



A Changing
Cuba
in a Changing World

COMPILED BY MAURICIO A. FONT



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Changing Cuba/ Changing World

Compiled by Mauricio A. Font
With the assistance of John Arias and Jackie Slater

The Cuba Project
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Introduction

Editors

This volume includes papers originally discussed at the symposium, “A Changing Cuba in a Changing World” (The Graduate Center, City University of New York, March, 2008). The conference featured a wide range of scholars and panelists working on contemporary Cuba (Appendix). The essays in this collection explore various aspects of change in today’s Cuba, including politics and economics, history, culture and the arts, and race and ethnicity.¹

Fidel Castro’s incapacitation in July 2006 gave a special significance to this conference. Initially declared temporary, the health problems of the older Castro led to the official transfer of the presidency to Raúl Castro on February 2008. Many expected that the younger Castro’s ascension to the presidency would bring about an acceleration of the reform process or even a transition. Indeed, some measured changes were announced in early 2008. The new head of state has implemented a few relatively modest reforms—such as allowing more cultivation by private farmers and the general population’s access to mobile phones and personal computers.

But Raúl Castro moved cautiously. A bill to replace the pay scale from one based on egalitarianism toward another based on productivity and merit moved slowly. In July, the new president seemed to lower expectations of change. Three hurricanes caused billions of dollars in damages to crops, buildings, and infrastructure in the weeks that followed, exposing in new light the shortcomings of the Cuban economy. By November, the government had replaced three ministers—education, for-

1. Conference material from a few panels will appear in separate volumes.

Introduction

eign investment, and agriculture. General Ulises del Toro, who had presided over the consolidation of the sugar sector, was appointed as head of agriculture, as his deputy became head of the sugar industry. Placing this sector in the hands of a general signaled its significance as a national priority. Changes are surely needed, as Cuba imports over half the food it consumes while only 45 percent of arable land is being farmed.

Economists have often framed the discussion of reform in Cuba in terms of prescriptive issues posed by post-Communist societies, such as sequencing and scope of a transition strategy. Two paradigms for structuring economic changes in post-communist societies have stood out in this regard. One camp emphasizes the need for a speedy transition to a competitive market economy, privatization, the free flow of goods, and greatly reduced government intervention. Citing some successful Eastern European transitions, the claim is that these examples offer Cuba a viable template for a “big-bang” strategy. Another prominent paradigm emphasizes a gradual approach that would combine measured liberalization with a significant role for the state and efforts to prevent systemic collapses that would threaten jobs, pensions, and policy-making stability. China and Vietnam are seen as key cases to support the most extreme version of this line of reasoning. Among economists, Ernesto Hernández Catá exemplifies the first approach, while Carmelo Mesa-Lago has explored opportunities for sustained change that assumes an incremental approach within Cuba’s current political context.²

In addition to substantive discussion of policy-driven debates about the political economy of reform in Cuba, other economists have conducted research on the changing dimensions of economic life. Such work deserves praise and attention. As noted by several journalists participating

2. The conference presentations by Hernandez-Catá, Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Archibald Ritter at the Cuba conference drew from a series of papers previously discussed since the early 1990s at the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE). See Hernández Catá, Ernesto (1991) “Long-Term Objectives and Transitional Policies: A Reflection on Pazos” (Vol 1); Hernández Catá, Ernesto (1993) “Economic Policy in Cuba's Transition to a Market Economy: Lessons From the Russian Experience (Vol 3); Hernández-Catá, Ernesto (1999) “Globalization, Transition and the Outlook for the Cuban Economy” (ASCE’s Eighth Annual Meeting). Mesa-Lago, Carmelo, (2000) *Market, Socialist and Mixed Economies, Comparative Policy and Performance: Chile, Cuba and Costa Rica*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University.

in the conference, it is extremely difficult to gain access to reliable data about economic and political processes in Cuba. Emma Phillips explores the significance of the transformation of work in Cuba from the perspective of Cuban workers and asks what broader implications these changes might have for Cubans' evolving ideas about work, citizenship, and models of political governance. Orlando Pérez and Angela T. Haddad analyze Cuba's trade agreements with Venezuela and present data on the economic, sociopolitical, and other consequences of that trade. Mario A. González Corzo and Scott Larson examine the U.S. based Cuban remittances forwarding agencies. Archibald Ritter's work on small-scale entrepreneurship provides compelling evidence on the rise and significance of this sector in contemporary Cuba, as well as a glimpse into the paradoxical relationship between official policy governing private enterprise and economic reality. Hilary Becker discusses the development of tourism in Cuba, its current status and its prospects, paying particular attention to recent projects toward sustainability. Emily Morris discussed the current state of the Cuban economy in a comparative context, exploring the economic recovery and growth since 2004-2005. She finds that while growth may be sustainable in the short and medium-term, external factors such as tourism and trade relations with countries like Venezuela will likely determine the trajectory of the economy in years to come.

The conference revisited in often new light some of the pivotal structural arguments informing the debate regarding a transition in Cuba today. Political and economic issues were scrutinized and intensely debated. A significant number of the papers focus on the thesis of stability of the regime under the one-party system, in some cases viewing great expectations of change under Raúl Castro as exaggerated. However, not always does the emphasis on the mechanisms inhibiting reform make change under the current regime unlikely.

Stephen Wilkinson discusses some of the motives behind Cuba's resistance to a democratic "transition" following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Marie Laure Geoffray analyzes why the socialist regime in Havana has managed to survive despite the fall of the USSR and the economic crisis of the 1990s, calling attention to its ability to generate a homogeneous pattern of socialization. According to Geoffray, however, the cultural realm remains dialectical. Groups of young artists often seek emancipation from traditional revolutionary norms, recalling a

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political, historical, and artistic heritage distinct from that which is promoted by the leaders of the country. These actors probe and promote diversity and the plurality of thought and social experience among artists.

David Strug explores another reason: the Cuban Revolution's meaning among older Cubans. Strug suggests that older Cubans still appear to identify with the revolution's accomplishments due to a perception of positive change in their lives, even within the context of notable failures to provide for their basic needs. Further exploring the links between culture and power, Enrique Pumar considers how non-democratic regimes employ primary frames to justify their rule and maintain popular support. These frames manipulate symbols and meanings to legitimize regime leaders, depict optimism, glorify collective sacrifices, and foster a common enemy and state of siege mentality, even if they deviate from the historical record. However, these tactics could be counterproductive as they raise expectations about the future and exacerbate tensions within the ruling elite. Salomon Berman describes the efforts by the leaders of the Cuban Revolution to instill in new generations of Cubans values and beliefs consistent with the perpetuation of the Cuban Revolution and a socialist system of production.³ Brenden Carbonell explores the Cuban military's economic and political ties, analyzing the prospects for some form of state corporatism as a possible political path.

Deepening the analysis of political culture, several papers discuss Fidel Castro's "Battle of Ideas" and its role in Cuba's internal political dynamics and prospects for change. Rather than dismissing the post-2000 Battle of Ideas as empty rhetoric or a desperate attempt to stave off the inevitable, Antoni Kapcia argues that the phenomenon needs to be analyzed within a wider historical context. He explores the continuity of ideological themes since 1959, internal "debate," and the alternation between participation through active mobilization and through structures. Anthony Maingot argues that significant groups of Cuban organic intellectuals are challenging the hegemony of orthodox Marxism, particularly with regard

3. In the Conference panel "Cubans in the US: Generational Differences among Cubans," presenters Lisandro Pérez, María Cristina García, Catherine Krull, Silvia Pedraza, and Yolanda Prieto examined Cuban generational groups on the island and abroad, to understand their divergent experiences and corresponding political attitudes. Their papers appear in a separate volume.

to economic strategy. Pragmatists question the reigning ideas based on “laws of development.” They are likely to remain faithful to Cuban nationalism and the goal of self-determination as they continue to address fundamental questions about Cuba’s insertion into the global market economy. Mauricio Font explores the logic, causes and priorities of the Battle of Ideas in part through a content analysis of Fidel Castro’s speeches after 1992 and the published statements in *Reflexiones* since his partial recovery in early 2007. His paper suggests that this campaign harkens back to past efforts of the regime to reinforce ideological orthodoxy and revolutionary renewal through the regime’s fundamental belief in the power of ideology to consolidate political power.

When it comes to the subject of Cuba and the World, few topics attract more attention than US-Cuba relations. Several presentations at the conference share a broad consensus emphasizing the centrality of Cuba’s relations with its neighbor to the north. The most heavily attended session of the conference was the panel on US-Cuba relations, moderated by Margaret E. Crahan. Ambassador Vicky Huddleston, Philip Brenner, Dan Erikson, and William LeoGrande presented informed analysis based on extensive personal and professional acquaintance with Cuba over many years. The panel discussed new expectations and reforms under president Raúl Castro, US-Cuban negotiations, the future of trade restrictions, and current Washington-Havana relations.

Andreas Pickel’s paper on mechanisms of change further explores US-Cuba relations as a system within which transformation processes are able to take place. Comparing post-Castro Cuba dynamics with change processes in Eastern Europe, two contradictory change mechanisms widely misunderstood in the literature are identified as central: US interventionism and Cuban nationalism. Gary Maybarduk argues that the US is not well prepared to ensure an orderly transition in the event that Cuba embraces a democratic transition—mass migration, drug trafficking, and other problems will follow a transition if US policies toward the island are not reevaluated. Sara Cooper explores political cartoons from the middle of the twentieth century until today, using humor to gain insights into the balance between continuity and change in Cuba-US relations.

However, Cuba’s relations with countries other than the US are at least as important to many authors. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the island has been developing relations with a significant number of

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countries in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa, with significant success in some cases. In the recent past, Venezuela, China, and Russia stand out. Brazil has gained ground. All of the above extend various forms of aid or preferential credits, something Cuba desperately needs, as it has a very large debts with the Paris Club of creditor nations (Cuba is this organization's second highest debtor) and other countries. Denis Baresch concentrates on Cuba's relations with Europe. He discusses the European Union's policy towards Cuba as well as the European Commission's recent engagement with Cuba in developing a structured dialogue, including political and economic questions. Julie Feinsilver discusses why and how Cuba has conducted medical diplomacy, providing examples of Cuba's external reach in the twenty-first century, converting human capital into much needed oil and other forms of material capital. Sociologist Ted Goertzel explores contemporary Latin-American socialist models and their significance. Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir examines Cuba's responses to changing international contexts, comparing them to approaches that other Latin American countries have taken during times of crisis.

Outside the realm of economics and politics narrowly defined, the symposium brought together specialists from diverse disciplines focused on empirical work on diverse facets of change taking place in contemporary Cuban society through official channels as well as from individuals and loosely-connected groups in an increasingly diverse intellectual sector. Based on these efforts, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that variegated forms of change outside formal structures are increasingly vital to any discussion of transformation in contemporary Cuba. As argued in diverse papers in the humanities and social sciences, these alternative processes and forms of change, unregulated by officialdom and often at odds with party doctrine, can be observed in the discussions of race and ethnic diversity, culture and art that took place during the symposium.

Several papers point to dialectical dynamics at odds with official views, as writers, artists, youth, race and ethnic formations, and various other groups contest values and conventions traditionally espoused by official doctrine. These processes take place in spaces outside the reach of party ideology and can in fact threaten the status quo through informal but sustained progression. The state finds itself unable to encapsulate these spaces. These changes do not necessarily represent deliberate collective action for reform or the elimination of official institutions. What is inter-

esting is that they represent a departure from the high-profile attempts at political reform that are so often the focus of interest and support outside of Cuba. This underbelly of change is seen in the way that artists interact with the global art market. It is also present in the changing attitudes towards race, gender, sexuality, or even the market for intimate favors.

Artists and their works received a great deal of attention at the symposium and in this volume. Natania Remba examines the work of four Cuban artists of the nineties generation, illustrating how they and their works debate and engage in today's evolving globalized art world. Darrel Couturier's notes address the issue of the contemporary Cuban Art Market between 1997 and 2003, the peak of a vibrant artistic period. Rafael Ocasio revisits how Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas became one of the most vocal figures among the political activists opposed to the Castro regime. Especially with the publication of his posthumously-published autobiography, *Antes que anochezca* (1992); [*Before Night Falls* (1993)], Arenas explored his own life as an outlaw engaged in sexual activities that were anathema to the Revolution, and as a gay activist who transformed his life into a case study. The paper by Yael Prizant explores how two plays, *Carlotta Corday* by Nara Mansur and *Charenton* by Raquel Carrió and Flora Lauten, examine recent and ongoing transformations on the island. Alfredo A. Fernandez compares the films *Guantanamera* (1995) of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and *Lista de espera* (2000) of Juan Carlos Tabío, highlighting how both films approach some of Cuba's social and political challenges with the help of black humor.

Lauren Shaw focuses on the level of involvement of cultural institutions with the second generation of nueva trova musicians referred to as 'los novísimos.' She argues that the novísimos have achieved substantial success in finding ways to subvert institutional control while taking advantage of the support offered by cultural institutions. Laura García Freyre explores the punk-rock group Porno Para Ricardo, probing their differences with the regime through their music and the contextualization of their performances.

Cultural institutions and intellectual history continue to attract considerable scholarship. Carlos Riobó's paper traces the history of the Cuban National Library and smaller public libraries while asking the universal question of how the culturally marginal learn to reify and to exhibit their culture—gaining or lose political agency and cultural authenticity.

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The essay by Rafael Rojas explores the reception of Walter Benjamin in socialist Cuba, discussing this Marxist thinker's trip to Havana in the summer of 1940 prior to his meeting with Theodor W. Adorno in New York. Judith Salerno Izquierdo underlines the value of Fernando Ortiz's works, what they represent for the development and maturity of the social sciences in Cuba, especially sociology, emphasizing his role as founder of institutions, lecturer, editor and director of important publications, as well as ambassador of his own culture. Ilan Ehrlich presents a personal view of Eduardo Chibás, a unique Cuban political figure in pre-revolutionary Cuba. His somewhat polemical opinions and appeals for integrity and honesty in public life brought him support from the island.

Alejandro Campos-Garcia analyzes the Cuban state's agenda and policies against racism in the periods of 1959-1985 and after, including the new challenges that the Cuban state faces in its most recent approaches to racism. Ryan Masaaki Yokota considers the complex history of the Japanese and Okinawan migrants to Cuba, beginning with their secondary migration to Cuba, often as an attempt to circumvent restrictive immigration laws in the United States. Marianne Samayoa examines how nineteenth-century Cuban medical institutions underwent dramatic modernization with autonomous local boards, drawing some comparisons with Mexico and Guatemala.

In summary, the presentations at this conference, in this volume and other publications document and explore cultural, economic, and societal changes, particularly since the 1990s. While some authors see them as adaptive measures that help maintain the current system, others found the cumulative effect of these changes on Cuban society to be significant. The papers hence sharpen the debate about continuity versus change, offering evidence of both and often clarifying policy issues. Above all, they reflect the richness of Cuban studies as a vibrant field of academic and intellectual inquiry.

Part I Ideas, Ideology and Politics

CHAPTER 2

Ideology and Power in the Cuban State

Stephen Wilkinson

Abstract: This paper explores how and why Cuba resists “transition” and introduces ideas for an alternative theoretical approach.

Introduction

When examining the nature of the Cuban revolutionary state ideological obstacles impede us. Limitations inherent in the approaches taken to answer questions prevent us from arriving at adequate solutions. Take for example the fundamental question: “How was it possible for the Cuban state to survive the collapse of the Soviet Union?” We find a variety of analyses corresponding to different traditional political tendencies all of which, in their different ways, fail to adequately convince. On the one hand there are left-Marxists who view Cuba as being “state-capitalist” with a political structure approximating “Stalinism.” (Gonzalez 1992: 85) Such a view sees a repressive apparatus holding a largely non-compliant population in check. But this begs the question as to why, if other Stalinist regimes collapsed at least in part because they were Stalinist, has Cuba's system survived? On the other hand, there is a more sympathetic left analysis that sees Cuba as a “workers state” and therefore the opposite of Stalinist, arguing that it has survived because it represents the overwhelming popular will (Hansen 1994:130). This view ignores, or dismisses as propaganda, the charge that there is political repression in Cuba that might be a factor in keeping the state alive. The western liberal analysis, like the left Marxist, tends to the view that Cuba, as a one party state, is ipso facto “undemocratic.” By controlling the media and strictly limiting the freedom of association, the government maintains its grip (Domínguez: 1997). This liberal view sees Cuba in need of reform and western liberal democratic states generally base their policies on this

interpretation. But this analysis fails to adequately explain why there is such a small opposition movement within Cuba, a factor that was present in all the regimes of the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The far right view is similar but more extreme. Whereas the liberals view Cuba as “authoritarian” and therefore capable of reform, the far right defines the “Castro regime” as “totalitarian” and therefore must be overthrown and replaced. In common with the liberals, the far right tends to overlook Fidel Castro's popularity and fails to adequately explain how the government manages to gather such large crowds for ritual events such as demonstrations (1.4 million in Havana in January 2006), and such large numbers to participate in elections (98.34 per cent turnout in 1998).

These different approaches create a field of debate in which the participants tug endlessly from their ideological perspectives without ever arriving at an adequate explanation of why and how the Cuban revolutionary state has not only survived the collapse of the Soviet Union but is now continuing to successfully vex political scientists by resisting a hitherto thought inevitable “transition” to the free market economy. This phenomenon is something to which scholars are now turning their attention. Hoffmann and Whitehead (2006) have addressed directly the question of Cuba's political and economic exceptionalism and have made a valuable contribution to the understanding of the historical and social processes that have enabled the revolutionary state to survive. There is clearly something exceptional in the nature of the Cuban state that makes it so durable.

The problem is that there is much emphasis on the questions of who wields power and what are the institutions of power (or lack of them) but relatively little on how and what type of power is wielded. Might it be that there is something unique in the way that power is structured in Cuba that could explain the efficacy of the Cuban state?

Power and Ideology

One theorist of power, Joseph S. Nye, differentiates types of state power. He talks of “hard” and “soft” power: *Power is the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want. There are basically three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payments (carrots), and attraction (soft power)* (Nye 2006).

Nye is talking here about the exercise of power by states in the international arena, but it is possible to transfer these categories to the behaviour of governments towards the populations they govern. The use of the law and control of the economy are the hard power tools at a government's disposal, whereas soft power would arise from the ethos and attraction of the government to the populace. Thus ideological matters are hugely important in the efficacy of any state. How effective a state's 'soft power' is will logically determine how much "hard power" it needs to exercise in order to keep order and advance its goals. In Cuba's case, the first observation to make is that the state has had remarkably little need to resort to violence to maintain order, even during the economic meltdown of the early 1990s when it had no carrots at all. This implies that the Cuban state has tremendous soft power leverage.

Similarly, Michel Foucault (1982) made the observation in his analysis of the nature of power that by focusing on the degrees of repression or consensus within society, political scientists tend to overlook the question of how power operates. Foucault argues that repression and consent, while being aspects of power, are not the constituents of power itself. Like Nye, he defines the exercise of power as 'actions upon the actions of others' (1982:221). While this may involve the use of repression and imply consent, power is neither of these two in itself. In the exercise of power therefore, ideology has a paramount role, because it enables persuasion by argument, seduction and moral exhortation. In the spectrum of actions that the powerful can exert in order to affect the behaviour of the subjects of their power, the threat of violence and violence itself are last resorts. Again, Foucault's argument would suggest that by not having to use the "last resort" something else must be compelling mass behaviour in Cuba.

In studying the structure of power in feudal Europe Foucault produced a remarkably innovative model that Thomas C. Dalton (1993) argued can be applied to revolutionary Cuba. This paper explores and builds upon Dalton's idea of applying Foucault's model of what he called "pastoral power" to the Cuban context. The result I believe is a convincing explanation of how the Cuban revolution has succeeded in building a cohesive and durable power structure in which ideology and state power works to support each other in such a way as to make it almost indestructible. In order to explain how this works let us first take a brief look at the

ideology of the Cuban revolutionary government and how it is manifested.

Cuban Ideology, Some Thoughts

As Jean Paul Sartre (1960) noted on his visit to Cuba in 1960, the newly installed regime was characterised at first by lack of an overtly socialist ideology. It was, as he put it, forging its ideology in “praxis.” Valdés (1975) has pointed out that the ideology of the 26th July Movement was decidedly home grown and predominantly “Martiano.” Thus the Cuban revolution has an ideology with an organic quality. It has the ability to morph and change as circumstances change without, it seems, affecting its legitimacy. At times it has exhibited more overtly Communist characteristics than others, but there have always been three constants:

The first of these is a predilection to see its task as one of salvation. The 1959 revolution had the purpose of saving the nation, or *Patria*, and this remains the primary goal today. Sovereignty and independence as the guiding principles of the revolution connect it directly to the 19th century struggles of independence and mentors such as Martí and Maceo. As Kapcia (1997) argues it was onto this idea of national salvation that the revolution's socialist aims were bolted. The socialist goals of 'saving lives' in the form of free at the point-of-delivery medical care and education remain the primary objectives of the Cuban state.

The concept of salvation is also very evident in the current 'rebranding' of the revolution as Bolivarian in partnership with Venezuela. Saving the “*patria*” has now morphed into saving America Latina, principally from the USA, as evidenced by the statue of Martí at the Tribuna Anti-imperialista in Havana. This was erected after the Elián crisis in 1999/2000. On the plinth, the first signs of what has become a widely diffused identification of Martí and Bolívar. Now we are seeing billboards like this on the main boulevards in which the shadows of the present leaders of Cuba and Venezuela are depicted as being the bearers of a historical duty. Other historical figures have been called up also to serve in this continental struggle against the North. This poster is in Old Havana. Even children's comic books are now being distributed throughout the island.

Latterly, with the global environmental crisis, Fidel has also successfully added the task of saving the “species” to the list of redemption proj-

ects. Cuba and Venezuela have recently eschewed ethanol as a solution to the energy problem and have attacked the US plan to increase production which will come at the expense, they claim, of consigning billions in the developing world to starvation, thus combining the tasks of saving America Latina from the yanqui and saving the species into one and the same.

This preoccupation with salvation would be less potent if it were not accompanied by a tremendous moral obligation. As Valdés (1992) has explained, the Cuban revolution has a deeply sacrificial tradition that again goes back the 19th century independence wars and the martyrdom of very many heroes in the name of saving the nation, including the seminal figures of Martí and Maceo. Blackburn (1963) explained that the venal politics of the first republic meant that the tradition was carried over into the 20th century, not least with the murders of figures such as José Antonio Mella and Antonio Guiteras, among many others. In Castro's own movement, there were significant martyrdoms such as the murders in custody of the Moncada assailants, the death of Frank País. Martí coined the phrase *Patria o Muerte* to which Guevara (yet another martyr) added *Socialismo o Muerte* a century later. Guevara, whose ideas endure as the billboards affirm, was particularly adamant that the ability to sacrifice one's own life was essential to the true socialist combatant. Guevara was tapping a deep historical vein.

Of course being ready to die for one's country is not a uniquely Cuban trait but what I believe is unique in the case of Cuba is that the way this has come to form a part of the national identity. So for example take the national anthem. "To die for the fatherland is to live." Echoed in these lines from Martí, and repeated in these from Fidel Castro's famous "History Will Absolve Me" speech.

As Valdés (1992) has explained this "cult of death," for want of a better phrase, predicates upon the notion that by giving one's life for the struggle, one becomes immortal, and you will be remembered and glorified by those who remain. This, it seems to me, is a most remarkable secularisation of the Christian idea of everlasting salvation. It is the most constant theme in Cuban revolutionary ideology and one that enables Castro to refer to assassination attempts against him as attempts to "eliminarlo físicamente" in the knowledge that in all other ways he is immortal (Cannell 2006).

Remembrance of the fallen is ritualised in national events and media with at times macabre effect. One such ritual took place in the spring of 2006 outside the US interest section. In response to the erection of an electronic ticker board on the US Interests Section displaying anti-government messages, the Cubans erected 138 flagpoles upon which they flew black flags to commemorate victims of terrorist attacks that have emanated from US territory in the four-decade plus stand-off. For three days a televised vigil took place whereby participants from all walks of Cuban society took turns to stand in front of the section holding up pictures of the victims.

Salvation, obligation and sacrifice, do these sound familiar? That the Cuban revolution might be more akin to Christian religious faith than a political ideology is not something that has gone unnoticed in Cuba itself as this installation by the young Cuban artist Lazaro Saavedra illustrates. This is a drawing for an installation that the artist produced for an exhibition at London's Barbican Centre in 1999. The juxtaposition of the gospel of St Matthew and the Cuban national anthem is an extremely evocative representation of the point.

How does all this help us to explain the durability of the Cuban state following the collapse of the Soviet Union? It is clearly not credible to say that everyone in Cuba, much less the majority perhaps, buy into this completely and would be prepared to die before surrendering (although comparisons with Numancia were made during the worst times of the special period when Cubans did literally begin to starve). So how does this ideology work to produce behaviours that support the government? It is here where I believe that Foucault's model of power is helpful.

Foucault's Model

Foucault, in his essay "The Subject and Power" (1982: 208-26) starts by categorising struggles against power that have taken place in the history of developed societies and identifies three distinct forms. I have expressed these as a diagram. These are struggles against forms of domination (ethnic, social and religious); forms of exploitation (that separate individuals from what they produce); and forms of subjection (against subjectivity and categorisation). Foucault noted that all three forms of struggle are present in any given society and at any time to differing degrees of quantity and intensity. However, at different epochs and at dif-

ferent stages of development some were more prevalent than others. Ethnic and religious struggles against domination were more common in the feudal period in Europe for example, while struggles against exploitation were more common in the industrial era. In late twentieth century developed capitalist states, however, struggles against subjection are more typical. Why should this be? According to Foucault it has to do with the nature of the state and the way in which power is structured in modern welfare states, which, since the reformation onwards, have taken on more and more characteristics of what he calls 'pastoral power.'

Pastoral power is a technique of control that originated in the Catholic Church and was its basis of power throughout the middle ages. The Church occupied a space alongside and sometimes in competition with the sovereign, but the difference between the Church's power and the king's rested in the fact that the Church:

... postulates the principle that certain individuals can, by their religious quality, serve others not as princes, magistrates, prophets, fortune tellers, benefactors, educationalists and so on, but as pastors. However this word designates a very special form of power (Slide 182: 214).

The basic unit of this power was the local village priest. How this structure of power worked can be represented as a diagram. Unlike the sovereign (whose subjects were supposed to die for him) the pastor was expected to die for his flock if necessary. The pastor was also concerned with the project of salvation, of souls for the next world. In addition, through the confessional and by living among his congregation, the Pastor was privy to their personal lives. This combination of close surveillance, personal knowledge of the individual and the ethic of sacrifice was so powerful that it maintained the Church's influence sometimes in opposition to the crown through centuries.

Foucault argues that the Reformation was a huge struggle against this form of power and that since the Enlightenment he suggests that the modern state has developed in such a way as to slowly incorporate and adapt the characteristics of pastoral power. The main difference is that in the modern state, the aim of salvation has shifted from the next life to this: in the form of health care and the protection of a "standard of living." The basic unit of the modern system of pastoral power has switched from the parish priest to state officials that have grown in number alongside public

institutions. Modern “pastors” are teachers, doctors, social workers and policemen, who while not exactly hearing confession, do nevertheless gather enormous amounts of information about the intimate lives of the population, with the added potency of applying modern science and technology to the process. The modern state is therefore characterised by a huge increase in the application of subjectivising power, which is as individualising as it is totalising.

Applying Foucault's model of Pastoral Power to Cuba

Foucault's model of Pastoral Power offers a theoretical means of a better understanding of the nature of the Cuban state as it can be argued that the Cuban revolution has developed a system of power that closely resembles the feudal system of pastoral power that Foucault identified.

Let us consider the family doctor programme for example and the fact that there is one doctor and two nurses for every 120 families. These are agents of state power who live within the community and whose mission is preventive health care, a task that requires them to make careful and precise observations about the lifestyles of each and every individual in their care. Professor Theodore Macdonald, a comparative health specialist at Brunel University actually uses a priest analogy to describe the family doctors:

“No citizen in Cuba is without access to a doctor, either geographically or for financial reason. At the operational level, every GP lives in the community he serves and in a city such a community would be no more than two or three city blocks! This means that people are always in contact with their doctor. He/she in fact, often spends a part of each day making unsolicited calls on his/her patients, rather like the old-style parish priest doing his rounds.”(MacDonald 1995: 21)

Now that Cuban doctors are being sent abroad in such vast numbers (68,000 in 2006) they may be seen as acting as “missionaries.” Of course all of them are schooled in the Cuban revolutionary tradition. It is worth, I think taking into account the words of Guevara again here. All Cuban schoolchildren are brought up chanting daily that there are to be like Che and of course, Che was a doctor before he was a revolutionary. Castro himself once said: “[...] all the qualities that make a priest are qualities needed in a good revolutionary.” (cited in Kirk 1989: 122).

I have represented what I see as Cuba's structure of power following Foucault as a diagram. We have seen how the objective of salvation is intensely a part Cuba ideology. To this we must add the obligatory nature of the Cuban struggle, its concern for the individual as expressed through free health an education services and finally the knowledge of the individual as maintained by the family doctor and other participatory organs of the state.

If, as Foucault argues, the exercise of power is an inducement upon others to act in a certain way, then this diagram helps us to understand why Cubans seem to act paradoxically, in what they call the *doble moral*, by participating in the system while at the same time perhaps indulging in petty crime or activities that otherwise undermine it. What this structure implies is that the individual is morally compelled to conform by participating because consequences for visibly not doing so will quickly lead to stigmatisation and possible social exclusion. It is hardly credible to oppose a state system that has such overtly altruistic aims and a record of fulfilling them. Violence and repression are unnecessary when exemplary moral force such as being ready to die for the cause is brought to bear. In Cuba, one is categorised as “*bien integrado*” or “*mal integrado*” depending on one's level of visible commitment. To actively object to the system runs the risk of the individual being labelled as a traitor, a coward or as an ‘*auto-suficiente*.’

So long as the system continues to keep up fulfilling its stated aims of providing free health care, education and social welfare and as long as the leadership avoids being perceived as a corrupt elite living at the expense of the rest of society, then this structure will be extremely durable. The fact that the Cuban leadership has not failed in either of these respects is the primary reason why the system has survived and will continue to be able to resist any outside attempts to force it to change.

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CHAPTER 3

Epistemic Organic Intellectuals

Anthony P. Maingot

Abstract: An analysis of the language and concepts used by a group of Cuban scholars that Antonio Gramsci would call 'organic intellectuals', this study finds no use of Marxist or neo-Marxist approaches. Using contemporary socio-linguistic theory, the author hypothesises that Cuban organic intellectuals, while still revolutionary, were no longer following the official Marxist-Leninist line of the Cuban state.

«Dogma es lo que queda de una idea cuando la ha aplastado un martillo pilón». (José Ortega y Gasset, *Ideas y creencias*, 1940).

Introduction

It is paradoxical that one of the better ways of looking at Cuba today is through the theories of a Marxist theoretician-practitioner. Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was, in the words of two prominent Gramsci scholars, “the greatest Marxist writer on culture.”¹ He certainly was one of the first Marxists to use a sociology of knowledge conceptual framework which is why he was known as “the theoretician of the superstructure.” Contrary to the rest who followed a dogmatic interpretation of the primacy of the “the base” over the “superstructure,” Gramsci believed that ideas, language, and intellectual production (especially the written word) were not merely ancillary consequences of the factors of production, but had significant causal effects on their own. He was particularly interested in the role of intellectuals. All men, he argued, are, in a way, intellectuals but every society assigned, explicitly or implicitly, specific statuses and roles to those who either defend the ideational *status quo* or those who challenge

1. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Cultural Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p.14.

it. He called those who occupy those roles “organic intellectuals,” individuals who battle over the conception of the world.²

Along with this paradox there is an historical irony. Cuba today represents the reverse of what preoccupied Gramsci. Being a Marxist, he was particularly interested in the role of organic intellectuals in the challenge to the bourgeois political, cultural and ideological “hegemony.” How, he asked, could revolutionaries defeat the intellectual hegemony of the *status quo*, including very importantly in the Italian case, the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church? How to bring about the necessary ideological “crisis”? By crisis he meant the process by which “the great masses become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe.” It was the role of organic intellectuals to construct alternative concepts of life. “The philosophy of *praxis*,” said Gramsci, “does not aim to keep simple people confined to a primitive philosophy...but on the contrary to lead them to a higher concept of life...to build up an intellectual-moral bloc that makes intellectual progress politically possible for the masses and not just for small intellectual groups.” This tended to occur during periods Gramsci called “transformism” which consists “precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born.” Of course, according to the Marxist ontology, the one pushing to be born was the next stage, socialism. Today, it is decidedly just the reverse in Cuba. So that, if we dispense with the dogmas regarding “iron laws of change,” the fact is that Gramsci’s sociology of knowledge scheme tells us much about the role of organic intellectuals and the language of their discourse. Because he was both academically and politically interested in the role of language, he would have, for instance, been interested in the implications of the evident abandonment of Marxist, even radical dependency/world system language and paradigms, and the rise of common technical languages among skilled-based or epistemic communities in the global economy. Economists and political scientists, no less than petroleum engineers, “know,” and communicate this knowledge in fairly similar ways and, more and more, in English, directly or in

2. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, (ed.) *Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, (London, 1971), p. 8. Karl Mannheim called those who defended the *status quo* “ideologues” and those who strived to change it “utopians.” (See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York, 1936)).

translation. This is a global phenomenon of which Cuban intellectuals are part.

The Various Transitions

In CRI Report No. 3 (April 15, 2007), I argued that the emphasis on the “indispensable” charismatic authority of Fidel Castro in contemporary Cuba was misplaced. The political transition in Cuba has already occurred. It has been administered by Raúl Castro, in control of what Edward Shils called a “modernizing military oligarchy.” Where there has not been a full transition is in ideology, especially as regards the economic system. While no major groups on the island are calling for a full market (i.e., capitalist) economy, there is an evident, because open, debate over the nature of Cuba’s national economy and its necessary, even inevitable, insertion into the global market.

Should the highly centralized – even totalizing – socialist model so dear to President Fidel Castro and other top leaders be retained or should it move towards some form of market socialism or quasi-capitalism? “I despise capitalism,” said President Castro to the National Assembly in 1993, “it is excrement!” But, in a clear admission that there were challenges to the monolithic official ideology, he then lamented that, “It seems that we are afraid to shout: long live socialism, long live communism, long live Marxism-Leninism!”³

That was 1993 but he has repeated this sentiment many times since then. This Report looks at the state of intellectual ferment – challenge and response – in Cuba 14 years later from a sociology of knowledge perspective.⁴

3. Cited in Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Are Economic Reforms Propelling Cuba to the Market?* (Miami: North-South Center, 1994), p. 65.

4. Sociology of Knowledge studies the relationship between ideas (and groups of ideas called ideology) and objective social factors such as class, generation, organizational structures, power and authority. See Ann Swindler and Jorge Arditi, “The New Sociology of Knowledge,” *Annual Review of Sociology* – 1994.

The “Battle of Ideas”

In 1999, following the struggle to have Elian González, the boy saved in the Straights of Florida from a sea tragedy in which his mother drowned, Fidel Castro launched a “Battle of Ideas.” The purpose was to highlight the superiority of Cuban socialism as it faced two monumental challenges: the collapse of Soviet subsidies and Perestroika. The latter should never be minimized. It was a total negation of Cuban revolutionary internationalism. When Gorbachev announced that they were pragmatists, not “adventurers” and, as such, were not going to exploit anti-US attitudes “let alone fuel them,” nor were they going to “erode the traditional links between Latin America and the United States,” Cuba was left to confront the still aggressive US policies alone.⁵ The Battle of Ideas was now a matter of using “soft power” to break the island’s isolation. It was important enough to put a member of the Cuban Council of Ministers in charge of this initiative. And, certainly, the initiative has had some real successes: in medicine abroad,⁶ in cordial diplomatic relations with virtually all the nations of the world (perhaps especially in the Greater Caribbean) and with repeated UN General Assembly condemnations by solid majorities of the US Embargo against Cuba. Less clear have been the results of the battles over ideas and models of development which are roiling in Cuba.

To listen to officials of the state bureaucracies who have engaged this battle, they are confidently asserting the superiority of Cuban Marxist socialism, not only over capitalism but, indeed, over other forms of socialism which have existed elsewhere. Carlos Alzugaray, for instance, a high ranking intellectual in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argues that Cuba is making a secure transition because it is grounded in a Marxist vision of society:

No se trata de marxismo dogmático y anquilosado, como el que prevaleció en algunos países socialistas en el pasado, sino de una visión rica y diversa, que reconoce los aportes de otras corriente filosófico-políticas, pero que reafirma *la tesis de que la sociedad humana tiene leyes de*

5. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 188.

6. See Julie M. Feinsilver, “La diplomacia médica cubana,” *Foreign Affairs en Español* (oct.-dic., 2006); Pedro Margolles, “La cooperación cubana presente en 155 países,” *Digital Granma Internacional*, (22 de mayo, 2007).

desarrollo y que esas indican la caducidad del régimen de producción capitalista (la economía de libre mercado) y su sustitución por otro superior, más solidario y más orientado a satisfacer las necesidades del hombre.⁷

Similarly, Ricardo Alarcón, the articulate and experienced statesman who is now President of the Cuban National Assembly, engages in the “Battle of Ideas” by pressing Tom Hayden, an old American “progressive” and now member of *The Nation’s* editorial board, to fly down for a visit. The purpose, he said, was nothing more than “two old guys talking.”⁸ Hayden describes Alarcón as a “pragmatic” and there is some evidence of this in Alarcón’s discourse on “Marx after Marxism.” “Marxists,” he says, “should begin to see the world anew... [there is] need for self critical reflection in the ‘original spirit’ of Marx before the 20th Century.” This revisiting of Marx, according to Alarcón, has to begin by admitting that the earlier Marx never meant a science-based, inevitable march to socialism founded on some objective truth revealed through communist parties. Marx, he says, was “a practical revolutionary who himself famously declared with all naturalness ‘I am not a Marxist!’” As if to drive home the lesson to be learned, Alarcón adds, “Old dogmatists are incapable of new possibilities in the revolutionary movement” and that the best thing the “Latin American left” could do is to reelect President Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil. This explains why in his interview with the magazine *Cigar Aficionado* (June, 2007, p. 64), Alarcón describes Raúl Castro as a pragmatic: “...he has to be pragmatic.... You don’t want a person to lead by his imagination and fantasies in that position.”

Even as it is still unclear whether what is presently transcending the orthodox discourse in Cuba is an intellectual debate or an intellectual pro-

7. Carlos Alzugaray, “El eventual levantamiento del bloqueo norteamericano y el interés nacional de Cuba,” in Alejandra Liriano de la Cruz (ed.), *Cuba y el Caribe en el Post-Embargo* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: FLACSO, 2005), pp. 33-34. Alzugaray has his own bilingual website where he argues fine points of US-Cuban history (<http://www.rprogreso.com>). He is also a frequent contributor to *Política Internacional*, the official journal of the Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales “Raúl Roa García.”

8. Tom Hayden, “A Top Cuban Leader Thinks Out Loud,” at <http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/20060829/>

test,⁹ in either case there is ample evidence that many Cuban intellectuals involved in the “Battle of Ideas” hew closer to Alarcón’s pragmatism than to Alzugaray’s emphasis on Marxist “laws of development.” This is not to say that it is evident that they are carrying the day but that there is well-founded evidence that at least they are holding their own in that battle. As in any intellectual battle, there is first a need for space, for the opportunity to expound. This they have achieved.

What should we conclude, for instance, from the knowledge that John Williamson of the liberal (not “neo-liberal”) Institute for International Economics in Washington had presented a paper on the “Washington Consensus” in Havana in early 2004,¹⁰ and that it had been summarized and critiqued by Fidel Castro himself? It is not evident that Castro’s critique was to the point, but for organic intellectuals it was the opportunity which mattered. Similarly, although one is accustomed to reading in the venerable *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (founded in 1831) little else than orthodox interpretations of Cuba’s present and past replete with quotes from Fidel Castro’s speeches, one is surprised by their absence in recent years. Each issue of the *Revista* has been carrying an editorial from the *The Economist* (London). Issue No. 24 (January-June, 2006) was dedicated to the “VIII Encuentro Internacional sobre Globalización y Problemas del Desarrollo.” Mario Fernández Font, Professor of Economics of the Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Internacional of the University of Havana, summed up the “principal debates” among the 1,500 participants and 157 formal presentations. These debates had as themes: “El comercio internacional, la integración económica, el mundo monetario y financiero, la empresa como actor del desarrollo, cooperativismo.” Judging from the papers selected for No. 24, the journal editor’s claim that the conference was characterized by political, academic and theoretical pluralism appears warranted. Not a one made reference to any ontological verities or economic “laws;” the language was the language of the global market place. “The general perception one derives from the major-

9. Alfredo Muñoz-Usain poses this question but also asserts that “fermenta el panel intelectual de la isla.” (“Debate cultural en la Habana,” *Contrapunto de América Latina*, No.9 (Julio-septiembre 2007), pp.102-106.

10. John Williamson, “A Short History of the Washington Consensus,” ms., for Conference on New Global Governance, Barcelona, September 24-25, 2004, p. 7, n. 4.

ity of the presentations,” noted the Editorial, “is that today there exist very few ‘indisputable truths.’”

The evident absence of references to “truths”—whether as quotes from Marx, Lenin or Ché Guevara—or citations from one or another speech of Fidel Castro, is notable and, we hypothesize, significant. And, this is not only true in economics. Part of the pleasure of reading Dick Cluster and Rafael Hernández’ book, *The History of Havana* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) is the total absence of any Marxist, neo-Marxist, dependency or other “theoretical” superimpositions. The life and times of that erstwhile seigniorial city comes to life in the evident sympathetic etchings of the authors. Arguing well within the parameters of the established political system, the authors persuade you that after what its residents have endured, you know these same denizens will eventually return their city to its past glory. This, of course, will be another “doubling back” or irony of history since that magnificent city was a product of Spanish-Cuban bourgeois architecture.

Even the artistic community ponders on the changed atmosphere. In the vital area of film, the recent appearance on Cuban T.V.—fourteen years after its debut—of “*Fresa y chocolate*” and “*Suite Habana*”, might be harbingers that the official censoring of many truly outstanding, and mostly critical, films is starting to weaken. Similarly, Frank Delgado, a younger member of the “Nueva Trova,” talks about his predecessor *trovadores*, all caught up in the period of “revolutionary enthusiasm.” “I come from a generation which did not experience that revolutionary enthusiasm but rather the institutionalization of the country.” His concern, and that of other artistes, he says, is not to abandon the system but to sing about the problems of every day existence and the need to *resolver* and *inventar para vivir*, in other words, intellectualizing through songs of protest.¹¹

While all this is revealing of an unfolding transformation, it is arguably the economists who have been the most important organic intellectuals of this search for reform. In their very comprehensive and revealing 2005 book, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform*, Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge Pérez-López review the work of those they identify as some of Cuba’s most recognized economists. They chose: Julio Carranza, Alfredo González

11. Interview with EFE in *El Nuevo Herald*, (May 21, 2007), p. 21.

Gutiérrez, Hiram Marguetti, Pedro Monreal, Juan Triana, Anicia García Alvarez, Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva, and Viviana Togores García.¹²

Mesa Lago and Perez-Lopez note that every one of these scholars were loyal adherents of the revolutionary regime, evident by their rejection of neo-liberalism and support of the socialist system. However, while there were differences among them in interpretation and emphasis, “their identification of current problems, is markedly similar.”¹³ Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López analyze 17 areas of substantial agreement. We chose to highlight six of the problems the Cuban economists cite as explanations as to why Cuba still confronts a “failed” or stalled recovery:

[1]Cuba has been unable to generate sufficient internal resources to invest for a sustained recovery.

[2]Cuba’s international credit-worthiness is poor; there is limited access to external credits and loans.

[3]It is “impossible” to restrict consumption further to divert resources to investment as consumption is already depressed.

[4]The only way out is to increase domestic efficiency and enterprise competitiveness.

[5]The enterprise management reform process (*perfeccionamiento empresarial*) is new and very slow in implementation; “verticalism” and enterprise centralization and concentration continued its deleterious effects.

[6]Finally, and critically, there were the political, social structural impacts: a decline in real wages, increase in disguised unemployment, steeper income stratification and concentration of bank deposits by, and prebends for, the elite.

