

To access Worksheet 3.3 on Fidel Castro, Agrarian Reform and the USA, please visit [www.pearsonbacconline.com](http://www.pearsonbacconline.com) and follow the on-screen instructions.



#### Examiner's hint

If a Paper 2 question asks you to discuss issues relating to the consolidation of power, answers on Castro should only include events up to 1962.

nuclear war. After 13 days of tense negotiations, the Soviets removed the missiles and dismantled the sites in Cuba. In exchange, the USA removed its own nuclear missiles from Turkey and made a promise that it would not invade the island. Although this pledge was good news for Cuba, Castro was faced with the disappointment that the Soviets would no longer defend his island.

### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Find information to help you understand the context against which the Bay of Pigs incident and the Cuban Missile Crisis took place. What do you know about the Cold War? How was Cuba affected by this conflict?

#### CLASS DISCUSSION

With your class, discuss whether the Bay of Pigs incident and the Cuban Missile Crisis strengthened or weakened Castro's position in Cuba. Find material to support your views. This could include treatment of these events in the Cuban press, public speeches, popular songs, etc.

By 1962, Fidel Castro had freed himself from the *batistianos* and the liberals in government. He had also extinguished revolts in the provinces and implemented revolutionary domestic policies. No other figure from the revolution seemed to be in a condition to dispute his authority. Furthermore, he emerged from this period with a more radical position by accepting Soviet assistance, and also making public that he was a Marxist-Leninist. In December 1961, for example, he declared 'I am a Marxist-Leninist and shall be one until the end of my life.'

## Fidel Castro's ideology

It is often discussed whether Castro had always intended to align the revolution with Marxism or whether this was the product of US policies that pushed Cuba into the arms of the USSR. It was not clear in 1959 that Cuba would soon adopt a communist ideology. The inclusion of liberals in the provisional government, for example, seemed to indicate that all the revolution was hoping to change was tyranny for democracy. Also, in 1959 Castro seemed little inclined to commit himself to any specific ideology or detailed programme, and he publicly denied any relation between the 26th of July Movement and the communists. He refused to answer questions about which global political ideology matched his own. Any observance of a fixed set of principles, such as communism, would have restricted the methods at Castro's disposal.

### SOURCE D

*The 26 July movement which is a truly revolutionary movement, which wants to establish the economy of the country on a just basis, which is a revolutionary movement and at the same time a democratic movement with broad human content, was established in Cuba, its ranks were swelled by many people who previously had no political alternative and who inclined toward parties with radical ideas. The 26 July movement is one with radical ideas, but it is not a communist movement, and it differs basically from communism on a whole series of basic points. And those in the 26 July movement, both Raúl and Guevara, like all the others, are men who agree very closely with my political thinking, which is not communist thinking. The thinking of the 26 July movement is not communist thinking.*

From a transcript of a press conference given by Fidel Castro at Havana Presidential Palace on 27 February 1959

## STUDENT STUDY SECTION

### QUESTION

What does Source D reveal about Castro's political ideology in 1959?

### RESEARCH ACTIVITY

In groups, find additional information to help you discuss the following questions:

- Why did Castro change his views about communism by December 1961?
- To what extent did the more radical members of his movement, such as Che Guevara and Raúl Castro, contribute to this change?
- How far do you consider the USA policies towards Cuba may have influenced Castro's turn to the left?
- Can you think of other elements that played a part in the shift towards a Marxist-Leninist society?

Once your group has collected sufficient evidence, discuss with the rest of the class the strengths and limitations of the different arguments which explain Cuba's shift to the left.

Answer the following question after you have read the examiner's hint: 'Assess the role played by the policies implemented between 1959 and 1962 in the consolidation of power of Fidel Castro.'

### Examiner's hint

The final question here does not ask you to evaluate the successes and failures of the policies in themselves, but the extent to which they enabled Castro to consolidate his position by 1962. In other words, you need to analyze how far the policies contributed to making Castro an undisputed leader.

