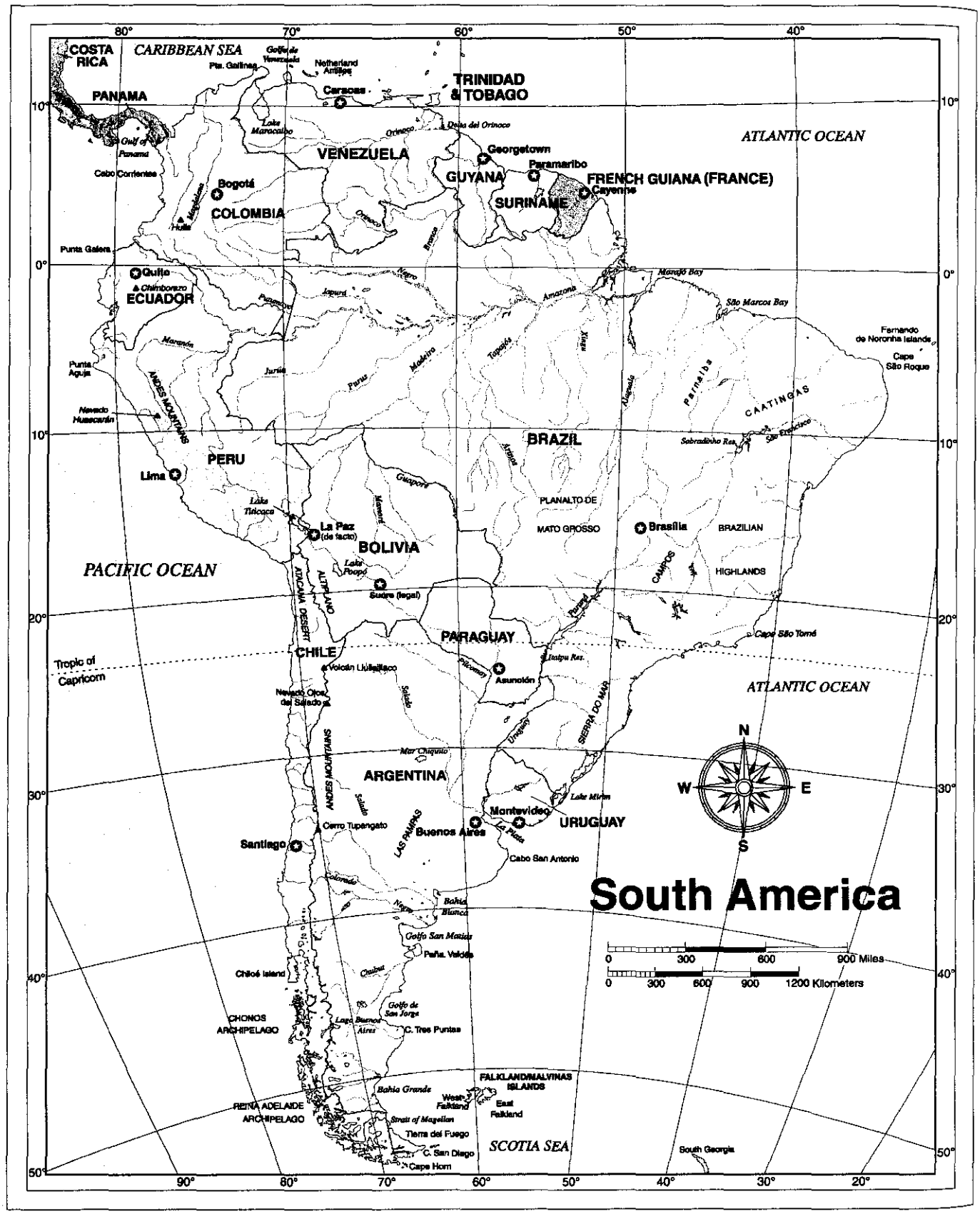
South America



South America: An Imperfect Prism

Any overview of South America must first address the incredible geographic and climatic diversity of the region. Equatorial rain forests are found in Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and other countries; and the coastal deserts in Peru and northern Chile are among the driest and most forbidding in the world (naturalist Charles Darwin described the area as "a complete and utter desert"). More hospitable are the undulating pampas and plains of Argentina, Uruguay, central Venezuela, eastern Colombia, and southeastern Brazil. The spine of the continent is formed by the Andes Mountains, majestic and snowcapped. Because of its topography and the many degrees of latitude in which it lies, South America has extremes of temperature, ranging from desert heat to the steaming humidity of the tropics to the cold gales of Tierra del Fuego, which lies close to the Antarctic Circle. To add further to the perils of generalization, wide-ranging differences often occur within a country. Geography has played a critical role in the evolution of each of the nations of South America; it has been one of several major influences in their histories and their cultures.

NATURE'S CHALLENGE

Nature has presented the inhabitants of South America with an unrelenting challenge. On the west coast, most of the major cities are located in geologically active zones. All too frequently, earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic activity, and landslides have taken a staggering toll of human life. And throughout the region, floods and droughts make agriculture a risky business. Periodically, for example, the weather phenomenon known as *El Niño* brings devastating floods to Peru and Ecuador, with heavy loss of life and extensive damage to the infrastructure of the region.

REGIONALISM

South America's diverse topography has also helped to foster a deep-seated regionalism that has spawned innumerable civil wars and made national integration an extremely difficult task. In Colombia, for instance, the Andes fan out into three distinct ranges, separated by deep valleys. Each of the nation's three major cities—Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali—dominates a valley and is effectively isolated from the others by the mountains. The broad plains to the east have remained largely undeveloped because of the difficulty of access from the centers of population. Troubling to Colombian governments is the fact that, in terms of topography, the eastern plains are tied to Venezuela and not to the Colombian cities to the west.

(Photo Lisa Clyde)

The northern Andes Mountains meet the Caribbean Sea in Venezuela.

(United Nations photo)

The cultures of the countries of the southern Cone—Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile—have been profoundly influenced by the geography of their vast, fertile plains. These latter-day gauchos herd their animals to the auction pens.

Similarly, mountains divide Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Venezuela. In all of these nations, there is a permanent tension between the capital cities and the hinterlands. As is the case in those republics that have large Indian populations, the tension often is as much cultural as it is a matter of geography. But in the entire region, physical geography interacts with culture, society, politics, and economics. Regionalism has been a persistent theme in the history of Ecuador, where there has been an often bitter rivalry between the capital city of Quito, located high in the central mountains, and the port city of Guayaquil. Commonly, port cities, with their window on the world outside, tend to be more cosmopolitan, liberal, and dynamic than cities that are more isolated. Such is the case with freewheeling Guayaquil, which stands in marked contrast to conservative, traditional, deeply Catholic Quito.

Venezuela boasts six distinct geographical regions, which include mountains and valleys, plains and deserts, rivers and jungles, and a coastline. Historian John Lombardi observes that each of these regions has had an important role in identifying and defining the character of Venezuela's past and present: "Over the centuries the geographical focus has shifted from one region to another in response to internal arrangements and external demands."

THE SOUTHERN CONE

The cultures of the countries of the so-called Southern Cone—Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile—have also been shaped by the geographical environment. Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil's southern state of Rio Grande do Sul developed subcultures that reflected life on the vast, fertile plains, where cattle grazed by the millions. The *gaucho* ("cowboy") became symbolic of the "civilization of leather." Fierce, independent, a law unto himself, the gaucho was mythologized by the end of the nineteenth century. At a time when millions of European immigrants were flooding into the region, the gaucho emerged as a nationalist symbol of Argentina and Uruguay, standing firm in the face of whatever natives viewed as "foreign."

Landlocked Paraguay, surrounded by powerful neighbors, has for most of its history been an introspective nation, little known to the outside world. Because of its geography, most of Paraguay's population is concentrated near the capital city of Asunción. A third of the nation is tropical and swampy—not suitable for settlement. To the west, the desolate Chaco region, with its lack of adequate sources of drinkable water, is virtually uninhabitable.

Chile, with a coastline 2,600 miles long, is a country of topographic and climatic extremes. If superimposed on a map of North America, Chile would stretch from Mexico's Baja California to the Yukon in Alaska. It is on Chile's border with Argentina that the Andes soar to their greatest heights. Several peaks, including Aconcagua, reach to nearly 23,000 feet in elevation. That mountain barrier has historically isolated Chile from eastern South America and from Europe. The central valley of Chile is the political, industrial, social, and cultural heart of the nation. With the capital city of Santiago and the large port of Valparaíso, the valley holds about 70 percent of Chile's population. The valley's Mediterranean climate and fertile soil have long acted as a magnet for Chileans from other, less hospitable, parts of the country.

BRAZIL

Historian Rollie Poppino has noted that the "major miracle of Brazil is its existence as a single nation." What he implies is that Brazil embraces regions that are so distinct that they could well be separate countries. "There are actually many Brazils within the broad expanse of the national territory, and the implication of uniformity conveyed by their common flag and language is often deceptive." In Brazil, there exists a tremendous range of geographical, racial, cultural, and economic contrasts. But part of the Brazilian "miracle" lies in the ability of its people to accept the diversity as normal. Many Brazilians were unaware of the great differences within their country for years, until the improvement of internal transportation and communications as well as the impact of the mass media informed them not only of their common heritage but also of their profound regional differences.

DIVERSE PEOPLES

In many respects, the peoples of South America are as diverse as its geography. While the populations of Argentina and Uruguay are essentially European, with virtually no Indian intermixture, Chilean society is descended from Spanish conquerors and the Indians they dominated. The Indian presence is strongest in the Andean republics of Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador—the heart of the ancient Inca civilization. Bolivia is the most Indian, with well over half its population classified as such. Mes-

tizos (mixed white and Indian) constitute about a quarter of the population, and whites make up only about one tenth.

Three ethnic groups are found among the populations of Colombia and Venezuela: Spanish and Indian predominate, and there are small black minorities. About 60 percent of the populations of both countries are of Mestizo or pardo (mixed blood) origin. One of Brazil's distinctive features is the rich racial mixture of its population. Peoples of Indian, European, African, and Japanese heritage live in an atmosphere largely free of racial enmity, if not degrees of prejudice.

Taken as a whole, the predominant culture is Iberian (that is, Spanish or Portuguese), although many mountain areas are overwhelmingly Indian in terms of ethnic makeup. With the conquest and colonization of South America in the sixteenth century, Spain and Portugal attempted to fasten their cultures, languages, and institutions on the land and its peoples. Spanish cities in South America—laid out in the familiar grid pattern consisting of a large central plaza bordered by a Catholic church, government buildings, and the dwellings of the ruling elite—represented the conscious intention of the conquerors to impose their will, not only on the defeated Indian civilizations but also on nature itself.

By way of contrast, the Brazilian cities that were laid out by early Portuguese settlers tended to be less formally structured, suggesting that their planners and builders were more flexible and adaptable to the new world around them. Roman Catholicism, however, was imposed on all citizens by the central authority. Government, conforming to Hispanic political culture, was authoritarian in the colonial period and continues to be so today. The conquerors created a stratified society of essentially two sectors: a ruling white elite and a ruled majority. But Spain and Portugal also introduced institutions that knit society together. Paternalistic patron–client relationships that bound the weak to the strong were common; they continue to be so today.

INDIAN CULTURE

Among the isolated Indian groups of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, Spanish cultural forms were strongly and, for the most part, successfully resisted. Suspicious and occasionally hostile, the Indians refused integration into the white world outside their highland villages. By avoiding integration, in the words of historian Frederick Pike, "they maintain the freedom to live almost exclusively in the domain of their own language, social habits, dress and eating styles, beliefs, prejudices, and myths."

Only the Catholic religion was able to make some inroads, and that was (and still is) imperfect. The Catholicism practiced by Quechua- and Aymara-speaking Indians is a blend of Catholic teachings and ancient folk religion. For example, in an isolated region in Peru where eight journalists were massacred by Indians, a writer who investigated the incident reported in *The New York Times* that while Catholicism was "deeply rooted" among the Indians, "it has not displaced old beliefs like the worship of the *Apus*, or god mountains." When threatened, the Indians are "zealous defenders of their customs and mores." The societies' two cultures have had a profound impact on the literature of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The plight of the Indian, social injustice, and economic exploitation are favorite themes of these nations' authors.

(United Nations photo/Bruno J. Zehnder)

South America's Indian cultures and modern development have never really mixed. The native cultures persist in many areas, as exemplified by this Indian woman at a market in Ecuador.

Other Indian groups more vulnerable to the steady encroachment of "progress" did not survive. In the late nineteenth century, pampas Indians were virtually destroyed by Argentine cavalry armed with repeating rifles. Across the Andes, in Chile, the Araucanian Indians met a similar fate in the 1880s. Unfortunately, relations between the "civilized" world and the "primitive" peoples clinging to existence in the rain forests of Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, and Venezuela have generally improved little. Events in Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela in the early 1990s, however, signaled a shift toward greater Indian rights. Indigenous peoples throughout the Amazon Basin, however, are still under almost daily assault from settlers hungry for land, road builders, developers, and speculators—most of whom care little about the cultures they are annihilating.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE

In those South American countries where slavery was widespread, the presence of a large black population has contributed yet another dimension to Hispanic culture (or, in the case of Guyana and Suriname, English and Dutch culture). Slaves, brutally uprooted from their cultures in Africa, developed new cultural forms that were often a combination of Christian and other beliefs. To insulate themselves against the rigors of forced labor and to forge some kind of common identity, slaves embraced folk religions that were heavily oriented toward magic. Magic helped blacks to face an uncertain destiny, and folk religions built bridges between peoples facing a similar, horrible fate. Folk religions not only survived the emancipation of slaves but have remained a common point of focus for millions of Brazilian blacks.

This phenomenon had become so widespread that in the 1970s, the Roman Catholic Church made a concerted effort to win Afro-Brazilians to a religion that was more Christian and less pagan. This effort was partly negated by the development of close relations between Brazil and Africa, which occurred at the same time as the Church's campaign. Brazilian blacks became more acutely aware of their African origins and began a movement of "re-Africanization." So pervasive had the folk religions become that one authority stated that Umbada (one of the folk religions) was now the religion of Brazil. The festival of *Carnaval* ("Carnival") in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is perhaps the best-known example of the blending of Christianity with spiritism. Even the samba, a dance form that is central to the Carnaval celebration, had its origins in black folk religions.

