professional practice with as much energy as they could. In the disturbed political atmosphere, which had lasted as long as anyone could remember, these colleges often became involved in politics. The College of Lawyers (of which Miró Cardona, the new prime minister, was Dean) and the College of Journalists were constantly asked to ‘take a stand’: so were the colleges of dentists, doctors, vets, architects, all men of good will. They often did, but they did not take to the hills. Since a policy of war had in 1959 conquered, the standing of these professional groups was automatically diminished. They had some heroes to offer in the new epic age now beginning but even a man such as Pelayo Cuervo, killed by the Country Club lake, was tarnished by the accusation of compromise with the old political parties and the belief that he would have accepted something short of Batista’s unconditional surrender. ‘All that was best in Cuban public life’ died with Pelayo Cuervo; and the Country Club lake was a sadly appropriate spot for such a departure.

CHAPTER XCI

Black Cuba

In the 1950s the Negro or mulatto population was described as being under one-third of the total; an accurate figure is hard to give, since in 1953 the identification of this or that individual by the curious and misleading euphemism ‘coloured’ was left to the innumerators, whereas in previous censuses account was taken of the declarations made by the persons concerned. Presumably, therefore, the identification was inaccurate. At least one other published estimate suggested that as many as half of the total were ‘Negroid’ and another 20% really mulatto, an estimate with which many intelligent observers would agree. These included Fernando Ortiz, the Afro-Cuban folklorist.

OFFICIAL FIGURES FOR BLACK CUBA 1899–1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>167,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>628,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1,246,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1,179,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1,245,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>843,105 mulatto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,568,416 Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However misleading the official figures may be, in comparison with whites there was a drop in the black or mulatto population between 1931 and 1943, due partly to the repatriation of over half the Jamaican or other West Indian labourers who had come to Cuba in the good times of the past, partly to the effects of the depression which hit the poorest Cubans hardest (and probably more of these were black than white). The drop in the early years of the Republic was due to the Spanish immigration. The decline in that immigration, as well as the general recovery of prosperity after the Second World War, accounts

1 MacGaffey and Barnett, 88. See also Goldenberg, 151.
2 In conversation with the author, July 1966.
3 46%. Census of 1943, 741.
for the rise of the black or mulatto percentage between 1943 and 1953. On the other hand the official figures, which must represent something of the truth, suggest that the ‘white’ population increased four times, the black or mulatto population three times.

Again according to the official figures, the Negro population dropped from 15% of the total in 1899 to 10% in 1943, and rose again to 12% in 1953, whereas the mulatto population fell from 17% in 1899 to 14.1% in 1953.4 These changes can scarcely be accurate, given the alterations in methods of examination, but they are all that exist. There was obviously intermarriage between black and white, but more usually between white men and black girls. The voluptuous mulatto remained a symbol for sexual desirability; but marriage between white girls and black or mulatto men was relatively rare. The social area where the races mixed most freely was that of prostitution, habitual criminality, drug trafficking, gambling and superstition.4 The mixture of Chinese and mulata produced offspring of very special beauty.

At the beginning of the century, about twenty municipalities of Cuba had formally a black or mulatto majority of the population, and these remained apparently the most non-white areas. There was little change in fact in the general geographical distribution of the Negroes during the early history of the Republic. This immobility of the black population is one of the many aspects of the matter where Cuba contrasted with the U.S.: the U.S. Negro had little part in the great expansion of the west in the nineteenth century, but moved much in the twentieth.

On paper, even Oriente formally had a majority of white people. Havana province had a total of 350,000 Negro or mulatto people in 1953, or a fifth of the total number; three-fifths4 of the black population as a whole were considered ‘urban’—slightly more, that is, than the national percentage.7 The birth rate appears to have been higher among whites than coloured. But mulattos, in Cuba as elsewhere, sought to pass themselves off as ‘white’ once they got to the towns, and often succeeded, particularly if they became well off.

It is impossible to resolve exactly how many (and if so to what extent) the black or mulatto population suffered economically in comparison with whites. In some districts with a theoretically mostly Negro population, the majority in all school ages did not go to school. But in the Oriente towns of Caney and Guantánamo, both of which had a black or mulatto majority, most of those aged ten to fourteen went to school, and