### The embargo on Cuba

The US commercial and financial embargo upon Cuba reached 50 years' duration in 2010. Its stated aim is to bring democracy to Cuba by forcing the collapse of Castro's regime. However, the embargo has been criticized for humanitarian reasons, as it affects the living conditions of the Cuban population in a negative way. Another source of criticism comes from the fact that the embargo placed on Cuba has actually given Fidel Castro a scapegoat on which to blame all the economic and social problems, proof of which is the fact that in 50 years the embargo has not reached its aim of democratizing Cuba.

### Centrally planned economy

A system in which the state directs and controls all major economic areas and decides upon the distribution of resources and production, following a national plan.

### Socialist emulation

A term used in the USSR to refer to a competition among workers as a method to achieve the set targets.

## Section IV:

### Castro in power: Economic policies and their impact

Fidel Castro aimed to make Cuba an economically independent and industrialized nation. However, the Cuban economy was to remain linked to the decisions and policies of other nations. The US **embargo**, the economic dependence on the Soviets and the impact of the subsequent collapse of the USSR on Cuba helped shape Castro's different economic policies. Although these policies were claimed to uphold the aims of the revolution, Cuba responded to the internal and international challenges with different – and at times contradictory – instruments.

This section analyzes the economic policies adopted by Cuba after 1962 in order to assess their levels of success in achieving the revolutionary aims.

### The influence of Che Guevara: Moral incentives and voluntarism

A revolutionary who played an important part in the design of Cuba's economic policies was Che Guevara. He occupied the positions of President of the National Bank of Cuba and, later, Minister of Industries. With the revolution in power, Guevara believed it was time to leave capitalism behind and adopt communism. He favoured a **centrally planned economy**, with an emphasis on moral incentives and self-sacrifice. By this he meant that people should work for the ideals and values of the revolution rather than for personal gains. Moral incentives included **socialist emulation**, party membership and state recognition, amongst others. All workers were to receive equal pay; overtime would not be

● **Examiner's hint**

Paper 2 questions may ask about the economic policies of leaders. In your answers, you will be expected to provide sufficient detail to support your views. The following section will equip you with detailed material on some of Castro's economic policies, so that you are able to provide specific evidence when assessing, for example, whether they have been successful. You can also find additional information about any of these policies and share your findings with the group.

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara at work with Cuban locals.

paid for, as workers were expected to cover it voluntarily as their personal contribution to the revolution.

Guevara aimed at creating a new consciousness, and with it a 'new man' prepared to sacrifice himself for a higher good – a society ruled by the principles of the revolution.

**SOURCE A**

*We are doing everything possible to give labour this new status of social duty and to link it on the one side with the development of a technology which will create the conditions for greater freedom, and on the other side with voluntary work based on a Marxist appreciation of the fact that man truly reaches a full human condition when he produces without being driven by the physical need to sell his labour as a commodity.*

*This is not a matter of how many pounds of meat one might be able to eat, nor of how many times a year someone can go to the beach, nor how many ornaments from abroad you might be able to buy with present salaries. What is really involved is that the individual feels more complete, with much more internal richness and much more responsibility.*

From Ernesto Guevara, 'Socialism and Man in Cuba', 1965

**SOURCE B**



**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**QUESTIONS**

- What, according to Source A, were the aims of the revolution? How does this speech compare to Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech?
- What is the message of Source B? How do you think this photograph relates to Source A?
- In groups, discuss the ideas presented by Guevara in 'Socialism and Man in Cuba'. Can you identify any source of inspiration for Guevara's ideas? Who do you think they were appealing to and who might have opposed to them? Justify your answers.

The push to transform the Cuban economy into a communist one continued after 1961. In 1962, Cuba changed the national currency and anyone caught with their savings in banks that did not belong to the state lost them overnight. In the cities, rents – which had been reduced by 50 per cent in 1959 – were abolished. This meant that those people living in a property that they did not own virtually became property owners overnight. In 1963, a second Agrarian Law reduced again the amount of land that could be owned by a single person or entity, to prevent the existence of ‘rich’ peasants. After 1963, the state owned 70 per cent of the land, the rest being small farms, which were expropriated in 1968.

