, 1987), 29. Centro de Información y Documentación Turística, "Arribo de Visitantes a Cuba, 1989-1997" (La Habana, 1998).

⁶⁰⁰ Zellers, 221.

By the end of the decade, foreigners found slightly expanded opportunities to explore the island on their own. Taxis were still “few and far between in the cities,” but by 1988, visitors could rent cars from state-run companies such as Havanautos and Transtur.⁶⁰¹ By 2002 though, taxis were plentiful almost everywhere there were tourists. Moreover, a fleet of buses designed for tourists (with air conditioning) had begun to serve destinations throughout the island. Domestic air routes had also expanded considerably by the twenty-first century.

As foreigners began to access more of the island in the late-Soviet era, Cubans were slowly pushed aside within Cuba’s tourist world. They had been the primary occupants of Cuban hotels during the 1960s and 1970s. While Cubans still outnumbered foreigners within the island’s hotels during the 1980s, occupancy rates underwent a profound shift during the middle of the decade. In 1982, the country’s rate of occupancy for tourist accommodations was 71.3%. Cubans occupied 54.6% of the island’s rooms, foreigners 16.7%. By 1986, the overall occupancy rate had risen slightly to 74.7%, but the occupancy rates for Cubans and foreigners had drawn closer, to 46.3% and 28.4% respectively.⁶⁰² While Cuba’s hotels were still not full, foreigners were steadily occupying a larger share of the island’s tourist world.

By the early 1990s, in the midst of the Special Period, most Cubans had far more significant concerns than whether they could spend time in the island’s hotels. The economy declined sharply between 1991 and 1993, and the social consequences were dire for the overwhelming majority of citizens. Many basic supplies and services were unavailable for the first time in decades. Factories closed, and agricultural equipment lay

⁶⁰¹ Gravette, 89.

⁶⁰² “Foreign Tourism in Cuba: Statistics, 1982-1986,” 21-29.

idle. Transportation networks collapsed. Medicines vanished. In desperate need of foreign currency to replace lost Soviet subsidies, the government feverishly promoted tourism. Arrivals grew by an astounding rate between 1990 and 2000, soaring by an average of 17% a year from 340,300 to 1,774,000. While the island's hotels were overflowing with foreigners, the state raised hotel rates significantly. Yet the few Cubans who did have adequate funds to stay in hotels found that in most cases they were not permitted to do so. All hotel rooms in Cuba were classified as either "*Habitación Internacional*" (a room for foreigners) or "*Habitación Nacional*" (a room for Cubans). By 2005, only 3,746 of Cuba's 46,298 had been designated as *Habitaciones Nacionales*.⁶⁰³ Cubans had been almost completely shouldered out of Cuban hotels amidst the island's deep economic crisis in order to make room for foreign visitors. The government's actions aimed to create two separate worlds of leisure on the island, one for Cubans and one for foreigners. Ironically, because of the deep tourism-driven divide that developed within the Cuban economy during the 1990s, some of the people who were most likely to have the ability to pay for these hotels and other tourist services were people who actually worked in the tourism industry.

Other aspects of some Cuban hotels made it plainly clear that they were part of a very non-Cuban world. Promotional material found within some Havana hotels indicated that these establishments were not seeking Cubans as guests. Examples from the Hotel Habana Libre, a hotel that was renamed to symbolize the egalitarian nature of the Revolution, are particularly revealing. In January of 2007, a large display board in the hotel lobby offered patrons and other guests eight brochures on other Sol Meliá hotels.

⁶⁰³ "*Instalaciones Hoteleras al Cierre de 2005*," 7.

All of these pamphlets used English on their covers and were therefore clearly unintended for Cuban customers.

One of the eight, that advertising the Meliá Santiago de Cuba, featured only the name of the hotel on the front. As far as the next six are concerned though, Table 4.5 illustrates the intense focus on the use of English within the internal advertising for Cuban tourist destinations.

Table 4.5. Advertising from the Hotel Habana Libre

<u>Hotel Name</u>	<u>Additional Words on Cover</u>
Meliá Santiago de Cuba	(None)
Meliá Varadero	Beach & Incentive Resort
Paradisus Río de Oro	Ultra All Inclusive
Paradisus Varadero	Ultra All Inclusive
Soy Cayo Guillermo	All Inclusive
Sol Meliá Cuba	Free Weddings
Tryp Cayo Coco	All Inclusive
The Varadero Golf Resort	Sol Meliá Cuba

Source: Promotional material obtained from the Hotel Habana Libre in January 2007. Author's collection.

Each moved immediately to the use of English after the hotel's name. The eighth is actually an advertisement for three separate Meliá hotels, all of which are referred to as "golf resorts" by their owners as a result of their proximity to the eighteen-hole Varadero Golf Club. The use of English in these brochures further reflects the sharp divide that has arisen between foreigners and nationals in Cuba. Because of this and other forms of touristic segregation, foreigners infrequently meet Cubans in their hotels who are not there in a strictly professional capacity – not in the lobby, not in the pool, not even in Internet cafés. In fact, tourists are never farther from Cubans than when they are in hotels such as the Libre.

But as of 2005, planners were still reserving 3,746 hotel rooms on the island for Cubans. None were in the Hotel Nacional, none were located on Cayo Coco, and ironically, none were in the Libre. All of the rooms were located in hotels run by Islazul, a company that specialized in domestic tourism. A guide for potential investors in Cuba's tourist economy noted that Islazul focused on "the lower-end range."⁶⁰⁴ Many of its hotels actually catered to only Cubans, not accepting foreigners. The Casas del Este, on the beach in Havana's resort area of Playas del Este, for example, contained 1,014 rooms that were reserved strictly for Cubans; the nearby Celimar, sixty more. In several of the company's hotels though, foreigners and Cubans did cross paths. There were several of these in Playas del Este. The city of Havana had three. Even Varadero had ten Islazul hotels with a total of 285 rooms reserved for Cubans (and over 15,000 for foreigners).

Notwithstanding official state designations regarding the island's hotels, a closer look at the Islazul chain is enlightening, for example, Havana's Hotel Lido, an Islazul hotel where Cubans and foreigners both frequently stay. Like the Libre, the Lido offered its guests an abundance of promotional material detailing other hotels. Its catalogues, brochures, and pamphlets clearly indicated that the company was focused on a different clientele than places such as the Libre. Spanish, rather than English, was used as the primary language. Islazul did provide some English translations, but Spanish was never relegated to a secondary status.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁴ Miller and Henthorne, 120.

⁶⁰⁵ This is the case for all the Islazul promotional material. Three somewhat different examples are the "*Catalogo de Producto*," an extensive sixty-four page book featuring detailed descriptions and color photos for all of the company's hotels throughout the island; the "*Mapa Directorio*," a concise region-by-region listing of Islazul hotels as well

It is also interesting how Islazul described the Hotel Lido within its promotional material, and how these descriptions differed from those found in other forums – namely guidebooks. The following example comes from a catalogue for Islazul hotels produced by the Cuban state.

This hotel is just a few blocks from Old Havana and a few steps from the Gran Theater of Havana, the Museum of Fine Arts and other institutions of historic and cultural interest. Its welcoming atmosphere makes it ideal for individual tourism.⁶⁰⁶

Compare this with what the authors of several foreign-published guidebooks have written of the Hotel Lido over the last several years. The first edition of *The Rough Guide to Cuba* (2000) describes the Lido as being “on a run-down street in a lively local neighbourhood [sic], this hotel has dark rooms and rickety furniture, but is an inexpensive option so close to Havana Vieja.”⁶⁰⁷ Four years later, a Lonely Planet guidebook writer offered a similar description of the Lido.

One of the cheapest Havana hotels catering to foreigners, this isn't a bad choice deep inside Centro Habana (not for the timid). Expect cold water showers, frequent power outages and noise. Try for a room with balcony. Lock your valuables in a safety deposit box at reception for US\$2 a day (don't leave valuables unattended in your room). The cafeteria (7am to 9:30pm) serves a reasonable breakfast. The Lido's rooftop bar (4pm to 4am) rustles up a good meal of pork, veggies and chips for US\$6. There are many peso joints that will keep you well fed in the area.⁶⁰⁸

as a map illustrating where they can be found; and a pamphlet advertising Islazul's Hotel Caribbean in Centro Habana – one containing pictures of the hotel and the surrounding area. All were obtained in Cuba in January 2007.

⁶⁰⁶ Hoteles Islazul, “*Catalogo de Producto*,” (January 2007), 8.

⁶⁰⁷ Fiona McAuslan and Matthew Norman, *The Rough Guide to Cuba*, 1st ed. (London: Rough Guides Ltd, 2000), 75.

⁶⁰⁸ Gorry, 86-87.

Others continued to provide parallel descriptions of the Hotel Lido. A 2004 guidebook described the Lido as “a budget hotel...modest...[and] dreary.”⁶⁰⁹ By 2006, the author of Lonely Planet’s fourth edition of *Cuba* was still not impressed by the Lido.

A travelers’ institution, the lackluster Lido probably boasts a higher concentration of Lonely Planet readers than any other hotel in Cuba. The secret lies in a strangely unexotic mix of location, price, and friendly, no-nonsense service offered up by the staff at reception. If you don’t mind cold showers, lumpy beds, and a breakfast that will leave you searching hungrily for an early lunch, this could be a worthwhile Havana base.⁶¹⁰

The point of these examples is not to cast judgments on the Lido or its clientele.⁶¹¹ The point is to show the great distance between state and private conceptions of the Lido – one of the only Havana hotels where both foreigners and Cubans could stay. It is no surprise that state-sponsored descriptions of the Lido (or any hotel, for that matter) vary from those written by independent writers. In this instance, however, the extreme distance between the two reveals the inequality between Cuba’s two separate worlds of tourism. Before the government permitted Cubans to stay in any hotel (that they could afford) in 2008, the Lido offered the best accommodations they could hope to obtain. For non-Cubans’, they were seemingly some of the worst.

Geography and official designations for hotels were not sufficient to separate Cubans and tourists though. While many foreign visitors were content to remain

⁶⁰⁹ Baker, 246.

⁶¹⁰ Sainsbury, 119.

⁶¹¹ From my own experience, the Lido is an efficient hotel that serves its purposes well – purposes that actually go beyond providing accommodations and food services. As recently as 2003, there existed the possibility that Cuban customs would make a reservation at a Cuban hotel for visitors who did not arrive with one already in hand. Since people were forced to declare upon arrival where they intended to stay while in Cuba, claiming that one’s ultimate destination was the inexpensive Lido reduced the financial risk were customs agents to question an individual’s lack of reservation and proceed to make one for him or her.

separated from Cubans in places such as Cayo Coco, the curiosity of other outsiders – not to mention the entrepreneurial spirit of Cubans hoping to profit from the islands visitors – worked against the state’s efforts to divide the two groups. Particularly within Cuba’s cities, the two groups were quite difficult to separate. During the 1980s, and increasingly thereafter, the state employed a variety of other strategies to achieve its desired ends.

The organization of many Havana hotels reflects this high level of separation that Revolutionary leaders have sought to maintain between Cubans and foreigners. At first glance, by the twenty-first century, the hotels in Cuba’s capital remained surprisingly free of overtly visible barriers that were designed to separate the two groups. Beneath the surface though, a highly organized security apparatus functioned at multiple levels in order to keep Cubans out of these establishments. This was made far simpler by the fact that many hotels in Cuba were designed with a single door for public use. Aside from emergency exits, there is only one way in and only one way out. Several smartly dressed guards usually stroll close to the entrances of restricted spaces such as hotel, shops, and clubs. Many hotels have street side tables for patrons to enjoy food and drinks. Instead of using fences or iron bars to divide this space from the ‘real’ Cuba, planners frequently utilized potted trees, shrubs, and flowers to limit Cubans’ to access these spaces. Of course, there are exceptions. The expansive Hotel Nacional, for example, sits atop a steep bluff, surrounded on its remaining sides by chain-link barbed wire fence. A tall wrought-iron fence surrounds the pool at the Hotel Sevilla.

Some of the more visible divisions from Cuba’s tourist world have impacted the formation of individual identity in Cuba in unexpected ways. A quick glimpse at the Nacional or Sevilla suggests that these are restricted zones. Guards, a series of fences,

and even a rocky bluff separate these hotels from the public space of Cuba's streets. The sheer inaccessibility of these hotels has had an important impact on the tourism/identity relationship for young Cubans, particularly young males. Scaling the fence surrounding the Sevilla's or the rock wall behind the Nacional takes both athletic ability and cunning. For boys of a certain age in Havana – those old enough to recognize the challenge and young enough to avoid serious consequences if caught – the ability to quickly gain access to and then leave the grounds of either hotel has served as a test of manhood.

The state did not want to completely exclude all Cubans from all of the island's attractions though. Even though both Cuban and foreign promoters stressed the economic 'value' of holidays in Cuba, prices for some attractions rose as foreigners chose to visit the island in increasing numbers. In 1984, as the upward trend in arrivals continued, the state established subsidized rates for one of the island's most popular attractions. Cuba's Trade Union members received a discount at the Tropicana.⁶¹² Cubans' access to this tourist staple was based on their support of the Revolutionary system. The same went for other cabarets and clubs, all of which became increasingly inaccessible to Cubans throughout the 1990s.

By the twenty-first century though, this practice had been discontinued at Tropicana and many of the capital's most popular nightspots. (Tickets at the Tropicana start at sixty-five convertible pesos; the price includes one drink.) This led to a situation where many of the country's most impressive establishments were only serving foreigners. The pattern was repeated throughout Cuba. The rural town of Viñales has one nightclub with live music in its downtown area. Even though the cover charge is

⁶¹² Joseph Treaster, "The Pride of Castro's Cuba: A Pre-Castro Cabaret," *New York Times*, May 16, 1984.

only one to two convertible pesos depending on the night, this is still out of reach of many residents who earn state salaries of roughly twelve convertible Pesos per month. As one young local man commented to me, “Viñales is the most expensive town in Cuba.” While that point is debatable, even Varadero has several venues where locals can occasionally take in live music for free. At places such as Havana’s Casa de la Musica, for example, a matinee show is priced in Cuban pesos, while the more spectacular evening show is priced in convertible pesos.

Some museums in Cuba actually remained free for Cubans. Of course, foreign patrons could also enter these spaces at no cost. In Havana, for example, the Museum of the Playing Card, the Napoleonic Museum, and the Postal Museum are free. Generally speaking, these museums cater to niche markets. Cuban museums with the most to offer and the most sophisticated exhibits are not free. Nevertheless, as of 2006, a number of them were still heavily subsidized for Cubans. The most noteworthy of these was the Museo de la Revolución. The admission for foreigners was five convertible pesos, for citizens, four Cuban pesos. Guided tours cost two pesos in each of the respective currencies. Similarly, the Museo Nacional de las Bellas Artes charges foreigners and nationals different prices – five convertible pesos for the former and three Cuban pesos for the latter. The prices of a dual ticket that includes the museum’s international collection housed two blocks away are eight convertible pesos and five Cuban pesos.⁶¹³ Yet despite these subsidized prices, Cubans’ ability to access the sights and spectacles enjoyed by tourists was limited and has only become more so throughout the post-Soviet period.

