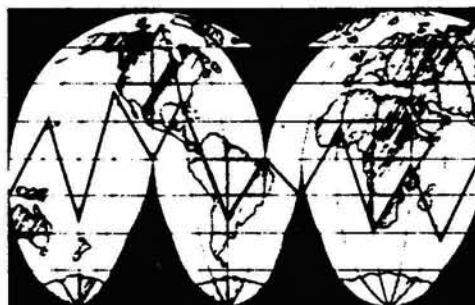


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Cuba: A Handbook of Historical Statistics

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Introduction

This statistical history of Cuba contains 22 chapters, which treat the social, political, and economic topics of significance to Cuba's history. The topics--climate, demography, education, labor, production, foreign trade, finance, politics, government, and the military--are listed in the contents and cross-referenced in the index. Each chapter contains an introductory text followed by supportive statistical tables.

This volume is intended to be a research manual for use by students and professionals in the fields of academics, government, and business. It presents quantitative information in a historical context for time-series analysis. The data may be used to analyze trends, to formulate projections, and to gain general views of the entire development of Cuba from the days of Columbus through the Castro years. In fact, a new profile of the country emerges as a result of this first attempt to provide a comprehensive survey--a profile that could not have been seen if there had not been a formulation of the quantitative record of the island's activities.

In this work I divide Cuba's history into four periods based upon the periodization established by Hugh Thomas in his monolithic text of 1971.¹ These divisions are the colonial period (1492 - 1898), the U.S. military intervention (1899 - 1902) and (1906 - 1908), the Republic of Cuba (1909 - 1958), and socialist Cuba (dating from the Revolution of 1959 until the present). Since it is understood that this book may be used selectively by subject, it is in order at the outset to give a brief summary of Cuba's historical development to enhance the researcher's perspective in relation to his particular topical interest.

The early history of Cuba begins with the discovery of the island in 1492 by Christopher Columbus, who remarked upon its beauty and the civility of its native inhabitants. Columbus claimed the island for Spain in the name of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel. Subsequent

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colonization of the island was slow, although it should be noted that Cuba was the home of Hernando Cortés and served as the launching point for the conquest in 1521 of the infamous Aztec capital at Tenochtitlan in the Valley of Mexico. Cuba's role thereafter during the colonial period was as an intermediate station between the mother country, Spain, and her numerous colonies in North, Central, and South America.

Cuba remained a Spanish colony for more than 400 years after Columbus claimed it for Spain in 1492. The colony was a quiet, agriculturally oriented island that depended upon Spain for political tutelage. It attempted to comply with the mother country's many laws that regulated all colonial activities. Trade restrictions were among the most difficult of the laws to adhere to, for the colonies were not permitted to exchange goods with any country other than Spain. Luxury items were scarce, and it was necessary to import many basic commodities. In addition, economic support was received through the Viceroyalty in Mexico, which caused frustrating delays, for all appropriations required royal authorization.

The island's center of activity was the large city of Havana, which served as a major port for seagoing vessels traveling from Spain to the Americas. Havana was the third largest city in colonial Latin America and provided an important center for the exchange of European imports such as wheat, wine, and other goods that were not available in the New World. The primary American export was silver, which was mined in Mexico and Peru. The passage across the Atlantic was often hazardous because of inclement weather and the many pirates who waited to intercept the heavily laden vessels. The island was not immune to the piracy and smuggling that occurred as the rich cargoes of the many ships traversed the Caribbean. Indeed, the numerous keys of the island afforded secluded havens for the buccaneers who commandeered the cargoes and fortunes of the Spanish sea captains. The Caribbean became a sort of international center for the Dutch, French, English, and Portuguese pirates, as they sought to capitalize upon the wealth of the Spanish-colonial trade network.

The island itself was often subject to attack by these lawless outsiders, and fortifications were necessary to protect Havana's harbor. In spite of the safeguards, Havana was captured by the English navy in 1762.² While this was a coup for the English, the Cubans benefited indirectly, for during the English occupation (1762-63), the Cubans became cognizant of a new dimension in international trade and shipping practices. No longer were

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import and export items the exclusive right of Spain. Thereafter, Cuban markets included other European countries as well as the island's developing neighbor to the north.

Coffee and tobacco had been the major export items during the eighteenth century. By the end of that time, sugar production had surpassed both tobacco and coffee production and dominated all the island's trade. By the late 1820s Cuba was the richest colony and the largest producer of sugar in the world.