Not surprisingly, all the Cuban economists recommend changing property relations, decentralizing economic decision-making and promoting domestic competition.¹⁴ As is well known, few, if any, of these recommendations have been followed. The reason, according to Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López is defensive: the fear that economic decentralization will cause a political weakening of the regime. As plausible as this explana-

12. Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge Pérez-López, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005), pp. 61, 164.

13. Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform*, p. 61.

14. Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform*, pp. 164-167.

tion is, there might be another: the belief that Cuba can achieve what most Cubans want, i.e. retaining the social gains of the revolution even as they enter the global market. Note the arguments that Cuba can sustain its socialist policies even as it actively seeks out new foreign investments, new markets and adopts new technologies.¹⁵ Especially interesting is the essay of the economist Tania García which in terms of diagnosis of the current deficiencies in the situation differs little from the reformist economists cited, yet concludes that even after a lifting of the embargo and Cuba's reinsertion into the global market, state property would continue dominant, the "social programs" would continue intact, and the market would not play the role of determiner and assignor of domestic economic activities.¹⁶ Of course, the crux of the debate is whether any of these goals, no matter how admirable, are realistic. There is a growing consensus among the organic intellectuals that they are not.

Prominent social scientist and historian Rafael Hernández, known for his firm defense of the regime in domestic and international forums, is nevertheless brutally candid in admitting that "The hothouse in which the system and the culture of socialism could flourish, was shattered more than ten years ago."¹⁷ The negative impact of the growth of tourism, the growing gap in social equality, the presence of fashion and behavior foreign to socialism in everyday life is already sufficient, he says, to consider that challenges associated with a reencounter with capitalism do not belong to a faraway and improbable future. Even so, Hernández believes the "new" Cuba will retain the major gains of the revolution but not without serious challenges. Hernandez argues that the fundamental question is not even if Cuba can resist the cultural onslaught of capitalism, but rather "what a system (or the project of a system) is worth that cannot endure the merciless blast from the elements outside of its hothouse and flourish on its own?" The system, the culture and the values of a possible socialism, he argues, cannot be protected by "an ideological condom," only through

15. See the essays by Cuban scholars, Tania García, Juan Valdez and Carlos Alzugaray in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba, el Caribe*.

16. Tania García, "Cuba, Estados Unidos y el Caribe en un escenario Post Bloqueo: criterios para el debate," in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba, el Caribe*, pp.49-91.

17. Rafael Hernández, "On Hearing the Right Questions," *Revista* (Harvard Review of Latin America (Spring – Summer 2005), pp. 16-17.

acquired immunities that permit it to survive even in the face of the virus coming from contact with the outside. "This vaccination, this acquired immunity," he concludes, "has been taking place for 12 years now, not without cost, but still without showing signs of fatal illness."

Not nearly as optimistic is Haroldo Dilla, one of the victims of the 1996 purge of the most internationally-recognized think tank on the island, the Centro de Estudio Sobre América (CEA). Now in exile in the Dominican Republic, Dilla argues that the idea that Cuba can open up to global capitalism without internal changes is an illusion.¹⁸ He visualizes three major structural changes.

[1]The State will have necessarily to modify the strident nationalist discourse, basic component of its legitimacy;

[2]A reinsertion into the global market will intensify the cultural/ideological links between domestic and exiled communities;

[3]It can be assumed that a distention will erode the standing of the "hard liners" (*sectores duros*) and open spaces for more moderate figures.

In a brilliant piece of sociology of knowledge, Dilla addresses the origins of the intellectual challenges which the present system will face.¹⁹ Aside from the reformist economists now freed from debunked Marxist dogma but always susceptible to being stymied by the political elite, Dilla argues that that elite will not have such intellectual veto power over the new "technocratic-business" sector brought about by foreign investments. It is, he says, "the only actor capable of ideological production with no political authorization other than that permitting its existence."²⁰ One institution which will not disappear, says Dilla, is the military, "the most coherent and efficient of the Cuban system." They will continue to operate in the world of business and "en cualquier circunstancia de transición hacia un régimen liberal, aspirarán a jugar un rol protagónico."²¹

18. Haroldo Dilla, "El fin del bloqueo, la fiesta por la Victoria y la política en Cuba: notas para un debate," in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba en el Caribe*, pp. 226-227.

19. Haroldo Dilla Alfonso, "Larval Actors, Uncertain Scenarios, and Cryptic Scripts: Where is Cuban Society Headed?," in Joseph Tulchin *et.al.* (ed.), *Changes in Cuban Society Since the Nineties* (Wash., D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, 2005), pp. 35-49. Dilla extends this analysis in "La reestructuración espacial en Cuba," Paper, LASA-2007, Montreal, Canada.

20. *Ibid.*, p.42.

The historical record since the beginning of the reforms in the 1990s tends to support the Dilla thesis. There is considerable evidence that even the modest openings of the early 1990s had significant impact on Cuban social mobility and stratification. Recording these impacts has become a task for Cuban social scientists. Their studies are now part of the established literature. Very compelling, and widely shared by the “new” social scientists, is Mayra P. Espina Prieto’s concept of the “patterns of inequality” argument of what she calls the “*mobilidad ascendente selectiva*.”²² Espina Prieto has elaborated further her understanding of the consequences of the reforms:

Regardless of the intent or whether this was an anticipated or relatively spontaneous outcome, these reforms led to a reconfiguration of the social class structure, specifically the emergence of a pattern of social stratification that ... generated increasing inequality.²³

Noting the rise of a new “technocratic-entrepreneurial bloc” engendered by **market forces**, she noted the connection between empowerment and the formation of a new “hegemonic bloc” that excludes grass-roots sectors.

One who has accepted Espina Prieto’s analysis but goes further in describing the highly deleterious consequences of the opening to market forces is Juan Valdéz Paz:

The first, and most serious change has been growing social disorder – crime, corruption, prostitution, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and so forth – which has reached levels unheard of before the nineties.²⁴

Far from forming a sort of *lumpen proletariat*, he says, these groups gained advantages “and exercise a certain degree of influence over their social milieus.” No “ideological condom” evident here.

21. Tania Garcia in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba, el Caribe*, p. 231.

22. Mayra P. Espina Prieto, “Reajuste y movilidad social en Cuba,” in *La sociedad cubana: retos y transformaciones* (La Habana: CIPS, 2003).

23. Mayra P. Espina Prieto, “Structural Changes Since the Nineties and New Research Topics on Cuban Society,” in Tulchin, *et. al* (ed.), *Changes in Cuba*, p. 89.

24. Juan Valdés Paz, “Cuba in the ‘Special Period:’ From Equality to Equity,” in Tulchin, *et.al.* (ed.), *Cuba*, p. 109.

Further Empirical Evidence

Table A lists nineteen of the most internationally recognized Cuban economists. The emphasis on economists is in keeping with Gramsci's ideas on their role. He was of the opinion that while all social tasks require a degree of skills, economists require more. "In the first instance," he noted," these occupations are associated with the particular technical requirements of the economic system."²⁵ We note their sources and references to illustrate why we call them part of the epistemic community of scholars studying the global economy. Their language and principal economic arguments are strikingly similar to those found in any report from, for instance, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), while their criticisms of "neo-liberalism" do not sound much different from those of a Joseph E. Stiglitz in his 2002 book, *Globalization and its Discontents*. Table B demonstrates Cuban intellectual performance in a broader and more international context, i.e. a LASA conference.

The data in the two Tables bolster the central argument of this paper: Cuba is experiencing an *apertura* which, at least on its surface, would indicate a much greater tolerance for dissent on the part of the authorities. There is candid discussion of the hardships of the *periodo especial* and very detailed analyses of what it will take for the island to reverse the deterioration and reinsert itself into the global economy. Marxist or other radical paradigms appear to have little space in these efforts. On this score, it is important to note that even if, as is widely assumed, the papers delivered at LASA-2007 (Table B) were screened and vetted beforehand in Cuba, the fact that the officials "allowed" so many critical presentations is itself evidence of a new dispensation.

This paper makes no claim that because increasing numbers of intellectuals are challenging the existing orthodoxies of the system and are being given greater freedom and space, that this necessarily and immediately affects the way the top political elites operate. Nor do we argue that it is certain that the reforms the organic intellectuals are pushing for are

25. See the discussion in Paul Ransome, *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction*. (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 198 ff.

irreversible. There were reverses in the mid-1980s, the mid-1990s and even today.²⁶ Our arguments are four.

First, just as it is important to note that Cuban communism was not imposed by Soviet bayonets, it is important to note that the communists were never at the original “vanguard” of that revolution. They were asked to join out of geopolitical necessity and did so opportunistically. The Cuban revolution was the result of a nationalist movement, only part of which was the July 26 group. Gramsci would insist on making such a different historical path to power an integral part of the analysis. Just as Martí has replaced Marx as the leading light of the revolution, so a nationalist interpretation of events is displacing the hegemony of the Marxist-Leninist ideological explanation.

Secondly, the only domestic poll taken by a professional polling organization that I know of, demonstrates that being a “communist” or even a “socialist” is a minority position in Cuba.²⁷ Note the self descriptions:

“Hablando de Ud. Mismo, como se describe?”

Revolucionario – 48%

No integrado – 24%

Comunista – 11%

Socialista – 10%

The poll understood *revolucionario* to imply nationalist, an appellation 88% would apply to themselves. But the dominant attitude was found to be apathy and /or inertia. The director of the poll, the Costa Rican Carlos Denton, concluded that “People go about their lives in every society without making transcendental decisions about themselves and their families...and the Cubans are no exceptions.” The ones who are concerned with such transcendental matters are the organic intellectuals. This brings us to our third point.

26. It is important to note that even an experienced Cuba-watching economist as Carmelo Mesa-Lago has had to change his opinion. In 1994 he concluded that “Castroism is gradually losing power to market forces, and the reform process appears irreversible.” Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Are Economic Reforms Propelling Cuba to the Market?*, p. 71.

27. See the CID/Gallup poll done in November 1994 by the Costa Rican agency of Carlos Denton, *The Miami Herald*, December 12, 1994, pp.1, 18, 19.

Beyond the question of concepts and frames of reference, there is the importance of the wider influence of the language, just as Gramsci would have had it. To him, language was “a totality” of determined notions and concepts. “If it is true,” he theorized, “that language contains the elements of a conception of the world and of a culture, it will also be true that the greater or lesser complexity of a person’s conception of the world can be judged from his language.”²⁸ Gramsci was ahead of his times not only in sociolinguistics but also in his understanding of the role of language (national and foreign) in creating epistemic communities. As he put it, the capacity to be in touch with “the great currents of thought which dominate world history.”

To those who would argue that the content analysis in the Appendices and other analyses of ideas is a mere impressionistic approach which tells us nothing “objective,” one should keep in mind just how closely Gramsci’s ideas fit with well-established modern theories of socio-linguistics. A transition in language necessarily means a transition in ideas. I say “necessarily” because, as the widely accepted Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in linguistics tells us:

[1] New words and language are invented to reflect new realities.

[2] Language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but is itself a shaper of ideas. It is, in the language of Edward Sapir, “the programme and guide for the individual’s meaningful activity.” In other words, language shapes our perception of reality.²⁹

This brings us to the work of the most recognized contemporary scholar on cognitive linguistics, Georg Lakoff.³⁰ Lakoff speaks of “frames”, those mental structures that shape the way we look at the world and, as such, shape the goals we seek, the plans we make and our judgment as to what counts as a good or a bad outcome. In politics, says

28. Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1957), p. 60.

29. See Edward Sapir, “Communication,” *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, (New York: Macmillan, 1931), Vol. 4, pp. 78-81; Benjamin L. Whorf, “The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language,” in Leslie Spier, *et. al* (ed.), *Language, Culture, and Personality*, (Menasha, 1941), pp. 75-93.

30. See Georg Lakoff, *Metaphors we Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Lakoff, our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out these policies. “To change our frames,” he concludes, “is to change all of this. Reframing is social change.”³¹

Gramsci quite evidently was ahead of his time and most assuredly right on target regarding his ideas on the role of language and images.

Conclusion

There is ample evidence that, to use Gramsci’s term, the “hegemony” of the orthodox Marxist ideology of the Cuban revolution is being challenged by a numerous group of organic intellectuals gathered in a number of important think tanks and at the University of Havana. They are presenting their ideas in a much more eclectic and non-dogmatic fashion, utilizing frames of reference widely accepted in the international community of scholars. While it is true that as of now they are only challenging ideas about economic arrangements in a reformist, rather than in a “total opposition” way, the sociology of knowledge informs us that beyond the manifest functions of ideas are the latent, non-intended consequences. One would have to conclude that it will be the unintended consequences which will challenge the hegemony of the Marxist state. They will define the outcome of the real “Battle of Ideas” in Cuba’s transformism.”

Finally, and as we have argued in all three previous Reports for the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University, this battle will unfold in Cuba among Cubans and within the transition which they themselves are constructing managing. What our evidence reveals is a debate—even a protest—regarding economic policies, not what the literature on revolution has called “the abandonment of the intellectuals.”³² What is being abandoned are Marxist frameworks and language and the hypothesis is that policies will also eventually change. This should tell us that attempts from outside to determine the course of the Cuban transition will fail just as they have failed for the past five decades. It is illusory to believe that now that Cuba has produced its own home-bred organic intel-

31. Georg Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), p.xv.

32. The concept was first developed by Lyford P. Edwards (*The Natural History of Revolution*, 1927) and became central in Crane Brinton’s *The Anatomy of Revolution*, 1936.

lectuals they will be ready to cede to outsiders the directions they should take. Nationalism and the desire for self-determination continue to be the operational impulses in this long-lasting drama.

TABLE 3-1. Scholarly Sources Used by the Reformist Economists, Number of References

Scholar Year of Publication	Total Number	Marxist ^a	World System/Dependency Theory	Global Development Theory	In English ^b
Omar E. Pérez Villanueva					
2003	31	0	0	31	1
2004	38	0	0	38	10
2005	11	0	0	11	3
Pedro Monreal					
2004	21	0	0	19	9
José M. Sánchez Egozcue					
2004	63	0	0	63	61
Mayra Espina Prieto					
2004	39	3	0	36	2
Viviana Togores González/ Anicia García Alvarez					
2004	52	1	0	51	1
Juan Triana Cordoví					
2005	27	1	0	26	16
Mariana Martín Fernández					
2005	5	0	0	5	2
Anicia García Alvarez/ Hiram Marquetti Nodarse					
2005	32	0	0	32	13

Sources of Essay:

(1) Jorge I. Domínguez, Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva and Lorena Barbería (ed.), *The Cuban Economy at the Start of the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); (2) *Cuba: Crecer desde el conocimiento* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2005). Most of the authors in this volume are members of Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana.

TABLE 3-1. Scholarly Sources Used by the Reformist Economists, Number of References

Scholar Year of Publication	Total Number	Marxist ^a	World System/Dependency Theory	Global Development Theory	In English ^b
Anicia García Alvarez/ Eislen Guerra Boza 2005	27	0	0	27	5
Gabriela Dutrenit/ Alexandre O. Vera-Cruz/ Argenis Arias Navarro 2005	53	1	0	52	38
Humberto Blanco Rosales 2005	22	0	0	22	7
Jorge Ricardo Ramirez Silvia García García 2005	21	0	0	21	2
Dayma Echeverría León 2005	14	0	0	14	2

Sources of Essay:

(1) Jorge I. Domínguez, Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva and Lorena Barbería (ed.), *The Cuban Economy at the Start of the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); (2) *Cuba: Crecer desde el conocimiento* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2005). Most of the authors in this volume are members of Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana.

a. Includes reference to Fidel Castro's speeches.

b. Includes translations.

TABLE 3-2. Cuban Scholars with Written Papers. Latin American Studies Association Congress 2007. Montreal, Canada^a

Scholar Title of Paper^b	Marxist Framework	Reference to Marxist Literature
Hilaria Suarez León "Dinámica de la escritura martiana"	No	None
Yoel Cordovi Nuñez Hostos y Martí por el equilibrio continental"	No	None
Guillermo Galvez Rodriguez "Manejo de la investigación...proceso de reestructuración agroindustria azucarera"	No	None
Lazaro Peña Castellanos "Globalización, inserción internacio- nal...Experiencias para Cuba"	No	None
Luis R. Fernández Tabio "EE.UU. y la Revolución Cubana: La renovación de una política fracasada"	No	None
Concepción Nieves Ayús "Continuidad...renovación...mecanismos de consenso en la sociedad civil"	No	None
Lourdes Pérez Montalvo "Protagonismos social y vida cotidiana...Estudio de caso en San Isidro...."	No	None
Mario Coyla Cowley "La Habana: reaparicion de la ciudad Blanca"	No	None
Omar E. Pérez Villanueva "Desarrollo Humano de los Municipios de la Provincia...Habana"	No	None
Blanca R. Pampin Balado "Consumo, producción / comercialización de alimentos"	No	None

TABLE 3-2. Cuban Scholars with Written Papers. Latin American Studies Association Congress 2007. Montreal, Canada^a

Scholar Title of Paper^b	Marxist Framework	Reference to Marxist Literature
Cristina Díaz López "Papel de La Mujer en la educación superior cubana"	No	None
Juan A. Cordero Martinez "Democracia Electoral v. Democracia de Ciudadania..."	No	2 ^c
Lourdes M. Tabares Neyra "Justicia Social y Formación de Directivos...Habana"	No	None
M. T. Montes de Oca Choy "Reanimación y Participación...Barrio Chino..."	No	None
Victor M. Betancourt Estrada "Papel de la Familia religiosa afro-cubana...."	No	None
Rodrigo Espina Prieto "La relaciones raciales en Cuba...un estudio de familias...."	No	4 ^d

- a. There were 65 Cuban scholars listed in the official program. Sixteen papers (i.e., 24%) were available on the Congress' CD-ROM. The availability of papers for the Congress as a whole was 27%.
- b. Many papers list more than one author and titles often differ from those listed in LASA's official Program. They are listed here as they appear in the official Program.
- c. One citation to Rosa Luxemboug and one to Marx-Engels, more as illustration than part of an evident Marxist analysis of subject.
- d. Two references to speeches by Fidel Castro, one to an essay by Ché Guevara and one to a PCC document on race relations.

CHAPTER 4

Cuba and Castro: Beyond the “Battle of Ideas”

Mauricio A. Font

Abstract: This paper explores the logic, causes, and priorities of the “Battle of Ideas” in part through an analysis of Fidel Castro’s published statements in Reflexiones since 2006. This study suggests that this campaign harkens back to past efforts of the regime to reinforce ideological orthodoxy and revolutionary renewal through the regime’s fundamental belief in the power of ideology to consolidate political power.

Out of the Special Period

During the second half of the 1990s, Cuban authorities began to apply a series of countermeasures to the reform process adopted in the Special Period, seemingly confident that they had surmounted the worst of the economic crisis of the early decade. Already by 1995 the regime had defined the limits of the reform process and restricted some of the liberalizing measures, blaming them for growing social problems. By the end of the turn of the century, Fidel Castro was framing his own thoughts and perspective as the “Battle of Ideas.” He and the hardliners were ready for a renewal of the traditional Cuban model and initiated specific steps and ideas in that regard. Through 2006, the year Fidel Castro fell gravely ill, the “Battle of Ideas” campaign subsumed many initiatives to supplant the Special Period. This paper explores the role of the “Battle of Ideas” in opening a new chapter in the history of the Cuban revolution. The broader issue is how to characterize the timing, properties, and dynamics of the post Special Period years. An important issue is the extent to which a new coherent approach was launched in the early 2000s.

The collapse of socialism after 1989 forced drastic adjustments and change upon Cuba, as it challenged previous ideas about Cuba’s international role and the presumed superiority of its development strategy. The Cuban revolutionaries focused on regime survival and significantly

altered the highly centralized model of state socialism. The kind of socialist internationalism that brought Cuba to Africa in the 1970s was now a thing of the past. The armed forces contracted and refocused. The authorities called this the Special Period (more precisely, “Período Especial en Tiempos de Paz”), signaling a temporary critical moment of great collective sacrifice. Cubans faced an uncertain era of belt-tightening and hardship. The reforms that were to alleviate conditions brought additional tensions such as new forms of inequality based on access to hard currency.

Until its demise in 1991, Cuba had received vital support from the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet model and the shift in international context brought about a very large contraction in trade and overall economic activity (by at least 35 percent). The leadership opted for market mechanisms that included the urgent development of tourism as the leading economic sector, legalization of the dollar, enhanced role for foreign capital, permission of small-scale entrepreneurs, encouragement of remittances, improved scope for farmers’ markets, and a general adjustment program.¹

Cuban society was called upon to find a new model, but President Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders expressed their reluctance to accept the reforms and did not hide their desire to curtail them after a period of adjustment. There was no serious criticism for the preceding measures and model, and the state never relinquished its role as a primary engine of economic development. In fact, the authorities insisted that the reforms were a temporary deviation from socialism. They left unanswered the question of when and under what conditions and how the country would return to the building of socialism.

The corrective policy measures and ideas embraced at the turn of the century emphasized such themes as the development of socialist values and consciousness that in some ways resembled earlier concepts and strategies pursued in the 1980s and even the 1960s. It was in this context that the Battle of Ideas crystallized, sounding at times like a broad new strategy. By late 2005, a new Cabinet-level office had become “a super-ministry with a wide array of programs covering the most diverse fields, ...

1. My early analysis of the reform process is found in Font (1997).

effectively sidelining the competencies of the respective ministries or other established government authorities.” (Hoffman and Whitehead 2006). Would this be a passing moment or a durable phenomenon?

I. The Battle of Ideas

The Battle of Ideas has been discussed in different terms:

“When I visited Cuba (1999-2002), the phrase “Battle of Ideas” was a prominent slogan on state television, in the print media, and on billboards. The national media and political figures commonly used it in public forums to contextualize the international conflict surrounding Elián González.” (Tisdell Flikke 2007)

“a political operation of the Cuban state ...to maintain in power the historic bureaucracy of the “revolution” through a deepening of the cultural and media struggle against American imperialism, and whose principal object is the Cuban people.” (Paz Ortega)

“a multifaceted social, ideological and cultural counter-offensive, led by the country’s youth, against the corrosive impact of the market concessions.” (Cameron)

“We must continue to pulverize the lies that are told against us. . . . This is the ideological battle, everything is the Battle of Ideas.”(Fidel Castro, reported in Anderson 2006)

“... in this Battle of Ideas, the imperialists are headed for nothing other than a colossal Bay of Pigs ...” (Fidel Castro speech, March 31, 2001)

“The Battle of Ideas incorporates five political objectives: (1) the liberation of the five Cuban men incarcerated in Miami for espionage; (2) the end of the Helms-Burton Law, Torricelli Act, and other forms of the U.S. blockade; (3) the end of the world economic crisis that threatens humanity and particularly the Third World; (4) world peace; and (5) education and culture.” (García 2001:3)

“Castro's Last Great Battle. Castro’s goal is to reengage Cubans with the ideals of the revolution, especially young Cubans who came of age during what he called the Special Period.” (Jon Lee Anderson, *The New Yorker*)

“The Battle of Ideas [was organized and led by the UJC as] ... a political counteroffensive to the imperialist ideological drive and the pro-capitalist values it promotes ...”(Silverman et al.)

“Imperialism will never succeed in crushing Cuba. The Battle of Ideas will go forth. Long Live the Homeland! Long Live the Revolution! Long Live Socialism! Ever Onward to Victory!” (Fidel Castro, “Proclama” of July 31, 2006)

“Battle of Ideas? That’s just politics,” said the 18-year-old. “It doesn’t help us.” “... basic freedoms outweigh benefits like free university education.” (Maria, philosophy student at the University of Havana, AP)

“...many Cubans regard the Battle of Ideas as a spectacle they must tolerate but which is irrelevant to their lives.” (Anderson, in *The New Yorker*)

The above list evokes the parable of the blind men describing an elephant based on touching only one of its very different anatomical parts, creating an unbalanced and incomplete picture of the whole.¹ Should the Battle of Ideas be seen as a composite of the above characterizations?

Key antecedents of the Battle of Ideas are found in the words and pronouncements of Fidel Castro himself through the 1990s. Even in the early part of the decade, the speeches of the embattled Cuban president maintained the *superiority of Cuban socialism* as a development model. He supported national and international ideological campaigns to highlight the importance of *social development* over that of economic development, and Cuba’s accomplishments in that regard. Leaders pointed to significant achievements in *education, health, sports*. Though Cuba increasingly relied on tourism, Castro could also call attention to such themes as the production of cheaper vaccines to meet the needs of *developing countries*. Castro’s trips and travel throughout the 1990s sought to sell his model.

1. In John Godfrey Saxe’s version (1878) of this ancient Chinese parable, one blind man touches the tusk and argues that the elephant is like a spear; another feels the trunk and sees elephants as being like snakes; a third comes into contact with a leg and maintains that elephants are like trees; to a fourth who seized an ear elephants are like fans; the one stumbling upon a side concluded that the animal was like a wall; lastly, one reaching the tail argued as strenuously that elephants are like a rope. All were partly right yet largely wrong.

The Cuban leaders tried to regain their footing through the 1990s. They made slow headway, but at the end of the century, political and international conditions turned more auspicious. Two events linking international and national arenas created a new context. Internationally, the rise of Hugo Chavez after 1998 meant support and new hope for Castro and the hardliners, particularly after subsidized Venezuelan oil began to flow into the island. Some Cuban institutions like the Latin American Medical School experienced revival or expansion. A *new (or soft) form of internationalism* was now emerging, centered not so much on military interventions but on an enhanced role for health, education, and security personnel in Venezuela—and later, Bolivia and Nicaragua. Naming 2005 as the “year of the Bolivarian Alternative,” the Cuban authorities signed a major cooperation agreement with Venezuela. At the same time, the rise in the international price of nickel raised Cuban nickel exports to two billion dollars.

The Elián González case was also important. On November 25, 1999, Thanksgiving Day in the United States, the shipwrecked five-year-old Cuban boy reached Florida shores on an inner tube, following a difficult escape from Cuba in which his mother perished in the open seas. Almost immediately, Elián became a rallying symbol for Miami Cubans, a large number of whom mounted a major campaign to retain the boy in the United States under the custody of relatives.

Within Cuba, the reaction was fast, forceful, and even furious. The government and the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC) organized an increasingly well-orchestrated campaign to rally Cubans in support of Elián’s return to his father and other family who had stayed on the island. *Huge mass mobilizations* now became part of routine life in Cuba. FEU (University Student Federation) president Hassan Pérez, hitherto a relatively unknown and unpopular student leader, emerged as a national figure. National television ran numerous appeals and programs on the subject. Fidel Castro assumed personal leadership of the Cuban government’s international custody battle for Elián González’s repatriation. The authorities relied on the legal and political case to give custody to his father. Huge and frequent (at one point they were daily) mobilizations of Cuban youth and society called for his return. The Elián case was so important in the Battle of Ideas that Fidel designated December 5, 1999, the date of the very first rally, as its official beginning.

The campaign to gain custody of Elián as well as its outcome turned out to be a major political success for Castro personally and for his regime. In fact, it helped usher in notions of a *new phase in the construction of revolutionary socialism* in Cuba (Kapcia 2005). The mobilizations rallied many Cubans around their national leader, once again. The outcome confirmed the regime's claims to legality, and authorities basked in their ability to "protect a Cuban child against injustice." The case severely damaged the growing links between Cubans on the island and those in the United States—who had gained influence as a result of the role of remittances in alleviating the crisis that Cuba had experienced in the early 1990s. The Elián affair also gave new life to the historical animosity toward the United States. In 2001, Fidel Castro explicitly acknowledged the link between the Battle of Ideas, the mass mobilizations surrounding the Elián González case, and the new phase of the regime (speech of March 31, 2001).

The Battle of Ideas helped to further block the liberalizing reforms of the 1990s, and in that context can be seen as the basis for a strategy to strengthen the socialist revolution after years of tentative reform under the Special Period. The Battle of Ideas includes diverse goals and components.

TABLE 4-1. "Battle of Ideas" and Related Themes

Emphasis on Human and Social Development (even over economic growth)	(a) New investment in healthcare, education, and welfare (safety net). Pensions increased. (b) Large number of new social workers. Brigadas Estudiantiles de Trabajo Social. ¹
Educational Reform (2001-)	a) Social Work Training Colleges and other training or paraprofessional schools (<i>Escuelas Emergentes</i>): primary teaching, nursing, cultural education, information technology. (b) Universidad para Todos (new TV channel and courses) (c) University courses in all <i>municipios</i> (d) Special schools in sugar-producing and other rural areas (e) UCI: Universidad de las Ciencias Informaticas ²

TABLE 4-1. “Battle of Ideas” and Related Themes

Emphasis on Consciousness and Values	(a) Revolutionary renewal (new phase): moral/political incentives, superiority of socialism, Che Guevara as role model. (b) Engagement of intellectuals and role of culture. (c) Expansion of role of television and media. (Roundtables and others focus on attacking the US, Bush administration, and “Miami mafia”). (d) “Battle of Ideas” and revolutionary theory for the 21st century. (e) Museum for the Battle of Ideas (Cárdenas) (see Tisdell Flikke's analysis).
National Campaigns (direct leader-mass relationship)	(a) “Return Elián” campaign (b) Anti-Imperialism, anti-US nationalism (c) “Energy Revolution” (2005-; appliances, fluorescent light, new Contingentes after July 2007). (d) Combat theft of public assets/goods
Emphasis on Mass Mobilization	(a) Enhanced role to mass organizations, particularly youth organizations: UJC (Young Communists), FEU, and others. (b) Frequent ad hoc rallies and itinerant public meetings (Marchas and Tribunales Abiertas). (c) Brigadas, contingentes, and the like (linked to national campaigns).
Recentralization and Economic Role of the State	(a) Roll back dollarization (b) Decrease/neutralize role of small-scale entrepreneurs—2,000 private street stalls and other businesses shut down (June 2005), licensed entrepreneurs drop from 240,000 to 140,000. (c) Many foreign businesses leave Cuba: over half of the 800 firms registered in 2002 leave by mid-2005, as do 400 firms in free-trade zones and a large number of joint ventures. (d) State investments in tourism and services (e.g. modern restaurants).

TABLE 4-1. “Battle of Ideas” and Related Themes

Reaffirmation of Socialist Norms and Concepts in Economy	(a) Statistical and economic agencies calculate economic activity using methods that differ from those of capitalist societies. (b) “...to each according to work” (c) Salary not enough. (d) Fighting new forms of inequality. (e) Beyond the Special Period.
New Internationalism	Medical and educational teams; Cuba as model; “Patria es humanidad;” defense of the poor against ‘neoliberalism’ and globalization; anti-Bush/US sentiment, ALBA.

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1. Uriarte (2005)
 2. Sources: Kapcia (2004), Uriarte (2005)

The United States as Main Focus. The heart of the Elián González repatriation campaign was to show Cuba’s ability to challenge and confront Washington DC and Miami. While Elián’s return to the island led to the gradual cooling of sentiments over the issues it had generated, this theme is echoed in such other Battle of Ideas’ campaigns as the Posada Carriles, Free the 5 Cuban (Anti-Terrorists), and various other mobilizations in front of the US Interests Section. The leaders argued that Cuba’s ability to remain on course depended on the high levels of consciousness and commitment of Cubans, and in concrete terms that was defined as the country’s ability to resist pressure from the United States. Attacks on the US first focused on opposition to neoliberalism, shifting to anti-imperialism during the second term of the George W. Bush presidency, in tandem with the rising global unpopularity of the war in Iraq.

Human/Social Development. Cuban authorities now focused more directly on mounting social problems. The 1990s had indeed brought rising unemployment and underemployment as well as new forms of inequality and even exclusion in such matters as access to hotels and tourist facilities. The generation coming of age in that decade had experienced adverse structural conditions and faced high levels of unemployment. This was a sharp contrast to expectations created in the much better conditions of the 1980s. There were signs of dissatisfaction. From the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC) and other organizations central to the mobilizations surrounding the return of Elián came the impetus for some of the new programs that eventually coalesced into a new “educational

revolution” and the broader Battle of Ideas. The youth wing of the party worked with state agencies in launching schools of social work (to include unemployed youth), television courses, extension programs, and computer use.

More broadly, the Battle of Ideas would be framed as part of Cuba’s long-term focus on the supremacy of human and social development over economics. The educational system at all levels began to be overhauled. But the Battle of Ideas came to entail major new investment in welfare, health, and cultural development.

The government settled on a massive program to train, mobilize, and deploy social workers. Four schools of social work were set up throughout the country. Particularly after the second student cohort, they “took unemployed youth who had not been admitted to a university and paid them to go to school for a year where they learned to become social workers in the poor communities they had come from” (DuRand 2005). Newspapers reported more than 28,000 graduates from the program by 2005, nearly 35,000 by early 2007, and 42,000 in September 2007.¹ These youth were sent to address the problems of communities, often their own.

The authorities focused next on former sugar cane workers, who had become unemployed as a result of the closing of a large number of sugar mills. These “redundant” workers were retrained for other jobs and received payment from the Cuban state. The University of Havana led a strategy of *universalización* or the universalization of education. University rector Juan Vela led in this initiative. He was named Minister of Higher Education in 2006 and was given the task to broaden the “educational revolution” central to the Battle of Ideas.

Cuba Joins the Knowledge Revolution? The Battle of Ideas projects extended university facilities to most counties on the island, expanded the training of teachers, and offered courses through new television channels. A new University of Information Sciences (UCI) was created in 2002 as

1. The Social Work Program celebrated its 7th anniversary on September 10, 2007 (“Trabajadores sociales consolidan su papel en la Revolución,” *Granma* 9/11/2007). The *Granma* article claims an average age of 21, confirmed that the program was organized in 2000 by Fidel Castro himself, and alluded to some debate about future mission of the program. A speech by Carlos Lage argued that the program should not become either an administrative entity or a political organization.

part of the 170 programs of the Battle of Ideas (Rodriguez 2004). President Castro himself set up UCI and referred to its students as “troops of the future” (Valenciaga 2007). Hundreds of “computation clubs” had been organized in prior years throughout the island (Rushton 2004). But that was truly a mild response to the information or knowledge revolution unfolding globally. Over 1,300 information science engineers graduated from the UCI in 2007. According to Valenciaga, that year the island had 16,395 university level computing students. Together with the 39,000 students in the computer polytechnics, Cuba hence had 50,000 young people in this field. The labor force would provide software and computing services to the country and “to the world.” Valenciaga’s speech reveals a Fidel Castro concerned with every detail of this program, including how the graduates would be distributed across government offices. The speech asked for total commitment from the graduates to the needs of the “threatened fatherland” and warned them about the possibility of a brain drain from the United States.

National Campaigns and Mass Mobilizations. The Battle of Ideas’ national campaigns have relied on Marchas, Tribunas Abiertas, various rallies, other forms of mass mobilization, and TV Round Tables (Mesas Redondas Informativas). While young leaders emerged from these campaigns, Fidel Castro was the main speaker or figure in these events. The organizational ideas of the Elián campaign were later adapted to other purposes.

Television and other media have been harnessed to the goals and methods of the Battle of Ideas. Attacks on the US, particularly the Bush administration and Cubans in Miami (“Miami mafia”), have remained constant themes. Of the traditional mass organizations, the UJC has been particularly important in the Battle of Ideas. The Brigadas Técnicas Juveniles (BTJ) were involved in the Tribunas Abiertas rallies, many of which took place in front of the US Interests Section (a space later named Tribuna Anti-imperialista José Martí). Young Pioneers and formations of Social Workers have also mobilized in support of these activities, reflecting the focus on the Cuban youth. Castro has framed the campaign to combat corruption and theft of state property, largely as part of the battle against inequality resulting from access to hard currency by a significant number of Cubans (more than half of whom are reported as receiving remittances).

The Battle of Ideas, Youth, and Regime Survival. Fidel Castro has repeatedly argued that socialism is fundamentally different from capitalism and has to be built through new forms of consciousness and solidarity. In his view, socialism collapsed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union because of an inability or unwillingness to resist the growing influence of capitalism and capitalist ideas in the 1980s. In contrast, Cuban socialism did not collapse in the early 1990s because of revolutionary consciousness and communist ideology. The commitment of leaders to defend socialism at all costs has been essential, according to Castro. It hence follows that the revolution will survive to the extent that revolutionaries continue to believe in their ability to address the needs of the most vulnerable in society and neutralize the impact of inequality and privilege.

A few months before the onset of his illness in July 2006, President Castro himself raised the possibility that the revolution could be ultimately defeated from within, as a result of demoralization from the failure to prevent inequalities, capitalist influences, and corruption. “Revolutions in great countries fell or collapsed precisely because of corruption, bureaucracy, lack of consciousness, bad methods of working with the masses and other [internal] failures,” Castro stated in a December 6, 2005 rally celebrating the official sixth anniversary of the Battle of Ideas. If youth is essential in the renewal of revolutionary socialism, youth must be called into service in a manner that promotes socialist consciousness. This goal helps explain the new programs that train many of the young as social workers and other socially-aware instructors.

Youth organizations, the newly trained social workers, and other instructors focus on specific neighborhoods and homes, thereby studying social conditions and helping families solve their problems. They gather information on various issues, including the number of seniors needing personal services. Social workers appear to have been well received by the general population. They often have working-class backgrounds and are seen as defending the interests of the people against the “new rich.” Since the basic premise is that workers and retired workers in Cuba’s aging population must be given priority in the socialist revolution, having the youth focus on providing services for them reinforces inter-generational bonds and social harmony.

The newly trained workers are also engaged in fighting the theft of state-owned energy resources and the use of bribes at gas stations. Their vigilance in preventing workers from appropriating or diverting fuel for personal benefit led to the doubling of gasoline sales receipts within a few weeks—according to the authorities. “Just how many ways of stealing do we have in this country?” asked Castro on November 17, 2005. According to him, common Cubans welcomed the new forms of vigilance in dollar stores, drugstores, and other places. Earlier speeches acknowledge the widespread presence of theft in “ports, trains, pharmacies, stores, and factories,” and Castro was convinced that this would be effectively resolved by training and organization (e.g., speech at the sixth anniversary of the battle of ideas, December 6, 2005). He expressed admiration for youths coming from economically disadvantaged environments and becoming highly prepared and well trained.

The Battles of Ideas can be seen as “a catch-phrase for efforts to win them [disaffected Youth] over through improvements in education, housing, health care and the everyday quality of life,” claims journalist Will Weissert (Weissert 2007). But, many share his view to the effect that “these days, many young Cubans are more interested in access to the Internet, music, television and movies than upholding revolutionary ideals.”

State Socialism and Socialist Norms. The Cuban economy experienced some degree of economic recovery after 2004. Aid from Venezuela and China, the rising price of nickel and other commodities, the consolidation of the tourist sector (notwithstanding the recent slowdown in the number of tourists), new forms of management, and the relative modernization of production processes in some sectors are largely responsible for the improvements in economic conditions. But hardliners, many of whom play major roles in the Battle of Ideas, take the recent partial recovery as support for the idea of maintaining or even increasing the economic role of the Cuban state. They have favored the movement against small-scale entrepreneurship. Hardliners also share the goal of returning the economy to socialist norms of production. Statistical and economic agencies now calculate economic activity using methods that differ from those of capitalist societies or those previously used in Cuba—confirming, incidentally, that care needs to be exercised in using official statistics.

The return to statist ideologies implies a break from the liberalizing reforms associated with the Special Period. For instance, the reliance on two currencies shapes the broader policy debate in Cuba. In late 2004, the government announced that the US dollar would no longer be accepted as payment for goods and services. Though created in the early 1990s, the Cuban Convertible Peso or CUC had been in limited use. By 2004, the CUC, a functional equivalent of hard currency, was reinforced, and was even to be used in purchases in “dollar stores.” To further penalize holders of US dollars, a 10 percent fee started to be applied to dollar-CUC currency exchanges. Tourists and visitors are encouraged to bring euros, which are exchanged at the standard rate. At one point, Cuban bank account holders were reported to have reduced their dollar holdings by 57 percent, while saving accounts in Cuban convertible pesos have grown more than threefold.

II. Limits and Prospects of the Battle of Ideas

Fidel Castro aimed at turning key elements of the Battle of Ideas into an international campaign. According to some reports, the 2006 Havana summit of the non-aligned countries would have done so by means of a proposal for international cooperation in which Cuba would send teachers, medical personnel, and ideas to further a worldwide energy revolution. In this account, the Cuban Foreign Ministry pulled the proposal out of the summit’s agenda after confirming less than enthusiastic interest on the part of many member countries.

It is quite clear, however, that pragmatic policymakers and reformers within the regime itself are not enthusiastic about the idea of a major shift toward orthodox socialism or turning back to the Rectification period creed. Many feel that the country needs to focus on key internal priorities, rather than the international promotion of a Cuban model of socialist development. Cuba needs to act practically in terms of agreements with Venezuela and other countries. According to Maingot (2007), the real battle of ideas in Cuba is that between internal reformers and hardliners.

There are indeed various cases and evidence that suggest a substantial number of reformers, managers, specialists, and ordinary Cubans hold views, preferences, and assumptions that differ considerably from the return to socialist orthodoxy of the Battle of Ideas.

Yet, if opposing sentiment was in fact growing, the Battle of Ideas strategy would have entered a period of decline with Castro's own poor health during the second half of 2006 and the first quarter of 2007. During this interlude, Cuba should have turned, even if slowly and tentatively, toward pragmatism and reform. Indeed, accounts by a number of observers tend to confirm this view and rationale.

However, Fidel Castro's recovery and gradual return to public attention since March 2007 renewed the suspense of the impending change and direction of Cuban society in the immediate future. In this context, this paper gauges Fidel Castro's current and prospective role and priorities in terms of the close scrutiny of over thirty articles—*Reflexiones del Comandante en Jefe*—published under his name in Cuban newspapers (*Granma*, but also *Juventud Rebelde*, *Trabajadores*), news services Prensa Latina and AIN, and other media from late March through December 2007 (see Appendix). I apply content analysis techniques to the study of these texts. Some basic results are reported here.¹

This series of pronouncements succeeded in attracting considerable international media attention, actually refocusing the spotlight on Fidel Castro. After eight months largely away from center stage, starting in late March 2007 the Cuban leader returned to the headlines and resumed his standing as the main figure in Cuba's national psyche. *Granma*, *Juventud Rebelde*, and other newspapers and news agencies promptly published or released these essays. Most did so in front-page columns titled "Reflexiones del Comandante en Jefe," with links to versions in at least eight languages (Spanish, English, French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Russian, and Arabic). The author's instructions indicated that the Ideology Department of the Communist Party of Cuba and the Chief of Staff (Jefe de Despacho) of the Council of State were to be in charge of disseminating these articles. Most Cuban newspapers and media made full use of these essays. Newscasts repeated them several times, while Mesa Redonda discussed them in primetime television. The international media frequently cites them, gradually focusing on content more than on questions about Castro's health. In the column written on June 22, Castro states that his *Reflexiones* are not the result of a careful plan, but rather of his strong

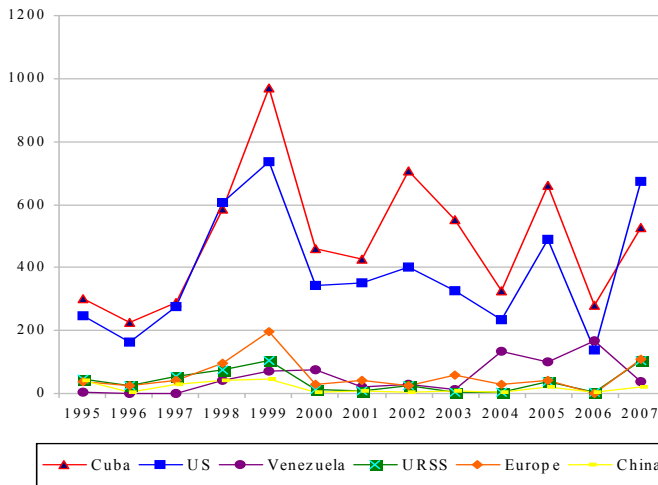
1. I thank Marcela Gonzalez and Amara Davidson for excellent research assistance in the content analysis of texts by Fidel Castro.

desire to communicate with “el protagonista principal de nuestra resistencia a medida que observo las acciones estúpidas del imperio.”

What are the main themes found in these articles and what do they indicate about trends in Cuban society, including the Battle of Ideas?

Of the 66 *Reflexiones* published through December 31, 2007 the vast majority of these essays have some criticism or attack directed at the United States as prominent or central points. The specific targets are Pres-

FIGURE 4-1. Mentions of US and other countries in F. Castro's Speeches and *Reflexiones*



ident George W. Bush, the CIA, US imperialism, and the broader “world tyranny” represented by the United States. Challenges or critiques of the US are present even in articles focused on seemingly unrelated topics, such as sports.