IMMIGRATION AND CULTURE

Italians, Eastern and Northern Europeans, Chinese, and Japanese have also contributed to the cultural, social, and economic development of several South American nations. The great outpouring of Europe's peoples that brought millions of immigrants to the shores of the United States also brought millions to South America. From the mid-1800s to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, great numbers of Italians and Spaniards, and much smaller numbers of Germans, Russians, Welsh, Scots, Irish, and English, boarded ships that would carry them to South America.

Many were successful in the "New World." Indeed, immigrants were largely responsible for the social restructuring of Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil, as they created a large and dynamic middle class where none had existed before.

Italians

Many of the new arrivals came from urban areas, were literate, and possessed a broad range of skills. Argentina received the greatest proportion of immigrants. So great was the influx that an Argentine political scientist labeled the years 1890–1914 the "alluvial era" (flood). His analogy was apt, for by 1914, half the population of the capital city of Buenos Aires were foreign-born. Indeed, 30 percent of the total Argentine population were of foreign extraction. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants also flocked into Uruguay.

In both countries, they were able to move quickly into middle-class occupations in business and commerce. Others found work on the docks or on the railroads that carried the produce of the countryside to the ports for export to foreign markets. Some settled in the interior of Argentina, where they usually became sharecroppers or tenant farmers, although a sizable number were able to purchase land in the northern province of Santa Fe or became truck farmers in the immediate vicinity of Buenos Aires. Argentina's wine industry underwent a rapid transformation and expansion with the arrival of Italians in the western provinces of Mendoza and San Juan. In the major cities of Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, and Brazil, Italians built hospitals and established newspapers; they formed mutual aid societies and helped to found the first labor unions. Their presence is still strong today, and Italian words have entered into everyday discourse in Argentina and Uruguay.

(Photo Lisa Clyde)

The Spanish colonial influence is apparent in South America, as seen in this sixteenth-century building in Andean Venezuela. It was originally a monastery. Later, it was used as a hunting lodge; most recently, it was turned into a hotel.

Other Groups

Other immigrant groups also made their contributions to the formation of South America's societies and cultures. Germans colonized much of southern Chile and were instrumental in creating the nation's dairy industry. In the wilds of Patagonia, Welsh settlers established sheep ranches and planted apple, pear, and cherry trees in the Río Negro Valley.

In Buenos Aires, despite the 1982 conflict over the Falkland Islands, there remains a distinct British imprint. Harrod's is the largest department store in the city, and one can board a train on a railroad built with English capital and journey to suburbs with names such as Hurlingham, Temperley, and Thames. In both Brazil and Argentina, soccer was introduced by the English, and two Argentine teams still bear the names "Newell's Old Boys" and "River Plate." Collectively, the immigrants who flooded into South America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries introduced a host of new ideas, methods, and skills. They were especially important in stimulating and shaping the modernization of Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and southern Brazil.

In other countries that were bypassed earlier in the century, immigration has become a new phenomenon. Venezuela—torn by political warfare, its best lands long appropriated by the elite, and its economy developing only slowly—was far less attractive than the lands of opportunity to its north (the United States)

and south (Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil). In the early 1950s, however, Venezuela embarked on a broadscale development program that included an attempt to attract European immigrants. Thousands of Spaniards, Portuguese, and Italians responded to the economic opportunity. Most of the immigrants settled in the capital city of Caracas, where some eventually became important in the construction business, retail trade, and the transportation industry.

INTERNAL MIGRATION

Paralleling the movement of peoples from across the oceans to parts of South America has been the movement of populations from rural areas to urban centers. In every nation, cities have been gaining in population for years. What prompts people to leave their homes and strike out for the unknown? In the cases of Bolivia and Peru, the very real prospect of famine has driven people out of the highlands and into the larger cities. Frequently, families will plan the move carefully. Vacant lands around the larger cities will be scouted in advance, and suddenly, in the middle of the night, the new "settlers" will move in and erect a shantytown. With time, the seizure of the land is usually recognized by city officials and the new neighborhood is provided with urban services. Where the land seizure is resisted, however, violence and loss of life are common.

Factors other than famine also force people to leave their ancestral homes. Population pressure and division of the land into parcels too small to sustain families compel people to migrate. Others move to the cities in search of economic opportunities or chances for social advancement that do not exist in rural regions. Tens of thousands of Colombians illegally crossed into Venezuela in the 1970s and 1980s in search of employment. As is the case with Mexicans who enter the United States, Colombians experienced discrimination and remained on the margins of urban society, mired in low-paying, unskilled jobs. Those who succeeded in finding work in industry were a source of anger and frustration to Venezuelan labor-union members, who resented Colombians who accepted low rates of pay. Other migrants sought employment in the agricultural sector on coffee plantations or the hundreds of cattle ranches that dot the *llanos*, or plains. In summary, a combination of push and pull factors are involved in a person's decision to begin a new life.

Since World War II, indigenous migration in South America has rapidly increased urban populations and has forced cities to reorganize. Rural people have been exposed to a broad range of push–pull pressures to move to the cities. Land hunger, extreme poverty, and rural violence might be included among the push factors; while hope for a better job, upward social mobility, and a more satisfying life help to explain the attraction of a city. The phenomenon can be infinitely complex.

In Lima, Peru, there has been a twofold movement of people. While the unskilled and illiterate, the desperately poor and unemployed, the newly arrived migrant, and the delinquent have moved to or remained in inner-city slums, former slum dwellers have in turn moved to the city's perimeter. Although less centrally located, they have settled in more spacious and socially desirable shantytowns. In this way, some 16,000 families created a squatter settlement practically overnight in the south of Lima. Author Hernando DeSoto, in his groundbreaking and controversial book *The Other Path*, captures the essence of the shantytowns: "Modest homes cramped together on city perimeters, a myriad of workshops in their midst, armies of vendors hawking their wares on the street, and countless minibus lines crisscrossing them—all seem to have sprung from nowhere, pushing the city's boundaries ever outward."

Significantly, DeSoto notes, collective effort has increasingly been replaced by individual effort, upward mobility exists even for the inner-city slum dwellers, and urban culture and patterns of consumption have been transformed. Opera, theater, and *zarzuela* (comic opera) have gradually been replaced by movies, soccer, folk festivals, and television. Beer, rice, and table salt are now within the reach of much of the population; consumption of more expensive items, however, such as wine and meat, has declined.

On the outskirts of Buenos Aires there exists a *villa miseria* (slum) built on the bottom and sides of an old clay pit. Appropriately, the *barrio*, or neighborhood, is called La Cava (literally "The Digging"). The people of La Cava are very poor; most have moved there from rural Argentina or from Paraguay. Shacks seem to be thrown together from whatever is available—scraps of wood, packing crates, sheets of tin, and cardboard. There is no source of potable water, garbage litters the narrow alleyways, and there are no sewers. Because of the concave character of the barrio, the heat is unbearable in the summer. Rats and flies are legion. At times, the smells are repulsive. The visitor to La Cava experiences an assault on the senses; this is Latin America at its worst.

But there is another side to the slums of Buenos Aires, Lima, Santiago, and Rio de Janeiro. A closer look at La Cava, for example, reveals a community in transition. Some of the housing is more substantial, with adobe replacing the scraps of wood and tin; other homes double as places of business and sell general merchandise, food, and bottled drinks. One advertises itself as a food store, bar, and butcher shop. Another sells watches and repairs radios. Several promote their merchandise or services in a weekly newspaper that circulates in La Cava and two other *barrios de emergencia* ("emergency"—that is, temporary—neighborhoods). The newspaper addresses items of concern to the inhabitants. There are articles on hygiene and infant diarrhea; letters and editorials plead with people not to throw their garbage in the streets; births and deaths are recorded. The newspaper is a chronicle of progress as well as frustration: people are working together to create a viable neighborhood; drainage ditches are constructed with donated time and equipment; collections and raffles are held to provide materials to build sewers and, in some cases, to provide minimal street lighting; and men and women who have contributed their labor are singled out for special praise.

The newspaper also reproduces municipal decrees that affect the lives of the residents. The land on which the barrio sits was illegally occupied, the stores that service the neighborhood were opened without the necessary authorization, and the housing was built without regard to municipal codes, so city ordinances such as the following aimed at the barrios de emergencia are usually restrictive: "The sale, renting or transfer of *casillas* [homes] within the boundaries of the barrio de emergencia is prohibited; casillas can not be inhabited by single men, women or children; the opening of businesses within the barrio is strictly prohibited, unless authorized by the Munici-

(United Nations photo/M. Grant)

Colombia, as is the case with many other Latin American nations, has experienced rapid urbanization. Large numbers of migrants from rural areas have spread into slums on the outskirts of cities, as exemplified by this picture of a section of Colombia's capital, Bogotá. Most of the migrants are poorly paid, and the struggle to meet basic needs precludes political activism.

pality; dances and festivals may not be held without the express authorization of the Municipality." But there are also signs of accommodation: "The Municipality is studying the problem of refuse removal." For migrants, authority and the legal system typically are not helpful; instead, they are hindrances.

Hernando DeSoto found this situation to be true also of Peru, where "the greatest hostility the migrants encountered was from the legal system." Until the end of World War II, the system had either absorbed or ignored the migrants "because the small groups who came were hardly likely to upset the status quo." But when the rural-to-urban flow became a flood, the system could no longer remain disinterested. Housing and education were barred to them, businesses would not hire them. The migrants discovered over time that they would have to fight for every right and every service from an unwilling establishment. Thus, to survive, they became part of the informal sector, otherwise known as the underground or parallel economy.

On occasion, however, municipal laws can work to the advantage of newly arrived migrants. In the sprawling new communities that sprang up between Lima and its port city of Callao, there are thousands of what appear to be unfinished homes. In almost every instance, a second floor was begun but, curiously, construction ceased. The reason for the incomplete projects relates to taxes—they are not assessed until a building is finished.

These circumstances are true not only of the squatter settlements on the fringes of South America's great cities but also of the inner-city slums. Slum dwellers have been able to improve their market opportunities and have been able to acquire better housing and some urban services, because they have organized on their own, outside formal political channels. In the words of sociologist Susan Eckstein, "They refused to allow dominant class and state interests to determine and restrict their fate. Defiance and resistance won them concessions which quiescence would not."

DeSoto found this to be the case with Lima: Migrants, "if they were to live, trade, manufacture, or even consume . . . had to do so illegally. Such illegality was not antisocial in intent, like trafficking in drugs, theft, or abduction, but was designed to achieve such essentially legal objectives as building a house, providing a service, or developing a business."

This is also the story of Buenos Aires's La Cava. To open a shop in the barrio with municipal approval, an aspiring businessperson must be a paragon of patience. Various levels of bureaucracy, with their plethora of paperwork and fees, insensitive municipal officials, inefficiency, and interminable waiting, drive people outside the system where the laws do not seem to conform to social need.

AN ECCLESIASTICAL REVOLUTION

During the past few decades, there have been important changes in the religious habits of many South Americans. Virtually everywhere, Roman Catholicism, long identified with the traditional order, has been challenged by newer movements such as Evangelical Protestantism and the Charismatics. Within the Catholic Church, the theology of liberation once gained ground. The creation of Christian communities in the barrios, people who bond together to discuss their beliefs and act as agents of change, has become a common phenomenon throughout the region. Base communities from the Catholic perspective instill Christian values in the lives of ordinary people. But it is an active form of

religion that pushes for change and social justice. Hundreds of these communities exist in Peru, thousands in Brazil.

NATIONAL MYTHOLOGIES

In the midst of geographical and cultural diversity, the nations of South America have created national mythologies designed to unite people behind their rulers. Part of that mythology is rooted in the wars of independence that tore through much of the region between 1810 and 1830. Liberation from European colonialism imparted to South Americans a sense of their own national histories, replete with military heroes such as José de San Martín, Simón Bolívar, Bernardo O'Higgins, and Antonio José de Sucre, as well as a host of revolutionary myths. This coming to nationhood paralleled what the United States experienced when it won its independence from Britain. South Americans, at least those with a stake in the new society, began to think of themselves as Venezuelans, Chileans, Peruvians, or Brazilians. The architects of Chilean national mythology proclaimed the emergence of a new and superior being who was the result of the symbolic and physical union of Spaniards and the tough, heroic Araucanian Indians. The legacy of Simón Bolívar lives on in particular in Venezuela, his homeland; even today, the nation's foreign policymakers speak in Bolivarian terms about Venezuela's rightful role as a leader in Latin American affairs. In some instances, the mythology generated by the wars for independence became a shield against foreign ideas and customs and was used to force immigrants to become "Argentines" or "Chileans." It was an attempt to bring national unity out of diversity.

Argentines have never solved the question of their identity. Many consider themselves European and hold much of the rest of Latin America in contempt. Following Argentina's loss in the Falklands War with Britain, one scholar suggested that perhaps Argentines should no longer consider themselves as "a forlorn corner of Europe" but should wake up to the reality that they are Latin Americans. Much of Argentine literature reflects this uncertain identity and may help to explain author Jorge Luis Borges's affinity for English gardens and Icelandic sagas. It was also an Argentine military government that invoked Western Catholic civilization in its fight against a "foreign" and "godless" communism in the 1970s.

THE ARTIST AND SOCIETY

There is a strongly cultured and humane side of South America. Jeane Franco, an authority on Latin American cultural movements, observes that to "declare oneself an artist in Latin America has frequently involved conflict with society." The art and literature of South America in particular and Latin America in general represent a distinct tradition within the panorama of Western civilization.

The art of South America has as its focus social questions and ideals. It expresses love for one's fellow human beings and "has kept alive the vision of a more just and humane form of society." It rises above purely personal relationships and addresses humanity.

