

Beginning in 1960, the exodus began. By the end of 1962, more than 196,000 persons had left Cuba, most claiming that their homeland had been taken over by a communist government and dictator.¹⁶ During these first years, the vast preponderance of the refugees came from the political, economic, and social elites, that is, people who had held executive, professional, and managerial positions. People from lower-status jobs made up only a small part of these early refugees, though this changed in the 1970s. By 1975 almost 585,000 persons had emigrated. It is interesting to note that this emigration, which was encouraged

by the U.S., had some unintended consequences beneficial to the new Cuban government. One of the most important of these was helping to solidify the revolution's position by removing leadership that might have provided effective opposition. Probably most of the Cubans who left were not emigrants, as the term is usually understood. Many were following the path of earlier generations of Cubans who left their homeland with the intention of returning when the situation ameliorated. In this case they were waiting for the day when Castro and the other revolutionaries lost power, which most felt would come soon, for it

VIGNETTE

Una Quinceañera

In Cuba, as in most countries of Latin America, the *quinceañera* is celebrated on a young woman's fifteenth birthday. It may be simple or elaborate. The following describes one such event held by a Cuban family in the U.S., attended by the author.

The nightclub was dim as the spotlights lit up the doorway on the edge of the dance floor. In a few moments, as music played, a young woman dressed in a long white dress, a sparkling tiara on her hair, came through the door on the arm of a young man dressed in a tuxedo. The couple walked to the center of the dance floor, followed by five other couples of magnificently-dressed young women, with their escorts in tuxedos. Father came onto the dance floor, and presented his daughter to the family members and friends who were invited to be a part of the celebration. In a few moments the music changed and the couples began to dance. The father and mother were seated at a table near the dance floor. Soon, the young couple went to the table, where the father rose to dance with his daughter, while her mother danced with the young man. Then, many of those in the club joined the dancing. The evening festivities continued with dinner and dancing until the fiesta closed.