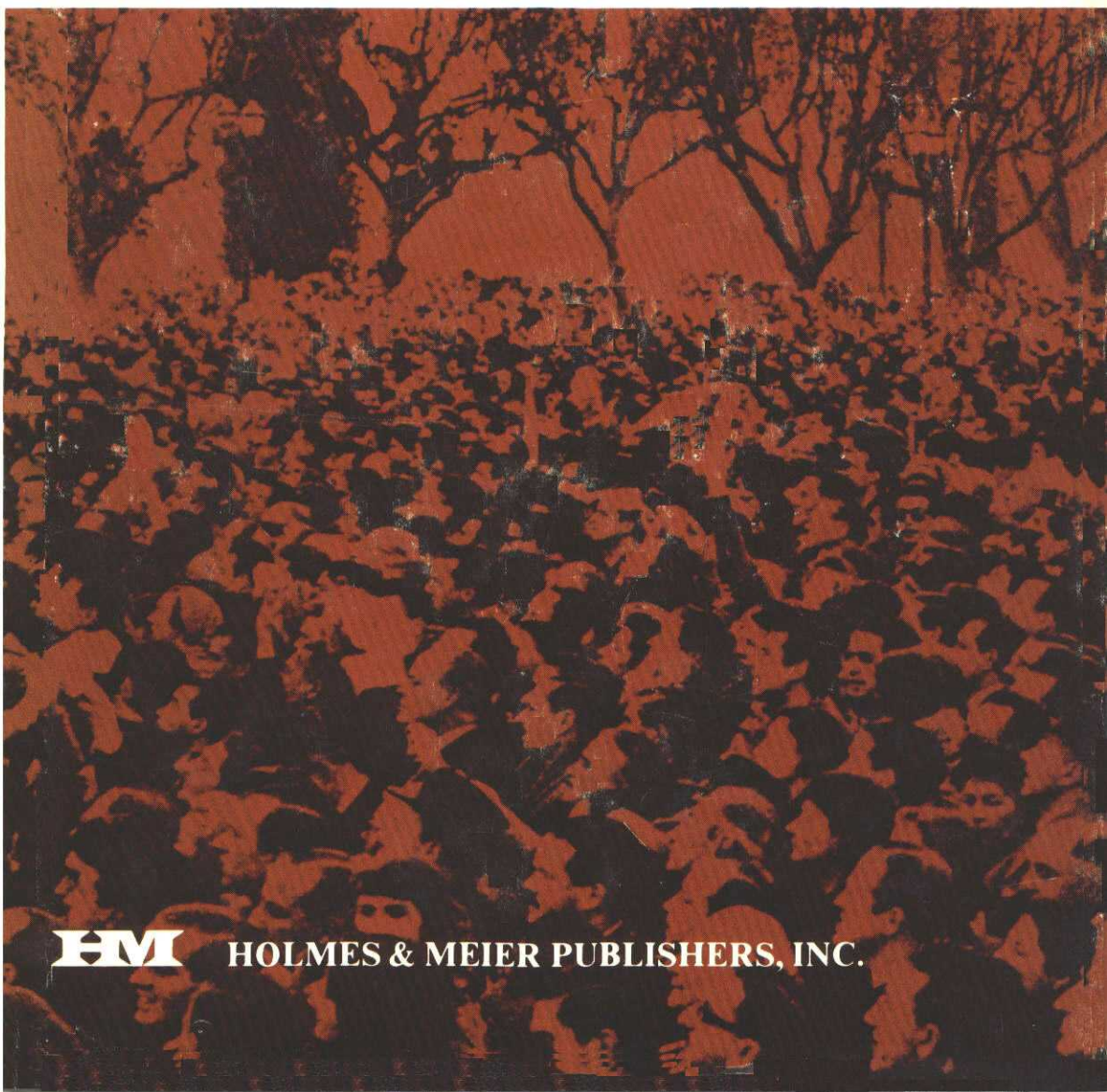


POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATIN AMERICA

VOLUME 1: CITIZEN AND STATE

Edited by John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson



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Participation in communist nations has traditionally been regarded as "inauthentic." LeoGrande's study of political participation in revolutionary Cuba attempts to ascertain how Cubans participate in politics and how that participation affects the formation of public policy. In recent years, "direct democracy" (implementing policies made by elites) has been replaced by greater emphasis on mass input into the process of policy formation. The practical result has been a considerable expansion and diversification of the participatory opportunities available to Cubans, particularly at the local level.