Much change is also evident at the level of popular culture. Andean folk music, for example, is being replaced by the more urban and upbeat chicha music in Peru; and in Argentina, the traditional tango has lost much of its early appeal. Radio and television programs are more and more in the form of soap operas, adventure programs, or popular entertainment, once considered vulgar by cosmopolitan city dwellers. South America is rather like a prism. It can be treated as a single object or region. Yet when exposed to a shaft of sunlight of understanding, it throws off a brilliant spectrum of colors that exposes the diversity of its lands and peoples.

Argentina (Argentine Republic)

Argentina Statistics

GEOGRAPHY

Area in Square Miles (Kilometers): 1,100,000 (2,771,300) (about 4 times the size of Texas)

Capital (Population): Buenos Aires (11,802,000)

Environmental Concerns: soil erosion and degradation; air and water pollution; desertification.

Geographical Features: rich plains of the Pampas in the north; the flat to rolling plateau of Patagonia in the south; the rugged Andes along western border

Climate: varied; mostly temperate; subantarctic in southwest

PEOPLE

Population

Total: 39,144,753

Annual Growth Rate: 1.02%
Rural/Urban Population Ratio: 12/88
Major Languages: Spanish; Italian Ethnic Makeup: 97% white; 3% Mestizo, Indian, and others
Religions: 90% Roman Catholic (fewer than 20% practicing); 2% Protestant; 2% Jewish; 6% others

Health

Life Expectancy at Birth: 72 years (male); 76 years (female)
Infant Mortality Rate (Ratio): 15.66/1,000
Physicians Available (Ratio): 1/376

Education

Adult Literacy Rate: 97.1%
Compulsory (Ages): 6–14; free

COMMUNICATION

Telephones: 8,009,400 main lines
Daily Newspaper Circulation: 138 per 1,000 people
Televisions: 347 per 1,000 people
Internet Users: 41 million

TRANSPORTATION

Highways in Miles (Kilometers): 135,549 (218,276)
Railroads in Miles (Kilometers): 23,542 (37,910)
Usable Airfields: 1,359
Motor Vehicles in Use: 6,100,000

GOVERNMENT

Type: republic
Independence Date: July 9, 1816 (from Spain)
Head of State/Government: President Néstor Kirchner is both head of state and head of government
Political Parties: Radical Civic Union; Justicialist Party (Peronist); Union of the Democratic Center; others
Suffrage: universal at 18

MILITARY

Military Expenditures (% of GDP): 1.3%
Current Disputes: indefinite boundary with Chile; claims UK-administered South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, and Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas); territorial claim in Antarctica

ECONOMY

Currency ($ U.S. Equivalent): 2.9 pesos = $1
Per Capita Income/GDP: $11,200/$432 billion
GDP Growth Rate: 8%
Inflation Rate: 3.7%
Unemployment Rate: 16.3%; substantial underemployment
Labor Force: 15,000
Natural Resources: fertile plains; lead; zinc; tin; copper; iron ore; manganese; petroleum; uranium
Agriculture: wheat; corn; sorghum; fruits; soybeans; tobacco; tea; livestock
Industry: food processing; motor vehicles; consumer durables; textiles; chemicals and petrochemicals; printing; metallurgy; steel
Exports: $29.5 billion (primary partners Brazil, European Union, United States)
Imports: $13.2 billion (primary partners European Union, United States, Brazil)

SUGGESTED WEBSITES

`http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html`

Argentina Country Report

ARGENTINA: THE DIVIDED LAND

Writers as far back as the mid-1800s have perceived two Argentinas. Domingo F. Sarmiento, the president of Argentina in the 1860s, entitled his classic work about the country *Civilization and Barbarism.* More contemporary writers speak of Argentina as a divided land or as a city and a nation. All address the relationship of the capital city, Buenos Aires, to the rest of the country. Buenos Aires is cultured, cosmopolitan, modern, and dynamic. The rural interior is in striking contrast in terms of living standards, the pace of life, and, perhaps, expectations as well. For many years, Buenos Aires and other urban centers have drawn population away from the countryside: Today, Argentina is 88 percent urban.

There are other contrasts. The land is extremely rich and produces a large share of the world's grains and beef. Few Argentines are malnourished, and the annual per capita consumption of beef is comparable to that of the United States. Yet this land of promise, which seemed in the 1890s to have a limitless future, has slowly decayed. Its greatness is now more mythical than real. Since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Argentine economy has, save for brief spurts, never been able to return to the sustained growth of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

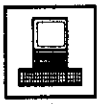
In the 1900s, the Argentine economy enjoyed a brief period of stability and growth. Inefficient and costly state enterprises were privatized, with the exception of the petroleum industry, traditionally a strategic sector reserved to the state. A peso tied to the dollar brought inflation under control, and the pace of business activity, employment, and foreign investment quickened.

The nation's economy is vulnerable to events in other parts of the world, however. The collapse of the Mexican peso in the early 1990s and the economic crises in Russia and, especially, Asia in the late 1990s had profound negative effects in Argentina. The global slowdown in the new millenium further complicated the economic situation.

By the first quarter of 2002, the economy was in crisis. A foreign debt of $142 billion (which works out to $3,000 for every man, woman, and child in the country), declining export revenues, high unemployment, and the inability of the government to win International Monetary Fund support for additional loans forced a devaluation of the currency.

Argentine economic history has been typified by unrealized potential and unfulfilled promises. Much depends on the confidence of the Argentine people in the leadership and policies of their elected representatives. Five changes of government between December 2001 and March 2002 suggest a wholesale *lack* of confidence.

DEVELOPMENT



Argentina convinced the IMF to help its economic recovery without following the strict full fiscal discipline measures usually required. Economic recovery was well underway in 2004.

AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT

In political terms, Argentina has revealed a curious inability to bring about the kind of stable democratic institutions that seemed assured in the 1920s. Since 1930, the military has seized power at least half a dozen times. It must be noted, however, that it has been civilians who have encouraged the generals to play an active role in politics.

Historian Robert Potash writes: "The notion that Argentine political parties or other important civilian groups have consistently opposed military takeovers bears little relation to reality."

Argentina has enjoyed civilian rule since 1983, but the military is still a presence. Indeed, one right-wing faction, the *carapintadas* ("painted faces"), responsible for mutinies against President Raúl Alfonsín in 1987 and 1988, have organized a nationwide party and have attracted enough votes to rank as an important political force. An authoritarian tradition is very much alive in Argentina, as is the bitter legacy of the so-called Dirty War.

THE DIRTY WAR

What made the latest era of military rule different is the climate of political violence that gripped Argentina starting in the late 1960s. The most recent period of violence began with the murder of former president Pedro Aramburu by left-wing guerrillas (Montoneros) who claimed to be fighting on behalf of the popular but exiled leader Juan Perón (president from 1946 to 1955 and from 1973 to 1974). The military responded to what it saw as an armed challenge from the left with tough antisubversion laws and official violence against suspects. Guerrillas increased their activities and intensified their campaign to win popular support.

Worried by the possibility of a major popular uprising and divided over policy, the military called for national elections in 1973, hoping that a civilian government would calm passions. The generals could then concentrate their efforts on destroying the armed left. The violence continued, however, and even the brief restoration of Juan Perón to power failed to bring peace.

FREEDOM

Some 40 retired military officers accused of human rights violations during the Dirty War have been stripped of their immunity from extradition to Spain where they face criminal charges. This is seen as a major advance in international law.

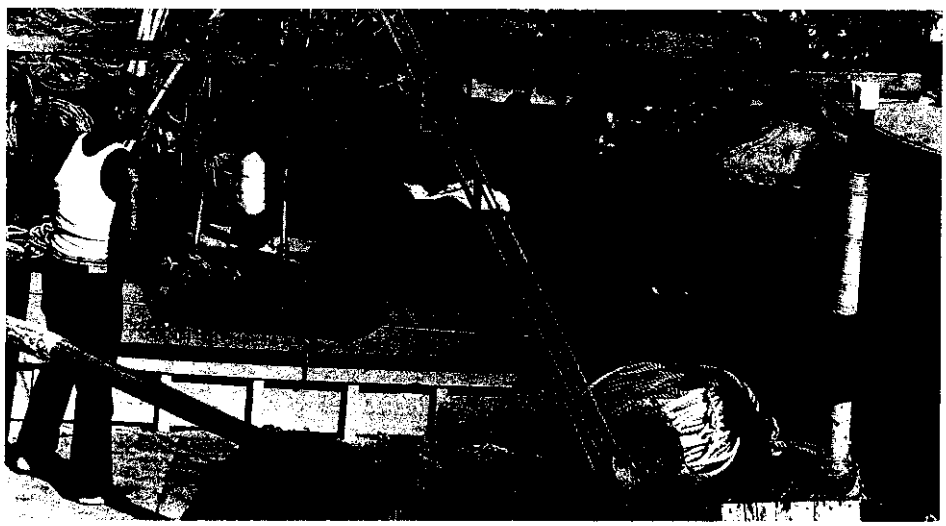
In March 1976, with the nation on the verge of economic collapse and guerrilla warfare spreading, the military seized power once again and declared a state of internal war, popularly called the Dirty War. Between 1976 and 1982, approximately 6,000 Argentine citizens "disappeared." Torture, the denial of basic human rights, harsh press censorship, officially directed death squads, and widespread fear came to characterize Argentina.

The labor movement—the largest, most effective, and most politically active on the continent—was, in effect, crippled by the military. Identified as a source of leftist subversion, the union movement was destroyed as an independent entity. Collective-bargaining agreements were dismantled, pension plans were cut back, and social-security and public-health programs were eliminated. The military's intent was to destroy a labor movement capable of operating on a national level.

The press was one of the immediate victims of the 1976 coup. A law was decreed warning that anyone spreading information derived from organizations "dedicated to subversive activities or terrorism" would be subject to an indefinite sentence. To speak out against the military was punishable by a 10-year jail term. The state also directed its terrorism tactics against the media, and approximately 100 journalists disappeared. Hundreds more received death threats, were tortured and jailed, or fled into exile. Numerous newspapers and magazines were shut down, and one, *La Opinión*, passed to government control.

The ruling junta justified these excesses by portraying the conflict as the opening battle of "World War III," in which Argentina was valiantly defending Western Christian values and cultures against hordes of Communist, "godless" subversives. It was a "holy war," with all of the unavoidable horrors of such strife.

By 1981, leftist guerrilla groups had been annihilated. Argentines slowly began to recover from the shock of internal war and talked of a return to civilian government. The military had completed its task; the nation needed to rebuild. Organized labor attempted to re-create its structure and threw the first tentative challenges at the regime's handling of the economy. The press carefully criticized both the economic policies of the government and the official silence over the fate of *los desaparecidos* ("the disappeared ones"). Human-rights groups pressured the generals with redoubled efforts.



(United Nations photo/P. Teuscher)

Few people are malnourished in Argentina. Well known for its abundant grains and beef, Argentina also has a large fishing industry. These fishing boats are in the bay of the Plata River in Buenos Aires.

OPPOSITION TO THE MILITARY

Against this backdrop of growing popular dissatisfaction with the regime's record, together with the approaching 150th anniversary of Great Britain's occupation of Las Islas Malvinas (the Falkland Islands), President Leopoldo Galtieri decided in 1982 to regain Argentine sovereignty and attack the Falklands. A successful assault, the military reasoned, would capture the popular imagination with its appeal to Argentine nationalism. The military's tarnished image would regain its luster. Forgiven would be the excesses of the Dirty War. But the attack ultimately failed.

In the wake of the fiasco, which cost thousands of Argentine and British lives, the military lost its grip on labor, the press, and the general population. Military and national humiliation, the continuing economic crisis made even worse by war costs, and the swelling chorus of discontent lessened the military's control over the flow of information and ideas. Previously forbidden subjects—such as the responsibility for the disappearances during the Dirty War—were raised in the newspapers.

The labor movement made a rapid and striking recovery and is now in the forefront of renewed political activity. Even though the movement is bitterly divided into moderate and militant wings, it is a force that cannot be ignored by political parties on the rebound.

The Falklands War may well prove to be a watershed in recent Argentine history. A respected Argentine observer, Torcuato DiTella, argues that the Falklands crisis was a "godsend," for it allowed Argentines to break with "foreign" economic models that had failed in Argentina. Disappointed with the United States and Europe over their support of Great Britain, he concludes: "We belong in Latin America and it is better to be a part of this strife-torn continent than a forlorn province of Europe."

HEALTH/WELFARE

In recent years, inflation has had an adverse impact on the amount of state spending on social services. Moreover, the official minimum wage falls significantly lower than the amount considered necessary to support a family.

Popularly elected in 1983, President Raúl Alfonsín's economic policies initially struck in bold new directions. He forced the International Monetary Fund to renegotiate Argentina's huge multi-billion-dollar debt in a context more favorable to Argentina, and he was determined to bring order out of chaos.

One of his most difficult problems centered on the trials for human-rights abuses against the nation's former military rulers. According to *Latin American Regional Reports*, Alfonsín chose to "distinguish degrees of responsibility" in taking court action against those who conducted the Dirty War. Impressively, Alfonsín put on trial the highest authorities, to be followed by action against those identified as responsible for major excesses.

Almost immediately, however, extreme right-wing nationalist officers in the armed forces opposed the trials and engineered a series of mutinies that undermined the stability of the administration. In 1987, during the Easter holiday, a rebellion of dissident soldiers made its point, and the Argentine Congress passed legislation that limited the prosecution of officers who killed civilians during the Dirty War to those only at the highest levels. Mini-mutinies in 1988 resulted in further concessions to the mutineers by the Alfonsín government, including reorganization of the army high command and higher wages.

Political scientist Gary Wynia aptly observed: "The army's leadership is divided between right-wing officers willing to challenge civilian authorities with force and more romantic officers who derive gratification from doing so. Many of the latter refuse to accept the contention that they are 'equal' to civilians, claiming that they have a special role that prevents their subordination to civilian authorities." To this day, the Argentine military has come to terms neither with itself nor with democratic government.