But the economic plans to increase productivity met several obstacles. First of all, Cuba faced a lack of specialized personnel and technicians, many of whom had left the country since the revolution. This deficit meant that the assessment of problems and the implementation of solutions was limited. Also, moral incentives were not efficient in raising productivity levels and tackling poor-quality work and absenteeism. Farmers in collective farms were forced to sell their product to the state at very low prices. They consequently lost motivation to produce more than what they needed to survive. As a result, sugar production levels were very low and government plans to diversify away from the cultivation of sugar did not compensate for the drop in those levels.

Determined to advance the industrialization programme, the government continued to buy machinery from the USSR and Eastern European nations and to increase its debt. Cuba was again trapped in trade relations of subsidized sugar in exchange for goods and, by 1964, it had to return to intensive sugar production to reduce debt.

## The Revolutionary Offensive (1968)

In March 1968, Castro launched the ‘Revolutionary Offensive’ to move Cuba further towards a communist state and remove the last vestiges of capitalism from the island. The Offensive emphasized the ideas of Guevara’s ‘new man’, in which work was a social duty rather than a way to achieve personal aims. Under the Revolutionary Offensive, Castro ordered the expropriation of all remaining privately owned enterprises, such as family stores, restaurants, handicraft stores, grocers, service shops and street vendors. All of these were to be owned and managed by the state and put at the service of a centrally planned economy. Farmers’ markets were eliminated. Self-employment was banned, as it was seen as pursuing individualist aims.

The Offensive did not achieve an increase in productivity, but instead produced administrative chaos as the number of government agencies needed to organize the different fields of production and sales grew exponentially. Also, the return to the policy of moral incentives was met with high levels of absenteeism and vagrancy.

## The ‘Year of the Ten Million’ (1970)

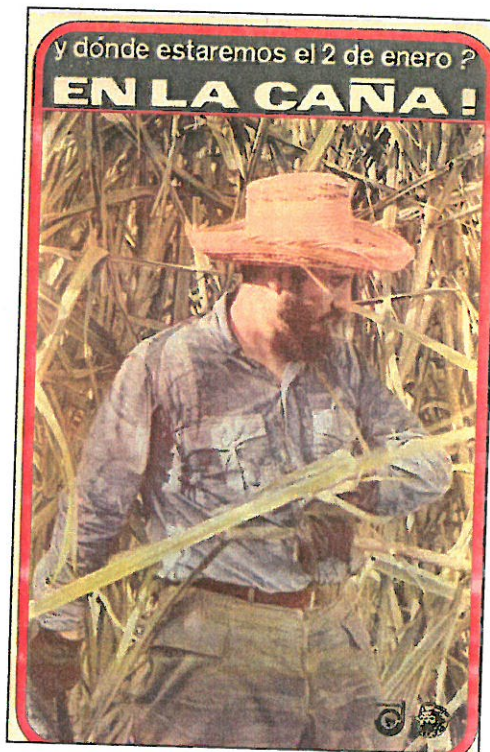
In order to solve the problems left by the revolutionary offensive in 1969, Castro announced that he intended Cuba to break its previous sugar production record and reach a 10 million ton output in 1970. The campaign aimed to obtain from the harvest enough money to pay off Cuban debts to the USSR and, by selling surplus sugar, make investments to achieve economic diversification. In Castro’s words, it was ‘a liberation campaign’.

With 1970 becoming the ‘Year of the Ten Million’, the *zafra* (sugar season) became another battle for Cuban pride. It was intended to show those who remained sceptical about the revolution that it could attain its dreams. The campaign became a crusade that mobilized the entire population and became a political test for Castro.

In order to achieve the 10 million tons target, and aware that the appeal to voluntarism and solidarity had not guaranteed results in the past, Castro appealed for the 'militarization' of labour (organized and disciplined like an army). Students, conscripts, law breakers, emigrants awaiting their turn to leave the island – all worked cutting cane side by side as 'volunteers'. The armed forces occupied the sugar-producing regions and were put in charge of the sugar mills. Castro himself was seen cutting cane in street posters, to motivate people to work. To increase productivity, bars and theatres were closed and even Christmas and New Year celebrations were cancelled.

### SOURCE C

Propaganda poster used in 1970. It reads 'And where shall we be on January 2? AT THE SUGAR CANE!'



### STUDENT STUDY SECTION

#### QUESTIONS

- What is the message of Source C?
- What do you think was the purpose of the poster?
- How does it help you understand the nature of the campaign?