Ethanol. Several of the essays attack the US-favored energy strategy promoting ethanol. The title of the first article, “Condenados a muerte prematura por hambre y sed mas de 3 mil millones de personas en el mundo” was published on March 28, 2007. It suggests in rather dramatic terms that such US policies will bring death, hunger, or thirst to 3 billion persons. The essay itself focuses on the costs of producing ethanol from corn (“la idea siniestra de convertir alimentos en combustible”), with implicit

reference to the Brazil-US accords on ethanol. The second article, published on April 3, elaborates Castro's arguments in specific reference to the Camp David meeting of presidents Bush and Lula (Brazil). Six additional articles (4/30, 5/9, 5/14, 5/16, 5/22, 5/23) further extend Castro's challenge of the new emphasis on ethanol.

These writings use forceful language to challenge the ethanol strategy, arguing that it will harm the developing and poor countries in the Southern hemisphere. Expanding the use of agriculture to produce fuel will worsen already high food prices, global warming, and the exploitation of agricultural workers. In Castro's view, the world does indeed need a new energy regime ("an energy revolution"), but one that will focus on the adoption of conservation measures—much like Cuba's shift from incandescent to fluorescent lighting. More broadly, President Castro was using his critique of the proposed ethanol regime as a platform for the superior "energy revolution" adopted by Cuba under his leadership.

Since Brazil is in fact the pioneer and possibly most interested party in the wider use of ethanol to fuel cars, this line of argument has brought Castro and the Cuban government into debate with Brazil and President Lula. The Brazilians have been emphatic about the success of their approach. They therefore rapidly distanced themselves from claims by Castro and the Cuban government in regard to their views on this topic. Why was this issue so important to Castro and to the Cuban government that they would risk harming relations with Brazil? The answer appears to center on Castro's desire to internationalize key elements of his idea—directly and forcefully challenging US policies and approaches, while claiming moral and ideological superiority to the principles and policies of his Cuban Revolution and its allies. But it may also be speculated that he did not fully anticipate the impact that his reasoning would have on the Brazilians. Or else, Castro could also have been trying either to draw Lula and Brazil to his way of thinking, or to side with Hugo Chavez in terms of leftist politics in South America. (While Castro's arguments imply strong criticism of the Brazilian position, some passages simply praise the policies of Venezuela and China).

The ethanol reflections clarify Castro's profound animosity toward president George W. Bush and the United States. In these articles as well as in others, he refers to Bush as "jefe máximo del imperio." In Castro's account, Bush "decided" to take away food needed to feed the world's

hungry and poor. His “diabolical” plans to use food as fuel amounts to genocide against the poor, while the emerging ethanol regime should be seen as a major factor in global warming.

At the same time, the *Reflexiones* turn Cuba’s economic problems into virtue by arguing that the world’s energy revolution should not be based on false hopes for growth and consumerism. The Cuban leader’s position on energy further aims at claiming the moral and political high ground by defending the world’s poor against the ravages of the developed North. He champions such causes as cheap food for the poor, the welfare of sugarcane workers, environmental protection, and the battle against global warming.

Resisting Imperialism. But the main theme in Fidel Castro’s *Reflexiones* is the view that the United States is aggressive, imperial, and prone to the use of violence and terror—including assassination attempts on his own life.

On April 3, “La respuesta brutal” cites a ruling on Posada Carriles, charged with masterminding the blowing up of a Cubana de Aviación plane in 1976, to argue that “El más genuino representante de un sistema de terror que ha sido impuesto al mundo por la superioridad tecnológica, económica y política de la potencia más poderosa que ha conocido nuestro planeta, es sin duda George W. Bush.” Bush is referred to as a “tirano mundial,” “apocalíptico,” and “jefe máximo del imperio.” Nine additional essays attack or denounce three main phenomena: advanced arms build-up by the US and threats to world peace; US imperial designs on Cuba (“No Tendrán Jamás a Cuba,” June 17); and orders or attempts to assassinate Castro by the CIA or Bush himself (6/24, 6/28, 7/1).

Free Trade Agreements. A third theme against the United States is criticisms of free trade agreements signed by the US.

Europe. Three essays criticize the European Union or the UK for subservience to the US on Cuba policy, arms buildup (including a new British submarine), and the like.

Sports: Pan-American Games in Brazil (late July). Four pieces written in the *Reflexiones* series comment on the XV Pan-American games held in Rio de Janeiro in July of 2007. The first two note Fidel’s excitement about the competition and the level of excellence of the Cuban team. Approvingly, Castro applauds that Cuban athletes are ready to compete

“even in the mud,” implying a contrast with comments about the US baseball team’s unwillingness to do so because of rain. The tone shifts in the third article, “Is Brazil a Substitute for the United States?” in which Castro denounces the defection of several members of the Cuban team (including a no-show by two top Cuban boxers), and dismisses the defectors as traitors and mercenaries. He blames the event on the US and market-driven international recruiters—a mafia that uses “refined psychological methods and many millions of dollars” to persuade Cuban athletes to participate in international sports competitions. “Treason for money is one of the favorite arms of the United States to destroy Cuba’s resistance,” he maintains. Castro argues against the idea of granting these athletes asylum in Brazil (though the terms he uses to characterize the athletes might be considered sufficient evidence of threats or future danger to the authorities assessing the defectors request for asylum). The fourth article, published one day after Raúl Castro’s speech in the July 26 celebrations, quotes extensively from international cables on how the two defecting boxers were being incorporated into the international sports industry.¹

Conditions in Cuba. Aside from US criticisms, some of the articles focus on the conditions in Cuba and the socialist spirit. One column commented on Vilma Espín upon her death. “Las luchas de Vilma” focuses on her role as a revolutionary and her example to other Cuban women. The column reads as a call for Cuban women to emulate her. The article does not mention Vilma Espín as a mother, wife, or even as Castro’s sister-in-law—other than once sentence near the end of the article that reads, “Los deberes revolucionarios y su inmenso trabajo nunca le impidieron a Vilma cumplir sus responsabilidades como compañera leal y madre de numerosos hijos.”

An essay titled “Cuba’s Self-Criticism” addresses patterns of inequality in Cuba resulting from remittances and hard currency flows. “A flood of foreign currency has created irritating inequalities.” Cuba was not a “consumer society,” but some Cubans who receive foreign currency from abroad set up “illicit” activities and at the same time enjoy the ration cards, housing, healthcare, and other free benefits. Those who do not

1. In subsequent days, these boxers would be detained by the Brazilian police and returned to Cuba.

receive convertible currency are at a disadvantage. “The real and visible lack of equality” results in criticisms by the disadvantaged. Castro lamented in particular “the juicy profits” earned by unlicensed taxi services. Their use of scarce gasoline for profit “can compromise the independence and life of Cuba.” “We cannot fool around with that!”—states the Cuban leader.

The scrutiny of Fidel Castro’s *Reflexiones* points to a leader focused on the survival of the revolution, attacking its archenemy, convincing Cubans of the need for clarity of ideas to preserve the revolution, calling on Cubans to cultivate revolutionary virtue, defending the revolution from various threats, and maintaining his own role and legacy. Castro argues that socialism collapsed in the USSR and Eastern Europe precisely because of internal neglect and unclear ideas, resulting in wavering commitment and opening Cuban society to dangerous Western influences. These essays highlight the importance Castro places on the battle of ideas, values, and related measures to preserve the revolution.

The Jefe Máximo insists on a strategy to keep the United States at bay. Interestingly, Miami and Cuban Americans receive relatively little direct attention in the *Reflexiones*. The *Reflexiones* are a call to defend the revolution’s virtues at all costs, reclaiming a high international profile and moral high ground. The frequency and timing of these essays suggest that Castro is leaving open the possibility of reclaiming his leading role, though he also presents himself as humble seemingly reconciled with his role as convalescent statesman.

III. “Battle of Ideas” and Socialist Renewals

Fuller insights into the emergent model of the Battle of Ideas model can be derived from comparing it with previous shifts in the Cuban regime, particularly that of the mid-1980s, as well as to comparable changes in other socialist societies. Internationally, China’s Cultural Revolution is an obvious candidate for comparison.

In fact, much of the impulse behind the Battle of Ideas may appropriately be compared to earlier chapters of socialist radicalization or renewal in the Cuban revolution.

The most directly relevant moment is the 1986 “Rectification,” which both put a break on liberalization processes and institutional development

in place since 1970, and set in motion a return to socialist orthodoxy. Though Rectification (the full name was “Rectification of Errors and Negative Tendencies”) came to a screeching halt with the crisis of socialism and the onset of the Special Period, it was the dominant policy paradigm in Cuba for more than five years. It advanced principles and ideas close to those of the Battle of Ideas. Rectification returned Cuba to the notion of radical statism, sharply curtailing forms of market expansion allowed in the earlier part of the 1980s. But instead of planning, it rejected bureaucratization and embraced mass action. Against ‘selfish’ individualism and material incentives, it brought back egalitarianism, moral incentives, and voluntarism. To fight the black-market, low worker productivity, depoliticization, and demoralization, the Rectification advanced grassroots participation, microbrigades, Communist consciousness, and the example of a selfless Che Guevara. Fidel Castro maintained, “the construction of socialism and communism is essentially a political task and a revolutionary task. It must be fundamentally the fruit of the development of awareness and educating people for socialism and communism” (Azicri 1990).

In turn, both the Battle of Ideas and Rectification draw from the radical socialism of the 1960s, when nationalizations, large mobilizations, and reliance on moral incentives resulted in a highly centralized form of state socialism—a process that reached its limits with the disastrous sugar harvest of 1970. In the 1980s as well as the 1960s, Fidel Castro relied on charisma, anti-bureaucracy (institutions), mass mobilization, ethical appeals, moral rather than material incentives, and related measures to return Cuban society to what was viewed as a unitary, monolithic form of socialism.

The Battle of Ideas should only in part be understood as an expression of the strength of the ideological fundamentalism of Fidel Castro and Cuban revolutionaries. The continuity in discourse, political forms, and protagonists is clear. But as in the past, reassertions of orthodoxy also imply enhanced political roles for Fidel Castro and must also be viewed in terms of a political logic. In addition, the Battle of Ideas gives Castro a relatively coherent strategy for burnishing his legacy and enhancing his international standing after the hard times of the Special Period and intimations of his own mortality.

The Cuban Puzzle

However, the distinct context of the Battle of Ideas makes the outcome considerably more uncertain than in the case of the Rectification of the 1980s. As a model or strategy, the Battle of Ideas depends on Fidel Castro himself, who claims to have worked more than 7,000 hours on its original design (Castro 2004). It is true that young leaders Otto Rivero, Hassan Pérez, Randy Alonso, and others have catapulted into prominence or high office because of their roles in the campaign, but they lack legitimacy and control of political bases. The comparison with other episodes of socialist renewal, such as China's Cultural Revolution, suggests that they are often political processes in which leader-mass (and great leader-youth) phenomena reflect and reaffirm the centrality of the former. It is hence to be surmised that the future of the Battle of Ideas depends in large measure on the extent to which Fidel Castro recovers his health and his full political authority.

Fidel Castro's recent return as a public figure, even if primarily through the *Reflexiones*, suggests that the Battle of Ideas is itself still alive. Even if the campaign is not as frequently mentioned in the recent past, the Cuban leader's essays contain persistent appeals to revolutionary consciousness and ideas. Is the reform process on hold? Is Cuba likely to return to the path of socialist orthodoxy the way it did at critical junctures in the 1960s and 1986?

That appears highly unlikely—at least in the sense of the possibility that the policy will endure for a sufficiently long period of time. First, even if Castro were to return to power, he is not the leader he once was, and would find it very difficult to steer Cuba in that direction. In any case, it would seem to be unlikely that he would rule Cuba for a sufficiently long duration. Without Castro, hardliners as a group do not seem to have particularly appealing leaders, despite the salience of young leaders recruited from the UJC and FEU.

Meanwhile, Cuba's reformers are a significant force now and one likely to continue to gain strength. Some recent changes in Cuban society favor them. Cuba today is a significantly more complex society than in the past. The island's management structure is now more effectively decentralized and even segmented than it was at any other point since the 1960s. The largest enterprises and agencies in tourism and the hard-cur-

rency sector (hotels, restaurants, transportation, and the like) are run with considerable operational autonomy. Various large projects in mining are also under complex management arrangements, as are key components of Havana's central or historical core. Managers have succeeded in creating conditions for a modest recovery and stand to benefit more from a pragmatic expansion of the reform process than from the return of socialist orthodoxy. More importantly, even before his recent speech on July 26, 2007, acting president Raúl Castro was known to be in favor of reforms.

In political economic terms, it may be possible to speak of a loose and informal coalition of actors whose transactions are routinely conducted in hard-currency equivalents such as the Cuban convertible peso (CUCs). Remittances, gifts, and purchases by outsiders and by Cubans with access to foreign currency generate substantial flows vital to the economy and affect the lives of many Cubans who are in effect part of this loose and informal coalition.¹ Operators and holders of hard currency equivalents currently hold an important position in Cuban society.

In addition, a large and seemingly growing number of individuals, many of them in the traditional *peso* economy, share a problematic allegiance to the idea of a renewed revolutionary project envisioned by some hardliners. Youth are the main case in point. Notwithstanding the government's efforts to instill consciousness in the young and enhance their support of the revolution project, disillusionment is rampant. Most Cuban youths want to live their lives in their own terms, rather than sacrifice themselves for some distant national goal. A large number would rather migrate to another country if they could. It will take more than dreams and promises to regain the affective allegiance of these actors.

The government is delivering refurbished medical facilities, training thousands of new teachers, and offering cultural programs such as book and video clubs. However, "it's not hard to find teenagers who say such things are not enough" (Weissert 2007). As this source reports, these are the views of Francisco Hernandez, an English major at the University of Havana, for whom "The Battle of Ideas has nothing to do with change. It

1. Currency dualism does generate tension, but despite notions of a return to a single currency it would seem rather difficult to imagine an alternative to the existing system in the near future.

Appendix I

is the opposite.” To this student, “Cuba’s communism is ‘broken’ and [with] gaping income gaps. Some people have money, some people can travel. Some people can live in big houses and eat in restaurants... The rest of us can do none of that.” Other reports point to Cuban youth’s dissatisfaction over limited economic opportunities and freedom. Public statements by Fidel Castro (e.g., 2007 letter to UJC), Carlos Lage, Raúl Castro, and other authorities have acknowledged the problem.

A full assessment of prospects for specific changes in the Cuban model is beyond this paper’s objectives. However, Raúl Castro’s speech of July 26, 2007 confirmed the strength of the reform process in Cuba and argued against the likelihood of a full episode of socialist renewal. An era of deepening structural reform awaits Cubans—announced Raúl. Cuba hence finds itself between contrasting paths offered by the Castro brothers. But the then interim president himself also stated that reformers will act slowly and cautiously. In no small way this is due to Fidel Castro’s own political positions and role. Meanwhile, though the more ambitious aims and hopes of the Battle of Ideas may not be sustained, several specific programs and tendencies (for example, educational institutions and programs, some entitlements, and the like) seem to have better short-term prospects. A turning point beyond the current stalemate with the hardliners will ultimately hinge on the reformers’ willingness and ability to confront and transcend the traditional orthodoxy of state socialism. Because so much of the debate within inside Cuba is framed in terms of mistrust of US policy toward the island, that too is no doubt an important factor in the resolution of this debate. For better or for worse, the United States is a big part of the Cuban puzzle.

Appendix I

Chronology, 1986-2007

1986

Feb, Dec 3rd Congress of Communist Party of Cuba

December Rectification Policy

1989 Fall of Berlin Wall

1991 Demise of the URSS (and end of Soviet assistance)

4TH Congress of Communist Party of Cuba

1991-1993 Onset and Peak of Economic Crisis

Toughening of US embargo (Torricelli's Cuban Democracy Act) as Soviets leave Cuba

1995 Break on Reform Process

1996 Helms-Burton Law (Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, [or, Libertad])

Revitalization of Communist Party

Speech of Raúl Castro to CCP (uses term "battle of ideas," CEA affair) launches ideological offensive

1997 5th Congress of Communist Party of Cuba (Strengthening of party)

1998 January Pope John Paul II visits Cuba

US eases restrictions on remittances

1999

November Elián González arrives in Florida, new chapter in US-Cuba relations

December Official launching of 'Battle of Ideas' (12/5, Elián's birthday)

2000 George W. Bush becomes president

June Elián González returned to Cuba

2002

May US Under Secretary John Bolton accuses Cuba of maintaining an "offensive biological warfare research and development effort"

Former president Jimmy Carter visits Cuba

2003 Peak of reform process initiated during the Special Period

2005

January Castro declares end of post-Soviet economic crisis

2006

Appendix II Tables

July 31 Fidel Castro falls ill and cedes power to Raúl Castro and other officials (Proclama)

2007

January 1 Absent from the annual celebrations of the 1959 victory of the revolution.

March Fidel Castro begins writing *Reflexiones* (del Comandante en Jefe), widely covered in the Cuban media and internationally.

July 26 Raúl Castro delivers ‘reformist’ speech at celebration of Moncada attack. Fidel Castro absent.

2008

January 1 Fidel Castro absent from the anniversary celebrations of the Revolution opening the 50th year of the revolution. Has not been seen at a public event since July, 2006.

Appendix II Tables

TABLE 4-2. United States Frecuencias

Word Stem	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	Total
United States/ Estados Unidos	144	66	126	397	431	196	202	204	188	77	209	58	341	1639
Empire/ Imperio	20	30	40	34	45	15	34	34	20	23	89	19	60	463
Imperial- ism/ist	27	44	76	20	33	22	24	25	17	13	29	10	122	363
Bush	1	-	-	5	12	7	3	69	29	82	52	29	23	411
American	56	21	36	147	214	104	88	69	72	41	110	22	124	1104

Sources: 1995, 1996 & 1997: Granma Spanish. 1998-2007: Granma English. Only through July 31, 2006, when FC becomes ill

TABLE 4-2. United States Frequencies

Word Stem	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	Total
North American	-	-	-	5	2	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	3	13
Total	248	161	278	608	737	344	352	402	327	236	489	138	673	4993

Sources: 1995, 1996 & 1997: Granma Spanish. 1998-2007: Granma English. Only through July 31, 2006, when FC becomes ill

TABLE 4-3. Country Frequencies

	Cuba	US	Europe	China	Venez.	URSS
1995	301	248	36	40	4	45
1996	225	161	24	4	0	24
1997	289	278	40	30	1	54
1998	584	608	97	42	40	77
1999	970	737	198	45	73	106
2000	461	344	31	5	74	14
2001	425	352	42	8	22	9
2002	708	402	24	6	29	23
2003	551	327	59	10	14	6
2004	326	236	31	6	133	3
2005	662	489	40	19	99	39
2006	281	138	2	5	168	3
2007	527	673	109	19	37	106
Total	3106	4993	733	239	694	509

Appendix II Tables

TABLE 4-4. World Frequencies

Word Stem	95 sp	96 sp	97 sp	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	Total
Socialis Social- ism/ socialist	152	112	141	67	72	34	68	54	20	9	31	2	18	780
Communis Communism/ commu- nist	29	17	44	16	36	20	4	19	6	10	33	3	30	267
Capitalis- Capital- ism/ capitalist	63	59	96	30	52	11	12	27	18	6	13	2	15	404
Battle of Ideas	-	-	-	-	4	4	9	15	8	23	25	5	3	96
Cuba Cuban	301	225	289	584	970	461	425	708	551	326	662	281	527	6310
United States- Bush/ Ameri- can/North Ameri- can / Empire/ Imperialis	248	161	278	608	737	344	352	402	327	236	489	138	673	4993
Cuban- American	-	-	-	11	40	19	6	-	2	4	4	4	3	93
Europe European	36	24	40	97	198	31	42	24	59	31	40	2	109	733
Mexico Mexican	2	7	21	112	26	13	21	271	31	14	42	20	30	610

Sources: 1995, 1996 & 1997: Granma Spanish. 1998-2007: Granma English. Only through July 31, 2006, when FC becomes ill

TABLE 4-4. World Frequencies

Word Stem	95 sp	96 sp	97 sp	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	Total
Brazil-Brazilian	4	-	7	56	54	2	8	7	12	-	1	3	62	216
Chile-Chilean	4	10	5	19	6	3	6	8	10	3	6	2	6	88
Venezuela Bolivar/Chavez	4	-	1	40	73	74	22	29	14	133	99	168	37	694
Argentina-Argentinian/Argentina	4	-	4	20	13	4	7	20	4	-	3	6	2	119
China-Chinese	40	4	30	42	45	5	8	6	10	6	19	5	19	239
Russia-Russian/URSS/Soviet	45	24	54	77	106	14	9	23	6	3	39	3	106	509
Asia-Asian	10	8	15	36	19	4	11	6	8	3	7	-	5	132

Sources: 1995, 1996 & 1997: Granma Spanish. 1998-2007: Granma English. Only through July 31, 2006, when FC becomes ill

Appendix II Tables

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CHAPTER 5

Batalla de Ideas: Old Ideology in New Clothes?

Antoni Kapcia

Abstract: Rather than dismissing the post-2000 Batalla de Ideas as empty rhetoric or a desperate attempt to stave off the inevitable, we should understand the phenomenon within a wider historical context: of elements of continuity since 1959, of processes of ideological development and reinforcement, of patterns of internal “debate,” and of the continual and necessary alternation between participation through active mobilization and participation through structure. As a result, it may perhaps be too early to write off the campaign and the collective experience as meaningless and anachronistic.

Cuba's *Batalla de Ideas* (officially dating from 5 December 1999, the first Elián González rally) has often been dismissed as empty rhetoric, desperation of a moribund regime, an example of idiosyncratic and irrational personalist rule or a nostalgic return to the 1960s. Indeed, even inside Cuba, it has occasionally been seen as a costly, chimerical, and pointless exercise.¹

However, as is so often true, the reality is that it can be seen as both none of those things and all of those things; it is all of them, because there is an element of truth in all these images, but, more importantly, it is none of them, because what it represented was much more complex. Therefore, as Cuba takes stock of its future under a leader reputedly cautious about the *Batalla*, this is a moment to reassess it all, to assess its complex origins, nature and implications, and also to judge its success. For this purpose, we need to use two separate, but related, prisms: ideology and

1. The purpose of this national exercise (required of all of Cuba's Mass Organizations, the ruling Communist Party and the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas) was to discuss the implications of Raúl Castro's speech on 26 July 2007, in which he had voiced criticisms of Cuba's failings and suggested issues for discussion.

methodology, within a historical reading of the Revolution's trajectory since 1959.

However, we first need to recall the context for the *Batalla* and its subsequently christening. In summer 2000, as the Elián campaign moved towards its conclusion, its significance became clear to leaders and participants alike, although not necessarily to outsiders. A year later, on 15 August 2001, Fidel Castro launched the “educational revolution,” which, within a month, was bearing fruit in the first emergency schools. The term *Batalla* then began to be used more systematically, although this retrospective christening persuaded many observers that the exercise was simply capitalizing on a popular issue to legitimize a new “phase” of the faltering Revolution. This interpretation was of course enhanced by the Revolution's long history of “phases,” seen variously as indicative of confusion and lack of direction, of irrationality and personalism, or of intrigue and factionalism (Mesa-Lago, 1974); according to this reading, Fidel was leading an exhausted Cuban people through yet another ambitious “phase” to evade declining credibility, economic crisis and advancing capitalism. Therefore, the *Batalla*, with its astonishing scale and scope, was simply the 1968 Revolutionary Offensive repeated, bound to have the same deleterious and demoralizing effects of that former campaign.² Since the *Batalla*'s focus was always on “ideas,” and since Fidel had repeatedly called for ideological strengthening of Cuba's youth to resist the effects of the market and individualism, Fidel was depicted as Canute.

We should, therefore, first examine the ideological dimension of the *Batalla*. However, the question of “ideology” in Cuba inevitably raises several issues: what is meant by 'ideology, what were the 'strengthening' mechanisms used, and how did this all fit into the Revolution's whole trajectory? The first question is relevant because the dismissal of the *Batalla*'s ideological purpose has generally arisen from a particular reading of ideology in Cuba, as a top-down imposition of a dogmatic Marxism-Leninism (Bunck, 1994). However, as many have observed,

2. The March 1968 campaign saw the nationalization of around 56,000 small businesses, as part of two processes: the rapid drive towards a radical version of Communism and the build-up to the make-or-break 10-million ton 1970 sugar harvest. One immediate outcome was a noticeable increase in absenteeism at work.

“ideology” in Cuba should never be dismissed in these terms, arguing instead that we should recognize the complex processes of ideological formation both before and after 1959 (Liss 1987; Fernández 2000; Kapcia, 2000; Gott 2004).³ Besides recognizing the roots of this ideology, however, we should also examine the complex processes of negotiation, synthesis and organic growth of its emergence, and the parallel processes of ideological definition, redefinition and reinforcement which the Revolution has pursued over 50 years.

For one characteristic since 1959 has been the continuity detectable between the basic tenets of 1959-60 and those evident since, despite apparent contradiction and change through all its bewildering “phases.” That continuity is detectable less in precise formulations or programs at particular moments than in the underlying principles (*valores*) or codes (Valdés 1992). We might, for example, take collectivism first, being the one most associated with the move towards Communism and apparently most undermined after 1990. Despite expectations that it only arose after 1961 under Soviet and Marxist influences, it was actually rooted in principles of community and solidarity inherited from the pre-revolutionary *cubanía*, reinforced in the collective experiences of 1959. Hence, as the post-1990 crisis fragmented social cohesion, it was this which ensured that something of the community principle survived; for, although individualism became increasingly evident, it did so within a wider context of family, social and local networks which created a shared response to the new challenges, a framework of social networks, ways of acting and attitudes which substituted for the state. In essence it was that Cuban civil society long overlooked and denied by those seeing “civil society” as necessarily opposed to, and negated by, the state, a counterweight to the monolith; it was a civil society which, now partly disengaged from its symbiotic relationship with the weakened state, stood in for it during the shortages and the forced localization of activity and focus.⁴

Moreover, that *valor* was evidently shared by Cuba's Christian churches and *santería*, which, equally fearful about declining social cohe-

3. Most of the following discussion of ideology, ideological codes and political-historical myths relies on the arguments laid out in Kapcia (2000).

4. For alternatives to the “civil society versus the state” paradigm, see Hernández (2007), Crahan and Armony (2007), and Gray and Kapcia (2008).

sion, joined the state and Party in seeking a way out of the crisis. It was this which essentially made the Pope's 1998 visit as much a celebration of that sharing as a demonstration of a pragmatic *modus vivendi*.

Of the other *valores* or codes remaining more or less constant, the most obvious is "struggle" (*lucha*), but others include the belief in the liberating and socializing potential of culture and education, "moralism," and the power and importance of youth. In each case, it is the underlying "storyline" (the narrative) of the code which remains detectable, regardless of the specific form at any given time.

The concept of "essence" is directly relevant here. After 1993, with the immediate economic strategies in place, leaders, activists and supporters embarked on a familiar process of "debate;" it was familiar because, rather than reading the Revolution as a series of 'phases', it may be more useful to interpret it as a recurrent cycle of crisis, debate and confident consolidation or mobilization. According to this alternative reading, each crisis; external or internal, contingent or structural; has generated a period of "debate" which, in turn, has resulted in a more confident and more consensual period of consolidation or mobilization, until the next crisis repeats the cycle again.

The concept of "debate" is of course a complex one in Cuba, since such periodic phenomena are often unrecognized by outsiders (because they are either held in camera or are disguised in some other form) or because they are rarely open, obvious and inclusive. Historically the most open was the "Great Debate" of 1962-5 (although somewhat limited in its participants and immediate relevance), while the most closed debates have been around the Escalante affair (1961-2) or the recriminations following the 1970 harvest. However, the more typical debates have been the post-1986 'Rectification' process, the current cultural *encuentros* or the most recent consultation to discuss Raúl's 26 July 2007 speech.⁵

5. This refers to the series of semi-public debates between intellectuals and government leaders which, since February 2007, followed the furor over the apparent rehabilitation on television of Luis Pavón, whom many held responsible for the *quinquenio gris*, the period (1971-6) of cultural dogmatism, harassment and restriction. This debate rapidly moved beyond the past and literature, encompassing different groups, cultural and intellectual issues and the old vexed and contested question of the relationship between the Revolution and culture.

In the mid-1990s, this debate was both public (and inclusive) and enclosed, both formal and informal. It was more structured within the Party ranks (in preparation for the 1991 and 1996 Congresses), but less enclosed within the Mass Organizations, most obviously in the workplace *parlamentos obreros* or the CDRs.⁶ However, it was also evident in religious groups, academic centers, and magazines (*Temas, Debates Americanos and Contracorriente*) and newspapers (notably *Trabajadores and Juventud Rebelde*), and informally in any number of ways and places: at bus stops, at workplaces, at home, and also in those plays and films that pushed out the boundaries of discussion. It went to the heart of the Revolution: if Cubans were being asked to “save” the revolution, there had to be a clear consensus on what to save and what to discard, as the cost of economic reform. Without that consensus, there was no guarantee of popular support. Hence, Cubans argued about what was now possible, desirable or necessary, about shortcomings and the need for immediate reform, about *jineterismo* and tourism, and so on. In all this, the debate followed the usual “rules:” those outlined by Fidel’s famous dictum, in his 1961 *Palabras a los Intelectuales*: “dentro de la Revolución, todo, contra la Revolución nada” (with the emphasis on *dentro*).⁷

By 1998, the results were clearer, with the basics of ‘the Revolution’ identified: a commitment to welfare, especially for the old and young (converting the old “mass” collectivism of action, shared struggle and improvement into *solidarismo*, a sense of social responsibility and concern for the welfare of the less fortunate); continuing state control of key economic sectors; a rejection of a multi-party system but a willingness to broaden participation and perhaps to redefine Party domination; a commitment to education (as an end and a means of modernization); and a key

6. These were: Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC), Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC), Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (CDR), Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU), Federación de Estudiantes de Educación Media (FEEM) and Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (ANAP). After 1993, they were joined by the Asociación de Combatientes de la Revolución Cubana.

7. This raises the intriguing question of the usual interpretation of this phrase, since the conventional version outside Cuba has tended to include the word *fuera* (outside) rather than *contra*; while the former assumes an “either-or” dichotomy with the potential to define those not explicitly in favour (of the Revolution) as being *contra*, the latter, the actual version, implied a less exclusive message that, far from demanding explicit commitment in art, assumed commitment unless explicitly rejected.

role for the Armed Forces (FAR). Everything else was either desirable but not essential (public housing, full employment, or state-run agriculture) or dispensable.

Therefore, following the usual cycle, the Revolution was now ready for the next step, boosted by the “feel-good” factor of the Pope’s 1998 visit, which, in all but name, was greeted as a celebration of external recognition (and the end of the new siege) and the end of the worst. Indeed, that same “feel-good” factor was related to the question of “the Special Period;” Cubans had been asked for almost a decade to pin their declining hopes on economic recovery, make ends meet, and work collectively in the latest *lucha* (generating the street term *luchando*, expressing illegal means of survival), but the leaders knew that, with growth being trumpeted each year and with dollars circulating, either the imminent end of suffering had to be announced or expectations had to be dampened down. Hence, a way had to be found either of distracting, of implying the end of the Special Period without generating expectations, or of finding an alternative focus; it was ultimately in Miami that a new focus was found, within a matter of months, in the Elián González case.

Returning to the question of ideology, however, we also now need to consider another aspect: how exactly the processes of internalization have worked since 1959. For “ideology” is never a question of ideas alone; instead, an ideology’s development, inculcation and internalization is always a matter of belief-systems behind those ideas, the formal and the informal sentiments underlying them, and the amalgamated “world-view” emerging. For the most powerful means for inculcating an ideology are rarely those imposed from above, but rather those that are seen by the collective as genuinely organic, reflecting real collective experiences, values and beliefs, and given relevant and consensual meaning through collective action and shared collective struggle. For the point of a consensual ideology is that it provides the “belief cement” to enable people to belong to a larger reality which they simultaneously see as also enabling them to be themselves in some form or other.

Hence, the key issues about any ideology are not just its components but also the processes and mechanisms of its emergence and evolution, enabling it to become persuasively meaningful. In Cuba since 1959, these mechanisms have principally been: the shared experience of participation from 1960 (various organizations, campaigns and rallies); the growing

sense and redefinition of active nationalism (firstly defensive and then more positive, through “internationalism” and sport); the sense of shared siege from 1961; the actual struggles (of 1961, the 1961-66 *lucha contra bandidos* and then Angola) and imagined “struggles” of repeated campaigns, defensive mobilizations and crises; the processes and materials of education (especially the 1961 Literacy Campaign, *Escuelas al Campo* and *Escuelas en el Campo*); the use of “banal nationalism” through banners, posters, hoardings, monuments, and so on (Billig 1995); and the continuous use and customization of political-historical myths, through public rhetoric, visual reinforcement and popular culture.

How, though, did these mechanisms fare after 1990 and especially during the *Batalla*? To answer that, we must first consider a further dimension to the whole context: the alternating methodologies of participation since 1959. This refers to the detectable alternation between participation through mobilization and “passion” (Fernández 2000) and participation through structure and system. At its simplest, this was visible in the “radicalism” of 1965-70 and the post-1975 “institutionalization,” which, rather than being seen in terms of competing factions, panic management or personalist strategies, might more usefully be seen as two sides of the same coin, as differences in style and form rather than in belief or policy, with Cuba's leaders having recourse to one or the other according to changing circumstances, awareness of the limits of each, and responses to pressure from below.

Hence, until 1968, those leaders almost certainly read the popular mood correctly when continuing to develop mechanisms of active and continuous mobilization, building on the early enthusiasm, the sense of empowerment, and the shared sense of siege and defensive nationalism. Given the accompanying awareness of “crisis,” this approach made sense, worked successfully in keeping the collective adrenalin running, and also prevented the bureaucratization of a growing state-run system from slowing down, from distancing and from weakening the active processes of belonging and involvement.

However, as many have observed, by 1968 the strains were obvious; nine years of constant mobilization had exhausted even the most committed (on whom the Revolution depended), nine years of austerity had frustrated and exhausted tolerance, and specific errors, together with general structural problems and “the bureaucratization of anarchy” (Dumont,

1970: 58) all led to the impending stagnation an effective system of participation and social welfare. Hence, once the disastrous *zafra* became the final straw, the new approach was adopted easily, enabling less a frenetic and more stable participation through structures (especially through the post-1975 Party and the post-1976 Poder Popular) and much less through collective action. The fact that morale—and of course the economy—recovered so quickly perhaps indicated a greater popular willingness to support and a crisis less deep than imagined, but also that “institutionalization” was simply the other side of the same coin, a strategy, regardless of the specific crisis, always likely to be adopted, as the investments of the first decade began to bear fruit.

By the mid-1980s, however, the different strains generated by that process also began to show. Material benefits might have improved (giving Cubans their best standard of living since 1959 and creating a myth of a golden age), but the resulting downgrading of the CDRs and collective campaigning, and the rise of a bureaucratic inertia and even of relative privilege within the increased Party, conspired to create a disjuncture between the ethos of “revolution” and the daily grass-roots experience. Therefore the specific challenges facing the system after 1980 (the Mariel affair, Gorbachev, the stresses within the UJC) were all partly attributable to these strains.

What followed was “Rectification,” resurrecting some of the mechanisms, ideas and people of the 1960s. Although seemingly another confident mobilization, this experience was actually more a post-crisis “debate,” whose following period of certainty was prevented by the even greater 1989-91 crisis and the Special Period, making the *Batalla* the postponed outcome of “Rectification.”

Without going into the detail of the Special Period, the important point here is its deleterious effects on morale, active support and ideological commitment, all weakened by the rise of a corrosive individualism and the decline of the effectiveness and credibility of the benefactor state (Eckstein, 1994) and the divisive effects of hard-currency and tourism. Few of the familiar ideological mechanisms remained active in the face of the pressures, shortages and lack of transportation, leading to a decline in the opportunities for shared participation through organizations, campaigns and rallies. All that remained, therefore, was education (crucially maintained), the less active presence of “banal nationalism,” and the folk

memory of customized myths (Kapcia 2000). Many Cubans sustained faith through the belief that the “Special Period in Peacetime” (contrarily implying a “war economy”) was the latest struggle to be endured, a belief reinforced by US tightening of the embargo (the Cuba Democracy and Helms-Burton Acts). This partly echoed the 1960s “siege mentality” of a Cuba seemingly abandoned by allies and battling alone against imperialism; however, unlike the 1960s, there was now little hope to sustain that faith, although loyalists—demoralized by the evidence of capitalism, rising crime, prostitution and their own recourse to the black market, raised their spirits by referring hopefully to *pasando por el Período Especial*.

This, then, was the context for the Elián campaign, which, along with the genuinely shared sense of involvement, anger, and even nationalism, had the clear effect of convincing the Cuban leaders, and Fidel in particular, of the continuing benefits, power and possibilities of the old mechanisms of “passionate” mobilization, as well as of the possibilities of renewal offered by youth, now seen more as 'the solution' than 'the problem' of old. August 1994 had, of course, reminded those leaders of the potential of mobilization, as the rally of 5 August palpably reinforced the morale of those supporters who had despondently watched the unfolding events with no real response from the beleaguered system. As Fidel intervened crucially in the tumult and then led the rally on the Malecón, thousands of the hitherto demoralized strove to gather with like-minded Cubans, relieved that so many still shared their faith.

Since then, however, there had been few opportunities to re-express that faith. Hence, the Elián campaign, demonstrating a remarkable capacity to be sustained for six months, offered the perfect opportunity. What followed was, therefore, firstly the regeneration of the youth organizations, capitalizing on willing youth involvement in the campaign and the prominence of the two main leaders, Otto Rivero (UJC) and Hassan Pérez Casabona (FEU), the latter being especially outstanding in his oratory and his visible association with Fidel. Not only were these two organizations given much greater media coverage but their leaders were now evidently being involved more in decision-making than had ever been true.

The focus on youth had two advantages, of course. Firstly, it highlighted to young Cubans the possibility that they and their views were suddenly at the forefront of the Revolution’s considerations. After decades when the system had found it difficult to develop a consistent

attitude to the growing manifestations of youth discontent and even alienation (from an increasingly ageing leadership and a frustrating structure which educated them but then denied them a separate voice), this new attention was significant. Hence, Hassan's brief popularity was less a reflection of his abilities than the FEU members' recognition that, once "problematic," they might now be taken seriously. This focus (with an almost millennial meaning of regeneration in 2000) therefore promised to enroll a new generation in a perhaps revived 'Revolution.'

This leads on to the second advantage of the youth focus: its boost to morale among older generations, especially those (aged over 45) who had borne the brunt of the previous collective efforts, marching in much-reduced rallies, volunteering in much-reduced campaigns, and keeping the faith loyally. Now the promise of a new generation to take their place, implying long-term survival, brought much relief.

The second sequel to the Elián campaign, however, was the emergence of the (retroactive) *Batalla* from 2001, a campaign which immediately took advantage of the new potential for militancy to return to a *guerrillista* discourse, repeating the ethos of the early Revolution; it was, of course, a batalla because it responded to the threat from the newly elected Bush Administration, now committed to hardening the somewhat frayed Cuba policy and repaying political debts to the émigré lobby. Moreover, after September 2001, with the new discourse of the "axis of evil," the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq (the latter demonstrating to Cuba a worrying US willingness to defy world opinion and the UN), and the 2004 US measures to squeeze the Cuban economy even further, the "siege" became more real, reinforced in even more. Thus *batalla* responded to a new sense of vulnerability and a new mood of defensiveness.

The *Batalla* took shape principally through three mechanisms, all directly associated with "ideas" and all intended to capitalize on the recently witnessed collective enthusiasm in order to strengthen the ideological commitment of both young and old, and to mend some of the preceding decade's damage. The first were new political vehicles for mobilization, especially the regular *Tribunas Abiertas* (from January 2000), but also including the daily *Mesa Redonda* TV programs, which, although eventually stultifying and ritualized, initially offered new parameters for debate.

The *Batalla's* second manifestation was the characteristically fidelista explosion of activity and investment focused on the new “educational revolution:” the construction of a network of *escuelas emergentes* and the graduation of thousands of young “professionals” to fill gaps and enlist them in the Revolution; the new opportunities for older Cubans through the televised Universidad para Todos; and, after 2003, the emergency retraining of laid-off sugar workers.

It was, however, the *escuelas* that most represented the *Batalla*. The concept arose from three “discoveries” by both the UJC’s and FEU’s foot-soldiers during the Elián campaign. The first was the existence of a potential “lost” generation of Cuban youth, who, denied a university education by the highly selective system, threatened to drift into delinquency, alienation and even perhaps dissent. The second was a serious labor migration from the public service sector to the hard-currency tourist-related sectors, creating shortages of personnel. The third was the evidence of the genuine social problems which, in the inner-city slums, the Special Period had created, with no easily available skills to deal with them. The new *escuelas* therefore targeted all three problems; by emergency training to fill the identified labor gaps, they also addressed the new social problems and promised a university education to the potentially “neglected” generation.

Within weeks the first schools, largely under the UJC, were producing somewhat raw graduates in social work, nursing, primary teaching and (much overlooked) cultural education; within years, thousands had graduated from the schools, flooding a university system which now had to expand urgently (through the emergency program of “municipalization”), and then filling schools and hospitals. However, it was the *trabajadores sociales* who were the real protagonists of the experiment, becoming the “shock troops” of the *Batalla* (or the “Red Guards” or *talibanes* as many called them). The third manifestation (less relevant here) was the rebirth of the pre-1989 phenomenon of “internationalism,” especially focused on medical aid and Venezuela.

How effective was this whole experience of “ideological reinforcement”? It is, of course, too early to say, since the products of those *escuelas* have not yet been tested beyond the organized tasks, and popular suspicion of these young “militants” could deter their willingness to remain committed, especially with the slight marginalization of the

Batalla since August 2006. However, a potential longer-term commitment is perhaps identifiable, not least in the *Batalla*'s use of the old familiar mechanisms of ideological socialization.

For example, the new experience of shared collective campaigning clearly repeated the first flush of popular involvement of 1959-61, increasingly recalled by older Cubans as the time when young Cubans were massively radicalized through responsibility and mobilization in defense, social and labor tasks. Equally, the *Batalla* experience has reactivated nationalism and a sense of shared siege, and has been based on a shared experience of a new "educational revolution," with the young as both educators and newly "liberated," as in 1961. As for myths, the continually reinforced association with Martí (not least at every rally at the Tribuna Antimperialista, which, crowned by a statue of Martí holding a child, faces "imperialism" head-on) has also explicitly been adapted to identify this generation with Che Guevara, through teaching materials and the schools' discourse (Kapcia 2005).

Meanwhile, of course, the last few years have seen these new "troops" manning "the front line" in various mobilizations, highlighting to them and the Cuban public the special value attributed to their role, possibly giving them a sense of their collective importance in defending both Cuba and the Revolution. Even the recent controversial use of the *trabajadores sociales* as emergency gas-station attendants had the potential to build some sort of *esprit de corps*, as the popular criticism of them for closing off opportunities for pilfering could easily have the converse effect of strengthening their sense of righteous importance, as a generation unsullied by *metal vil*. In this respect, they again have the potential to echo the youth experience of the early years, where adolescents' experience of being seen as the first line of defense of national sovereignty and the first line of attack against underdevelopment ensured an enduring loyalty.

So the potential for a longer-term success clearly exists. The critical test, however, is about to come, and may have started in 2005-6. For that was when the *Batalla*'s deleterious effects began to be felt. Firstly, despite the benefits of the increasing support from Chávez's Venezuela (bringing hope and relief to those who had felt besieged), more and more Cubans began to complain informally about the costs of Cuba's renewed "internationalism," including the scale of the investment in international solidar-

ity rather than in much-needed repairs for Cubans' immediate benefit. While many felt pride that, despite shortage and crisis, Cuba was aiding fellow Latin Americans, some resented this generosity, occasionally publicly.

Secondly, it also became clear then that the repeated demands on the loyal activists were beginning to exhaust; as the implied end of the Special Period transmogrified into the *Batalla* and then into repeated mobilizations to help Venezuela or Bolivia, to protest against the imprisonment of the "Five Prisoners of Imperialism," or to express anger or support in other causes, the wearing effect of it all evidently took sapped the levels of active hope and commitment. In other words, the "1968 effect" was beginning to repeat itself, with significant implications, since the exhausted were the life-blood of the active commitment on which it all relied.