⁶¹³ These were the prices listed in the Museo de la Revolución and the Museo Nacional de las Bellas Artes in August of 2006.

Restaurants, for example, offered no such subsidies; neither did the stores and shops that catered to foreigners. Much like the island's hotels, most residents were completely priced out of these establishments. The best food, the nicest venues, the widest range of quality products – these were reserved for foreigners. There had been little to buy in Cuba during the 1960s and 1970s, but as consumer products began – albeit very slowly – to reappear in Cuba, the tension between what foreigners and Cubans were able to purchase on the island became more visible.

As Cubans emerged from the Special Period and life began to improve, the disparity between their purchasing power and that of foreigners only increased. Expensive shops soon lined central tourist arteries such as Calle Obispo. Hotels such as the Nacional and the Sevilla were full of them. Other areas such as Varadero were adding more as fast as they could. Between March and July of 2006, the Sevilla added three more boutiques to its shopping arcade. They sold things such as high-priced Puma shoes, Fariani clothes, and handbags. Such establishments were clearly designed with the island's international guests in mind. Their prices were economically prohibitive for the overwhelming majority of Cubans and they were often located in hotel complexes where (before 2008) Cubans were not allowed to set foot. Despite reforms that permitted Cubans to enter these hotel shops in 2008, most can still little afford to purchase anything with their meager state salaries. These establishments were (and remain) conspicuous markers of the tension between Cubans and foreigners that has become so apparent in the post-Soviet era.

Unable to dissuade many of the island's new guests from roaming the streets and perusing the shops of Havana and other cities, the state flooded the streets with its own

emissaries – uniformed police, undercover police, and K9 police units. Instead of utilizing these forces to restrict the actions of tourists, the state chose to regulate the actions of Cubans. In highly toured areas such as Havana, tourists were largely allowed to roam where they pleased while Cubans faced intense scrutiny.

Despite the enormity of the task, Cuban police have tried to maintain separation between nationals and the island's millions of guests, particularly in places such as Habana Vieja where foreigners stroll through densely populated residential areas. Throughout the entire capital though, as well as in other popular tourist destinations such as Trinidad and Santiago, Cuban police closely monitor public interactions between the island's visitors and its residents. On one hand, this is done in an effort to keep foreigners free from unnecessary hassle while on holiday. Some streets in these and other Cuban cities teem with *jineteros*, male 'jockeys' that, often very persistently, offer tourists a variety of services. Invariably, accepting their help increases the cost of any service, from drinks and dinner to accommodations and women. They direct unsuspecting tourists into establishments where proprietors will raise prices in order to pay the *jinetero* a small commission. Some sell fake poor-quality cigars and occasionally drugs. Generally speaking, *jineteros* are harmless, but guidebook writers and individual travelers in the post-Soviet era have frequently described their persistence as bothersome and unpleasant. Authorities frequently disrupt these interactions in an effort to keep visitors hassle free. They briefly detain the suspected *jineteros*, asking them for identification, and essentially allowing tourists to continue walking free from unwanted solicitation. In effect, the Revolutionary authorities were enforcing the letter of pre-Revolutionary Cuba's tourist law, keeping visitors free "from annoyances and abuses of

every kind.”⁶¹⁴ At times, the state seems to prioritize this above the welfare of its own citizens.

Frequently, Cubans did not need to blatantly break the rules or offer unwanted solicitations to tourists in order to draw the ire of the authorities. Cuban police often insert themselves between Cubans and foreigners who are engaged in conversation. Without question, authorities have been most concerned with limiting contact between foreigners and Cubans of African descent. As Figure 4.5 attempts to illustrate below, the process is meant to be as mundane and non-evasive for nearby tourists as possible. Police quietly ask their target to stop for a moment.



Figure 4.5. Cuban Police Officer Stopping Young Cuban. This photo was taken in Habana Vieja in June 2007. Author’s collection.

They follow this with a request for one’s national identification card. A call to the station invariably follows. Meanwhile, foreigners are left to go on their way. They can certainly choose to wait for their Cuban acquaintances, but the police many take ten, twenty, thirty

⁶¹⁴ *Cuba, Ideal Vacation Land* (1949), 16-17.

minutes, or more before they allow the Cuban they are questioning to continue walking. They may not let them continue at all.

Several factors continued to work against the state's wishes though. Unemployment and underemployment drove thousands of Cubans to seek out work in the tourist sector. In some cases, Cubans' desire to pursue an informal career in tourism has helped to open up new parts of the island to tourists where the authorities have less control. People who use their own cars as unofficial taxis, for example, can bring tourists to places to which the state has either been unable or unwilling to provide transportation. Others have become unofficial 'tour guides' in places such as Viñales, opening up new parts of the area's unique landscape.

Since the early 1990s when the Revolutionary government was at its absolute weakest, the state has regained much of its grip on Cuban society. Yet its energies have gone towards restricting Cubans, not foreigners. While many visitors have chosen to limit their Cuban experience to isolated beach resorts and guided tours, by the twenty-first century, independent tourists could largely roam free throughout Havana and other cities. To be sure, Cuban security forces quickly approach people who move too close to sensitive state, military, or party installations (much like anywhere else, from the U.S. and France to Myanmar and Libya). Unwanted visitors have little or no chance of slipping into these spaces. Interestingly, the area surrounding the U.S. Interests Section in Havana is designed to mirror one of these highly restricted areas. Police and military continuously circle the building, moving hurrying passers-by along – after giving them just enough time to snap photos of the building that seemingly appears to be under siege. In this way, the regulation of space around the U.S. Interests Section has contributed to

the state's broader agenda of creating a martyr identity for Cuba. The street art and other displays surrounding the building (examined below) have been designed to further enhance this status.

The entrances to a number of beaches, particularly on Cuba's northern coasts, are fenced in and manned with several guards. Cars are searched, officially for Cubans who may be hoping to make their way north, but searches such as these represent a reemerging tension on the island. Foreigners had once again been granted more freedom than Cubans to explore and enjoy the island, a situation that was unquestionably reminiscent of the pre-Revolutionary era.

The construction of two separate worlds on the island involved more than merely creating distance between Cubans and foreigners. Cuban officials have made a clear choice to provide the latter group with cleaner public spaces than those offered to the island's residents. To this end, Cuban authorities have made an effort to control the behaviors of Cubans who exist within the tourist world. Occasionally, Cuban police reprimand Cubans for littering. This though, is only likely to happen in either heavily developed or pristinely refurbished tourist zones. Reinforcing the separation between Cubans and foreigners, such regulation would be almost unthinkable in parts of the capital such as Centro Habana or Cerro. In fact, based on the number of garbage cans found in Habana Vieja compared to Centro, it seems as if the Cuban state cares very little if the streets frequented predominately by Cubans are strewn with litter. A comparison of Calle Obispo in Habana Vieja and Calle Neptuno in Centro Habana is particularly telling. Both streets serve as vital arteries within the capital. For tourists, Obispo links Havana's colonial core with the city's center and sights such as the Capitolio Nacional and the

Prado. It has become (much like in the pre-Revolutionary era) the main thoroughfare for tourist activity. For many Habaneros, Neptuno serves as a link between their homes and the city's center near the Capitolio. This is also an important area for Cubans; not only are many jobs based near the center, the area serves as a public transportation hub for individuals working or traveling elsewhere as well. Each of the streets is lined with shops (that cater particularly to the dominant group using each street), and each has become consistently crowded. These were the conditions in August of 2006 when this data on waste disposal was collected.

The stretch of Obispo in question is roughly ten blocks, between Plaza de Armas and the Floridita, a famous bar and restaurant that marks the end of Obispo. City planners have placed three to four trash receptacles on some blocks. Others undergoing major construction or renovation (a common phenomena in the aging sector) only had room for one or two. On average though, planners placed between two and three trash receptacles on each block. There is always one within close reach. The people walking along Neptuno found no such luxury. It averaged less than two receptacles per ten-block stretch. Moreover, these were bins that, albeit larger, entire city blocks utilized for their waste disposal. They are frequently found overflowing. In terms of sanitation and beautification, tourism once again sparked conspicuous tension. In this case, tourism once again fostered the creation of two Cuba's – one for tourists and one for Cubans.

In addition to these problems associated with waste disposal in Centro, many of the district's buildings, even those found along main thoroughfares such as Neptuno, are desperately in need of repair. Building resorts far from these areas ensured that many tourists would never see such blighted areas. Many did not stray far from their guided

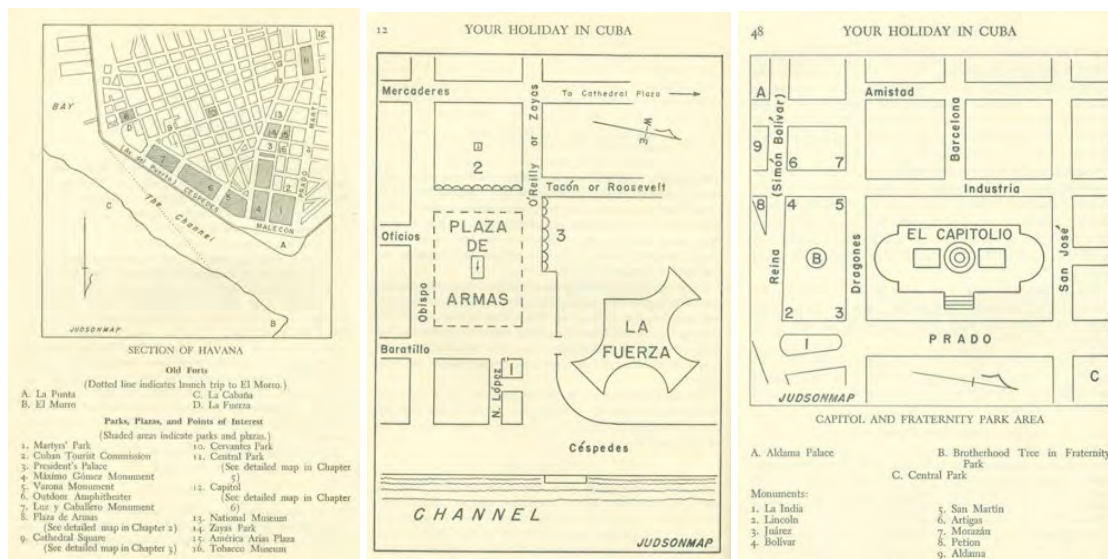
tours when they did visit the capital and other large cities. Other visitors shunned the services of state-employed guides though. Cuban planners employed a variety of strategies to most effectively control these individuals. One of these strategies involved the maps that were offered to tourists. Once again though, independent writers from abroad countered the vision of the state through their own cartographic conceptions of Cuban space.

Mapping the Nation and a New (Bigger) Havana

Maps are a great way to show tourists the sights that a destination has to offer. They can show the location of everything from restaurants and bars to museums and hotels. Maps are also an excellent way of hiding sights from tourists' view. People on holiday are often unfamiliar with their destinations, and they frequently have to rely on others for information. Mapmakers – or guidebook writers who utilize maps – have a great deal of control over how these visitors perceive Cuba. During the 1980s, as publishers once again began to produce guidebooks for travel to Cuba, they utilized maps far more frequently and in different ways than their predecessors in the 1940s and 1950s.

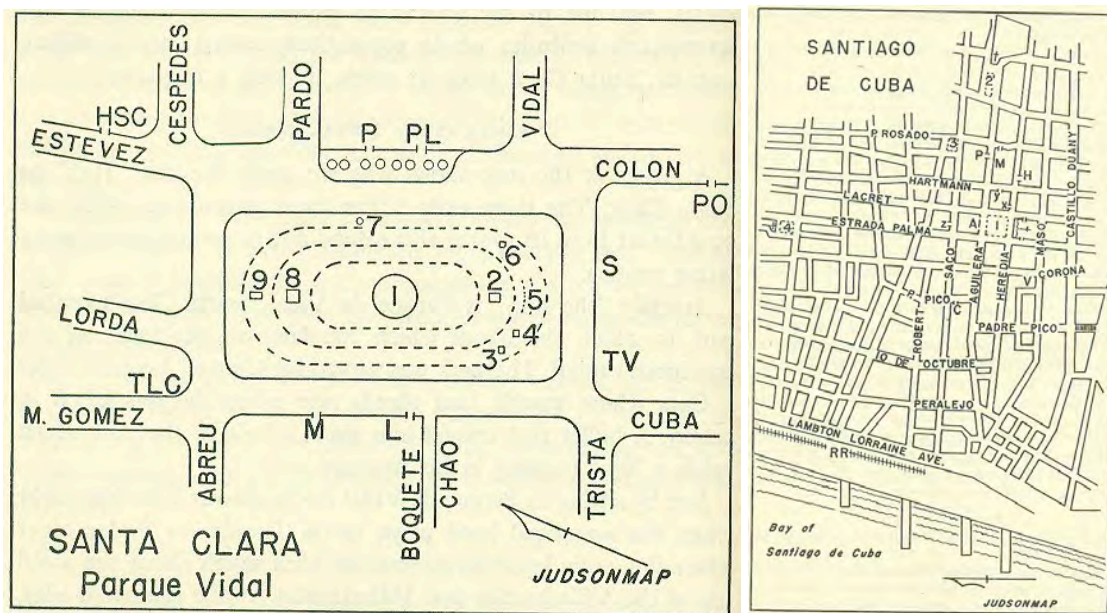
In fact, most of the guidebooks that were published by both state planners in Cuba and independent firms abroad made sparing use of maps during the pre-Revolutionary era. Several of the extensive guidebooks mentioned in Chapter Two contain no maps at all, for example, the CTC's *Welcome to Cuba* (1955), *Mexico and Cuba on Your Own* (1954) and *Havana: The Portrait of a City* (1953). Erna Ferguson's *Cuba* (1946) offered readers only a national map. While it was fairly detailed, it was the only one. Less detailed was the national map provided within *McKay's Guide to Bermuda the Bahamas and the Caribbean* (1955). It too stood alone as the only map in the guide.

The only pre-Revolutionary guidebook that contained a wide array of maps was Judson and Judson's *Your Holiday in Cuba* (1952). Like some of the others, it began with a national map. Unlike the others, it featured several maps of not only Havana, but smaller cities throughout the island as well. In reality though, the authors did not offer a complete map of the capital. There was no 'whole.' Instead, the city was cast as a collection of sights, address, and specific destinations – not a contiguous urban society for people to explore on their own. These maps (see 4.6-4.8) gave foreign tourists little sense of their broader place within the capital and did not help them to explore their surrounding environment. They represented merely a fraction of the sprawling metropolis of Havana.