7. **Mass Political Participation in Socialist Cuba**

WILLIAM M. LEOGRANDE

The study of political participation has traditionally focused almost exclusively on participation in developed Western nations. Participation in underdeveloped countries has been presumed to be restricted to political elites, except for periodic outbursts of mass violence (Seligson and Booth 1976). Participation in communist countries, on the other hand, has been acknowledged as being widespread, but it has been regarded as coerced, ineffective, and therefore inauthentic (Hough 1975; Little 1976; Baylis chapter 2). A number of recent studies (Seligson and Booth 1976; Hough 1976; Salisbury 1975) have challenged this conventional wisdom as ethnocentric, and have called for research to establish empirically the extent and effects of political participation in non-Western settings. This study is an examination of political participation in revolutionary Cuba which attempts to ascertain: (1) how the revolutionary leadership has conceived of the role mass participation should play in the revolutionary process; (2) what opportunities to participate in politics exist for the mass public in Cuba; (3) how many Cubans avail themselves of these opportunities; and (4) what effect mass participation has on the political process.

Cross-national studies by Verba, Nie, and their collaborators (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1971; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1973) have demonstrated that political participation is a more complex phenomenon than the prevalent unidimensional conceptions of it had allowed. They identify various "modes" of political participation, and by showing that these modes cannot be scaled

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hierarchically they establish that participation is multidimensional. Modes of participation are distinctive ways in which citizens relate to the government (Verba and Nie 1972, pp. 44-45), and they are distinguished by the degree of initiative required from the participant, the degree of conflict liable to be engendered with other participants, and the scope of the intended outcome (personal or community-wide).

Four modes of participation have been identified cross-nationally (Verba et al. 1973, p. 237): voting, campaign activity, personalized contacting of government officials, and communal activity (i.e., nonelectoral activity by which citizens try to influence policy). In Yugoslavia, another mode—self-management activity—has been identified (Verba et al. 1973), and in Costa Rica (Seligson and Booth forthcoming-c; see also Booth 1976) researchers found evidence of two additional modes: political communication and community improvement activism.

Our study of political participation in Cuba will utilize a modified version of the conceptual schema developed by Verba et al. (1973) in their study of Yugoslavia, since it is the only communist polity in which this sort of research has been conducted. In Yugoslavia, four modes of political participation were identified: voting, contacting, communal activity, and self-management activity. Participatory acts which in other nations formed the mode of campaign activity were found not to constitute a distinctive mode in Yugoslavia. Since the Cuban electoral process prohibits campaigning, there is no campaign activity mode there either.

In addition to these four modes, our study of Cuba will also consider the mode of supportive activity. Most studies of political participation concentrate solely on activity aimed at influencing the policy process. Participation is defined as behavior through which the populace articulates its interests and makes demands on the political system. Verba and Nie (1972, p. 2), for instance, define participation as "those activities that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take." However, as Salisbury (1975), Baylis (chapter 2), and Booth and Seligson (chapter 1) point out, this is an unnecessarily narrow conception of participation. Behavior which is supportive rather than demanding can have implications which are as important for policy implementation as demand participation is for policy formation. Supportive participation (i.e., behavior in which people carry out policies) constitutes a political resource, and its absence can be a serious constraint on policy makers. If a given policy initiative is premised upon eliciting supportive participation, the success of the policy will depend upon the extent to which such participation is forthcoming. Consequently, supportive participation is deserving of investigation, and our study of Cuba will construe participation broadly to include supportive as well as demand participation.

This study defines political participation as behavior which influences or is designed to influence the distribution of public goods (on the concept of public goods, see Chaffee 1976; forthcoming), where public goods are taken to

include not only goods distributed by formal political institutions, but also by the community (See Booth and Seligson, chapter 1).

Unconventional participation (e.g., strikes, demonstrations, etc.) is included in this definition, but will not be considered because adequate data are not available and because the evidence that does exist indicates that such activity has been of only minor consequence in Cuba since the early 1960s.

Unlike the Verba and Nie studies, which are based upon individuals' responses to survey instruments, the Cuban data are entirely aggregate. Data on the number of people engaged in various participatory acts are relatively plentiful, but individual-level data are nonexistent. This places several limitations on the study. Our conceptual schema of modes, though it has found empirical verification in other contexts, must be regarded in this instance simply as a means of organizing the available data rather than as a testable hypothesis about the structure of political participation in Cuba. Without survey data, it is impossible to verify that participatory acts in Cuba do, in fact, cluster together in the modes we have postulated. Our categorization of participatory acts as belonging to one mode or another will follow the categorizations found in Verba's study of Yugoslavia (Verba et al. 1973).