Slavery was an inextricable part of sugar production in Cuba. The island was not unique in its use of slaves: Spaniards had long depended upon black slaves as auxiliaries. They had become a necessary part of Spanish society. Black slaves were essential to the entire process of sugar production. The importation of slaves into Cuba reached such high levels that during one point in the sugar boom, the black population exceeded that of the island's white citizenry.³

This dependency on slaves caused the Cubans to be reluctant to follow other colonies in seeking independence and establishing themselves as a sovereign nation. The fervor for independence, which coincided with abolitionism in the nineteenth century, was not acceptable to the Cubans because they feared that both movements would jeopardize the economic prosperity that they were enjoying from sugar trade revenues.

The United States had become a major purchaser of Cuban sugar. As early as 1808 Thomas Jefferson expressed the wish on behalf of the United States that Cuba be either purchased or annexed. This was the first in a long series of attempts to make the island an integral part of the United States. The proximity of the island in addition to its economic potential prompted U.S. politicians and businessmen to become increasingly involved in Cuban affairs. Finally, Cuban independence, late in the 1890s, was the result of U.S. intervention and support during the island's struggle for freedom against Spain. Independence from Spain meant growing dependence upon the United States: economic associations between the two countries created a ligature that was not broken for more than 50 years. Cuba became increasingly dependent upon the United States for sugar purchases as well as capital investments.⁴ Many scholars believe that Cuba exchanged Spanish domination for that of the United States. Cole Blasier claims that by the 1950s, "United States' capital controlled a declining but large share of Cuban sugar production and a large sector of finance, public utilities, and mining."⁵

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Later, in the 1960s the U.S. dominance was supplanted by a new dominance - dependency relationship with the Soviet Union. In the latter relationship the focus was different: the Soviet Union was not so much interested in political and economic hegemony as it was in securing a geographical foothold that would have international implications.

Scholars are much concerned with this concept of dominance - dependency, which is correlated with capitalism and the superiority of industrialized Western nations and their subjugation of underdeveloped countries. It is theorized that the undeveloped and underdeveloped countries remain static until overbearance and usurpation by the dominant country ends.⁶ It is not the purpose of this book to interpret U.S. - Cuba - U.S.S.R. roles nor expound upon Cuba's "economic vassalage," the term coined by Che Guevara.⁷ Instead, the interested researcher will be able to ascertain the relevant facts by evaluating the quantitative information in the chapters devoted to trade and finance in this book.

Cuba in the twentieth century enjoyed a progressive development compatible with other Latin American countries. In many ways, the island surpassed its neighbors by enjoying a higher standard of living with bright prospects for the future, most of which were due to its close relationship with the United States. In addition, revenue from tourism was high; tourists loved this Caribbean island, which provided luxury hotels, beautiful beaches, and such diversionary pleasures as night clubs, gambling, and prostitution.

Most of the activity and opportunity was in the urban center--Havana. Rural areas remained backward, of importance only during the sugar harvest. The Cubans in the countryside did not have the high standard of living enjoyed in the cities, and some suffered great poverty. For them access to educational opportunities, health care, regular employment, and the like, was nearly nonexistent. Racial inequality was another problem: the large, black slave population of the previous century remained as an extant, albeit free, entity throughout the 1900s. Some miscegenation had occurred among the rural poor, but opportunities for advancement were rare regardless of modification of skin color.

After the Revolution of 1959 many inequalities, especially in the standard of living, were lessened. According to William M. LeoGrande, this was accomplished by redistributing the income of the upper classes to the lower classes. There was also provision of free social services and a rationing system that tended to equalize buying power.⁸ All forms of racial and sexual discrimination were prohibited.

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The economy, however, suffered from a series of setbacks: the abolition of the U.S. sugar quota; the institution of trade embargoes by various countries; and isolationism imposed by the Organization of American States.⁹ The Soviet Union offered aid, and Cuba accepted, thereby establishing a relationship that has endured for more than 20 years.

The rich historical life of Cuba deserves as complete a survey as possible. The island is small and specialized yet unique in the international attention that it traditionally commands. In addition, its economic and political developments are intimately related to society. Hugh Thomas frequently refers to the "character of Cuba." This is an important concept and deserves elaboration. Historically, Cuba has been subjected to and influenced by three powerful and dominating countries. Contemporary Cubans reflect the cultural input of these associations as well as selected adaptations from Africa, which are still apparent in the arts and religion. Over the years these traits have crystallized so that now Cubans enjoy their own ethnic, national culture. In spite of the prevailing political situation, their traditions endure. Cuban character cannot be quantified, but instead must be appreciated as a composite of a multitude of political, social, and cultural customs.