Figures 4.6-4.8. Sectional Maps of Havana. (Judson and Judson, 4, 12, 48.)

Judson and Judson utilized a similar approach in their mapping of other cities, for example Pinar del Río and Santa Clara (see 4.9). Their maps of Camagüey and Santiago (see 4.10) offered slightly more information but were also quite limited.



Figures 4.9-4.10. Sectional Maps of Santa Clara and Santiago. (Judson and Judson, 200, 258.)

The point here is not to criticize Judson and Judson – or any of the far less cartographically focused authors – but rather to illustrate that most guidebooks provided little, if anything, in terms of maps. Those that did presented a limited view of the island and its cities.

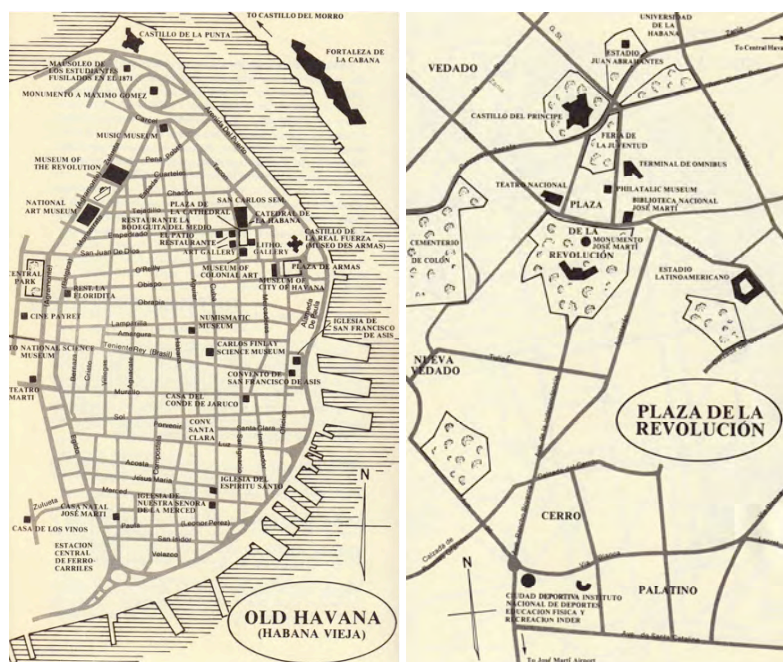
Maps played an equally small role in the minimal number of guidebooks published between 1959 and 1980. There were few available to the island's guests during these years. Revolutionary planners seemed to have no interest in providing visitors with maps of the cities; they were more interested in controlling foreigners' movements. Mohammed Rauf, who visited Cuba in the 1960s, was only able to obtain a guidebook from the pre-Revolutionary era. Frank Mulville and his family, who visited the island as tourists during the same period, were rarely able to obtain clear maps of the island's sailing lanes. Non-Cuban writers had little reason to produce guidebooks in the 1960s. The market for such products was quite small. This was also the situation in the

1970s. There were still few visitors and very little need for guidebooks. Moreover, since the state still refused to let visitors stray far from their pre-planned tours, the government found little need to publish its own.

By the 1980s, a number of publishers began to either include Cuba within their general surveys of Caribbean tourism or release complete volumes dedicated to the reemerging destination. Comprehensive guides on the region offered little in the way of maps. Every edition of *Fielding's Caribbean* featured chapters on over thirty islands, including Cuba, yet each volume from the early 1980s contained only one simple map picturing all of the included destinations. Stephen Birnbaum edited a series of similar volumes for "Get 'Em and Go Travel Guides." His guidebooks contained individual maps for each island, including Cuba, none of which were very detailed.

Just prior to 1980 (in 1979), Paula DiPerna wrote one of the first detailed guidebooks on Revolutionary Cuba. She included maps of the island as well as several cities. Unlike the few maps that were offered to tourists in the pre-Revolutionary era, those used by DiPerna allowed visitors to locate themselves within the broader urban landscape. She first offered her readers a detailed map of Habana Vieja (see 4.11). Yet before mapping neighborhoods such as Vedado and Centro Habana, which were popular in the pre-Revolutionary era, she provided a map of the Plaza de la Revolución and its surrounding areas (see 4.12). The Plaza offered visitors a statue of José Martí, a 142-meter high monument, and an open space where Castro first addressed the Cuban people upon the victory over Batista. While the monument offered an excellent view of the capital, not to mention a sense of the immensity of the crowds that had gathered in

support of the Revolution, the Plaza area did not contain as many sights as Vedado or Centro. Yet this non-Cuban author elevated the Plaza de la Revolución over such areas.



Figures 4.11-4.12. Maps of Habana Vieja and Plaza de la Revolución. (DiPerna, 100-101.)

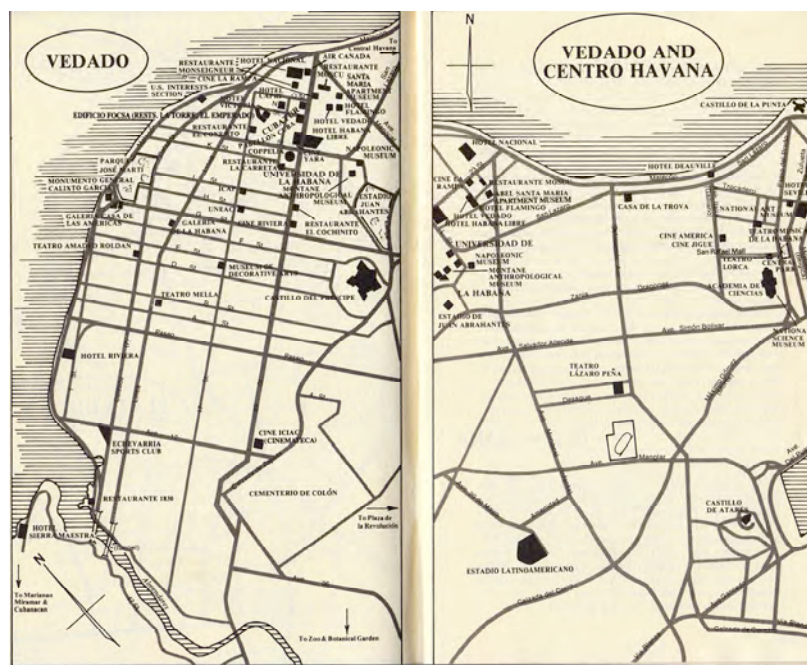


Figure 4.13. Map of Vedado and Centro Habana. (DiPerna, 102-103.)

DiPerna did provide readers with a large map of both Vedado and Centro (see 4.13). This map, along with her map of Habana Vieja, set the modern era standard for the mapping of Havana. Hers was the first guide to cartographically define Havana more broadly, filling the voids between the snapshots that had been provided for guidebook readers during the pre-Revolutionary and thereafter. The cartography found in hers and other guidebooks beginning in the 1980s helped to fashion a tripartite Havana in the minds of visitors. Beginning with hers, maps focused on three sections of the city – Habana Vieja, Centro, and Vedado.⁶¹⁵ Also, her use of the Calzada del Cerro as the city's southern border was repeated in others' maps thereafter. Thus during the 1980s, maps slowly began to revise the way in which visitors thought about the spatial limits of the capital. Within these divisions, Centro regularly served as a bridge between the two other areas. Yet it was a featureless bridge, offering little in the way of sights. DiPerna herself mapped few of its streets. Both Cuban and foreign guidebook writers followed suit throughout the 1980s and thereafter, giving little attention the poorest section of Havana where thousands of Cubans went about their daily lives amidst the area's crumbling buildings. While some, including DiPerna, included a number of Centro sights on the border of Habana Vieja, the area largely existed as a void between the two areas where tourists were directed to spend their time while in the capital.

Even though DiPerna's guidebook was published in 1979, it would take roughly a decade for foreign-published guidebooks with more detailed maps than hers to appear. In the meantime, the Cuban state utilized maps in order to create its own vision of the

⁶¹⁵ Some guidebooks offered contiguous maps of these areas. Others, like DiPerna, connected Vedado and Centro, separating Habana Vieja. Some connected the old city and Centro, separating Vedado. Several guidebooks even offered separate maps of each area.

capital. During the 1980s, the government released two guidebooks, one independently and one in conjunction with a British publisher. INTUR's *Cuba Travel Guide*, published in 1986, featured two maps of Havana. By designating these maps "Habana Vieja" and "Habana Moderna," INTUR officials illustrated that they had no compunction about completely removing Centro from their vision of the capital. Habana Vieja included solely the old city, and Habana Moderna included Vedado and the city's western suburb of Miramar. These maps featured few street names, omitted many others, and directed visitors to specific sights instead of advising them on how to independently explore the capital.

Cuba: Official Guide, published in 1988 by Macmillan with assistance from INTUR, had two maps of Havana, yet offered a similarly limited vision of the capital as the aforementioned INTUR maps. While its map of Habana Vieja largely mirrored that found in DiPerna's guidebook (see 4.11 above), its map of the broader capital (see 4.14) lacked much of the detail that was found in DiPerna's maps as well as the many other guidebooks that were published abroad during the next several years.

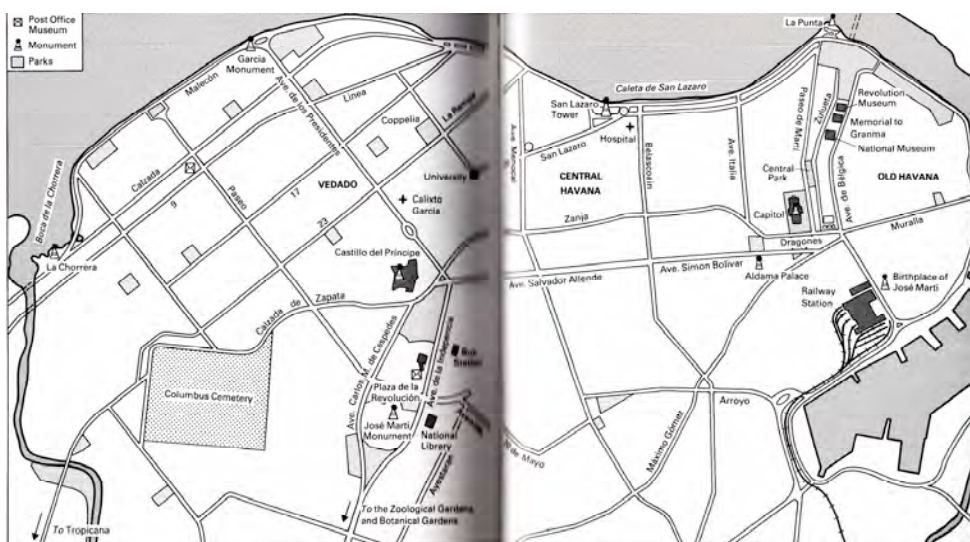
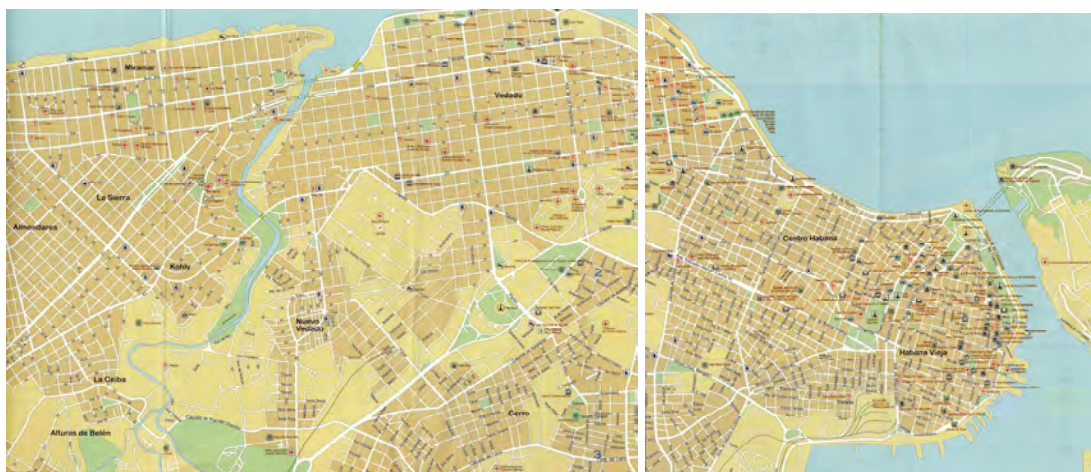


Figure 4.14. Map of Havana. (Gravette, 208-209.)

It too featured few street names, highlighting specific sights instead. It noted Centro's place within the broader city, yet offered few reasons to visit that area. The maps in both of these guides share another important characteristic. They represent clear examples of ideological cartography. Each map directed visitors to sights that fit neatly into the Revolutionary government's version of Cuban history.

As guidebooks with maps to rival DiPerna's began to emerge in the 1990s, the new authors utilized several common strategies. Moon Handbooks, Lonely Planet, Fodor's, Frommer's and others all laid out similar boundaries for the city. Cerro continued to represent the southern border of Havana's tourist space. By the twenty-first century, perhaps to remain competitive with foreign published guides, the state began to include more detailed maps of the island and its cities. *Cuba Sí*, published in 2003, offers several examples. As far as streets and major sights were concerned, this guidebook's maps of Havana and Santiago (see 4.15-4.17) were as detailed as those found in any independently published guide.



Figures 4.15-4.16. Maps of Havana. (Max Cucchi, ed., *Cuba Sí*, [La Habana: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2003], fold-out map.)



Figure 4.17. Map of Santiago. (Cucchi, fold-out map.)

Cuba Sí's map of Havana offered a detailed and broad street map that included Habana Vieja, Centro, and Vedado. It also utilized the neighborhood of Cerro as a southern border. Much like INTUR's 1986 guide, this map of the capital continued to include the city's western suburbs, home of the Tropicana nightclub and Marina Hemingway. While foreign authors often provided brief written descriptions of places such as Miramar, Marianao, and Buenavista, they did not often include them within their maps of the capital. The state's inclination to do so may have been based on more than the aforementioned attractions found in these areas. Mapping the neighborhoods of Miramar and La Sierra, for example, allowed the government to showcase what leaders still claim to be one of the Revolution's greatest achievements. *Cuba Sí's* map prominently displays the six hospitals found in these areas (see 4.18).

