The Political Impact on Cuba of the Reform and Collapse of Communist Regimes

Jorge I. Domínguez

The ideas, organizational designs and practices, and experiences of the European and Asian communist regimes have been of the utmost importance to Cuba's domestic politics since 1960. Their influence has varied, however. This chapter seeks to explain why the reforms of communist regimes in Europe and Asia in the mid- and late 1980s had only a modest impact on Cuba, while the subsequent collapse of communist Europe had a markedly greater effect on Cuba's domestic politics.

The explanation of the first phenomenon seems simple. From late 1984 and especially from April 1986, President Fidel Castro's government adopted a Rectification Process (RP) that deemphasized the role of market forces associated with perestroika, thus nipping reform-communist ideas in the bud. Yet reform-communist ideas about political and economic apertura influenced Cuba around 1987 and did so to some degree until late 1989. Why did reform-communist ideas have any impact at all, and what was that impact? Cuba's regime has been sufficiently complex so as to allow a certain freedom of expression with regard to thinking about changes in communist Europe, even as Cuba's leaders gradually edged away from those experiments. Similarly, an opening had developed in Cuba's intellectual life that was not caused by the political and intellectual changes associated with Soviet glasnost.

The explanation of the second phenomenon also seems simple. Cuba had depended so much on Soviet economic, military, and political support that the collapse of the Soviet system had an enormous impact on
every facet of Cuba’s life. But this fails to explain the form of the impact: Cuba did not shut itself off from news about the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, but chose instead to teach Cubans lessons to vaccinate them from the virus that killed communism in Europe.

This chapter pursues these questions. I will assess whether or not openings in Cuba (especially in the intellectual sphere) were caused by Soviet ideas about glasnost. We consider next the obstacles in Cuba to the reception of ideas about reform communism, but we also show that such external ideas shaped much of Cuba’s political debate in the late 1980s. Ideas from abroad legitimated alternative courses of action, clarified strategic choices, provided practical advice, and permitted an indirect discussion of Cuba’s own problems. I look also at the social sectors and journals through which those ideas became influential, and on which those ideas had an impact. Finally, I discuss the ideological and political factors in Cuba that resisted new ideas from abroad and the actions taken by Cuban leaders to prevent the repetition in Cuba of the East European experience.

This chapter is not a study of economic and political reforms in Cuba since the mid-1980s—or the lack or insufficiency thereof—nor does it address all international influences on Cuba’s domestic affairs. My focus is the impact on Cuba of the ideas and practices of European and Asian reform communism and, subsequently, of the collapse of European communist regimes. Therefore, changes or continuity in the climate of ideas and policies in Cuba are pertinent to my discussion only if they can be traced explicitly to events elsewhere in the communist or former communist world. My references to “political imports” or to “receptivity toward external ideas” must be read within this framework.

Deriving Hypotheses from Cuba’s Past

Before the mid-1980s, the ideas, organizations, and experiences of European and Asian communist regimes had an impact on Cuba at three moments. The first was the early 1960s, when Cuba’s political regime shifted toward socialism. The second was the late 1960s, when Cuba institutionalized its most radical political and economic experiment and differentiated its practices from those found in other socialist regimes. The third was the early to mid-1970s, when Cuba adopted, though in modified ways, many of the formal institutions of mature socialist regimes.

Political imports were therefore influential in the first and third periods, but not in the second. How can this variation be explained and what hypotheses might this analysis generate to help us understand the most recent period?

These analytical factors are especially important: the worth of the ideas themselves at given historical junctures; the institutional links between the carriers of ideas and top decision makers; the state-structural features of the crisis of the moment; the nature of Cuba’s relations with the Soviet Union; the political coalition that sees new ideas as a way to address a given crisis; and the decisions of top leaders.1

The following empirical hypotheses examine these factors within a stylized historical record:

1. Severe state-structural crises (early 1960s, early 1970s) made Cuba more receptive to ideas from abroad, while moderate state-structural crises (mid-1960s) were dealt with by closing off receptivity to external ideas. Emergencies forced the collective mind to open and accelerate the circulation of state leaders, some of whom responded to new ideas, while mere “problems” were addressed with one’s own intellectual resources.

2. Political and organizational unity on “core” issues facilitated the reception of ideas from abroad (early 1960s, early 1970s), while breakdowns in coalitions that occurred concurrently with divergences over ideas were associated with less receptivity to ideas from abroad (mid-1960s).2 Divisions among the elite facilitated the penetration of external ideas into one elite segment but not the conquest of the state by those ideas. In contrast, coalitional unity speeded up the adoption and adaptation of external ideas.

3. The nature of Cuban-Soviet relations explains much about the influence and receptivity of socialist ideas from abroad. Good relations fostered receptivity (early 1960s, early 1970s) partly because the Soviets funded the adoption of their ideas; deteriorating relations reduced receptivity (mid-1960s), in part because the Soviets spent less money in Cuba.

4. The presence or absence of institutional links between idea carriers and top decision makers affects outcomes. Economists were close to decision makers in the early 1960s and early 1970s, but much less so in the mid-1960s.3

5. The worth and nature of the ideas (e.g., using some market procedures within central planning) and Fidel Castro’s preferences (to rely
on the market as little as possible) seem to be constants. They matter greatly, but they do not explain variations in their ideological influence or reception.

These reflections suggest that Cuba’s situation in the mid-1980s resembled—analytically, not in empirical details—that of the mid-1960s. Consequently, one might expect Cuba’s leaders to be unsceptive to new ideas in the mid-1980s because (1) there was no severe state-structural crisis; (2) the elite was divided about the course of economic policy; (3) Soviet-Cuban relations were deteriorating; and (4) economists suddenly became less influential in policy making.

The situation of the late 1980s and early 1990s is more difficult to account for. The crisis within the state began to unfold and there was much greater elite unity; these factors would suggest that external ideas should be welcome. Nonetheless, relations with the USSR deteriorated markedly, and economists were much less influential in policy making; these factors should explain closure to external ideas. What light does the historical record shed on these forecasts?

The Irrelevance of Glasnost: Trends in Recent Cuban Poetry and Prose Fiction

Not all changes in Cuba can be explained in terms of imported reform-communist ideas. This allows us to isolate more precisely which processes of change can be connected to external ideas and which seem to have developed endogenously in Cuba. This is the first analytical task.

We adopt the analytical strategy of examining the “most likely” case—that is, one in which the impact of external ideas is most apt to occur. If external influence is modest in this case, it would surely be less in others; one could thus establish the endogenous origin of many recent changes in Cuba. The most likely case must have two features: (1) it must have been a realm of significant change in other communist countries; (2) the Cuban government should have little to lose if change occurred in such an area and thus would not block the influence of external ideas.

