

WORDS

- **assassination** = the murder or killing of a politician or important person
- **attempt** = try
- **bonus** = to get more money if you work harder
- **claim** = say officially
- **classless society** = a society in which there are no classes or groups; everyone is the same
- **climax** = peak, height, the highest point
- **collapse** = to break down; here: destroy
- **equality** = to be the same or have the same
- **hardship** = something that makes your life difficult or unpleasant
- **modest** = not very big
- **opportunity** = chance
- **pass on** = here: to give to someone else
- **property** = land
- **salary** = the money you get every month for the work you do
- **spare part** = a new part of a machine or car that you use if the old one is broken
- **state-run economy** = the production and trading of goods and products is controlled by the government
- **trade embargo** = an order by a government to stop trading with another country

*In many ways, the communist island in the Caribbean has managed to survive the last 50 years despite many **hardships**.*

Since the revolution which reached a **climax** on 1 January 1959, Cuba has seen the **attempted** Bay of Pigs invasion, a few **assassination** attempts against Fidel Castro, the **collapse** of its best friend, the Soviet Union, and a decades-long US **trade embargo**.



One of the effects of the embargo is that the streets of the Cuban capital, Havana, are still filled with many of the same old American cars that were here when Fidel Castro came to power 50 years ago.

After years of economic **hardship**, Cubans have become masters of improvisation.

Cars no longer have their original engines. They have often been replaced by fuel-saving Japanese or Russian ones. It's really hard to get **spare parts** and some people even make them by hand.

Some Cubans would like to have a new car, but they can't even if they could afford one. The only cars that they are legally allowed to buy or sell are those built before the revolution.



It's the same with housing. Most Cubans have their own homes and can **pass them on** to their children but there is no open market to buy or sell land or **property**.

One of the goals of Fidel Castro's revolution was to create a **classless society**. Private companies were banned and everyone from doctors to factory workers was paid the same.

Today Cuba has one of the most centrally controlled, **state-run economies** left in the world. It is not very productive and the average **salary** is about €20 a month.

Since he took over from his ill brother in 2006 Raul Castro has begun some **modest** but symbolic reforms. In a speech earlier this year, he **claimed** that socialism means the **equality** of rights and **opportunities** but not **salaries**.

President Castro has ordered that workers should receive **bonuses** based on their productivity. He has also started to give land to private farmers.

WORDS

- **achievement** = something important that you have done
- **aim** = goal, what you want to do
- **amount** = how much of something, quantity
- **billion** = a thousand million
- **boast** = to talk very proudly about something
- **certain** = special
- **counterpart** = here: the children in another country
- **high-ranking** = in a very important position in the government
- **impressive** = you admire something because it is very good
- **infant mortality** = the number of babies that die up to their first year of age
- **influence** = power
- **inhabitant** = person who lives in a place or country
- **key figure** = the most important statistical facts
- **life expectancy** = the number of years that a person is expected to live
- **literacy rate** = the number of people who can read and write
- **major** = important
- **official** = someone who is in a leading position in the government
- **provide** = give
- **remain** = stay
- **resource** = things we need and use every day, like land, water, oil etc..
- **scarf** = a piece of cloth that you wear around your neck
- **share** = to have with someone else
- **tolerate** = accept, allow

If you take a drive out of Havana you will see how much land has become useless. Cuba should be able to produce enough food itself but instead it spends €1.5 **billion** a year on imports. It is the small private sector which produces most of the food.

After selling a **certain amount** of fruit and vegetables to the state a farmer can go to a market and sell the rest of it there.

Politically, there are no signs of change. Cuba **remains** a one-party state and opposition groups are banned. A few critical voices within the communist party are **tolerated**.

Russian **influence** is present wherever you go. If you drive past a school you can see children wearing red and white uniforms with a red neck **scarf**. They are called the Pioneers, just like their former Soviet **counterparts**.

Education and health are both known here as "triumphs of the revolution".

The state **provides** free education through to university level and Cuba **boasts** one of the highest **literacy rates** in the world.

The health statistics are also **impressive**. All the **key figures** from **infant mortality** to **life expectancy** are among the best in the Americas. There are more doctors per one thousand **inhabitants** than anywhere else in the world.

Health care has now become a **major** export. Cuba sends tens of thousands of doctors and health workers to some of the poorest parts of Latin America and Africa. As one **high ranking official** puts it: "From the starting days of the revolution, one of our main **aim** was to let other countries in the third world share in our **achievements**."

"We **share** our **resources** with those who have nothing. We've got 70,000 doctors; there are only 50,000 for the whole of Africa."

The largest group of medical workers is in Venezuela, which President Hugo Chavez pays for in oil. It is one of the reasons why Cuba can afford to import the fuel which keeps its classic old cars running on the roads.



Fidel Castro - Cuba's founding father 1