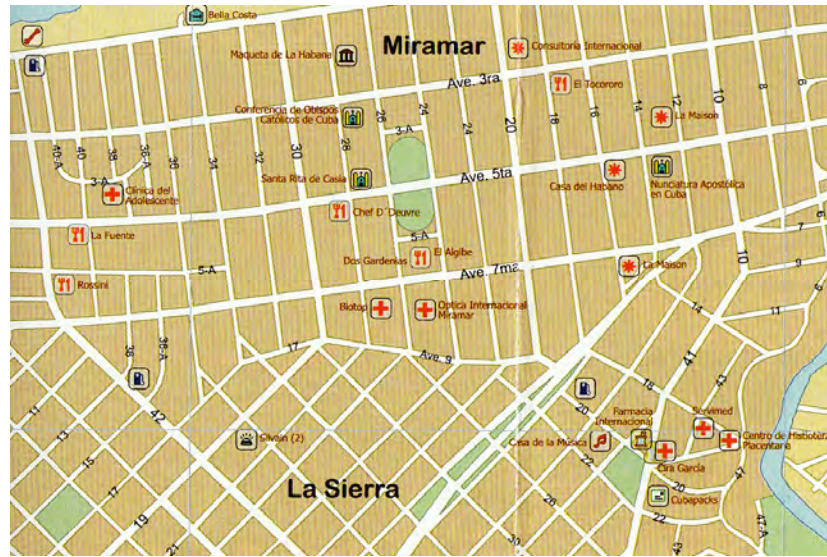


Figure 4.18. Map of Miramar and La Sierra. (Cucchi, fold-out map.)

A far more stark difference also emerged between those maps produced by the Cuban state and those produced by non-Cubans. Even though the Cuban government legalized a wide range of private enterprises during the 1990s, the maps utilized in state guides were (and remain) totally devoid of these establishments. The above maps from *Cuba Sí* feature only state enterprises or large joint ventures such as the Libre or the Hotel Meliá-Cohiba. Privately run small businesses have become more common in Cuba, and many are directly linked to the tourism industry. Havana has hundreds of private renters and restaurant owners. Nevertheless, the state has chosen to ignore their existence within its maps. Many independently published guides have done just the opposite, providing tourists with extensive maps and the locations of privately run establishments. In 2004, Moon Handbooks featured a map of Habana Vieja accommodations that included *casas particulares* and a map of Habana Vieja eateries that included *paladares* (see 4.19-4.20).

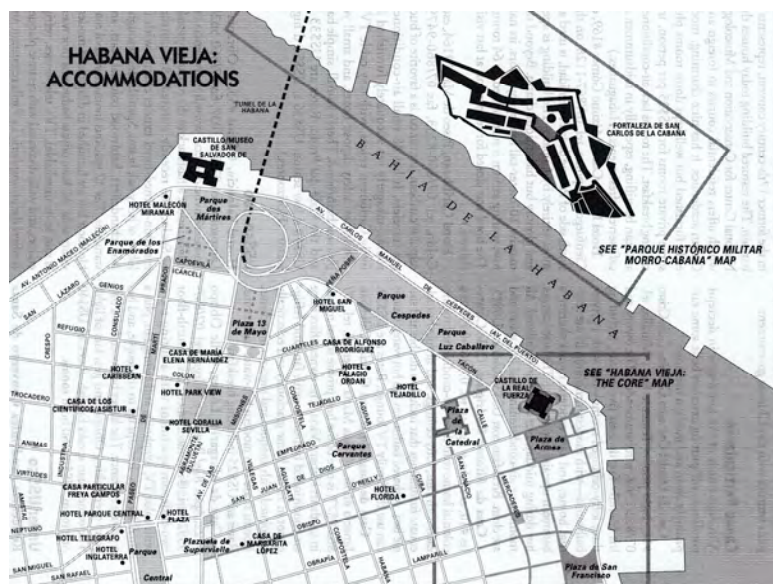


Figure 4.19. Habana Vieja Accommodations. (Baker, 420.)

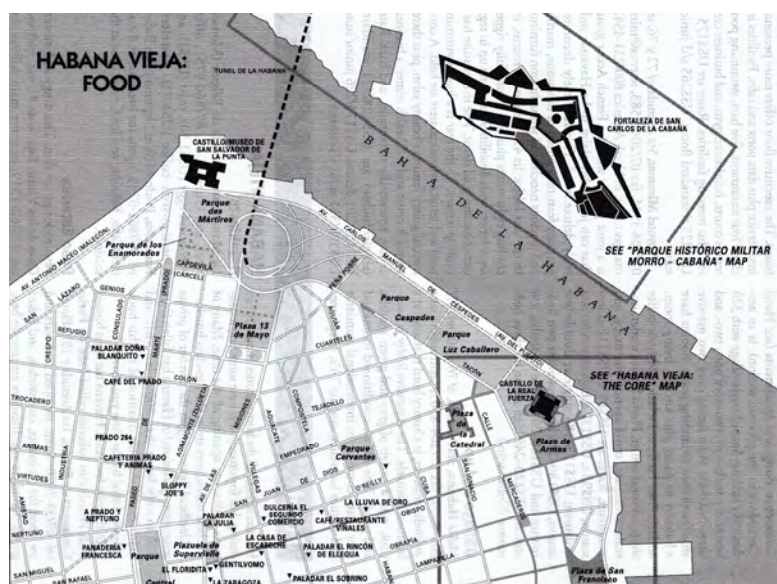


Figure 4.20. Havana Vieja Eateries. (Baker, 436.)

Yet some guidebooks not produced by the Cuban government occasionally helped to uphold the primacy of the Revolution, using maps to make ideological statements similar to those of the Cuban state. For instance, fifty years after de Gamez and Pastore established the center of Havana as the U.S. inspired Capitolio, Conner Gorry recast the space of Havana in her 2004 guidebook. Gorry, who follows the tradition of a tripartite

division of Havana's space, does not even go so far as to focus the Central Havana space on the Capitolio. Her Central Havana walking "tour starts in the heart of matters, at the Museo de la Revolución."⁶¹⁶

Sex and Society

By the 1980's, Cuba's pre-Revolutionary identity as a den of inequity lived only in the pages of magazines, in movies, and in people's mind. Limited prostitution continued after 1959, but the scale was nothing like that of the pre-Revolutionary era. The extremely limited number of guidebooks that were published between 1959 and 1980 never mention the existence of prostitution in Cuba. Those guidebooks published in the 1980s continued to turn a blind eye to the practice – except to say that the practice had been eradicated. Even so, one travelogue noted the continued presence of prostitution in Cuba just prior to this period. Alberto Cervera Espejo spoke with several Cubans while visiting the island in 1976. They informed him that 90-95% of prostitution from the pre-Revolutionary era had been eradicated. Cervera believed that even though the Cuban government had eliminated two of the three reasons for prostitution, hunger and ignorance, some women continued to choose that profession because they did not have the ability to change.⁶¹⁷

Despite this example, during the 1980s, the Cuban government continued to profess that no prostitution existed in Cuba. Yet officials did acknowledge the occasional presence of an overt sexuality within the country's burgeoning tourism industry. In a 1984 interview with the *New York Times*, Ricardo Villanueva, manager of the Tropicana, explained how the nightclub (and Cuba in general) had changed since the pre-

⁶¹⁶ Gorry, 83.

⁶¹⁷ Cervera Espejo, 48-50.

Revolutionary era. “You do not see any sex here. We have no striptease, no dancers without tops. We don’t allow anyone to touch our dancers. And it is not allowed for dancers, when they finish, to go to the tables of guests.”⁶¹⁸

By the 1980s and early 1990s though, others were becoming more interested in contemporary Cuban sexuality than that of the pre-Revolutionary era. In 1979, Australia’s *Playboy Magazine* featured an article on Cuban women. In October of 1993, Germany’s *Playboy* featured an extensive pictorial entitled “*Cuba Libre.*” A number of young women were shown topless. A caption proclaimed: “*Kuba Heute: Erotik, Sinnlichkeit*” (Cuba Today: Sex, Sensuality).⁶¹⁹ Towards the end of the pictorial, the editors include a picture (see 4.21) that links this sexuality to the social changes wrought by the Revolution.



Figure 4.21. Photo from German *Playboy Magazine*. (“Cuba Libre,” *Playboy Magazine*, October 1993, 136.)

⁶¹⁸ Joseph Treaster, “The Pride of Castro’s Cuba: A Pre-Castro Cabaret,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1984.

⁶¹⁹ “Cuba Libre,” *Playboy Magazine* (Germany), October 1993, 132.

The picture's caption reads: "*Die kinder der Revolution: Selbstbewusst, modern, ohne berührungängste*" (Children of the Revolution: Self-Confident, Modern, Without Fear).⁶²⁰ The image of these four young women, two uniformed soldiers and two provocatively dressed others, implies that not only have Cuban women been sexually liberated, they have had a role in their own liberation as well.

The explosion of prostitution in Cuba during the early 1990s had little to do with Revolutionary culture or any inherent characteristics of Cuban women. While prostitution existed in Revolutionary Cuba prior to this, the economic crisis of the Special Period combined with the massive influx of tourists to encourage thousands of women to sell their bodies. Prostitution became a means of survival. Not only has the government discouraged foreign scholars from interviewing and surveying Cuban citizens involved in prostitution, officials continued to deny the existence of Cuba's massive sex industry throughout the 1990s. The government eventually acknowledged that there were a few women who might be reviving this extinct practice, but officials dismissed these individuals as immoral instead of desperate. Throughout the 1990s, Cuba's Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC), the state's immense apparatus for helping to support (and control) women, asserted that prostitutes were simply immoral.⁶²¹ Of course, this was not the case. For most women, selling their bodies was a matter of survival.

Prostitutes in Cuba have become known as *jineteras*, female 'jockeys' who often accompany foreign men for extended sexual liaisons rather than one encounter. Professor of Women's Studies Amalia Cabezas argues that for these women, sex with

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁶²¹ Julia O'Connell Davidson and Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor, "Child Prostitution and Sex Tourism: Cuba," presented at the World Congress of Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Leicester, UK, August 1996. Cabezas, 994.

foreign men served purposes beyond financial gain. She notes that while money is often exchanged for sexual services, many times it is not. “Liaisons with tourists provide recourse to get by and to get ahead: not just to supplement low wages but also to procure opportunities for recreation, consumption, travel, migration, and marriage.”⁶²² Thus while prostitution in the pre-Revolutionary era was defined by the prevalence of brothels and pimps in Cuba, during the post-Soviet era, a large percentage of *jineteras* worked independently and had more than financial goals.

Patterns from other sectors of Cuba’s informal tourist economy emerged among Cuban women working as prostitutes. A disproportionately high number of Afro-Cuban women took up work as prostitutes in Havana and elsewhere. De la Fuente suggests that the reasons for this may extend beyond the disadvantaged position that Afro-Cubans found themselves in during the post-Soviet period and the discrimination from formal sector tourism-related jobs that they faced. This prevalence was based on “tourists’ own racialized notions of sexuality and pleasure.”⁶²³ He points to a study conducted by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales in Cuba. It argues that many *jineteras* that society would consider to be white assume the identity of “mestiza” in order to appeal to their clients. The aforementioned German issue of *Playboy* seems to support this assertion. Most of the women featured in its extensive pictorial are of visibly African descent. Moreover, as the postcard shown below illustrates (see 4.22), the Cuban state has actively marketed Afro-Cuban sexuality as well.

⁶²² Cabezas, 992-993.

⁶²³ De la Fuente, 327.

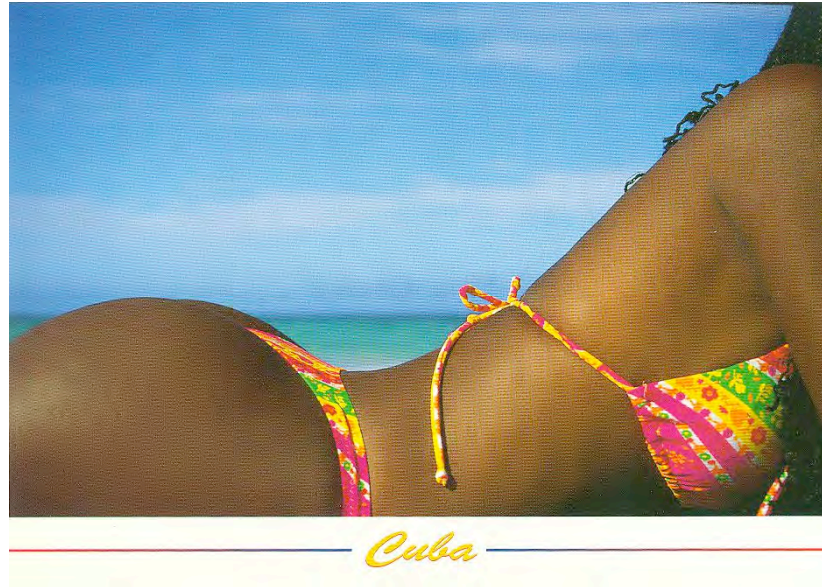


Figure 4.22. Postcard of Woman on the Beach. The Cuban government produced this postcard; it and others like it were being sold on the island during 2005. (Author's collection.)

In their study of child prostitution and sex tourism in Cuba, sociologists Julia O'Connell Davidson and Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor argue that this idealized image of the non-white *jinetera* has had other implications for Cuban sex workers. These racialized visions have led foreign men to view Cuban women as sexual others – in this case, primitive and close to nature. The authors argue that based on these assumptions, men define Cuban women as “sexually ‘open’ and ‘free.’” This in turn leads men to justify their exploitation of Cuban women. Their fieldwork, carried out in August of 1996 among sex workers and their clients in Varadero, suggested that many foreign men view Cuban women as nothing short of nymphomaniacs. It thus becomes okay to pay women as little as possible, to force them to have unsafe sex, and for some men in their study, to have sex with minors as young as thirteen. According to the authors, these men “construct a fiction within which children want and consent to sexual relations with adult

men.”⁶²⁴ Not all foreign men who visit Cuba engage in sexual relations with underage girls. Nevertheless, O’Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor’s work on child prostitution illustrates how the tourism industry illuminates the extreme inequality between Cubans and foreigners. In fact, foreign men have found themselves able to exert power over Cuban women in a variety of ways.

Despite the government’s own promotion of Cuban sexuality, and despite the desperation facing most *jinetas*, the Cuban government has reacted harshly towards these women, treating them as criminals. During her fieldwork in Cuba, Cabezas spoke to a young Cuban woman who the police suspected of being a *jinetas*. She recounted her harrowing story of interrogation, a gynecological exam, blood tests, and counseling. Other women were dealt with even more harshly, sent to rehabilitation centers for several years. Separated from their families, they are often forced to work for extremely low wages in the agricultural sector.⁶²⁵ O’Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor note that men are almost never punished if caught with a *jinetas*. They argue that it is only men who cannot afford to pay bribes, who are found with significantly underage Cuban girls, or who are caught being physically abusive that face arrest.⁶²⁶

Yet by the early twenty-first century, it was not uncommon for men to receive propositions for sex from Cuban women in bars, restaurants, clubs, or even in the middle of the street in more heavily toured areas. The repressive efforts of the Cuban state have clearly not been systematic. Considering that men are not punished for having sexual relations with *jinetas*, it would seem as though Cuban officials have actively taken

⁶²⁴ O’Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor.