The aggregate character of the data also prevents any assessment of the degree to which some people participate in a wider variety of activities than do others. Nevertheless, the data suffice to establish the extent of participation in a wide variety of activities, and to do so using a conceptual framework that has been found to be applicable cross-nationally.

The Role of Participation in a Revolutionary Ideology

Promoting mass political participation has always been a key aspect of the revolutionary leadership's plans for building socialism and communism in Cuba. Participation is regarded as indispensable to achieving both the objective conditions (economic development) and the subjective conditions (new socialist man) for a revolutionary transformation of Cuban society. As Fagen (1969, p. 7) writes, "A primary aim of political socialization in Cuba is to produce a participating citizen, not just one who can recite the revolutionary catechism perfectly. The test of the new Cuban man is how he behaves." Nevertheless, the particulars of precisely *how* Cuban citizens ought to participate in the revolutionary process and the actual opportunities available for participation have changed considerably over time.

The earliest concern of the revolutionary government was to organize and mobilize the population to support the new regime and to protect it from both internal and external threats. While the revolutionary government enjoyed widespread popular support after the collapse of the old regime (Free 1960; Zeitlin 1970), few people had actively participated in the struggle against Batista (Bonachea and San Martín 1974). Moreover, there was no organizational vehicle to convert attitudinal support into behavioral support. Initially, then, the principal form of mass participation was the mass rally.

Dozens of such rallies, with tens of thousands in attendance, were held in the first few years of the revolution, and they were an important factor in the struggle between left and right wings of the anti-Batista coalition. The inability of the Right to mobilize mass support as could the Left contributed significantly to the Right's feelings of political isolation and impotence (Thomas 1971, pp. 1232-33, 1246-47).

The first formally organized vehicle for mass participation in revolutionary Cuba was the Militia, created in late 1959. At its peak in the mid-sixties, the Militia included half a million armed civilians, drawn largely from the working class (Blutstein, et al. 1971, p. 454). It constituted an important supplement to the military might of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (as demonstrated at the Bay of Pigs), and also acted as a politico-military counterweight to the armed forces. Since the mid-sixties, however, the status of the Militia has been reduced to that of a civil defense force and military reserve; it is no longer a significant vehicle of mass participation in politics.

The conception of how Cuban citizens ought to participate in politics and the range of participatory opportunities available have been inextricably linked to the revolutionary leadership's conception of socialist democracy. Throughout the 1960s, the concept of "direct democracy" predominated. This conception rested upon several distinct premises: (1) that the essence of democracy is the pursuit of policies which serve the interests of the people; (2) that democracy requires the active support of the people through their direct participation in the implementation of public policy; and (3) that a direct, informal, and noninstitutional relationship between the people and their leaders is sufficient to ensure governmental responsiveness to popular needs and demands.

In practice, direct democracy meant that virtually all organized political participation was supportive activity. Fagen (1969, p. 9) refers to this activity as mobilization participation and describes it aptly as "a matter of enlisting supportive hands in the service of national goals. . . . Mobilization as used here means 'getting the troops out' to do whatever the leadership feels needs to be done." With the exception of the brief interlude of Local Power (1966-68), which has been described elsewhere (LeoGrande 1976), there were no formal channels through which Cuban citizens could participate in policy formation or elite selection during the 1960s.

There was one informal way, however. Fidel Castro's numerous inspection tours throughout the countryside constituted the principal opportunity for the Cuban people to communicate with their leaders and thereby to exert some influence over policy. Frequent, usually unannounced, and always informal, these visits were an integral part of direct democracy. "No one could accuse him," wrote Hugh Thomas (1971, p. 1345), "as Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* did of so many leaders of new states, of retiring to the palace and never visiting the country. On the contrary, Castro never seemed to be in the capital, always travelling by helicopter, or jeep, or Oldsmobile, always looking at some new project, always speaking, encouraging, threatening, denouncing, never indifferent."

In his travels, Castro gave the ordinary Cuban direct access to the center of governmental power—himself. He would often spend hours with small groups of people discussing local problems, ordering action to solve the problems, or explaining why the problems were unsolvable. Not infrequently, he would take the side of the citizenry against abuses or inefficiency by local officials. Castro personally came to be regarded as a more reliable bulwark against governmental irregularity than any set of structural safeguards. González (1974, p. 184) writes:

As the personal link between the rulers and the ruled . . . Castro also supplied an element of regime responsiveness to popular pressures. Constantly making personal inspection tours throughout the length and breadth of the island, he functioned, in effect, as an ombudsman for the populace. Only he possessed the singular ability to redress local grievances in a political system that had yet to develop truly responsive (as opposed to command) institutions. By the same token, he served as the regime's intuitive barometer of popular sentiment, sounding out public opinion and eliciting criticisms from among the rank and file regarding the performance of local party and government officials in the management of state enterprises.