Carlos Menem was supported by the military in the presidential election of May 1989, with perhaps 80 percent of the officer corps casting their votes for the Peronist Party. Menem adopted a policy of rapprochement with the military, which included the 1990 pardon of former junta members convicted of human-rights abuses. Historian Peter Calvert argues that Menem chose the path of amnesty because elements in the armed forces "would not be content until they got it." Rebellious middle-rank officers were well disposed toward Peronists, and Menem's pardon was "a positive gain in terms of the acceptance of the Peronists among the military themselves." In essence, then, Menem's military policy was consistent with other policies in terms of its pragmatic core. And the military seems to have been contained; military spending has been halved, the army has been reduced from 100,000 to 20,000 soldiers, military enterprises have been divested, and mandatory service has been abandoned in favor of a professional force.

Significant progress has been made with regard to "disappeared" people. In 1992, President Menem agreed to create a commission to deal with the problem of children of the disappeared who were adopted by other families. Many have had their true identities established as a result of the patient work of "The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo" and by the technique of cross-generational genetic analysis. (In 1998, former junta chief Admiral Emilio Massera was arrested on charges of kidnapping—that is, the distribution to families of babies born to victims of the regime.) In 1995, the names of an additional 1,000 people were added to the official list of the missing. Also, a retired military officer revealed his part in pushing drugged prisoners out of planes over the South Atlantic Ocean.

ECONOMIC TRAVAIL

The Argentine economy under President Alfonsín was virtually out of control. Inflation soared. The sorry state of the economy and spreading dissatisfaction among the electorate forced the president to hand over power to Carlos Menem six months early.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Argentine citizens have won four Nobel Prizes—two for peace and one each for chemistry and medicine. The nation's authors—Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Manuel Puig, and Ricardo Guiraldes, to name only a few—are world-famous.

Menem's new government worked a bit of an economic miracle, despite an administration nagged by corruption and early policy indecision, which witnessed the appointment of 21 ministers to nine cabinet positions during his first 18 months in office. In Menem's favor, he was not an ideologue but, rather, an adept politician whose acceptance by the average voter was equaled by his ability to do business with almost anyone. He quickly identified the source of much of Argentina's chronic inflation: the state-owned enterprises. From the time of Perón, these industries were regarded as wellsprings of employment and cronyism rather than as instruments for the production of goods or the delivery of services such as electric power and telephone service. "Ironically," says Luigi Manzetti, writing in *North-South FOCUS*, "it took a Peronist like Menem to dismantle Perón's legacy." While Menem's presidential campaign stressed "traditional Peronist themes like social justice and government investments" to revive the depressed economy, once he was in power, "having inherited a

bankrupt state and under pressure from foreign banks and domestic business circles to enact a stiff adjustment program, Menem reversed his stand." He embraced the market-oriented policies of his political adversaries, "only in a much harsher fashion." State-owned enterprises were sold off in rapid-fire order. Argentina thus underwent a rapid transformation, from one of the world's most closed economies to one of the most open.

Economic growth began again in 1991, but the social costs were high. Thousands of public-sector workers lost their jobs; a third of Argentina's population lived below the poverty line, and the gap between the rich and poor tended to increase. But both inflation and the debt were eventually contained, foreign investment increased, and confidence began to return to Argentina.

In November 1993, former president Alfonsín supported a constitutional reform that allowed Menem to serve another term. Menem accepted some checks on executive power, including reshuffling the Supreme Court, placing members of the political opposition in charge of certain state offices, creating a post similar to that of prime minister, awarding a third senator to each province, and shortening the presidential term from six to four years. With these reforms in place, Menem easily won another term in 1995.

Convinced that his mandate should not end with the conclusion of his second term, Menem lobbied hard in 1998 for yet another constitutional reform to allow him to run again. This was not supported by the Supreme Court.

The Radical Party won the elections in 1999. Almost immediately President Fernando de la Rua confronted an economy mired in a deepening recession. Rising unemployment, a foreign debt that stood at 50 percent of gross domestic product, and fears of a debt default prompted the government to announce tax increases and spending cuts to meet IMF debt targets, because the peso was tied to the strong U.S. dollar. At the end of 2001, the economic crisis triggered rioting in the streets and brought down the de la Rua administration and three others that followed in rapid succession.

By the end of 2002 the economy was in such shambles that some provinces began to issue their own currencies, farmers resorted to barter—exchanging soy beans for agricultural equipment—and many Argentines seriously considered emigration. Crime rates rose and people lost faith in governments that seemed incapable of positive policies and all-to-susceptible to corruption.

This dismal picture began to change with the election of Néstor Kirchner in May, 2003. During his first year in office he called on Congress to begin impeachment proceedings against the widely hated Supreme Court. The justices were accused to producing verdicts that reflected payoffs and political favors. Kirchner also laid siege to Argentina's security forces: he ordered more than 50 admirals and generals into early retirement and dismissed 80 percent of the high command of the notoriously corrupt Federal Police.

Finally, after years of severe malaise, the economy began to turn around in 2003. Kirchner noted that the IMF had abandoned Argentina in 2001 as its economy spiraled downward. Consequently the Argentine president, in the words of *New York Times* reporter Tony Smith, "felt justified in resolutely refusing to make a series of concessions that negotiators for the monetary fund wanted in exchange for refinancing $21.6 billion in debt" that Argentina owes to multilateral institutions ..." In effect Argentina worked out a deal in accord with Argentine economic realities.

FOREIGN POLICY

The Argentine government's foreign policy has usually been determined by realistic appraisals of the nation's best interests. From 1946, the country moved between the two poles of pro-West and nonaligned. President Menem firmly supported the foreign-policy initiatives of the United States and the UN. Argentine participation in the Persian Gulf War and the presence of Argentine troops under United Nations command in Croatia, Somalia, and other trouble spots paid dividends: Washington agreed to supply Argentina with military supplies for the first time since the Falklands War in 1982. President Kirchner has assumed an independent posture. The U.S. invasion of Iraq was cast as a violation of international law and Argentina has moved closer to Latin American regimes not in the good graces Washington, i.e., Brazil, Venezuela, and Cuba.

ARGENTINA'S FUTURE

Renewed confidence in government and economic recovery auger well for Argentina. Experts predict a 4 percent annual growth from 2004 to 2006 while inflation should decline from double digits to about 7 percent.

Timeline: PAST

1536
Pedro de Mendoza establishes the first settlement at Buenos Aires

1816
Independence of Spain

1865–1870
War with Paraguay

1912
Electoral reform: Compulsory male suffrage

1946–1955 and **1973–1974**
Juan Perón is in power

1976–1982
The Dirty War

1980s
War with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands; military mutinies and economic chaos

1990s
Economic crises in Mexico, Russia, and Asia slow the economy

PRESENT

2000s
Argentina Struggles to climb out of recession

Néstor Kirchner elected president in May 2003

Chile (Republic of Chile)

Chile Statistics

GEOGRAPHY

Area in Square Miles (Kilometers): 292,280 (756,945) (about twice the size of Montana)

Capital (Population): Santiago (4,642,000)

Environmental Concerns: air and water pollution; deforestation; loss of biodiversity; soil erosion; desertification

Geographical Features: low coastal mountains; a fertile central valley; rugged Andes Mountains in the east

Climate: temperate; desert in the north; Mediterranean in the center; cool and damp in the south

PEOPLE

Population

Total: 15,823,957

Annual Growth Rate: 1.01%

Rural/Urban Population Ratio: 16/84

Major Language: Spanish

Ethnic Makeup: 95% European and Mestizo; 3% Indian; 2% others
Religions: 89% Roman Catholic; 11% Protestant

Health

Life Expectancy at Birth: 72 years (male); 79 years (female)
Infant Mortality Rate (Ratio): 9.6/1,000
Physicians Available (Ratio): 1/875

Education

Adult Literacy Rate: 96.2%
Compulsory (Ages): for 8 years; free

COMMUNICATION

Telephones: 3.5 million main lines
Daily Newspaper Circulation: 101 per 1,000 people
Televisions: 280 per 1,000 people
Internet Users: 3.6 million

TRANSPORTATION

Highways in Miles (Kilometers): 49,556 (79,800)
Railroads in Miles (Kilometers): 4,212 (6,782)
Usable Airfields: 370
Motor Vehicles in Use: 1,375,000

GOVERNMENT

Type: republic
Independence Date: September 18, 1810 (from Spain)
Head of State/Government: President Ricardo Lagos Escobar is both head of state and head of government
Political Parties: Christian Democratic Party; Party for Democracy; Socialist Party; National Renewal; Independent Democratic Union; others
Suffrage: universal and compulsory at 18

MILITARY

Military Expenditures (% of GDP): 4.1%
Current Disputes: boundary or territorial disputes with Argentina, and Bolivia; territorial claim in Antarctica

ECONOMY

Currency ($ U.S. Equivalent): 691.43 pesos = $1
Per Capita Income/GDP: $9,900/$154.6 billion
GDP Growth Rate: 3.2%
Inflation Rate: 1.1%
Unemployment Rate: 8.5%
Labor Force: 5,800,000
Natural Resources: copper; timber; iron ore; nitrates; precious metals; molybdenum; fish; hydropower
Agriculture: wheat; corn; grapes; beans; sugar beets; potatoes; fruit; beef; poultry; wool; timber; fish
Industry: copper and other minerals; foodstuffs; fish processing; iron and steel; wood and wood products; transport equipment; cement; textiles
Exports: $20.44 billion (primary partners, European Union, United States, Japan)
Imports: $17 billion (primary partners United States, European Union, Argentina)

SUGGESTED WEBSITE

`http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos.ci.html`

Chile Country Report

CHILE: A NATION ON THE REBOUND

In September 1973, the Chilean military, with the secret support of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), seized power from the constitutionally elected government of President Salvador Allende. Chile, with its long-standing traditions of free and honest elections, respect for human rights, and freedom of the press, was quickly transformed into a brutal dictatorship that arrested, tortured, and killed thousands of its own citizens. In the larger sweep of Chilean history, however, the coup seemed to be the most recent and severe manifestation of a lengthy conflict between social justice, on the one hand, and the requirements of order dictated by the nation's ruling elite, on the other. This was true in the colonial period, when there was conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and landowners over Indian rights. It was also apparent in later confrontations among Marxists, reformers, and conservatives.

FORM, NOT SUBSTANCE

Form, as opposed to substance, had characterized the rule of the Christian Democrats in the 1960s, when they created many separate rural unions, supposedly to address the needs of *campesinos* ("peasants"). A divided union movement in effect became a form of government control that prevented the emergence of a single powerful rural organization.

DEVELOPMENT

Chile, with an average gross domestic product growth of 6% over the last decade, has become a model for other Latin American nations. Bilateral trade agreements have continued with Mexico, Venezuela, and Bolivia. Trade agreements were also signed with the United States and the European Union.

In the early 1970s, President Allende—despite his talk of socialism and his genuine attempt to destroy the institutions and values of an old social order—used as his weapon of transformation, a centralized bureaucracy that would have been recognized by sixteenth-century viceroys and nineteenth-century presidents. Allende's attempts to institute far-reaching social change led to a strong reaction from powerful sectors of Chilean society who felt threatened.

THE 1973 COUP D'ETAT

When the military ousted Allende, it had the support of many Chileans, including the majority of the middle class, who had been hurt by the government's economic policies, troubled by continuous political turmoil, and infuriated by official mismanagement. The military, led by General Augusto Pinochet, began a new experiment with another form of centrist rule: military authoritarianism. The generals made it clear that they had not restored order merely to return it to the "discredited" constitutional practices of the past. They spoke of regeneration, of a new Chile, and of an end to the immorality, corruption, and incompetence of all civilian politics. The military announced in 1974 that, "guided by the inspiration of [Diego] Portales"—one of nineteenth-century Chile's greatest civilian leaders—"the government of Chile will energetically apply the principle of authority and drastically punish any outburst of disorder and anarchy."

The political, economic, and social reforms proposed by the military aimed at restructuring Chile to such an extent that there would no longer be a need for traditional political parties. Economic policy favored free and open competition as the main regulator

(Reuters/Bettmann)

On October 5, 1988, the voters of Chile denied the brutal dictator General Augusto Pinochet an additional eight-year term as president. To his credit, his military regime accepted defeat peacefully.

of economic and social life. The Chilean state rid itself of hundreds of state-owned corporations, struck down tariffs designed to protect Chilean industry from foreign competition, and opened the economy to widespread foreign investment. The changes struck deeply at the structure of the Chilean economy and produced a temporary but sharp recession, high unemployment, and hundreds of bankruptcies. A steep decline in the standard of living for most Chileans was the result of the government's anti-inflation policy.

FREEDOM

With the restoration of democracy in 1990 successive Chilean presidents have worked hard to resolve human rights issues stemming from the Pinochet dictatorship.

Social-welfare programs were reduced to a minimum. The private sector was encouraged to assume many functions and services once provided by the state. Pensions were moved entirely to the private sector as all state programs were phased out. In this instance, the state calculated that workers tied through pensions and other benefits to the success of private enterprise would be less likely to be attracted to "non-Chilean" ideologies such as Marxism, socialism, and even Christian democracy. State-sponsored health programs were also cut to the bone, and many of the poor now paid for services once provided by the government.

THE DEFEAT OF A DICTATOR

To attain a measure of legitimacy, Chileans expected the military government to produce economic achievement. By 1987, and continuing into 1989, the regime's economic policies seemed successful; the economic growth rate for 1988 was an impressive 7.4 percent. However, it masked critical weaknesses in the Chilean economy. For example, much of the growth was overdependent on exports of raw materials—notably, copper, pulp, timber, and fishmeal.

Modest economic success and an inflation rate of less than 20 percent convinced General Pinochet that he could take his political scenario for Chile's future to the voters for their ratification. But in the October 5, 1988, plebiscite, Chile's voters upset the general's plans and decisively denied him an additional eight-year term. (He did, however, continue in office until the next presidential election determined his successor.) The military regime (albeit reluctantly) accepted defeat at the polls, which signified the reemergence of a deep-rooted civic culture and long democratic tradition.