⁶²⁵ Cabezas, 1005-1006.

⁶²⁶ O’Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor.

steps in order to not dissuade potential sex tourists from visiting the island. Whether or not this is true, it is certain that widespread corruption among Cuban police has created difficulties in eradicating prostitution from the island, ensuring that it continues quite openly in places such as Havana and Varadero. Over the course of my time in Cuba, I spoke with three women who occasionally slept with foreigners in hope of financial gain.⁶²⁷ Each of them claimed that it was possible to avoid arrest as long as one could pay the police a bribe. The price depended on how many police there were and who the police were. All agreed that it would cost then no less than twenty convertible pesos. While I did not discuss sexual intimidation or rape by the police with any of these women, O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor frequently heard stories of intimidation and met one prostitute during their field work who had herself been raped by a police officer.⁶²⁸

The Internet has further compounded the state's difficulties in eradicating prostitution from the island. By the end of the 1990s, it was playing a crucial role in the formation of Cuba's sexual identity, particularly in promoting the island's *jineteras* as some of the most desirable, not to mention accessible, women in the world. The website sexincuba.com was "designed to provide information on Jineteras (Cuban prostitutes and female hustlers), sex laws, escorts, gay hangouts and clubs where you are most likely to

⁶²⁷ Much like the women and girls who Cabezas, O'Connell Davidson, and Sanchez Taylor spoke to while conducting their research in Cuba, each of the women I spoke to only did so out of necessity and only when they had to. They hoped for cash, if not clothes and a meal at a tourist restaurant. One of the women noted that sometimes she was forced to settle for a free drink or two over negotiations that failed to lead to sexual relations.

⁶²⁸ O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor.

find (temporary) love.”⁶²⁹ Worldsexarhives.com provides a forum for potential visitors to Cuba (and elsewhere) to discuss prostitution-related issues, for example, where to meet girls, where to take them, and how much they charge. Members of this site also exchanged information regarding other websites where Cuban women and girls advertised themselves to tourists. Several of these included amigos.com, AdultFriendFinder.com, and havanacubaconnection.com. These sites offered foreign men the opportunity to browse the island’s selection of available women before setting foot on the island.

Companies running advertisements on these websites and within other forums could not openly advertise Cuba’s widespread prostitution, but they have been able to create an image of a hyper-sexualized island. In fact, the creators of Martí Auténtico, a brand of rum prepared closer to New York City than Havana, have begun to do so. In 2005, they created an advertisement (see 4.23) that attempted to market Cuban sexuality in order sell rum.



Figure 4.23. Advertisement for Martí Auténtico. This postcard was obtained in Miami in 2004. (Author’s collection.)

⁶²⁹ Sex in Cuba, n.d., <<http://sexincuba.com>> (June 2, 2009).

Even though few people who drank this rum would be visiting Cuba (since it was being sold in the U.S.), promoters tied the idea of drunken revelry to Cuban sexuality in order to sell their product. Cuba's identity as a den of sexual iniquity had even reached a country where people were unable to visit Cuba.

Manufacturing Cubanidad

Perhaps more than anything else, the isolation that Cuba experienced during the 1960s and 1970s is what drew the country's first wave of foreign guests. As Cuba's novelty as a tourist destination waned with the arrival of large numbers of tourists in the late 1980s, planners had to find other ways to entice people to visit the island. They searched for strategies to once again make Cuban identity appealing to foreigners. The state reinforced what it believed to be acceptable conceptions of *Cubanidad* through a number of cultural tourism programs designed to explain the island's past and present. They had their own visions of Cuba that they believed were the most effective for marketing the island. State planners pointed individual tourists who were not part of such programs to specific sights that would reinforce Revolutionary notions of Cuban identity. As foreign visitors flooded the island, so too did their culture. A number of foreign cultures clashed with *Cubanidad*, as well as with the undertones of U.S. culture that were occasionally quite visible. In some cases, Cuban planners celebrated these foreign influences alongside Revolutionary icons, particularly within the island's broadening souvenir market, which still served as an important marker of Cuban identity. The fact was that by the 1990s, the state was less concerned with defending Cuban culture than it had been in previous decades. Instead, Cuban officials were working with foreign promoters in order to create a marketable identity for potential visitors. In some

instances, this new identity designed to entice tourists clashed with earlier Revolutionary conceptions of *Cubanidad*.

Cultural Tourism and the New Lure of Cuba

During the 1980s and thereafter, most foreigners were not solely motivated by politics to visit Cuba. They did so for one of the major reasons that people did in the pre-Revolutionary era – the country’s sunny beaches and warm seas. This is not to say that beach-seeking visitors in this era were not interested in Cuban culture; many were. Culture was just not their top priority, particularly for the hundreds of thousands of individuals who flocked to Cuban resorts such as Varadero and Cayo Coco, which were far from the island’s cultural centers. They frequently arrived on packaged tours and thus had the bulk of their vacations planned by Cuba’s various tourism agencies. This provided the state with an excellent chance to insert aspects of Cuban culture that it felt to be the most significant into the tourist experience.

In the early 1980s, most packaged tours were based in Havana or Varadero. Irrespective of location, these tours included a “Cuba Night.” These events included “a native buffet and a folkloric show with dancing and signing in *ñañigo* – the Afro-Cuban language.”⁶³⁰ While it is unclear what was meant by “a native buffet” (certainly not that visitors received a ration card to obtain their food), the inclusion of *ñañigo* singing is significant. Much like at venues such as the Tropicana prior to 1959, Afro-Cuban culture was included within tourism spectacles in the Revolutionary era. Of course, as was shown, Revolutionary planners also went on to exclude Afro-Cubans from the larger tourist world much like they had been prior to 1959.

⁶³⁰ Stephen Birnbaum, *Caribbean, Bermuda, and the Bahamas* (Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 1982), 336.

In other cases throughout the 1980s, planners offered guests on packaged tours a variety of “optional excursions.” The state offered short trips to places such as Habana Vieja, colonial museums, modern Havana (Vedado), the Tropicana, Lenin National Park, Viñales, Varadero Beach, Cienfuegos, and Trinidad. Excursions were also offered for people visiting Santiago de Cuba, for example, the Bacardí Museum and the Casa de la Trova.⁶³¹ Cuban planners exposed visitors not only to a variety of regions, but to a variety of historical eras as well. A visit to Habana Vieja was obviously meant to showcase the colonial era, Vedado the post-Independence period, and Lenin National Park the Revolutionary era. To be sure though, Revolutionary undertones were apparent everywhere – whether in overt forms such as billboards and lectures or in less conspicuous manifestations such as carefully screened tour guides and others workers who sometimes wore buttons featuring the image of Lenin.⁶³²

Some people though, traveled to Cuba with the express desire to more completely understand or experience a specific aspect of the Caribbean isle. For these individuals, the Cuban government (and later private interests) designed a number of cultural tourism packages. During the 1980s, when the Cuban government was still able to exert a large degree of control over the island’s guests, there was not a wide variety of cultural tourism packages from which people could choose. At this time, most specialized tours focused on outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, and hunting. Yet even these could sometimes be closely linked to Revolutionary conceptions of Cuban culture.

⁶³¹ Tamargo and Riaza, 37-38.

⁶³² In 1984, a doorman at the Tropicana wore a button with a picture of Lenin on the lapel of his jacket. See Joseph Treaster, “The Pride of Castro’s Cuba: A Pre-Castro Cabaret,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1984.

Fishing tours provide one example of this. Cuba offered many such tours as well as several tournaments throughout the year, the most important of which was the Hemingway Tournament, named after the country's one-time resident Ernest Hemingway. By this time, the renowned author had become a popular icon in Cuba. It is widely believed that he based the character of Santiago from *The Old Man and the Sea* on Gregorio Fuentes, a Cuban man from the town of Cojimar. Moreover, Hemingway owned a residence in Cuba for over two decades before abandoning it in 1960. He was clearly tied to the island in several ways. Revolutionary planners took this connection further by promoting several photos (see 4.24-4.25) from a brief encounter between 'Papa' Hemingway (as he is often referred to in Cuba) and Fidel Castro.



Figures 4.24-4.25. Ernest Hemingway and Fidel Castro. (Author's collection.)

It is highly unlikely that the two were as close as they appear to be in the second of these photos. Hemingway did leave, after all. Notwithstanding his departure, planners named several awards after the author – the Hemingway Cup, The Old Man and the Sea Trophy,

and the Pilar Trophy (named for his boat). Contestants, as well as others who visited Cuba for the fishing, also visited the Hemingway Marina.⁶³³

By 1981, Cuba's tourism bureau was offering an actual Hemingway Tour. The marina and Gregorio's house in Cojímar were only two aspects of this tour. Guides also brought visitors to the author's former residence in just outside of Havana, *la Finca Vigia*. The house remained almost exactly how Hemingway left it in 1960. (It still does to this day.) Visitors walked around the house, peering in at books, assorted papers, and trophies from Hemingway's many hunting trips. Outside, visitors could view his notorious fishing boat, *Pilar*.⁶³⁴ As interest in 'Papa' grew, so too did the "Hemingway Trail," which is what a 1985 West German guidebook labeled the string of sights that had been closely linked to the author. Two of his favorite bars, La Bodeguita del Medio and La Floridita, as well as room 511 in the Hotel Ambos Mundos, where he once stayed, became integral parts of the tour.⁶³⁵ In recent years, a number of experts from the U.S. have actually traveled to Cuba on academic visas in order to help preserve some of the author's papers that were left at *la Finca*.⁶³⁶ All of these tours were meant to exploit this U.S. born writer's ties to Revolutionary Cuba. Hemingway's links to the island were cast as full-fledged support of both the Revolution and Castro, an endorsement from one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century.

Cuba's Revolutionary planners also came to define Cuban identity by the government's ability to provide quality health care for its citizens. In turn, medical

⁶³³ Tamargo and Riaza, 34.

⁶³⁴ Zellers, 236-237.

⁶³⁵ Rann and Geide, 65-67.

⁶³⁶ Michael Voss, "Rare Project Saves Hemingway Papers," March 17, 2009, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7906399.stm>> (June 16, 2009).

tourism offered the state a chance to earn large profits as well as great press abroad. By the mid-1980s, planners were using tourism to showcase the government's triumphs in medicine. Havana's Cira García Central Clinic offered foreigners services in internal medicine, general surgery, gynecology and obstetrics (including abortion), ophthalmology, allergies, cosmetic surgery, remedial speech, cardiology, and more. The clinic even provided guests with private rooms that included an extra bed for a companion.⁶³⁷ As the country endured economic catastrophe in the early 1990s and the state found itself unable to provide some of the most basic medical services to Cubans, offering such services to foreigners revealed yet another level of tension that existed between Cuba's tourist world and the reality of life on the island. Foreigners even assumed a privileged status in hospitals that catered to Cubans. I had the opportunity to accompany a Japanese friend to the emergency room at the Calixto García Hospital. Upon entering, a triage nurse whisked her past Cubans who had clearly been waiting longer than her. Even though there were few supplies to treat her (or any of the Cuban patients), the nurses and doctors seemed to make it a point to provide her with better care than that offered to Cubans.

While several cultural tours were designed during the 1980s, both the number and range of such tours increased dramatically between 1991 and 2007. By 1994, Marazul Tours was arranging a wide variety of cultural and educational tours for the limited number of U.S. citizens who could obtain Department of Treasury permits to visit Cuba. Several of these included programs in popular Cuban dance, sustainable agriculture, and

⁶³⁷ Tamargo and Riaza, 37. See also McManus, 169-170.

Yoruba culture.⁶³⁸ The same programs were, of course, available to citizens of other countries. By the twenty-first century, Paradiso was offering tours with titles such as “This is My Music,” “Cuba: The Salsa Paradise,” “In the Heart of Cuba: History, Nature, and Culture,” “Cuba: Form and Color,” and “Art and Tradition in the Cuban Cuisine.”⁶³⁹ Other companies offered baseball, classic cars, and May Day getaways.

Aside from Cuba’s oldest and most notable Catholic churches and sites, other testaments to the country’s rich religious heritage were infrequently presented to the island’s visitors during the 1960s and 1970s; this deemphasizing of the country’s religious heritage continued into the 1980s. In 1985, Suzanne Garment recounted an experience in Cuba that illustrates the government’s desire to maintain control over how foreigners conceptualized Cuban identity: “...when we ask to see the largest synagogue in Havana, our guide says he does not know where it is and forgets to find out.”⁶⁴⁰ By the post-Soviet era though, opportunities for religious tourism expanded greatly in Cuba. Pope John Paul II’s 1998 visit to Cuba certainly contributed to this shift. Yet it was not only Catholic tourism that expanded during this era. Santeria brought people to the island. Cuba’s Jewish Diaspora returned in large numbers. The Hotel Raquel in Habana Vieja began catering specifically to Jewish tourists, offering kosher meals and tours focusing on this aspect of the country’s religious heritage.

Private firms and groups have also taken advantage of the broad interest in Cuba to develop themed tours of Cuba. Cuba’s foreign investors, such as the hotel chain Sol

⁶³⁸ Promotional Material for Marazul Tours Inc., “1994 Programs to Cuba.”

⁶³⁹ Paradiso Website, n.d., <www.paradiso.soycubano.com/p_especializadosi.asp> (February 28, 2007).

⁶⁴⁰ Suzanne Garment, “Cuban Politics: Living with the Lies,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 19, 1985.

Meliá, utilized strategies similar to those of the state, highlighting Cuba’s sun, sand, and colonial heritage. They frequently utilized images of beaches, sunsets, and palm trees. Firms ran ads in magazines, on television, and the Internet. One can also find them within Cuba – in the airport, in one’s hotel, and even on sugar packets. At least one international organization has attempted to lure visitors to Cuba based on the island’s Revolutionary identity. This was the case with the Global Solidarity School; they offered their first classes in Cuba in the spring of 2007.⁶⁴¹

While the state and its foreign partners spent large sums on promoting the idea of Cuba abroad (not to mention on the island), people running *casas particulares*, for example, used some similar strategies in order to lure guests to their homes. Much like the Cuban state did in areas such as Habana Vieja and Trinidad, many *casa* owners also focused on the ‘colonial’ aspects of their dwellings. Individuals tied their enterprises, if not explicitly to the colonial style prevalent throughout Havana, to the city’s historic character in a more general sense. Take, for example, the following phrases found on several *casas*’ business cards: “Havana Colonial;”⁶⁴² “in the historic center of the old havana;”⁶⁴³ “in the historical center of Havana;”⁶⁴⁴ “casco historico;”⁶⁴⁵ “Casa Colonial con Balcon vista a la Calle;”⁶⁴⁶ and “Casa Colonial en el [heart] de Centro Habana.”⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴¹ Marcel Hatch, <marcel@cubafriends.ca> “Re: May Day Global Solidarity School in Cuba,” February 16, 2007, personal e-mail (February 28, 2007).