Therefore, when Fidel handed power temporarily to Raúl in July 2006, this allowed the system to make the necessary adjustment of approach. By the autumn, it was becoming clear that Raúl's preferences for system and structure over mobilization were being expressed in the Party (in a general strengthening and in changes to personnel in the middle ranks) and in a quiet downplaying of the *Batalla*. When encouragement was given formally, in September 2007, to discuss the implications of the 26 July speech, it became clear that this new process, besides allowing Cubans to let off steam, also provided Raúl with evidence for his plans for reform and change.

Therefore the new generation brought into "the Revolution" after 2002 runs the risk of being marginalized as "Fidel's children" and thus anachronistic, especially if any reforms move towards a low-level privatization, unless a way is found to capitalize on their new loyalty to use them in politically productive ways; in other words, to balance structure with mobilization. However, ordinary Cubans' expectations are now such that the pressure for rapid, if small-scale, economic improvement is sufficient for Cuba's leaders to be unable to ignore it, knowing that, in the absence of Fidel's charisma and of the old personal loyalties, continuing credibility depends on delivering the economic goods sooner rather than later.

Finally, therefore, we come back to the question of ideological continuity, to see what remains of the "old" ideology as a result of the *Batalla*

and what, if anything, has been added. Certainly, the old *valor* of collectivism has been strengthened since 1999, but has probably not returned to its former active force, still weakened by the effects of crisis and reform since 1990. Among the new young activists, it seems to have gained some 'corporate' strength, although that is still to be tested, but, more generally, it has continued to transmogrify into the post-1990 sense of *solidarismo*, itself a new spirit in a formerly egalitarian political culture. However, collectivism has also undergone another change, replacing the national by the local, a process clearly shaped by the effects of the crisis and the localized collective responses to it; hence the emphasis on the *comunitario* reflects both the recognition of the possible during the worst of the Special Period but also the recognition that the old collectivism worked at one level (the national) or another (the block), but had ignored the median level of the *barrio* and the sub-*barrio*.

The second element of the old ideology's continuity is of course the emphasis on culture and education, expressed so clearly since 2001, in a campaign which, as in 1961, focuses on the benefits (opportunities for both the forgotten young and the neglected old) and the processes of involvement. Moreover, this educational campaign has focused less on elementary liberation than fulfillment of potential, as befits the new century as opposed to the 1960s. Equally, "youthism" has been revived as an ideological code, not only in a new focus that suggests Cuba's youth as the subjects of change rather than the objects of mobilization (or vigilance), but also in its implicit message that 'the Revolution' has a future in their hands, albeit a "revolution" that, ultimately, may be somewhat changed from its 1960s imagery. Likewise, the emphasis on "moralism" has been reinforced by the recent anti-corruption campaigns, cleverly associating corruption with inequality (and the same kind of "naked" capitalism presented as seeking to end Cubans' social welfare), while, on the other hand, associating efficiency with effective social protection.

So how "new" is this? The first point to make here is, of course, that it does not need to be, and indeed should not be, really new. For the strength and persuasiveness of any ideology lies in its continuity, its balance between "the good" of the old and the need to adapt without changing the essence. Hence "renewal" is precisely that: the renovation of the known to adapt it to newly relevant issues and concerns, the reinterpretation of the old in accordance with new realities, ideas and pressures. Thus, for

example, the 1980s might have seen the emergence of the new code of “internationalism,” but in fact this was not at all new but, rather, a fusion of two or more existing values, namely solidarity (or even collectivism), *lucha* and nationalism, to respond to the new confidence and opportunities, much as collectivism has now evolved into *solidarismo* or into localism.

The point of all this is not that we are witnessing the emergence of the next generation to take the Revolution forward for another 20 or even 50 years; anything can yet happen to derail the effects of the *Batalla* project and only time will tell if it has borne long-term fruit and gone beyond mere rhetoric. Instead, the point is that it is also too early to dismiss it out of hand, not least if we remember that over the last 49 years, the survival of the Cuban system has depended on a good deal more than the personality of, or coercion by, Fidel Castro, part of which has been the system's ability to adjust, adapt and even reinvent not just its policies and strategies but also even its underlying thinking.

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CHAPTER 6

What the Cuban Revolution Means to Older Cubans

David L. Strug, Ph.D.

Abstract: This paper discusses what the Cuban Revolution means to older Cubans and how it has changed their lives. It addresses why many older Cubans still appear to identify with the revolution and its accomplishments, despite its failure to provide for their basic needs. The elderly are disproportionately affected by the hardships of life in Cuba, receiving pensions on which they cannot live, residing in overcrowded homes, and suffering from shortages in food and transport (Durán Gondar and Chávez, 2000). Yet many older persons retain a positive attitude about the revolution.

The question of why many elderly Cubans hold positive attitudes about the historic event of 1959, despite the hardships of life noted above, emerged from a study I conducted in 2005 with 25 older persons about the importance of the revolution in their lives. In this paper, I discuss the findings from that study, which was guided by the following questions: 1) How important has the revolution been in the lives of older persons? 2) How has it changed their lives? 3) Do older Cubans retain faith in the future of the revolution? and, 4) Do they believe younger Cubans share their views about this historic event? I expected at the outset of my investigation that years of exposure to adverse living conditions would have significantly diminished the degree to which the elderly identified with the major societal transformations that began in 1959.

“Identification with the revolution” refers to an expression of ongoing support for the economic, political and social transformations begun in 1959. The meaning of “the revolution” varies from individual to individual in Cuba (Rosendahl, 1997). It has been associated with collective participation in shared struggle in the 1960s, with acknowledgement of the state and the political class in the 1970s, and with community and solidarity in the 1990s (Gray and Kapsia, 2008). “The revolution” here refers to

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a series of ongoing cultural, political, and societal processes set into motion in 1959 by the government of Fidel Castro. These processes included the socialization of the Cuban economy and the attempt to construct a more egalitarian social order (Saney, 2004).

More than a million Cubans (11.3% of the population) are 65+ years of age (Oficina Nacional de Estadistas, 2006). Published information on this disproportionately large and growing older population is sparse (Durán and Chávez Negrín, 2000; Harnecker, 1996; Strug, 2004; Lewis, 1977a, b). Most of this literature relates either to the health of older persons or to the national challenge of meeting the needs of an aging population (Alonso Galbán, Sansó Soberats, Díaz-Canel Navarro, Carrasco García, and Oliva, 2007; Díaz-Briquets, 2002) rather than to older persons' beliefs and attitudes about government or about life in Cuba today. It is important to document these beliefs and attitudes before this age cohort disappears.

Key Concepts

Social scientists suggest that exposure to societal values in young adulthood shapes a person's thinking later in life; and that remaining faithful to one's ideals may provide meaning for the individual later in life (Ikels, 1990). This assumption is relevant to our investigation of how exposure of study participants to a new set of societal values and transformations in early adulthood may have affected their current thinking about the revolution.

Psychologists note that a person's core beliefs and values formed earlier in life tend to persist over time and frame the individual's perspectives about an imagined future (Ruth and Coleman, 1996). The psychological literature on aging also suggests that it is important for persons as they age to envision a future for themselves, for their children, and for their country that links key beliefs and experiences in their past and present lives (Shenck, Davis, Peacock, and Moore, 2002). This investigation examines whether this applies to the elderly Cubans in this investigation.

Methods

Study Design and Sample

Information for this article comes from a study I conducted with 25 older Cubans in Havana in the summer of 2005. Participants had to be 60+ years of age and to have lived in Cuba all their lives for inclusion in this study. Study participants represented a sample of convenience and some subjects entered the study through a snowball sampling technique. I interviewed 8 participants whom I was first introduced to by administrators of two senior day programs (casas de abuelos). I interviewed an additional 7 participants whom I met through contact with Cuban colleagues. I explained to these colleagues that I wanted to interview individuals who held a wide range of views about the revolution. These 7 referrals from colleagues in turn introduced me to 10 of their acquaintances. Three of these persons declined to be interviewed, resulting in a refusal rate of 11% (3/28). I stressed with all potential study subjects that the open-ended interview I conducted in Spanish was voluntary and anonymous, and that it did not involve payment.

I asked interviewees both demographic and open-ended questions that included the following: 1) What meaning has the revolution had in your life? 2) How did the revolution change your life? 3) Do you have faith in the future of the revolution? and, 4) Do you think younger people share your views about this event? I probed after asking each open-ended question to increase the likelihood that participants' responses reflected their true views. For example, if I asked the question "How has the revolution changed your life?" and the respondent answered "It improved it," I then asked "Can you tell me in what ways your life was improved." Interviews lasted between one and two hours. Information was hand recorded, entered into a computer, and transcribed. I carried out an iterative content analysis of interviewee's responses and identified common subthemes for use in writing in this paper.

Limitations of the Study

The investigation was exploratory and based on a small sample of convenience. It is possible that referral sources were biased in favor of the revolution and that I was introduced to individuals with more favorable views

of this event, despite my efforts to interview persons holding a range of views. I interviewed persons who remained in Cuba after the revolution and who may have been biased in favor of it. I did not directly interview younger persons. It was impossible to know in every instance if a respondent's statement was true. However, the length of the interview, the lack of hesitation on the part of participants to provide answers, the apparent frankness and spontaneity of their responses suggested that interviewees reported their actual views rather than what they thought would be suitable to the government or the interviewer.

Findings

Description of the Study Population

Of the 25 study subjects, more than two-thirds were female (68%, N=17). They ranged in age from 62 to 105 and the median age was 74. Over half (64%, N=16) were married and living with a partner. All had children and 85% (N=22) had grandchildren. Six (24%) had a university education, 12 (48%) had completed 12 years of schooling. All of those who had held jobs were now retired. Eleven (44%) of the women had never worked. Only one study participant reported being affluent before the revolution.

How Important Has the Revolution Been In Your Life?

Over 80% (21/25) of respondents answered the revolution was of great importance to them because of its achievements. Respondents mentioned the following accomplishments: education and literacy programs, guaranteed health care and family doctors, vaccinations, affordable housing and access to cultural events.

Other participants responded the revolution was important to them because it eliminated economic, racial, and social injustice. A 70-year-old former economist stated the revolution was significant to him because it meant "total liberation of the Cuban people, ideological, political, and social; the equality of men and women; and lack of censorship." A 75-year-old woman said the revolution was important to her because it brought equality to Cuba. She stated: "For all of us who lived through these events, we know what equality means. It is the right to many things, including the right not to have to fear terrorism and murder." She

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described the dread she would feel when she encountered the bodies of murdered students and political opponents of Batista on the streets of Havana during the dictatorship.

Seventy percent of respondents (N=18) reported the revolution was important to them because it taught them the significance of hard work, self sacrifice, and cooperation. One 83-year-old noted that everyone in her building helped one another:

There is no egoism here, and there is solidarity in this building. We help one another. If María, my upstairs neighbor, needs an egg for her 5-year-old grandson and I have one, then of course I am going to give it to her. That is the revolutionary way of doing things—cooperation.

Respondents reported their views about the revolution had remained constant since its inception.

How Did The Revolution Change Your Life?

Ninety percent of participants (N=22) answered the question “How did the revolution change your life?” by reporting on how it improved their lives in many ways including, by increasing their wages, by offering them educational opportunities, by reducing their exposure to racial discrimination, and by raising their consciousness concerning economic and social justice.

A sixty-three-year-old black female who was a poor teenager at the time of the revolution stated:

I would not be here talking to you today if it were not for the revolution. I would never have been able to pursue an education and because of my black skin color, there would be many neighborhoods where I would not even be allowed to walk.

Wilma, a 76-year-old black woman and former educator, noted that her life improved after the revolution when legal racial discrimination ended. Her father discouraged her from applying to the university as a working class black female, because he was afraid she would not be admitted or that she would encounter racial discrimination as a student. Then the revolution occurred and she began her studies at the University of Havana. She felt economically, politically, and psychologically liberated as a result of her university education and by her exposure to other

societal changes as well: "I felt realized as a person. I married who I wanted, I studied what I wanted, and I lived where I wanted. I worked in what I wanted and I had the children that I wanted."

Forty-five percent of participants (N=11) said the revolution made them more conscious about the need for an improved life for all Cubans throughout the island. Rosa, a 70-year-old former teacher, said that her revolutionary consciousness was heightened by participation for several years in literacy campaigns throughout Cuba, including one for members of Fidel Castro's rebel army. She is currently a volunteer teacher at Cuba's University for the Older Adult. Rosa stated: "They don't pay me. I do this work because I feel good when others feel good as a result of my work. The revolution gave me these values." Margarita, who also had been trained as a teacher before the revolution, became involved in health education and sanitation projects throughout the island. This experience sparked her interest in social work and she went on to become a leader in this field.

Not Everyone's Life Was Dramatically Improved

A small number (N=3) of respondents stated that the revolution did not necessarily improve their standard of living and they reported that they initially reacted to the revolution with a degree of indifference. The centenarian Amelia was 58 in 1959. The daughter of a tobacco merchant, she indicated that she lived well prior to the revolution and continued to do so afterwards. Marta (age 86) was a seamstress before the revolution. She was forced to work in a clothing factory after it began, instead of making clothes for rich clients, which she had done before the revolution. However, she noted that she adapted well to change and that her life was not transformed by the events following 1959. She noted that she has always lived in a comfortable house and that her savings were not affected after the revolutionary government nationalized the banks in 1960.

The Revolution Has Brought Us Good Things and Bad Ones

Sixty-five percent of participants (N=16) reported that despite the revolution's achievements, ordinary Cubans like themselves face many problems related to lack of money and the high cost of basic necessities. "The revolution has brought us good things and bad ones" was a common response in speaking about the effect of the revolution on their living situ-

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ation. However, respondents were quick to add that the good brought by the revolution outweighed the bad, that no perfect societies exist, and that the country's leaders were human and therefore sometimes made mistakes.

The most frequent complaint was that monthly pensions were too small, especially since food prices have increased in recent years and many basic items had to be paid for in dollars not pesos. Respondents said they were unable to afford to live independently from their families, even if they could find housing and even if they wanted to live separate from their younger relatives. Amelia stated:

I would have to be living in an old age home if it were not for the material help my family provides. I could never live on 164 pesos a month (approximately \$7, her deceased husband's pension). The bottle of wine I drink every week on the advice of my doctor for my blood circulation costs more than that. Nobody lives off the ration book (which allows Cubans to buy limited amounts of food at reduced prices). As an old person, I need more eggs and protein than I can buy or my family can give me.

Other problems mentioned included complaints about overcrowded housing in need of repair, inadequate public transportation, and older persons' perception that they should keep their views to themselves when they conflicted with those held by the younger people they lived with in order to maintain peace within the multigenerational household. Five persons (20%) complained that Cuba's famed health care system had become strained in recent years by the sending of thousands of doctors to Venezuela in exchange for petroleum. Nevertheless, no respondents stated Cuba should stop sending doctors abroad, because they were proud of this humanitarian aid.

Do You Have Faith in the Future of the Revolution?

All the respondents expressed faith in the future of the revolution and its leadership. They uniformly expressed the conviction that Cuba would continue to support the right of its citizens to universal access to health care, free education, low cost housing, social equality, and other achievements of the revolution, even after Fidel Castro dies.

They noted that they had never lost faith in the revolution, even at the most difficult of times during the Special Period. An 82-year-old man stated:

I never thought about the end of socialism in Cuba, even at the worst of times when we had money, but there were no goods to buy. Our country is very Fidelista (believers in Fidel Castro and his ideas). Fidel told us there would be difficult moments like those we endured during the worst of the Special Period and that we would have to adapt and we would get past those difficult times. And so we adapted then and we need to be flexible now.

Do Younger Persons Share Your Views about the Revolution?

All of the respondents acknowledged that few of today's youth share their faith in the Cuban Revolution. They noted that a sector of today's youth, including in some instances their own grandchildren, had no historical memory of what capitalist life was like in Cuba prior to the revolution, had lost faith in government's ability to improve the lives of ordinary Cubans, and believed that Cuba should have a more capitalist, market-oriented economy. Forty-two percent (N=10) of respondents said their children believed their views to be utopian, out of touch, and antiquated. However, they stated that the majority of youth have grown up in homes where they had been exposed to the revolutionary principles and values of their parents and grandparents and they were certain that young people would give their lives in defense of those principles if necessary.

Discussion

Study findings showed that all the older persons who were interviewed reported positive views about the revolution, identified with its values and achievements, talked about life's hardships, but remained optimistic about Cuba's future. The detailed and spontaneous nature of their responses suggested that interviewees reported what they truly believed, although these findings are subject to the study's limitations noted earlier.

These findings do not negate the fact that there may be many older persons who have become discontented with the revolution as the result of many years of difficult living conditions. However, this study suggests that there are many older persons who still identify with the revolution

Discussion

and who want and expect Cuba to retain its successful revolutionary projects including those in education and health.

The revolution was a life-altering macro-event that exposed study participants to liberating social change and to a radical vision of the New Man. Study findings showed this exposure elevated participants' consciousness about economic, racial, and social justice, and also improved their lives in material ways when they were in their early adulthood at the start of the revolution. The establishment of free health care, the end of legal race discrimination, and improvement in wages left a lasting psychological impression on the older persons in this study, perhaps because these radical changes contrasted strikingly in their minds with the economic decline, the class, racial and political inequalities, and the violence, corruption, and U.S. domination of Cuba of the pre-revolutionary 1950s (Domínguez, 1978).

The fact that many older Cubans continue to identify with the revolution and its values almost half a century since it began is testimony to the impact that exposure to radical social change can have on adult political socialization, that is, on the way people acquire enduring orientations towards a political system (Sigel, 1989). Older Cubans like those in this study acquired their revolutionary attitudes in their education and work settings, through participation in mass mobilizations, and through the media. Through this involvement, many elderly Cubans like those in this investigation appear to have established a bond with the revolution that remains strong.

One might have expected the positive identification with the revolution expressed by the elderly in this study to have been seriously weakened by the difficult economic conditions they have been exposed to, and especially by the calamity of the Special Period and its aftermath (Demartini, 1985). However, it is important to consider that participants' identification with the revolution in early adulthood had been consolidated by the experience of the U.S. blockade, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Study participants were in their late fifties and early sixties during the worst of the Special Period, by which time their revolutionary political attitudes and identification with the revolution had been strengthened by the country's more than forty year history of struggle and survival. The "Battle of Ideas" campaign launched at the end of the 1990s, an effort to strengthen Cuba economically, ideologically, and socially

through a variety of educational and social programs including ones for the elderly (Barthelemy, 2004), may have further fortified the political views of the elderly in this study. Also, in recent years the government has introduced social assistance programs for older persons and a modest increase in pensions, which many elderly point to as an indication of the government's interest in their wellbeing. All of the above may help explain the ongoing support for the revolution expressed by study participants.

Consideration of the effects of the aging process and of the psychological correlates of old age may also explain why the elderly persons in this study retain positive views about the revolution. Those views, held for some fifty years, have become a core component of their outlook on life and an important element of their psychosocial identity. Their perspectives on the revolution may contribute to psychological coherence and stability as they age. It might be psychologically disillusioning for these older persons to seriously question the value of the revolution after having lived all of their adult lives identifying with its principles.

It may be important for the elderly persons in this investigation to imagine a future for themselves, for their children, and for their country that links their core beliefs about the triumph of the Cuban Revolution to their imagined future for themselves, for their descendants, and for Cuba. This is the case even though they report that their children and grandchildren think that fundamental change in Cuba is necessary.

Implications of This Investigation

This study suggested that many older Cubans born before the revolution may hold views about this event that are different from those of subsequent generations whose political consciousness was formed at later periods in the country's history. Youth has been particularly outspoken about the need for change and for the introduction of economic reform in the country; and young people are probably more willing than are older persons to see the country deviate from its socialist path (Generación Y, 2008). This implies that some degree of intergenerational difference of opinion exists concerning views about the future of socialism in Cuba and about the path the country should take. It is important to assess the extent

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of this intergenerational difference of opinion and its impact on older persons.

The Need for Further Research

Seventy percent of Cubans alive today were born after the revolution. Older Cubans are an important and fast disappearing source of information about life in Cuba as it existed before the revolution and in the early years of this transformative event. It is important to collect data about the impact of the revolution on the lives of the elderly before their generation passes into history.

We noted this was an exploratory study based on a sample of convenience and that the information collected cannot be generalized to a wider population of elderly Cubans. Therefore, it is important to collect data from a broader, more representative sample of older persons to better understand how age and cohort effects have influenced the political socialization of today's elderly. It is also necessary to collect information directly from younger family members about their interactions with the elderly. This will increase our knowledge about how age related differences of opinion about the revolution may affect intergenerational relationships.

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CHAPTER 7

Symbolic Emancipation in Authoritarian Cuba

Marie Laure Geoffray

Abstract: Since 1989 experts have analyzed Cuba as a society in transition. But almost twenty years later, it seems that Cuba has not undergone a transition. The question is therefore why and how the socialist regime has managed to survive despite the fall of the USSR. Indeed since the economic crisis of the 1990s, some logics at work in the Cuban society question the regime's capacity to generate a homogeneous revolutionary socialization. There exists striking dynamics in groups of young artists. They try to emancipate from the revolutionary norms and to recall a political, historical and artistic heritage distinct from the one which is promoted by the leaders of the country. Their objective is to socialize the capacity for creation in order to promote diversity and the plurality of thought and of social experience.

«Because democracy is not just about voting. In its original Greek sense, democracy is the power of the people, and it is reached only when citizens actually and directly participate in the process of decision making, especially when it is about business that interests and affects them. The process of construction of a genuinely democratic society, in which the rights and freedoms of every citizen are guaranteed, must be based on the development of social, civic and political organizations, in which democracy is a daily practice. It is not possible to democratize a society that does not experience democracy every day! ».

Since 1989 experts keep analyzing Cuba as a society in transition. Analysts focus on “dissidents” as seeds of the future democratization of the country (Hidalgo, 1994; Del Campo and Peralta, 1998). Others analyze the emerging civil society as made of the new self employed workers, workers in the joint venture sector, afrocuban religious believers or Cath-

1. Max Puig, “La transition démocratique dans la région de la Caraïbe,” in *Les Transitions Démocratiques*, sous la direction de Laënnec Hurbon, Actes du colloque international du Port-au-Prince, 1996, 127-138. (My translation).

olics (Javier Corrales, 2005; Ariel Armony, 2005; Létrilliart, 2005), young blacks (de la Fuente and Glasco, 1997) or members of new NGOs (Gillian Gunn, 1995). Others study “informal dissent” (Eckstein, 1994; O’Bryan and Otero, 2002). Most studies focus on a transitional approach to the actual processes, emphasizing the emergence of new actors, since the fall of the Soviet Union (Gunn, 1993; Domínguez, 1997; Centeno and Font, 1997; Del Campo et Peralta, 1998; Mesa Lago, 2005; Tulchin, Bobes, Espina, Hernandez, 2005; Perez-Stable, 2006; Habel, 2006).

But almost twenty years later, it seems that Cuba has not undergone a transition. The question to be asked is therefore why and how the socialist regime has managed to survive despite the fall of the USSR. Few analysts have dedicated their research to that question. Klepak (2005) insists on the emphasis made on education and health care throughout the worst years of the economic crisis, to the detriment of the army budget. According to him, it shows that the Cuban State continued to bet on socialist values instead of organizing repression. Daniel Ortega (2006) says that the dissemination of political billboards, which picture the revolutionary norms to be enforced, creates a distinct urban landscape and a nationalist, revolutionary and socialist “normalized community,” from which it is difficult to dissent. Bloch (2006; 2007) describes and interprets Cuban everyday life so as to show how the Cuban population is entangled in competing norms (the official revolutionary norm and the unofficial survival norm) and how their social experience therefore becomes meaningless, which prevents them from uprising and claiming their rights, thus helping to maintain the status quo.

My focus draws from those visions, with a critical perspective. The concept of civil society has, since the fall of the USSR, been used in a normative sense, which discards it to understand actual Cuban dynamics. The notion of transition is used in a similar way, as if there were a specific path Cuba was supposed to follow to finally reach democracy. My experience is that dissidents in Cuba are quite marginalized and generally unable to discuss strategic issues with their fellow citizens who more often than not know very little about the alternatives they try to elaborate. As far as self-employed workers, they are new actors indeed but since market reforms have been quite limited, their role is minor in Cuban politics today. There is no status quo, but changing dynamics, which cannot be understood without close scrutiny and extensive fieldwork. To show

the complex interactions between the resilient Cuban State² and the emerging actors in the Cuban society, I propose to focus, using some Foucauldian concepts, on the lively web of distinct political, cultural and social groups working from *within* the regime, fighting for space *within* the regime, so as to try and implement new ways of doing or thinking politics in Cuba.

I have identified four groups³ of people who have managed to push boundaries and experiment freedom through the objectification of their daily reality, that is the transformation of that reality into an object of knowledge and the experimentation of modes of subjectivation of that reality.⁴ Although there are many more, I focused on those four groups because they are the only ones which have stood the test of time (in this case, about ten years), and managed to maintain a semi-autonomous position within the socialist political order. Though they, like all Cubans, have an ambivalent relationship with it, they share one particular goal: making the dissonant Cuban social experience more coherent, give it meaning (or in other words, harmonizing it). I am interested in analyzing the way in which those Cubans experience what I would call civic principles, and the way in which they secure space for that purpose in a hostile authoritarian context. I would like to demonstrate that it can be more efficient to produce an analysis in terms of collective action inside the Cuban authoritarian regime than to look for dissidents or a Cuban civil society acting against the regime.

I will demonstrate through the description and interpretation of semi autonomous collective action in Cuba the ambivalence that links Cubans

2. Richard Baum (2006) proposes the concept of resilience to analyze the Chinese State. I draw from his work since the concept seems particularly suited for Cuba: Cuban leaders have managed to maintain a strong centralized political authority while implementing sets of reforms.

3. I decided to keep the anonymity of the studied subjects, therefore no names (either of the groups or of individuals) will be provided.

4. For Foucault, subjection is a positive mode of subjectivation because the individual obeys the norm, and therefore exerts his liberty. Resistance is consequently not the opposite of subjection, but a complementary part in every kind of subjective experience. There is always a tension between the two. See Michel Foucault, "Deux essais sur le sujet et le pouvoir," in Hubert Dreyfus et Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault, un parcours philosophique*, Gallimard, Paris, p.297-321, 1984.

to the regime and how this explains why dissidents do not have much echo inside the island, but on the other hand I will show that this ambivalence does not necessarily entail political and social apathy. Indeed some groups manage to partly emancipate from both what I call the revolutionary socialization (the revolutionary norms, what we can understand as a moral economy, in Foucault's words, are embedded in their construction of self) and from norms linked to the logic of survival (illegal traffics, black market, prostitution, etc.) though their activities do not escape from the State's *trompe l'oeil* liberalization tactics.

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Post-1989, the Cuban social experience is chaotic for the Cuban people since laws and norms keep changing. Economic reforms were implemented in the 1990s (Monreal, 1994; Dominguez, 1997; Mesa Lago, 2003) but the economy has since then been recentralized (Mesa Lago 2005). And we can wonder if the permanent semi-illegality in which people have to live in order to obtain basic goods isn't just another mode of social control (Bloch, 2006). Political reforms were also implemented (Roman, 1995; Valdés Paz, 1999; Dilla, 2000) but practices still remain quite vertical (democratic centralism) and bureaucratic. We therefore do not face a linear process of liberalization but cycles of opening and repression with limited changes that can always be reversed. Cuban people have therefore learnt to cope with two competing norms: the revolutionary official norm and the survival unofficial norm. It is impossible to survive without engaging in illegal activities but at the same time it is impossible to keep one's status without abiding by the official rules, or claiming to do so (Bloch, 2006). Such a regime⁵ incites to lie and bend rules and norms. The social revolutionary experience is therefore that of "cognitive discordance" (Festinger, 1957; Hirschman, 1983), since there is a fundamental disruption between the revolutionary discursive logic and everyday-life practices of survival. The absence of trustworthy infor-

5. I understand "regime" as a set of conditions, which create regular patterns. In the Cuban case, Vincent Bloch (2006) has demonstrated that the existence of two competing norms, with which all Cubans have to deal, entails a social and political status quo.

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mation and the consequent existence of widespread rumors reinforce the loss of meaning (Bloch, 2007).

Such a context reifies individuals and prevents them from attempting to organize themselves collectively. Every citizen suspects others of watching and possibly denouncing his illegal activities, and this fear encloses people into silence and passivity. Moreover, 70% of Cubans were born after 1959. They have only experienced State socialism and their knowledge of the outside world is extremely partial and distorted by tales told by travelers and images shown on Cuban television. They have been shaped by certain values and norms, the revolutionary socialization, from which it is difficult to emancipate. That is why ambivalence towards the regime is a fundamental characteristic of the Cuban social experience. We would expect dissidents to manage to frame that reality and emerge as a voice for the silent Cuban population but they have thus far been unable to do so. Essentially for two reasons: they are disconnected from everyday life since they are permanently controlled by the Cuban State, and their political choice is one of systemic opposition to the socialist regime. Their discourse is consequently inaudible to the majority of the people.

There is a problem in terms of reality framing which partly explains why though most people agree on what should be changed, nobody rises to do so. Yet though the odds seemed against it, some groups of people do manage to objectify their social experience and be creative so as to find a new grasp on their individual and collective reality. I've focused on groups, in the arts world, that try to push boundaries and experiment freedom in their daily practices.

The Possibility for Collective Action

Though artists and intellectuals did experience repression, the arts world in the revolutionary period has produced quite a lively and critical voice. The fact is that Fidel's famous speech in June 1961 located the arts in a sort of blurred zone: *dentro de la revolución todo, contra la revolución nada*. That motto made it possible for artists and intellectuals to interpret the rule with a certain degree of freedom. But it also gave censors a certain degree of freedom to determine who was counter-revolutionary and who was not.

The beginning of the Special Period allowed for more freedom of expression, but Raúl's speech in March 1996, accusing some intellectuals to be a fifth column inside Cuba, seemed to close the possibility to coin alternative forms of expression in Cuba. Paradoxically it is at that moment that new social, cultural and intellectual spaces started to emerge. Different reasons explain these dynamics. The creation of the *Asociación Hermanos Saiz* (AHS), in 1986, allowed for young artists and intellectuals to be integrated into institutions while being protected from more conservative and dogmatic authorities, and the changing legal framework, in the 1990s, created new possibilities for semi autonomous associations to emerge. Moreover although Raúl's speech⁶ made it very clear that autonomous thinking and action would not be permitted, no explicit criteria were put forward. He only mentioned socialist values without defining them. Since limits are not clear and since Cuban authorities claim there is no censorship in Cuba, artists and intellectuals can decide to experiment and try to push boundaries. To do *as if* there existed freedom of speech and action.⁷ And this is what the groups I have identified have been doing since then.

They are rappers, popular educators, poet-performers and libertarian socialists. What do they have in common? Such a question might at first glance seem preposterous. But in Cuba they share both a common vision of resistance against the paternalistic control of the leadership and what we can call common practices of emancipation (from paternalism, authoritarianism, vertical hierarchies, sets of norms, and censorship) in order to harmonize their social experience and assert their individuality. The practices they devised and implemented in their everyday life single them out. I will analyze them through the example of the poets-performers.

6. "Por supuesto, debemos distinguir (...) entre el investigador cubano que puede pensar de modo diferente al vigente en torno a cualquier asunto, pero desde posiciones desde el socialismo, y en los marcos apropiados para ellos, de aquel que de hecho se ha vuelto un cubanoólogo con ciudadanía cubana y hasta con el carné del Partido, divulgando sus posiciones con la complacencia de nuestros enemigos." Speech pronounced on the 23rd of March, 1996.

7. Goldfarb (2006) analyzes the Solidarity Movement in Poland as people defending freedom by acting freely: "In the words of the most articulate leader of this movement, 'they acted as if they lived in a free society' and a free society resulted. They presented themselves to each other as independent citizens and in the process they created an independent public." p. 33.

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One of the main characteristics of the four groups is their focus on the reconstruction of the individuality in order to emancipate it from the regime propaganda of self and collective sacrifice.

The group of poet-performers was created in Alamar in the 1990s. It is a heir to many previous artistic endeavors. Their idea was to link different kinds of artists, autodidacts or not, and try to promote news forms of expression in the community. They started by creating a new identity for the city through the painting of graffiti, wherever it was possible to do so. Indeed, Alamar, which used to be a model city for Che's "new man," is built in soviet-style architecture. It lends it a sad and impersonal atmosphere. One specific sign is particularly significant of that will to "re-coin" their daily reality. The "Alamar" graffiti, made of playful shapes and colors is to be read as a counterpoint to the very austere "Alamar" sculpture which indicates the entrance to the city. Another graffiti says "revolución del ser". It can be read as an alternative to Fidel's definition of revolution, which is shown on huge panels everywhere in the country. Instead of promoting a normative vision of revolution, they propose to reflect on the revolutionary state of being, instead of promoting an ideological scheme, they propose to question the reality in which they live. They also organize workshops (poetry, multimedia, sculpture, graffiti and ceramic) literally in the streets, or in building halls, so as to attract people and show that anyone could be creative if let free to express oneself. I interpret this practice as a way to recognize individual knowledge and know-how as individual characteristics and not only as elements of a whole. It is also a way to reflect on the constraints and norms they have incorporated as subjects of the revolutionary socialization, thus allowing them to assert the possibility for an semi autonomous self, capable of self transformation. Foucault's notion of subjectivation is useful again to understand how those Cubans accept themselves as subjected beings, and at the same time become subjects through the production of their modes of existence. That process allows for the reconstruction of a new collective identity, made of singular subjects, and far from the leadership's monolithic vision of the Cuban nation.

Another characteristic is their self-organization and self-experimentation within communities in order to actively reconstruct the citizen's relationship to polity with a vision from below.

In Cuba nearly all forms of collective action must be organized from above by the concerned official organizations. People are supposed to voice their complaints during mass organizations meetings, and not to take steps by themselves to solve their problems. But they often receive little response from their leaders and therefore resort to illegal solutions. The poet-performers have put forward alternative ways. They neither promote official nor illegal means to solve issues. They instead become public protagonists, claiming their rights through public action. During some of the worst years of the economic crisis, garbage was not removed from the streets of Alamar. To protest against that state of things, which had been denounced for months in mass organization assemblies, they threw themselves in the garbage and acted as if they were dead. The image of bodies in the garbage drew attention from the whole neighborhood, local authorities and the police. The police detained members of the group but they were finally let free and the garbage removed within the next days. This action epitomizes one of the group's main objectives: to attempt to do away with the fear (of repression, of social stigma, etc.) and show that it is possible to do things collectively *outside* of official organizations. That kind of action goes against political apathy and people's beliefs that they cannot change their everyday life reality. It demonstrates that it is possible to address social, political and artistic questions in an autonomous and unofficial way, with a concrete positive impact.

They practice what I call symbolic rituals of emancipation,⁸ such as direct actions, poetic performances, collective lectures and readings or cathartic shows, to get rid of top down imposed social attitudes.

The poet-performers organize performances, directly tuned to the Cuban everyday life experience, and which constitute another way to appropriate spaces. One of them is about freedom of speech. It was performed in Santiago de Cuba, during an official festival, but the group chose a central public space to perform instead of the officially designated area. In that performance, a few men are literally wrapped up in a narrow

8. I define the "symbolic rituals of emancipation" as a ceremony, with a succession of established sequences, using symbolic elements (signs), in order to gain access to another dimension of human experience, in which one can understand and accept the norms and constraints of their socialization and at the same time learn to do away with fear.

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nationalist vision of the world (their costumes are made of newspaper and flags that symbolize nationalism). They can only get their information from very restricted sources (they breathe through a pipe linked to a suitcase which embodies Information). They manage to break free from that yoke (they get rid of their costumes and burn them). They are therefore born anew and become free men and citizens. A whole meditation ritual follows. The performance took place without any action from the local police because the group always plays with their uncertainties: art or counter-revolutionary action? While the policemen contact their hierarchy, there is time to perform, though members of the group have been hassled by local authorities and sometimes even by the police or the state security. But they have never stopped working. A member of the group once told me that he would not stop unless he was in physical or mental danger.

Taking that example as representative of the other groups, I conclude, for now, that their members act together with intentional will, in order to get a grasp on their reality and invent new meanings to it, what we could call “reality framing”. They put emphasis on the re-coining of their reality and on direct actions to defeat the prevailing social and political apathy. The spaces they create are collective and they share common objectives while cooperating and sometimes competing with other spaces. They can therefore be analyzed in terms of collective action (Erik Neveu, 1996; Daniel Cefaï, 2007) though they don’t always have specific claims but rather propose an alternative way of experiencing reality, what a poet called the quest for *una cívica*, civility. That is why I call those experiments arenas of symbolic resistance to the local hegemony, and of emancipation from it, or in other words “emancipation spaces,” rather than social movements. Indeed in the Cuban context the notion of social or political movements are not quite efficient because, as Xuegang Zhou⁹ puts it: “the communist state claims a monopoly of the public goods and denies the legitimacy of interests at the individual level. An important consequence is that any behaviour outside State control is seen as a challenge to the state.” Collective action is therefore seen as a threat. The question that comes to mind is then: how are these experiments possible

9. Xuegang Zhou, “Unorganized Interests and Collective Action in Communist China.” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1. (Feb., 1993), pp. 54-73.

in a Cuban society in which we know that any attempt at challenging revolutionary norms meets almost immediate social disapproval if not outright repression?

Being In and Out, Playing with the Limits

With the Special Period new ways of dealing with such experiments are implemented. Since the Cuban leadership has more difficulty in dealing with the growing social and economic complexity that followed the fall of the Soviet Union, it adopts *laissez-faire* tactics in order to control those dynamics in a different and less costly way. In the cultural sphere, it means that artists and intellectuals can express themselves quite freely as long as they do not structurally criticize the socialist regime. Since artists and intellectuals are offered what can be considered privileges such as a better house, a car, the right to travel and even publish works abroad, they are very vulnerable to State control. After experiencing a privileged life (in Cuban terms), it is hard to renounce it. Daily life economic hardships in Cuba are significant enough to be used as a means of pressure for political conformity. Most artists and intellectuals are co-opted that way. Authorities can also count on the revolutionary socialization. Its values and utopias have shaped Cubans' vision of the world and it is hard for them to extricate themselves out of it.

Members of the studied groups have all experienced co-optation, repression or marginalization. The relationship between cultural authorities and the hip hop movement epitomizes the cooptation and marginalization strategy. To cope with the emerging movement the AHS was first summoned, in the late 1990s, to integrate most rap artists, though it is supposed to accept only vanguard artists. But when the hip hop movement emerged, it seems that no cultural institution knew how to cope with it. This membership helped the movement to develop and at the same time provided the authorities with means of pressure and control. The situation dramatically changed for rap artists when the National Rap Agency was created in 2002. The 'best' rappers (only nine groups) became professional artists, with official recognition, promotion and wages, while the others were turned into 'amateurs'. A few years afterwards, the then president of the AHS, decided that most rappers should belong to local *casas de cultura* while only the 'best' artists should remain in the AHS. The definition of 'best artist' has been an issue of contention ever since

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between cultural authorities and rappers, and between rappers, since they were not asked to give their own point of view on the issue and quite a few think that the selection of the ‘best rappers’ was not fair. Those decisions created more divisions inside the movement and contributed to establish more hierarchical lines among rappers. We can here see clearly how some gained recognition and institutional status while the others were on the contrary pushed into the background.

Cooptation and marginalization are the main strategies used by the Cuban authorities. Repression remains at low levels. Control more often takes the face of prohibition than that of repression (rappers have been prohibited from performing for some time after they have had a critical behavior towards the State, through attitudes or lyrics). Only the poet-performers have actually experienced more serious repression: local authorities, party members, the police and the State Security have all, at one moment or another, intervened to curtail the group’s activities, trying to prohibit it to receive any financial help from abroad, detaining some of its members in police stations, trying to convince them to put an end to their experiments and become more mainstream artists. But it is important to mention that none of its members ever went to prison and that they were never physically threatened.

On a general basis, members of the studied groups have resisted cooptation and repression. This resistance comes from the specific configuration of the groups. Formed during dark times (the beginning of the Special Period), they have learnt to survive together, helping out one another. They have built what Mark Granovetter (1973) calls “strong ties,” trust and affection, and have generated a common organizational culture made of shared beliefs and strategies. Working together has contributed to affording meaning to a disillusioned social experience, and creating feelings of solidarity cemented in shared experience (including repression). The medium size of groups has conjured a sense of “family,” as group members themselves put it. Last, “selective incentives” in Olsonian terms are also an important element. The groups have managed to attract attention and resources, especially from foreign counterparts, which individuals alone would not. The capacity to generate collective autonomous sources of income certainly explains the relative stability as far as involvement is concerned (that is, the slim turn-over).

All groups have also created “weak ties,” (Mark Granovetter, 1973) i.e. more or less loose networks, both locally and internationally, which are regularly activated in order to ask for support or participation in a special event. This prevents them from feeling isolated when pressured or stigmatized. It makes it complex and potentially costly for the Cuban authorities to exert power too harshly upon them.

That relative resistance to State pressure does not mean that the groups broke free from the revolutionary socialization. They indeed show quite an ambivalent attitude towards the regime. They articulate their action from *within* the regime, using what Jason Lyall (2006) names the mechanism of “entrapment,” i.e. the gaps in the State’s rhetoric, to call attention to certain “focal points.” They never structurally criticize the regime, they rather point out the discordance between the epics of sacrifice celebrated by the leadership and everyday life struggle, between the claimed rhetoric of equality and the actual discrimination at work, or between the free access to education and health systems and their deteriorating capacity. They have no apparent systemic claims and most of them are organized *within* State institutions. Rappers belong to the AHS or to local cultural institutions. The collective/group of poets has its own workshop, inside the gallery of a local culture house/house of culture, which pays its electricity bill. The intellectuals also belong to the AHS. Though it is probably one of the most “liberal” institutions in the Cuban regime, its function is to legitimate State politics. And the popular educators are organized in NGOs that show allegiance to the Cuban leadership, defending it in international social forums all over the world. The price of semi-autonomy is the acceptance of imposed limits. If rappers were not in the AHS it would be quite difficult for them to organize concerts in cultural places. At the same time, the AHS membership card can become a resource for audacious cultural undertakers: if some official authority wants to curtail their initiatives, they use it as a protective umbrella, arguing they have official authorization for what they are doing. The whole consists in never exactly declaring what the events are about, obtaining the official paper and then being audacious within certain limits.

Eventually, I must also mention that those four groups are all based in suburban Havana. Most of their members live in popular districts of the periphery (Alamar, Guanabacoa, Marianao, etc.), where they generally

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perform. I have noticed that it is generally far easier for the groups to obtain the authorization to organize events in the periphery than in central hot spots. (It is not as clear for the hip hop movement, which has managed to gain access to central venues in Havana through the Rap Agency).

The Cuban State's cooptation and marginalization strategies represent new ways of control, but they are not always optimally effective. Indeed the groups I've studied have managed to maintain a certain unity and have generally not allowed for individual promotion or repression. It is quite noticeable since most informal groups do not resist such pressure (many other cultural and intellectual endeavors have ended up in fights, splits and dissolutions). It does not mean that State tactics have not provoked tensions within the groups and between them. But up to now they have managed to keep on working for more than ten years, which must be considered as quite an achievement in a country where freedom of association is not guaranteed.

Pressure, cooptation, marginalization can also be used to demonstrate, especially to the international community, that there indeed exists freedom of expression in Cuba. In changing times these new modes of expression could also be used as possible resources for later purposes. Those daring Cubans represent social and cultural capital and could become allies in troubled transition times since they have strong roots in their local communities and are quite respected both locally and in the artistic sphere, and they have created international networks. We are facing a game in which the regime tries to control and monitor more 'liberal' spaces, and in which the protagonists of those spaces have understood that they can play with borders and therefore constantly try to expand the spaces they have managed to create.

Conclusion

These groups are not representative but significant of the existing possibility to organize resistance inside the socialist Cuban regime. The strategic interactions between the State and what I called "spaces of emancipation" show that the game is quite complex and that different cards are being played. The regime strives to control and monitor more "liberal" spaces in which the protagonists have understood that they can play with boundaries and therefore constantly attempt to expand the spaces they have managed to create. Of course those spaces do not escape

the State's orchestration of a *trompe l'oeil* liberalization but they work in a somewhat autonomous way, which allows them to objectify their social experience. Those spaces also epitomize the Cubans' ambivalence toward the socialist regime. Since this regime constructed them as men and citizens, they are completely entangled in the "revolutionary socialization." However, the protagonists of those spaces try to emancipate themselves from it, in order to re-shape and re-coin their social reality.