It is not the intention of the editors of this volume to present personal ideological preferences. It is understood that Cuba is a highly controversial and always provocative topic. Rather, the purpose has been to compile the most complete and objective compendium of statistics possible. However, since record keeping was the prerogative of individual agencies, and not a national responsibility in early times, the lacunae are many and the record is often incomplete. It would be most convenient to date the tables in this book from the 1940s when international agencies began their accounts on individual countries. These tabulations could then be correlated with each country's accounts in order to develop a more extended record for time-series analysis. However, Cuba does not lend itself to such superficial treatment: its history is rich and complex and should be accounted for with the most complete survey possible.

The quantitative information contained in the tables of this volume is from a variety of sources. A preliminary trip by the author to the island in 1978 demonstrated the impracticability of an extended stay for the purpose of perusing the primary sources. Thus, many sources are of a

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secondary nature or depend upon traveler's accounts, and so on. Many of these sources can be corroborated by cross-checking with other materials as they become available. In some cases, the statistical sample is short, but it is included as representative of a particular period and process in Cuban development. It is hoped that other scholars will add to its sequence. In extended time-series accounts, such as rainfall, each year has been included so that the researcher will have a complete survey in order to understand the significance of rain, or the absence thereof, to the economic and historical growth of the island. The ramifications of one year of drought might be reflected in one way or another in every other chapter of the book. For instance, inadequate rainfall would affect agricultural production, especially sugar. This in turn would be reflected in employment or unemployment, diminished foreign trade, negative balance of payments, reduced domestic spending, fewer social services, and so forth.

The sources for these historical statistics include the various international publications sponsored by the United Nations; Cuban, U.S., and British publications as well as the scholarship of individual researchers. These include Levi Marrero's many volumes on the colonial history of Cuba; the Cuban Economic Research Project, which provides statistical information from the colonial period through the first decade of the socialist period; Archibald R. M. Ritter's economic history of Cuba; and Carmelo Mesa-Lago and the many scholars from the University of Pittsburgh, whose diligent research has produced many major publications. The Statistical Abstract of Latin America, edited by James W. Wilkie and Peter Reich, contains quantitative information regarding social, political, and economic conditions in Latin America. It serves as an invaluable reference tool by providing some of the most recent statistics on Cuba and presenting a general perspective so that Cuba's development may be viewed in relation to other Latin American countries.

There are many limitations in statistical studies. For example, in Cuba a statistical yearbook has not been published on a regular basis. Even in the 1970s, the yearbooks published by JUCEPLAN (Junta Central de Planificación) were three to four years behind and contained a considerable amount of provisional data. Considering the erratic nature of Cuban politics and economics, it was not unexpected that data reporting might be irregular or even nonexistent.

When analyzing any statistical information, the researcher must evaluate the usefulness of the data in terms of the validity of the reporter and the tenor of the prevailing times. This is the main theme of Carmelo

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Mesa-Lago's extensive article, which cautions the researcher to exercise special care when selecting statistical sources and analyzing the material. Although Mesa-Lago's essential concern was with the statistical information that was produced after the Revolution of 1959, his warning could well be taken for much of Cuban history. On the other hand, James W. Wilkie, in the Statistical Abstract of Latin America, states that statistical information need not be evaluated as either "right" or "wrong," but rather understood as "subject to the limitations of the original sources and definitions developed and/or changing over time with realignment of subcategories making data noncomparable before and after the realignment." Professor Wilkie also advocates "the need for caution in reading, comparing, and interpreting the data" and urges the use of collateral sources when additional information is desired.¹¹

Critics of Latin American statistical accounts challenge their accuracy as well as their honesty. Professor Wilkie responds by stating "...the fact that many of the data are officially accepted by the respective governments or the international organizations does not necessarily imply that they are completely accurate or reliable....the fact that governments disseminate and use such data is vital to understand their self-conception of problems in national development."¹²

Professor Mesa-Lago's caveat regarding the inconsistency and irregularity of statistical data since the Revolution of 1959 does not imply that the information has no usefulness. Indeed, there would be nothing to report, and the tables in this book would be void after 1959 if the available samples were not utilized. The researcher is simply forewarned to be discrete in his analysis of the information. The statistical tables in this volume cover the longest time period possible, providing the scholar with an opportunity to qualify or substantiate other statistical sources. An example of misuse would be the individual who, in appropriate revolutionary zeal, notes that one benefit of the revolution is the improvement in health care and cites the decline in the mortality rate to an all-time low. Upon examination of the time-series data (Table III.3), the researcher believes that for the period from 1960-1973 this was a notable achievement. However, upon checking the table in a broader context, it is evidenced that the 1973 record is just beginning to approximate the level that had been recorded during the prerevolutionary period in 1958.