The political and intellectual opening called glasnost was particularly important for intellectuals in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. To assess the influence of glasnost on Cuba, we focus on intellectual life as the most likely case. Cuban leaders might have blocked access to new ideas regarding politics or the economy, so for the most likely case we chose instead on a low-stakes area: recent Cuban poetry and prose fiction.

An important issue in the evolution of Cuban poetry and prose fiction after the revolution is the extent to which content is social or personal. Do poems deal with the epic issues of the revolution and the construction of a new society, or with the life of personal love and sorrow? The spirit of glasnost would presumably permit, perhaps even foster, a transition from social to personal themes in literature. But in Cuba that transition occurred before glasnost and therefore could not have been caused by it; in the 1960s poetry dwelled on social themes and collective action at the expense of intimate personal issues. But already in the 1970s, poetry, especially by young poets, came to focus on personal morality and on love. This was no longer a collective love or a “love for persons unknown,” but a love of two people for each other. Poetry referred to specific situations in daily life, explicitly commented on sex, and generally reflected a “rediscovery of the body.”

In prose trends were similar. In the 1960s and early 1970s stories had focused on the revolution, on the class struggle, and on the need to become socially conscious; by 1979 the literature of daily life had become much more important. The violence discussed in the narrative fiction of the 1980s was no longer that between political enemies or between men of action, but between individuals—between adolescents and children, for example. The new prose, like the new poetry, focused on love and its disappointments, relations between parents and children, or disagreements among friends that lead eventually to pain.

Some of these changes depended on favorable state policies, for all publications were in the hands of state institutions. The state continued to support a wide variety of literary expression even though some criticized the new forms of writing as too distant from heroic or epic themes.

To say that literary themes were personal does not mean that there were no political implications. Consider the following lines from passages from two poems. They can be read in purely personal terms, as reflections on friends or loved ones, yet can also be read politically. The first, entitled “This Will Be the Only Lie in Which We Will Always Believe,” contains the lines: “It is a sad story / To play the game of becoming perfect.” Both the title and the quoted lines express disillusionment with the government’s policy of constructing the “perfect” socialist citizen. The passage from the second poem, “Days of Anger,”
On April 19, 1986, Castro formally announced the Rectification Process (RP) to guard against those who were becoming too enamored of the market and its mechanisms. Government policy shifted away from reliance on material incentives. Castro attacked both the coalition that had supported some market ideas under central planning and also the ideas themselves.

Further dismissals of high-ranking personnel got under way in the political and internal security realm. In addition to the dismissal of Central Planning Board President Humberto Pérez (noted above), in 1985 Castro dismissed the Cuban Communist party’s ideology secretary Antonio Pérez Herrero and Minister of the Interior Ramiro Valdés. All three, who had emerged after the Second Party Congress (1980) as the most important leaders next to Fidel and Armed Forces Minister Raúl Castro and Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, were dropped from their posts in the party’s Political Bureau and Secretariat in 1985. Their removal led to President Castro’s remarkable decentralization of power, which continued into the late 1980s.

For separate reasons, Soviet-Cuban relations deteriorated in 1984–85. During Konstantin Chernenko’s brief leadership of the Soviet Union, economic strains appeared in Soviet-Cuban relations. These included increases in the price of petroleum to be paid by Cuba, declines in the price of sugar sold to Soviet Union, and disputes over how much support Cuba could expect from the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). There were also political differences, most notably the weak Soviet response to the U.S. invasion of Grenada in late 1983 while Cubans fought U.S. forces on that island. When Chernenko died in early 1985, Fidel Castro did not attend his funeral.

The destruction of the political coalition most receptive to perestroika on the eve of its birth, the reshaping of state structures to emphasize once again President Castro’s role, and the deterioration of Soviet-Cuban relations made it much more difficult to welcome external ideas into Cuba, especially ideas from the Soviet Union.

The Influence of Perestroika on Cuba

If important changes in Cuba had endogenous origins and if such formidable barriers were erected to insulate Cuba from foreign ideas, how did reform-communist concepts have any impact at all? The answer is that
Cuba's political regime was complex enough to allow some freedom of expression for a time regarding thinking about the experiments in communist Europe, even as Cuba's leaders were moving in another direction. Moreover, these ideas were so presented as to encourage a favorable reception in Cuba.

**Legitimizing Proposals for Major Policy Changes**

One reason to import ideas from outside the prevailing national discourse is, of course, to change the content and direction of that discourse when appeals to ideas existing within the country would not lead to change. One way to discredit an idea in Cuba, however, is to say that it has been "copied" from some other country. 11 In the mid-1980s, invoking external ideas in Cuba was even more problematic because the government had adopted the RP to move away from reliance on certain market mechanisms, opposite to what was occurring in yearly all European and Asian communist regimes.

How, then, might Cubans argue that their country should learn from reform-communist ideas? Those who supported a greater use of market mechanisms had to advance their cause in language that was familiar to their intended audience, while retaining their credentials as Cuban communists, not stalking horses for foreigners. In those circumstances, the safest way to borrow from abroad was to invoke the sacred texts of international socialism.

In 1989, Minister of Culture Armando Hart, a Political Bureau member, began to reintroduce ideas from Lenin and Engels into the public discourse as a way of recalling the utility of market mechanisms in socialist countries. It was pedagogically sound, he said, to reread Lenin "from a modern perspective." Hart noted the importance of avoiding schisms and maintaining party unity—an essential Leninist principle. Having established his Leninist credentials, he argued:

Lenin's focus on the New Economic Policy (NEP) shows the dramatic circumstances that took him to propose, as a pragmatic matter, a change that he recognized was not the one that Marx and Engels had considered in their theories, nor one that he had considered himself, with regard to socialism. We must recall the conjunctural nature of those political and economic decisions, but it is also clear that the most important conjunctural decisions carry also important lessons. 12

Substitute Cuba in the late 1980s for Lenin's Soviet Union, and Fidel Castro for Lenin, and this statement becomes an appeal to adopt NEP-like market mechanisms in Cuba.

In his next article on Engels' thought, Hart attacked dogmatism as an obstacle to making necessary changes:

Our purpose with these texts . . . is to remind the reader about those classical texts connected with practical and immediate concerns that we have before us. Among them is the need to combat, with reasoning, the illusions hurt at Marxism-Leninism in presenting it as a "dogma" or as a doctrine that prevents the advancement of knowledge and the analysis of new realities.