Where had Pinochet miscalculated? Public-opinion surveys on the eve of the election showed a sharply divided electorate. Some political scientists even spoke of the existence of "two Chiles." In the words of government professor Arturo Valenzuela and *Boston Globe* correspondent Pamela Constable, one Chile "embraced those who had benefited from the competitive economic policies and welfare subsidies instituted by the regime and who had been persuaded that power was best entrusted to the armed forces." The second Chile "consisted of those who had been victimized by the regime, who did not identify with Pinochet's anti-Communist cause, and who had quietly nurtured a belief in democracy." Polling data from the respected Center for Public Policy Studies showed that 72 percent of those who voted against the regime were motivated by economic factors. These were people who had lost skilled jobs or who had suffered a decrease in real wages. While Pinochet's economic reforms had helped some, it had also created a disgruntled mass of downwardly mobile wage earners.

(United Nations photo)

The rural areas of Chile have presented challenges for community development. Here, volunteers work on a road that will link the village of Tincnamar to a main road.

Valenzuela and Constable explain how a dictator allowed himself to be voted out of power. "To a large extent Pinochet had been trapped by his own mythology. He was convinced that he would be able to win and was anxious to prove that his regime was not a pariah but a legitimate government. He and other officials came to believe their own propaganda about the dynamic new Chile they had created." The closed character of the regime, with all lines of authority flowing to the hands of one man, made it "impossible for them to accept the possibility that they could lose." And when the impossible occurred and the dictator lost an election played by his own rules, neither civilians on the right nor the military were willing to override the constitutional contract they had forged with the Chilean people.

In March 1990, Chile returned to civilian rule for the first time in almost 17 years, with the assumption of the presidency by Patricio Aylwin. His years in power revealed that tensions still existed between civilian politicians and the military. In 1993, for example, General Pinochet mobilized elements of the army in Santiago—a move that, in the words of the independent newspaper *La Época*, "marked the crystallization of long-standing hostility" between the Aylwin government and the army. The military had reacted both to investigations into human-rights abuses during the Pinochet dictatorship and proposed legislation that would have subordinated the military to civilian control. On the other hand, the commanders of the navy and air force as well as the two right-wing political parties refused to sanction the actions of the army.

President Aylwin regained the initiative when he publicly chastised General Pinochet. Congress, in a separate action, affirmed its supremacy over the judiciary in 1993, when it successfully impeached a Supreme Court justice for "notable dereliction of duty." The court system had been notorious for transferring human-rights cases from civil to military courts, where they were quickly dismissed. The impeachment augured well for further reform of the judicial branch.

HEALTH/WELFARE

Since 1981, all new members of Chile's labor force have been required to contribute 10% of their monthly gross earnings to private-pension-fund accounts, which they own. By 1995, more than 93% of the labor force were enrolled in 20 separate and competing private pension funds. The reforms increased the domestic savings rate to 26% of GDP.

Further resistance to the legacy of General Pinochet was expressed by the people when, on December 11, 1993, the center-left coalition candidate Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle won the Chilean presidential election, with 58 percent of the vote. As part of his platform, Frei had promised to bring the military under civilian rule. The parliamentary vote, however, did not give him the two-thirds majority needed to push through such a reform. The trend toward civilian government, though, seemed to be continuing.

Perhaps the final chapter in Pinochet's career began in November 1998, while the former dictator was in London for medical treatment. At that time, the British government received formal extradition requests from the governments of Spain, Switzerland, and France. The charges against Pinochet included attempted murder, conspiracy to murder, torture, conspiracy to torture, hostage taking, conspiracy to take hostages, and genocide, based on Pinochet's alleged actions while in power.

British courts ruled that the general was too ill to stand trial, and Pinochet returned to Chile. In May 2004 a Chilean appeals court revoked Pinochet's immunity from prosecution, a decision that renders a trial possible, if not probable. In the words of one lawyer, "It is as likely that he will stand trial as it is that he will get into Heaven." The government of Ricardo Lagos has made progress against human-rights offenders but Lagos himself admits that "this chapter can never be closed."

THE ECONOMY

By 1998, the Chilean economy had experienced 13 consecutive years of strong growth. But the Asian financial crisis of that year hit Chile hard, in part because 33 percent of the nation's exports in 1997 went to Asian markets. Copper prices tumbled; and

because the largest copper mine is government-owned, state revenues contracted sharply. Following a sharp recession in 1999, the economy once again began to grow. However, domestic recovery has been slow. Unemployment remains high at 9 percent of the workforce, and a growth rate of 5.5 percent does not produce sufficient revenue to finance President Lagos's planned social programs and education initiatives. The sluggish global economy in 2001 was partly to blame, as prices fell for copper, Chile's number-one export.

Although there is still a large gap between the rich and poor in Chile, those living in poverty has been reduced from 40 percent to 20 percent over the course of the last decade. The irony is that Chile's economic success story is built on the economic model imposed by the Pinochet regime. "Underlying the current prosperity", writes *New York Times* reporter Larry Rohter, "is a long trail of blood and suffering that makes the thought of reversing course too difficult to contemplate." Many Chileans want to bury the past and move on—but the persistence of memory will not allow closure at this time. Chile has chosen to follow its own course with respect to economic policy. While many of its neighbors in the Sourthern Cone—notably Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela—have moved away from free trade and open markets, Chile remains firmly wed to both.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Chile's great literary figures, such as Gabriela Mistrál and Pablo Neruda, have a great sympathy for the poor and oppressed. Other major Chilean writers, such as Isabel Allende and Ariel Dorfman have won worldwide acclaim.

Peruvian novelist and politician Mario Vargas Llosa observes that while Chile "is not paradise," it does have a "stability and economic dynamism unparalled in Latin America." Indeed, "Chile is moving closer to Spain and Australia and farther from Peru or Haiti." He suggests that there has been a shift in Chile's political culture. "The ideas of economic liberty, a free market open to the world, and private initiative as the motor of progress have become embedded in the people of Chile."

Chilean novelist Ariel Dorfman has a different perspective: "Obviously it is better to be dull and virtuous than bloody and Pinochetista, but Chile has been a very gray country for many years now. Modernization doesn't always have to come with a lack of soul, but I think there is a degree of that happening."

SIGNS OF CHANGE

Although the Chilean Constitution was essentially imposed on the nation by the military in 1980, there are signs of change. The term for president was reduced from eight to six years in 1993; and in 1997, the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Legislature, approved legislation to further reduce the term of a president to four years, with a prohibition on reelection. Military courts, which have broader peacetime jurisdiction than most other countries in the Western Hemisphere, have also come under scrutiny by politicians. According to the *Revista Hoy*, as summarized by *CHIP News*, military justice reaches far beyond the ranks. If, for example, several people are involved in the commission of a crime and one of the perpetrators happens to be a member of the military, all are tried in a military court. Another abuse noted by politicians is that the military routinely uses the charge of sedition against civilians who criticize it. A group of Christian Democrats wants to limit the jurisdiction of the military to military crimes committed by military personnel; eliminate the participation of the army prosecutor in the Supreme Court, where he sits on the bench in cases related to the military; grant civilian courts the authority to investigate military premises; and accord civilian courts jurisdiction over military personnel accused of civilian-related crimes. The military itself, in 2004, in an effort to improve its tarnished image has worked in the background to hold accountable those officers involved in human rights abuses in the past.

Another healthy sign of change is a concerted effort by the Chilean and Argentine governments to discuss issues that have been a historical source of friction between the two nations. Arms escalation, mining exploration and exploitation in border areas, and trade and investment concerns were on the agenda. The Chilean foreign relations minister and the defense minister sat down with their Argentine counterparts in the first meeting of its kind in the history of Argentine—Chilean relations.

Timeline: PAST

1541
The founding of Santiago de Chile

1818
Independence of Spain is proclaimed

1964–1970
Revolution in Liberty dramatically alters Chilean society

1973
A military coup ousts President Salvador Allende; General Augusto Pinochet becomes president

1988
Pinochet is voted out—and goes

1990s
Asian financial woes cut into Chilean economic growth

PRESENT

2000s

Ricardo Lagos, a moderate Socialist, wins the presidency in December 1999–January 2000 elections

Lagos government accelerates prosecution of human rights abusers

The Caribbean: Sea of Diversity

To construct a coherent overview of the Caribbean is an extremely difficult task because of the region's profound geographical and cultural diversity. "The history of the Caribbean is the examination of fragments, which, like looking at a broken vase, still provides clues to the form, beauty, and value of the past." So writes historian Franklin W. Knight in his study of the Caribbean. Other authors have drawn different analogies: Geographer David Lowenthal and anthropologist Lambros Comitas note that the West Indies "is a set of mirrors in which the lives of black, brown, and white, of American Indian and East Indian, and a score of other minorities continually interact."

For the geographer, the pieces fall into a different pattern, consisting of four distinct geographical regions. The first contains the Bahamas as well as the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Greater Antilles—consisting of Cuba, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands—make up the second region. Comprising the third region are the Lesser Antilles—Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and St. Kitts and Nevis as well as various French departments and British and Dutch territories. The fourth group consists of islands that are part of the South American continental shelf: Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and the Dutch islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire. Within these broad geographical regions, each nation is different. Yet on each island there often is a firmly rooted parochialism—a devotion to a parish or a village, a mountain valley or a coastal lowland.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

To break down the Caribbean region into culture groups presents its own set of problems. The term "West Indian" inadequately describes the culturally Hispanic nations of Cuba and the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, "West Indian" does capture the essence of the cultures of Belize, the Caribbean coast of Central America, and Guyana, Suriname, and Cayenne (French Guiana). In Lowenthal's view: "Alike in not being Iberian [Hispanic], the West Indies are not North American either, nor indeed do they fit any ordinary regional pattern. Not so much undeveloped as overdeveloped, exotic without being traditional, they are part of the Third World yet ardent emulators of the West."

EFFORTS AT INTEGRATION

To complicate matters further, few West Indians would identify themselves as such. They are Jamaicans, or Bajans (people from Barbados), or Grenadans. Their economic, political, and social worlds are usually confined to the islands on which they live and work. In the eyes of its inhabitants, each island, no matter how small, is—or should be—sovereign. Communications by air, sea, and telephone with the rest of the world are ordinarily better than communications within the Caribbean region itself. Trade, even between neighboring islands, has always been minimal. Economic ties with the United States or Europe, and in some cases with Venezuela, are more important.

A British attempt to create a "West Indies Federation" in 1958 was reduced to a shambles by 1962. Member states had the same historical background; spoke the same languages; had similar economies; and were interested in the same kinds of food, music, and sports. But their spirit of independence triumphed over any kind of regional federation that "threatened" their individuality. In the words of a former Bajan prime minister, "We live together very well, but we don't like to live together together." A Trinidadian explanation for the failure of the federation is found in a popular calypso verse from the early 1960s:

> Plans was moving fine
> When Jamaica stab we from behind
> Federation bust wide open
> But they want Trinidad to bear the burden.

Recently, however, the Windward Islands (Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) have discussed political union. While each jealously guards its sovereignty, leaders are nevertheless aware that some integration is necessary if they are to survive in a changing world. The division of the world into giant economic blocs points to political union and the creation of a Caribbean state with a combined population of nearly half a million. Antigua and Barbuda resist because they believe that, in the words of former prime minister Vere Bird, "political union would be a new form of colonialism and undermine sovereignty."

While political union remains problematic, the 15 members of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM, a regional body created in 1973) began long-term negotiations with Cuba in 1995 with regard to a free-trade agreement. CARICOM leaders informed Cuba that "it needs to open up its economy more." The free-market economies of CARICOM are profoundly different from Cuba's rigid state controls. "We need to assure that trade and investment will be mutually beneficial." Caribbean leaders have pursued trade with Cuba in the face of strong opposition from the United States. In general, CARICOM countries are convinced that "constructive engagement" rather than a policy of isolation is the best way to transform Cuba.

Political problems also plague the Dutch Caribbean. Caribbean specialist Aaron Segal notes that the six-island Netherlands Antilles Federation has encountered severe internal difficulties. Aruba never had a good relationship with the larger island of Curaçao and, in 1986, became a self-governing entity, with its own flag, Parliament, and currency, but still within the Netherlands. "The other Netherlands Antillean states have few complaints about their largely autonomous relations with the Netherlands but find it hard to get along with one another."

Interestingly, islands that are still colonial possessions generally have a better relationship with their "mother" countries than with one another. Over the past few decades, smaller islands—

populations of about 50,000 or less—have learned that there are advantages to a continued colonial connection. The extensive subsidies paid by Great Britain, France, or the Netherlands have turned dependency into an asset. Serving as tax-free offshore sites for banks and companies as well as encouraging tourism and hotel investments have led to modest economic growth.

CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

Despite the local focus of the islanders, there do exist some broad cultural similarities. To the horror of nationalists, who are in search of a Caribbean identity that is distinct from Western civilization, most West Indians identify themselves as English or French in terms of culture. Bajans, for example, take a special pride in identifying their country as the "Little England of the Caribbean." English or French dialects are the languages spoken in common.

Nationalists argue that the islands will not be wholly free until they shatter the European connection. In the nationalists' eyes, that connection is a bitter reminder of slavery. After World War II, several Caribbean intellectuals attacked the strong European orientation of the islands and urged the islanders to be proud of their black African heritage. The shift in focus was most noticeable in the French Caribbean, although this new ethnic consciousness was echoed in the English-speaking islands as well in the form of a black-power movement during the 1960s and 1970s. It was during those years, when the islands were in transition from colonies to associated states to independent nations, that the Caribbean's black majorities seized political power by utilizing the power of their votes.

It is interesting to note that at the height of the black-power and black-awareness movements, sugar production was actually halted on the islands of St. Vincent, Antigua, and Barbuda —not because world-market prices were low, but because sugar cultivation was associated with the slavery of the past.