Since direct democracy placed such emphasis on direct personal mass-elite relationships, institutional mechanisms for mass participation in policy making or to ensure elite accountability were virtually nonexistent.

The Cuban conception of democracy underwent substantial revision in the reorganization of the political system which began in 1970. The failure of the economic policies of the late 1960s, culminating in the failure to produce ten million tons of sugar in 1970, was a severe blow to the prestige of the revolution. These failures prompted a reassessment not only of economic policy, but also of the political system which had allowed such mistakes to be made. The problems in the economy were blamed, in part, on the weakness of Cuban political institutions and on the lack of popular participation in the formation of public policy (Castro 1970a). To remedy these failings, a total reorganization of the political system was initiated, a reorganization aimed at "institutionalization" (i.e., strengthening the institutional structure of the political process) and "democratization" (i.e., increasing mass participation in policy decision making). This new phase of the Cuban revolution marked a shift away from the precepts of direct democracy, and the recognition that more than supportive participation was required for building socialism:

The people must be given the opportunity to decide the persons to whom they delegate their power and, moreover, the channels should be established through which every member of society may, to the greatest extent possible, participate directly in the governing of that society, in the administration of that society (*Granma Weekly Review* 1974a, p. 10).

In practice, this has meant an expansion of political participation and participatory opportunities beyond the narrow bounds of supportive activity

which, during the 1960s, constituted by far the greatest part of political participation in Cuba.

One aspect of political participation in Cuba which has remained relatively constant over time is the boundary delineating the limits of legitimate participation. Since 1961 when Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist, the Cuban political system has been officially characterized as a proletarian dictatorship. As such, it is thoroughly antipluralistic; many political activities regarded as essential to pluralist democracy are beyond the bounds of legitimacy in Cuba's socialist democracy. Specifically, mass participation aimed at altering the form of rule (i.e., the basic ideological and institutional framework of the political process), replacing the existing political elite with a counter-elite, or blocking the implementation of policy are all regarded as strictly illegitimate. The formation of political organizations that might pursue such goals—e.g., opposition political parties, autonomous voluntary associations, or even organized factions within existing political structures—is likewise prohibited.

Political Participation in Cuba in the Early 1970s

Legitimate forms of political participation in Cuba are concerned primarily with influencing the allocation of public goods within the context of the existing political system. Such participatory activity is channeled through and structured by a variety of political institutions, three of which are especially important: the mass organizations, the Communist Party, and the elected government assemblies.

The mass organizations. Like all socialist countries, Cuba has a variety of mass organizations which organize people on the basis of common characteristics such as age, occupation, and gender. Four of these stand out as being, by far, the most important: the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (Comités de Defensa de la Revolución—CDR); the Confederation of Cuban Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba—CTC); the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas—FMC); and the National Association of Small Farmers (Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños—ANAP). Together, these four organizations constitute the most important mechanism through which Cuban citizens participate in politics. The activities comprising three of the five modes of participation under consideration (supportive activity, communal activity, and self-management activity) occur largely under the rubric of these mass organizations.

During the 1960s, the mass organizations constituted virtually the *only* channel through which Cubans could participate, and the activity of these organizations was then concentrated primarily on mobilizing people for supportive activities. This emphasis characterized all the mass organizations from their inception: the CDR was created to mobilize supporters to defend the regime against internal opponents; the CTC was reoriented in 1961 to mobilize workers to raise productivity and thereby to accelerate economic

development; the FMC was created to mobilize women to participate in all the various activities of the revolution; and the ANAP was organized to mobilize support among small private farmers. Indeed, the Cubans themselves portrayed the mass organizations as instruments of mass mobilization. "In order to organize and mobilize the masses," said party official Jorge Risquet in 1963, "... the Party depends upon the mass organizations, which are like its arms and legs" (Risquet 1963). Not until the political reorganization of the 1970s was the role of the mass organizations expanded to allow for any significant input to the policy-making process.