A negative hypothesis is that those spaces are only "pocket protests" that have little impact on the course of Cuban contemporary history. A positive hypothesis would be that those spaces constitute social capital and that their protagonists are actually constructing the possibility for a new political imagination in Cuba. They could be an alternative (something not expected by the regime) to the monolithic socialist imagination though they incorporate elements of that socialist imagination (something not expected by Western observers). We must indeed understand that the revolutionary imagination must be considered as an essential part of Cuba's contemporary history and social experience. The necessary change should not overlook that aspect of Cuban contemporary history and politics.

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CHAPTER 8

How Revolutions Justify Themselves

Enrique S. Pumar

Abstract: State Framing examines how authoritarian regimes manipulate symbols and meanings to attempt to legitimize themselves. Through a content analysis of the 26th of July speeches by Fidel and Raúl Castro and an interpretation of the celebration of this anniversary, the paper demonstrates how non-democratic regimes employ primary frames to justify their rule and spark popular support. Primarily, these frames depict optimism, need for collective sacrifice, distortion of history, fostering of a common enemy, and a state of siege as mechanisms of legitimation. Finally, the paper asserts that these tactics could also be counterproductive as they raise expectations about the future and exacerbate tensions within the ruling elite.

Whether one examines democratic or nondemocratic regimes one thing is certain: all governments need to legitimize themselves.¹ As Gramsci and others have stipulated, legitimacy derives not merely from the effective enforcement of the rule of law or the menacing mechanisms of repression regimes have at their disposal but also from the dissemination of values that eventually become hegemonic. In the case of democracies, this verbosity manifests itself in great part by conveying the efficacy of public policies, the accountability of elected officials, and from such democratic mechanisms as valid election results, transparent electoral campaigns, widespread popular participation, and the toleration of dissent. Nondemocratic regimes, especially Communist ones, on the other hand, hide the veil of oppression behind controlled political mobilization and a carefully

1. I gratefully acknowledge the comments of my colleagues Joseph L. Scarpaci, Jorge Perez-Lopéz, Juan del Aguila and Mauricio Solaun and assume all responsibility for the exposition of the ideas herein. Since I presented this paper, I learned of the passing of my aunt Linda in Cuba. I dedicate this paper to her memory and celebrate her enduring indifference to the 26th of July speech.

crafted public communication strategy deciphering Socialist rule as the determined path of historical development. The case of Cuba provides us with an opportunity to examine the central concern of this study. How do authoritarian regimes attempt mobilize political support through framing? Notwithstanding the effective use of repression, the principal thrust of this paper is to investigate how the regime maneuvers political discourse to attempt to justify itself and foment political support.

For the purposes of this paper, I call the strategy to gain political leverage through communication *the politics of framing*. I depart from David Snow's (1992) conception of framing strategies among social movements, to define the politics of framing as the conscious political efforts by any regime to attract and sustain support for their authority over time and, in the case of Cuba, to foment shared enthusiasm for the dynamic transformations taking place within the revolution. In addition, the politics of framing is designed to raise the cost of any organized opposition and to facilitate the recruitment of supporters who would devote themselves wholeheartedly to the revolutionary cause. In essence, the politics of framing is another manifestation of what Catherine Bell (1992) calls "redemptive hegemony."²

The strategy of framing then consists of examining the repertoire of tactics, rituals, and conceptualizing mechanisms that give meaning to the communication the regime maneuvers to secure various forms of political support. While every regime devotes a certain amount of effort to "make itself look good," in the absence of open and democratic elections framing becomes an indispensable legitimizing tool for Communist regimes in the battle for people's hearts and minds. This is specially the case in Cuba, where most of the population is young enough not to have a vivid recollection of the economic disparities and political instability that characterized the Republican years. In this case, as in many others throughout the developing world, the impetus to legitimize the regime must also to be considered within a contentious international context where adversaries of the regime also battle in the realm of ideas. Besides the arbitrary use of repression, authoritarian regimes have few other effective strategies to

2. According to Bell (1992, p. 85) "redemptive hegemony is therefore, to formulate the unexpressed assumptions that constitute the actor's strategic understanding of the place, purpose, and trajectory of the act."

boost their grassroots political mobilization. Needless to say, tight controls over the media and education are two of the many resources such regimes manipulate to facilitate the articulation of strategic communication. As Misztal (1985, p. 146) has persuasively argued, the mechanisms of control in Communist regimes range from the distribution of welfare gains to the more pervasive infringement on human values. In addition, there is increasing evidence to support Przeworski's (1991) conclusion that with time the official ideology becomes ritualized and devoid of popular meaning in Communist countries. This makes the craving for legitimacy even more prevalent, and investigating the manifestation of this type of *soft power* in nondemocratic regimes is a fascinating question for a number of reasons.

First, mechanisms of framing reveal the hearty capacity of the state to produce and reproduce its image for public consumption. One can argue that the success of the politics of framing throughout the revolution is a contributing factor to the longevity of the regime in the midst of recurrent internal and external crises and mounting popular discontent. Second, how states attempt to legitimize their rule after intense crises also reveals their adaptability and reengineering capacities. Proving wrong most pundits' calculations about its survival has become a trademark of the Cuban government. We witnessed some evidence of this resilience after the regime rebounded from the social devastation generated by the economic hardships during the *Periodo Especial* and more recently with the speculations surrounding the implications of Castro's emergency surgery and his decision to transfer power, for the first time, to his brother Raúl. It is fair to say that no state, including Cuba, can survive for more than four decades by unleashing repression alone. Third, depending on how a frame is devised, the politics of framing can also conceal normative contradictions that could exacerbate tensions within the regime's highest circles and between the state and society. Since its inception, the revolutionary government has been keenly effective in concealing internal drifts and in presenting a unified public image. However, there is evidence to suggest that the gap between political rhetoric and reality is increasingly becoming a source of popular discontent, particularly among the younger generations with no recollection of the Batista regime or the insurgency that battled it. At one point, young people on the island privately characterized Fidel as "the Ayatollah" mainly for his frequent public aberrations and

unwillingness to loosen his tight grip on power, but also for his many unrealized flamboyant claims and messianic promises. In popular music, Carlos Varela symbolically depicted this generational gap in the song *Guillermo Tell*.

While the regime's crafty communication strategies justify the study of framing, in the context of Cuba, it is remarkable that until now very few scholars have systematically studied its political effects. Perhaps part of the reason for this is the unquestionable double standards of the regime when it confronts such issues as human rights, accountability, the rule of law, or democracy, which fill the pages of books and other studies about the revolution during the last four decades. Another possibility for this intellectual vacuum might be the difficulty of assessing how the politics of framing is actually crafted in such a tightly guarded and reclusive environment. For instance, we know political messages must receive the blessing of the highest officials in Cuba before they are made public. But how policy is formulated remains an enigma. Finally, insofar as *dramaturgialists* assure us that frames and rituals shape perception, there is no convincing evidence to support any direct correlation between the meanings of these subjective traits and impromptu social actions. At best, one can posit that state framing disguises conditions of political realities, suppress alternative interpretations, and attempt to prompt solidarity between subordinates and political elites.

Fortunately, we can follow a fairly reliable methodology to uncover not necessarily how framing is crafted or its concomitant social impact, but instead the tactics and mechanisms through which frames are communicated by the regime. This approach consists of conducting a content analysis of Fidel's speeches at the ceremony commemorating the 26th of July celebrations. The 26th, as is commonly referred to in Cuba, is one of the most important annual festivities celebrated by the regime. In addition, it presents an opportunity for the regime to deliver what would be comparable to the State of the Union address in American politics. Analyzing these speeches reveals what the regime wants the world to know about itself and how it rationalizes the twists and turns it planned for the revolution. Moreover, the speech has been conceived as a vehicle of "direct democracy," the true form of political participation embraced by revolu-

tionary leaders. The 26th celebration constitutes one of the most venerated and colorful public gatherings since it was first instituted in 1959 and the impact of the 26th speech transcends time and the public event itself. The symbolism and magnitude of this celebration make the 26th speech an ideal source of information to depict how the regime wants others to perceive it and how it depicts its own reality.

I borrowed the theoretical framework guiding this study from the groundbreaking work of Erving Goffman (1974) on frame analysis and from the contentious literature on power (Isaac 1987; Lukes 2005). According to Goffman, frames are all about the organization of experience. Situations are structured according to values and norms subjectively defined and interpreted by participants. Social frameworks in particular involve rules and postulates about what is acted upon within the frame and about what should be left out. Primary frameworks³ consist of the social norms and principles that give meaning to experiences. As I hope it is obvious, in the case of Cuba it is in the interest of the regime to take an active part in the task of giving meaning to popular social experiences. The capacity of individuals to construct their own reality is significant because this social construction precedes social action. In other words, individuals behave according to how they perceive their experiences. The logical assumption is that the more effective the regime's articulation, the more support it will foster particularly among those who do not possess alternative historical references.

Thus, one can say that when an autocratic charismatic leader unchallengedly constructs, delineates, or defines reality, and these meanings permeate the political culture, the act of framing becomes another manifestation of this power because the leader has the ability to manage and manufacture "the mobilization of bias" and the third dimension of power⁴—the expectations that cognition and preference subordinates will employ to interpret or reference their own reality. Furthermore, since autocracies do not provide space to officially articulate and diffuse rival

3. According to Goffman, a primary framework "is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful" (Goffman 1974, p. 21).

4. E. E. Schattschneider (1960) contends that the mobilization of bias reflects the capacity of political organizations to include and exclude certain issues of the public discourse.

schemas, the word of the leader amounts to a primary reference, a most subtle and sophisticated manifestation of social control. The leader's language conveys norms, values, and principles that permeate the human consciousness particularly among those with a predisposition to validate his message.⁵ Hence, framing becomes one of the most effective and sophisticated latent manifestations of political power because it is transmitted through unrestrainedly enthusiastic experiences and collective identities without the threat of negative sanctions or coercions. In a recent *Washington Post* report, the Cuban poet Pablo Armando Fernandez put it succinctly when he said: "Fidel will always live in the minds of Cubans. He is electric—like a messiah" (*Washington Post* 2007, A14).

More specifically, to examine the power of frames in Cuba I analyzed the collection of speeches of Fidel Castro published by the Cuban Government listed on the official government website *www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos*, between 1959 and 2006. Throughout my analysis I searched for evidence of how five recurrent primary frameworks attempt to legitimize political power within the revolution. The first two are 1) the call for justice and a just society and 2) the evidence of social affluence, I borrowed from Oberschall's (1996) pathbreaking study of the composition of frames during the demise of former Eastern European Communism. The rest of the frameworks are prominent features in most Cuban official discourse. These I shall call 3) the making of history and the exuberant depiction of the revolution as a unique social process; 4) the victimization of the revolution under constant siege from internal and external enemies; and 5) the need for personal sacrifice in support of the revolutionary process.

Having established the analytical design of the paper, I interpret the 26th of July celebrations as the ritual where these five primary frameworks are aired. Behind the celebration, this public occasion also reveals how one-sided and controlled this interactive ritual actually is. As I shall

5. This conclusion follows Bachrach and Baratz (1970, pp. 43–44) when they write "political systems and sub-systems develop a "mobilization of bias," a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to benefits certain groups and persons at the expense of others. Those who benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests." For a discussion of the third dimension of power see Lukes 2005.

The 26th Speech as Theater

argue, the celebration amounts to a theatrical production that mimics the horizontal organization of authority throughout the island. I discuss the configuration of the five cornerstone frameworks delivered by Fidel between 1959 and 2006 and interpret the much-discussed 26th celebration speech delivered by Raúl in 2007. I conclude by discussing the implications of these speeches portend about recent events in the island.

The 26th Speech as Theater

The occasion of the 26th is a highly symbolic one. The ceremony commemorates the anniversary of the Moncada attack,⁶ the event that marks the beginning of Castro's uprising against Batista. Celebrating this anniversary year after year seems to be intended to reiterate the image of Castro and his associates as the sole forebearers of the revolution while diminishing the contributions of other revolutionary groups. In fact, the celebration seems to have been originally intended to divert authority from the provisional government set up after Batista's downfall and to consolidate authority around the public figure of Castro. The first 26th festivities, in 1959, took place among a gathering of *campesinos* away from the capital and Fidel did not miss the occasion to devote a substantial part of his speech to blast politicians in Havana who, in his words, tried to continue with bourgeois politics as usual. This is a clear reference to the moderate character and political affiliation of the provisional government in power at the time. The signal here was clear. The newly formed transitional government might control the reins of government but it will enjoy few real powers. Political authority lies with Castro and his associates and it derived from his ability to mobilize and speak directly to the Cuban people and constituting a new brand of polity. He then delineated his trademark definition of revolutionary democracy:

Gobierno del pueblo no para un grupo privilegiado del pueblo; gobierno del pueblo no para una oligarquía que somete a la explotación al pueblo; gobierno del pueblo no para una casta de militares o de politiqueros,

6. The Moncada Attack was carried by Fidel and his followers the 26th of July Movement on July 26, 1953 and marks the beginning of their armed struggle against the Batista dictatorship. The attack against the army garrison failed militarily but it was later the source of much political gains for Castro.

como habíamos tenido siempre en Cuba. Gobierno del pueblo para todo el pueblo: ¡Eso sí es democracia!⁷

Another tactic intended to signal a new departure in Cuban politics was the assembly itself. I refer to this strategy as *staging*. The 26th marks the beginning of controlled mass demonstrations where the regime employs controlled political mobilization to support its position on issues and intimidate opponents while presenting an appearance of voluntary and democratic popular participation. The regime goes to great lengths to conceal the sophisticated mixture of incentives, favors, and pressures it maneuvers behind the scenes to gather such a crowd. While early on during the revolution many people probably attended these celebrations out of self-interest, curiosity, even perhaps enthusiasm, as years went by the celebration became another obligatory ritual performed to gain personal concessions favors from the regimes, or simply avoid being labeled a *gusano*.

The dramatization of the event in itself can hardly be characterized as a form of democratic participation or a carnivalesque ritual a la Bakhtin. Paradoxically, an event popularly depicted, as a celebration of direct democracy could not be more anti. The 26th speech itself has always taken the form of a monologue delivered by one of the Castro brothers, preferably Fidel, to signal they are solely in command. Since there are no rebuttals, the Castros are in complete control over what is said and how it is said: the framing process. Then, there is the staging of the speech itself. For most of the early years, Fidel delivered the speech at the Plaza de la Revolución, an open square adorned with gigantic portraits of revolutionary heroes, only use for selective revolutionary celebrations. At the Plaza, not coincidental, Fidel would always talk from a podium situated in front of a monumental bust of Jose Martí, consider by many as one of Cuba's founding fathers, to associate himself with the lineage of mystical nationalism this fallen hero represents. Fidel also stands at the highest point, one step above his closest associates, only his inner circle seating in the stage. Finally, at the street level, was the populace. The symbolism in this staging configuration reflects the hierarchical organization or power in

7. 26th of July speech 1959. All of the references to the 26th speeches are taken from those cited in the Granma database unless otherwise indicated.

State Framing

the island. In later years, this celebration was moved out of the revolutionary square to the provinces without altering the staging and the cite of the festivity was awarded to the place that demonstrated more allegiance to the revolution as measure by meeting or exceeding production targets.

State Framing

A study of the 26th speeches from 1959 through 2006⁸ reveals how the revolutionary generation, and in particular Fidel Castro, time and time again reiterates his vision of the revolution and its place in world affairs. The speeches rarely outline major policy shifts; in fact, during times of crisis, as in 1989 and 1990, a substantial portion of the speech was dedicated to the many achievements of the revolutionary government.⁹ In 1990, for instance, as one would have expected, Castro highlighted the achievements in the education and health sectors and then stated how Cuba compares favorably with other countries in Latin America and the rest of the Third World even in the midst of trouble times.

Another significant characteristic is the free use of the collective “we,” *nosotros*, throughout his discourse. This usage has two significant political connotations. The first is the apparent depersonalization of the revolution. Every achievement is presented as the result of a collective effort that translates into an apparent sense of empowerment to the average citizen. Second, forging a collective identity is an essential tool to control popular mobilization since it encourages citizens to defend what is theirs, the revolution, and any efforts calling for a different course is seen as intrusive, possibly threatening, and something that must be eradicated.

Finally, Castro always avoids communicating any depressing news to Cubans. This was evident when in 1989 he reported the breakdown of the Soviet Union without elaborating on the profound adverse impact this radical change would have on the island. Instead, he used the occasion to alert Cuba’s enemies that the island will persevere at all cost to preserve

8. It is worth noting that the database does not contain speeches for the 26th of July celebrations in 1992, 1994, 1997, and 2001. Presumably, his brother Raúl headed these celebrations while Castro was traveling overseas.

9. A rare exception is the 1993 speech that decriminalized the dollar and outlined significant policy shifts.

the course of the revolution. The impression that the revolution is willing to fight to safeguard its existence not only exploits popular nationalistic feelings but also plays into the values of bravery and determination so dear to the human condition. In Castro's words:

¡Cuba y la Revolución Cubana resistirán! Lo digo, y lo digo con calma, con serenidad y con toda la sangre fría del mundo. Es hora de hablarles claro a los imperialistas y es hora de hablarle claro a todo el mundo. Nosotros no bromeamos.¹⁰

Primary Frameworks

In this section of the paper, I briefly examine how Castro attempts to legitimize the course of the revolution through five distinct frameworks. Admittedly the intrinsic political value of this conceptual strategy is difficult to assess since there is increasing evidence of growing popular disillusionment and the reliability of published interviews by the state-controlled media in support of the revolution is questionable at best. Many who have done fieldwork in Cuba recently report a growing trend toward a popular degeneration of revolutionary values and of individuals more preoccupied with making ends meet than with demonstrating an organic solidarity.¹¹

A trend analysis of how primary frameworks have evolved shows two significant transformations. The first is the use of these frameworks selectively in speeches. A significant portion of each speech is always devoted to describing achievements of the revolution and accentuating how revolutionary policies serve the people more effectively than ever before. The implication of this position is also that the revolution is fairer than any of its predecessor Republican governments. As time went on other uses of this reference becomes more sporadic. Starting in the mid-1970s, the call for personal sacrifice almost disappeared from the speech. Early on, the reference to personal sacrifice took two connotations. One was patience. Fidel insinuated that commitment to the revolution would materialize into

10. 26th of July 1989 speech.

11. For a recent account of how personal ties and reciprocity enables individuals to maneuver the risks and opportunities of the informal sector, see Sacchetti (2006).

Primary Frameworks

a better future. A typical illustration is his prediction in 1966 about the plentiful times ahead:

Nosotros tenemos la más completa seguridad de que la década del 80 no será década de hambre para nuestro pueblo, nosotros sabemos que la Revolución impidió eso. Porque ya no es la situación de un millón de analfabetos, de 500 000 obreros sin trabajo, ¡no! Que ya nuestro problema hoy no es de falta de trabajo en nuestros campos, sino de falta de brazos para poner a producir nuestras tierras.¹²

Of course, in retrospect this prediction could not have been more off the mark given the adverse effects on the real standard of living conditions the country experienced during the 1980s and 1990s.

But sacrifice also took on the meaning of alliance. It was important given the early contention of the revolution for the revolutionary government to sell a pledge of support for the cause. References to making history are also more frequent early on than after the 1970s. In time, the idea of making history gradually progressed from practical allusion to historical figures as a strategy to link the revolution with the nationalistic struggles of the past, and starting in 1993 every speech mentioned it was not just to commemorate another Moncada anniversary, but also to invoke Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and other leaders of the insurgency against Spain in the 19th Century.

Conceptual transformation is the second conclusion that can be drawn from the trend analysis. The symbolic meaning of terms seems to have changed over time to conform to historical circumstances. References to how democracy is practiced in the revolution not only became less frequent after 1965 but also the word democracy was rarely used, referring instead to other modes of political participation. In fact, during the last decades whenever there was a direct reference to capitalist democracy, it was to underline how it did not work as intended, serving special interests and the powerful and affluent at the expense of the ordinary citizen.

Another remarkable illustration of the dynamic of conceptual transformation was evident in the 1960 speech when Fidel, to characterize the historical contributions of the revolution, claimed that before the revolu-

12. 26th of July 1966 speech.

tion various public services did not work and people were not treated with dignity or respect. He credited the revolution with changing all that, stating “Antes no había honradez; antes no había, como hay hoy en nuestro pueblo, amor; antes no había, como hay hoy en nuestro pueblo, compañerismo y confraternidad profunda; antes no se abrían las casas en la ciudad para recibir a los del campo, ni se abrían las casas en el campo y en los pueblos del interior para los hombres de la ciudad....” A constant feature of the speech has always been the historic achievement of the revolution to survive years of hostile aggression by the United States and its allies, especially as manifested in the embargo.

The result is that these primary frameworks reveal the dogmatic operational code of the first generation of revolutionary leaders who are reluctant to concede failure or to change the course. This is very problematic because it is evident they conceive a threat from any position that would deviate from the course they set up for the revolution and dare challenge their authority and policy judgment. In practical terms, this means that they are unwilling to contemplate sustained reforms. This is the reason that revolutions do not radically change until the first generation of leaders, and particularly the primary leader, is long gone from power. When one compares other nations that have gone through Communist reforms, China and Vietnam, with Cuba, it is evident that the more distant reforming political elites who are still nominally Communist are from the experience of fighting a revolutionary insurgency war, the more this group is willing to preside over significant openings and reformist policies that seem to deviate from the revolution’s original course.¹³

Raúl’s Future Course

Evidence to support this assertion can be found in the 26th speech (2007) delivered by Raúl while his brother was convalescing from surgery. In some respects, the speech was vintage Fidel. Raúl was sober but reassuring. His opening highlighted how his brother’s illness had not resulted in

13. Despite the recent cosmetic reforms instituted by Raúl, there is evidence he has no inclination to move ahead with more structural reforms. For a recent account of the political impasse see Patrick Symmes, “The Battle of Ideas. Searching for the Opposition in Post-Fidel Cuba.” *Harper*, 216, 1896, May 2008, pp.50-62.

Raúl's Future Course

political chaos, popular unrest, or the collapse of the Cuban socialist state, as some analysts speculated. He acknowledged the difficulties of this year presumably due to the recent death of his wife Vilma and Fidel's protracted and uncertain recovery. He then reassured the public about the vigor of the revolution and credited the people for their resilience, stating: "no conocen bien a nuestro pueblo quienes se asombran ante su capacidad de crecerse hasta la altura que demanda cada reto, por grande que sea..."

Raúl alluded to the historical making of the Cuban people as part of a long struggle dating from the nineteenth century wars of independence. He tied the continuous popular struggle to resistance to the recurrent misguided aggression by the United States. This was a clever way of mixing two primary frames alluding to nationalistic pride. He cited the evidence of current nationalism by referring to historical national heroes—Martí, Maceo, Agramonte, Céspedes, Mella, and others. He referred to the 3,478 Cubans who felt they were victims of direct or indirect attacks supposedly sponsored by the United States. Raúl also went to great lengths to credit the resilience of the Cuban people and their personal sacrifice in overcoming what he called bureaucratic mistakes of the past and the embargo, which aggravated the effects of those errors. The people's personal sacrifice was paying off in the surmounting of bureaucratic and international obstacles against socialism in the island, he concluded.

The part that caused more controversy was his announcement, toward the end of his speech, that the leadership is considering opening the economy further to "serious" foreign investors. Raúl postulated:

En tal sentido estudiamos actualmente lo referido al incremento de la inversión extranjera, siempre que aporte capital, tecnología o mercado, para así aprovechar la contribución que esta pueda hacer al desarrollo del país, sin repetir los errores del pasado por ingenuidades e ignorancia en esta actividad y a partir de las experiencias positivas, trabajando con empresarios serios y sobre bases jurídicas bien definidas que preserven el papel del Estado y el predominio de la propiedad socialista.

As on previous occasions, the 26th speech was seen as an opportunity to state the new identity and potential new course of the revolution. It is precisely this new identity that has been the topic of much debate and speculation on what the future will bring to the island nation. Critics of the regime interpret this stance as a "band-aid" measure accomplishing

too little too late to save socialism in Cuba. More sympathetic pundits see the speech as signaling a long-awaited opening for a more pragmatic phase of socialism, perhaps the beginning of a course similar to the rise of market socialism witnessed in China today.

The reality, however, is further from these two positions. Raúl seems to be signaling a muddling-through strategy of development similar to the tentative reforms China, and especially Vietnam, incrementally instituted after their revolutionary leaders left power. The path chosen by Raúl should not surprise any serious student of post-Communism in developing nations. It is evident that, as was the case with Viet Nam and China, Raúl will follow a tentative approach that will consist of small reforms intended to satisfy potential allies and reassure hardliners of his commitment to revolutionary ideals. Sustained reforms among Communist regimes come only after such revolutionary leaders as Castro, Mao, or Ho Chi Minh step down or die and the younger generations manage to consolidate their grip on political power. New generations of leaders base their legitimacy not on the survival of revolutionary traditions but on changing them. This generational change has obviously not happened in Cuba yet; hence the guarded tone of Raúl's announcement and the brevity of his statement.

What All This Means

As was stated earlier in the paper, examining the articulation of primary frames gives us a clue to the reengineering capacity of the revolution. Recently, as the revolutionary fervor levels off, some would even say dwindles, the 26th speech has dropped recurrent references to distributive justice and a just society. References to personal sacrifices seem to be connoting popular resilience and heroism. In many respects, Raúl 26th speech follows the trend of the 2006 speech, the last one delivered by Fidel, which enthusiastically states copious details about how much the revolution has accomplished to improve the daily life of the country while it stands firm against external enemies. The call for social solidarity these days has also taken a back seat in these proclamations.

But more importantly, frames do not only reveal the capacity of the revolution to reinvent itself every so often. These tactics set the policy agenda and define popular perceptions and expectations, and as such they

Conclusions

manifest a third dimension of power. This does not mean that this is the only strategy designed to amplify the regime or that it works well all the time. However, the fact remains that until recently Cuba has been holding back on sustainable reforms at a time when other former Communist regimes have been moving toward increased liberalization. This situation calls attention to the effectiveness of discursive mechanisms of *legitimation* as a strategy that complements outright repression to achieve political allegiance. In the final analysis, the case of Cuba illustrates a strategy of *legitimation* fairly similar to those attempted by other authoritarian regimes. The values, norms and ideology embedded in the official public discourse assume that these codes will be internalized to cement the social discipline or conformism.¹⁴

Conclusions

This paper examines the 26th of July celebration speech as a social act intended to construct an image and rationale to sustain the continuous survival of the revolution. Primary frames reinterpret the condition of the island and often make references to nationalistic instincts to present the revolution as a dynamic ongoing process with a long historical path. This strategy obviously hides the fact that, politically at least, the Cuban revolution is no longer as revolutionary as it claims. From 1959 to 2007, five strategic frames organized the 26th speech. Taken together these are intended to reinforce popular obedience and subordination by framing the revolution as a process of collective consciousness rewarding revolutionary fervor and personal dedication.

State framing is another attempt to leverage the communicative power of the revolution in a similar fashion to what James C. Scott has called *public transcripts* (Scott 1990, 19). The third dimension of power is as effective as any other because it sets the subjective framework to, at least in public, interpret the new course the revolution will follow as it attempts to reinsert itself in a world marked by the effects of globalization.

14. For an insightful elaboration of this point see, José Joaquín Brunner, "Ideología, legitimación y disciplinamiento en la sociedad autoritaria." FLACSO, No. 4, 1980.

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CHAPTER 9

Bound to Outlast? Education for Socialism

Salomon Berman

Abstract: This paper accompanies the leaders of the Cuban Revolution in their considerations as to how to educate a population in values and beliefs consistent with the perpetuation of the Cuban Revolution and the socialist system of production. The leaders of the Cuban Revolution try to replicate their own character in the youth but then they fear youth rebellion. They try to prevent this problem through telling their history to the young but then they create a dependent youth. They try to balance youth dependence by developing initiative and independence of mind among the young but then the possibility of future youth irreverence appears. In order to prevent future youth irreverence, the founders of the Cuban Revolution have promoted socialist values and beliefs among the young both through speech and through framing their life experiences. Whether this effort has paid off is too early to judge. Insofar as the promotion of the political leaders of the new generations depends on choices made by leaders of the revolutionary generation we cannot know if the behavior of the former is genuine and therefore the question is to remain undisclosed. Yet, as in every society, a degree of social diversity in Cuba and thus in the success of its leadership's political educational effort can be assumed. If so, the question of regime continuity also depends on the specific process of recruitment and preparation of cadres, which is promising direction of further research.

« It will be the duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer insight into all theoretical questions, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old world outlook and constantly to keep in mind that socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, that is, that it be studied. »

Fredrick Engels

Just as every modern state is founded on violence, every socioeconomic and political order is founded on values and beliefs. Qua humans, those persons or groups who control the means of coercion in every modern state have or claim to have values and beliefs through which they frame the ruling socioeconomic and political order and justify it. When their values and beliefs change, the socioeconomic and political order changes.

As theoreticians have repetitively pointed out through concepts such as “false consciousness,” “legitimacy,” and “hegemony,” this order strengthens as more and more people accept it for normative, or internal reasons, rather than for an either coercive or uncoercive external system of rewards and punishments. Thus, in order to strengthen the socioeconomic and political order at any given time, rulers can try to propagate their values and beliefs. In order to prolong it over time, they can try to transmit them from the old to the young. It is possible to call the process of transmission of values and beliefs “education.” This process is political when the values and beliefs concerned refer to the institutions of government. When the process of education flows from the incumbent government, as an iron rule it seeks both to strengthen the ruling socioeconomic and political order and to prolong it over time.

Now it has become clear that in the long run most state socialist experiences that have come to an end scored a political-educational failure. Notwithstanding the very strong efforts at times invested by leaders of state socialist regimes to propagate and perpetuate their dominant set of values and beliefs, whatever consent with the socialist rule existed constantly shrunk over time. Along with the shrinking of consent, social life came to transpire “within a lie,” to paraphrase Vaclav Havel, or contrary to the own values and beliefs of most citizens, including most if not all persons in leadership positions.¹ From here on systemic change—the adjustment of acceptable behavior with the “real” dominant set of values and beliefs—was only a matter of time, though of uncertain length until that the change effectively took place.

Whether Cuban state socialism is following or escaping that script depends to a degree on the ability of its political leaders to transfer the values and beliefs upon which it lies both horizontally, to the population, and longitudinally, from the old to the young. Their persistent effort to do so vacillates between fomenting the reverence or the autonomy of their pupils, and consists of two moments of “character” and two moments of “reason.”

1. Playwright, leading dissident, and first post-revolutionary president of the Czech Republic. The expression belongs to his famous 1978 essay, “The Power of the Powerless.” See Havel (1989, pp. 36-122).

Creating anything new is never an easy task, the less so when it implies a change of human behavior.² Yet a new human morality is just what political leaders of state socialist regimes aimed to create. Early socialist thinkers and ideologues of socialist states alike hoped that the socialist revolutions would breed a man whose soul and mind would be compatible with the long-term development of socialist societies. Upon the appearance of that man were hung great expectations: the coercive features of the state would disappear, the economy would thrive, and the arts would flourish. What exactly this man should look like has never been, of course, fully clear. To conceive a new morality requires a non-negligible degree of imagination that to a lesser or greater extent is always delimited by what is known. The clearest characteristics of the new socialist morality have therefore always been depicted in terms of selflessness and subordination of the individual to the general interest, which are but the symmetrical opposite of those values implicit in the behavior of economic agents in any capitalist model that socialist believers generally despise. Beyond that, depending on speaker, thinker, or imperatives of time and place, the socialist citizen has been imagined mostly through universally accepted positive values open to broad interpretations, such as international solidarity, patriotism, fraternity, frugality, honesty, modesty, sincerity, discipline, optimism, humility, boldness, and so forth.³

Although in several of their most suggestive passages on the topic Marx and Engels subordinated the morality of men and women to their

2. The task is difficult to the extent that liberal thinkers tend to refer to individual social behavior as an unchanging given that is ultimately conditioned by human nature. If we accept their view, creating a new human morality is impossible, and any attempt at doing just this is inevitably doomed to fail. On extreme versions of this argument, the works of Hayek and Von Mises are obligatory consults, and the work of Popper (1966) strongly recommended, but any philosophical inquiry after the normative foundations of a free market economy leads in one way or another to this point. On another plane but equally to the point, on the difficulty of creating a new human morality was perhaps Niccolo Machiavelli (1950 [1513], p. 21) thinking when he wrote that there “is nothing more difficult to carry out, no more doubtful of success, no more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things.” The sentence refers to a political regime and not concretely to a new human morality, but Machiavelli’s overall insistence on the link between human morality and political stability gives some credence to this hypothesis.

material conditions,⁴ and although from these passages it can be understood that, in their thinking, material abundance and rational economic planning would be preconditions for the emergence of the new human morality,⁵ leaders of the state socialist regimes never merely waited for institutional change and economic growth to produce more or less automatically the expected change in human behavior. In all state socialist regimes—to degrees varying across time and place—the new morality was actively pursued, at a minimum, through a branch in the dominant party for the socialization of the youth and a universal schooling system with curricula specifically designed to promote the new morality.⁶ The moral engineering of man was justified, when needed (occasionally), by the particular local conditions upon which communism was being built, which necessarily differed to some degree from the theoretical expectations of Marx, Engels, or other theoreticians.

Thus, in his celebrated writing on the topic, Ernesto Guevara identifies the divergence of existing conditions for the building of a socialist society between those expected by Marx and those initially prevailing in Cuba. Whereas Marx saw socialist revolutions taking place in advanced capitalist societies and the new morality emerging upon conditions of material abundance, according to Guevara Cubans suffered from underdevelopment and material scarcity. In Cuba, therefore, he argued, to advance toward the construction of communism it is necessary to work on the modification of man's morality together with and as emphatically as on the modification of the material and institutional economic basis. The new man would then be the crucial agent to construct the communist society, rather than the one who would emerge as a result. To the degree that Cubans achieve concrete successes in creating a new man, they “will have

3. The statutes of the Communist Party of Cuba, to give one concrete example, define the “new morality of the Cuban society” in terms of “collectivism, solidarity, equality, social justice, mutual trust, conscious discipline, modesty, honesty, critical and self-critical spirit, and confidence in the socialist future.” These values, according to the same document, are against “individualism, racism, skepticism, lack of faith in socialism, libertinism, defeatism, populism, opportunism, hipper-criticism, double morality, paternalism... indiscipline, corruption and any other form of criminal behavior.” See *Estatutos del Partido Comunista de Cuba* in the Spanish bibliography under “sitios web.”

made a valuable contribution to Marxism-Leninism, to the cause of humanity.”⁷

In their effort to “contribute to the cause of humanity” in this sense, Cuban leaders have built over the years an all-encompassing system of socialist education, which literally accompanies the Cuban citizen from the cradle to the grave. This system encompasses the whole schooling system from preschool to universities, the mass organizations (for infants, youth, women, students, elders, or just citizens), the party, the army, and most workplaces. Within these spaces socialist values and beliefs are transmitted through the speech of high-ranking leaders, study materials of diverse kinds (including speeches of leaders), and formative experiences. It is no exaggeration to say that in these spaces and through these means in one way or another the attempt of the Cuban leadership to instill a new morality in humans has reached practically all Cubans who have grown up (and therefore been educated) since the institution of the revolutionary regime.⁸

4. Consider, for instance, the following two:

- 1) The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this, their real existence, their thinking, and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, in Lewis S. Feuer ed. 1959, p. 247).
- 2) Just as Darwin discovered the law of development or organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, the ideas on art, and even on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case. (Frederick Engels, *Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx*, in Foreign Languages Publishing House ed. 1949, p.153.)
5. See for instance the passage of the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (in Lewis S. Feuer, ed. 1959, p.119) quoted as epigraph to the first chapter of this dissertation.

Whoever is designing a system of socialist education for the first time in a burgeoning socialist society is inevitably confronted by the challenge of forming a man for a society that does not yet fully exist. He, she, or rather they, surely have to ask to themselves what the person compatible with the long-term endurance of the socialist regime might look like and what are the most appropriate methods to bring her about. A first, rather intuitive answer to such questions is that any ruling group that wants to preserve its rule over a long time “must design the education of the latest generation to build a character identical to the first.”⁹ The Cuban leaders of the first revolutionary generation made a conscious choice for socialism and profess to like it. They have also been able to preserve it, sometimes despite many difficulties. If they want the socialist regime to endure after their death, perhaps the safest rule of thumb for them to follow would be to try to replicate their own character among their chronological followers.

Through memory and the method of imitation much seems to be made in Cuba to replicate the character of the main protagonists of the Cuban Revolution. Ernesto Guevara in his aforementioned essay finds in the Rebel Army fighters a glimpse of the “man and woman of the future” and points to the propagation of their heroic attitude as the principle to follow in creating the new morality.¹⁰ Since his death, Guevara himself

6. On this point it is customary to distinguish between the more “mechanical” or less intrusive post-Stalinist Soviet approach to the formation of the new morality and the more voluntaristic or intrusive Maoist approach of China. But even the post-Stalinist approach in the Soviet Union and East Europe was far from passive by the standards of liberal education in liberal democracies. See Paul (1979) and Medyesy (1975) for evidence based on the cases of Czechoslovakia and Hungary respectively. If we were to place Cuba at some point in a continuum between these two extremes, as this chapter aims in part to show, it would be closer to the voluntaristic end most of the time.

7. For writing this dissertation and this chapter in particular I have used the version of Guevara’s seminal letter directed to Carlos Quijano, director of the Uruguayan weekly magazine *Marcha*, best known under the title “Socialism and Man in Cuba,” as it appeared in *Verde Olivo*, 31 December 31, 1967. The letter was first published in 1965 and since has been many times reprinted in almost every imaginable language. For a relatively recent translation to English see can be found in the compilation of essays by Ocean Press Guevara (2005, pp.147-168). I have used this translation as the main source for my quotes. This particular quote appears on page p. 163.

has become the quintessential example of the new Cuban man, to the extent that the schoolchildren pledge every morning that they “will be like Che.” The epic episodes of the revolutionary war are well remembered through their commemoration as national holidays. Part of their commemoration consists of their replication, even if symbolic. Every July 26, the best elementary school students of Santiago de Cuba “take” the Moncada barracks. Every beginning of January marches recall the victory caravan of the Rebel Army to Havana. On December 2, the landing of the *Granma* yacht is commemorated as Revolutionary Armed Forces Day. The commemoration does not include sea voyages from Mexico to Oriente, though this voyage has been replicated occasionally by groups of Cuban youth.¹¹ At least once in their life hundred of thousands of Cubans climb the Turquino peak, the highest in Cuba and located in the area of operation of the Rebel Army, where significant events during the revolutionary struggle took place.¹² In remembering and imitating the epic events of the revolutionary struggle, those who did not participate in them come to know better those who did and the circumstances under which

8. Given the considerable quantity of academic production in English devoted to the Cuban case, the relatively little attention being paid to the regime’s efforts at transforming political culture and the total ignorance of the socialist dimensions of this effort seem quite odd. Books devoted specifically to the topic of political culture include Fagen’s pioneering work (1969), Medin (1990), Bunck (1994), and Kacpia (2000). Despite their many differences, the first three have in common the focus on concrete cases such as the literacy campaign (Fagen and Medin) or else on particular fields through which the transformation of culture has been attempted, ranging from the military and literature (Medin) to gender relations and sports (Bunck). These books contain mainly policy description and assessment (Fagen and Medin) or reports on Castro’s speeches (Bunck). The vision or ideological purpose behind the policies and speeches being described is only barely scrutinized and therefore stays at the very general level of “revolutionary consciousness” (Bunck), “rejection of money,” “importance of youth” (Fagen) and “confrontation and heroism” (Medin). By analyzing messages of national content in depth, Kacpia has been able to show a basic continuity over time in the transference of Cuban national values since the foundation of the Cuban Republic. See the remainder of this chapter, as a “socialist” corollary, albeit a partial one, of Kacpia’s meritorious work.
9. McWilliams (1973, p. 218).
10. The phrase in the English translation reads: “In the attitude of our fighters could be glimpsed the man and woman of the future... Finding the method to perpetuate this heroic attitude in daily life is... one of our fundamental tasks.” In Guevara Ocean press ed. (2005, p.150).
11. See Blanco (1994), for an example of one.

they fought. By knowing them better and (symbolically) sharing their experiences, they can increase their likeness to them.

Yet for any group that achieved its power through rebellion, an exact replication of its character among the youth—even if possible—would be too dangerous a principle to follow in trying to perpetuate its rule for generations. The “problem of beginnings” looms large against this rule of thumb. Those Cubans who made the revolution attained power by rebelling against the incumbent socioeconomic and political order under which they grew up. If they transmit their rebellious spirit to the next generation, there is always the danger that the next generation will rebel against their rule, just as they rebelled against the rule of their time. Not for nothing are revolutions so often likened to Saturn, who devoured his own children out of fear of their insubordination.

The founders of the Cuban socialist regime have tried to mediate their own “problem of beginnings” through reason. The telling of history is the method par excellence in the service of reason. Through the telling of Cuban history, those Cubans who participated in the revolutionary struggle and instituted the socialist regime teach their chronological followers about the ills of the old society and the marvels of the new one. In their first contact with the history of the Cuban Revolution in the Cuban schools, children ages nine to ten read in their textbook that life in Cuba before the revolution was plagued by undernourishment, unemployment, and racial and gender discrimination.¹³ Peasants were pulled away from their lands, children had neither schools nor hospitals, and people could not speak their minds. The law favored “exploiters” and foreign interests, and Cuban governors were subordinated to the United States. With the revolution, Cubans “achieved their long-awaited liberty.” Now “Cuba is a free and sovereign Republic,” where “oppression, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy and discrimination” no longer exist. Rather than rebellion, Cubans who have come of age after the revolution have the historical mis-

12. Specifically, Fidel and other guerrilla leaders had a CBS televised interview with Bob Taber at the top of that peak on April 28, 1957. The episode is narrated in Szulc (1986, p.420). See also the article by de la Rosa Labrada in *Juventud Rebelde*, April 28, 2007, p. 4.

13. The book corresponds to the fourth grade. All quotes in this paragraph are taken from Santos Palma et. al. (1991, pp. 41-47).

sion to “maintain the conquests” achieved and to further develop the socialist regime. With greater historical detail and more elaborate data, this message repeats itself several times in the schooling system as students continue studying the history of their revolution in higher grades.¹⁴

If believed, this interpretation of history cannot but create a mix of sentiments such as admiration, veneration, respect, and gratitude, that is, *reverence*, toward the persons who overthrew the old regime and instituted the new. Those who substitute clean for corrupt government and convert oppression into justice and subordination into independence are great men and women, the more so when so many difficulties stand in their way. Thanks to them, by implication, Cubans born or raised under the revolutionary regime live in a good rather than an evil society.

That at least the leaders of the Communist youth organization (UJC) appear to revere their revolutionary elders comes to the fore in their writings and speeches. In newspaper editorials they often express admiration for the “exemplary generation” that built the revolutionary regime, “unbreakable, firm in action and thinking, altruist, of whose fertile legacy we are honored.”¹⁵ At youth congress after youth congress, all them invariably attended by historical leaders of the Cuban revolution, the young delegates thank their elders for “having given us the political weapons, the moral weapons, and the physical weapons that we have to defend the Revolution.”¹⁶ And they declare themselves privileged, for “getting the direct attention of a personality the size of Fidel.”¹⁷

Reverence fosters obedience. The leaders of the Cuban Revolution claim the right to ask obedience from their youth because they see themselves working for the future, that is, for the younger generations. “We do not work for us; we work for you,” said Fidel in a typical statement to his audience in a meeting with university students. “Therefore we have the right to demand from you,” he continued, “to expect the best from you.”¹⁸ The young Communists by and large correspond. It seems, at times, that

14. See for illustration Valdés López, Marta María, et. al. (2001 pp. 269-360) for ninth grade and Regla María Albelo, et. al. (2000), for high school.

15. “Digamosle a Fidel,” *Juventud Rebelde* April 11, 1982, 1.

16. “Manifiesto de Abril,” *Juventud Rebelde* April 4, 1992.