4 See Census of 1953, 49. Negro population rose from 235,000 to 725,000; mulatto from 270,000 to 840,000.
5 See Ogier, Negroes Esdavos, 11.
7 White figures were 6,365,759 (57.3%) to 1,898,497.
8 See above, p. 1118.
9 1118 - OLD CUBA AT SUNSET

in Santiago a majority of those aged five to fourteen. Proximity to a city, more than race matters, determined this. There was little formal difference between predominantly Negro towns in Oriente and nearby mainly ‘white’ communities; while Santiago, a predominantly black city, resembled Camagüey, predominantly 'white', in the level of school attendance.8 The only district even in Oriente which seems to have had an illiterate majority was Niquero, in the south-west, which was mainly white.9 This was because many workers there were recently arrived sugar workers. Black and white illiteracy seems to have been much the same. In the late 1930s a quarter of students were black or mulatto—doubles an underestimate.10

On paper, half the Cuban black or mixed population lived in Oriente,10 the poorest province. They had not always done so, but then Oriente had not always been the province with the largest population, and it was natural that, in the early years of the century, the opening up of Oriente should attract a great immigration of labour. By the 1950s, however, the vast majority of Cubans were where they were because they had been born and brought up there.11 Anyone, black or white, living in Oriente, had, again on paper, a less good chance of a good life than anyone living in Havana (schools, doctors, hospitals and so on being far less provided for), only 5,000 people out of the total population2 having had any higher education. For educational and economic reasons alone it was not surprising to find black people poorly represented among the prestigious middle-class professions.14 Even there, however, the situation had changed greatly since the beginning of the century. In 1943 there were 550 black or mulatto lawyers—a large number in comparison with the three or four in 1899-1907; 424 doctors were black or mulatto, a fifth of the total in the country, compared with 10 out of 1,000 in 1899-1907. There were also 3,500 teachers, compared with about 16,000 white teachers, though the black ones were more regular attenders than the whites. Negroes were well represented among musicians, painters and others involved in the arts. In 1943 workers on the average received less if black than if white: 46% of black workers got under $30 a month compared to 37% of white, while 43% of white got between $30 and $60 compared to 41.4% of black. There might be little in that but 6% of white workers got over $100 and only 21% of black.

5 Though the sugar mill workers at Niquero from the manager down were all black or mulatto (evidence of Julio Lobo).
6 ‘White’ figures were 6,365,759 (57.3%) to 1,898,497.
7 The only district even in Oriente which seems to have had an illiterate majority was Niquero, in the south-west, which was mainly white.
8 We have to make do with 1943 statistics in these matters.
In some professions, the black or mulatto population was well established. As in the early part of the century, they dominated laundering, sewing, shoemaking, woodcutting, and tailoring. They were on a level with whites among barbers, bakers, carpenters, coopers, and blacksmithe. They held their own, in terms of their percentage of the population, among tobacco workers. They also represented a majority of the servant population, partly out of tradition, partly because those with servants liked to imitate the North American deep South. In unskilled work, the black or mulatto population did more than its fair share – 26% – of mining, building and industrial activities, but had slightly less than its percentage in agriculture. It would be correct to assume, no doubt, that as in 1900, racial distinction in the country was still the superficial visible symbol of a distinction which in reality was based on the ownership of property.

The Constitution of 1940 barred all race discrimination. This worked reasonably well. The situation was described by Castro in a press conference on 23 January 1959 when he said, in reply to a North American journalist, that 'the colour question' in Cuba did not exist in the same way as it did in the U.S.; there was some racial discrimination in Cuba but far less; the revolution would help to eliminate these remaining prejudices; on this topic, Castro added delphically, 'Our thoughts are the thoughts of Martí.' This was Castro's first comment of any sort on the question of race, though, later on, the Cuban revolution would emphasize race questions harshly. Castro might also have gone on to say that, in so far as it did exist, racial discrimination was chiefly a middle-class phenomenon. The Cuban middle class was always conscious of North American habits. Such racial discrimination as there was appears to have been imitative of North America rather than to have sprung from anything special to Cuban circumstances. In the smarter hotels of Havana, frequented by the American business community, racial prejudice was yet another example of the way that some Cubans were always exiles, even in Havana. There was a half racial, half class colour bar in those streets where the upper class walked in the evenings. In the tobacco industry Negroes were cigar-makers and strippers but not sorters or trimmers. Segregation was most remarked in Camagüey, least so in Oriente. No doubt there was segregation in certain enterprises, and a committee for rights of Negroes had been set up in 1934. There were also clubs for mulattoes and Negroes in addition to the religious groups. Relations between Negroes and mulattoes were ambivalent: one proverb ran: 'One Negro may hurt another; a mulatto will do worse.' Fights between black and white on racial grounds were rare, though some seem to have occurred from time to time; for instance in Trinidad in 1934. That racial prejudice in old Cuba was not overwhelming is suggested by the fact that Castro never mentioned the matter in any of his speeches or programmes before the revolution. To read History will absolve me would suggest that Castro was addressing a racially homogeneous nation.

