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Abstract: This article presents a geographical, demographic, historical, socio-cultural, political, and ethnological description of Cuba, which is an island on the northern edge of the Carribean Sea, located about 100 miles off the coast of Florida. Cuba is made up of one big island and many small surrounding islands. It is the largest country of the West Indies. Almost the entire population of Cuba was born in Cuba, and most of this group is of Spanish descent. Havana is the capital city, and the national flag has blue and white stripes with one white star on the left. Cuba was originally inhabited by the Ciboney and the Taino people. Relations between the United States and Cuba have been tense ever since the Castro revolution, but that tension reached a high point in April of 1961 when Cuban exiles invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs on the south coast. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts)

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Monkeyshines On Cuba**Holidays CUBA**

National Name	República de Cuba
Area	44,218 square miles
Capital	Havana
Largest city	Havana
Currency	Peso
Language	Spanish
Religion	Roman Catholic
January 1	Day of the Revolution, Liberation Day
May 1	Labor Day
July 25-27	Anniversary of the Revolution
October 10	Proclamation of Yara

Cuba is an island on the northern edge of the Caribbean Sea, located about 100 miles off the coast of Florida. It is the largest country of the Antilles, or what is often referred to

as the islands of the West Indies. Cuba is made up of one big island and many small surrounding islands.

Almost the entire population of Cuba (two million people) was born in Cuba, and most of this group is of Spanish descent. Havana is the capital city, and the national flag has blue and white stripes with one white star on the left. Havana, also the largest city in Cuba, has both modern and traditional architecture.

Havana, once famous for its hotels and nightlife, is growing as a tourist attraction again. Diego Velasquez founded La Havana in 1511. Ernest Hemingway lived on this island and his home is a tourist spot. Old Havana a famous section of town, with its narrow streets and Morro Castle, dominating the harbor entrance. Aging hotels, yacht clubs and lavish homes remind the visitor of the city's old prosperity.

Another important city in Cuba is Santiago de Cuba, located on the southern coast. The capital of the Oriente Province is the second largest city of the island. The final major battle of the Spanish-American War in 1898 was fought here.

History

Cuba was originally inhabited by the Ciboney and the Taino people. Columbus landed in Cuba in 1492 on the first of his voyages to the Americas. Diego Velasquez was made governor of Cuba in 1511 and made Santiago the capital.

The Spanish settlers began importing Africans to be slaves in 1523 because the Indians were dying from diseases brought over by the Spanish. The Spanish also found treasures in Mexico, so Cuba became a resting point between the Americas and Spain for Spanish ships leaving their country.

In 1868, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes freed his slaves and called for a revolt against Spanish rule. Jose Marti founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892 while he was living in the United States.

The war began in 1895 and Marti was killed by the Spanish at Dos Rios in Cuba. The United States supported the war for freedom of Cuba, and helped the Cuban forces fight. After the United States Battleship Maine was blown up, the United States declared war on Spain.

The United States Navy defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War, and the Treaty of Paris was signed in December 1898.

The United States stayed in Cuba to help in the formation of its new government. In 1901 Cuba had its new constitution, and in 1902 a new president, Tomas Estrada Palma.

For the next years, Cuba's economy declined, and difficult times brought about the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado y Morales. This dictatorship was replaced by the regime of Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar, a former army sargeant.

After selecting four presidents, Fidel Castro deposed three of them. He was elected President in 1940. After Fidel Castro's term expired, he was no longer president, but was still very involved in the country's politics. So much so that in 1952 he and his army seized power of the government by force.

In 1954 Fidel Castro was elected President, but the elections were proven to be fraudulent. He did not have the support of the people, so he had to use violent tactics to stay in power. During his rule, the country was in very bad shape.

Government

In 1960 Fidel Castro declared Cuba a Socialist country. Today the government is highly centralized and allows for only one political party, the Cuban Communist Party.

The Castro government provides many benefits for the people such as free education and medical care, but the country's economy has not developed much under Castro's rule. Industrial output has declined and agricultural production is not as successful as it might be.

Communism

Communism has a number of meanings. It can be a form of government, an economic system or a philosophical ideal. It is based on ideas developed by V. I. Lenin who thought of communism as a way of understanding how history develops. Lenin was a Russian revolutionary who lived in the early 1900's. His theory of communism was inspired by the writings of Karl Marx who was a German social philosopher in the 1800's.

According to communists, their goal is a society that provides equality and economic security for all. Communists traditionally have been in favor of government ownership as opposed to private ownership of factories, machines, and other means of production.

Communist governments use propoganda and education to spread their message, allowing little or no public criticism. Communism usually will not permit much of a person's life to go uncontrolled, which is why most communist regimes are also called totalitarian.

The largest nation with communist rule is China, and until 1991 the Soviet Union was a large communist country as well. Cuba is the only communist country in Latin America but Castro supports revolution in other Latin countries. In the 1970's Cuba trained and supplied weapons to the Sandinista National Liberation Front, a guerilla organization in Nicaragua. The National Liberation Front was a partner of Marxist-Leninist groups that held power in Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990.

The terms communism and socialism are frequently confused. That's probably because Communists often refer to their goals as "socialist." But Socialists, also called Social Democrats, do not consider themselves Communists. Socialism may or may not be based on the teachings of the philosopher Marx but they are not to be confused with the teachings of Lenin.

Both Communists and Socialists advocate public ownership or government regulation of businesses and production sites. Socialists are more apt to favor legal and peaceful means to achieve their goals, while Communists have resorted to force to realize their goals.