Despite the fact that the entire nation had been put at the service of the campaign, and that a record harvest of 8.5 million tons was reached, Castro was forced to admit that they had been unable to reach the 10 million tons target. Deep harm had been inflicted on the economy. The agricultural machines had been over-used; agricultural production of crops other than sugar had suffered; other economic areas such as forestry and fishing had seen important losses. Rather than raise the morale of Cubans, the campaign had exhausted them and made them sceptical. The soldiers, for example, who had been mobilized to oversee operations, had felt their status diminished – they had been used to cut cane when they had been trained to defend the nation.

Because the campaign had been given so much importance, its failure was a terrible blow for Castro not only at an economic but also at a political level. In an address to the nation on 26 July 1970, he admitted that the campaign's failure was due to the administrative apparatus rather than the ordinary citizens' commitment. In doing so, and by offering his resignation to a crowd that cheered his name, Fidel Castro managed to survive the political effects of the failure. The price he had to pay was the abandonment of Guevara's ideas of solidarity, voluntarism and self-sacrifice, and the acceptance of a greater economic dependency on the USSR.

Farmers' markets were reinstated. State-owned companies were given enough autonomy to take some daily decisions without having to go through the state bureaucracy. Material incentives, such as pay for overtime work, were introduced. However, Cuba continued to suffer similar economic problems.

The end of the 1970s brought new levels of recession. Cuba was badly hit by the international economic situation as the USSR cut the price it paid for Cuban sugar. Unemployment, debt and policies that limited consumption led to increased discontent, which contributed to the 1980 **Mariel** exodus, when 125,000 abandoned Cuba for the USA.

**Mariel**  
Mariel was one of Cuba's emigration ports. Built between 1762 and 1768 on the Mariel Bay in the province of Pinar del Río, it soon became an important deep-water port and integral to the country's economy.

## The Rectification Campaign (1986)

In 1986, Castro blamed the more liberal measures that had been adopted in the past for the present economic problems. He consequently advocated a return to the values of solidarity and voluntarism under the 'Rectification Campaign'. The aim was to 'rectify errors and negative tendencies' linked to the relaxation of communist principles after 1970.

Under the Rectification Campaign, farmers' markets were again banned; bonuses and extra pay were abolished and self-employment was discouraged. Farm cooperatives were given new emphasis as, under a new Agrarian Reform Act, the percentage of land managed by independent farmers dropped to 2 per cent. Labour discipline was enforced and the workers lost many union rights.

The economic results of the Rectification Campaign were poor. Productivity fell; absenteeism at work increased. Reduced supplies of milk, oil, textiles and sugar led to an increase in their prices. Parallel or black markets reappeared to offer goods that were difficult to obtain, or that had been added to the list of rationed products. Transport and electricity rates also increased and affected the population's living standards. But Cuba had not yet seen the worst.

## The Special Period (1991)

The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was, in Castro's words, 'the most unfavourable international economic juncture ever faced by the Cuban economy in the entire history of the Revolution'. The 30-year period in which the USSR had become central to Cuba's economy and social development ended suddenly and unexpectedly. Soviet technicians left Cuba as hundreds of projects were abandoned. Subsidized goods, oil, access to international loans and everything the USSR had provided to Cuba were finished.

As a result, Castro announced Cuba had entered a 'special period in peacetime'. Cubans faced new levels of rationing as basic goods disappeared from the market. With Soviet oil gone, the need to save energy limited the working hours of the population, imposed long black-outs and restricted public transport.

**SOURCE D**

*Large cuts had been made in food rations, and gasoline, electricity and other goods and services were in short supply. Food was scarce. People were not starving, but they could definitely not eat as much as they had before and they complained that there was no lard or cooking oil and that the food therefore had no taste. A disease was spreading that affected the eyes and the legs of many people and that was later diagnosed as caused by the drastic drop in food intake.*

From Mona Rosendahl, *Inside the Revolution: Everyday Life in Socialist Cuba*, 1997

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION****QUESTIONS**

- What does Source D reveal about the state of the Cuban economy during the Special Period?
- To what extent can it be argued that the Special Period demonstrated that the Cuban revolution had failed in its economic aims?