This silence on Castro's part was in fact denounced by militant Cuban Negroes. Some years later, a Cuban Negro Communist of Chinese views, Carlos Moore, criticized Castro as an upholder of white Castilian upper-class ways, and claimed that Castro's alleged improvement in racial harmony was a fraud. The question is more complicated. (One Negro commented in the mid-1960s, 'Before the Revolution the only time I remembered I was black was when I had a bath; now I am reminded of it every day'). In general, since the mysterious and unsuccessful 'Negro revolution' of 1912, Negroes had not played a prominent part in public life. One or two minor politicians had been mulatto, such as Vasconcelos (a minister under both Prio and Batista and Castro's earliest political sponsor) but none had been as prominent, in the second era of Cuba's history as a Republic, as Morúa Delgado or Juan Gualberto Gómez had been in the first. In Grau's time there were five black or mulatto senators out of fifty, twelve representatives out of 127.

### Table: Distribution of Employment in Cuba, 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, cattle, fishing</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufactures and mechanical</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and communications</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks and finance</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic and personal services</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and other services</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional services</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various services</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial and commerce</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Average                       | 25.9       | 74.1 |

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*Note: Corrected from Census of 1943, 786.

18 The Agricultural Census of 1946 did not make any allusion to the question of colour, so we know nothing about the size of farms in this period.

19 Williams, Race Relations in Caribbean Society, op. above, p. 431.

20 Rodriguez, 23 January 1959. Martí's views were expressed in the Manifesto de Monte-cristi.
Two prominent generals of Prio's day, Hernandez Nardo and Querejeta, were Negroes. Locally, black or mulatto politicians were often successful: for instance, Justo Salas, a Negro, became mayor of Santiago in the 1940s, with votes from the (white) bourgeoisie district against black votes for his white opponent. Negroes also rose to important positions in the trade union movement, particularly among the Communist trade unionists: Lazaro Peña, about to reappear on the political scene, Aracelo Iglesias, the dockers' leader murdered in 1948, and Jesus Menendez, murdered in 1947, were the outstanding ones. The chief exception was Batista, apparently a mulatto with Chinese blood. He was the Cuban politician who appealed most to the black population, precisely because he was a man from outside conventional politics, outside conventions, and because his lower-class origins, his apparent sympathy with the masses, his charm, his popularity and his support contributed to the santeria and afiigo rites, whose initiates regarded him as almost one of themselves, particularly in the city of Trinidad. Indeed, Batista paid 'out of his own money' for a big reunion in the summer of 1958 for all the prominent santeras (priests) of Guanabacoa, at which many cocks and goats were sacrificed to appease the 'demons of war'.

Batista's army and police were full of Negroes and mulattoes. Yanes Pelletier, the officer who arrested Castro in 1953 after Moncada, was black. In 1943 (the latest year for which even doubtful statistics are available), just under one-third of the army was allegedly black or mulatto, just over what seems to have been the national proportion. In contrast, most active radicals or progressives were middle-class whites. About a dozen of Castro's followers at Moncada were black or mulatto, but this was an exceptional event in Cuban revolutionary history. Batista's soldiers openly said that it was a disgrace to follow a white such as Castro against a mestizo such as Batista. When Captain Yanes came on Castro hiding asleep in a bohio, it will be recalled that the soldier who found them cried: 'Son blancos!' 'They are white!' Some Negroes even owed their lives at that time to the fact that they were black. It is not clear how many of the rebel army in the Sierra were black but a majority certainly were not, and Almeida, a mulatto, was the only officer of importance who was. The black population as such never rallied to Castro before 1959. He appeared just another half Negro. African rhythms, echoes of ceremonies forgotten or practised still in secrecy, dominated Cuban popular music and poetry. The dances, for which the Cubans were as famous internationally as their cigars or sugar, were mostly African: the conga, rumba, mambo and finally the pachanga, were all direct popularizations of religious dances. They were not, however, entirely African and in fact their blend of African and Spanish, with some North American and French influences, was their distinctive contribution. Much Cuban music derives from the 'love affair of African drums and Spanish guitar', as Fernando Ortiz put it, echoing the carnaval dances of Negroes at Catholic festivals before they were banned. By 1958 the old white Spanish dances, such as the habanera or bolero, had almost vanished. The best Cuban musicians, such as Brindis de Salas or Jose Maria Jimenez, were black. Nicolas Guillen, the best Cuban poet, himself a mulatto, tried to catch in his poetry the