Bay of Pigs

Relations between the United States and Cuba have been tense ever since the Castro revolution, but that tension reached a high point in April of 1961 when Cuban exiles invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs on the south coast. The invaders had been promised United States military support so that their mission would not fail.

President John F. Kennedy had approved the invasion, but he refused to supply the military assistance. Castro was able to squelch the invasion, and he later traded the exiles for nonmilitary supplies from the United States. That year the United States severed diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Cuban Missile Crisis

In 1962 Fidel Castro suspected a United States attack on Cuba and so turned to the former Soviet Union for help. The USSR supplied missiles and launch site materials. Kennedy ordered a naval blockade and demanded that the USSR remove all their missiles from Cuba. It was the worst crisis of the Kennedy administration and the first

time the world had faced a threat of nuclear war. The USSR backed down after being reassured that the United States would not attack Cuba.

Military in Cuba

The United States maintains a naval base at Guantanamo Bay which is a further source of tension since the Cuban government does not approve of this foreign military presence.

Cuba has one of the largest and best-equipped armies in Latin America with approximately 130,000 men and women serving in the country's regular armed forces, and about 135,000 men and women in the regular reserves. The armed services participate in many nonmilitary activities such as harvesting. Cuban men must serve two years of duty in the military after they are 16 years old, unless they are farmers.

Political Refugees

The first 20 years of Communist regime headed by Castro was generally supported by the people, but many Cubans-about 600,000-fled the country. Cuba turned to the former Soviet Union for support, but the USSR could not help the country enough economically which is when the Cuban government began to ration supplies. More people have left the island because of extremely difficult living conditions.

The United States continued to pressure Cuba by imposing sanctions. They did not want the idea of Communism to spread throughout Latin America. All but two countries in North and South America stopped trade with Cuba: Mexico and Canada.

A large group of people emigrated (left the country — Cuba) between April and September of 1980 with about 125,000 relocating to the United States. Due to opposition to Castro or extreme economic hardships, many Cubans resorted to taking makeshift boats from their island to the United States. The trip to south Florida is only 90 miles but can be treacherous in overcrowded and unseaworthy crafts. Old and young have made the journey, however, to improve their lives.

The great number of Cuban immigrants to the United States has put social and financial strains on Florida and the entire nation. This tension led to a revision on the United States' policy of automatically accepting Cuban refugees.

Geography

Located south of the Tropic of Cancer, this island's 2000 miles of coastline is made up of round bays and gorgeous coral reefs. Most of the island is flat, and most of the soil throughout Cuba is made up of limestone. Guantanamo Bay is occupied by the United States.

The countryside is made of soft rolling hills that make farming on the land easy. There are grasslands in the central part of the island, and mountains along the eastern and western sides.

There are many mangrove swamps like the Zapata Swamp in Southern Cuba. The eastern part of the island is covered by the Sierra Maestra (a mountain range) which rises to 6,473 feet; its highest point is the Pico Real del Turquino.

The Sierra de Trinidad is in the center of the island, while the Escambray Mountains are in the southern part of the island. The Sierra de los Organos looks like haystacks, because of its lumpy hills, sometimes called mogotes.

Some of the most interesting fruits found on this island is the plantain, which is similar to the banana, but not as sweet. Plantains are often used as vegetables. Pawpaw and coconuts also grow well on this island. The pawpaw is similar to the papaya fruit.

Climate

Cuba's climate is one of the most pleasant in the Caribbean. Its weather is usually categorized as semitropical to mild, not including the mountains. Breezes from the sea make Cuba's climate comfortable. The rainy season is from November to April, but the island does experience frequent droughts. The Hurricane season is from August to October, and it often hits the small island hard.

Cuba has many different kinds of flowers and plants — about 8000 varieties! The tropical forests are mainly located on the mountains. Small animals like tropical bats and birds live on this island, as well as many different species of reptiles and insects.

Industry

Most of the economy of this country is agriculturally based. Cuba is the world's fourth leading sugar producer, and tobacco is also a very important crop, requiring intensive cultivation. Cuba also exports citrus fruits, rice, bananas, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and coffee. They have a large fishing industry of tuna, lobster and shellfish. Nickel and copper are abundant in Cuba, and there are large iron ore mines in the Oriente Province.

People

More than 11 million people live in Cuba; three-fourths of this population live in cities. The population is either white, black or of mixed ancestry. Most Cubans speak Spanish and many, especially in the cities, speak English.

After Castro's revolution, attention was turned away from luxury resorts in Havana, and turned toward spending money on food, housing and education for rural people. Still, people in rural areas survive largely on beans, rice, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes, because many types of food are impossible to get; Cuba has a system of rationing food where the government provides coupons for beans, beef, milk, potatoes and rice.

And though the government has helped to upgrade housing conditions, it has not kept up with the urgent demand for improved conditions in the city's overcrowded apartments

Cuban children go to school for at least the required six years. Approximately 35,000 students go to the country's three national universities in Havana, Santa Clara, and Santiago de Cuba. It is estimated that more than 95 per cent of Cuban adults can read and write due to various adult education programs.

Roman Catholicism is the most popular religion in Cuba, yet the church is not approved of by the Cuban government.

Many church schools have been taken over by the government; people who attend religious services are not able to be Communist Party members and do not usually get the better jobs. A religion called Santeria combines African tribal and Roman Catholic ceremonies. The followers of Santeria believe the Catholic saints represent African gods.

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MAP

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Cuba

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