Even Marxists, he said, have contributed to this "inflamy" because they "have attempted to turn the ideas of the classics into a catechism." 13 To criticize dogmatism within Marxism-Leninism is, of course, to advocate change within the system.

Although it was easier for someone of Hart's stature to use the sacred texts to attempt to redirect government policy toward markets and away from dogmatism, he was not alone. Writing in the more technical journal _Economía y desarrollo_, Félix Gómez Rodríguez followed the identical strategy by quoting Lenin's comments on NEP made in 1921:

We should not give in to a romantic socialism . . . that feels an unassailable disdain for commerce. All economic forms are admissible during the transition . . . [and] are necessary . . . to revitalize the economy. . . . [Thus] it is important to continue to study forms of commerce (especially in consumer items) that are used in the capitalist countries which can foster an improvement of commercial activity under socialism once they are drained of their capitalist content. 14

This strategy illustrates the utility of foreign ideas; reference to the revered texts legitimized the arguments for policy change and enabled their advocates to make a case in terms familiar to the audience in form, though not in specific content. 15 They could not be criticized for referring to current experiences in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

**Clarifying Strategic Choices**

Some Cuban academics, especially those associated with the Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Mundial (CIEM), have the task of analyzing international economic relations and the economic ideas and performance of other countries. CIEM reports on the CMEA countries have
been particularly professional and informative; their purpose seems to be academic analysis to clarify strategic choices for Cuban decision makers.

The CIEM reviews were never favorable toward Hungary's market-oriented reforms. This was evident both before and after Mikhail Gorbachev's installation as general secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, which suggests a continuity of professional judgment as well as at most lukewarm support among Cuban leaders for market mechanisms, even in the early 1980s. In general, CIEM authors were much more impressed with the centralized efficiency of the German Democratic Republic than with Hungary's market socialism. In contrast, Norka Clerc's 1985 article on Yugoslavia—which preceded Gorbachev's perestroika—can be read as an effort to clarify the strategic choices for a socialist country that had relied for many years upon market mechanisms under socialism. Cuba's relations with Yugoslavia had not been warm. Nonetheless, Clerc stated, "Yugoslavia's economic growth showed notable results during the postwar period, which allowed it in a few years to grow beyond its underdeveloped agrarian structure to become a country with a middle level of industrial development." Clerc's assessment both of Yugoslavia's accomplishments and of its difficulties with regional economic disparities, inflation, and foreign debt were professional. On a more ideological level, she noted the "overvaluing of private interests, and of those of groups, at the expense of social and national interests" and commented that this configuration of values "causes the imbalances inherent in the operation of the self-management system." In short, there was much to be gained in terms of economic growth and economic structural transformations from using market mechanisms under socialism, but there were also economic and ideological problems. Clerc used Yugoslavia to clarify strategic choices for Cuba's decision makers.

In late 1988 the CIEM published its first article about the economically successful reforms in the People's Republic of China, followed in 1989 by an article on Vietnam's economic reforms. These editorial decisions are noteworthy because Cuba's political relations with China had been poor from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, when they began to improve. The CIEM professionals recognized that China's economic reforms had been more successful than Hungary's or Yugoslavia's.

China's economic reforms after 1978, according to Gladys Hernández Pedraza, "caused rapid economic growth" in national income, average 9.5 percent. There was also an "improvement of the people's living standards" and an end to economic stagnation. Because her task was to clarify choices for Cuba's decision makers by writing about a foreign experience, she reported that the costs of China's market-socialist strategy were mainly in the political-ideological realm. There was a "deepening of private relations of production" in the agrarian sector; there was a general growth of income inequality; and, in late 1986 and early 1987, there were "ideological deviations" evident in urban student protests calling attention to "how dangerous" the implementation of reform could be. Although new controls had been announced, she wondered whether they could be effective, "given that the extent of decentralization is already so high." Maritza Bauta's article on Vietnam's economic reforms critiqued that country's past economic policies for "inadequate understanding of the role of monetary-mercantile relations under socialism"—a criticism that could be made about Cuba with equal force. She presented Vietnam's economic reforms thoroughly, noting the tendency toward improved economic performance. Her attention to the constructive role of foreign direct investment preceded the Cuban government's decision to implement more flexibly its 1982 law on foreign investment in order to foster such ventures.

These CIEM researchers went beyond mere reporting to highlight the choices before Cuba's leaders. These were not works of advocacy, but they bolstered the views of those who believed that fostering economic growth on pragmatic grounds was worth some ideological flexibility—as, for example, rereading Lenin's views of the NEP along with Armando Hart.

Providing Practical Technical Suggestions

Ideas from abroad sometimes have narrower but still important objectives: to encourage particular changes in Cuba on the grounds that the new techniques developed elsewhere would serve practical goals. The form of this argument is to demonstrate practical gains at low cost. Typical of this approach is Jorge Valdés Miranda's exhortation that Cuba should learn trade techniques from the German Democratic Republic (GDR). He showed how the GDR demanded that its market-economy suppliers purchase its exports to improve its trade balance with their countries. He was impressed that the GDR had institutionalized such a
policy, whereas the Soviet Union had not. "In Cuba," he noted, "we have not been able to make use of such possibilities to acquire technology," implying that Cuba should learn from the GDR.2

Aesopian Language to Discuss Cuban Politics

Cuban intellectuals and journalists knew that there were similarities between events in Cuba and those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; one could write about events in Europe as if one were writing about Cuba. In late 1989, Elsa Claro covered events in Eastern Europe for Bohemia, Cuba's leading general-circulation magazine. She wrote about the unraveling of the GDR:

(1) Workers complained that their ideas received no hearing in the organizations and channels created toward that end; . . . they felt that they were not taken seriously, given the fact that they were taken into account only with regard to whether or not they fulfilled the plan. . . . (2) The labor union . . . were losing their purpose and, as with other organizations, stuck to following directives without taking into account the interests of the workers. . . . (3) There had developed a tendency not to admit attitudes or criticism about things that worked badly . . . the mass media reflected successes (of which there was no doubt) but failed to portray the domestic and international reality in their full diversity. . . . (4) The parliament's sessions . . . had no debate and/or interesting participation, with no one objecting, even if the subject was pertinent, until a unanimous decision was reached. . . . (5) [Local government] got used to following orders "from above." . . . (6) The existence of Friends and relatives "on the other side" (in the Federal Republic of Germany) or the impact of direct broadcasting by radio and television facilitated [negative] comparisons.22

With but slight changes, these statements could have been written about Cuba. Cuban workers have had difficulty getting a hearing and their participation in the workplace is problematic at best. Labor unions have all too easily followed directives from the top.23 Cuba's National Assembly meets only a few days a year, mainly to listen to lengthy reports followed by little debate and virtually unanimous approval of legislation. Cuba's local governments could potentially foster more popular participation in public affairs than those of many East European countries, but have also suffered from the weight of the national bureaucracy.24 And the existence of a large Cuban-American community in Miami and Radio Martí and other broadcasts help Cubans to make invidious comparisons.