⁶⁴² See business cards for Migdalia Caraballe Martin, Olga Lopez Hernandez, and Noemi Moreno. Obtained February 2006.

⁶⁴³ See business card for Luis Fornaris Perez and Mirtha Garcel. Obtained February 2006.

⁶⁴⁴ See business card for Lourdes Roque. Obtained February 2006.

⁶⁴⁵ See business card for Eliberto Barrios Suarez. Obtained February 2006.

⁶⁴⁶ See business card for José Ricardo García. Obtained February 2006.

⁶⁴⁷ See business card for José Ricardo García. Obtained January 2007.

In their attempts to lure tourists to their establishments, *casa* owners began to employ another strategy frequently utilized by the state. Many began to utilize English within their marketing tactics. Once again, business cards provide an excellent example of this trend. Table 4.6 highlights ten business cards that were collected randomly in Habana Vieja during February of 2006. Each card was either written totally in English or contained several English translations. That is to say, following the name of the renters or the title of the house, the next words are written in English.

Table 4.6. *Casa Particular* Business Cards

<u>Renter's Name</u>	<u>English Words</u>
Martha e Isidra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent
Eliberto Barrios Suarez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent • Comfort, Private, Security
Luis Fornaris Perez Mirtha Garcel (Chicha)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooms for Rent: • Conditioned Air, Room of private bathroom and hot water • The best choice: In the historic center of the old Havana
Lourdes Roque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent • It is found in the historical center of Havana
Migdalia Caraballe Martin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent • Air Condicioned
Ana y Surama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent
Rafaela y Pepe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Room • Air Condition • All Comfort
Olga Lopez Hernandez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent
Noemi Moreno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent
Miriam Soto Gerardo Cardenas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for Rent

Source: All business cards were obtained in February 2006. (Author's collection.) Amongst these ten business cards, the primacy of English is present in seven of them.

Only on the cards of Rafaela and Pepe, Olga Lopez, and Noemi Moreno does Spanish text precede that which is written in English.⁶⁴⁸

While business cards are useful to distribute to foreigners who are already in Cuba, the Internet has allowed *casa* owners (as well as restaurateurs, language teachers, sex workers, etc.) to advertise their rooms in a global forum. Yet Internet access within the realm of tourism has only further accentuated the tension between those inside and outside of Cuba's tourist economy. Moreover, it has given some *casa* owners an unfair advantage over others. In privileging certain Cubans over others, the economic opportunity offered by the Internet has further eroded the egalitarian mission of the Revolution. As noted earlier in this chapter, regular Internet access allowed Concha to correspond with many of the people who saw her *casa* featured in the 2000 edition of Lonely Planet's *Cuba*. Unlike many of the *casa* owners I spoke with, her *casa* was full on a regular basis.

Sights, Displays, and Spectacles

During the 1980s, before tourists began to flood the island, there was a distinct tension between the 'Cuba' that was presented to tourists and the actual 'Cuba.' Yet as more people visited the island, the government found it more difficult to control what aspects of Cuban society and culture that foreigners saw while visiting the island. Hiding the 'real Cuba' from view became a challenge, particularly in light of the growing numbers who did not arrive as part of packaged tours. These 'independent travelers' strolled the capital's streets and elsewhere largely at their leisure. While these visitor's

⁶⁴⁸ On the card of Rafaela and Pepe, the words "*casa hospedaje*" precede "guest room." On the cards of Olga Lopez and Noemi Moreno, the words "*renta de habitacion*" precede "room for rent."

actions were difficult to control, planners nonetheless strove to provide them with a clear sense of Revolutionary Cuban identity. Yet this could be difficult at times. Many of these individuals were not in Cuba to listen to lectures or visit Cuba's seemingly endless selection of museums. Nevertheless, the state did its best to make sure that there were a wide variety of Revolutionary sights, displays, and spectacles for independent-minded travelers to encounter.

Many of these sights, for example, the city's collection of public art, spontaneous musical displays, its varying architectural forms, and its multitude of statues and memorials, were free. Public art, by its very definition, is free for all to view – and Cuba is full of it. *Callejón de Hammel*, for example, is a world-renowned two-block long outdoor mural. While Salvador González created the artwork, the alley also features sculptures and sacred spaces for Afro-Cuban deities. Some visual displays aimed at tourists (as well as Cubans) are less art than they are propaganda. An abundance of such displays (see 4.26-4.28) can also be found encircling the U.S. Interests Section in Vedado.



Figures 4.26-4.27. Political Street Art from Havana. June 2005. (Author's collection.)



Figure 4.28. Political Street Art from Havana. June 2005. (Author’s collection.)

Public displays such as these have served another function for the Cuban government. They contribute to the formation of Cuba’s martyr identity. The U.S. provides an enemy not only for Cubans to rally against, but foreigners as well. This strategy was also employed throughout the island’s hotels, not with art, but with murals dedicated to “The Five” – a group of Cubans being held on charges of espionage by the U.S. government. Even posh Varadero resorts such as the Quatro Palmas prominently displayed posters calling for their release (see 4.29).



Figure 4.29. “The Five” Propaganda. (Author’s collection.)

Music, like art, also serves as a cultural marker. Cuba is a country with strong musical traditions, and tourists have access to various public performances of Cuban music. In some cases, public art and music have actually been intertwined in Cuba, and once again, *Callejón de Hammel* provides an example. On Sundays, free Afro-Cuban music is on offer along with the art.

Some cultural displays encompassed far larger areas. Just like promoters in the pre-Revolutionary era, the Revolutionary government has continued to market the entire district of Habana Vieja as a tourist attraction. In 1982, the entire old city was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This helped to validate the colonial architecture found in Habana Vieja not only as an important sight for tourists to see, but as a marker of Cuban identity as well. State planners, individual Cubans, and foreign firms have all utilized the island's colonial architecture in order to market the island to foreigners.

In recent years, tourists have been confronted with other architectural influences that speak volumes about the changing nature of *Cubanidad*. In his examination of shopping and urban tourism in China, Alan Lew describes the process of hypermodernization. He points to Wangfujing Street in Beijing as an area that has utilized “postmodern architectural designs that incorporate technology, minimalism, and futurist elements.”⁶⁴⁹ While Habana Vieja will likely never succumb to such intense modernization as Lew's examples in Beijing, Shanghai, or Kunming, certain areas of have already undergone a process of more subdued hypermodernization. Across the street from the Hotel Ambos Mundos where Hemingway lived for a short time, and

⁶⁴⁹ Alan A. Lew, “Shopping and Urban Tourism in the Chinese City,” in *Tourism, Power and Space* (London: Routledge, 2007), 162.

sandwiched between several other colonial structures, the Cuban state has constructed a modern building that clearly stands out as non-colonial (see 4.30-4.31).



Figures 4.30-4.31. Hypermodernism in Habana Vieja. (Author's collection.)

Moreover, beginning in the mid-1980s, the large presence of European firms within Cuba's tourist economy has helped to promote European-style architecture in some areas, for example, Varadero. Previously, Revolutionary ideology had influenced the construction of hotels. Castro noted that this had been a mistake. Early Varadero hotels often looked like Soviet-style high-rise apartment buildings, or as Sol Meliá's founder deemed them, "vertical shoe boxes."⁶⁵⁰ The size of guest rooms in these hotels had been minimized in order to provide larger public spaces on the hotel grounds. European hotel chains such as Sol Meliá and Guitart brought European designs to the island. Many of these developers not only constructed larger guest rooms that fit better

⁶⁵⁰ Gabriel Escarrer Julia quoted in Evan Ward, "Cuba: Prodigal Sun" (working paper, May 2005), 23.

with Western preferences, they took a low-density approach, incorporating aspects of Cuba's natural environment with groups of smaller buildings.⁶⁵¹

Cultural displays could also be found within some Cuban hotels. The authors of a paper titled "*Entorno del Hotel Habana Libre y su importancia para el turismo*" claim that from 1959 until the time of their research (1997), the Hotel Habana Libre contributed to the development of culture, art, and politics in the surrounding neighborhood. Yet one of the authors' examples, three murals painted by Tomás Sánchez, are on the twenty-fifth floor of the hotel in the bar "Turquino."⁶⁵² The authors do not acknowledge the cost of visiting the hotel's twenty-fifth floor. In 1996, it was "several dollars."⁶⁵³ In 2000, after the name had been changed to "Cabaret Turquino," it was fifteen dollars.⁶⁵⁴ To enter the "Salon Turquino" in 2007, the price was ten to twenty dollars depending on the night.⁶⁵⁵ Like many of Cuba's tourist offerings, this bar – and thus, the hotel's supposed cultural contribution – is beyond the reach of most Cubans. The authors of this piece also noted works of other artists that are spread throughout the hotel. Since the early 1990s though, these have also been inaccessible for most Cubans. Much like other hotels, the Libre remained under close watch by a number of guards, and getting in for Cubans was difficult. The manifestations of Cuban identity found within were part of Cuba's 'tourist world,' doing little to develop culture, art, and politics in the surrounding neighborhood.

⁶⁵¹ Ward, 22-23.

⁶⁵² Angel Luis Rios Mendez, Ricardo Pérez Hernández, Idalberto García López, Francisco Piloto Vega, "*Entorno del Hotel Habana Libre y su importancia para el turismo*" (Trabajo Investigativo Panorama de la Cultura, Escuela de altos Estudios de Hotelería y Turismo, 1997), 12-13.

⁶⁵³ Perrottet and Biondi, 144.

⁶⁵⁴ McAuslan and Norman, 121.

⁶⁵⁵ Eliot Greenspan, *Frommer's Cuba*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, 2007), 123.

As the number of independent travelers in Cuba grew, the government also published guidebooks to direct tourists to the sights that it believed to be most representative of Cuban identity. In order to remain competitive with the rapidly expanding number of non-official guidebooks, tourism planners had to be sure that their guides had a significant quantity of information. *Cuba Sí*, a guidebook published by the Cuba's Ministry of Tourism in 2003, offered information on a wide range of recommended sights. The book's authors included expected sights, for example, Havana's castles and fortresses, the neighborhood of Habana Vieja, the house where Martí was born, the Hemingway Museum, and the Tropicana nightclub. They also included sights and spectacles that had not been in line with Revolutionary ideas regarding Cuban society throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and even into the 1980s, for example, a number of churches, several locations where Santería was widely practiced, John Lennon Park (Beatles music was once banned in Revolutionary Cuba), Havana's Chinatown, and the fifteen meter statue of Jesus Christ overlooking the Bahía de la Habana. Of course, the guidebook also suggested visiting the most important sights that dealt with Revolutionary history, the Museo de la Revolución in Havana, the capital's Plaza de la Revolución, and numerous sights dedicated to Che Guevara in Santa Clara and elsewhere.⁶⁵⁶

Guidebooks published outside of Cuba did not exclude any of these sites. In fact, in terms of the major sights and spectacles, there was not an immense difference between state and foreign guidebooks. Nevertheless, as was noted in the above section on maps,

⁶⁵⁶ Cucchi, various. In total, the authors dedicated over seventy pages to writing about Revolutionary struggles and achievements, briefly touching on topics ranging from dance and architecture to biotechnology and health tourism.

one of the most significant differences was the inclusion of privately run establishments in foreign published guides. Beyond this, guidebooks published by Lonely Planet, Moon Handbooks, Eyewitness Travel Guides, and Frommer's offered (and continue to offer) a vision of Cuba's tourist offerings that is strikingly similar to that which is put forth by the state. Many of them also dedicate significant space to discussion of the Revolutionary government and its achievements.

Much like in the pre-Revolutionary era though, these foreign-published guidebooks offered information on the steamier side of Cuban tourism – information the state was unwilling to provide. *Cuba Sí*, for example, contains no information on prostitution; Lonely Planet, Moon, and Frommer's all do. Eyewitness' Cuba guidebook from 2004 contains only the briefest mention of prostitution on the island. This is likely one of the reasons why it was the only foreign-published guidebook being sold at Havana's major tourist shops in 2007.⁶⁵⁷

Tourism, Cuba's Culture War, and the U.S.

Revolutionary leaders had always been concerned with the ways in which foreign tourists could shape Cuba. Their worries grew during the 1980s and were compounded further in the post-Soviet era. While U.S. tourists have yet to regain their place as the largest groups of foreigners in Cuba, many aspects of U.S. culture remain a conspicuous part of Cuba's tourist world. In some ways, it is impossible to erase the cultural imprint made by U.S. tourists in the pre-Revolutionary era. U.S. inspired hotels and taxis could not easily be thrown away. Nor would it have made sense to knock down the former

⁶⁵⁷ Past editions of other foreign-published guidebooks, often left behind by tourists (particularly those from the U.S. who do not wish to risk being implicated at Customs for having visited Cuba), were widely available on the secondary book market at this time.

Hotel Havana Hilton. Instead, officials changed its name. Only non-essential components of the industry, for example the Maine Monument, could be physically changed.

As tourism in Cuba grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Cuban planners did not specifically highlight the presence of U.S. culture on the island.⁶⁵⁸ Despite their intentions and hopes, they had little control over what foreign authors wrote about the island's past. Independently published guidebooks reminded Cuba's visitors that the A description of the Hotel Riviera from a 1985 guidebook is illustrative. "Shortly before the Revolution, the Americans put money into pink bathrooms and lilac king-sized beds and had the 22 storeys [sic] painted the colour of dollar bills: a dazzling monument to an era."⁶⁵⁹ According to this account, foreigners would encounter an indelible imprint that had been left by the U.S. in Cuba.

By the post-Soviet era, guidebooks were tying Cuba to the U.S. in a myriad of ways beyond hotels and cars. Insight Guides' first edition on Cuba (1996) features a photo of two young Cuban men sitting in front of some of Havana's abundant street art (see 4.32). The scene features the image of a Revolutionary cartoon character as well as those of two from the U.S. – Bart Simpson and Wiley Coyote. By showing this photo, the author of this British-based guidebook was making a contemporary connection between Cuba and the U.S. The links between the two countries were not depicted as part of the island's past, but instead, of its present.

⁶⁵⁸ Cuban promoters actually tried to create a counterpoint to the Miami brand of tourism. In the early 1980s, Cuban planners actively courted Mexican and Argentine tourists based on hopes that visitors from these countries would rather take their holidays in a Spanish-speaking country as opposed to one that spoke English. Cite this.

⁶⁵⁹ Michael Schweizer, "Sunburn and Socialism," in Rann and Geide, 50.