Today, the mass organizations are still the main vehicle for political participation. Mass organization membership is so extensive that virtually everyone belongs to at least one mass organization, and a majority of Cubans belong to at least two. Since their reorganization in 1961, the trade unions have had a membership of over 2 million, or more than 80 percent of the state sector work force (Castro 1976, p. 188). Similarly, the Farmers' Association has included nearly all small private farm owners since its inception in 1961; present membership stands at 232,000, or about 85 percent of private farmers and the members of their families (Castro 1976, p. 193; Mesa-Lago 1976, p. 283). The memberships of the CDR and FMC have grown more slowly. After burgeoning rapidly in the first two years of their existence (1960-1962), they settled into a fairly steady rate of expansion of about 15 percent per year. This continued into the early 1970s when membership in both organizations peaked at what appears to be a saturation point of 80 percent of the eligible populations. At present, the CDR has nearly 5 million members, and the FMC has over 2 million (Castro 1976, pp. 197, 201). Unlike the other mass organizations, the CDR is open not just to one social sector, but to anyone who supports the revolution. The CDR's goal is to incorporate the entire adult population into its ranks.

There is considerable social pressure to join a mass organization, thereby demonstrating that one is "integrated" into the revolution—i.e., that one is a supporter and a participant. Consequently, membership figures probably overstate the number of citizens who are actually participants in any mass organization activities. Intense organizational efforts to mobilize the entire membership of a mass organization (e.g., to elect delegates to a national Congress, or to discuss drafts of important legislation) typically result in a participation rate of about 85 percent (e.g., *Granma Weekly Review* 1968b, p. 8; 1974b, p. 3; Castro 1976, p. 192). At the other extreme are those members who participate a great deal. Such members are referred to as "activists" and comprise 19 percent of the CDR's membership, and 16 percent of the FMC's (*Granma Weekly Review* 1970, p. 3; 1975, p. 6).

The specific tasks undertaken by the mass organizations have been as diverse as they have been numerous, changing considerably over time as the national goals and policies of the regime have evolved. As memberships have expanded, the mass organizations have taken on a larger number and a wider variety of tasks.

Participatory opportunities available through the mass organizations fall primarily into the modes of supportive and communal activity. Both modes are extremely variegated and the constraint of space prohibits a full listing of all the participatory acts that comprise them. The three most important types of supportive activity, though, are voluntary labor campaigns (usually in agriculture at harvest time), work on community improvement projects (such as adult education, public health classes, vaccination campaigns, blood donation drives, school improvements, etc.), and socialist emulation (contests between individuals or groups to see who can fulfill or overfulfill their work plans most quickly). Since different individuals devote their time to different projects, it is extremely difficult to estimate how many people participate in these supportive activities taken together, although it appears to be a majority of the membership.

Communal activity is defined as nonelectoral behavior aimed at influencing policy, especially within the community. Much of the communal activity engaged in by Cubans involves internal decisions about how the mass organizations will conduct their various work programs. At the base level, branches of the mass organizations have considerable autonomy to organize their own programs of work and to elect their officers (Fagen 1972). Candidates for leadership positions in the mass organizations at the local level are nominated by the membership itself, with the requirement that there must always be at least two candidates for every position. The Communist party is prohibited from either nominating or endorsing any candidate. After a discussion of the merits of the candidates, the membership votes (in the trade unions, at least, this vote is by secret ballot). One indicator of the effectiveness of this process is the very high turnover in mass organization leaders at the local level. For example, in the trade union elections of both 1966 and 1970, three-quarters of the candidates elected had not previously held leadership posts (*Granma Weekly Review* 1966, p. 3; Mesa-Lago 1974, p. 77). Participation in this electoral process varies somewhat from one mass organization to another. About 84 percent of the trade unions' membership participated in the 1966 elections, while only about 60 percent participated in the elections of 1970 (*Granma Weekly Review* 1966, p. 3; Mesa-Lago 1974, p. 77).

Mass organization members also have some opportunity to influence the work of their organizations at the national level. National plans of work are adopted at a mass organization's national congress. "Draft theses," i.e., a proposed work plan, circulates throughout the organization before the congress convenes so that the membership can discuss it and suggest changes. In addition, most national congress delegates are drawn from the base of the organization; local units elect delegates to congresses in the way that they elect local leaders.

The degree of influence these procedures actually give the membership over national work plans is debatable; no doubt the Communist party and the national leadership of the mass organizations retain the ability to control this process. That, however, does not make participation by the general membership

“inauthentic.” The whole process is not merely a charade; rather, it is a way for the national leadership to assess the reactions of the membership to a program which depends for its success upon mass participation in its execution.