Cuba and the Reform and Collapse of Communist Regimes

Cuba's mass media has been triumphant regarding the accomplishments of government or state enterprises, but reluctant to discuss poor performance because such criticism is typically not allowed. In December 1986 Gramma published a remarkable account of corruption and abuse of power at a major cement manufacturing plant. Days later, President Castro made it clear that the party had explicitly authorized and requested the article's publication. "No one should imagine," Castro noted, "that some individual could write an article putting the state on trial, nor the party, nor the laws; . . . no one has the right to pass judgment on the party."25

Another example of using the East European experience to discuss events in Cuba was Mercedes Santos Moray's review of a Czech film.26 Although she criticized it—the acting was bad—she welcomed "the clear improvement" of Czech cinema in its "attempt to represent the Czechoslovak reality." She recalled that the Czech film industry "in the 1960s produced with great intensity works that were important and beautiful." This was a time of massive changes in Czechoslovakia, eventually suppressed by Soviet military intervention (though she did not mention it). She noted that the film focused on "bribery, illegal gains, blackmail, professional malpractice" and other matters. Cubans witnessed similar practices on the eve of the scandal that led Division General Arnaldo Ochoa to the firing squad and revealed extensive corruption in top echelons of the government, the party, the internal security forces, and the armed forces.

Despite the endogenous source of many changes in Cuba and though it was an auspicious source for the reception of reform-communist ideas, in the late 1980s such ideas affected debates in Cuba, forcing people to think about long-range strategies as well as about more immediate choices, enabling some to consider borrowing practical techniques while permitting others to discuss Cuban affairs by indirect means. Thus ideas were influential both for reasons intrinsic to them (content, structure, logic, and familiarity) and their manner of presentation.

The Receptivity to Glasnost and Perestroika in Cuba

Few Cubans have acknowledged publicly their support for the ideas behind glasnost or perestroika, but warnings against the diffusion of such ideas suggest that they had become known and were admired. Unguarded
public endorsement for these ideas may have peaked in 1987, although some support lasted through 1989, as we have seen.

The best evidence for public support for external ideas comes from intellectual circles. In late 1987, for example, Unión, the journal of the official National Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC), announced its "new age" with a "new format, new authors, new helmsmen, and new energy." This edition, which "happily coincided with the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution," contained a special section on Soviet writers "at this moment of the Soviet Union's blossoming . . . [because] debates among the Soviet people . . . underlie the nation's health and endurance."27

The key official concerned with the reception of these ideas was Party Ideology Secretary Carlos Aldana, later responsible also for international relations. At the UNEAC's Fourth Congress in January 1988, Aldana referred—without mentioning any country—to those who "were understandably enthusiastic about the disappearance, in other latitudes of the globe, of official state doctrines about esthetics." Speaking in the first-person plural, he said, "We of course respect, hail, consider with hope, and must study [those processes]." But Aldana's enthusiasm for reform communism was limited. In the same speech, he cautioned his audience not to "pretend to identify our . . . current charges with those processes abroad" because Cuba's government had never made the mistakes committed in those unnamed countries and thus did not need such changes.28

Aldana's choice of words may have sought to express his preferences, and those of many others, for wider openings while allaying Fidel Castro's suspicions. In draft form, Aldana's original phrase for this speech had been to extend respect, understanding, confidence, analysis, and sympathy to changes occurring in the Soviet Union. When in late 1987 Aldana discussed this language with Castro, the president approved the words respect, understanding, and analysis but rejected sympathy and questioned confidence. Aldana dropped these two concepts from his UNEAC remarks and substituted the more ambiguous verb to hail (saludar). More important, he turned his remarks away from truly hailing the processes of change and, instead, warned against copying them.29

Retrospectively, Castro too dates his change of heart about the processes of change in the USSR and Eastern Europe from late 1987. In November he led a Cuban delegation to the Soviet Union and participated in CMEA meetings, where he cautioned against excessive reliance on market mechanisms and began to worry about the trend of events.30 Just after this time, he and Aldana had the conversation, reported above, that would change Cuban policy.

The Role of Social Sectors

Aldana has noted that there was substantial support for reform-communist ideas within Cuba's Communist party, perhaps including himself. He gave a persuasive explanation for the diffusion of those ideas: "We idealized the Soviet Union . . . and led people to think that everything that came from there, whatever it might be, was good and better even than our own practices." For Aldana, recent changes abroad had brought "a most difficult ideological moment [to Cuba] . . . one of the most difficult that we have experienced," though "not at the level of the people, but at the level of many intellectual circles in our country."31 Aldana's explanations seem accurate. Intellectuals were most receptive to ideas from abroad, even if important changes in the content and style of Cuban literature of the 1970s and 1980s were not caused by Soviet glasnost. Leaders of the Communist Youth Union expressed unusual concern about younger intellectuals and especially about social scientists.32 But, separately, those who had always thought well of the USSR were also more responsive to any ideas from the USSR. To my surprise, in interviews in 1991 and in 1992 I was told that many former members of the prerevolutionary Communist party tended to sympathize with changes in the Soviet Union, while those who had been close to Che Guevara in the 1960s were more skeptical. Thus responses to ideas and events of the late 1980s were partly shaped by experiences and alignments from the 1950s and 1960s.

In the late 1980s, the most stirring argument on behalf of an intellectual opening in Cuba was made by the senior "old communist" Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, though not once did he refer to "copying" from the Soviet Union. He condemned the view that there was only "enough room for apologists and acolytes" among Cuba's intellectuals. He recalled Fidel Castro's saying to Cuban intellectuals in 1961 that "outside the revolution, nothing" was permissible in their work. Rodriguez argued against interpreting that phrase too narrowly so as "to impose inopportune decisions or minority views in the name of the revolution and the party." The motto he proposed was: "Those who are
not against us are with us.’ He defended a cosmopolitan vision: ‘If knowing how to handle a rifle in our nation is nowadays necessary for every citizen, let us not overlook the fact that appreciating Degas or Picasso, Beethoven or Prokofiev is also important.’