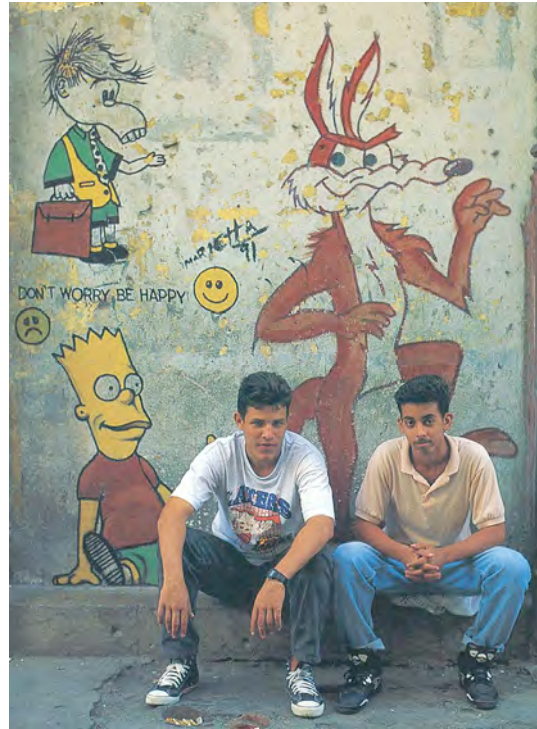


Figure 4.32. U.S. Popular Culture Icons in Cuba. (Perrottet and Biondi, 18.)

The Cuban government highlighted contemporary links between the two countries in other ways. In fact, they actively promoted one of the most controversial links between the island and its northern neighbor, the U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay. The base has been cast as an affront to Cuba's sovereignty since it was established in the early twentieth century. While the city of Guantánamo was frequented by U.S. servicemen in the pre-Revolutionary era, and thus gained a reputation as a haven for drinking and prostitution, it never developed as a popular destination for mainstream tourists. The enormous growth of tourism in post-Soviet Cuba has made it quite difficult to ignore the city of over 200,000 people and what role it can play in the industry's development. Guantánamo lies between two popular tourist destinations, Santiago de Cuba and Baracoa. This has offered the government an opportunity to economically profit from the base. State published guidebooks such as *Cuba Sí*, as well as guidebooks

published abroad by Lonely Planet and Moon Handbooks, have highlighted the base as a significant tourist attraction.⁶⁶⁰ Roughly forty kilometers southeast of the city, one can climb a 320-meter hill to find the *Mirador de Malones*. For a charge of five convertible pesos (as of 2004), visitors could take in a sweeping view of the Naval base. There is a scale model of the base, as well as a telescope that was made in Kentucky. From the viewpoint, one can see U.S. cars, American flags, and the heavily guarded perimeter. Visitors are also informed that the U.S. has created the biggest mine field in the Western Hemisphere in Cuba.⁶⁶¹ Like many other tourist sights in Revolutionary Cuba, this one was meant to reinforce Cuba's status as a martyr. Visitors were encouraged to witness imperialism first-hand.

A clear U.S. influence on consumer culture in Cuba's tourist world also became more apparent throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. Despite the trade embargo, U.S. products have become conspicuous within Cuba's tourist world. Centers of international activity such as the Hotel Habana Libre and the Nacional serve Coca-Cola, arguably the trademark beverage of the U.S. Many stores throughout Havana and other cities sell U.S. liquors and cigarettes. Varadero has a store that only sells merchandise manufactured by New Balance, a U.S. company headquartered in Boston. A number of other shops sell Nike sneakers and other brand-name products explicitly associated with the U.S.

In the *Feria de la Artesanía*, one of Havana's largest markets specifically aimed at foreign shoppers, U.S. inspired products abound. Some are more surprising than others. In 2006, I purchased a coaster featuring the image of James Bond (see 4.33).

⁶⁶⁰ *Cuba Si*, 215. Sainsbury, 437. Baker, 868-869.

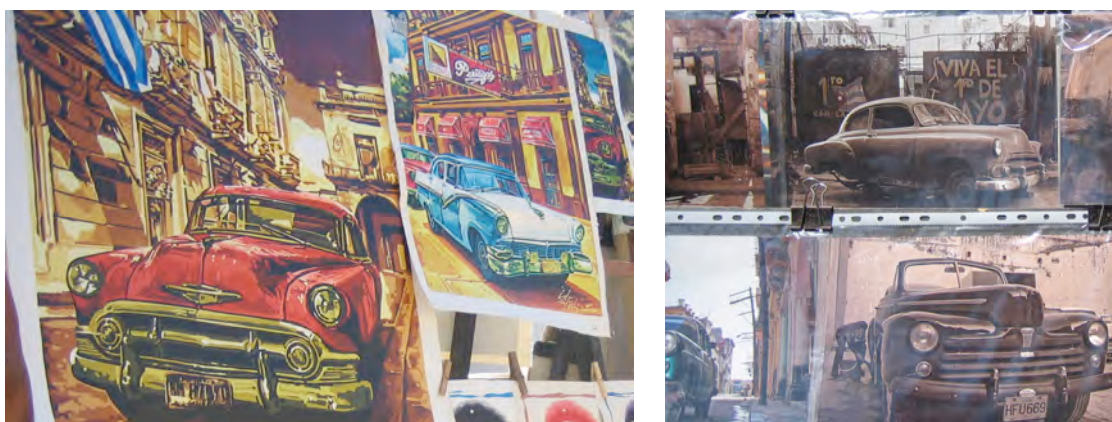
⁶⁶¹ Gorry, 395-396.

While Bond is British, he is a renowned Hollywood icon and a bold symbol of Western imperialism.



Figure 4.33. James Bond Souvenir Coaster. (Author's collection.)

Other U.S. symbols are available for purchase in the market as well. Coca-Cola cans were fashioned into a variety of curios. Most conspicuous perhaps though, were images of classic U.S. cars on Havana streets. Countless paintings and photographs highlighted this decades-old connection (see 4.34-4.35).



Figures 4.34-4.35. Classic U.S. Car Artwork. (Author's collection.)

Cementing this seemingly timeless connection, independent guidebook writers have continued to highlight the links between Cuba and the U.S. For example, the Hotel Riviera is described in Lonely Planet's fourth edition of *Cuba* as follows: "Built by US

Mafia boss Meyer Lansky in 1957, this hotel oozes character – all the spacious lobby lacks is a lounge lizard in a sharkskin suit.”⁶⁶²

Amidst these multiple connections, U.S. tourists remained conspicuously absent from Cuba. While the Carter administration had temporarily eased travel restrictions, the U.S. government continued to prevent citizens from visiting the island throughout the 1980s. The U.S. government reevaluated its ban on travel to Cuba once again following the fall of the Soviet Union. By 1993, lawmakers had established a clear policy, in large part based on the Cuban Democracy Act of the previous year. They found no reason to open travel channels between the two countries. According to Ambassador Alexander F. Watson, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs:

The U.S. government has no desire to keep its citizens from learning about the country of Cuba, its people and its culture, but we do want to deny the Cuban government hard currency. We do not want to prolong the suffering of the Cuban people under a dictatorship, which could happen were the Cuban government to receive the economic windfall open travel would provide.⁶⁶³

Over the last sixteen years, not only have U.S. citizens continued to learn little of Cuban culture, the country’s business community has lost valuable opportunities to profit tourism in Cuba.

⁶⁶² Sainsbury, 123.

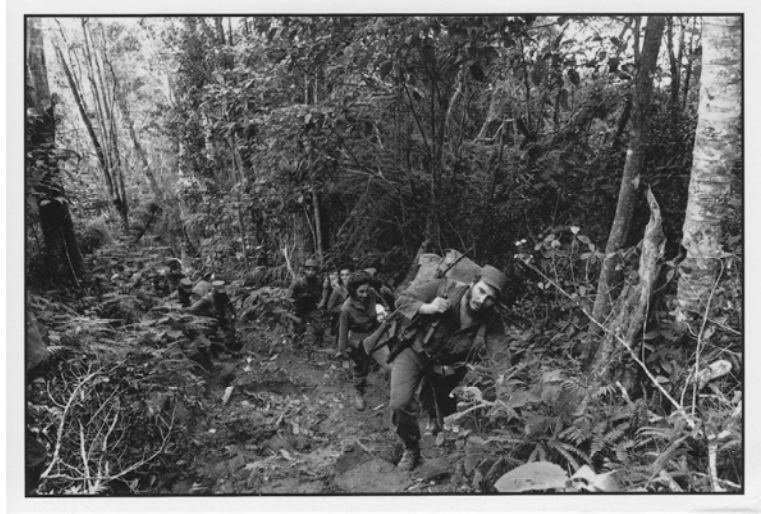
⁶⁶³ “U.S. Policy and the Future of Cuba: The Cuban Democracy Act and U.S. Travel to Cuba,” 22. In light of the testimony brought before the U.S. House of Representatives, a decision to allow for tourism would have been shocking. Members of several subcommittees heard the account of Paula Valiente, an Afrocuban opposition leader exiled in November of 1993. She spoke of being beaten, clubbed, and dragged through the street; of bruised kidneys and urinating blood; of losing her family through her exile. Putting aside any questions regarding the legitimacy of her account, it is unsurprising that U.S. lawmakers were not anxious to extend economic relief to a regime that perpetrated such acts. See Ibid.

Post-Soviet Souvenirs: Mass Market Identities

Much like Cuba's hotels and other tourist offerings, the island's souvenir market reinforced the economic divide between foreigners and Cubans. In general though, little changed within Cuba's souvenir market from the 1970s through the 1980s, shops offered tourists a slightly larger supply of wares, but in general the selection was extremely poor. There was still plenty of rum and cigars, but tourists could not expect to do the type of high-end shopping in Cuba that they were able to do in places such as the Bahamas, Cancun, or Puerto Rico. During the 1980s and into the early 1990s, planners did their best to offer visitors a wide variety of mementos from their visits, but it would take until the mid-1990s for extensive shopping options to return.

Much as in other periods, postcards remained popular in post-Soviet Cuba. Thousands of tourists exported these visual markers of Cuban identity before they left the island. Almost every tourist attraction sold postcards, as did every airport, hotel, bus station, train station, and bookstore. Restaurants, newsstands, post offices – postcards appeared everywhere. When possible, postcards reinforced the primacy of the Revolution within Cuban society. The most commonly sold postcards feature snapshots from the earliest years of Cuban Revolution. Six examples are shown on the following pages (see 4.36-4.41). These images are black and white reproductions of actual photos taken during either the battle waged against the Batista government or the first few years of Revolutionary rule in Cuba. Many portray a young Fidel Castro, just as many a young Che Guevara. This series of postcards attempts to send several messages to tourists. The first is that Fidel, Che, and other Revolutionary soldiers made extreme sacrifices. They and others are shown trekking through the Sierra Maestra Mountains; Che is shown with

a broken arm. The second message is that the Revolution enjoyed wide support from the Cuban population. Some postcards show the sweeping crowds that greeted Revolutionary leaders upon their arrival in Havana. Che and his daughter smile amongst Cuban soldiers in another. Finally, this series of postcards humanizes the Revolutionary heroes. Several postcards from this series show Che golfing; he and Fidel relax while fishing in another.



Figures 4.36-4.37. Postcard of Castro in the Sierra Maestra. Postcard of Che with Broken Arm. (Author's collection.)



Figures 4.38-4.41 (clockwise from top left). Postcard of Che with his Daughter and Troops. Postcard of Crowds in Havana, 1959. Postcard of Fidel and Che Fishing. Postcard of Che Golfing. (Author's collection.)

Beyond postcards, souvenirs linked in some way to Che are arguably some of the most common as well as some of the most popular. In the *Feria* and other souvenir shops, one can find Che artwork, Che postcards, Che t-shirts (see 4.42), Che berets, money with Che's image, as well as books on Che. Cultural anthropologist Ariana

Hernández-Reguant argues that the intense promotion of Che to Cuba's tourists, particularly Che's most notorious image (featured on the yellow t-shirt in the bottom left of Figure 4.42), has illustrated the government's changing position on property rights.



Figure 4.42. Photo of Che T-shirts in a Cuban Souvenir Shop. (Author's collection.)

The state supported photographer Alberto Diaz Gutierrez's (known simply as "Korda" in Cuba) copyright infringement lawsuit against Smirnoff vodka, even though he took the photo while working for a state-run newspaper and thus had questionable rights to the image. Hernández-Reguant explains that the collapse of the Cuban economy in the early 1990s, coupled with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of foreign tourists, helped prompt the Revolutionary government to reevaluate cultural production. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the state began to defend artists' cultural property (much of which was sold to tourists), which allowed them to profit from their trades. She points out that the state has guarded access to the cultural professions, excluding certain groups and demanding support from any artist seeking government support.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶⁴ After several years, Korda finally won his case in 2000. Ariana Hernández-Reguant, "Copyrighting Che: Art and Authorship under Cuban Late Socialism," *Public Culture*, 16(1): 4-5, 23.

Markets such as Havana's *Feria de la Artesanía* offered foreigners in Cuba the opportunity to purchase a wide range of items beyond postcards and those featuring Che's likeness. Many of the market's stalls are overflowing with creative works such as paintings, photographs, and statues. Works of art have not only been some of the most commonly purchased, but they are also some of the most representative of Cuban identity. Amongst the souvenir markets, shops, and stores that cater to tourists, there is little variety in the available art (see 4.43-4.44). Classic U.S. cars are one of the most popular subjects, as are notable establishments such as La Bodeguita del Medio.



Figures 4.43-4.44. Typical Cuban Tourist Art. (Author's collection.)

The works of some artists though, did not fit the standard mold. Their creators did not portray kitsch tourist sights or strive put a wholly positive face on life in Cuba. The works of Lisette Padilla provide an example of this. I met her in Havana's *Feria* in March of 2006. Her photographs illustrated a side of life in Cuba that many tourists

never encounter. Those shown below (see 4.45-4.47) are filled with dilapidated cars, trash-strewn streets, and crumbling buildings.



Figures 4.45-4.46. Non-Typical Cuban Tourist Art. Purchased from Lisette Padilla, March 2006. (Author's collection.)



Figure 4.47. Non-Typical Cuban Tourist Art. Purchased from Lisette Padilla, March 2006. (Author's collection.)

Despite these visions of hardship, her photographs all contain a small piece of Revolutionary iconography. Figure 4.45 contains a small depiction of Che and the words “*Hasta victoria siempre*” (Until victory always) in the upper right corner. Figure 4.46 contains the words “*Viva Cuba*” as well as the logo for Cuba's Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. Figure 4.47 contains a small Cuban flag in the upper left corner.