Mass organization members also have opportunities to influence policies outside the organizations themselves. The main mechanism for doing this is the mass discussion of drafts of laws. The process here is similar to the mass distribution of draft theses before a national congress, except that all the mass organizations are involved. Drafts of important legislation are discussed by mass organization members at the local level, suggested changes are solicited, and these changes are then communicated to the Council of Ministers for use in drawing up the final text of the law. In at least some cases, the suggestions that emerge from the discussion process have led to substantial revisions in the draft law. The mass discussions of draft legislation are typically attended by about 60-80 percent of the mass organizations' membership (Castro 1976, p. 192; *Granma Weekly Review*, 1968a, p. 1).

Individual mass organizations also serve a “watchdog” function in various settings. The trade unions are responsible for overseeing the behavior of plant managers, the CDR is responsible for maintaining a “patient advocate” service to assure proper treatment of people receiving medical services, and the FMC and CTC have created the “Women’s Work Front” which is essentially a women’s caucus within the trade unions. The Women’s Work Front is responsible for seeing that the trade unions give proper attention to the concerns of working women.

Self-management activity in Cuba takes place almost entirely in the work place through the trade unions. While there were several experiments in worker self-management during the 1960s, they were largely ineffective. The trade unions, like the rest of the mass organizations, devoted most of their energy to mobilizing supportive activity. In the late 1960s, the trade unions were replaced by the Advance Workers Movement—a cadre organization of the most productive workers in a plant. The function of the Advance Workers Movement was to spur production. At its peak, the Movement included only 450,000 workers, about 17 percent of the labor force (Mesa-Lago 1974, p. 237). Thus the vast majority of workers had no mass organization of their own to represent their interests or through which they could participate in politics.

One conclusion of the post-1970 reassessment of the political system was that the replacement of the unions by the Advance Workers Movement had been a mistake (Castro 1970b). Beginning in 1970 and culminating in 1973 with the Thirteenth Congress of the CTC, the trade unions were rebuilt. The self-management activities now available stem largely from resolutions passed at the Thirteenth Workers’ Congress (CTC 1973). Workers’ participation in decision making within the workplace is exercised through three channels: production assemblies, management councils, and work councils.

Through the production assemblies, which are meetings of a plant's entire work force, workers have the right to participate in decisions concerning production quotas, individual work norms, overtime, working hours, socialist emulation plans, voluntary labor mobilizations, etc.

Proposals passed at production meetings are not binding on the plant manager, but rejections of such proposals must be justified at the next production assembly. The assemblies are held at least every two months, though many work centers hold them more frequently. Zimbalist (1975, p. 20) reports that worker attendance at production meetings is between 80 and 100 percent and that worker participation is "extensive and vocal." In interviews with Cuban workers, Pérez-Stable (1976, p. 40) found that 85.9 percent of her respondents said the workers must be consulted in enterprise management, 57.8 percent felt that workers' input through the production assemblies was influential, and 52.6 percent believed that the management had to respond to workers' proposals.

Management Councils offer an additional avenue for worker participation in plant administration. The councils are composed of the plant administrator, his/her top assistants, elected trade union representatives, a representative of the Women's Work Front, and representatives of the Communist party. The Management Councils do not have the power to overrule the plant manager, but all administrative matters must be brought before it for discussion. "From my interviews with administrators, Party representatives, union representatives, and workers," writes Zimbalist (1975, p. 19), "it seems that the workers' input at these meetings is quite significant."

The Work Councils, on the other hand, are comprised entirely of workers elected by their coworkers. These councils handle all labor grievances, and their decisions are not subject to review by the plant management.

The Communist Party of Cuba. During the 1960s, the only avenue for political participation besides the mass organizations was the Communist Party of Cuba (Partido Comunista de Cuba—PCC). As a Leninist party, the PCC is a cadre party; membership is highly selective and limited to a very small portion of the population. Indeed, the Cuban party has been smaller than any other ruling Communist party. In 1969, it had only 55,000 members, about .7 percent of the population (Green 1970, p. 76). In contrast, the next smallest ruling party (Albania), included 3.0 percent of the population. At present, after a decade of rapid expansion, the PCC has reached over 200,000 members, about 2.2 percent of the population (Castro 1976, p. 234). Thus, the number of people participating in politics through the party has been and continues to be relatively small.

However, the PCC's unique method of selecting party members does provide the mass populace with at least some opportunity to participate in party affairs. Since 1962, PCC members have been chosen by the "mass method." Periodically, the workers in each plant meet to decide who among them

deserves to be a party member. Nominations are made, discussed, and voted upon. Those who are approved are then recommended to the party for membership. If the party decides to accept these nominees, it must still return to the workers' assembly for ratification of the individuals' membership (*Cuba Socialista* 1962, pp. 129-32).