17. “Generación Privilegiada” *Juventud Rebelde* (digital edition), December 5, 2004.

at the slightest request the leaders of the Communist youth do the bidding of the high-ranking revolutionary leaders. When the revolutionary leadership decided to finance economic development through record sugarcane harvests, the young Communists invariably organized the most productive cane-cutter brigades. When the historical leadership decided to engage in international military campaigns, the young Communists fought heroically in faraway lands. When more recently Fidel declared an energy revolution, the young Communists substituted fluorescent for incandescent light bulbs all over Cuba.¹⁹ Communist youth leaders say they have a “commitment to Fidel, to Raúl, and to the historic generation of the revolution” that impels their behavior.²⁰ Making the historic leaders happy by fulfilling their requests is their satisfaction.

A generational division of labor thus develops. Drawing an organic analogy, the generation that made the revolution is the brain and the generations that grew up under the revolution are the body. Hardly ever was this differentiation of tasks more clearly uttered in speech than when the chief of revolutionary orientation of the CC of the PCC asked from the delegates to the 1972 UJC congress to be “doers “rather than “thinkers.” In his words, the Cuban exemplary youth should consist “not of philosophers but of fighters, of builders of socialism and communism.”²¹ The symmetrical correspondence of the Communist youth to advice such as this is evident in one of its slogans of the time (used until the early 1980s), which literally begged the “commander in chief” to tell them what to do. “Wherever, whatever and whatsoever,” the slogan went, “Commander in Chief, give us command!”²²

18. In his speech of January 10, 1987. An abridged version can be found in *Juventud Rebelde*, January 12, 1987, quote from page 2.

19. The descriptive “all” in the text in respect to the lightbulbs should not be taken too literally. See, in this order, UJC (1972, 13); UJC (1977, 3, 8.); UJC (1990, 131); María Julia Mayoral and Orfidio Peláez, “Nada detendrá a esta Revolución Socialista dispuesta a lograr la real igualdad,” *Granma Internacional* (digital edition) November 24, 2005; Fidel Castro (speech on January 17, 2006); Julieta García Ríos, “un año intenso de trabajo juvenil,” *Juventud Rebelde*, June 3, 2006, 8.

20. In the words of Otto Rivero, First Secretary of the UJC at the time of the VII (1998) and VIII (2004) UJC congresses. Quote from “Programa: Noticias del VIII Congreso” *Juventud Rebelde* (digital edition), secciones 2004.

21. See the speech of Orlando Fundora in the Congress as transcribed in *Juventud Rebelde*, April 1, 1972, 5.

If not for the biological tendency of the older to retire and die sooner than the younger, this generational division of labor could work well for the long-term endurance of the Cuban socialist regime. It has its clear advantages, for with tasks so clearly differentiated, time and other resources are not wasted in endless discussions between persons of different ages, who may see the world differently, over who decides what and what to do next. When reverence among the young is strong and their obedience to their elders ensured, generational conflict does not arise, so-called generational gaps do not develop, let alone a rebellion of the youth. And yet, in so much obedience there are clear dangers for the longevity of political regimes. Much obedience can easily slip into dependence. Dependent continuing generations may lose their way when left by themselves. When their elders are no longer around to tell them what to do, the leaders of the generations accustomed to obey may feel confused, unsure, and lacking such decision-making skills as confidence in themselves, creativity, and initiative, which are imperative for giving effective responses to the challenges of their time in a way consistent with preserving the ruling political and socioeconomic regime they have inherited from their elders and within which they have grown up.

Evidently aware of these dangers, at least a few high-ranking revolutionary leaders have tried to palliate the possible ill side effects of youth reverence by stimulating alongside it such skills and qualities as initiative, creativity, self-esteem, and self-judgment among the young. The possession of those skills and qualities among the new generations may help develop their *autonomy*, that is, their ability to control their own fate. Just as reverence is “that sentiment...which binds a generation to those who have preceded it,” autonomy prepares a generation to build a future of its own.²³ Chief among these leaders was Ernesto Guevara, who openly chastised the Cuban Communist Youth organization of his time for lacking creative spirit and for being “too docile, too respectful...not decisive in addressing its own problems.”²⁴ Likewise, in the speeches of Fidel Castro,

22. Translated from the Spanish: “Donde sea, cómo sea y para lo que sea, Comandante en Jefe, ¡ordene!” See also the exemplary of *Juventud Rebelde* at the closing of the congress, April 4, 1972. Upon a background of the commander in chief’s picture stands the eight-column inscription: “Ordene.”

23. Both the quote and the idea are taken from Smith (1985). The quote appears in page p.10.

the intention to create “young people who think,” who “accept nothing of which they are not convinced,” and who “learn by themselves to be revolutionary,” has always been a recurrent theme.²⁵

Here, however, that the Communist Youth leaders declare themselves “revolutionary by conviction and not simple repeaters of slogans, who do not think, who do not analyze, who wait always for orientations to act” speaks more of their ability to repeat the speech of their elders than of their possession of skills such as initiative, creativity, and self-judgment.²⁶ Nor does their behavior in the open manifest their possession of such skills as abundantly as it manifests their reverence and obedience to their elders. Given the dominant personality of the political leaders of the revolutionary generation, it seems by and large that the political leaders of the new generations find much security and comfort in their shadow, agreeing rather than debating, following rather than proposing.

Perhaps for this reason the political leadership's concern with increasing youth autonomy has seemed to be on the rise since the mid-end 1980s. Youth passivity, apathy, and lack of initiative certainly did not escape criticism in the critical atmosphere of the rectification process. Some policy responses to these problems seem evident. Study methods in schools and universities have been revised constantly with the stated purpose of stimulating “creative thinking, active participation of students, more independent work, and a dialectical approach to problems.”²⁷ Spaces have been opened for students on school boards and for representatives of high school and university student organizations in the national assembly.²⁸ More recently, under the umbrella title of “Battle of Ideas,” the leaders and former recent leaders of the UJC (best known as the Taliban) have played an unprecedented role in directing the revolution's current ideological campaigns. While welcoming youth representatives into decision-making bodies says nothing about their real participation in policy formu-

24. In his speech commemorating the second anniversary of the unification of revolutionary youth organizations, October 20, 1962. An English translation of the speech can be found in Gevara Waters ed. (2000, pp.101-117; quote from page p. 108).

25. Quotes taken from his March 13, 1962 and December 1, 1961 speeches. See also his October 24, 1961 and December 2, 1986 speeches.

26. See “Declaración Final del II Congreso de la UJC” in *Juventud Rebelde*, April 5, 1972, 6.

lation, it reveals the leadership's disposition, at least formally, to share decision-making with the youth. To the degree to which taking part in decision making requires thinking (of whatever sort), and the related information-processing and self-judgment abilities, through participating in decision making young leaders are likely to develop these abilities.

Some glimpses of autonomy appear. At the 1987 UJC congress, delegates finally denounced in the open the "paternalism" of their party elders, who assign them tasks without asking their opinion, kill their initiatives, and block their promotion to higher posts.²⁹ Even if this congress took place after Fidel signaled criticism as the order of the day, youth leaders nevertheless showed some ability to reflect upon themselves by criticizing their wrongdoings, ranging from the widespread "formalism" or insincere behavior in their practices to the numerous exemptions from compulsory military service given for figurative academic merit and faked medical illnesses.³⁰ The demands raised by the delegates to the congress of the Federation of University Students (FEU) earlier that year, in

27. As stated by the Program of the Communist Party of Cuba approved by the deferred session of the Third Party Congress in December 1986. See Redacción Política Actual Partido Comunista de Cuba ed. (19867, p.134-546). See also the interview with Secretariat member and chief of the education, science, and sports department of the CC, José Ramón Balaguer (Septiembre 1987, pp. 16-25). Academic and newspaper articles on innovations in education report changes in educational policy implemented in 1988, changes in study methods made official by the Ministry of Education in 1991, changes in educational plans and programs effective for the school years 1992 and 1993, and an "educational revolution" initiated in 2000, which by December 5, 2004, according to Castro's speech of that day, had brought "radical transformations" to secondary schools. See María Isabel Domínguez (Enero-Marzo 1995, p.90); FBIS-LAT-92-079, April 23, 1992, p.4, and article by Margarita Barrio in *Juventud Rebelde*, September 3, 2006. In the same vein, numerous proposals and experiments to increase innovation skills and self-esteem of Cuban students in the schooling system have been carried out. One particular experiment with influential implications for policymaking in the 1990s is Avendaño and Minujin (1988). For theoretical studies with strong policy recommendations in this direction, see González Rey (1995) and D'Angelo Hernández (2010). See also Lutjens (1996, pp. 167-8) for a general sketch of revamping study methods during "rectification," and Leal García (2000) for attempts at and proposals for continuing revamping methods for teaching history afterwards.

28. María Isabel Domínguez (2003); María Isabel Domínguez and Lutjens (2004); UJC (1998, p.3); Fidel Castro, speech in meeting with candidates to the national and provincial assemblies, February 11, 1993; and Yailin Orta Rivera, "Propuesta joven en el proceso electoral Cubano," *Juventud Rebelde* (electronic edition version), October 12, 2007.

turn, helped shape the policy on revamping study methods and programs.³¹ At the same time these organizations also showed a degree of creativity and originality in devising and implementing the so-called new working methods, which attempted to reach young audiences by combining political events with cultural and recreational activities like concerts in open spaces and dances in discotheques.³²

While these examples concern the most politically active young, other young have gone further in taking initiative and in showing creativity and criticism. Creators by vocation, the new generations in the visual arts have more than once since the late 1980s challenged political authorities by emphasizing the “individual” rather than the “collective,” as well as by experimenting with unconventionally erotic and satirical forms of expression.³³ Young musicians, for their part, have ventured into new genres for Cuban interpreters such as rap and rock, their lyrics often touching on taboo issues such as racial discrimination.³⁴

And yet, much youth autonomy is not without risk in ensuring the long-term continuation of the Cuban socialist regime—for autonomy can easily slide into irreverence. Irreverent continuing generations might step away from the socialist path out of an overdose of confidence rather than for a lack of it. With their elders no longer around to punish or else to pre-

29. See García Rodríguez (Mayo 1987).

30. See García Rodríguez (Mayo 1987); UJC (1990) and “todos los jovenes al servicio militar,” *Juventud Rebelde* April 3, 1987, 1, 4-5.

31. See the intervention of Ramón Sánchez, director of the Marxism department in the Ministry of Higher Education, in a roundtable moderated by Enrique Ubieta (Enero-Marzo 1996, p.140).

32. See the interview with then first secretary of the UJC, “Robertico” Robaina by Aristides Sotomayor González and Manuel Menéndez Díaz (Abril 1990). See also the article by Fernández in Baloyra and Morris eds. (1993, p. 200); Kaptcia (2000, p.248); and María Isabel Domínguez (2003).

33. Among them Eduardo Ponjuán, René Francisco Rodríguez, Fernando Rodríguez, José Ángel Toirac, Licet Castillo Valdés, Sandra Ceballos, Carlos Estévez, Roberto Fabelo, Abigail González, Tania Bruguera, and Ángel Delgado, to name but a few. See Block ed. (2001) and Kaptcia (20056, pp.191-192

34. Examples are the groups “Orishas,” “Los Paisanos,” “Obsesión,” “Hermanos de Causa,” “Anónimo Consejo,” “Cliente Supremo,” “Cien por Ciento Original,” “Alto Voltaje,” “Explosión Suprema,” “Instinto,” and “Primera Base.” See Sujatha Fernandes (Fall 2003) and Kaptcia (20056, pp. 198-200).

vent what they would consider unacceptable behavior, much initiative, creativity, self-esteem, and self-judgment may awaken among the leaders of the new generations a desire “to open a new route, which has not yet been followed by any one,” even at the price of breaking with the sacred cows of their venerated predecessors.³⁵ For that not to happen, the founding leaders of the Cuban Revolution have tried to influence the impending choice of the new generations—for or against socialism—by appealing, in great part, to their reason.

Hence we meet a second moment of reason in the attempt of the Cuban political leadership to perpetuate its revolutionary deed for generations and the one specific to “socialism” as such. In order to let the new generations of Cubans “understand” or rather “discover” the intrinsic high value of their socialist system of production, the Cubans who made the revolution have in part taught them “Marxism.”³⁶ Built upon the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, this theoretical basis has always been broad enough to allow for different, even conflicting, interpretations. A look at the dominant strands of Marxism in Cuba and how they have been taught in universities and other centers of higher education over time may provide further insight on the unfolding attempt of the revolutionary generation to convince its successor generations of the desirability of having a socialist system of production.

Since the declaration of the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution, the conformation of any dominant Marxist view in Cuba has always been made through the interaction between international and institutional relations. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the relations between the two countries, or rather between their respective leaders, always constrained to a degree the relations between the Cuban political leadership and the Cuban “organic intellectuals,” in a Gramscian sense, whose com-

35. Quotation marks enclose Machiavelli’s famous phrase in his introduction to the *Discourses*. Quoted from Machiavelli (1950 [1513], 103).

36. For years the conventional name of this theoretical basis was Marxism-Leninism. With the collapse of the Soviet Union this term fell somewhat into disuse (rather than Lenin into disrespect) in Cuba as well as in academic circles elsewhere, being replaced by Marxism alone.

mitment to the incumbent social order is without doubt and who play a critical role in its maintenance through generating and disseminating the kind of knowledge needed to make it acceptable, or at least bearable, to the rest of society.³⁷ Throughout this period, the dominant strand of Marxism in Cuba always varied in tandem with the bilateral relationship between the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Throughout the 1960s, when Cubans were both building socialism by trial and error and testing the appropriate distance to take from Moscow, oscillations occurred in the favoritism of the political direction towards one of two developing strands of Marxism in universities and other centers of higher education. The 1962 university reform established the Marxist hegemony in universities and by extension in social thinking. Within this hegemony two main views can be differentiated according to the apparent politico-intellectual alignments toward the Soviet theoretical orthodoxies that were reaching Cubans through foreign assessors, books, and didactic materials of diverse kind, as well as through Cuban students returning from Soviet bloc countries in Europe.³⁸ The *reverent* position proposed to build socialism in Cuba by imitating, adopting, or at most adapting formulas that were proved effective-according to the criteria of the time-in the Soviet Union and other socialist states. The *autonomous* position, while hardly anti-Soviet, wanted to incorporate methods of its own creation in the construction of socialism in Cuba and also to create theoretical understandings based on the Cuban experience, which would put Cuban Marxism-in Fernando Martínez's felicitous phrase—"at the height of the Cuban Revolution."³⁹

37. Irrespective of the complex (and only superficially addressed in the text) question of how Gramsci defined organic intellectuals and what role they play in the maintenance of any given socioeconomic and political institutional order, the statement reflects the use of the term by at least some important Cuban political leaders and social scientists. See Jorge Luis Acanda (Abril-Junio 2002, pp. 13-14); Hart (Julio-Septiembre 1995, p.3); and Jorge Luis Acanda mod. (Abril-Junio 1997). For a similar interpretation of the function of the Gramscian organic intellectuals, see Femia (1981, p.164).

38. On the penetration channels of the Soviet versions of Marxism that reached Cuba in the 1960s see the article by Fidel Díaz Sosa in Plá León and González Aróstegui eds. (2006, pp. 78-96) or (preferable) its extended version downloadable from the website of Cuban contemporary thinkers (Spanish bibliography).

In the relatively free atmosphere needed for testing alternatives, the two views developed somewhat separately—each with its own epicenter of theoretical formulation and dissemination—yet at times also clashed with each other. In the “Great Debate,” high-ranking policymakers like the National Bank president, Marcelo Fernández Font, and the agriculture minister, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, argued for the suitability of the Soviet “system of economic calculation” for managing Cuban enterprises.⁴⁰ Against them, Industry Minister Ernesto Guevara proposed the “budgetary financial system” based on his own analysis of the characteristics and needs of Cuban enterprises. In the “polemic on the manuals,” Humberto Pérez and Félix de la Uz from the schools of Revolutionary Instruction (ERI and EBIR) argued for the convenience of Soviet didactic materials for teaching Marxism to Cuban laypeople.⁴¹ Confronting them, Aurelio Alonso from the University of Havana philosophy department disputed the usefulness of these materials, arguing that because of their uncritical perspective they are inherently anti-Marxist.

Given the incompatibilities between these views, as definitions were reached one of them had to become hegemonic. By 1966 the autonomous view gained momentum as the whole Cuban economy adopted a version of the budgetary financial system and as the second national congress of philosophy endorsed the views on the study of Marxism promoted by the University of Havana philosophy department.⁴² Under the direction of members of this department, in February 1967 the first issue of *Pensamiento Crítico* came into being.⁴³ By giving voice to different strands of Marxist thinking, the journal purported to create an authentic Cuban Marxist thought.⁴⁴ That same month the Political Bureau of the PCC

39. Fernando Martínez (Julio-Septiembre 1995, p. 20). During the 1960s Fernando Martínez Heredia had a prominent role in the conformation of this view as member, and for a time director, of the University of Havana philosophy department, director of the journal *Pensamiento Crítico*, and president of the second National Congress of Philosophy held in 1966.

40. A comprehensive presentation of the debate can be found in the See compilation by Deuschmann and Salado (2006).

41. This exchange took place between July 1966 and January 1967 over the issues 28, 30, 31 and 32 of the journal of the schools of revolutionary instruction, *Teoría y Práctica*. For the complete set of articles in the exchange, see in the bibliography entries Pérez, Humberto and de la Uz, Félix on the one hand and Alonso Tejada, Aurelio on the other.

announced the temporary suspension of the publication of the Party's theoretical journal, *Cuba Socialista*, precisely for lacking a "theoretical elaboration of its own."⁴⁵ The ERI were closed in 1968. Their main organ of expression, *Teoría y Práctica*, ceased publication in December 1967.

This momentum, however, was short-lived. In the eyes of those engaged in creating an autonomous strand of Cuban Marxism, their chance ended before they could fully mature their views.⁴⁶ As a result of the failure to reach the production goal of 10 million tons of sugarcane in 1970, the Cuban leadership reconsidered its views and concluded that the Cuban Revolution had sinned from arrogance and idealism in trying to build socialism by methods of its own. "We thought we were approaching communist forms of production and distribution," expressed the main report to the first party congress, "whereas in reality we were drifting farther and farther away from the correct methods of building socialism." Time had come "to make use of the wealth of experience accumulated by

42. The latter event is widely known as the "institutionalization of the heterodoxy," because in this congress it was agreed that the materials for studying Marxism can be diverse and do not have to conform to any particular official line. Although public records on this congress have either not been kept or not made available to the public, in the accounts of the participants it invariably appears as the moment signaling the relative ascendancy of the view that here is named autonomous. Its president, Fernando Martínez, for instance, mentions it as a moment of breakdown with "the whole Soviet conception" of Marxism in Cuba. In an interview with Yohanka León del Río in Plá León and González Aróstegui eds. (2006, p.203).

43. The most easily available documentation for the lifetime of academic journals is the WorldCat electronic catalog. It contains the information reported on the lifetime of *Cuba Socialista* and *Pensamiento Crítico*, which was matched with the hard copies available at both the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the José Martí Library in Havana. The date of closing of *Teoría y Práctica* is reported by Fidel Díaz Sosa in Plá León and González Aróstegui eds. (2006, 92) and matched with the copies available at the José Martí Library. For a closer perspective of the motivations behind and the purposes of *Pensamiento Crítico*, see the interviews on the issue with Fernando Martínez Heredia. See in particular the interview with Nestor Kohan (1994) reprinted in Kohan (Enero-Junio 1995).

44. See the article by Natasha Gómez Velázquez in Plá León and González Aróstegui eds. (2006, especially p. p. 99).

45. The decision, however, can also be interpreted as denoting divided opinions or a personnel shortage in the party. See Buró Político (Febrero 1967, quote from p. p.3).

46. Fernando Martínez (Julio-Septiembre 1995, p. 22).

other people in the building of socialism.”⁴⁷ The ensuing reverent phase lasted for about fifteen years from the cane-cutting failure.

The event that marks the starting hegemony of the reverent view is the First National Congress on Education and Culture, held in April 1971. Aside from targeting homosexuality and extravagance (whatever its exact meaning) as aberrant behaviors, its declaration takes issue with “pseudo-leftist intellectuals who aspire to represent the critical conscience of society” and who “pretend to be Marxists but are against the socialist countries.”⁴⁸ As if to make clear where intellectuals of this type gathered in Cuba, that same year the University of Havana philosophy department was disbanded and *Pensamiento Crítico* ceased publishing, its last number appearing in August.

Beginning in 1976, the “social science cycle” was introduced to the study plans of higher education.⁴⁹ The plans dictated a uniform curriculum for the teaching of Marxism to all students in the system of higher education, composed of the Leninist triad of philosophy (with the division between dialectic and historical materialism), political economy (of capitalism and socialism), and scientific communism/socialism (the term varying according to the accent of the time). The textbooks for these courses were the didactic materials imported from the Soviet Union or translated from Soviet authors or in a few cases their copycats written by Cuban authors.⁵⁰ Completing the cycle was a course on the history of the Cuban working class and the Cuban Revolution.

Faculty and students in universities often recount that the reverent view was promoted with “extreme radicalism” under which there was “no room for doubt,” and therefore, as René Descartes would add, no possibility of generating new knowledge.⁵¹ Official policies projected great cer-

47. Quoted from the English edition of the report: PCCCommunist Party of Cuba (1976, p. 32 and 31 respectively).

48. Excerpts of the declaration can be found in Joaquín G. Santana ed. (1977, quoted from pagesp. 52, p. 61, and p. 63 respectively).

49. See the article by Vecino Alegret (Diciembre 1982-Febrero 1983, pp. 20-21). He was the minister of higher education at the time.

50. A partial list of these materials include Konstantinov, F. (1979, 1980) for the course on philosophy, Pérez, Humberto (1976) for the course on political economy, and Afanasiev (1984) for scientific communism.

tainty about what was the truly Marxist “scientific” interpretation of the world, and therefore what was left was to reveal it to those who did not know it yet. Given this certainty, through the study of Marxism professionals were trained to either eulogize what existed or apologize for it, in Cuba as well as in the other socialist regimes—neither to question nor to improve it. Whereas for its schematic introduction in teaching programs and the clarity of messages conveyed this view may have contributed to the systematic propagation of Marxism in Cuba, with the passing of time it became more and more clear that the drawbacks by far outweighed the gains. The credibility of the study materials was undermined by their inconsistency with real events in general, and with Cuban history in particular.⁵² Whereas according to the study materials feudalism precedes capitalism in a rather mechanistic evolving of history, feudalism was by and large missing from Cuban history as well as from most of the American continent. Whereas according to the study materials socialist revolutions are driven by a party of the working class, whatever the contribution of worker movements to the Cuban Revolution, it did not correspond to this script.

It is not clear, in any case, whether and how many students and faculty accepted in earnest this view. If a bit of inherent ability to autonomous thinking is credited to persons who after an ostensibly rigorous process were selected to learn and teach in universities, then probably not many. They may rather have developed a double morality, behaving at formal forums as good believers in what they preached or heard in class, but at the same time laughing in the more informal forums at the forced succession of stages throughout history and dubbing their course on Scientific Communism “Science Fiction,” because “many times the utopian and idealized worldview preached was very far from the concrete reality.”⁵³ Not coincidentally, therefore, the “double morality” was a main target of the process of rectification, which, as far as social thinking is

51. Amaro Cano (Enero-Junio 1997, p.15). By casting doubt on everything he thought he knew, Descartes (1989 [1637] pp. 30-31), of course, got to his maxim *I think, hence I am*.

52. For the following two examples, see Konstantinov (1980, pp.192-193) for the views expressed by the study materials. See Fernando Martínez in Kohan (Enero-Junio 1995, p.42) and Oscar Zanetti (Enero-Marzo 1995, p.122), for two Cuban authors who have pointed to these disparities in the order appearing in the text.

concerned, launched an authentic crusade against “dogmatism,” or the uncritical and ahistorical acceptance of truths.

This crusade can be traced back to Fidel's speech on October 8, 1987, in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Commander Ernesto “Che” Guevara's falling in combat. In this speech he made a forceful call for Guevara's economic thinking to be studied in Cuba and elsewhere, including the other socialist countries, just as Cubans read “many texts on many themes” produced there.⁵⁴ Though Ernesto Guevara was by no means a forgotten figure in Cuba by this or any other time, hereafter intellectuals and political leaders alike increasingly evoked his figure in ways that subverted the reverent view and by implication criticized the dominant practices in the Soviet Union and other East European socialist regimes. In line with what Fidel had said in his speech, throughout the process of rectification the figure of Che was evoked to assert the rights of Cubans to be and think differently from the rest of the socialist countries to a degree, especially as the Soviet Union proceeded with the perestroika process of reform.⁵⁵

After the Soviet collapse, the self-assertion claims turned into sheer irreverence, more from intellectuals than from political leaders, toward the former “big brother” and other allies.⁵⁶ Articles and public statements since the Soviet collapse have repeatedly criticized the former socialist states for their “bureaucratism,” “dogmatism,” and lack of political education, at the same time that they have proposed reading Che as preven-

53. See Fernando Martínez in Kohan (Enero-Junio 1995, p.42). Quote corresponds to Joaquín Santana Castillo in Hernández ed. (2003, p.167).

54. The speech can be downloaded from the website of the Cuban government. Statements of relevance appear also in the preface written by Aurelio Alonso to Plá León and González Aróstegui eds. (2006, p.16).

55. See, for example, articles by Miranda Hernández y Orteaga Paredes (1987); Chavez Antunes (1987); Barrios Osuna (1987); Turner (1988); Pupo Pupo (1989); Rivero Alvisa (Enero-Abril 1990) and Estevez (Enero-Abril 1990) as well as the book by Fernando Martínez (1989).

56. The analogy of the Soviet Union with a “big brother” is common among Cuban authors. See, for example, Yoss (Abril-Septiembre 2004, p.139) and Mayra Espina in Rafael Hernández ed. (2003, p.34). Political leaders have been equally or more critical than intellectuals toward the East European socialist regimes but markedly less toward the Soviet Union.

tive medicine for these illnesses.⁵⁷ Supporting both the diagnosis and the prescription are not only Che's public statements and writings, but also his private correspondence, unpublished prior to the demise of the other socialist regimes, in which he explicitly mocks the Marxist study materials imported from the Soviet Union by calling them "Soviet bricks which have the inconvenience of not letting you think."⁵⁸

In the social sciences, the crusade against dogmatism has resulted in some "opening."⁵⁹ Official documents during the rectification process repeatedly criticized the social sciences and the humanities for "lacking authentic debate and for their tendency to repeat supposed truths pre-established by others," while calling upon these disciplines to "resurge with strength and fulfill a grater role in the generation of knowledge and the transformation of social realities."⁶⁰ Aiming toward that end, new research institutes such as the Institute of Cuban History and the Center for the Study of Che Guevara have been created, and others like the Center of Psychological and Sociological Research (CIPS) and the Institute of Philosophy (IF) have been increasingly employed by the state in trying to respond to concrete social necessities. Between 1995 and 1996, five jour-

57. For a short yet representative sample, see Pañellas Álvarez mod. (Octubre-Diciembre 2005), Pérez-Rolo mod. (Julio-Septiembre 1997), Roig (Abril-Junio 1997, p.29), and Suarez Salazar (Abril-Junio 1997, p.39).

58. The letter sent to Armando Hart from Tanzania, dated Dec. 2, 1965, was first published in the July-September issue of the journal *Contracorriente*. See Hart (Julio-Septiembre 1997, p.142) and Ernesto Guevara (Julio-Septiembre 1997, pp.144-47). Reprinted in Hart (2005, pp. 18-27).

59. For general overviews on the evolution of the social sciences during the process of rectification and beyond, see Alvarez Sandoval and Alvarez Hernández (website of the Cuban Academy of Sciences.d.); Darío Machado Rodríguez (Septiembre-Octubre 1987) and (Enero-Marzo 1990); Casamayor Maspóns (Abril-Junio 1990); Fernandez Ríos (Septiembre-Diciembre 1990); Valdés Gutiérrez (Mayo-Junio 1989); Díaz Caballero (Julio-Agosto 1989); Ortiz Torres (Noviembre-Diciembre 1989); Toledo y and Nuñez Jover (Julio-Septiembre 1990); Limia David (1994) and (Enero-Marzo 1995); Yañes Quintero (Julio-Septiembre 1995); Enrique Ubieta mod. (Enero-Marzo 1996); Rafael Hernández mod. (Enero-Marzo 1997); Rafael Hernández ed. (2003); Juan Luis Martín (Octubre 1998 - Junio 1999) and (March-April 1999); Mayra Espina mod. (Enero-Marzo 2003) and Aurelio Alonso (Julio-Septiembre 1995).

60. Quote corresponds to the calling to the fourth Party Congress. See Raúl Castro (1990, p.14). Similar indications on the need to improve social research were made in the Plans for Social Research 1986-1991 and 1991-1995. See detailed account by (Alvarez Sandoval and Alvarez Hernández (n.d.) on the Cuban Academy of Science website).

nals of relevance to the social sciences either appeared for the first time or reappeared after being discontinued for lack of resources during the early years of the special period.⁶¹ Starting in 1989 with the application of the so-called study plans “C,” universities have received more freedom to choose their own programs and content of study in the social sciences according to the needs, interests, and abilities of faculty and students.⁶² Through these and similar policies, the climate was created for the ongoing widening diversity of research topics and of views expressed by social thinkers.

The evolution of the discipline of sociology illustrates this widening.⁶³ With the creation of the Ministry of Higher Education in 1976 and the introduction of the social sciences cycle, the only sociology department in Cuban universities closed under the conception that this discipline is comprehended within historical materialism.⁶⁴ Practitioners say, however, that in practice a narrowing of perspective occurred. Research on topics such as social stratification, downward social mobility, generations, civil society, social conflict, and the like was not supported by a policy view that could not recognize them as phenomena (let alone important) under socialism, and therefore it was not done.⁶⁵ Social problems such as youth alienation and gender, racial, and class inequalities did not disappear, however. In a May 1984 document, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party finally addressed the resulting detachment of the social sciences from reality.⁶⁶ That same year, the department of sociology in the

61. *Contracorriente* and *Debates Americanos* appeared for the first time in 1995. *Marx Ahora* appeared for the first time in 1996. *Temas* renewed publication in 1995, and *Cuba Socialista*, the theoretical journal of the Party, in 1996.

62. See Amaro Cano (Enero-Junio 1997, p.106) and Zardoya Loureda (Noviembre-Diciembre 1997, p.60).

63. The following account draws from Muñoz Gutiérrez (Julio-Diciembre 2005); Boves, González and Ravenet (Julio-Septiembre 1990); Toledo and Nuñez Jover (Julio-Septiembre 1990); Espina (Enero-Marzo 1995); and Espina in Hernández ed. (2003, pp.29-48).

64. The conception is very well reflected by the title: *Historical Materialism is the Marxist Sociology*, a book written by F. Konstantinov, the same author of the university textbooks for the course on philosophy as imparted under the predominance of the reverent view.

65. On this point in particular, see the article by Mayra Espina in Rafael Hernández ed. (2003, p. 42).

University of Havana opened again. After 1986 sociology was taught as a specialization (minor) in other disciplines within the faculty of philosophy and history, and since 1990 it has been reestablished as a major program. Today three universities in Cuba offer a bachelor's degree in sociology and the University of Havana offers in addition master's level and doctoral programs.⁶⁷ Along with the restitution of the career of sociology, research on its classical areas of inquiry has been promoted and evidently used by policymakers in tackling concrete social problems.⁶⁸ While aggregate social research may have influenced policymaking only indirectly, as elsewhere, practitioners have been able to point to specific policies on several issues, such as religion, the young, and education, which were preceded by recommendations of social research.⁶⁹

While a trend in the same direction has occurred in all other disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities, including economics and political science, these two disciplines at once seem to stand at the shortest end of the opening.⁷⁰ Policy recommendations are clearly limited by the predominance of state property and central management in economics

66. The document is mentioned as a turning point by Alvarez Sandoval and Alvarez Hernández (n.d.(website of Cuban Academy of Science)).

67. The other two universities that offer a B.A. program in sociology are the University of Oriente and the University of Las Villas.

68. Among the problems "rediscovered" by social research during rectification and the special period, Mayra Espina in Rafael Hernández ed. (2003, p.36) points out a weakening in popular participation; absolutism in the equation state property = socialist property; contradiction between an increase in state employees and a decrease in state productivity; low efficiency in the cooperative agricultural sector; deficit of qualified and surplus of professional workers; disproportion in the technical workforce occupied in productive and not productive enterprises; young professionals' lack of interest in promotion to posts of direction; lack of symmetry between the system of higher education and the requirements of the economy; proliferation of crime and black markets; and sexism within the family. María Isabel Domínguez (Enero-Marzo 1995, p.89) also identifies the predominance of class divisions and their tendency to reproduce across generations and low social mobility.

69. On this point in particular, see examples provided by Juan Luis Martín (Octubre 1998 - Junio 1999, p.150) and María Isabel Domínguez (Enero-Marzo 1995, p.91).

70. For greater detail in a few other disciplines within the rubric "social science and humanities," see Zanetti (Enero-Marzo 1995) and Torres Fumero (Julio-Septiembre 1995) for history; Joaquín Santana mod. (Julio-Diciembre 1999) for philosophy; Fernando González Rey (Enero-Mmarzo 1995) for psychology; and Alzugaray Treto (2005) and Valdés Paz in Rafael Hernández ed. (2003) for political science.

and the Communist Party in politics. When the outer edges of the opening have been tested, these limits have appeared. In March 1996, for instance, a Political Bureau document presented by Raúl to and approved by the Central Committee, singled out “several comrades” within the Center of the Study of the Americas for collaborating with U.S. interests, after economists within this center began speaking favorably about a transition to a “decentralized market economy with a high level of state participation.”⁷¹ The “restructuring” of the center followed.⁷² To this day Cuban universities do not offer a major degree in political science, and taboo topics exist, especially as research nears the political elite. If the Communist Party and the sociological, psychological, and institutional dynamics among its members have ever been researched by the Cuban “organic intellectuals,” the results have never made available to outside observers, for whom information remains restricted.⁷³

In spite of the many social problems appearing in the special period and the role that the social sciences have played in finding solutions, policy-oriented research has not been the only nor perhaps the principal task played by the Cuban social sciences in the wake of the disappearance of the “socialist camp.” Theoretical elaboration has been an equally or more demanding task. While increasingly questioned since 1986, the reverent view was ultimately removed by the flowing of events. The “Kostantínov”—the textbook for the basic philosophy course for all students in institutes of higher education as mandated by the study plans up to 1989-

71. Raúl's criticism appears in the report of the Political Bureau to the fifth plenum of the Central Committee delivered on March 23, 1996. The text appeared in the *Granma* newspaper on March 27, 1996, pp. 2-6. The particular accusations to the “comrades” within the Center of the Study of the Americas appear on page 5. For a version in English, see PCC Editora Política ed. (1996). The quote on proposals for economic reform is taken from the interview with Julio Carranza by NACLA (September-October 1995, p.31). He is commenting on his co-authored book with Luis Gutiérrez and Pedro Monreal (1995), which is the usual reference on proposals for far-reaching economic reform in Cuba made by Cuban intellectuals.

72. See Giuliano (1998).

73. The point is raised by Juan Valdés Paz in his contribution to Hernández ed. (2003, p.159). While anecdotal, my personal research experience fully confirms it. I requested official permits for gathering data in Cuba through diplomatic and academic channels. While two research institutes agreed to host me while gathering the data, none was able to obtain the required authorization from the political authorities in their respective ministries.

declared that “imperialism” was in crisis and that the "socialist regimes" headed by the Soviet Union were in line with the direction of historical progress and therefore destined to become hegemonic all around the world.⁷⁴ Since the status of “scienc” was ascribed to Marxism, these and similar assertions claimed the status of “scientific law.”⁷⁵ When the Soviet Union and other socialist regimes collapsed, what the reverent view specified as impossible phenomena thus happened. In light of its unequivocal refutation, heretofore (true and faking) believers confronted the dilemma of either to dispense with their theory or to reformulate it in such a way that it could account for the new events.

The dilemma was resolved by the decision of the political authorities to "stick" with socialism. The theoretical reformulation required for its rational justification has been taking place since the early 1990s. The social sciences have contributed their share. Once again, both Cuban political leaders and intellectuals have been engaged in constructing an autonomous strand of Marxism. In contrast to the 1960s, this time not as an option between two alternatives, but, under the transformed geopolitical realities, as the only possible option to base the socialist system of production on reason.

Repeated invitations to reread the classics of Marxism in the pages of Cuban journals and newspapers mark a logical, if not strictly chronological, beginning to this reformulation.⁷⁶ By the passages chosen and the interpretations offered, it turns out that Marxism as understood by its founders and highest authorities is a quite malleable and open-ended theory. Marx himself even denied being a “Marxist” in order to prevent “stiff” interpretations of his writings.⁷⁷ For Engels, “Marxism” was a

74. See Konstantinov (1980, especially p. 206).

75. The point could be taken to ridiculous extremes. One needs to go no further than to the very opening of the Afanasiev (1984, p.3) text on “scientific communism,” which describes the discipline as “the science about the inevitability on the destruction of capitalism and the triumph of communism.”

76. For a few examples see Armando Hart (EneroJanuary-Marzoch 1990; AbrilApril-Junioe 1990; Septiembretember-Diciembreecember 1990, p.14); Limia David (Enero-Marzo 1995, p.21); Fernando Martínez (Julio-Septiembre 1995, p.19); Rauber (Abril-Junio 1996, p.77); and Duharte Díaz in Ubieta Gómez mod. (Enero-Marzo 1997, p.126).

method as opposed to a doctrine, and for Lenin it was a guide for action rather than a ready-to-be-applied recipe.⁷⁸

Armando Hart, who as past minister of education and culture and as current director of the Martí studies program has throughout his trajectory stood rather permanently at this intersection of power and knowledge, has drawn an analogy between Marxism and mathematics, according to which Marx “invented the tables for summing, resting, multiplying and dividing” for the social sciences, but the solution to every particular problem depends on the applier.⁷⁹ In his opinion, the application of the Marxist method in the Soviet Union and other socialist regimes was characterized by an economic reductionism that sought answers to all questions in the objective or material basis. This application was wanting, for experience has demonstrated that changes in the material basis by themselves are not sufficient to produce a subsequent change in human behavior. The underestimation of the subjective or superstructure factors was the theoretical error with the most tragic consequences for the unraveling of these regimes. Yet the economic and social conditions that gave rise to the socialist regimes have by no means disappeared. With capitalism unchecked by a rival bloc, its evolution is causing more socioeconomic, demographic, and ecological strains worldwide than ever before in history. As the most powerful theoretical criticism of capitalism, Marxism is thus not only highly relevant for explaining the world surrounding us, but its ethics of equality and solidarity are key for the forging of any better alternative. If this alternative is to incorporate the lessons of past experience, its sustaining theory must now pay due attention to the subjective factor, or to the role that men and women *do* play in the making of their own history.

77. See excerpt from Engel’s letter to Conrado Schmidt in Hart (Abrilpril-Junioe 1990, p.11).

78. See excerpt from Engel’s letter to Werner Sombart in Hart (Abrilpril-Junioe 1990, p.14) and Hart (EneroJanuary-Marzorch 1990, p.2) respectively.

79. Quote from Hart (Enero-Marzo 2003, p.104). See also his comments on the roundtable on Lenin in Zardoya Loureda mod. (1999, p.189). This paragraph draws in addition from Hart (Noviembre-Diciembre 1997; 2005; Enero-Junio 2005) and “el socialismo del Siglo XXI,” *Juventud Rebelde* (digital edition) December, 9, 2006.

In line with Hart's *humanist* rather than materialist interpretation, over the pages of academic journals the search for an authentic Cuban brand of Marxism has expanded to figures and authors forgotten, ostracized, or banned by the Soviet Union and therefore of little or no diffusion in Cuba during the hegemony of the reverent view.⁸⁰ These figures include Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, but especially the so-called superstructure authors for their emphasis on the relative autonomy of human consciousness, among them Georg Lukács and, above anybody else, Antonio Gramsci. Adding emphasis to the subject, even the emancipatory links between Marxism and psychoanalysis have been explored, as well as the points of contact between Marxism and postmodernism. While necessarily eclectic in the topics chosen, sources and references, and the ideas expressed in the journals, this theoretical reformulation is taking place within the Marxist hegemony and has a common denominator in placing men and women rather than their surrounding environment at the center of their own making.

A similar yet much less complex shift in theoretical orientation can be identified in the study programs and didactic materials used in universities, though much uncertainty during the early years of the special period made them change frequently and lack of resources has caused lags in both the discontinuation of the old and the introduction of the new textbooks, the latter usually written by collectives of faculty members.⁸¹ According to a high officer in the Marxism department in the Ministry of Higher Education, the changes introduced in the programs seek to present

80. For a brief synopsis of this expansion, see interview with Celia Hart by the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*, April 6, 2005 (electronic edition). I reviewed all the numbers up to December 2006 of the journals *Temas*, *Debates Americanos*, *Contracorriente and Marx Ahora* to write this paragraph. For a few typical examples of articles appearing in these journals, which stress both the theoretician authors and the research directions mentioned in the next two sentences, see Jorge Luis Acanda mod. (Abril-Junio 1997); Díaz Castañón (Enero-Junio 1995); Jorge Luis Acanda (Abril-Junio 1998; Abril-Junio 2002; Octubre-Diciembre 2006); Azor Hernández (Julio-Septiembre 20056); Ravelo Cabrera (Julio-Septiembre 1995); and Soler Martínez (Enero-Junio 2001). See also the books by Jorge Luis Acanda (2002); Hiram Hernández (2006); and Centro Juan Marinello (2000).

81. These include Pablo Guadarrama González and Carmen Suárez eds. (2000, 2001) for the course on philosophy, García Fernández and Campos Alfonso (2004) and Ramón Sánchez Noda ed. (2002) for political economy, and Duharte Díaz ed. (2000) for socio-political theory.

Marxism as a coherent whole rather than in fragmented parts, to link teachings to the specific disciplines of students, and to incorporate more materials of Cuban intellectual history.⁸² The distinction between dialectic and historical materialism has thus been abolished, professors have now the discretion to choose additional literature and adapt textbook content to specific programs and abilities of students, and more writings by or about Cuban historical personages such as Martí, Che, Fidel, and others have been included in the curricula. As in the reverent period, the common social science curriculum for students in all disciplines now includes courses on philosophy, political economy, and Cuban history, though each with a rather different content except for the political economy of capitalism, perhaps under the criterion that its underlying mechanics have not changed much.⁸³ There is no longer a course on “scientific socialism/communism,” which has been replaced by a course on sociopolitical theory taught exclusively to students enrolled in programs within the social and economic sciences.

In content the changes in university study materials are consistent with both the rejection of the reverent view and the renewed attention to the superstructure. The textbook for political economy of socialism, for instance, from the outset clarifies to its readers that what they have in their hands “is not a manual,” in an explicit and somewhat belittling allusion (among many) to the materials of study used in the past. More important, students at this level no longer learn that socialism is unbeatable as revealed by “scientific” laws on the unfolding of history, but rather that its continuation in their country “depends on the subjective factor, on our moral and ideological clarity.”⁸⁴

Arguably, to the same extent in which what is more in accord with reality is also more believable, arguments that start from the premise that the future of the socialist system of production in Cuba depends on the determination and commitment of Cubans themselves sound more con-

82. These intentions are presented according to the explanation of Ramón Sanchez Noda in Enrique Ubieta mod. (Enero-Marzo 1996, p.140).

83. Compare textbooks written by Humberto Pérez (1976) with books written by García Fernández and Campos Alfonso (2004). These are basically identical in both structure and analysis.

84. Sánchez Noda ed. (2002, p. 8 and p. 335 respectively).

vincing in times of socialist debacle and crisis than anything promising predestined victory. For this reason and in the special period at least, even if eclectic and unconcluded, the subjective viewpoint has the potential to frame more reasonable arguments for socialism in Cuba than ever did the viewpoint prevailing during the “three black quinquennia,” as Jorge Luis Acanda has termed the period from 1971 to 1986.⁸⁵

Praxical” Basis of Socialism

Intelligent theoretical elaboration transmitted through speech in classrooms and printed materials may convince the leaders of the new generations, based on their own understandings of Marxism and socialism, to follow the socialist path traced by their elders. Yet it may not be enough for ensuring the long-term continuation of this path. Theoretical argumentation alone may well create coffee-shop Marxists and revolutionaries, able to make an erudite point on the suitability of the socialist system of production to Cuba and even to all the countries of the world, but not necessarily with the courage and determination to defend this system beyond the rhetorical space, whenever and wherever needed in the face of difficulties. Cuban political leaders know well that full commitment to socialist values and beliefs can neither be transmitted nor formed through spoken and written language alone. Their insistence that theory must be complemented by praxis, that is by theoretically informed action, simply cannot be overstated. A second moment of character in the attempt of the political leadership to perpetuate its revolutionary deed for generations thus takes place through the framing of some of the most important life experiences of practically the whole population raised under the revolution. This framing stems logically from basic Marxist notions about justice, freedom, and solidarity and has a stated purpose of promoting a socialist morality.