African Influences

The peoples of the West Indies are predominantly black, with lesser numbers of people of "mixed blood" and small numbers of whites. Culturally, the blacks fall into a number of groups. Throughout the nineteenth century, in Haiti, blacks strove to realize an African-Caribbean identity. African influences have remained strong on the island, although they have been blended with European Christianity and French civilization. Mulattos, traditionally the elite in Haiti, have strongly identified with French culture in an obvious attempt to distance themselves from the black majority, who comprise about 95 percent of the population. African-Creoles, as blacks of the English-speaking

(United Nations photo/King)

These Jamaican agricultural workers, who reflect the strong African heritage of the Caribbean, contribute to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the region.

islands prefer to be called, are manifestly less "African" than the mass of Haitians. An exception to this generalization is the Rastafarians, common in Jamaica and found in lesser numbers on some of the other islands. Convinced that they are Ethiopians, the Rastafarians hope to return to Africa.

Racial Tension

The Caribbean has for years presented an image of racial harmony to the outside world. Yet, in actuality, racial tensions are not only present but also have become sharper during the past few decades. Racial unrest broke to the surface in Jamaica in 1960 with riots in the capital city of Kingston. Tensions heightened again in 1980–1981 and in 1984, to the point that the nation's tourist industry drastically declined. A recent slogan of the Jamaican tourist industry, "Make It Jamaica Again," was a conscious attempt to downplay racial antagonism. The black-power movement in the 1960s on most of the islands also put to the test notions of racial harmony.

Most people of the Caribbean, however, believe in the myth of racial harmony. It is essential to the development of nationalism, which must embrace all citizens. Much racial tension is officially explained as class difference rather than racial prejudice. There is some merit to the class argument. A black politician on Barbuda, for example, enjoys much more status and prestige than a poor white "Redleg" from the island's interior. Yet if a black and a Redleg competed for the job of plantation manager, the white would likely win out over the black. In sum, race does make a difference, but so too does one's economic or political status.

East Indians

The race issue is more complex in Trinidad and Tobago, where there is a large East Indian (i.e., originally from India) minority. The East Indians, for the most part, are agricultural workers. They were originally introduced by the British between 1845 and 1916 to replace slave labor on the plantations. While numbers of East Indians have moved to the cities, they still feel that they have little in common with urban blacks. Because of their large numbers, East Indians are able to preserve a distinctive, healthy culture and community and to compete with other groups for political office and status.

East Indian culture has also adapted, but not yielded, to the West Indian world. In the words of Trinidadian-East Indian author V. S. Naipaul: "We were steadily adopting the food styles of others: The Portuguese stew of tomato and onions ... the Negro way with yams, plantains, breadfruit, and bananas," but "everything we adopted became our own; the outside was still to be dreaded...." The East Indians in Jamaica, who make up about 3 percent of the population, have made even more accommodations to the cultures around them. Most Jamaican-East Indians have become Protestant (the East Indians of Trinidad have maintained their Hindu or Islamic faith).

East Indian conformity and internalization, and their strong cultural identification, have often made them the targets of the black majority. Black stereotypes of the East Indians describe them in the following terms: "secretive," "greedy," and "stingy." And East Indian stereotypes describing blacks as "childish," "vain," "pompous," and "promiscuous" certainly do not help to ease ethnic tensions.

(Photo Lisa Clyde)

The weekly open-air market in St. Lucia provides a variety of local produce.

REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

In terms of culture, the Commonwealth Caribbean (former British possessions) has little in common with Cuba or the Dominican Republic. But Cuba has made its presence felt in other ways. The Cuban Revolution, with the social progress that it entailed for many of its people and the strong sense of nationalism that it stimulated, impressed many West Indians. For new nation-states still in search of an identity, Cuba offered some clues as to how to proceed. For a time, Jamaica experimented with Cuban models of mass mobilization and programs designed to bring social services to the majority of the population. Between 1979 and 1983, Grenada saw merit in the Cuban approach to social and economic problems. The message that Cuba seemed to represent was that a small Caribbean state could shape its own destiny and make life better for its people.

The Cuba of Fidel Castro, while revolutionary, is also traditional. Hispanic culture is largely intact. The politics are authoritarian and personality-driven, and Castro himself easily fits into the mold of the Latin American leader, or caudillo, whose charisma and benevolent paternalism win him the widespread support of his people. Castro's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church is also traditional and corresponds to notions of a dualistic culture that has its roots in the Middle Ages. In Castro's words: "The same respect that the Revolution ought to

(United Nations photo/M. Hopp)

Certain crops in Caribbean countries generate a disproportionate amount of the nation's foreign incomes—so much so that their entire economies are vulnerable to changes in world demand. This harvest of bananas in Dominica is ready for shipment to a fickle world market.

have for religious beliefs, ought also to be had by those who talk in the name of religion for the political beliefs of others. And, above all, to have present that which Christ said: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' What are those who are said to be the interpreters of Christian thought doing meddling in the problems of this world?" Castro's comments should not be interpreted as a Communist assault on religion. Rather, they express a time-honored Hispanic belief that religious life and everyday life exist in two separate spheres.

The social reforms that have been implemented in Cuba are well within the powers of all Latin American governments to enact. Those governments, in theory, are duty-bound to provide for the welfare of their peoples. Constitutionally, the state is infallible and all-powerful. Castro has chosen to identify with the needs of the majority of Cubans, to be a "father" to his people. Again, his actions are not so much Communistic as Hispanic.

Where Castro has run against the grain is in his assault on Cuba's middle class. In a sense, he has reversed a trend that is evident in much of the rest of Latin America—the slow, steady progress of a middle class that is intent on acquiring a share of the power and prestige traditionally accorded to elites. Cuba's middle class was effectively shattered—people were deprived of much of their property; their livelihood; and, for those who fled into exile, their citizenship. Many expatriate Cubans remain bitter toward what they perceive as Castro's betrayal of the Revolution and the middle class.

EMIGRATION AND MIGRATION

Throughout the Caribbean, emigration and migration are a fact of life for hundreds of thousands of people. These are not new phenomena; their roots extend to the earliest days of European settlement. The flow of people looking for work is deeply rooted in history, in contemporary political economy, and even in Caribbean island culture. The Garifuna (black–Indian mixture) who settled in Belize and coastal parts of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua originally came from St. Vincent. There, as escaped slaves, they intermixed with remnants of Indian tribes who had once peopled the islands, and they adopted many of their cultural traits. Most of the Garifuna (or Black Caribs, as they are also known) were deported from St. Vincent to the Caribbean coast of Central America at the end of the eighteenth century.

From the 1880s onward, patois-speaking (French dialect) Dominicans and St. Lucians migrated to Cayenne (French Guiana) to work in the gold fields. The strong identification with Europe has drawn thousands more to what many consider their cultural homes.

High birth rates and lack of economic opportunity have forced others to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Many citizens of the Dominican Republic have moved to New York, and Haitian refugees have thrown themselves on the coast of Florida by the thousands. Other Haitians seek seasonal employment in the Dominican Republic or the Bahamas. There are sizable Jamaican communities in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, the Bahamas, and Belize.

(United Nations photo/J. Viest)

Economic hardship in parts of the Caribbean region is exemplified by this settlement in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Such grinding poverty causes large numbers of people to migrate in search of a better life.

On the smaller islands, stable populations are the exception rather than the rule. The people are constantly migrating to larger places in search of higher pay and a better life. Such emigrants moved to Panama when the canal was being cut in the early 1900s or sought work on the Dutch islands of Curaçao and Aruba when oil refineries were built there in the 1920s. They provided much of the labor for the banana plantations in Central America.

The greatest number of people by far have left the Caribbean region altogether and emigrated to the United States, Canada, and Europe. Added to those who have left because of economic or population pressures are political refugees. The majority of these are Cubans, most of whom have resettled in Florida.

Some have argued that the prime mover of migration from the Caribbean lies in the *ideology* of migration—that is, the expectation that all nonelite males will migrate abroad. Sugarcane slave plantations left a legacy that included little possibility of island subsistence; and so there grew the need to migrate to survive, a reality that was absorbed into the culture of lower-class blacks. But for these blacks, there has also existed the expectation to return. (In contrast, middle- and upper-class migrants have historically departed permanently.) Historian Bonham Richardson writes: "By traveling away and returning the people have been able to cope more successfully with the vagaries of man and nature than they would have by staying at home. The small islands of the region are the most vulnerable to environmental and economic uncertainty. Time and again in the Lesser Antilles, droughts, hurricanes, and economic depressions have diminished wages, desiccated provision grounds, and destroyed livestock, and there has been no local recourse to disease or starvation." Hence men and women of the small West Indian islands have been obliged to migrate. "And like migrants everywhere, they have usually considered their travels temporary, partly because they have never been greeted cordially in host communities."

On the smaller islands, such as St. Kitts and Nevis, family and community ceremonies traditionally reinforce and sustain the importance of emigration and return. Funerals reunite families separated by vast distances; Christmas parties and carnival celebrations are also occasions to welcome returning family and friends.

Monetary remittances from relatives in the United States, England, Canada, or the larger islands are a constant reminder of the importance of migration. According to Richardson: "Old men who have earned local prestige by migrating and returning exhort younger men to follow in their footsteps.... Learned cultural responses thereby maintain a migration ethos ... that is not only valuable in coping with contemporary problems, but also provides continuity with the past."

The Haitian diaspora (dispersion) offers some significant differences. While Haitian migration is also a part of the nation's history, a return flow is noticeably absent. One of every six Haitians now lives abroad—primarily in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, and the Bahamas. In French Guiana, Haitians comprise more than 25 percent of the population. They are also found in large numbers in urban areas of the United States, Canada, and France. The typical Haitian emigrant is poor, has little education, and has few skills or job qualifications.

Scholar Christian A. Girault remarks that although "ordinary Haitian migrants are clearly less educated than the Cubans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and even Jamaicans, they are not Haiti's most miserable; the latter could never hope to buy an air ticket or boat passage, or to pay an agent." Those who establish new roots in host countries tend to remain, even though they experience severe discrimination and are stereotyped as "undesirable" because they are perceived as bringing with them "misery, magic and disease," particularly AIDS.

There is also some seasonal movement of population on the island itself. Agricultural workers by the tens of thousands are

found in neighboring Dominican Republic. *Madames sara*, or peddlers, buy and sell consumer goods abroad and provide "an essential provisioning function for the national market."

AN ENVIRONMENT IN DANGER

When one speaks of soil erosion and deforestation in a Caribbean context, Haiti is the example that usually springs to mind. While that image is accurate, it is also too limiting, for much of the Caribbean is threatened with ecological disaster. Part of the problem is historical, for deforestation began with the development of sugarcane cultivation in the seventeenth century. But now, soil erosion and depletion as well as the exploitation of marginal lands by growing populations perpetuate a vicious cycle between inhabitants and the land on which they live. Cultivation of sloping hillsides, or denuding the slopes in the search of wood to make charcoal, creates a situation in which erosion is constant and an ecological and human disaster likely. In 2004 days of heavy rain on the island of Hispaniola generated thousands of mudslides and killed an estimated 2,000 people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

A 1959 report on soil conditions in Jamaica noted that, in one district of the Blue Mountains, on the eastern end of that island, the topsoil had vanished, a victim of rapid erosion. The problem is not unique to the large islands, however. Bonham Richardson observes that ecological degradation on the smallest islands is acute. Thorn scrub and grasses have replaced native forest. "A regional drought in 1977, leading to starvation in Haiti and producing crop and livestock loss south to Trinidad, was severe only partly because of the lack of rain. Grasses and shrubs afford little protection against the sun and thus cannot help the soil to retain moisture in the face of periodic drought. Neither do they inhibit soil loss."

Migration of the islands' inhabitants has at times exacerbated the situation. In times of peak migration, a depleted labor force on some of the islands has resulted in landowners resorting to the raising of livestock, which is not labor-intensive. But livestock contribute to further ecological destruction. "Emigration itself has thus indirectly fed the ongoing devastation of island environments, and some of the changes seem irreversible. Parts of the smaller islands already resemble moonscapes. They seem simply unable to sustain their local resident populations, not to mention future generations or those working abroad who may someday be forced to return for good."

MUSIC, DANCE, FOLKLORE, AND FOOD

Travel accounts of the Caribbean tend to focus on local music, dances, and foods. Calypso, the limbo, steel bands, reggae, and African–Cuban rhythms are well known. Much of the music derives from Amerindian and African roots.

Calypso music apparently originated in Trinidad and spread to the other islands. Calypso singers improvise on any theme; they are particularly adept at poking fun at politicians and their shortcomings. Indeed, governments are as attentive to the lyrics of a politically inspired calypso tune as they are to the opposition press. On a broader scale, calypso is a mirror of Caribbean society.

Some traditional folkways, such as storytelling and other forms of oral history, are in danger of being replaced by electronic media, particularly radio, tape recorders, and jukeboxes. The new entertainment is both popular and readily available.