In order to adjust to the new scenario, and in response to growing unrest at home, new policies were implemented:

- A large percentage of state-owned farms began to be run as worker-managed cooperatives in an attempt to increase levels of productivity.
- In an effort to attract capital and diversify economic activities, Cuba was opened to international business. Foreigners were invited to join the state in the development of certain areas of the economy, such as tourism, mining and energy. Tourism in particular developed positively.
- In 1993 it was made legal for Cubans to buy and sell US dollars in an attempt to attract dollars from the relatives of Cubans overseas. The fact that Cubans could now buy and sell dollars freely had a positive impact on the demand for goods and contributed to the reactivation of the economy.
- Farmers' and handcraft markets reappeared and some level of self-employment and private businesses was allowed. The state aimed at saving money by reducing some subsidies and increasing taxes.

By 1994, those who had predicted the collapse of the regime were again proved wrong, as Cuba was showing some signs of economic recovery. Sugar had been replaced by tourism.

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

Fill in the following chart by identifying the aims of the different economic programmes you have studied in this section and listing their successes and failures. It will be useful revision before you approach the next exercises.

| POLICY | AIMS | ACHIEVEMENTS | FAILURES |
|--------|------|--------------|----------|
|        |      |              |          |
|        |      |              |          |
|        |      |              |          |
|        |      |              |          |

**QUESTION**

Consider the following question: 'Fidel Castro's government tried to promote economic development, but his policies did not succeed.' To what extent do you agree with this view?

Now read the following introduction to the question above:

**● Examiner's hint**

An effective approach to this question requires that you first show that the revolutionary government sought to generate economic growth. Because the question does not ask you to focus on a specific period, it would be a good idea to decide, before you start writing, which specific policies you plan to address. For each of the selected policies, you should show how the government hoped it would produce economic growth and then decide the extent to which this was achieved.

### Student Answer A – Jenna

Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959 with the aim of making radical changes to the country. He promised to end inequality, corruption and the economic dependency on the USA. With these aims, he implemented economic policies to generate economic growth. These policies included the nationalization of industries and banks, the passing of an Agrarian Reform Act and the development of national industries. However, they did not bring about economic growth. Castro's attempt to increase the production of sugar to pay for the industrialization of the country did not succeed, as shown by the failure to reach the target of the 10 million tons of sugar in 1970. Also, after the revolution Cuba began to depend on the USSR and, with the collapse of that state, Cuba entered a very difficult economic period.

### Examiner's comments

This introduction shows specific knowledge of the aims and policies of Castro's economy and the candidate is aware of the need to assess them. More could have been done to show explicitly which period/policies are treated in the essay and the attempt to assess the 10 million tons campaign could have been left for the essay itself.

Now read the following conclusion to the question above:

### Student Answer B – Jenna

The Cuban revolution did not produce the promised economic growth. Under Fidel Castro, Cuba continued to experience the problems caused by economic dependence and the consequences of the collapse of the USSR on the island were devastating. Castro was equally unable to develop a national industry that would make Cuba more self-sufficient and the country was never really able to reduce the influence of the sugar market on the national economy. Economic policies increased the shortage of goods, which made the living standards of the population drop, as seen during the Rectification Campaign. Although the Cuban population gained access to land to work and houses to live in, the levels of economic recession were very high at different times, as shown by the analysis of the late 1970s. All in all, the economic policies of Cuba never brought economic growth.

### Examiner's comments

This conclusion is very focused on the demands of the question. It also makes reference to specific arguments which, presumably, have been developed throughout the essay. Make sure you do not introduce new arguments and new evidence in your conclusion because there will be no time for you to develop the ideas. Use the conclusion to round up the supporting arguments you have presented in the essay with a clear focus on how they have helped answer the question before you.

Now read the following question: 'To what extent were the economic aims of the revolution achieved by Fidel Castro's government by 1990?'

- In what ways is this question similar/ different to the previous one?
- How would you approach it?
- Think of the arguments you could develop and which examples you would be using to illustrate each point made.

### Examiner's hint

This question requires a more specific treatment of the aims of the revolution and you will need to identify them early in your essay.