conventional politics had really lasted throughout the Republic. Perhaps they were less without means to rise to higher goals, as Lowry Nelson says, than without aspirations to do so. Like all the Caribbean Africans, the Cuban Negroes were still coping, not always satisfactorily, with the heritage of the forced migration of their ancestors, and of slavery itself. This heritage had meant above all the destruction of the family, the substitution (in some cases) for many generations of the Master for the Father, except in his strictly biological function. The Cuban Negroes were in some respects demanding real emancipation. Their task of adjustment may have been made easier by the fact that African ceremonies and religions sometimes blended effectively with Catholic festivals, though the task of self-articulation may have been more difficult than in the English West Indies, where the white population was insignificant. It was certainly different. Since race was a problem of noticeable physical attributes, the predominantly sallow-skinned Spaniards, with their strong draughts of Moorish and Jewish blood, probably blended more easily, at least with mulattoes, than did the pink or beige Anglo-Saxons, Celts, Germans and Slavs who constituted the majority in the U.S. There was no Cuban society for the advancement of coloured people, though in the 1930s some Negro Communists had argued for an autonomous Negro state in Oriente.

Cuban Negroes were not, however, living in a private world of their own. Their world extended outwards to embrace, if not politics, at least painting and music. If a country is measured by its arts, Cuba was over half Negro. African rhythms, echoes of ceremonies forgotten or practised still in secrecy, dominated Cuban popular music and poetry. The dances, for which the Cubans were as famous internationally as their cigars or sugar, were mostly African: the conga, rumba, mambo and finally the pachanga, were all direct popularizations of religious dances. They were not, however, entirely African and in fact their blend of African and Spanish, with some North American and French influences, was their distinctive contribution. Much Cuban music derives from the 'love affair of African drums and Spanish guitar', as Fernando Ortiz put it, echoing the carnaval dances of Negroes at Catholic festivals before they were banned. By 1958 the old white Spanish dances, such as the habanera or bolero, had almost vanished. The best Cuban musicians, such as Brindis de Salas or Jose Maria Jimenez, were black. Nicolas Guillen, the best Cuban poet, himself a mulatto, tried to catch in his poetry the
rhythm of the songs of Cuba as his master, García Lorca, did in Spain. Wilfredo Lam, half Chinese, half Negro, in his jungle paintings, was partly an intellectual explorer but partly a mediator between a West already noddingly searching for new dreams among primitive things and the African and West Indian worlds of green shadow and magic. The same sort of work was done in sculpture by Teodoro Ramos Blanco. Of course there were very few good Cuban artists who were untouched. The best Cuban novelist, probably the best novelist in South America, Carpenterist, used negroismo in his Ecrit Tamba-O, and his marvellous novel The Kingdom of this World is a brilliant evocation of Negro feelings during the Haitian revolution. Guillén believed that in Cuba a real mulatto culture (which he named negri-blanca) was already, uniquely, in existence.

Artists in Cuba itself were in fact specifically mediators between black and white. So too were the folklorists, among whom Fernando Ortiz, the inspiration of Afro-Cuban studies for half a century and grand prosecutor of sugar monoculture, was the acknowledged master. His books too were an exploration: they awoke middle-class white Cubans to the beliefs, habits and myths of the African Cubans, weakening their fear and ignorance. It was hard to distinguish Afro-Cuban religion from lower-class Catholicism. Upper-class Catholics still referred to Afro-Cuban activities as witchcraft (brujeria) — the word used by the Afro-Cuban population itself for bogus behaviour at rites. Other more timid writers described the development of Cuban Negroes as 'evolutionary disaster', or as inferior because their languages had no grammar.

The Africans introduced words as well as dances. A little Yoruba or Efik from Nigeria, some Fon from Dahomey, could be heard in Cuba, but the use of African languages was on the whole confined to religions, and, like the Sephardic Jews who lived so long in Arab countries, the Cuban Africans otherwise spoke the language of their adopted country, with different dialects.