(Photo Lisa Clyde)

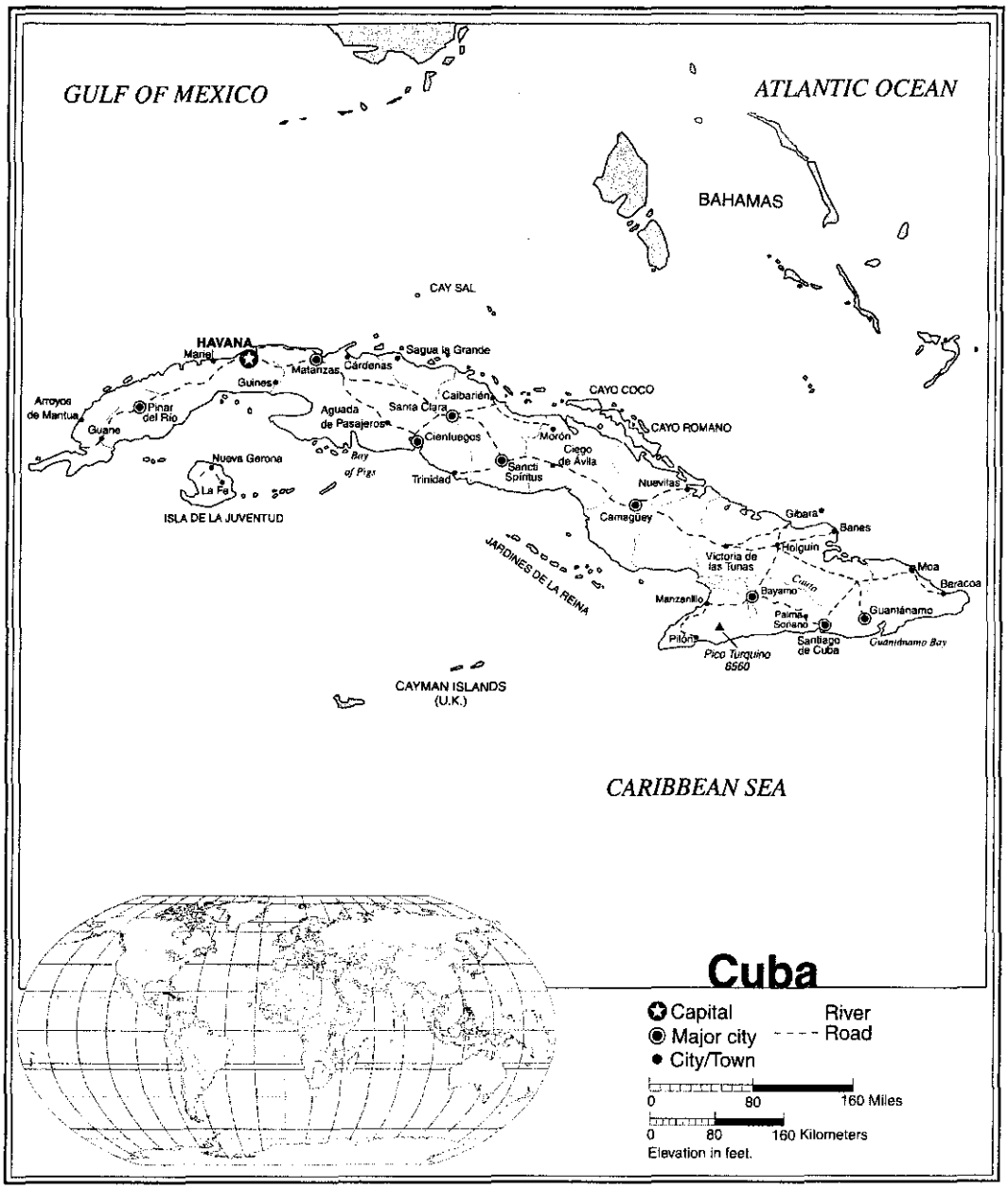
These lush mountain peaks in St. Lucia are volcanic in origin.

Scholar Laura Tanna has gathered much of Kingston, Jamaica's, oral history. Her quest for storyteller Adina Henry took her to one of the city's worst slums, the Dungle, and was reprinted in *Caribbean Review*: "We walked down the tracks to a Jewish cemetery, with gravestones dating back to the 1600s. It, too, was covered in litter, decaying amid the rubble of broken stones. Four of the tombs bear the emblem of the skull and crossbones. Popular belief has it that Spanish gold is buried in the tombs, and several of them have been desecrated by treasure seekers. We passed the East Indian shacks, and completed our tour of Majesty Pen amidst greetings of 'Love' and 'Peace' and with the fragrance of ganja [marijuana] wafting across the way. Everywhere, people were warm and friendly, shaking hands, chatting, drinking beer, or playing dominos. One of the shacks had a small bar and jukebox inside. There, in the midst of pigs grunting at one's feet in the mud and slime, in the dirt and dust, people had their own jukeboxes, tape recorders, and radios, all blaring out reggae, the voice of the ghetto." Tanna found Miss Adina, whose stories revealed the significant African contribution to West Indian folk culture.

In recent years, Caribbean foods have become more accepted, and even celebrated, within the region as well as internationally. Part of the search for an identity involves a new attention to traditional recipes. French, Spanish, and English recipes have been adapted to local foods—iguana, frogs, seafood, fruits, and vegetables. Cassava, guava, and mangos figure prominently in the islanders' diets.

The diversity of the Caribbean is awesome, with its potpourri of peoples and cultures. Its roots lie in Spain, Portugal, England, France, the Netherlands, Africa, India, China, and Japan. There has emerged no distinct West Indian culture, and the Caribbean peoples' identities are determined by the island—no matter how small—on which they live. For the Commonwealth Caribbean, nationalist stirrings are still weak and lacking in focus; while people in Cuba and the Dominican Republic have a much surer grasp on who they are. Nationalism is a strong integrating force in both of these nations. The Caribbean is a fascinating and diverse corner of the world that is far more complex than the travel posters imply.

Cuba (Republic of Cuba)



Cuba Statistics

GEOGRAPHY

Area in Square Miles (Kilometers): 44,200 (114,471) (about the size of Pennsylvania)

Capital (Population): Havana (2,185,000)

Environmental Concerns: pollution of Havana Bay; threatened wildlife populations; deforestation

Geographical Features: mostly flat to rolling plains; rugged hills and mountains in the southeast

Climate: tropical

PEOPLE

Population

Total: 11,308,764

Annual Growth Rate: 0.34%

Rural/Urban Population Ratio: 24/76

Ethnic Makeup: 51% mulatto; 37% white; 11% black; 1% Chinese
Major Language: Spanish
Religion: 85% Roman Catholic before Castro assumed power

Health

Life Expectancy at Birth: 74 years (male); 79 years (female)
Infant Mortality Rate (Ratio): 7.5/1,000
Physicians Available (Ratio): 1/231

Education

Adult Literacy Rate: 95.7%
Compulsory (Ages): 6–11; free

COMMUNICATION

Telephones: 574,400 main lines
Daily Newspaper Circulation: 122 per 1,000 people
Televisions: 200 per 1,000 people
Internet Users: 120,000

TRANSPORTATION

Highways—Miles (Kilometers): 37,793 (60,858)
Railroads—Miles (Kilometers): 2,985 (4,807)
Usable Airfields: 170

GOVERNMENT

Type: Communist state
Independence Date: May 20, 1902 (from Spain)
Head of State/Government: President Fidel Castro Ruz is both head of state and head of government
Political Parties: Cuban Communist Party
Suffrage: universal at 16

MILITARY

Military Expenditures (% of GDP): 1.8% (est.)
Current Disputes: U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay is leased to the United States

ECONOMY

Currency ($ U.S. Equivalent): 1.000 Cuban pesos = $1 (official rate)
Per Capita Income/GDP: $2,800/$31.59 billion
GDP Growth Rate: 1.3%
Inflation Rate: 5%
Unemployment Rate: 3.2%
Labor Force: 4,500,000
Natural Resources: cobalt; nickel; iron ore; copper; manganese; salt; timber; silica; petroleum; arable land
Agriculture: sugarcane; tobacco; citrus fruits; coffee; rice; potatoes; beans; livestock
Industry: sugar; petroleum; food; textiles; tobacco; chemicals; paper and wood products; metals; cement; fertilizers; consumer goods; agricultural machinery
Exports: $1.4 billion (primary partners Russia, the Netherlands, Canada)
Imports: $4.5 billion (primary partners Spain, Venezuela, Mexico)

SUGGESTED WEBSITE

`http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html`

Cuba Country Report

REFLECTIONS ON A REVOLUTION

Cuba, which contains about half the land area of the West Indies, has held the attention of the world since 1959. In that year, Fidel Castro led his victorious rebels into the capital city of Havana and began a revolution that has profoundly affected Cuban society. The Cuban Revolution had its roots in the struggle for independence of Spain in the late nineteenth century, in the aborted Nationalist Revolution of 1933, and in the Constitution of 1940. It grew from Cuba's history and must be understood as a Cuban phenomenon.

The Revolution in some respects represents the fulfillment of the goals of the Cuban Constitution of 1940, a radically nationalist document that was never fully implemented. It banned *latifundia* (the ownership of vast landed estates) and discouraged foreign ownership of the land. It permitted the confiscation of property in the public or social interest. The state was authorized to provide full employment for its people and to direct the course of the national economy. Finally, the Constitution of 1940 gave the Cuban state control of the sugar industry, which at the time was controlled by U.S. companies.

The current Constitution, written in 1976, incorporates 36 percent of the articles of the 1940 Constitution. In other words, many of Castro's policies and programs are founded in Cuban history and the aspirations of the Cuban people. Revolutionary Cuba—at least in its earlier years—was very successful in solving the nation's most pressing problems of poverty. But those successes must be balanced against the loss of basic freedoms imposed by a strong authoritarian state.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE REVOLUTION

Education

One of the Revolution's most impressive successes has been in the area of education. In 1960, the Castro regime decided to place emphasis on raising the minimum level of education for the whole population. To accomplish this, some 200,000 Cubans were mobilized in 1961 under the slogan "Let those who know more teach those who know less." In a single year, the literacy rate rose from 76 to 96 percent. Free education was made available to all Cubans. The literacy campaign involved many Cubans in an attempt to recognize and attack the problems of rural impoverishment. It was the first taste of active public life for many women who were students or teachers and because of their involvement, they began to redefine sex roles and attitudes.

While the literacy campaign was a resounding triumph, long-term educational policy was less satisfactory. Officials blamed the high dropout rate in elementary and junior high schools on poor school facilities and inadequate teacher training. Students also apparently lacked enthusiasm, and Castro himself acknowledged that students needed systematic, constant, daily work and discipline.

"Scholarship students and students in general," in Castro's words, "are willing to do anything, except to study hard."

Health Care

The Revolution took great strides forward in improving the health of the Cuban population, especially in rural regions. Success in this area is all the more impressive when one considers that between one third and one half of all doctors left the country between 1959 and 1962. Health care initially declined sharply, and the infant mortality

rate rose rapidly. But with the training of new health-care professionals, the gaps were filled. The infant mortality rate in Cuba is now at a level comparable to that of developed countries.

DEVELOPMENT

Vladimir Putin, president of Russia, visited Cuba in 2000 and promised a stronger economic relationship between the two countries. After Brazil, Cuba is Russia's largest trading partner in the region.

From the outset, the government decided to concentrate on rural areas, where the need was the greatest. Medical treatment was free, and newly graduated doctors had to serve in the countryside for at least two years. The Cuban health service was founded on the principle that good health for all, without discrimination, is a birthright of Cubans. All Cubans were included under a national health plan.

The first national health standards were developed between 1961 and 1965, and eight priority areas were identified: infant and maternal care, adult health care, care for the elderly, environmental health, nutrition, dentistry, school health programs, and occupational health. A program of insect spraying and immunization eradicated malaria and poliomyelitis. Cuban life expectancy became one of the highest in the world, and Cuba's leading causes of death became the same as in the United States—heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

Before the Revolution of 1959, there was very little health and safety regulation for workers. Afterward, however, important advances were made in the training of specialized inspectors and occupational physicians. In 1978, a Work Safety and Health Law was enacted, which defined the rights and responsibilities of government agencies, workplace administrators, unions, and workers.

Cuba also exported its health-care expertise. It has had medical teams in countries from Nicaragua to Yemen and more doctors overseas than the World Health Organization. In 2003 and 2004 Cuban medical personnel provided health care to Venezuela, which in turn provided Cuba with cheap petroleum.

Redistribution of Wealth

The third great area of change presided over by the Revolution was income redistribution. The Revolution changed the lives of rural poor and agricultural workers. They gained the most in comparison to other groups in Cuban society—especially urban groups. From 1962 to 1973, for example, agricultural workers saw their wages rise from less than 60 percent to 93 percent of the national average.

Still, Cuba's minimum wage was inadequate for most families. Many families needed two wage earners to make ends meet. All wages were enhanced by the so-called social wage, which consisted of free medical care and education, subsidized housing, and low food prices. Yet persistent shortages and tight rationing of food undermined a good portion of the social wage. Newly married couples found it necessary to live with relatives, sometimes for years, before they could obtain their own housing, which was in short supply. Food supplies, especially those provided by the informal sector, were adversely affected by a 1986 decision to eliminate independent producers because an informal private sector was deemed antithetical to "socialist morality" and promoted materialism.

FREEDOM

The Committee to Protect Journalists noted that those who try to work outside the confines of the state media face tremendous obstacles. "The problems of a lack of basic supplies ... are dwarfed by Fidel Castro's campaign of harassment and intimidation against the fledgling free press."

Women in Cuba

From the outset of the Revolution, Fidel Castro appealed to women as active participants in the movement and redefined their political roles. Women's interests were protected by the Federation of Cuban Women, an integral part of the ruling party. The Family Code of 1975 equalized pay scales, reversed sexual discrimination against promotions, provided generous maternity leave, and gave employed women preferential access to goods and services. Although women comprised approximately 30 percent of the Cuban workforce, most were still employed in traditionally female occupations; the Third Congress of the Cuban Communist Party admitted in 1988 that both racial minorities and women were underrepresented in responsible government and party positions at all levels. This continues to be a problem.

SHORTCOMINGS

Even at its best, the new Cuba had significant shortcomings. Wayne Smith, a former chief of the U.S. Interest Section in Havana who was sympathetic to the Revolution, wrote: "There is little freedom of expression and no freedom of the press at all. It is a command society, which still holds political prisoners, some of them under deplorable conditions. Further, while the Revolution has provided the basic needs of all, it has not fulfilled its promise of a higher standard of living for the society as a whole. Cuba was, after all, an urban middle-class society with a relatively high standard of living even before the Revolution.... The majority of Cubans are less well off materially."

Castro, to win support for his programs, did not hesitate to take his revolutionary message to the people. Indeed, the key reason why Castro enjoyed such widespread support in Cuba was because the people had the sense of being involved in a great historical process.

Alienation

Not all Cubans identified with the Revolution, and many felt a deep sense of betrayal and alienation. The elite and most of the middle class strongly resisted the changes that robbed them of influence, prestige, and property. Some were particularly bitter, for at its outset, the Revolution had been largely a middle-class movement. For them, Castro was a traitor to his class. Thousands fled Cuba, and some formed the core of an anti-Castro guerrilla movement based in South Florida.

(United Nations photo)

Fidel Castro has been the prime minister of Cuba since he seized power in 1959. Pictured above is Castro at the United nations, as he looked in 1960.