The type of historical statistics in this book is descriptive in nature. Another type of statistics, called predictive, has not been incorporated into this work. The

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definitions and utility of both types have been discussed in Statistics and National Policy:

Quantitative history may be developed with classificatory (or descriptive) statistics, as in this volume, or with inductive (predictive) statistics. The former involves systematically organizing data into standard categories as well as utilizing such measures as proportion and central tendency. The latter involves using techniques such as correlation, regression factor analysis, and model building for purposes of inference. Although inductive statistics tend to be unintelligible to persons without an extensive background in statistics and probability theory, anyone with a background of basic concepts and terms in social sciences will find that with some patience it is possible to "read" tables of descriptive statistics.

The relationship of classificatory to inductive statistics is not always clear-cut. On the one hand, the descriptive statistics provide the raw data necessary for inductive analysis. On the other hand, when, for example, there are problems or gaps in descriptive data, inductive statistics may be utilized to test meaning or fill the gaps. And either type of quantitative analysis may involve the study of historical data for one moment in time or for a time series.¹³

The impetus for this book originated in Professor Wilkie's graduate seminar on historical statistics. That it should come to fruition is due to the generous support from all seminar members who participated in those scholarly, convivial sessions.

Finally, this book cannot be completed until the many individuals who provided assistance have been recognized. I gratefully acknowledge their support: Mollie Wirtschafter, who helped with several Spanish translations; S. L. Cline, who joined me on a visit to the University of Texas, Austin, and helped gather information on Cuba; Pamela French, who critically read this manuscript; Dr. Francisco F. Morales, who was the first to share his love of Cuba with me; Comrade Manuel Alvarez Fuentes, who kindly helped me locate statistical information when I visited the island in January 1978; Professor Carmelo Mes-Lago, who generously offered his offices and library to facilitate my research; and most importantly, Professor James W. Wilkie, who somehow found the patience and took the time to provide

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the necessary guidance. My family deserves special mention and thanks for their forbearance as they waited for me to finish.

1. Hugh Thomas, Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
2. For the status of the Cuban colony in 1762 and the consequences of English occupation see Hugh Thomas, pp. 3 - 57.
3. See Chapter IV, Table IV.5.
4. Eric N. Baklanoff, "International Economic Relations," in Revolutionary Change in Cuba. Edited by Carmelo Mesa-Lago (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 253.
5. Cole Blasier, "The Elimination of United States Influence," in Revolutionary Change in Cuba. Edited by Carmelo Mesa-Lago (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 74.
6. For more information on the theory of dominance-dependency between the United States and Cuba see William M. LeoGrande, "Cuban Dependency: A Comparison of Pre-Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary Cuban International Economic Relations" (Amherst, Mass.: Special Studies Series, Council on International Studies, 1978).
7. Statement issued in March 1960 by Ernesto (Che) Guevara regarding the underdevelopment of Cuba, in Cole Blasier, p. 70.
8. William M. LeoGrande, "Two Decades of Socialism in Cuba," Latin American Research Review 11, no. 1 (1981):198.
9. As an island, Cuba depended upon trade for basic necessities, as well as economic stability. During the 1954 - 1958 period alone, the United States purchased three-quarters of Cuba's tobacco and 60% of its sugar (Baklanoff). To suddenly have this market eliminated resulted in an economic crisis for Cuba. Trade with Latin American and Western European countries was also prevented because of prohibitions imposed by the OAS with U.S. sanction.
10. Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "Availability and Reliability of Statistics in Socialist Cuba," Latin American Research Review 4, no. 1 (1969): 53-91
11. James W. Wilkie and Peter Reich, Statistical Abstract of Latin America, vol. 18 (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1977), p. v.
12. Ibid., p. vi.
13. James W. Wilkie, Statistics and National Policy (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1974), p. 6.