The nature of Afro-Cuban religions appears to have become more closely identified than ever with Roman Catholicism since the Negro revolution of 1912. Catholicism was regarded by Africans increasingly as a Spanish version of the African Santeria, the cult of orichas, dead great men. The black or mulatto middle class had become assimilated by white Spanish society except on the occasions of participation in

Abakú or santería, which therefore became more of a contrast with ordinary life. Changó, god of war, and St Barbara remained an uneasy identification, living in a cedro tree of the acacia family (the only tree never uprooted by hurricanes), dressed alternately as man and woman; St Peter was still Elegua, destiny in a more malevolent dress, and also known as El Dueño de los Caminos, Master of the Paths. Destiny or Orumilla, St Francis, was believed to have 200–500 santeros (babalás) in Havana alone — part-time, of course — ministering to his needs: white cocks and palm nuts at regular intervals and in special combinations. Madonnas as ever appeared sometimes with tribal marks. God himself, or Ofili, son of the Earth, a shadowy Holy Ghost rather than a Lord of Hosts, played little part. White people continued to go to these celebrations: senators, politicians and mayors would often make obeisance to these curious deities: 'Yo no creo pero lo repito' ('I do not believe but I repeat the ritual') was a frequent explanation. One Cuban at least out of four had gone at one time or another to some such fiesta.

There was much interchange between the different Africans, including the Cubans, Haitians and Jamaicans who had come for work in the 1920s or before and also in the 1940s. Some Yorubas, however, feared the Haitians' Voodoo. Haitians were thought to order Zombies to chase chosen victims 'at all hours, with a burning candle' as Voodoo had of course a nineteenth-century basis in Cuba as well. The añafíos were the most secretive of these groups: membership guaranteed a place in the next world only if kept secret. (They had been banned for a time after 1902 but Menocal allowed them to come back as part of an electoral deal.) Añafíos were feared by the whites: white nannies would explain to the children of the rich that, if they were bad, añafíos would come looking for little white boys.

The black population in Cuba therefore lived still partly in a mysterious dream world, hispanized or North Americanized to some extent, which whites could visit but never really incorporate into their own affluence or poverty. This went ill, inevitably, in a country where materialism had utterly displaced religion. The Communist party, despite its important following among Negroes, criticized the African cults as non-productive and anti-social, but without effect: it was true, however, that the African religions were fundamentally conservative and immobile, if vital: innovations in ceremony were rare except that it seems that during the twentieth century the stones upon which the cocks were sacrificed in Yoruba cults came to have greater and greater significance. These stones, hidden behind a curtain in the lower part of
the altar, were supposed to have all sorts of magical powers once they
had been baptized in blood. On the other hand, it is clear that this was
not a wholly modern development since the most powerful stones, which
were supposed to be able to walk, grow and bear children, were said to
have been brought from Africa by the slaves.37

See W. R. Basswood, 'The Focus of Cuban Santeria', South
Western Journal of Anthropology, VI, Spring 1950, quoted R. F. Smith,
Background to Revolution, New York, 1966.

CHAPTER XCI I

The Church

The Church emerged from the age of Batista with more credit
than most supposed possible: Bishop Pérez Serantes was, of course, one
of Castro’s oldest friends, and the bishops had interceded for peace.
Nevertheless the Church remained a Spanish institution with little
hold among even white workers, less among black.3 The Church was an
institution of the upper class. The Negro transposition of African rituals
and gods into Catholic guises left the Church as such by the way. The
situation remained in 1958 as it was earlier in the century: there were
few churches in the country; such country churches as there were were
poor; attendance in the cities was confined to conventional white
families of Spanish outlook, often women only;4 there were many foreign
(Spanish) priests, and a tradition, dating from the wars of independence,
of siding with conservative opinion. Those wars had been so long as to
make the Church’s identification with Spain almost impossible to
sever. The Spanish conservative newspaper, the old Diario de la Marina,
was strongly clerical.

The separation of Church from State by the U.S. in 1900 had had the
effect of alienating the Church still further from the country. When
Spain fell the Church fell too, to be discredited so much as to be almost a
laughing stock. The Church lost its subsidy from the government, los­
ing still more revenue when civil marriage was made possible after
1902, and compulsory after 1918. Since the mid-nineteenth century,
there had been no monastic lands. After the Second World War, several
sugar mills began to assume the burden of paying priests’ salaries and
ordinary parish expenses. This subsidy from private enterprise further
removed the Church from the masses, though the bishops themselves
claimed they did not know of priests acting as agents of exploitation,
only of their taking the side of strikers.3

Marti, a Mason and an agnostic, had been excommunicated. The
1 The international church seemed to have been bowled over by Castro as much as North
American opinion. Thus Il Quotidiano, whose views were syndicated throughout the world,
assured its readers that Castro was ‘not red’, was a believer, and so could not have any
indulgence towards an ideology of materialism (3 January 1959).
2 Angel del Cerro, in Ha Comenzado la Persecucion Religiosa? (supplement to Cuadernos,
March-April 1960), estimated that 10% of the Cuban population practised Catholicism to
some degree and 80% would accept it nominally: the latter figure is open to doubt.
3 Open letter of the Cuban bishops to Castro, 4 December 1960.