In the schooling system, for instance, the main directing principle is the unity of study and work.⁸⁶ From preschools to universities, Cuban students do manual labor as part of their study programs. The amount and

85. In Zardoya Loureda mod. (1999, p.180).

86. See Arbesú (1993, p.29); Departamento de Estudios para el Perfeccionamiento de la Educación Superior de la Universidad de la Habana (1985, p. 4); DOR del PCC ed. (1975, p. 119).

kind of manual labor varies, from watering seeds and plants in the gardens of elementary schools to tasks related to the professional training of students in universities. The highlight programs oriented by the work-study principle take place in the midlevel education stage, ages twelve to eighteen roughly speaking.⁸⁷ In secondary and pre-university schools (more or less parallel to high schools in the American system), students from cities either go to the countryside for about forty-five days each academic year to study and work in agriculture or are enrolled in boarding schools located in the countryside where they similarly study for half of the day and work in agriculture for the other half. Carried out systematically since the late 1960s and early 1970s, these programs are considered by their promoters as both the realization of Martí's vision of Cuban students holding the pen "after noon in the schools; but in the morning, the hoe," and in correspondence with the work-study principle, as "the only formula of communist education."⁸⁸

The communist educational purpose claimed by the work-study principle finds sustenance both in Marx's statements on the division of intellectual and manual labor as the source of class societies and therefore of all exploitation and in his depictions of the communist society where this division no longer exists.⁸⁹ By applying the work-study principle, the Cuban schooling system at least heuristically eliminates this division and by so doing advances values associated with justice as distributive equality or as the end of exploitation in labor relations. Assuming that people who do or have done manual labor are likely to value it as much or even more than intellectual labor, citizens educated in the work-study principle may keep wage differentials between intellectual and manual labor low, as well as attempt to even the standards of living between the city and the countryside.⁹⁰

Work, of course, is not only part of the study programs in the Cuban schooling system but also the main activity that most persons do for most

87. For more detail on these programs than possible here, see Carnoy and Wertheim (1979, pp. 96-105); Fitzgerald (1990, pp. 76-80); Arbesú (1993, pp. 49-54); Figueroa et. al. (1974); DOR del PCC ed. (1975, p. 119); and article by Odalis Riquenes Cutiño and Lisván Lescaille Durand, "El plan la escuela al campo se renueva," in *Juventud Rebelde*, November. 5, 2006 (digital edition version).

88. Quotes correspond to Martí (1976, p. 72) and Fidel Castro's speech of April 4, 1972.

of their lives. In a sense, what the schooling system in Cuba does, as anywhere else, is to prepare people to enter the labor force. As the main activity of humans, work distinguishes between societies or historical stages for Marx. According to his distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, whereas in all past societies most people worked to obtain the barely minimum to satisfy their basic material necessities, in a socialist society an ever-growing amount of work will be done beyond what is dictated by material necessity.⁹¹ With the basic necessities fulfilled, people will feel free to create.

From the very first year of the Cuban Revolution in power, policies have tried to approximate the “realm of freedom” by promoting work in ways that do not involve material rewards.⁹² Besides a wage and other material benefits, the remuneration system in the workplaces includes moral incentives such as the public recognition for a worker or a group of workers as outstanding. Work that involves no external rewards at all, or voluntary labor, is often done in the framework of the mass organizations. When done en masse, as in the national journeys of voluntary labor, it

89. Hence the exquisite paragraph from the *German Ideology* (in Lewis S. Feuer ed. 1959, p. 254):

As soon as labor is distributed, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic.

As Bottomore (1993, p. 105) observes, the same idea recurs in the first volume of the *Capital*: The detail-worker of today, the limited individual, the mere bearer of a particular social function, will be replaced by the fully developed individual, for whom the different social functions he performs are but so many alternative modes of activity.

90. For a detailed summary of additional particular goals pursued by the schools in the countryside, see Figueroa et. al. (1974, pp. 14-26).

91. For this distinction, see once again the passage from the *Critique of the Gotha* Program quoted as the epigraph to the first chapter of this dissertation.

92. That is, even before the bulk of nationalizations. The date that marks this beginning is November 22, 1959, when following an initiative of commander Ernesto Guevara, thousands of volunteer laborers began building a school facility for 20,000 children in the Sierra Maestra.

purports to represent the maximum expression of a people that is “free to create.” If a reward exists at all for voluntary labor it must be internal, or in Marx’s system of human motivations, “joy.”

How to create joy from work so that it motivates more work has always been a main concern of socialist practitioners. For Ernesto Guevara, voluntary labor may be initially motivated by social compulsion, at least for some, which becomes habit as it is repeated several times, and eventually turns into “joy” as workers perceive the fruits of their labor.⁹³ He did not live long enough, however, to see how deeply people could be disappointed when their voluntary effort does not bear fruit. Much resource misallocation and the general disorganization that prevailed in the journeys of voluntary labor during the 1960s indeed seem to have wasted the initial willingness of many to work voluntarily and therefore to have contributed to growing rates of absenteeism and lower productivity in the taxing voluntary journeys held during the 1970 harvest.⁹⁴ With the willingness of workers exhausted, incentives to work changed. Neither moral incentives nor voluntary labor disappeared in the years between 1971 and 1985. The former, however, were less used than in the earlier period and the latter was mostly fused with material rewards in hybrid forms of labor, such as the construction microbrigades of the early 1970s (and then from 1986), and the several contingents of youth, students, workers, and soldiers which did “crash-works” in infrastructure.⁹⁵

Since the launching of the general offensive against capitalist methods in the framework of rectification, moral incentives and voluntary labor have once again been emphasized. Some lessons from the experiences of the 1960s seem to have been drawn. Newspaper invitations, for instance, call to the voluntary journeys only laborers strictly necessary in

93. He repeated this idea in several of his speeches and writings, but to refer the reader to the same text as earlier in this chapter, see Guevara Ocean press ed. (2005, p.156, 159,160).

94. See Fitzgerald (1990, pp. 48-53) for an illustrative account on this process. Bengelsdorf (1994, p. 95) reports that about 20 percent of the work in the 1970 harvest was voluntary.

95. See in this order Pérez-Stable (1999a, pp.157-160); Kapcia (2005, p.152); Fitzgerald (1990, pp.63-4); UJC (1977, p.3); UJC (1982, p.3); UJC (1990, p.98); and Fidel Castro, speeches on April 5, 1987 and April 4, 1992.

both number and skill to do the assigned tasks efficiently.⁹⁶ And because organization makes a difference in the results of work, to the extent that the voluntary journeys have been better organized than in the past, they may have increased the chances for the voluntary workers to see the schools, hospitals, or sports facilities that they contribute to create. To the extent that the development of intrinsic rewards from work does indeed depend on the results of work, better results of voluntary labor do increase the chances to produce the expected joy of workers.

In theory, all young Cuban males spend from two to three years in the army.⁹⁷ In practice, most of them do. As in any national army, their military training teaches them discipline, friendship, courage, and patriotism to the point of ensuring their willingness to defend the motherland with their life if necessary, both from external aggressors and from internal threats to the incumbent socioeconomic and political order.⁹⁸ Since December 1963, the party has had a presence in the army. Party and Communist Youth members work as political assessors in the units. They give political guidance to the ranks, which includes the study of Marxism and the speeches of the Cuban revolutionary leadership.⁹⁹ Yet it is through the frequent engagement of the army in operational tasks that military service seems to play an important role in the formation of the new generations. Army units have always been involved in tasks such as voluntary labor

96. See, for a sample, Domingo Amador, "Las BET deben movilizar solo a las fuerzas necesarias," *Juventud Rebelde* March 29, 1987, 16; UJC (1998, 3); Alexis Schlachter "Jornada Nacional de Trabajo Voluntario," *Granma* October 29, 2006 (digital edition); Katia Siberia García "Este domingo, trabajo voluntario en cada cuadra," *Granma* November 1, 2006 (digital edition); "Convoca la CTC a jornada nacional de trabajo voluntario," *Trabajadores* January 8, 2006 (digital edition).

97. According to Tzvi Medin (1990, p.148), a bill of law of November 12, 1963, established compulsory military service in Cuba and the first contingent of conscripts was called up in April 1964.

98. See Vecino Alegret and Escavia Rivero (Enero 7, 1968).

99. The construction of the party in the army was initiated in December 1963 and concluded in 1966. Throughout this time Marxist instruction was generalized, and later systematized in concurrence with the processes of institutionalization begun in 1971. For a synopsis on this process, see Alvbariño Atienzar (Diciembre 1981). For further detail on the educational work of the party cells in the army, see Medin (1990, pp. 147-153); editorials in *Verde Olivo* December 1976, p. 59; Vellinga (January 1976, p. 253); and interview with Brigadier General Harry Villegas (Pombo) in *Pathfinder* (1999, especially pagespp. 146-150).

and prevention before and relief after natural disasters. During the Cold War, the army was also constantly deployed to missions abroad in the name of international solidarity.

Consistent with Marx's characterization of capitalism as worldwide in scope and with his famous urging for the workers of the world to unite for its removal, Fidel has famously defined internationalism as "the most beautiful essence of Marxism-Leninism and its ideals of solidarity and fraternity among the peoples."¹⁰⁰ By losing his life while practicing international solidarity, Ernesto Guevara set the standard for how far an exemplary revolutionary should go with this practice.

From 1963, when the first international contingent of the Cuban Revolutionary Army (FAR) arrived to Algeria, to 1991, when the last military contingent returned home, hundreds of thousands of Cuban volunteers served in international military missions.¹⁰¹ In Angola alone served some 300,000 military personnel, and over 2,000 of them lost their lives. The numbers do not include some 50,000 personnel in civilian tasks, nor do these include the undetermined number of Cubans who militarily and nonmilitarily sought to foster insurrections in Latin American countries and actively supported their allies in armed conflicts throughout the Middle East, East Asia, and the rest of Africa.¹⁰²

Although the post-1989 geopolitical realities forced the Cuban government to step away from international military campaigns, tens of thousand of Cuban doctors, nurses, engineers, technicians, and teachers have continued rendering services at no charge to populations in need the world over. In June 2007, for instance, an estimated 42,000 or more Cubans were fulfilling internationalist duties in about 101 countries. Of them, some 32,000 in seventy-six countries were health workers.¹⁰³ To these numbers must be added the physicians who have assisted in Cuba

100. In his speech for the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks, July 26, 1978.

101. Other kinds of aid to Algeria had begun as early as 1961. Reported as stated by late Division General Néstor López Cuba to his interviewers in *Pathfinder* (1999, p. 24).

102. These are the numbers generally managed by Cuban sources. See Castro's speech on December 2, 2005, for instance. See Eckstein (2003, pp. 171-175), additionally, for a synoptic map of Cuban military internationalism. For a detailed account on the initial involvement of Cuba in Angola, see Gleijeses (2002).

hundred of thousands of sick from other countries free of charge and the professors who have trained more than 47,600 foreign students, from some 126 countries, who have graduated from Cuban universities in about thirty-three programs since 1961.¹⁰⁴

Irrespective of any Realpolitik consideration that must surely apply to the Cuban government's internationalist practices, the exercise of internationalism, or the extension of free help to peoples of other nationalities, is also a "revolutionary necessity," in the words of Ernesto Guevara, for its educative value in strengthening the selflessness and solidarity characteristic of the socialist morality. Consonant with this educative aim, participants in internationalist contingents often speak of their internationalist experience as a "school," where they developed their sense of human solidarity through the contact with populations in need.¹⁰⁵ If so or otherwise, the practice of internationalism clearly fosters at the same time more practical and immediate understandings that may help strengthen support for the socialist regime. By comparing life in Cuba to the "unbelievable misery" of the people they help in their missions, participants in internationalist contingents are more likely to feel satisfied with their own standard of living in Cuba.¹⁰⁶ Relating to others by giving rather than taking, they may also develop a feeling of pride in their country and in their ruling socioeconomic and political system.

Internationalism, moral incentives, voluntary labor, and the work-study principle in the system of formal education—all them have in common the intention to promote the socialist morality through life experi-

103. Numbers taken from "Más de 42 mil cubanos brindan su aporte a otros pueblos," in *Granma* (digital editi version), June 19, 2007. See also the website on Cuban cooperation (Spanish).

104. Osviel Castro Medel, "Estudian en Cuba más de 27,000 universitarios extranjeros," *Juventud Rebelde*, (digital edit version) December 14, 2006; "Operación Milagro ha devuelto la vista a más de 300,000 personas," *Granma Internacional* (digital edition) June 21, 2006.

105. For a few accounts on the learning experiences while participating in international missions, see interviews in Baez (1996) and Pathfinder (1999) with military personnel, and the book by Tarek William Saab (2006) based on experiences of medical personnel fulfilling an international duty in Pakistan.

106. "Unbelievable misery" in the words of General Samuel Rodiles Planas (in Baez 2006, p.287), recounting his experiences in Angola.

ences. In theory, Cubans raised under the revolution would develop out of their own experiences at school, work, and in the army and the missions abroad values such as justice as equality, freedom from insatiable material want and therefore to create, and solidarity with the weak in the amounts needed to perpetuate the socialist system of production for long. To the extent that these experiences succeed in promoting the pursued values, Cubans of the new generations would feel committed to the project started by their revolutionary elders not only out of the reverence they feel toward them, but also, and mainly, out of their own experiences while plowing the fields in secondary school; while cutting cane, building hospitals, or cleaning the streets in the journeys of voluntary labor; or while serving the wretched of the earth in Angola, Ethiopia, Haiti, or Pakistan. The higher their commitment to the values forged through actions such as these, the greater their expected determination to follow the route started by their elders when these finally leave the political scene.

Is the Battle Won?

Whether, in the final account, the new man exists in Cuba is a question both necessary and banal. It is necessary because only by asking it can we gain some insight into the critical factor that will determine the fate of Cuban socialism in the long run. But lacking any clear-cut depiction of the features of this man, we can know whether he exists only by the results. The question is thus banal because only when we know whether socialism in Cuba has or has not lasted for generations, will it be possible to discuss on firm empirical grounds whether or not a man compatible with the long-term endurance of a socialist regime has been produced in Cuba. And because the unequivocal evidence has yet to arrive, all we can do at this moment in time is speculate.

Rather than conjecturing sharply cut yes/no answers into the future, any careful (perhaps timid) speculation should begin by stressing existing diversity. Logically, the Cuban leadership's attempts to build the new man have been experienced differently by populations of different age and social location. For any one member of the new generations it makes a difference for the engineered formation of his or her personality whether she or he came to age before or after 1970, or the transition from "trial-and-error" to "institutionalization," before or after 1986, or the transition from "institutionalization" to "rectification," and even before or after the

end of subsidies from Moscow in 1990-2, or before or after the re-booming of mass mobilizations and the Battle of Ideas started in 2000. Within any of these periods, further differences can be noted. To give one example, for the age group of “institutionalization,” it makes a difference whether a given person fought in Angola or was trained as an engineer in one of the socialist states instead. Because these experiences are hardly the same, their results in terms of human morality cannot be assumed to be uniform.

Nor is there any apparent reason to suggest that similar experiences of people with different personal traits have rendered the same normative results. According to different personal traits the effects of the same experiences on individual behavior can be worlds apart. Vladimir Cruz Naranjo lost an arm, a leg, and a testicle while fulfilling his international duty in Angola. Yet he maintains enough revolutionary morale to declare to the Cuban press his disposition to use what is left of his body “to continue struggling for the socialist regime,” which he finds “the only honorable way for Cuba.”¹⁰⁷ Like Naranjo, Froilan Osmany Rodríguez fought in Angola. However, he soon discovered himself clashing a local insurgency rather than defending a sovereign country from foreign invasion. Upon returning to Cuba, he decided to raise his voice on the issue and eventually joined the opposition to the regime.¹⁰⁸ Today he lives in Paraguay.

The most immediate implication of existing diversity for the stability of socioeconomic and political regimes is that “who rules” matters. People with different degrees of commitment to the established social order are unlikely to pursue similar policies should they reach positions of influence. And because “who rules” matters, the ability of the departing leaders of the Cuban Revolution to find, select, train, and promote to posts of leadership the most committed among the new generations acquires critical importance for the long-term longevity of the state socialist regime.

107. Iris Rosquete Pulido, “Travesía 250,” *Juventud Rebelde*, December 13, 1998, p.11.

108. Histories like this abound on the Internet. This particular one was taken from article by Shelyn Rojas, “Ahora soy opositor por enfrentarme a la mentira: Froilán Osmany Rodríguez,” *CubanNet*, March 31, 2006.

CHAPTER 10

FAR from Perfect: The Military and Corporatism

Brenden M. Carbonell¹

Abstract: This paper explains the potential for the rise of state corporatism in Cuba during a transition to democracy. The focus is on examining the economic and political power of the Cuban military due to its involvement in the Cuban economy. The paper investigates Perfeccionamiento empresarial and how this program has led to a major increase in the power the military will wield during a post-communist transition. Surprisingly few authors writing about transition scenarios in a post-Revolution Cuba take the FAR into account in describing change on the island. Many of those who do mention the military neglect to acknowledge the effects its growing power will have on the transition government. More recent work on transition in Cuba does treat the role of the FAR. Yet, even this newer scholarship fails to establish the connection between the swelling economic and political clout of elite manager-officers, the likely weakness of the transition government, and the possibility of the rise of another authoritarian system in Cuba. My essay seeks to fill in this gap in the literature, by investigating the potential for the emergence of authoritarianism based on a state-corporatist partnership between a weak transition government and elite FAR manager-officers.

Cuba's productive capabilities continue to deteriorate, its leadership ages and sickens, and the political regime's human rights abuses continue to mount. On August 1, 2006, Fidel Castro temporarily ceded power to his brother Raúl, Cuba's defense minister and head of the Cuban military, known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). The transfer of power came as a response to a sharp decline in Fidel's health while undergoing intestinal surgery. While Castro's health seems now to be improving, his retreat from the center of political power highlighted the potential for major change in Cuba to occur very soon.

1. 2007 Jorge Pérez-López Student Award Competition

Yet, Cuba has neared the brink of sweeping change many times since the flight from power of Batista on December 31, 1958, which ushered in the Revolution and the rise of Fidel Castro. Recently, the most notable near-collapse of the current Cuban system occurred in the years following disintegration of the USSR and the abrupt cessation of all remaining Soviet aid to the island. Faced with a rapidly imploding economy and the loss of nearly all its former trading partners, the regime's leaders decided to experiment with economic liberalization within the limited scope of military enterprises. The project, known as *El sistema de perfeccionamiento empresarial*, or the System of Enterprise Perfection, allowed officers of the FAR to manage firms with relative autonomy from the state's central planning committee. Soon the military began to incorporate more firms under its influence, expanding into non-military sectors such as tobacco production and tourism.

The success of the economic liberalization within FAR-managed enterprises has led to a substantial increase in the economic and political power of elite manager-officers² hailing from the highest ranks of the FAR. The independence of the FAR from the regime remains a controversial issue, though the available evidence on the Cuban military—which is scant—indicates that the FAR and its powerful manager-officers can survive the collapse of Cuba's political regime. The FAR's burgeoning influence in Cuba will make it a critical variable during a post-communist transition in Cuba, should such a transition occur in the near future.

Surprisingly few authors writing about transition scenarios in a post-Revolution Cuba take the FAR into account in describing change on the island. Many of those who do mention the military neglect to acknowledge the effects its growing power will have on the transition government. More recent work on transition in Cuba does treat the role of the FAR. Yet, even this newer scholarship fails to establish the connection between the swelling economic and political clout of elite manager-officers, the likely weakness of the transition government, and the possibility of the

2. In this essay the following terms will be used interchangeably: "elite manager-officers," "raulista elites," "FAR elites," and "red business elites" (when "red business" refers to Cuban state-owned enterprises). "Manager-officer" can also refer to a lower-ranking FAR manager who has less influence than "elite manager-officers;" context will make the distinctions clear.

rise of another authoritarian system in Cuba. This essay seeks to fill in this gap in the literature, by investigating the potential for the emergence of authoritarianism based on a state-corporatist partnership between a weak transition government and elite FAR manager-officers.

This essay is composed of three sections. The first section presents some historical background on the adoption of the FAR's new economic role and the growth of the military's economic and political influence. The second section aims at establishing the potential for the FAR's power vis-à-vis that of a transition government to lead the latter to adopt state-corporatism as a way of increasing its influence. Also, included is a definition of state-corporatism and an analysis of how state-corporatism has arisen in Russia due to the power of entrenched Soviet-era managers and their ability to foil the post-Soviet government's efforts to privatize the economy.

Finally, the third section of this paper emphasizes the need for Cuba's transition government, should it seek to foster functional democracy, to implement a mass giveaway privatization as a way to break the influence of FAR elites.³ The third section introduces privatization theory and presents two proposals for privatizations drawn from the Cuba transition literature, offering critiques of these plans.

Overall, this essay examines the potential for a post-Revolution Cuba to witness the rise of state-corporatist authoritarianism, as post-Soviet Russia did. To prevent this type of authoritarianism from developing, a transition government in Cuba must implement a mass giveaway privatization. The FAR elites will attempt to sabotage the privatization. To avoid this, the transition government must weaken the powerful manager-officers by exposing corruption and prosecuting malfeasant officers. Finally, facing an economically and politically weaker FAR, the transition government can implement mass giveaway privatization, thereby greatly limiting the chance that state-corporatism can develop in Cuba.

3. I realize that this is a controversial claim. For example, Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan reject the notion that privatization leads to democracy in transition states (*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, p. 438).

The literature on transition in Cuba is vast. This essay focuses on several key sources that shed light on the present situation of the Cuban military, as well as sources on privatization theory and state-corporatism. This essay does not purport to be a comprehensive proposal for the restructuring of a post-communist Cuba, but rather aims at investigating the likely dynamic between elite FAR manager-officers and the transition government and the seeds of state-corporatism underlying this relationship.

Historical Background

The Cuban economy has undergone major structural changes since the collapse of party-state socialism in Eastern Europe. The entry of the FAR into the Cuban economy and its growing influence in the economic realm manifests itself as one of the most dramatic restructurings initiated by the current Cuban government. The decision to allow the FAR to manage military-related industries with the goal of increasing their efficiency and profitability came in the mid-1980s, by which point relations between Cuba and its benefactor the Soviet Union had suffered intense strain. The USSR's commitment to supplying Cuba with military equipment began to wane by the late 1970s.⁴ Additionally, the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan shamed and humiliated Fidel Castro, who in that same year chaired the Non-Aligned Movement, an organization of states committed to independence from the spheres of influence of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Due to Cuba's dependence on Soviet aid, which appeared to be diminishing by 1979, Castro had no other choice but to publicly approve of the Soviet Union's military action against Afghanistan, a fellow member nation of the Non-Aligned Movement.⁵ Further political turmoil with the USSR over Cuba's policies concerning Central America and Grenada and regarding diminishing Soviet support for Cuba's military venture in Angola, encouraged the Cuban government

4. Amuchastegui, Domingo. "FAR: Mastering Reforms." *Cuba in Transition: Volume 10. Papers and Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE)*, Coral Gables, Florida, August 5, 2000. p. 433.

5. Amuchastegui, "FAR: Mastering Reforms," p. 434.

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to consider economic alternatives that would promote greater independence from the Eastern Bloc.⁶

According to Domingo Amuchastegui, who worked closely with several FAR organs and with Cuban intelligence while living on the island⁷, and who wrote the essay “FAR: Mastering Reforms,” Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl, Cuba’s defense minister, clashed over how to implement economic reforms. Raúl “focused on the need to experiment with one specific and coherent system, more in line with the major trends in the real world;” Fidel, on the other hand, fearing the political consequences of liberalizing on a nation-wide scale, refused to implement so sweeping a reform. An agreement emerged between the brothers: the Cuban armed forces would implement the reforms within its own enterprises, which formed the *Unión de la Industria Militar* (the Union of Military Industries). These economic reforms would not apply to the entire economy, but remain a limited experiment within the FAR⁸ Since the inception of the reforms, however, the number of FAR-managed enterprises has increased dramatically, and includes many non-military firms in industries as diverse as tobacco production and tourism.

The set of economic reforms applied to the enterprises managed by the Cuban armed forces became known as the “System of Enterprise Perfection (Sistema de perfeccionamiento empresarial—SPE)” and its major goals included 1) increasing the self-reliance of the FAR and making it less dependent on the Soviet Union; 2) “increas[ing] efficiency and productivity in military factories producing uniforms, small arms, and consumer goods;” and 3) “provid[ing] a model that could be adopted elsewhere in the economy.”⁹ According to Brian Latell, former National Intelligence Officer for Latin America,¹⁰ and author of the essay “The

6. Amuchastegui, “FAR: Mastering Reforms,” p. 434.

7. According to Amuchastegui, he worked closely with “the Central Political Directorate the *Décima Dirección* (Military Operations Abroad), the Foreign Relations Directorate, and as Guest Professor at the National Defense College (CODEN) of the General Staff in the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (*MINFAR*). I was also chief analyst in two sections of the General Directorate of Intelligence (*DGI*), and had considerable field experience with Cuban military and intelligence missions abroad.” (From footnote 2 on p. 109 of Amuchastegui’s “Cuba’s Armed Forces: Power and Reforms.”)

8. Amuchastegui, “FAR: Mastering Reforms,” p. 435.

Cuban Military and Transition Dynamics:” “Large numbers of officers received training abroad, enterprises adopted new accounting procedures, decentralization and greater competitiveness were encouraged, and some factories were downsized.”¹¹ These measures represented a sharp break with past socialist practice. The training of soldiers in Western business techniques in order for them to fill new roles as firm managers and production efficiency experts undermined the notion that Cuba would follow Marxist-Leninist central planning methods and it redefined the role of the Cuban serviceman. No longer would soldiers merely be receivers of orders from the regime. With the advent of *perfeccionamiento*, many officers would find themselves making production optimization decisions as military firms gained greater autonomy from central planning authorities. Additionally, the idea that some enterprises would undergo downsizing represented a breach of Cuba’s socialist commitment to guaranteed employment. Amuchastegui corroborates this notion, characterizing the System of Enterprise Perfection as a “big *fordist* experiment that meant violating and doing away with more than 100 principles, laws, and regulations of the so-called socialist economy.”¹² These nascent capitalist tendencies catalyzed a change in the character of the FAR, despite the state’s official position that the System of Enterprise Perfection “was not the first step toward a capitalist economy but a ‘management method’ intended to make state enterprises more efficient and productive.”¹³

9. Latell, Brian. “The Cuban Military and Transition Dynamics.” Cuba Transition Project. Miami: Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (2003). p. 12-3.

10. Dr. Latell served as the Central Intelligence Agency’s National Intelligence Officer for Latin America between 1990 and 1994. He began his work as a specialist on Latin America, and in particular Cuba, in the 1960s, when he was assigned to the “Cuba Desk” at the CIA. He is now a Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. (From p. 39 of Latell’s “The Cuban Military and Transition Dynamics.”)

11. Latell, p. 13.

12. Amuchastegui, Domingo. “Cuba’s Armed Forces: Power and Reforms.” *Cuba in Transition: Volume 9*. Papers and Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE), Coral Gables, Florida, August 12-14, 1999. p. 111.

13. Latell, p. 13.

The Economic and Political Power of the FAR Today

The clout of elite manager-officers can be better comprehended through a closer examination of the sources of their economic and political power. After several years of *perfeccionamiento*, the FAR has become a formidable force in the Cuban economy. Though the military version of the SPE began as a limited project, the FAR has now come to dominate what Amuchastegui claims is “well beyond the ‘lion’s share’ of the national economy.”¹⁴ Latell cites a study asserting that enterprises managed by Cuba’s armed forces are responsible for “89 percent of exports, 59 percent of tourism revenues, 24 percent of productive service income, 60 percent of hard currency wholesale transactions, 66 percent of hard currency retail sales, and employ 20 percent of state workers.”¹⁵ These figures emphasize the pervasiveness of FAR economic activities, including entrepreneurial ventures in sectors such as tourism and retail that have little or nothing to do with the production of military supplies. According to Amuchastegui, the FAR control the following major enterprises: the Cuban Civil Aviation Corporation, headed by Division General Rogelio Acevedo, who is a member of the Central Committee; the *Plan Turquino-Manatí*, “a huge developmental plan covering some 20 municipalities, approximately 20 percent of Cuban territory”; the *Banca Metropolitana*, “a banking institution created 5 years ago”; *Habanos S.A.*, “an enterprise in charge of international marketing of Cuban tobacco,” which is headed by Colonel Oscar Basulto; *Gaviota S.A.*, “Cuba’s fastest growing tourist enterprise since 1992...One of the FAR’s ‘pet’ projects.”¹⁶ These firms are a far cry from the small, single enterprise toward which Law-Decree No. 187 seems directed. Many of the FAR-controlled enterprises are enormous concerns that employ many workers and large amounts of capital. The high-ranking FAR officers that head these firms find themselves in a position to make myriad business and political connections, and solidify their power through the granting of favors. Latell supports this notion: “The praetorian enterprises appear more than anything to function as protected monopolies granted to regime favorites for political as well as economic purposes...Perhaps there is even an understanding...that they

14. Amuchastegui, “FAR: Mastering Reforms,” p. 438.

15. Latell, p. 17.

16. Amuchastegui, “FAR: Mastering Reforms,” p. 437.

[*raulista* officers] may sequester nest eggs as personal insurance against the uncertainties of the post-Castro era.”¹⁷

This evidence indicates that top officers loyal to Raúl do not operate under the same constraints as civilian managers under the generalized implementation of *perfeccionamiento*. With such power over resources, jobs, and distribution networks and such strong connections with political elites and foreign investors, the *raulista* officers in charge of FAR enterprises can exert pressure throughout Cuban society, and, therefore, have the muscle to achieve whatever aims they may have. This power would become all the greater in a post-Castro regime Cuba, as Fidel Castro’s cautionary biases against layoffs and downsizing production often hinder the efficiency and profitability of FAR-managed firms.¹⁸

Moreover, the FAR boasts increasing *direct* power in the political realm and bureaucratic realm. In 1989, as part of a purge of government officials in various ministries and a restructuring of the institutional hierarchy, the Ministry of the Interior (MININT)—responsible for the repressive security forces in Cuba—came under the direct control of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR).¹⁹ In this way, the FAR rose in status and extended its already pervasive reach. Increasing organizational control through the absorption of the MININT, increases the power that the FAR can command, whatever the intentions of its elite officers. Such control over communication lines, coercion hierarchies, and local officials, down to the village level, would be difficult for any opposing institution—especially a post-communist transition government—to challenge.

In terms of direct political power, the FAR has even surpassed other traditional organs of political power in Cuba. Amuchastegui asserts that, “Frequent policy designs and recommendations coming from the FAR (specifically from Raúl Castro/Casas Regueiro’s²⁰ team) can play a more influential and decisive role than those coming from other quarters in the

17. Latell, p. 19.

18. Latell, p. 20.

19. Latell, p. 22-3.

20. General Julio Casas Regueiro is Cuba’s first vice minister of defense and oversees all of the FAR’s economic activities.

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Party or the Government.”²¹ Moreover, the Cuban military controls the Ministry of the Sugar Industry, the Ministry of Fisheries and Merchant Marine, and the Ministry of Transport and Ports.²² Thus, the FAR’s reach has extended further: it now controls much of the economy, the internal security apparatus, and has succeeded in sapping political power from the Communist Party and even from some regime elites. Apparently, the only upper echelon institution that the FAR does not control is Fidel Castro.²³ This line of argumentation emphasizes the entrenchment of the Cuban armed forces. Indeed, potential challengers to the FAR must co-opt the military’s ties to sources of political and bureaucratic power.

The ability of the FAR to influence the course of the post-communist transition in Cuba raises questions about what the dynamics between the military and the transition government will look like. A major concern is whether the FAR’s self-sufficiency and power will threaten the development of democracy by allowing the armed forces to bully an initially weak transition government into maintaining the economic status quo and the authoritarian nature of the state. For guidance in understanding the possible FAR-transition government relationship, it is helpful to consider the example of Russia and examine the connection between the Russian post-communist government and powerful Soviet-era managers that remained in charge of state-owned enterprises. In Russia, managers retained great influence after the collapse of the USSR, particularly vis-à-vis the new government. Describing the development of Russia’s mass privatization scheme, Roman Frydman et al., authors of the essay “Exit and Voice After Mass Privatization: The Case of Russia,” write: “To ensure the support of the powerful political and economic forces within individual state enterprises, the program gave to enterprise insiders majority ownership in as many as 70% of Russian companies.”²⁴ This excerpt indicates that the transition government in Russia did not possess enough strength on its own to implement a mass privatization. Moreover,

21. Amuchastegui, “Cuba’s Armed Forces: Power and Reforms,” p. 111.

22. Amuchastegui, “FAR: Mastering Reforms,” p. 437.

23. Latell, p. 21.

24. Frydman, Roman, Katharina Pistor and Andrzej Rapaczynski. “Exit and Voice After Mass Privatization: The Case of Russia.” *European Economics Review* 40 (1996). p. 582.

without support from powerful managers, the new Russian state remained alone and unable to effectively control opposing forces calling for change on the one hand, and for upholding the status quo on the other.

Additionally, shareholders of the newly privatized Russian firms experienced great difficulty in their attempts to restructure the management of their enterprises. In many cases, managers remained virtually immune to threats of dismissal due to their majority shareholdings and political clout.²⁵ These managers would often allocate their firms' profits and resources in such a way as to build alliances with workers, who also owned sizable stakes in the companies for which they worked. One of the major complaints of Russian investment funds and other non-insider shareholders was that managers routinely used profits to raise workers' wages, instead of distributing dividends to the various owners of stock.²⁶ According to Maxim Boycko of the Russian Privatization Center, author of the essay "Voucher Privatization," "Because of the political influence of the managers, the [Russian] government could not threaten to exclude incumbent managers from privatization if they resisted bringing in active investors."²⁷ This excerpt reveals that managers of Russian firms wished to stall efforts by the transition government and shareholders to foster true economic liberalization and complete the process of privatization.

The dynamics that arose in Russia between "incumbent managers" and Russia's transition government could develop in a post-communist Cuba as well. The economic and political power of the heads of FAR-managed firms combines with the military might that Cuban manager-generals can muster. Consequently, Cuba's transition government will have to contend with entrenched managers that have incentives to impede the completion of privatization and other economic liberalization, and who have the clout to defy government mandates with virtual impunity.

In Russia, the transition government found itself weak against influential managers of state firms, and found a remedy for its ineffectiveness in an arrangement known as state-corporatism. This economic and politi-

25. Frydman, et al., p. 584.

26. Frydman, et al., p. 584.

27. Boycko, Maxim, Andrei Shleifer and Robert W. Vishny. "Voucher Privatization." *Journal of Financial Economics* Vol. 35 (1994). p. 257-8.

State-Corporatism

cal system is a variant of corporatism that leads to the establishment of authoritarian control by the state via a partnering with entrenched managers that accrues benefits to both business and political elites. Due to the similarity between high-ranking FAR manager-officers in Cuba and Soviet-era incumbent managers in Russia, there is a high potential for state-corporatism to develop in a post-socialist Cuba.

State-Corporatism

Having examined the new economic role of the FAR, its growing economic and political power, and its increasing independence from the political regime, this essay moves into its main argument. The idea is that the Cuban armed forces' can use their influence to force a transition government in Cuba to abandon a sweeping reform agenda and unite with elite manager-officers to gain political and economic authority. This paper argues that, should this development occur, the likely political system for a post-communist Cuba would be state-corporatism.

Definition and Theory of State-Corporatism

First, the term "state-corporatism" must be defined. Paul Kubicek, author of the essay "Variations on a corporatist theme: Interest associations in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia," elaborates on the fundamental features of corporatism, contrasting them to the elements characteristic of pluralism. He also sheds light on the special corporatist variant known as state-corporatism. In defining the essentials of corporatism in general Kubicek offers Philippe Schmitter's description:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.²⁸

28. Kubicek, Paul. "Variations on a corporatist theme: Interest Associations in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia." *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 48, Issue 1. (Jan 1996). p. 2.

Pluralism, on the other hand, Kubicek states, is a system “in which groups are multiple, voluntary, competitive, overlapping, non-hierarchical and free from state interference. In short, pluralism is predicated upon a free-functioning civil society, whereas corporatism defines efforts to penetrate and shape civil society.”²⁹ Kubicek draws a further distinction, defining *state-corporatism*, which

focuses on the heavy hand of the state, which creates, guides and structures social life. The parameters of independent activity are restricted. Bargaining is decidedly assymetrical, and organisations are penetrated and/or co-opted by the state, often serving as little more than an appendage of the latter. Order is imposed from the top in order to prevent spontaneous explosions from below... These features, of course, could do much to undermine ‘democracy.’³⁰

Kubicek’s definitions of state-corporatism and pluralism clarify why a transition state faced with powerful managerial elite challengers would find state corporatism an attractive political solution. In a transition situation, demands from all segments of society buffet the state, which, in the minds of its citizens, becomes an omnipotent savior that can solve all of the problems inherited from the former regime. When the state discovers that it lacks the political and economic power to make the societal changes for which its constituents clamor, it faces the choice of limiting the demands placed on it by society or losing upcoming elections.

In the special case in which managers of state-owned enterprises enjoy the economic, political, and even military power to force the hand of the transition state regarding policies of economic liberalization, the state finds that it must compromise in order to survive. In such a situation, state-corporatism can readily emerge as an economic and political compromise, in which the state grants sizable concessions to managerial elites and their workers, and the managerial class lends its formidable support to the state. The state, in turn, uses its now buttressed position to limit the number of interest groups operating in society and force these to maintain close ties with the government. In this way, the transition government can slow societal change and ensure that it does not fall victim to excessive

29. Kubicek, p. 2-3.

30. Kubicek, p. 3.

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pressures emanating from civil society. Moreover, by slowing the rate of social change and economic restructuring, the transition state perpetuates favorable conditions for big business managers, ensuring their continued support, and, thus, the state's survival.

A post-socialist transition government forced to adopt state-corporatism will have to abandon plans for a workable privatization of state-owned enterprises.³¹ The dependence of the state on the political and economic power of the managerial elites means that the government must pursue policies that perpetuate the status quo as long as possible. According to Kubicek: "Red business" has little interest in the growth of the private sector from the bottom up, and may be able to pervert privatization so that it actually limits competition and maintains economic oligopoly and political oligarchy."³² Nevertheless, real privatization—in the sense of freedom from both the "authoritarian tilt" of the state and the intransigence of "red business" managers—must occur if a post-socialist nation seeks functional democracy and political liberty.³³ This privatization must be a mass privatization, capable of allocating the assets of state-owned enterprises to the entire population and breaking the domination of "old elite" managers by undermining their claims to economic power, which would effectively enervate their networks of political power. This, in turn, would free the transition government from having to establish state-corporatism in order to survive and gain strength.

Similarities to Russian "Red Business"

Returning to the analysis of state-corporatism, the paper now examines the potential for state-corporatism to develop in a post-communist Cuba. The high-ranking *raulista* officers of the Cuban military have emerged as a "red business" managerial class through the adoption of the System of

31. "Workable" in the sense that shareholders can restructure their firms freely and govern them to maximize profits without being blocked in their efforts by incumbent managers that enjoy government backing, and who, in turn, use their influence to support the state.

32. Kubicek, p. 14.

33. "Functional" in the sense that political parties are not restrained or limited and that the general citizenry plays an integral role in the democracy. In other words, the "democracy" does not merely consist of political and business elites catering to their mutual interests.

Enterprise Perfection. These military elites resemble the Russian “old elite” managerial class, though their situation is more complex. First, the FAR manager-officers benefit from the added influence of commanding a vast communication and transportation network, a formidable stockpile of weapons and delivery systems, and tens of thousands of subordinates bound to obey their superiors. The FAR’s elite officers do not have to make mutually beneficial deals with lower ranking managers, as civilian “red business” elites must do with their rival oligopolists. The business directives of generals of the FAR speed down the chain of command instantly. Such organizational power, backed by armed subordinates, can force a post-communist transition government to acquiesce even more completely to the will of the *raulista* officers. This can clear the way for an even more authoritarian state-corporatist regime than Russia’s to emerge in a post-communist Cuba, with the state acting not as a partner to “red business” managers seeking to slow the rate of change, but purely as an instrument of military authority.

Like the Russian “red business” elites, the elite manager-officers of the FAR have little interest in supporting economic liberalization efforts, let alone efforts to privatize state-owned enterprises. Latell identifies an exception to this trend in General Rosales del Toro, head of the Cuban sugar industry, who has attempted—over the protests of Fidel Castro—to shut down sugar mills in order to boost efficiency. Yet, in general, Latell concludes the following: “Enterprise managers in other sectors probably face similar constraints in trying to introduce free market type efficiencies in Cuba’s command economy, although there is really no evidence that others are energetically endeavoring to do so.”³⁴ This passage supports the notion that, for the most part, high-ranking FAR managers, like their Russian civilian counterparts would not favor privatization and would attempt to stall or sabotage the transfer of assets from the state to individual citizens. FAR generals neither wish to lose their oligopolistic powers over the Cuban economy, nor their ability to influence a post-communist successor state.

34. Latell, p. 20.

Mass Giveaway Privatization: Antidote to Corporatism

Having examined the potential for state-corporatism to emerge in a post-communist Cuba, we assert that the island's transition government can prevent the rise of state-corporatism by privatizing state-owned enterprises via a mass giveaway privatization. This section presents several analyses. First, there appears a brief discussion of the dilemma vis-à-vis elite FAR manager-officers that a transition government in Cuba—particularly a government seeking to establish a functional democracy—will face. Second, there is an examination of privatization theory. Finally, there is an evaluation of already existing plans for privatization in a post-communist Cuba.

Dilemma and the Need for Mass Giveaway Privatization

The post-communist transition government of Cuba will, like that of Russia, enter office as a weak institution. Generating revenue for the purpose of running the new government will prove challenging, as the general population will have small incomes and few savings on which the transition government can levy taxes. Furthermore, the state will have to contend with the entrenched economic and political power of military elites who control much of the Cuban economy. Should the transition government seek to establish a functional democracy, it will face the following dilemma. The transition government can partner with the military elites, which will give the state ready support, authority, and power. However, such a pact between FAR-managed business and the government opens the door to state corporatism and authoritarianism, which will undermine democracy. Then again, without the backing of the military elites, the state cannot hope to carry out its reforms or even survive in office. The transition state must make the choice between committing itself to the difficult course of developing a truly democratic political system, or resigning itself to establishing state-corporatism.

If the transition state chooses to foster a functional democracy, then it must implement a mass privatization.³⁵ Rolando H. Castañeda and George

35. Later, it will be argued that the mass privatization must take the form of a mass *give-away* privatization.

Plinio Montalván support this notion in their essay “Transition in Cuba: A Comprehensive Stabilization Proposal and Some Key Issues.” According to these two authors: “The widespread distribution of property will be a deterrent against public corruption.”³⁶ Regarding the vast segments of the Cuban economy that fall under the control of FAR officers, the notion of “widespread distribution” is especially important. The manager-officers of the Cuban military, particularly the *raulista* elites that control whole industries, gain influence from the enormity of the communication and distribution networks they control. In order to weaken these military elites, the transition government can target their networks by creating many small, partial owners of the large FAR concerns. “Old elite” managers, both in Russia and in Cuba, fear the loss of control to new shareholders that come to own stakes in former state-owned enterprises. Consequently, enervating the economic and political power of “red business” managers means targeting the unity of their control through the introduction of many shareholders from all segments of society, not simply other elites. Many different mass privatization schemes exist, but the one employed in Cuba must avoid the pitfalls that have plagued other privatizations and must be tailored to Cuba’s particularities.