Rodríguez commented on the UNEAC Congress resolution that asked Cuban intellectuals to be ‘as far removed from dogmatism as from liberalism, as far removed from intolerance as from complacency.’ He reminded the UNEAC Congress, ‘We must not forget, however, that although liberalism is dangerous and complacency is unacceptable, more dangerous still are intolerance and dogmatism in the field of culture and science.’ This argument was surely consistent with glasnost, but the vice president made a point of ignoring the connection. As with the changes in Cuban intellectual life that had occurred independently of events in the USSR, so too (he seemed to say) there were enough ‘Cuban reasons’ to define a more open policy toward intellectual life.

The Role of Journals

Reform-communist ideas were disseminated through Soviet journals, interviews with foreigners in Cuban journals, and specialized academic publications in Cuba that kept the windows open to news about communist Europe and Asia. Some Soviet publications that allowed Cubans to express ideas about changes in Cuba became conduits for new ideas, even if their expression did not imply that Cuba ought to emulate Soviet trends. Consider the views of Roberto Fernández Retamar, director of the Casa de las Américas publishing house. In 1990 he expressed views in the Soviet journal América Latina that he had not published in Cuba. He discussed the works of Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Heberto Padilla, exiled Cuban authors whom he called ‘openly hostile toward the revolution.’ Nonetheless, ‘they are Cuban authors of important works and sooner or later they will be published in Cuba, and they will enter the (low of Cuban literature of which they are part.’ Moreover, he noted that a dictionary of Cuban literature, published in Cuba, had failed to mention Cabrera Infante: ‘My personal opinion is that this is dumb.’

Some Soviet publications attacked the Cuban government and its policies. Written mainly by Soviet authors, these assaults raised the suspicions of Cuban leaders toward the reform processes in the USSR. The first mild but pointed rebuke of Cuba appeared in the Soviet publication New Times in August 1987, eliciting a strong response from Vice President Rodríguez.

Another way of importing foreign ideas was to interview foreigners who would comment on the events of communist Europe to those in Cuba. In May 1989, the director of Casa de las Américas, Cuba’s most internationally influential journal, interviewed the left-wing Brazilian intellectual Darcy Ribeiro, who had just received a medal from Cuba’s Council of State. Ribeiro asserted, ‘[I] found a sclerotic Marxism in the Soviet Union, dated, and given to the repetition of slogans. And I find the same in Cuba.’ Ribeiro called for the inclusion in Cuban publications of ‘different voices’ so that ‘voices that seek to contest [prevailing views] would also have space.’ Ribeiro criticized the ‘utulitarian’ teaching of Marxism in Cuba, the prevalence of censorship even of some of his works, and concluded that ‘it is necessary not to be afraid to think.’ Minister Hart replied to Ribeiro, ‘European formulas are not the ones that can shed light on our paths.’ The journal’s designer liberally sprinkled the issue in which Hart’s reply appeared with pictures of buffoons, some of whom were the faces of journalists known to advocate official positions.

Several key journals published articles about changes in other communist countries. Cuba socialista, the official party journal, responds to party directives and follows a political logic. From 1981 through 1985, it published 100 major articles with by-lines, of which eleven were by Soviet authors and another seven by Cubans on topics bearing on the USSR or Eastern Europe. (I exclude unsigned pieces, book reviews, reprints of Fidel Castro’s speeches, and so forth.) In 1986 and 1987, fifty-two such articles were published, but only five were by Soviet authors and none by Cuban authors on topics bearing on communist Europe. In 1988 and 1989, the journal published seventy-seven such articles, of which two were by Soviets, and again none by Cubans on communist Europe. Through 1987, therefore, the official journal’s receptivity to Soviet authors was a nearly constant 10 percent, although it declined slightly in Gorbachev’s early years and Cubans no longer published comments on communist Europe. After early 1988, articles by Soviet authors became rare (2.6 percent).

The CIEM’s editorial decisions for its journal, Temas de la economía mundial, responded to a more academic logic—for example: those economies had not become less important for Cuba in the late 1980s even if
Cuban leaders had come to disagree with political trends in those countries. *Temas* rarely printed articles by foreigners; when it did, they were from the United States or Western Europe. *Temas* typically published one article per issue on the economies of communist countries. In 1984, it published twelve articles, three of which dealt with the economies of communist countries; the respective proportions were nineteen to five in 1985, seventeen to six in 1987, and twelve to one in 1988. This pattern suggests that intellectual curiosity rose in the early Gorbachev years and, as with Cuba *socialista*, nearly vanished in 1988. While *Temas*’s continued coverage of communist Europe was consistent with its professional mission, the pattern of publication suggests that *Temas* was more interested than Cuba *socialista* in the early Gorbachev experiments but, by early 1988, *Temas* had pulled back as much as Cuba *socialista* had—both reflecting the shift in attitude of Cuba’s top leaders.

This differential pattern of journal publication is not accidental. It bears directly on a hypothesis mentioned earlier: that institutional links between idea carriers and top decision makers affect the likelihood of the receptivity of the ideas. Some Cuban economists play multiple roles: as academics they express a full range of views, but as advisors to policy makers, they support prevailing policies. Therefore, the fact that an academic economist is close to policy makers need not imply influence, though at times that may be crucial; it justifies the effect is reversed—namely, the policy maker affects the economist’s published ideas.

Consider for example two nearly identical articles, using literally many of the same paragraphs and sentences, published in 1990 by José Luis Rodríguez. The version in the party journal, Cuba *socialista*, has some harsh criticism about economic policies and performance during 1981–85 (when some market mechanisms existed under central planning) and significant praise for economic policies and performance during 1986–89 (when the role of market forces was reduced); this mirrored the party’s official position. In contrast, the version in Economía y desarrollo, the principal academic journal in economics, omits sections 3 and 4 of the Cuba *socialista* version and, consequently, is much less critical of the 1981–85 period and much less laudatory of the 1986–89 period; this is consistent with the view of many academic economists in and outside Cuba, as well as with Rodríguez’s other work on Cuba, that some market mechanisms are appropriate under central planning. The follow-

Cuba and the Reform and Collapse of Communist Regimes

The distorting use of material incentives in economic management advanced individual interests in opposition to the interests of the whole society. An individualist ideology came to be felt through the corrupting actions of speculators and intermediaries as well as that of self-employed workers who profited at the people’s expense... managers who followed a mercantile strategy in their enterprises... and bureaucrats who persisted in following a technocratic approach to the solution of economic problems.

On the other hand, the article in Economía y desarrollo makes it clear—unlike the Cuba *socialista* version—that the performance of all economic sectors except agriculture was very positive during 1981–85, while during 1986–89 economic growth stopped and productivity fell.