There are many signs that Castro's government, while still popular among many people, has lost the widespread acceptance it enjoyed in the 1960s and 1970s. While Castro still has the support of the older generation and those in rural areas who benefited from the social transformation of the island, limited economic growth has led to dissatisfaction among urban workers and youth, who are less interested in Castro as a revolutionary hero and more interested in economic gains.

HEALTH/WELFARE

In August 1997, the Cuban government reported 1,649 HIV cases, 595 cases of full-blown AIDS, and 429 deaths, a significant increase over figures for 1996. Cuban medical personnel are working on an AIDS vaccine. AIDS has been spread in part because of an economic climate that has driven more women to prostitution.

More serious disaffection may exist in the army. Journalist Georgie Anne Geyer, writing in *World Monitor*, suggests that the 1989 execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa, ostensibly for drug trafficking, was actually motivated by Castro's fears of an emerging competitor for power. "The 1930s-style show trial effectively revealed the presence of an 'Angola generation' in the Cuban military.... That generation, which fought in Angola between 1974 and 1989, is the competitor generation to Castro's own Sierra Maestra generation." The condemned officers argued that their dealings with drug traffickers were not for personal enrichment but were designed to earn desperately needed hard currency for the state. Some analysts are convinced that Castro knew about drug trafficking and condoned it; others claim that it took place without his knowledge. But the bottom line is that the regime had been shaken at the highest levels, and the purge was the most far-reaching since the 1959 Revolution.

The Economy

The state of the Cuban economy and the future of the Cuban Revolution are inextricably linked. Writing in *World Today*, James J. Guy predicted that, given the economic collapse of the former Soviet Union and its satellites, "Cuba is destined to face serious structural unemployment: its agrarian economy cannot generate the white-collar, technical jobs demanded by a swelling army of graduates.... The entire system is deteriorating—the simplest services take months to deliver, water and electricity are constantly interrupted...," and there is widespread corruption and black-marketeering.

Oil is particularly nettlesome. For years after the collapse of the Soviet Union Cuba had no access to affordable petroleum, at great cost to the economy. That changed in 2003 when Venezuela provided Cuba with discounted oil in exchange for Cuban expertise in the areas of health and sports.

Although Castro prides Cuba on being one of the last bulwarks of untainted Marxism-Leninism, in April 1991 he said: "We are not dogmatic ... we are realistic ... Under the special conditions of this extraordinary period we are also aware that different forms of international cooperation may be useful." He noted that Cuba had contacted foreign capitalists about the possibility of establishing joint enterprises and remarked that more than 49 percent foreign participation in state businesses was a possibility.

In 1993, Castro called for economic realism. Using the rhetoric of the Revolution, he urged the Legislative Assembly to think seriously about the poor condition of the Cuban economy: "It is painful, but we must be sensible.... It is not only with decisiveness, courage and heroism that one saves the Revolution, but also with intelligence. And we have the right to invent ways to survive in these conditions without ever ceasing to be revolutionaries."

ACHIEVEMENTS

A unique cultural contribution of Cuba to the world was the Afro-Cuban movement, with its celebration of black song and dance rhythms. The work of contemporary prize-winning Cuban authors such as Alejo Carpentier and Edmundo Desnoes has been translated into many languages.

A government decree in September 1993 allowed Cubans to establish private businesses; today, Cubans in some 140 professions can work on their own for a profit. At about the same time, the use of dollars was decriminalized, the Cuban currency became convertible, and, in the agricultural sector, the government began to transform state farms into cooperatives. Farmers are now allowed to sell some of their produce in private markets and, increasingly, market forces set the prices of many consumer goods. Managers in state-owned enterprises have been given unprecedented autonomy; and foreign investment, in contrast with past practice, is now encouraged.

Still, the Cuban economy has continued its decline. Mirta Ojito, writing in *The New York Times*, sees older revolutionaries "coming to terms with the failure of their dreams." Cuba now resembles most other underdeveloped countries, with "many needy, unhappy, sad people." The Revolution was supposed to make Cuba prosperous, "not merely survive," and end the country's dependence on the U.S. dollar. By 1999, dollars in circulation in Cuba had created a parallel speculative economy. With the new millenium, Cuba's infrastructure continued to crumble. In 2001, salaries averaged just $15 per month, and the weekly ration card given to each family provides one chicken, just over three pounds of rice and beans, sugar, and two pints of cooking oil The peso is virtually worthless, and bartering or U.S. dollars are needed to acquire all of the luxuries and many of the necessities of life. With rising prices, it is not surprising that prostitution, moonlighting, black-marketeering, and begging have rapidly increased. Castro has talked with CARICOM states about the possibilities of free trade, but the stifling bureaucracy makes it much easier to export *from* rather than export *to* Cuba.

Timeline: PAST

1492
The island is discovered by Christopher Columbus

1511
The founding of Havana

1868–1878
The Ten Years' War in Cuba

1895–1898
The Cuban War of Independence

1902
The Republic of Cuba is established

1940
Cuba writes a new, progressive Constitution

1959
Fidel Castro seizes power

1961
An abortive U.S.–sponsored invasion at the Bay of Pigs

1980s
Mass exodus from Cuba; trial and execution of top military officials for alleged dealing in drugs

1990s
The economy rapidly deteriorates; Castro pursues Economic Liberalization
Tensions flare between Cuba and the United Sates over the disposition of a young Cuban refugee, Elian González

PRESENT

2000s

The U.S. trade embargo, supported only by Israel, continues to make life difficult for the Cuban people

Freedom Issues

Soon after the Revolution, the government assumed total control of the media. No independent news organization is allowed, and all printed publications are censored by the government or the Communist Party. The arts are subject to strict censorship, and even sports must serve the purposes of the Revolution. As Castro noted: "Within the Revolution everything is possible. Outside it, nothing."

In many respects, there is less freedom now in Cuba than there was before the Revolution. Cuba's human-rights record is not good. There are thousands of political prisoners, and rough treatment and torture—physical and psychological—occur. The Constitution of 1976 allows the repression of all freedoms for all those who oppose the Revolution. U.S. political scientist William LeGrande, who was sympathetic to the Revolution, nevertheless noted that "Cuba is a closed society. The Cuban Communist Party does not allow dissenting views on fundamental policy. It does not allow people to challenge the basic leadership of the regime." But here, too, there are signs of change. In 1995, municipal elections were held under a new system that provides for run-offs if none of the candidates gains a clear majority. In an indication of a new competitiveness in Cuban politics, 326 out of 14,229 positions were subject to the run-off rule.

THE FUTURE

It will be difficult for Castro to maintain the unquestioned support of the Cuban population. There must be continued positive accomplishments in the economy. Health and education programs are successful and will continue to be so. "Cubans get free health care, free education and free admission to sports and cultural events [and] 80% of all Cubans live in rent-free apartments, and those who do pay rent pay only between 6 and 10% of their salaries," according to James J. Guy.

But there must be a recovery of basic political and human freedoms. Criticism of the government must not be the occasion for jail terms or exile. The Revolution must be more inclusive and less exclusive.

Although Castro has never been effectively challenged, there are signs of unrest on the island. The military, as noted, is a case in point. Castro has also lost a good deal of luster internationally, as most countries have moved away from statism and toward free-market economies and more open forms of government.

Even though a similar trend is apparent on the island, in 1994 and 1995 many Cubans grew increasingly frustrated with their lives and took to the sea in an attempt to reach the United States. Thousands were intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard and interned in U.S. military facilities at Guantanamo Bay and Fort Howard in the Panama Canal Zone.

The question is increasingly asked, What will happen once Fidel, through death or retirement, is gone from power? Castro's assumption is that the new Constitution, which institutionalizes the Revolution, will provide a mechanism for succession. Over the past few years, he has made some effort to depersonalize the Revolution; his public appearances are fewer and he does less traveling around the countryside. But there is no transition plan, and Castro continues to behave as if he is the embodiment of the Revolution. As for his staying power, a recent anecdote is revealing. When presented with a gift of a Galapagos tortoise, Castro asked how long they lived. The reply, "More than a hundred years," prompted Castro to say, "How sad it is to outlive one's pets."

Change must come to Cuba. More than half of all Cubans alive today were born after the Revolution. They are not particularly attuned to the rhetoric of revolution and seem more interested in the attainment of basic freedoms and consumer goods. In January 1999, *The Economist* asked: "What will follow Fidel?" The magazine suggested that Cubans could be faced with violence and political turmoil, for there were "no plausible political heirs in sight, no credible opposition, and an exile community eager not only for return but also revenge."

Latin America Losing Hope in Democracy, Report Says

By WARREN HOGE

UNITED NATIONS, April 21—A majority of Latin Americans say they would support the replacement of a democratic government with an "authoritarian" one if it could produce economic benefits, according to a United Nations report released Wednesday in Lima, Peru.

The report, a harsh self-analysis compiled by Latin Americans, says that the region, which has succeeded in freeing itself from a long history of military coups and dictatorships, is facing a new challenge to democratic rule because of popular disenchantment with its elected governments.

Created by the United Nations Development Program, the report looked at 18 nations and conducted opinion surveys of 18,643 citizens and lengthy interviews with 231 political, economic, social and cultural figures, including 41 current or former presidents and vice presidents.

Fifty-five percent of the people polled said they would support the replacement of a democratic government with an authoritarian one; 58 percent said they agreed that leaders should "go beyond the law" if they have to, and 56 percent said they felt that economic development was more important than maintaining democracy.

"This shows that democracy is not something that has taken hold of people's minds as strongly as we had thought it would," said Enrique Berruga Filloy, Mexico's ambassador to the United Nations.

The report says that while unhappiness with political leadership has a long history in Latin America, the people now complaining are faulting democracy itself.

Voter turnout is falling across the region, especially among the young, while civil unrest is on the rise.

Since 2000, four elected presidents in the 18 countries surveyed have been forced to step down because of plunges in public support, and others may now be in peril. The countries surveyed were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

All of these countries have either introduced or consolidated electoral democracy over the past 25 years, emerging from unrepresentative one-party politics or harsh and repressive military rule. All of them hold regular elections that meet international standards of fairness and enjoy a free press and basic civil liberties.

The report acknowledges distinctive circumstances in individual countries, but it argues that there is a broadly shared political culture and social structure that transcends them. "The common denominators of this phenomenon outweigh the many national differences," it says.

The report attributes the erosion of confidence in elected governments to slow economic growth, social inequality and ineffective legal systems and social services. Despite gains in human rights from the days of dictatorship, most Latin Americans, it says, still cannot expect equal treatment before the law because of abusive police practices, politicized judiciaries and widespread corruption.

From *World Policy Journal*, April 22, 2004, pp. 29-36.

Castro Attacks Enrope for Meddling

By Richard Lapper

Fidel Castro has marked the anniversary of the failed guerrilla attack that sparked the Cuban Revolution by launching a ferocious assault on some of the countries who have helped the island's battered economy survive the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Stung by recent criticism of human rights abuses, the Cuban president lambasted the European Union on issues ranging from rules on foreign aid and sugar subsidies to their historical involvement in the slave trade and the plunder and extermination of entire peoples.

In the low-key atmosphere at Saturday's rally in Santiago, 10,000 specially invited supporters waved small paper Cuban flags in unison as Mr Castro delivered his tirade. All were wearing red or black T-shirts specially printed with the slogan "carry in the heart the doctrines of the master"—a reference to the writings of José Marti, the 19th century Cuban nationalist hero who inspired Mr Castro's political thinking.

Mr Castro was speaking in front of the former Moncado barracks, the mustard yellow building that he together with a few dozen nationalist rebels—had unsuccessfully attacked in July 1953, kicking off the revolution that was to make Cuba communist. His guerrilla fighters finally overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959.

His speech was intensely ideological, and seems to mark an intention to dig in and weather the political storms that are buffetting the island, rather than reaching out to the wider world.

Cuba had welcomed the creation of the EU, Mr Castro said, because it counterbalanced the military and economic dominance of the US. "But now the EU adopts this arrogant and calculated attitude in hope of reconciliation with the masters of the world," he added, referring to the US.

Over the past 10 years, European trade and investment—especially in the tourism sector—have cushioned Cuba from the loss of billions of dollars a year in Soviet subsidies. In addition, European links have helped the island counter the impact of the US economic embargo which has been in place for four decades.

But Cuba's decision in April to execute three hijackers who were trying to reach the US by ferry and to impose draconian prison sentences on 75 opposition activists led to a crisis in the relationship with the EU, including fierce diplomatic protests and the suspension of humanitarian aid.

The European Commission froze Havana's request to join its Cotonou accord, which would have given Cuba access to substantial development and aid assistance, but was conditional on respect for human rights. During his speech, Mr Castro said he would in future only accept aid from organisations that did not "impose political conditions on Cuba".

Despite Mr Castro's outburst, the EC said on Sunday it remained committed to supporting the Cuban people.

But if Mr Castro is serious in rejecting dialogue, he appears to be embracing isolation and a further period of socialist austerity at a time of increasing economic difficulty. A decline in revenues from tourism and the closure of 71 of 156 state-owned sugar mills have hit the economy hard.

In spite of a gradual recovery since 1994, economic output has still not fully recovered to the levels of 1990.

Britain, Spain, and the former communist countries of eastern Europe—allies of the United States in the Iraq war—came under especially heavy fire from Mr Castro. He challenged the British government to tell the world how David Kelly, the biological weapons expert, who died 10 days ago "was brutally murdered, or how he was led to commit suicide".

The Cuban leader criticized José Maria Aznar for holding "fascist" ideas and said Spain's education system was equivalent to that of a "banana republic" and "an embarrassment for Europe".

The leaders of eastern Europe were opportunists and their countries US Trojan horses in the heart of the EU. They were full of hatred for Cuba, he said. Eastern Europe could not forgive the communist island "for having demonstrated that socialism is capable of achieving a society a thousand times more just and humane than the rotten [capitalist] system they were adopting", he claimed.

Fidel Castro is now 77 and dogged by rumours of ill health, a far cry from the 26-year-old revolutionary who stormed the barracks here. But on Saturday, his rhetoric was a reminder that the last communist state in the western hemisphere still has no intention of accepting criticism from outsiders.