The Organs of People's Power: 1976 and Beyond

During the 1960s, all government officials in Cuba were appointed from above. There were no elections and there were no representative assemblies analogous to soviets in the USSR. This was consistent with the general absence of mechanisms for assuring elite accountability to the populace and it was consistent with the precepts of direct democracy. It meant, however, that the government institution provided no opportunities for mass political participation.

The shift away from direct democracy in the 1970s brought with it a thorough reorganization of the government and the initiation of "People's Power." Composed of elected delegates, these legislative assemblies constitute the primary organs of government at all levels of administration (municipal, provincial, and national), and all administrative agencies are, in theory, subordinate to them. After a two-year pilot project in Matanzas province, Organs of People's Power were instituted nationwide in 1976.

The stated purpose for creating People's Power was to provide the citizenry with more opportunities to participate in policy formation and elite selection, especially at the local level (R. Castro 1974). The delegates to the municipal assemblies are directly elected by the general populace. These delegates, in turn, elect the members of the provincial and national assemblies. The legal powers of these assemblies are formidable (Constitution of the Organs of People's Power 1975). The Organs of People's Power has the authority to set governmental policy, to oversee administration of that policy, and to appoint or dismiss administrative officials. The Communist party explicitly retains the "leading role" in the political process, however, and it is still too early to assess the degree of actual control over decision making that the People's Power Assemblies will be able to exercise.

The electoral process for municipal delegates is complex, but is worth discussing at length. Municipalities are divided into electoral districts called "circumscriptions." Each circumscription sends one delegate to the municipal assembly. Circumscriptions are divided into neighborhoods, each of which runs one candidate for the delegate seat of the circumscription in which the neighborhood is located. A mass meeting of all eligible voters is held in each neighborhood for the purpose of nominating that neighborhood's candidate. The meetings are chaired by a local resident who was himself elected to chair the nominating meeting at a prior meeting of the neighborhood's residents. Nominations are made from the floor; any number of people may be nominated, so long as there are at least two nominees. The Communist party is

explicitly prohibited from making nominations or endorsing nominees, although individual party members may make nominations. The nominees are then discussed and voted upon by a show of hands. The nominee receiving a simple majority becomes the neighborhood's candidate for the delegate election. During the nominating process for the 1976 elections, 76.6 percent of the eligible voters attended these nominating meetings (*Granma Weekly Review* 1976a, p. 2).

Since each circumscription encompasses several neighborhoods, each delegate seat is contested by several candidates. Once candidates have been nominated by the neighborhoods, an election commission compiles their biographies and distributes them to all eligible voters in the circumscription. No other form of campaigning is permitted.

The first nationwide election of delegates to the municipal assemblies was conducted in 1976 with some 30,000 candidates contesting 10,725 seats. Voting was by direct secret ballot in closed voting booths. Although voting is voluntary (it was compulsory before 1959), voter turnout was 95.2 percent, the highest in Cuban history. Given the multiplicity of candidates, in many circumscriptions no one received a majority of ballots cast. Runoff elections had to be held to fill about a quarter of the delegate posts; turnout in the runoff election was 94.9 percent (*Granma Weekly Review* 1976b, p. 1; 1976c, p. 6).

The delegates' mission is to act as a "true vehicle of communication between the electorate and the municipal assemblies" (Constitution of the Organs of Peoples' Power 1975, p. 22). Consequently, the Cubans have introduced a formal set of procedures to assure ongoing contact between delegates and the populace. Delegates are mandated to meet regularly with their constituents, both to report on governmental operations and to listen to people's complaints and suggestions. The principal forum for such contacts are the "Assemblies for Rendering Accounts." These are mass meetings of the delegate's entire constituency which are held every three months. Delegates are required to report on the actions of the municipal assembly, report on their own performance in the assembly, and to solicit the people's grievances and proposals. All proposals are submitted to a vote, and if they are passed, the delegate is required to introduce them to the next meeting of the municipal assembly. Finally, the delegate must report back at the next Rendering of Accounts what the disposition of the proposal was. Delegates are also required to meet every three months with all the CDR committees in their circumscription to receive input from those organizations. Finally, delegates are required to set aside several hours every week as "Consulting Hours," during which time members of the community can meet with them on an individual basis.