In sum, Cuban intellectuals, including academic economists, were the most receptive to some features of Gorbachev’s early reforms. Intellectuals used academic publications in Cuba (and occasionally in the USSR) to advance their views, at times interviewing friendly foreigners who made their own points. Those who had long been sympathetic to ideas from the Soviet Union, no matter what their content, were also more receptive to reforms. In late 1987 and early 1988, however, the Cuban leadership’s attitude toward the Gorbachev policies changed, and these forms of expression became less common.

More subtly, the links between economists and policy makers were not severed, but the flow of influence was reversed: while economists remained free to publish as they wished in academic journals, before a wider public they became advocates of official policies rather than proponents of alternatives. Thus, the policy milieu changed even if on the surface the organizational channels remained the same.

The Ideological Domestic Resistance to External Ideas

In 1987–88, a battle of ideas developed between those who favored using some market forces within the context of central planning and close collaboration with the Soviet Union, and those who were allergic to the market and suspicious of the USSR’s long-term ideological reliability. One form this debate took was an argument about Ernesto (Che)
Guevara’s ideological legacy. Although Guevara spent only about a decade of his life in Cuba—and thus his ideas are also a foreign import—he became an adopted patron saint of the Cuban government after his death in Bolivia in 1967. His works have become sacred texts used to protect the integrity of the communist project in Cuba. After the official launching of the Guevara-flavored RP in 1986, no one sympathetic to opening up Cuban politics or economics could publicly oppose Guevara’s ideas. The preferred strategy was to “domesticate” this revolutionary tiger, preferably with help from abroad.

In a stunning revision of history, Vladimir Mironov argued that Guevara was a precursor of Gorbachev. He noted (accurately) that the “theoretical and practical work of Che Guevara during the initial stage of building socialism in Cuba was considered by some a leftist deviation (for instance, the emphasis he placed on the human factor).” Nonetheless, Mironov tells us, it “appears to have in fact been a scientific and moral precursor of a new stage in the socialist movement.” Guevara’s “notion of building a new kind of man is very close to the profoundly humane goals of the process of restructuring [perestroika] under way in the Soviet Union [in 1987].”

In Cuba, those who favored some market reforms had to argue that Che’s ideas were not inconsistent with the recommendations of academic economists and government technocrats. “A great many of Che’s principles are found incorporated” in Cuba’s official economic management system, wrote Carmen León and Adelaída Arias in 1988. They appear in “the need to combine the centralized planning of the economic activities of state enterprises and the recognition and use of monetary and mercantile relations,” and in a system that features “a high centralization at the top” with “operational economic autonomy” for the enterprise.

The main tendency of Guevara’s views was, of course, the opposite. Without oversimplifying: Guevara did not advocate reliance on monetary and mercantile relations, nor did he favor autonomous state enterprises to any great extent.

In the late 1980s, exponents of Guevara’s ideas used his bellowed texts to warn against the Soviet Union’s potential perfidy. Part of that perfidy was intellectual: the “theoretical vulgarization or impoverishment” of Guevara’s thought in the USSR, reducing it to simplistic political and military tactics. This warning about the USSR’s unreliability became urgent as the prospects of Cuban-Soviet trade at market prices (no longer at preferential prices) drew nearer: “With great honesty, courage, and realism Guevara discussed the asymmetrical exchanges found between the more developed socialist countries and the underdeveloped countries when trade occurs at market prices,” noted Osvaldo Martínez, CIEOM’s director, who quoted Guevara’s dictum that “the socialist countries are, to some degree, the accomplices of imperialist exploitation.”

The shift in the quality of economic relations between Cuba and other communist countries impaired Cuba’s ideological receptivity to ideas from abroad. The critique of the Soviet Union’s international behavior and of the treatment of Guevara by Soviet intellectuals did not, however, necessarily mean that those who made these arguments were opposed to greater political and economic openings. My argument is narrower: In making these critiques of the Soviets, Cuban authors weakened the legitimacy of importing ideas from the USSR and thus made it more difficult to foster openings in Cuba, even if that was not their intention.

The Ideological Assault on Reform Communism

Attacking reform communism was Fidel Castro’s responsibility. “Che [Guevara] would have been appalled if he had been told that money was becoming man’s main concern, man’s fundamental motivation,” Castro argued, as he radically rejected the influx of reform ideas.

Three years before the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, Castro noted that “there are also some brains around,” perhaps referring to Cuban intellectuals, “people who have no confidence in themselves, no confidence in the nation, no confidence in their people, no confidence in their revolution—who right away say we have to copy what others are doing.” The official newspaper reported that applause followed this remark, though it is unclear whether copying was being applauded. Castro left no doubt: “That is an incorrect stand ... no two countries are the same.”

Months later Castro argued that Cuba’s “errors” often “stemmed from imitating the experience of other socialist countries.” “Learning from the Soviet Union,” seen as positive in the early 1960s and again in the early 1970s, by the late 1980s was perceived as mistaken. More copying would be even worse: “We do not want anyone saying ten or twenty years from now that some of the things they are doing today were no good.” Therefore “we must base ourselves on our experience, our own
Cuba and the Reform and Collapse of Communist Regimes

market was the liberalization of rules to promote foreign direct investment. Cubans, however, were still not allowed to form truly private firms to take advantage of a market opening that remained restricted to foreigners. Proposals to allow Cuban farmers to participate again in limited private markets were rejected at the October 1991 Fourth Party Congress (discussed in chapter 5).

In international relations, as early as August 1989 the Cuban government was banning Soviet publications that criticized Cuba. Over the next year, various East European governments cut back their diplomatic and economic presence in Cuba and shut down the cultural institutions that had once worked with their Cuban counterparts. The Cuban government eagerly cooperated with this dismantling of the organizational channels that could have spread the reform-communist virus. The government repatriated most Cuban students and workers—a few sought asylum—stationed in the former communist countries. In domestic politics, a mass media campaign responding to changes in Europe was one of several strategies adopted.

Cuba’s Mass Media Explains “What Went Wrong” in Communist Europe

A failure of leadership, not a failure of the system, is the central explanation for what went wrong in communist Europe. Making concessions was especially wrong, for the enemies of socialism are never satisfied. And when the political regime changes, the standard of living of ordinary citizens drops. To make these three points, the Cuban government flooded the mass media with tales of woe from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

By December 1989, Cuba’s leaders had at last arrived at a clear and decisive rejection of reform communism. Thus journalists who only weeks earlier had written about the problems of bureaucratic socialism evident in both Europe and Cuba adopted the new line. At first, however, some hoped that reform communism was still possible and need not lead to the destruction of socialism. Let us focus on Bohemia’s Elsa Claro.

