

Editorial

AN INTERNATIONAL meeting of editors of cultural publications held in Cuba with the participation of our editorial assistance gave rise to the subject matter of this issue of *Estudos Avançados*. We thank Casa de las Americas, whose director, Roberto Fernández Retamar, generously granted us access to the Cuban scholars whose papers are published here.

The information coming to us from Cuba is generally scarce and incomplete. The media occasionally portrays undesirable aspects of the current political-party structure on the Island. Admittedly, this is insufficient for us to know what is going on in the midst of a society which, half a century ago experienced a radical economic, political and cultural transformation. It is noticeable that there have been advances in some key areas such as basic education and public health, but this progress has occurred in parallel with trends towards bureaucratic stiffening and institutional distortions. We are pleased to see that those who collaborated with this issue provide a critical view of these distortions. The emergence of a renewed mindset among Cuban intellectuals who continue to believe in the possibility of combining socialism with democracy is indeed promising.

The reader will find a wealth of information and comments on key aspects of the economy, politics and cultural life of contemporary Cuba. The crises that followed the demise of the Soviet Union had, predictably, disastrous effects on the economic fabric of the Island. However, the creativity of its culture seems to be intact. Just read what is recorded on these pages: the maintenance of the educational system; the quality of public health care; the nurturing of basic science; the interest in the various forms of popular culture; the vitality of the cinema, theater, music, literature and visual arts. Humor plus a critical spirit, with unshakable confidence in the future: this is perhaps the explanation for this unique *ethos*.

A section with testimonials from internationally renowned Brazilian intellectuals makes up the set of various texts and reviews that are regular items on the agenda of *Estudos Avançados*.