Since People's Power has only been recently created, it is still too early to evaluate the effectiveness of its mechanisms for increasing elite accountability and popular input to local policy making. Results of the two-year pilot project in Matanzas, however, offer preliminary indications that these procedures are functioning fairly well. The meetings for "Rendering Accounts" were held

regularly and attended by between 50 and 70 percent of the electorate. People also took advantage of the consulting hours by visiting their local representative, though estimates as to the extent of such contacting are unavailable (Bengelsdorf 1976; Casals 1975).

The creation of People's Power has significantly expanded the participatory opportunities of the Cuban population, and large numbers of people seem to be taking advantage of those opportunities. People's Power provides the first opportunity since 1959 for the Cuban people to vote for government officials; it provides several important new opportunities for communal activity (the nomination of candidates, the Rendering of Accounts assemblies, and the delegate meetings with CDR); and it provides a formal procedure to facilitate individual contacting of delegates (Consulting Hours).

Conclusion: Participation and the Allocation of Public Goods

The available data (summarized in table 1) clearly indicate that participatory opportunities in Cuba have expanded greatly since 1970, and that the vast majority of Cubans participate in politics in a variety of ways. The effects of this participation on the allocation of public goods is more difficult to assess, but several preliminary conclusions seem warranted.

Supportive activity has been and continues to be an important political resource for the successful realization of the regime's policy goals. Numerous accomplishments in such fields as housing, education, and public health would have been unattainable without active participation by thousands of citizens.

Electoral, communal, and self-management activity differ from supportive activity in that they are aimed directly at influencing policy—i.e., influencing the distribution of public goods by the state. Such participation in Cuba is not merely symbolic or manipulated, though the scope of its effectiveness is clearly limited by the ideological and institutional context in which it occurs. Fundamental challenges to the regime, its leadership, or its basic policy orientations are proscribed, as are political structures through which people might organize to pose such challenges. Virtually all opportunities for legitimate participation are provided by regime-sanctioned institutions. This does not mean that participation is therefore devoid of influence, but it does mean that popular influence is restricted to policy decisions about the allocation of particular public goods rather than the structure of the allocation process itself.

Since the institutions which structure participation in Cuba are organized on the Leninist principle of democratic centralism, there is also a significant difference between the effectiveness of popular influence at the local and national levels. Mass participation affords citizens considerable opportunity to affect local policy, local implementation of national policy, and even the composition of local elites. Above the local level, however, the role of the Communist party becomes increasingly important, and policy at the national level is undoubtedly the least responsive to popular influence.

TABLE 1: MASS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CUBA: A SUMMARY

Activity	<u>Percentage of eligible population participating</u>
I. Voting	
1. For People's Power Delegates	95% ^a
II. Contacting Local Officials	
1. Formal contacting (Consulting Hours)	na ^b
2. Informal contacting	na
III. Communal Activity	
1. Mass Organization membership	90 (est.) ^c
2. Electing mass organization officials	60-85 ^d
3. Discussing mass organization work plans	80 (est.) ^e
4. Discussing draft legislation	60-80 ^f
5. Nominating People's Power candidates	77 ^g
6. Meeting with People's Power Delegates (Assemblies for Rendering Accounts)	50-70 ^h
7. Nominating Communist party members	na
IV. Supportive Activity	
1. Voluntary labor	60-75 (est.) ^e
2. Community improvement programs	na
3. Socialist emulation programs	90 (est.) ^e
V. Self-Management Activity	
1. Production Assemblies	80-100 ⁱ
2. Management councils	na
3. Work councils	na

Sources: ^a*Granma Weekly Review* (1976b, p. 1; 1976c, p. 6).

^bNot available.

^cRefers to the estimated number of Cubans belonging to at least one mass organization. Memberships of individual mass organizations average about 80 percent of the eligible population. Data for each mass organization are reported in the text.

^d*Granma Weekly Review* (1966, p. 3); Mesa-Lago (1974, p. 77).

^eAuthor's estimate based on partial data collected from Cuban press sources.

^f*Granma Weekly Review* (1968a, p. 1); Castro (1976, p. 192).

^g*Granma Weekly Review* (1976a, p. 2).

^hBengelsdorf (1976, pp. 3-18).

ⁱZimbalist (1975, p. 20).

Even national policy is not wholly impervious to popular demands, however. The expansion of participatory opportunities since 1970 reflects the national leadership's desire to provide policy makers with information concerning popular opinions and demands—information which is essential to the formulation of realistic policy at the national level.

The evolution of political participation in revolutionary Cuba has been toward increasing levels of participation, and toward greater participation by the populace in influencing the formulation of public policy. For Cubans in

accord with the socialist character of the revolution, the expansion of political participation has provided extensive and meaningful opportunities to influence the allocation of public goods.

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