Claro wrote about the fall of Czechoslovak communism in terms of “problems related to the violation of principles, not [problems of the system … that is [the problem was with] aspects of the model, not with socialism.” Czechoslovak socialism, she said, fostered an industrial
Cuba and the Reform and Collapse of Communist Regimes

living standards that stem from the adjustment process." Despite its many changes, Poland had yet to get relief from its creditors. The paper reported events in Hungary as "a step backward" and commented on the flight of large numbers of East Germans toward West Germany as follows:

Behind them, they left the German Democratic Republic, where no one went shoeless, was illiterate, hungry, or unemployed, for no one would find there the conditions that one finds [in West Germany] with greater frequency than is often supposed: marginality, crime, and social decay.

The transition to a non-Marxist-Leninist regime implies suffering for many people, Cuban elites argued. This point would be made as well about Nicaragua after the defeat of the Sandinistas in the February 1990 elections: "Those who voted for the river full of dollars announced by [the Sandinista opposition coalition] UNO are still awaiting the overflow of this 'horn of plenty,' while the crisis grips the nation more than ever before," wrote Néstor Núñez in 1991, citing inflation, currency devaluation, and unemployment in Nicaragua.

Two more specific points were made. Fidel Castro argued: "You all know what has been happening elsewhere: they were asked to accept pluralism, so they accepted pluralism. The communist parties held multiparty elections . . . and even won several of them by a large margin. . . . But the reactionaries and imperialists were not satisfied with that; the Communists had to be swept away anyway." Thus he concluded, "Once a single concession is made, all sorts of concessions are demanded until they ask for your head." Do not make any concessions, therefore.

Writing about the collapse of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia, Juan Marrero noted in 1991:

In revolution or in politics, making concessions about principle leads sooner or later to the equivalent of suicide. This has happened not just in Eastern Europe where the presumed brilliancy of the market economy confused the eyes and minds of politicians, governments, and parties but even in Third World countries which, facing more severe difficulties, turned back on the ideas and behavior that had been the pillars of their national independence. . . . The lesson of Ethiopia demonstrates that, if revolutionary processes act with weakness, they cannot survive.

Third World socialist countries, too, must resist promarket changes, for there too the events of Eastern Europe could recur.
Making concessions was not only strategically unsound but also empirically unnecessary. Cuba is different; the difference is Fidel. The military magazine Verde olivo talked to young Cubans watching anticommunist Czech street protests on television. One young Cuban is quoted as saying: ‘That does not happen here, because here anyone who wants can talk with Fidel and say anything.’ But, another noted, ‘not all the leaders reach the people as Fidel does.’ A third, identified as a practicing Roman Catholic, observed that other such leaders do exist, naming Armed Forces Minister Raúl Castro and Communist Youth Union leader RobertoíJo [sic] Robaina, but he cautioned: ‘in those European countries many communists turned their back on the people.’64 The danger, therefore, is that some Cuban leaders might, unlike Fidel, turn their backs on the people. Failures of leadership must be avoided because socialism is judged to be sound.

**Cuban Leaders Narrow the Political Space**

In the discussions leading up to the October 1991 Fourth Party Congress, significant political changes were considered. The Congress dropped the article in the statutes committing the party to atheism, thus opening membership to some religious believers. The Congress recommended the direct election of deputies to the National Assembly. More far-reaching changes, however, were not approved. The Congress ratified the Communist party as the only lawful party. In late 1991 and in 1992, the shift toward direct elections of deputies moved slowly; more fundamental changes in the electoral law to permit greater electoral competition seemed unlikely for the time being.

The Political Bureau chosen at the Fourth Congress was constituted mainly of politicians. Only the elderly Vice President Rodríguez and new member Carlos Lage had technical knowledge about the workings of Cuba’s economy. The distance between red and expert widened. Armando Hart was dropped from the Political Bureau; during the preceding two years, many officials in the Ministry of Culture had been replaced and the Ministry’s powers curtailed. The likelihood of either glasnost or perestroika “from above” narrowed markedly.

The Interior Ministry authorized the activities of “rapid action brigades”—in effect, licensed mobs attacks on the regime’s opponents—which became especially conspicuous after mid-1991. The brigades attacked individuals on the streets as well as in their homes; they broke up meetings of dissidents. Though not unprecedented, this use of tar-

geted informal violence to stifle dissent was in many ways new. In late 1991, the government intensified repression of the small human rights and opposition groups, arresting and sentencing to jail many of the leaders and a fair number of activists. Harassment and surveillance of dissidents increased markedly. At least one Roman Catholic church was desecrated, and Roman Catholic bishops were warned to stay away from potentially counterrevolutionary behavior.65

Cuba’s political milieu has changed. In an address to the National Assembly in December 1991, Carlos Aldana, the only leader ever to have implied he thought well of reform communism, intoned a mea culpa. He thanked Castro for rescuing him from the error of expressing sympathy for the processes of change occurring in the Soviet Union. He noted, however, “More than a few of our comrades became supporters of perestroika and of Gorbachev. They echoed in our midst the changes and proposals then being implemented in the Soviet Union and suggested that we should adopt them.” Aldana said he could understand why so many comrades had become “confused,” but he “could not break bread with those who still lack the intellectual honesty and moral courage to recognize that they were wrong.”66 He called on them to recant. (For various reasons, Aldana was dismissed from his post in September 1992.)

By early 1992, it had almost become subservient to advocate changes in Cuba akin to those undertaken in communist Europe. The Sixth Congress of the Communist Youth Union denounced the “traitors” and the “pseudo-enlightened” who espoused views similar to those that caused the collapse of the USSR; it attacked those whom it called perestroikas who criticized everything but refused to recognize their own errors.67 In interviews, I discovered that discussing one’s earlier views about events in the former USSR had become a virtual taboo.

In the economy and in domestic politics, leaders acted to forestall a repetition in Cuba of the collapse of communism elsewhere. The prospects that Cuba can endure its new economic and political hardships are not good, but it is difficult to envision anything other than the survival of the status quo.

**Conclusions**

Since 1959, Cuba has been the willing recipient of many ideas from the Soviet Union and other communist countries. New concepts were influential in the early 1960s, when the means of production were socialized,
and in the early 1970s, when Cuba's economic institutions and policies were reorganized. Cuba was more receptive at those junctures because of a severe crisis within the state about the management of the economy, because of Cuba's excellent relations with the Soviet Union, because of the unity of the leadership coalition on core issues, and because national and international economists carrying the new ideas had access to top Cuban policy makers.