There are several possible explanations as to why Cuban authorities have allowed images such as these to be sold to tourists. The most obvious reason is due to the fact that they all contain small markers of Cuba's Revolutionary identity. Yet this alone is not a sufficient explanation. Planners can (and do) bombard tourists with Revolutionary propaganda at multiple points over the course of their visit. In this context, these small

additional messages are rather unthreatening. Another possibility is that the state has recognized that more and more foreign visitors are arriving in Cuba with hopes of witnessing authentic scenes from daily life. Padilla's photos allow them to witness this Cuban reality without actually experiencing it. In fact, her work can help to maintain separation between Cubans and foreigners, discouraging the latter group from interacting with 'ordinary' citizens as they pursue their own photo opportunities. A third explanation is that Cuban authorities have come to view such images as yet another component of the state's widely promoted notion of Cuban martyrdom. The above photographs perfectly reflect what is perhaps the most commonly uttered phrase in Cuba today: "*No es fácil.*" (It's not easy.) They symbolize the Cuban people's resilience in the face of U.S. aggression. In several ways then, Padilla's photos represent the deep tensions that have emerged in Cuba since arrivals began to steadily increase throughout the 1980s and particularly the 1990s.

Conclusion: Identity in Flux

During the 1980s, as it became clear that U.S. tourists would not soon return to Cuba, Revolutionary planners identified a range of replacement markets. They were hopeful that these new tourists could provide the country with the hard currency needed to service its debts and to pursue projects independent of the Soviet Union's economic yoke. Thus, even had the Soviet Union and Cuba's preferential trading networks not collapsed, the Revolutionary government would have undoubtedly continued to develop the island's tourism industry, albeit at a less intense pace.

In the 1980s, and increasingly in the 1990s, foreign tourists have experienced increasing levels of freedom while in Cuba. The same cannot be said for Cubans. The

majority of them have been made into second-class citizens. Just as had been the case in the 1960s and 1970s, in recent decades the Cuban government continued to utilize tourism as an arena for focusing on the primacy of the Revolution between 1980 and 2007. This was evident within the government's explanation of currency exchange, the realm of postcards, and even displays in hotel lobbies.

In some cases the growing intensity of tourism development that followed the fall of the Soviet Union seemed to overshadow these continuities. Much as in the pre-Revolutionary era, tension reemerged as the dominant theme within Cuba's tourist world during the post-Soviet period. This was particularly visible in the growing inaccessibility of Cuba's tourism infrastructure for Cubans as well as the dual economy that developed around the industry. It could also be seen in the mapping of Havana, the increasingly unequal treatment of Afrocubans, the entertainment divide, and the onerous restrictions placed upon entrepreneurs working in the tourism sector.

Chapter Five – Conclusion:
U.S. Perceptions, the Future of Cuban Identity, and Reliving the Past

This dissertation has illustrated the historic and continuing importance of tourism in Cuba. Since 1945 tourism has provided the Cuban state, Cuban and foreign companies, as well as individuals in Cuba and abroad with a powerful tool to influence the formation of Cuban identity. In a number of instances, state planners have had to modify their strategies in order to meet the expectations of foreigners. These expectations, often cultivated by both Cuban and foreign firms, guidebook writers and others, have led to unique realities for Cuban citizens. Before and throughout the Revolutionary era, the state relegated Cubans to ‘second class’ citizens, undermining their freedoms in order to project certain images of Cuban society and culture to foreigners.

As this dissertation has argued, the Cuban state faced a number of competing voices from the tourist realm. At times, state planners and the private sector presented tourists with a very similar vision of Cuban society and culture. In other cases, foreign publications such as travelogues, magazines, and guidebooks presented a view of the nation that ran contrary to these constructions, one that was sometimes unflattering and sometimes unprofitable. Before 1959, these groups’ respective constructions of Cuban identity were almost exclusively directed towards the U.S. tourist market. Since that time, Soviet, Italian, and Canadian tourists have all spent time as the country’s most important market. Nevertheless, it is almost certain that U.S. visitors will once again invade the island (although not necessarily anytime soon). U.S. tourists will likely never represent over 90% of Cuba’s visitors as they did in the pre-Revolutionary era, but it is conceivable that they could provide 50-60% of the island’s guests in the first several

years following the end of the travel ban that has prohibited them from doing so for almost half a century. Because of this, it is worth noting Cuba's historic place within the U.S. imagination. After all, millions of U.S. citizens will likely attempt to visit Cuba as soon as it is legally possible.⁶⁶⁵

The histories of Cuba and the U.S. had been inextricably linked for decades prior to 1945. Cuba's War of Independence became entwined with turn of the twentieth century U.S. overseas expansion. As U.S. politicians and the media proclaimed the need to help free Cuba from Spanish tyranny, the island immediately came to occupy a prominent place within the country's imagination, particularly as its northern neighbor replaced Spain, albeit as a neo-colonial overlord. Consider a 1907 postcard (see 5.1) that was manufactured, purchased, and mailed from within the United States.



Figure 5.1. Uncle Sam Postcard. (Cuba; American Intervention, 1907. Postcards, CHC UM.)

⁶⁶⁵ An International Monetary Fund (IMF) study estimated that up to 3.5 million U.S. tourists could visit Cuba annually if the travel ban was lifted. As of 2007 though, there were roughly 55,000 hotel rooms on the island, only enough to absorb another 500,000 tourists. See Jeff Franks, "Cuba Prepares for Influx of U.S. Tourists," April 12, 2009, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSN1232740720090412?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=10112&sp=true>> (August 2, 2009).

It features an iconic image, a fatherly Uncle Sam surrounded by child-like representations of Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, “Porto Rico” [sic], and Hawaii. According to this depiction, Cuba and the others needed the U.S; not only that, Cuba was just another piece of an expanding U.S. empire. Perhaps the notion that Cuba was simply one of many underdeveloped, tourist friendly islands that were similarly susceptible to U.S. domination is what has made it so easy for U.S. tourists to abandon Cuba since 1959. The dualism that afforded U.S. tourists their privileged status in the pre-Revolutionary era was replicated in other places throughout the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Despite the severing of ties between Washington and Havana, Cuba has remained conspicuous within the U.S. imagination. The government and media warned of a Communist takeover on the island throughout 1959. Scores of reports about the growing Soviet presence on the island foreshadowed events such as the failed Bay of Pigs invasion and the nearly calamitous Cuban Missile Crisis. Castro’s bellicosity in the face of perceived (and in some cases very real) U.S. aggression continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Later, the Caribbean isle became part of what President Reagan proclaimed as the Soviet Union’s “Evil Empire.” Moreover, throughout these years the Cuban-American community has worked fastidiously to promote the image of a repressive and backward island. Perhaps more significantly, they have promulgated themselves (albeit from Miami) as the ‘real’ Cuba, as the sole protectors of *Cubanidad*.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁶ A Cuban-American postcard from the 1980s is particularly enlightening. It features a reproduction of a 1977 work by Orlando Bosch, painted while he was in a Venezuelan prison. The image itself, which underlies a quote from Abraham Lincoln, is cast as a reflection of Bosch’s patriotism. This belies the great divide between Cuban versus Cuban-American identity. Even though Bosch planned several deadly terrorist attacks

They have at times tried to export this notion to the rest of the world. A postcard produced by the Asociación de Espirituanos en el Exilio illustrates this. It proclaimed, “Cuba yes...Communism no!” not only in Spanish and English, but in French, German, and Polish as well (see 5.2).



Figure 5.2. *¡Cuba sí...Comunismo no!* Postcard. (Cuba; National Emblems. Postcards, CHC UM.)

Despite this deep rift, and even though Washington has still not reestablished relations with Cuba (much like it has with former as well as still Communist countries), the island has already reemerged within the U.S. imagination as a dualistic world where Western tourists can lead a temporarily privileged existence. Consider the 2002 film *Die Another Day* in which James Bond travels to a contemporary Revolutionary Cuba. As he searches for a suspected North Korean terrorist amidst bikini clad girls and classic U.S. cars, Bond makes his way to a cigar factory. The manager, an impressively dressed gentleman named Raoul, utters several phrases to intimate his loyalty to the Revolution.

against Cuba (not to mention its visitors), members of the Cuban-American community elevated him to the level of hero. Meanwhile, Bosch was – and continues to be – reviled on the island. In the minds of U.S. citizens, Miami and Cuba are often times synonymous. Yet this postcard indicates that these communities are anything but similar. See Artist, Cuban; Bosch, Orlando; Reproduction. Postcards, CHC UM.

“I love my country Mr. Bond.” “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” Notwithstanding these proclamations, he quickly reveals that he is a British sleeper agent, and more significantly, the dualism that still seemingly elevates foreigners above Cubans. “Favor’s called in; some dollars spread about.” He speaks of a gene therapy clinic that specializes in “increasing the life expectancy of our beloved leaders, and of course, the richest Westerners.” Within this depiction, the island clearly exists as a place where foreign visitors have access to the best of what the island can offer.

This characterization of the island also suggests to U.S. viewers that they would be able enjoy themselves in many of the same ways that they had in the pre-Revolutionary era. As Bond pursues his man, he encounters a group of holidaymakers at a seaside bar. An array of beer bottles and wine glasses hints at their level of inebriation. One of them haughtily barks at the waiter: “Now round up some more girls, and take them to room forty-two.” Hollywood has made it clear that alcohol and women are both still readily available in Cuba.

As tourism continues to promote a dualism much like that which is depicted in *Die Another Day*, the connections between past and present become obviously clear. In general, foreigners visiting Cuba have always enjoyed a far more privileged existence than the island’s residents. In the pre-Revolutionary era, Cuban legislation frequently validated foreigners (particularly from the U.S.) as ‘first-class’ citizens. Later, honored guests of the Revolutionary government such as Ernesto Cardenal and Jean Paul Sartre were attended to in a fashion that would have been unfathomable for Cubans who faced shortages and rationing on a daily basis. As foreigners flush with hard currency increasingly began to reappear in Cuba during the 1980s, citizens slowly found

themselves being shouldered out of the island's hotels. Following the social crisis of the Special Period, they never regained access to the overwhelming majority of these. The state did its best to not only bar Cubans from the hotels, bars, and clubs frequented by tourists, but to restrict both their personal and business interactions with the island's visitors as well.

Meanwhile, many of the tourist sights popularized by promoters in the pre-Revolutionary era remained prominent throughout the 1960s and 1970s and into the resurgence of arrivals during the 1980s, 1990s, and thereafter. Castles, beaches, historic plazas, and José Martí have always been part of the Cuban experience. Establishments such as the Tropicana, Floridita, La Bodeguita del Medio, and Hotel Nacional have also remained consistently popular for decades.⁶⁶⁷ The Revolutionary government tried to construct its own vision of Cuban identity by removing certain sights from tourists' view, for example, churches and prominent religious sites. Yet the curiosity of the island's tourists has led to these sights' inclusion within the Cuban experience yet again.

In general though, touristic continuities abound in Cuba. Tourists have historically traveled in buses separate from Cubans. Many Cubans have had little access to offerings such as hotels, bars, and clubs. Prostitution has been a constant presence on the island. Aside from these exclusionary continuities, the tourism industry has also provided the Cuban state with a platform to showcase what it believes to be the most

⁶⁶⁷ La Bodeguita del Medio has become such a powerful tourist icon that it has been exported throughout the world. The name recognition associated with this Cuban sight, its Bohemian identity, as well as its most notorious patron (Ernest Hemingway) have proven strong enough to generate profits around the world. Entrepreneurs have recreated this vital part of Habana Vieja's tourist world in Mexico City, Milan, Prague, Palo Alto, California, and of course, Miami. The idea of Cuba has become profitable for developers in notorious tourist locations throughout the world.

significant aspects of Cuban identity. As well, the industry has provided a platform for foreigners to influence the island in a myriad of ways.

In the modern era, tourism has also helped to promote a significant form of structural continuity in Cuba, in effect, helping to maintain the island's historic dependence on foreign nations. One of Spain's final colonies to win Independence, Cuba was from that moment until 1959, both politically and economically dependent on the U.S. Several leaders in the early twentieth century drew their power from Washington's support, which occasionally arrived in the form of U.S. Marines. Meanwhile, trade between the two countries far outstripped that which Cuba conducted with any other foreign partner. From 1959 until 1989, Cuba was similarly dependent on the Soviet Union, receiving generous subsidies and unwavering military support. The Revolutionary government's increasing focus on tourism during the 1980s is what helped foreign tourists to replace the island's prior benefactors so quickly beginning in the 1990s.

Tourism though, is not the only component of this continued dependence on foreigners. While not on the scale of the U.S. or the Soviet Union, Venezuela has stepped in to provide Cuba with economic assistance, in particular, heavily subsidized oil. Moreover, while tourism replaced sugar as the island's most profitable industry during the 1990s, nickel recently replaced tourism as the country's leading earner. The two industries combined for roughly ten percent of GDP in 2008,⁶⁶⁸ yet both have proven

⁶⁶⁸ While the Cuban government has not yet released official statistics for 2008, arrivals were 9.3% higher than they had been in 2007 when the country earned \$2.2 billion from tourism. If profits increased at a similar rate, the government earned roughly \$2.405 billion from tourism in 2008. Cuba sold 70,400 tons of nickel in 2008. Cuban production slowed considerably as the price of nickel plummeted last year, but it is

extremely volatile. Amidst the ongoing financial crisis that began in the fall of 2008, the price of nickel has plummeted from a high of \$53,000 per ton to \$9,000 per ton and foreign arrivals are reportedly down significantly from their all-time high in 2008. These two industries, along with Cuba's new reliance on Venezuelan oil, have exposed the island's continuing inability to escape its dependency on others.

In short, tourism has been and will continue to be highly significant for Cuba. My dissertation sheds new light on Cuban tourism in a number of ways. First and foremost, it broadens our understanding of the impacts of one of the largest industries in the modern world (tourism) on the daily lives of people in Latin America. Cuban identity though, is also predicated on the country's status as a Caribbean island. By suggesting that an alternative chronological framework for examining tourism in Cuba is both useful and necessary, my dissertation contributes to the ways in which we understand the history of Cuban tourism and all of Cuban history since WWII. Furthermore, my work adds to the general discourse on touristic development, and certainly to the corpus of works dealing with the construction of identity in Cuba. It also focuses on an often ignored and quickly disappearing form of tourism planning – that of planning for leisure-seeking capitalist tourists within a socialist or Communist state.⁶⁶⁹ Within its primary context of

feasible that Cuba earned \$3 billion from the export of nickel. Thus, based on these calculations, as well as a CIA report that Cuba's GDP was approximately \$55.18 billion in 2008, tourism and nickel were responsible for 9.795% of total GDP. See "Cuba: Nickel Again Earned More than Tourism in '08," January 5, 2009, <<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory?id=6582345>> (July 29, 2009). "CIA World Factbook: Cuba," July 3, 2009, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cu.html>> (July 29, 2009).

⁶⁶⁹ China, Vietnam, and North Korea have planned along these lines for decades. Comparative work on this topic in the future should examine this form of planning in places such as Venezuela and Bolivia, and Myanmar, but should also take into

Cuban history though, my work is extremely timely. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba has seemingly been on the brink of massive structural change, maintained largely by tourist spending. Change may be arriving slowly, yet with or without a Castro in power, tourism will remain in Cuba's future.

consideration authoritarian non-socialist regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Russia, and others.

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