At times of crisis, a united Cuban leadership (renewed with new idea carriers) has used advice consistent with its good relations with the Soviet Union. In the mid-1960s, by contrast, when there was only a modest state-structural crisis in managing the economy, the elite coalition had split, and relations with the USSR had deteriorated, Cuban leaders disregarded ideas and advisors that they had embraced at other times; problems were to be solved using Cuba's own political resources. The worth and nature of new ideas, such as using some market elements within central planning, and Castro's preference for relying on the market as little as possible, were constants. Despite obvious empirical differences, at the analytic level conditions of the mid-1980s matched exactly those of the mid-1960s.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Cuba's leaders resisted external ideas as never before. There was a crisis in the state's structure because the rapidly failing economy could no longer finance the state and in 1989 the government presented evidence of widespread corruption in its midst. There was considerable unity among the top elite. At one time, such circumstances had facilitated the reception of fresh ideas from abroad. In recent years, however, the collapse of the Soviet economy and of the USSR itself prevented such a response. The content of the ideas was no longer a constant; at issue was preserving central planning, state ownership of the means of production, and the political regime.

Since 1959, therefore, the nature of Soviet-Cuban relations has been the most important and consistent explanation for Cuba's receptivity to new ideas. It is the only factor that accounts for trends in all five episodes when ideas from abroad were either welcomed or spurned. At issue is not Cuba's "sovietization"; we seek instead to account for both the rise and fall of Soviet ideological influence.

One might object that because I have focused on a period (1984–92) when Cuba's political leaders were especially un receptive to new ideas, perhaps external ideas have had no impact whatsoever in Cuba. But the pattern is more complex. Glasnost had little impact on Cuban literary life in part because autonomous changes in Cuba's domestic intellectual world and government policy anticipated the Soviet opening. This case study indicates that there is some truth to the claim of Cuban leaders that, having avoided many of the errors committed by Soviet leaders, they had little to learn from the USSR. And Cuba's intellectual life has been freer than that in the Soviet Union. But notions of political and economic opening imported from abroad did inform aspects of Cuba's political debate up to 1989.

For some, ideas borrowed from communist Europe legitimized calls for policy change and enabled advocates to make their case in terms that were familiar in form, though not in content, to their audience. Second, references to changes in communist Europe and East Asia clarified the strategic choices faced by those regimes—and, by extension, by Cuban leaders if they followed in their footsteps. Third, some academics argued that Cuba could learn specific practical techniques from countries undergoing change. Finally, some found it easier to discuss Cuba's problems by writing about the problems of socialism in communist Europe—using Aesopian language. In these ways, ideas were influential because of their content, their structure, their logic, their familiarity, and also their presentation. Despite the auspicious timing for receptivity to new ideas, for a while there was in Cuba considerable interest in external ideas. Intellectuals, including academic economists, welcomed or at least were intrigued by them, as were many whose careers predisposed them to accept innovations from the Soviet Union. At the top of the regime, those most closely associated with ideas of opening were Carlos Aldana, Armando Hart, and Carlos Rafael Rodríguez.

At the institutional level, intellectual and academic publications were the most effective carriers of innovative ideas, as were journalists who regularly covered events in Eastern Europe. Soviet publications at times facilitated the expression of ideas aimed at a Cuban public. Interviews with foreigners in Cuba's journals occasionally advanced an agenda for change. But idea carriers had limited influence; while economists remained free to publish as they wished in academic journals, before a wider public they endorsed official policies rather than proposing alternatives.
By the end of 1987, the tide had turned within Cuba's top leadership, though not yet in the regime's middle ranks. Beginning in 1988, explicit support for ideas from communist Europe dimmed; coverage of events in those countries shifted in tone. Within Cuba, elite alarm at the trends in the USSR toward greater reliance on market principles in international trade led some Cuban scholars to launch an ideological counterattack based on Ernesto Guevara’s criticisms of such policies; this critique delegitimized reliance on ideas from the Soviet Union. Finally in the summer of 1988, Fidel Castro opened a public attack on ideas coming from communist Europe about politics and markets—a critique sharpened over the next eighteen months.

The collapse of communism in Europe ended public arguments in Cuba that sought to legitimize reform communism. For some, such arguments approximated advocating the overthrow of Cuba’s political regime. A sustained assault was launched on notions of “copying” from abroad, blaming Cuba’s past mistakes on such copying. Instead, Cuban leaders argued, Cuba would follow its own path to socialism; they defended socialism even though they admitted that specific European communist leaders had performed badly.

Cuba’s leaders asserted that they would not fail. The mass media responded to this policy direction by reporting on all the economic ills evident in formerly communist Europe, to dissuade would-be Cuban sympathizers with reform communism. Cuba should make no concessions to those who wanted to modify the regime, conscious of the superiority of its leaders over those of communist Europe. Cuban leaders narrowed the regime’s political space—never wide—and jailed dissidents. Cuban leaders knew how to face the future. Change may come to Cuba yet, but now more than ever it must be for native reasons, the leaders argued, as Cuba seeks to adjust to a new world that is hostile to its brand of socialism.

NOTES

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2. Cuban leaders were divided about various issues in the early 1960s. They were united, however, on key points of concern to this work, such as the expropriation of all foreign firms and of most private firms outside of agriculture and certain services, the utility of comprehensive state planning and management of the economy, and learning from the Soviet Union’s conduct of its economy.


8. María Elena Cruz Varela, “Días branc,” Unión, no. 9 (1990): 73. Although Cruz Varela would soon thereafter become an opposition activist and is in prison at this writing, she was not so when she wrote this poem, when it was published in an official journal and when she received Cuba’s “Julio de Ceval” national poetry prize.


Cuba and the Reform and Collapse of Communist Regimes 131
45. Ibid., August 7, 1988, p. 4.
46. Ibid., December 18, 1988, p. 5.
47. Ibid., April 16, 1989, p. 2.
48. Ibid., December 10, 1989, p. 3.
49. Ibid., December 17, 1989, p. 2.
51. Ibid., December 17, 1989, p. 2.
52. Interview in 1990 and 1991 with East European diplomats.
53. Elsa Claró, "Che, el modelo: en el vértice de la tormenta," Bohemia 81 no. 48 (December 1, 1989): 76–78.
58. Trabajadores, October 7, 1989, p. 11.
59. Ibid., October 11, 1989, p. 11.
60. Ibid., October 12, 1989, p. 11.