Mass Privatization Theory

Before delving into the particulars of the Cuban privatization case, it is important to develop a clear understanding of the general characteristics of privatization as well as its challenges. This examination will help clarify why the transition government in Cuba should opt for a mass *give-away* privatization. According to Gérard Roland, author of *Transition and Economics: Politics, Markets and Firms*, two basic privatization strategies exist: “massive giveaways emphasizing speed,” and “revenue maximization through gradual sales.”³⁷ The “massive giveaway” strategy centers on the notion that, above all other considerations, state-owned enterprises must be liberated from state control. Jeffrey Sachs, author of

36. Castañeda, Roland H. and George Plinio Montalván. “Transition in Cuba: A Comprehensive Stabilization Proposal and Some Key Issues.” Inter-American Development Bank p. 9.

37. Roland, Gérard. *Transition and Economics: Politics, Markets and Firms*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000. p. 229.

Mass Giveaway Privatization: Antidote to Corporatism

Poland's Jump to the Market Economy, describes the “massive giveaway” or mass privatization approach “as one of transferring ownership back to the private sector, rather than selling enterprises as in the traditional approach.”³⁸ The underlying idea here is that the state under socialism did not legitimately own the enterprises that it expropriated from its citizens, and therefore, the state should not expect compensation for the firms of which it divests itself.

At the other extreme lies the “revenue maximization” plan, geared toward selling state-owned enterprises to the highest bidders, regardless of whether they are foreign or domestic, though they are usually foreign investors. This scheme has also become known as the “British Model” of privatization, referring to a limited number of firms that the British government turned over to the private sector in the 1980s.³⁹ The “British Model” has the great advantage of generating much revenue for the transition government at a time when it finds itself most in need of funding. The “revenue maximization” strategy offers a way for transition states to build up cash reserves that can be used to ensure law and order and enforce transition policies that may be extremely unpopular or wholly unfamiliar.

If Cuba were to use a “British Model”-type privatization with revenue maximization as its goal, many wealthy Cuban exiles, foreigners, and elite manager-officers of the FAR would quickly buy up the entire economy. If foreigners owned the major enterprises, then the citizens would be left with nothing. If, on the other hand, wealthy citizens were allowed to purchase the leading state enterprises, then much of the general citizenry would be left out of the privatization. Worse still, the only citizens likely to emerge from socialism with wealth are those who had connections with the Party leadership. All of these political considerations can be weighty enough to encourage a transition state to forgo revenue maximization and go ahead with a rapid mass privatization, or “massive giveaway” scheme.

Rejecting the “British Model” or revenue maximization approach means turning attention to a “massive giveaway” or mass privatization

38. Sachs, Jeffrey. *Poland's Jump to the Market Economy*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993. p. 87.

39. Sachs, p. 83-4.

strategy. The mass giveaway privatization involves the transfer of property rights to all or most of the Cuban citizens, safeguarding against exiles, foreign investors, or military elites buying up and controlling large sectors of the Cuban economy.

Analysis of Existing Privatization Plans for Cuba

Having examined the theory and structure of mass giveaway privatization, it is important to consider privatization proposals for Cuba that already exist in the literature. Despite the benefits that a mass giveaway privatization offers, many authors do not advocate this approach for Cuba, emphasizing instead the need for a revenue maximization scheme. These writers fail to consider the political benefits that a mass giveaway privatization would offer a post-socialist government in Cuba. For example, Teo A. Babún, Jr., author of the essay "Preliminary Study of the Impact of the Privatization of State-Owned Enterprises in Cuba," asserts that the best transition model for Cuba is the one adopted by East Germany⁴⁰. East Germany chose to privatize its state-owned economy via sales of firms along the lines of the "British Model." While this method generated revenue for the reunified German state, the resulting domination of the East German economy by wealthy West Germans engendered widespread resentment among East German voters⁴¹. Attempting an East German-style privatization scheme in Cuba likely means selling state-owned enterprises to wealthy Cuban exiles.

Louis A. Pérez, Jr., author of *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, sheds light on the islander-exile conflict. According to Pérez:

Many [islanders] believed that the return of the exiles would signal the restoration of expropriated properties to previous owners. The many tens of thousands of families faced eviction, dispossession, and the loss of farms, houses, and apartments as the immediate result of 'liberation.' Nor could vast numbers of Cubans of color...contemplate with equanimity the return to power of white, wealthy, and right-wing exiles. There was, hence, fear of change, anxiety associated with the unknown,

40. Babún, Teo A., Jr. "Preliminary Study of the Impact of the Privatization of State-Owned Enterprises in Cuba." *Ninth Meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy*. Coral Gables, Florida. August 12-14, 1999. p. 430.

41. Boycko et al., p. 255.

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apprehension that change could easily serve to make a bad situation worse (Pérez, p. 401).⁴²

Pérez's account highlights islanders' anxiety over what they view as a possible re-conquest of Cuba, starting with the repossession of Cuban firms and real estate by expatriates via an East German-type sales approach to privatization. Such a plan would provoke intense opposition from islanders and its adoption by the transition government would throw into question the new leaders' commitment to furthering the interests of their own citizens.

Moreover, the acceptance of a direct sales privatization program in Cuba may not only alienate islanders from the post-socialist government, but also encourage Cuba's inhabitants to throw their political allegiance behind the FAR. Elite FAR manager-officers, fearing the forced sales of their enterprises to Cuban exiles, could use their influence to discredit a transition government seeking to adhere to the direct sales method. As per Latell: "FAR professionalism traditionally was characterized by a closeness to the civilian population that was reciprocated with strong respect and admiration for military personnel."⁴³ The prestige that the Cuban armed forces continues to enjoy on the island could give the FAR the political leverage necessary to turn public opinion against the transition government, accruing to itself added political capital. Such an increase in the power of *raulista* elites would do much to force the issue of a state corporatist bargain between FAR leaders and transition government politicians, as the latter would find themselves virtually bereft of a popular mandate.

Despite the flaws in Babún's plan based on the East German model, the privatization proposal advocated by Rolando H. Castañeda and George Plinio Montalván reveals itself to be even more problematic. In particular, two aspects of their plan raise concerns: 1) "The privatization of small and medium-size firms...requires relatively simple transfer processes based on market parameters. It should be carried out primarily through public auctions...and should give preference to worker owner-

42. Pérez, Louis A., Jr. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. p. 401.

43. Latell, p. 26.

ship;” and 2) “To motivate workers and management to increase productivity and maximize profits of the privatized firm, they should have preferential rights to acquire up to 20% of the share capital transferred⁴⁴.” This excerpt reveals that Castañeda and Montalván support a revenue maximization privatization based on auctions of state-owned enterprises. Because participation in auctions depends on money, most Cubans would be excluded from the process of asset transfer. Not only would this situation fail to gain the support of the citizenry, but it would cede control over Cuba’s future to those with access to capital: Cuban expatriates, foreign investors, and the elite manager-officers of the FAR.

Auctions open to foreign investors would also play into the hands of powerful officer-managers of the FAR, as they can use their status as an institution firmly rooted in Cuban nationalism as a lever against the transition government. According to Latell, who cites the remarks of an official from the former Soviet Union: “[The FAR] continued after the demise of the Soviet Union to enjoy ‘a special status in Cuba.’ He [the official] said that the armed forces were ‘still perceived by the majority of Cubans as the defenders of national interests.’”⁴⁵ *Raulista* “red business” elites, unwilling to lose their enterprises to foreign investors, could rile public opinion against the privatization, discrediting the post-communist government. The “special status” of the FAR makes this institution even more capable of stalling privatization efforts than the entrenched managers of the former Soviet Union.

Yet, by privatizing via public auctions the transition government clears the way for military elites themselves to offer bids for state-owned enterprises. Consequently, a public auction privatization would risk the possibility that FAR elites will be able to assume legal ownership of firms they control and concretize their influence over the Cuban economy. In this case, the FAR would not seek to prevent privatization, but would rather manipulate the process to favor their elite colonels and generals. Again, the average Cuban would be left with little or no claim to either the political or economic realm.

44. Castañeda and Montalván, p. 8, 9.

45. Latell, p. 2-3.

Conclusion

As to Castañeda and Montalván's insistence that 20% of the assets of state owned enterprises should go to the managers and workers of these firms, this stipulation would facilitate the emergence of state-corporatism. As per the discussion of state-corporatism in Part II of this essay, the post-communist transition government in Russia opted for an "insider privatization" that reserved significant portions of enterprise shares for Soviet-era managers and workers. Having these substantial holdings in their firms allowed managers and workers to team up and block the entry of "outsider" investors, the lowering of wages, and the dismissal of "incumbent managers." With insiders sapping the momentum of privatization, the nascent Russian democratic government had to accept the power of "red business" elites and find a compromise in state-corporatism. Should insiders of FAR-managed enterprises receive preferential access to shares, the Russian scenario could play out in Cuba, with state-corporatism as the result.

By adopting a mass giveaway privatization scheme, Cuba's post-communist transition government can avoid favoring Cuban exiles, foreigners, and military elites and thus avert the political problems and widespread resentment to which auction-based privatizations give rise.

Conclusion

This paper reveals that the rise of an authoritarian regime in post-socialist Cuba is a strong possibility. The economic and political power of elite FAR manager-officers will pose a major obstacle to the island's transition government, which will likely force the new state to choose between a state-corporatist partnership with the *raulista* elites, or continued weakness and subordination to the military. Other transitioning states such as Russia have fallen into the state-corporatist trap due to the influence of entrenched state-enterprise managers. Cuba's transition government must learn from the mistakes of these post-socialist states, resist the pull of powerful "red business" elites, and finally break their power networks.

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that Cuba's transition government, should it seek to avoid an authoritarian result and implement a functional democracy, must initiate a mass giveaway privatization. This will complete the process of breaking the military's grip on economic and

political influence, and will prevent the need for the transition government to establish a state-corporatist pack with elite manager-officers.

The notion of state-corporatism receives far too little treatment in the literature on Cuban transition. The traditional view has been that at Fidel Castro's demise Cuba will move swiftly toward Western-style democracy. However, developments on the island in the years following the collapse of Eastern Bloc socialism indicate that the establishment of democracy in Cuba is not a forgone conclusion. The current regime's implementation of the System of Enterprise Perfection has created a powerful new interest group out of high-ranking military officers, which has greatly complicated the post-Castro picture. This essay has striven to demonstrate some of the complexities of the transition dynamic and present strategies for how Cuba's transition government can cope with challenges presented by one of the many transition variables: the FAR. The paper does not pretend to be a comprehensive solution to the problems of Cuba's post-socialist transition. The hope is that this analysis will raise awareness about the danger of state-corporatism developing in Cuba and show that this hazard can be avoided if recognized and steadfastly resisted.

Conclusion

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Part II

Cuba and the World

CHAPTER 11

After Fidel: Mechanisms of Regime Change

Andreas Pickel

Abstract: The end of Fidel Castro's reign is likely to release powerful forces for regime change in Cuba. This paper explores the major change mechanisms, paying particular attention to what social science can and cannot predict about the process and outcome of Cuba's post-Castro transformation. Instead of employing conventional categories distinguishing between the U.S. political system and foreign policy, on one hand, and Cuban political economy and society, on the other, the analysis introduces a novel conception of the "U.S.-Cuba system" within which major transformation processes will occur. Comparing post-Castro Cuba dynamics with change processes in Eastern Europe, two contradictory change mechanisms widely misunderstood in the literature are identified as central: U.S. interventionism and Cuban nationalism.

«The proximity of the United States of America is surely perceived as a threat by many Cubans. The regime's propaganda is very active in this respect. Yet there is no need to worry much about such a world power – provided it remains democratic. One has to be apprehensive primarily about totalitarian states.» Vaclav Havel¹

This paper is less sanguine about the unthreatening nature of democratic regimes to neighboring countries than former Czech dissident and President, Vaclav Havel, in particular when the regime in question is the United States in the early twenty-first century while the author frankly admits to a highly critical view of U.S. democracy, foreign policy and neoliberalism (e.g. Johnson 2004; Mann 2003), the primary purpose of this analysis is not political but scientific. Thus essentially the same series of events may be described by some as the U.S. annexation of Cuba, by others as the liberation of Cubans from tyranny. This paper is interested in the process to which both refer. Much so-called social science on contem-

1. Exchange of letters with Cuban dissident, Oswaldo Paya, published in *Journal of Democracy* 15, 2 (2004), 165-69.

porary Cuba is at best applied science (policy studies), at worst simple-minded ideology. If a piece of analysis offers a more or less explicit position on one of the following questions, it is likely to be primarily policy advice or political argument rather than social science explanation: What should happen to the Cuban Communist regime after Castro's death? What ought to be the role of the United States in any post-Castro transition?

These are of course important and legitimate questions that motivate much scholarly work on Cuba today; but as explicitly normative questions, they are not for the social sciences to answer. This is not to deny the social sciences any role in dealing with normative questions. Policy programs and political strategies are full of claims and assumptions about how the world works, which is where they overlap with the primary concerns of the social sciences. Anticipating Castro's death as a fundamental turning point in Cuba's political and economic transformation, the present paper is interested in the dynamics of subsequent regime change. We can assume that, whatever other sources of legitimacy the Cuban regime may have, the passing² of Cuba's charismatic revolutionary leader will strengthen internal and external forces for regime change. While few social scientists can resist developing likely scenarios of the future, social science cannot predict the outcome of regime transformation. There are two cognitive reasons for this: any outcome is at the same time "overdetermined"—too many causal factors that are playing a role—and "underdetermined"—the process is open, i.e. contingent on the timing and sequence of future events. In contrast to explanatory theories, policy programs and political agendas very much require a "predictive" element since they attempt to reduce contingency, intervene in the process, and shape the future. In hindsight, we should be able to explain regime change more easily since the major events and outcomes will be known. However, the problem of overdetermination will not go away; it may even

2. Fidel Castro's death would clearly be "the end." His incapacitation due to illness led to a temporary transfer of presidential powers to his brother, Raul, on July 31, 2006. As of this writing (December 2007), Fidel, though frail and old, seems to be recuperating from his illness. He met with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in October and intervened in the debate on the future of Latin America on the occasion of the Ibero-American summit in Santiago, Chile in November. The decisive symbolic turning point is thus still in the future.

become more serious as more event knowledge becomes available. Policy programs and political agendas, on the other hand, may quickly become irrelevant if some of their basic assumptions about the future collapse.

It is not unusual in the social sciences to have a fairly good understanding of macro-structural processes, yet at the same time prediction of the future is so difficult because specific political and economic developments are triggered or driven by key events we cannot foresee. In the Cuban case in late 2007, however, the situation seems to be at least partially reversed. Castro's death, the crucial event in question, is foreseeable even if we don't know the precise date. This will trigger a chain of other fundamental events, more or less unpredictable, yet embedded in a macrostructural context that is quite well understood. The unpredictability of future developments is therefore not primarily a result of our insufficient knowledge of contemporary Cuba, but of the genuine openness of the change processes following *the* event. It is possible to develop a range of scenarios reflecting different conceivable outcomes—from a relatively high degree of regime continuity and gradual reform to peaceful regime change or violent regime collapse.³ But what is more important from a social science point of view is to identify some of the key mechanisms that will be at work, regardless of the transition's specific form or its eventual outcome. Curiously, in much of the literature on Cuba's transformation, two key mechanisms that will be examined in this analysis routinely do not receive the serious attention they deserve: the powerful role that the U.S. will play; and the role of nationalism in Cuba. This lack of attention, I believe, is a result of the fact that certain widely held political and normative assumptions preempt serious analysis: first, the role of the U.S. is widely considered benign (cf. Havel quotation above); and second, Cuban nationalism is seen as little more than an instrument of the Communist regime. The question here, however, is not to what extent those assumptions are normatively or politically defensible but about the actual change processes they hide.

3. Many studies of contemporary Cuba sketch out alternative scenarios of this kind (see e.g. Corrales 2005; Horowitz 2004; Dominguez 2003; Brundenius 2002; Ramsey 2006; Latell 2006). While interesting and useful, they tend to be less informative about the central mechanisms of change, which are indeterminate as to what outcomes they may be associated with. In this paper, the focus is on two of those key mechanisms which will be involved whatever the specific transition scenario may turn out to be.

Ever since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, Cubanologists have derived lessons from the transition processes applicable to Cuba.⁴ One lesson, the imminent collapse of the Castro regime, has been a standard prediction since 1990. Being historically falsified year after year, the prediction has had to be reformulated repeatedly. Even the most ardent opponents of the regime have now grudgingly accepted that the Castro regime will not end before Fidel's death. There are two crucial differences between Cuba and Eastern Europe with respect to the key change mechanisms just mentioned—the U.S. role and Cuban nationalism—that are largely unrecognized. First, while the Soviet Union played a powerful and dominant role in Communist Eastern Europe throughout the post-World War II era, it was Gorbachev's voluntary reversal of that role that precipitated the regime collapses in the region in 1989. The Cuban situation is pretty much the reverse. Having been shut out of Cuba and shutting itself out for decades, Castro's demise is more likely to return the United States to the kind of powerful and dominant position the Soviet Union gave up in Eastern Europe in the latter part of the 1980s. Second, the idea of liberating the nation from the yoke of Communist rule in Eastern Europe and "returning to Europe" was a major cause in regime collapse and provided a fundamental resource in the legitimation of post-Communist regimes and transition policies. Here too the Cuban situation is pretty much the opposite. The Castro regime was the liberator of the Cuban nation in 1959, and Cuban nationalism since has always been closely tied to Cuban socialism and anti-Americanism. The return to U.S. tutelage is not easily made compatible with the idea of national independence and does not seem to be quite as enticing a prospect for many Cubans as the "return to Europe" was for Poles or Hungarians.

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe was precipitated by Gorbachev's historical decision to abandon the Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty for fellow Communist states, the most fundamental military and political fact holding together the Soviet bloc and propping up its Communist one-party regimes. It was this unexpected and unpredictable policy change emerging during glasnost and perestroika that radically altered the dynamics in each of the Communist countries of the bloc in the

4. As Reid-Henry (2007) points out, the experience of Cuba has been marginal to the study of transition in Central and Eastern Europe. See also Pickel 1997.

late 1980s, culminating in regime collapse and a rapid transition to capitalism and liberal democracy. Everyone, not least the major actors themselves, were surprised by the unfolding of events during the Soviet bloc's peaceful revolution. No one had contingency plans, and Western governments initially had no idea what their role should be⁵. The story of free market advocates mostly from the United States trying to convince post-communist leaders and populations of the virtues of Anglo-Saxon capitalism is well known (Bönker et al. 2002; Wedel 2001). The dominance of neoliberal ideology clearly was one of several fundamental conditions forming the global context for the political and economic transformation of postcommunist states. Other global conditions included the role of international financial institutions in the transition process, the disappearance of the Soviet Union, and perhaps most importantly, the prospect for a number of postcommunist states to join the European Union.

The key event in Cuba comparable to Gorbachev's foreign policy revolution will be Fidel Castro's death. It will produce a sudden symbolic opening of the previously blocked road to regime change. In contrast to the Eastern European cases whose Communist order was generally accepted as permanent until they actually collapsed, Cuban regime change has always been considered a real possibility by its opponents ever since the 1959 revolution, and eagerly anticipated as imminent since the early 1990s in the wake of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. If and when regime change finally does happen in Cuba, it will not come as a surprise to anyone. In diametrical contrast to the superpower withdrawal under Gorbachev's leadership, the United States is going to step up intervention in Cuba immediately. There is no European Union that a post-Castro Cuba could be looking forward to joining as a political equal. There is the huge North American market into which the Cuban economy will be reintegrated. Politically, the prospects for international integration would seem to be equally clear: the Cuban state will resume its historically subordinate position in the West-

5. As Johnson (2004, 19-20) reminds us: "Totally mesmerized by academic 'realist' thought, . . . [the American leadership] missed one of the grandest developments of modern history and drew almost totally wrong conclusions from it. At one point after the Berlin Wall had come down, the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union actually suggested that the Soviets might have to intervene militarily in Eastern Europe to preserve the region's 'stability'."

ern hemisphere of the American empire. Cuba itself has demonstrated in the last four decades that geography does not have to be destiny. Moreover, recent changes in the regional dynamics of integration undermining U.S. hegemony, to be further discussed below, are opening up previously non-existing alternatives for regional integration.

Although it is impossible to know the domestic dynamics emerging after Fidel Castro's death, it is much easier to anticipate what the United States will do. Remember, in contrast to Gorbachev, who turned the Soviet Union into a regional non-actor, the United States under Bush or his successor will become deeply involved in the Cuban transition process. This is not idle speculation or unsupported conjecture but a matter of stated policy, as will be documented below. Clearly, Cuba's future will be determined in part by its own domestic dynamics, but the key change mechanism that will overshadow all others will be the U.S.-Cuba relationship, that is, the various forms of intervention that different parts of the American political power structure will undertake in promoting the establishment of a "free market democracy."⁶ Domestic developments in Cuba will be decisive in so far as they will facilitate or obstruct the transition according to Washington and Miami. In other words, Cuban dynamics will determine the forms of intervention chosen by the United States. It is unpredictable what outcomes this key mechanism is going to produce, as no doubt other crucial mechanisms will come into play at the same time, the Venezuelan factor central among them. As argued earlier, the point of identifying key mechanisms is not prediction but a deeper understanding of how underlying social processes work.⁷

For this purpose, I propose to break down U.S.-Cuba relations into the major systems in which they take shape, from the global system and the hemispheric system to a variety of subsystems such as the Pentagon, the Cuban-American community in Miami, and independent "civil society" in Cuba. It is usually much easier to explain the workings of systems that are relatively stable than it is to explain systems undergoing rapid change. My assumption is that Cuba is likely to undergo further⁸ rapid and

6. This ideological phrase, used by the Bush administration, is an apt shorthand description of the "universal" model championed by the United States.

7. Karl Popper once compared the social sciences with meteorology: sciences dealing with volatile open systems which make reliable predictions difficult (Popper 1972).

fundamental transformations in the next ten years. We can distinguish two kinds of systems that will be relevant in this transformation process:

1. *Relatively stable systems* whose key mechanisms are quite well known:

- (a) the global system
- (b) the U.S. as a national system

2. *Rapidly changing systems* whose key mechanisms are at best partially known:

- (a) the U.S.-Cuba system, for which we know or can reasonably conjecture some of the key mechanisms
- (b) the regional system in which new change mechanisms are currently emerging
- (c) Cuba's political and economic systems whose key change mechanisms we do not know, though of course there is room for informed conjecture.

The systemic perspective employed here differs sharply from a realist perspective. In the latter, the United States and Cuba appear as two distinct, unitary actors—sovereign states, albeit of vastly different power, in a world of states pursuing their “national interests.” Against all odds, the Cuban Communist regime has been able to maintain state sovereignty in the face of strong opposition from the United States, and even more astoundingly has for a decade and a half survived the loss of its former powerful ally and supporter, the Soviet Union. From a realist viewpoint, regime survival has become increasingly difficult to explain since the demise of the Soviet Union eliminated any remaining international factors that could have accounted for the unlikely survival of a Communist country in the U.S. backyard. Regime change after the death of the revolutionary leader, however, may once again bring political reality more in line with realist expectations. To be fair, in trying to explain relations between the world's most powerful state and one of its small neighbors, realist theory does not mislead us completely. In the absence of powerful allies or a formal international structure restraining the stronger, the weaker state will be subordinated, sooner or later. Of course, this is not a particularly deep insight. For a more systematic analysis of U.S.-Cuban relations that tells us how these processes of subordination work, we require a different

8. The “earlier” fundamental transformations I refer to are not only the revolutionary changes after 1959, but also the deep social and economic changes in Cuba in the 1990s. See further on this below.

framework.⁹ In the perspective presented here, U.S.-Cuban relations will be examined in the context of different systems in which they are played out: the global or world system, the regional or hemispheric system, the system made up of certain parts of the U.S. and Cuba (to be referred to as the U.S.-Cuba system and defined further below), and each country's domestic systems. All of these systems are relevant contexts for U.S.-Cuban relations,¹⁰ and each of these systems affects them in a particular way. Let us see how.

Relatively Stable Systems: (a) The Global System

The most encompassing system for U.S.-Cuban relations is the global system.¹¹ In contrast to the period from 1959 to 1992 when the cold war provided the setting for a bipolar system of opposing blocs, the post-cold war global system is a unipolar system with a single state dominating the rest in military, political, economic, and ideological dimensions. The Cuban regime has lost its former international supports with respect to all four power dimensions,¹² only recently gaining a new strong regional ally with Chavez's Venezuela (to be further discussed below under regional systems). The remaining regimes ruled by Communist parties have openly embraced capitalist economic systems. Globally, therefore, Cuba appears like an anachronistic leftover from another historical epoch not unlike North Korea. In short, major mechanisms at the global level strongly work against the Cuban Communist regime and will remain parameters for its post-Castro transformation. Clearly, much more could be said about the world system, U.S. dominance, and Cuba's pariah sta-

9. The systemic framework employed here draws on the various alternatives to the realist approach in international relations, especially world systems theory, critical theory, and constructivism. This framework is developed in Pickel 2006.

10. I use the phrase "U.S.-Cuban relations" in a general and vague sense to refer to a variety of state and society relationships between the two countries. The concept of "U.S.-Cuba system" will be defined more specifically below. In general, the social systems I speak about are overlapping and do not necessarily have sharp boundaries.

11. The global system is here considered "relatively stable" compared to other systems under analysis, especially the Cuban domestic system and the Latin American regional system.

12. For a systematic analysis of the scope and limits of U.S. global dominance in each of these four spheres, see Mann 2003.

Relatively Stable Systems: (b) The U.S. Political System

tus, none of which however would fundamentally alter how these global mechanisms work. More fundamental changes by contrast are occurring in the hemispheric system's shift to the political left.

Relatively Stable Systems: (b) The U.S. Political System

As any student of American politics knows, the U.S. political system is internally highly fragmented. However, the same is not true of the American state as an international actor since World War II (Fisher 2000; Silverstein 1997). As the recent war in Iraq has forcefully demonstrated, foreign policy initiatives and especially decisions on military interventions are highly concentrated around the President, with representatives of the Pentagon playing an increasingly powerful and unaccountable role. Congress, on the other hand, is easily ideologically manipulated and overwhelmed in a policy area where its influence is relatively weak to begin with (Johnson 2004). Under George W. Bush, the president's power in foreign policy making has further grown, in particular his power "to act alone, even when in the midst of a dizzying array of political forces that constrain the White House" (Haney 2005, 290). As Patrick Haney has pointed out in his recent analysis of foreign policy making under Bush with respect to the anomalous case of Cuba policy:

[T]he policy process around U.S.-Cuba policy had largely escaped the firm grasp of the White House by the time President George W. Bush came to office. The range of actors involved in Cuba policy, and its center of gravity on the Hill rather than in the White House, had come to make the Cuba policy process look more like a domestic-policy issue than a foreign-policy one (Haney 2005, 293).

Perhaps the strongest manifestation of the president's limited powers was the 1996 Helms-Burton Act which, against then-President Clinton's preferences, turned the U.S. embargo of Cuba into law. Clinton was able to circumvent the full force of the law by temporarily "licensing" limited sales of food and medicine to Cuba. But his administration did not bring about a fundamental reevaluation, let alone reversal, of U.S. Cuba policy.

During elections, Cuba policy usually comes up in the context of securing majorities in the Florida districts with large Cuban-American

populations. Hard-line anti-Castro Cuban Americans formed a significant support base for Bush's election in 2000 (and for his brother's election as governor of Florida in 2002). Not having satisfied these conservative interests during his first term as president, in the run-up to his reelection Bush formed the President's Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, which presented its report and recommendations in May 2004. In addition to being a detailed blueprint for post-Castro regime change (see below), the report included a number of immediate measures concerning stricter limits on visits and remittances from Cuban Americans to relatives on the island which Bush promptly imposed. As Haney (2005, 295) notes with respect to the Commission:

What was really more an interagency committee than a "commission" of experts was chaired by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Cuban American, Mel Martinez. The merging of politics and policy, and the effort by the White House to take control of policy and create a process that existed alongside yet largely separate from the dynamics with which we had become accustomed for Cuba policy, is striking.

It is thus the Bush Doctrine as put into action in Afghanistan and Iraq that provides the current model for U.S. policy in the U.S.-Cuba system. Foreign policy making is subordinated to the global war against terrorism as conceived by a small group of insiders around the President and a very limited group of advisers. While somewhat more enlightened advice on post-Castro policy is available even from conservative think tanks such as the Rand Corporation and other expert institutions,¹³ it is unlikely to have any direct impact on the administration's policy making.¹⁴ Here the relevant guide is the Commission's report to be discussed in a moment. Looking at other actors in the U.S.-Cuba system, no critical opposition can be expected to emerge from the U.S. mass media which, though in principle and on occasion capable of reporting damaging revelations, are ideologically streamlined and "patriotic," deferring to and reinforcing the official ideology. Nor, as the nomination process for a presidential candidate

13. For Rand Corporation: Gonzalez and McCarthy 2004. See also the "Cuba Transition Project" at the University of Miami, <http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu/main.htm>

14. On the very limited role of outside advisors in White House foreign policy making, see Lemann 2004.

Rapidly Changing Systems: (a) The U.S.-Cuba System

shows, should a Democratic administration be expected to reverse U.S. imperial policies. Much the same holds for the potential influence of regional and international organizations on the U.S.-Cuba system where the United States has demonstrated time and again its willingness to ignore international opposition to its policies and impose its own agenda.

The overall picture emerging from this brief look at the U.S. political system shows that the central mechanism driving U.S. Cuba policy will be at the top-level executive, much like the entire “war against terror” is being masterminded by the White House and the Pentagon. This of course is not a surprising insight but simply a reminder of the basic structure of U.S. foreign policy making in the post-cold war age that will shape the Cuban transformation.¹⁵ Thus the key mechanism at work in the U.S. part of the U.S.-Cuba system is the decision making of a small executive group that has at its disposal the financial and military power of the United States. In contrast to other international interventions, U.S. Cuba “nation-building” policy after Castro has been well prepared. Whether the political preconditions and opportunities favourable for U.S. intervention will materialize remains of course an open question and will depend on developments in a number of rapidly changing systems to which the analysis now turns.

Rapidly Changing Systems: (a) The U.S.-Cuba System

In addition to belonging to a common global and regional system, U.S.-Cuban relations also form a specific transnational system of their own. In the traditionally asymmetrical relationship between the two countries, post-Castro Cuba will be an object of American action, whereas Cuba’s transformation is unlikely to have a significant effect on the United States. In other words, all of Cuba’s subsystems will be strongly affected by U.S. actors, but only a small number of U.S. actors will be significantly involved in U.S.-Cuban relations. Thus the overwhelming dominance, relative systemic stability and small number of actors on the U.S. side, on the one hand, and the dependence, potentially high degree of post-Castro systemic instability, and large number of actors on the Cuban side, on the

15. For a broader analysis, see e.g. Johnson 2004; Mann 2003.

other. These are some of the fundamental characteristics of what I refer to as the transnational U.S.-Cuba system.¹⁶

The two societies have a long and varied history of relations with each other. While involved in the island's decolonization, the United States quickly established itself as a neocolonial power in Cuba after its formal independence. Castro's revolution in 1959 was above all a national revolution against a right-wing dictatorship supported by the U.S. In the face of powerful opposition from the U.S. government, private economic interests and the Cuban exile community in Miami, the 1959 national revolution quickly developed into a socialist revolution which qualified the new Cuban regime for military, political, economic and ideological support from the Soviet Union and its allies. A failed U.S. sponsored invasion of the island in 1961 and the brinkmanship of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, which brought the world close to a nuclear holocaust, integrated the Cuban regime into the relative security and stability of the cold war order. While the U.S. has maintained a comprehensive trade embargo and remained the regime's major political and ideological opponent, it has until recently not supported or threatened military invasion again (more on this below).

With few exceptions, U.S. economic interests have been prohibited from doing business with or in Cuba, and American citizens without Cuban relatives are generally not allowed to visit the island. (This is US policy, not Cuban policy.) There is a sizable Cuban exile community in the U.S., concentrated mostly in the Miami region, which has a significant influence on U.S. policy towards Cuba. Otherwise U.S. society shows little interest in the island. While the U.S. regime has cut most economic ties with Cuba, the Castro regime in turn has relatively successfully insulated the country from American political and cultural influences reaching Cuba via airwaves, print, or direct contacts. In any event, Cubans are very interested in the U.S., whether as an object of fear and nationalism or a symbol of individual freedom and opportunity.

16. This conception of the U.S.-Cuba system as a transnational system differs from standard conceptions which, even if highly sophisticated (e.g. Brenner et al. 2002), focus on the U.S. political system as the basic unit of analysis when examining U.S.-Cuba relations in terms of U.S. foreign policy and its determinants.

Rapidly Changing Systems: (a) The U.S.-Cuba System

Before looking at the most relevant parts of U.S. political structures for the U.S.-Cuba system, let us briefly examine economic and ideological systems in which the Cuban transformation will be played out. Some U.S. economic actors are clearly interested in open access to the Cuban economy. The embargo has excluded them with few exceptions from trade with and investment in Cuba, leaving the field to Canadian and European corporations. In addition, there are more specific economic interests on the part of those who were expropriated by the Castro regime. This includes some large American corporations such as the United Fruit Company, but above all members of the 1.3 million large Cuban-American community who owned significant property on the island. While clearly there are some purely economic interests which stand to gain from a liberalized Cuban economy, their relative importance fades in comparison with the ideological dynamics in the United States. This is well illustrated by the Cuban-American community where economic interests are closely bound up with ideological motives.

Most Cuban exiles have left the country because of the Castro regime, whether as propertied refugees after the revolution or political or economic refugees in the more recent past. Most of them can be expected to have a deep ideological commitment to seeing the Cuban Communist regime replaced. Not all are equally radical, but few can be expected to come to the defense of the regime—though some clearly find strongly interventionist U.S. policy distasteful or counterproductive (Horowitz 1998). The general ideological climate in the United States can be quickly summarized. The Cuban Communist regime was an arch enemy throughout the cold war, and has remained so after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Even on the more moderate, liberal side of U.S. ideology, few are willing to show sympathy for a regime that openly refuses to respect certain basic civil and political rights and to hold multiparty elections. In the heated post-9/11 atmosphere in which the United States divides the world into friends and foes, the Cuban regime—classified as a “state sponsor of terrorism”—firmly belongs to the group of pariah regimes. For the United States as the self-appointed global defender of freedom and democracy, Castro’s Cuba is not only an ideological affront to the American way of life but to the “free market democracies” of the region and the world at large. This is the ideological backdrop for American Cuba policy.

In contrast to Afghanistan and Iraq, where major military intervention took place without serious planning for the “nation-building” following regime overthrow, extensive plans for U.S. intervention in post-Castro Cuba have been made, and a special coordinating agency in the State Department was set up in July 2005. These plans do not mention military intervention as an option explicitly—its availability should be self-evident.¹⁷ Washington’s Cuba transition plan is far-reaching and detailed, providing the administration’s blueprint for intervention after Fidel Castro’s death.

The U.S. Transition Plan for Cuba After Castro

In July 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice appointed Caleb McCaery to a newly created post in the State Department, that of “Cuba transition coordinator.” Creation of this position was one of the recommendations made in the May 2004 Report to the President by the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba (CAFC).¹⁸ CAFC is in fact not just a temporary commission of experts but a permanent coordinating body¹⁹ including the secretaries of Treasury, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development and Homeland Security, the President’s National Security advisor, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Several things are striking about this body: first, its very establishment—as if Cuba was naturally under the authority of the U.S. administration; second, CAFC’s membership, which brings together a host of U.S. government ministries and agencies; third, CAFC’s scope of activity, which envisions getting involved in all areas of Cuba’s public life; and fourth, the assumptions underlying the creation of a Cuba transition agency, above all the belief that another society will be moved from tyranny to freedom.

1. What from the perspective of international law must seem outrageous – that is, the self-appointed authority of the U.S over the affairs of a sovereign

17. In 2005 Cuba was added to the National Intelligence Council’s secret watchlist of 25 countries in which instability could require US intervention (Guy Dinmore, “‘The Day After’ Fidel Castro dies,” *Financial Times*, November 5, 2005).

18. Available under <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/cuba>.

19. Chaired by Secretary of State Rice. For up-to-date information on its activities, see the Commission’s website: www.cafc.gov.

Rapidly Changing Systems: (a) The U.S.-Cuba System

state – is unsurprising in terms of our conception of Cuba as part of a transnational U.S.-Cuba system discussed earlier. In global and hemispheric terms, Cuba is simply being normalized after almost five decades of exceptionalism.

2. In addition to the core departments of Treasury, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development and Homeland Security, the Cuba transition agency is set up to work closely with a host of other departments – Defense, Interior, Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Justice – and agencies – National Security Council, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Peace Corps, Social Security Administration, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, Export-Import Bank of the U.S., Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Small Business Administration, Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

3. All of these departments and agencies were involved in drawing up the Cuba transition plan and are organized in five working groups: Working Group on Hastening Cuba's Transition, Working Group on Meeting Basic Human Needs in the Areas of Health, Education, Housing, and Human Services; Working Group on Establishing Democratic Institutions, Respect for Human Rights, Rule of Law, and National Justice and Reconciliation; Working Group on Establishing the Core Institutions of a Free Economy; and Working Group on Modernizing Infrastructure and Addressing Environmental Degradation. The transition plan, an almost 500-page document, provides detailed recommendations for what is to be done in all areas of Cuban political life, public administration and the economy – from holding free and fair elections and instituting a structural adjustment program for the economy to traffic and vehicle safety and drinking water management. In addition, the transition agency will try to incorporate in its coordination efforts a range of non-governmental organizations and actors – from the Cuban American community to various civil society actors.

4. The U.S. transition plan for Cuba is based on a number of assumptions. They include: The Cuban state has been in the hands of a totalitarian regime that, upon the death of the tyrant,²⁰ can finally be dislodged. Cuban society has been helpless and impotent in the face of repression and propaganda. The Cuban economy has been shackled by a centrally planned system disallowing private enterprise, which has condemned Cubans to a low standard of living. Cuba's state institutions are incapable of providing basic governmental services. After Castro, the communist regime will try to stay in power, which means that radical regime change is necessary. The United States has the military, political, economic, and ideological power to bring about radical regime

change. Regime change will clear the way for establishing a free market democracy under U.S. guidance. Given the presumed lack of legitimacy on the part of the current Cuban regime and the self-evident legitimacy of free-market democracy, there will be overwhelming popular support for regime change and radical transition. The United States will receive international support from global and hemispheric organizations and from other governments for its transition efforts.

Clearly, these are far-reaching assumptions, most of them highly problematic. What matters for the purposes of this paper is not whether and to what extent these assumptions are right or wrong, but the very fact that they will be held by a major group of actors in the post-Castro transformation. As such, they will determine in considerable part the coming changes in Cuba. Whether, in what form and to what extent the U.S. scenario for regime change will go into action, on the other hand, is unpredictable since it will depend on developments and events in two other rapidly changing systems.

Rapidly Changing Systems: (b) The Regional System

U.S. power, observed from Latin America, should not be read only as a risk of military invasion in the literal sense. In the current situation, the reading can be extended to other forms of invasion of our economic sovereignty. It can be seen in the intrusive policies of certifying our practices of democracy or evaluating our contributions to the struggle against drug trafficking in the region or our “cooperation” in the antiterrorist struggle (Salinas 2007, 990).

A traditional system for Cuba since national independence has been the hemispheric system dominated by the United States. The U.S. helped to

20. As Secretary of State Rice put it in her report on the December 19, 2005 meeting of the coordinating body: “The Commission was reconvened to identify additional measures to help Cubans hasten the day when they will be free from oppression and to develop a concise but flexible strategic plan that will help the Cuban people move rapidly toward free and fair democratic elections. This plan will not be an imposition but rather is a promise we will keep with the Cuban people to marshal our resources and expertise, and encourage our democratic allies *to be ready to support Cuba when the inevitable opportunity for genuine change arises*” (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/58283.htm>; emphasis added).

Rapidly Changing Systems: (b) The Regional System

liberate Cuba from Spanish colonialism at the end of the nineteenth century, subsequently firmly integrating the country into its regional sphere of influence. Revolutionary Cuba since 1959 has played a singularly exceptional role in this regional system. In no other country of the region has the United States tolerated left-leaning governments for very long, intervening directly or through local parties to bring down such governments, which notably in most cases were the product of free elections or popular revolutions (Guatemala, Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua, Haiti), by supporting their opponents, in many cases repressive right-wing military regimes or militias (as in almost all of Latin America in the 1970s). Together with Mexico, which in the 1990s democratized and opened its economy, Cuba is the geographically closest neighbor of the U.S. and perhaps even a candidate to join Canada, the U.S., and Mexico in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) after the end of Cuban communism.

The election of Hugo Chavez as President of Venezuela in 1998 can serve as a historical marker for the beginning of far-ranging changes in the southern part of the hemispheric system that have occurred over the last decade. Economically, the 1980s and 1990s were a period of externally imposed, painful neoliberal policies for the subcontinent with poor economic growth and rising social polarization. Politically, by the end of the century all Latin American states with the exception of Cuba were multiparty electoral democracies. It was the high point of unquestioned U.S. dominance in the region after the end of the cold war. Recent elections in the region have brought to power left-leaning governments in Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay and Chile. The most radical of these, however, is the Venezuelan government of President Hugo Chavez, who is pursuing the project of building up a “twenty-first century socialism.” *Chavismo* is not merely an inward oriented approach to social change but a regional and ultimately global agenda to confront the U.S. dominated neoliberal world order. U.S. dominance in the region is being challenged in political, economic, and ideological respects (Centeno 2004; Hakim 2006; Kellog 2007).

Cuba has traditionally been excluded from regional economic integration schemes such as the Central American Economic Integration System (SIECA), the Caribbean Community (Caricom), the Andean Community (CAN), and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur). It is a pariah in

the U.S. dominated regional institutions – the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Defense Board, and the Summit of the Americas with its current focus on establishing a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). But the Cuban regime's fortunes changed with the election of Chavez as President of Venezuela. In 2000 the two countries entered into a Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement, followed up by a strategic implementation plan in 2005, including among hundreds of other projects the exchange of Cuban medical support for Venezuelan oil.

The significance of the Chavez government for Cuba goes far beyond economic exchanges. It supports the Castro regime with respect to all four basic power dimensions that so strongly work against Cuba in the global system (see above). This mechanism does not work only through the bilateral relationship between the two countries. Rather, Chavismo is changing the entire regional system by openly challenging the role and policies of the U.S. in Latin America and beyond. This ideological challenge is buttressed by regional integration initiatives, above all the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), a union designed as an alternative to the U.S. sponsored Free Trade Agreement for the Americas (FTAA), but inspired more by the European Union. In addition to Cuba and Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia have joined ALBA, while the more conservative leaderships of most Latin American and Caribbean countries are not willing to reject Washington's FTAA initiative. As Cuban international relations expert Luis Suarez Salazar (2006, 29) puts it, while ALBA is "still in its infancy, it represents nothing less than a bold new paradigm for the multinational integration of Latin America and the Caribbean." The union seeks to challenge U.S. hegemony by providing alternatives to IMF and World Bank funding. In addition to a Latin American Investment Fund, a new regional bank, Banco del Sur, was established in December 2007.

The regional system for Cuba is thus undergoing important changes that will strongly affect the future of the regime after Fidel Castro's death.

Rapidly Changing Systems: (c) The Cuban Political Economy after Castro

The mechanisms that will drive changes in Cuba's domestic political economy are numerous, and it will be their particular combination and

Rapidly Changing Systems: (c) The Cuban Political Economy after Castro

interaction with the two key change mechanisms identified in this paper that will shape the country's post-Castro political economy. Most important, the central political and economic actors of the future are not on the scene yet; they will either newly emerge or reconstitute themselves from existing institutions.²¹ Today's small number of dissidents and home-grown oppositional organizations in Cuba are unlikely to play a major role in the transition process. As we further know from the Eastern European experience, emergence and reconstitution of collective actors can take many different forms (see e.g. Stark and Bruzst 1998; Bönker et al. 2002). It therefore makes little sense at this time to divide Cubans and exile Cubans in political categories like conservative, reform, and radical, or to sketch scenarios from military rule to rapid democratization for the island's future. The meaning of such political categories will be defined and changed during the transition process which itself will not follow any simplistic scenarios. As Haroldo Dilla (2006, 37) writes in his review of the state of Cuban civil society, "the emergent actors . . . (those that have appeared in the past decade as a result of a changing society) are all larval, with little or no organization, and scripts so surreptitious as to be incomprehensible to the uninitiated."

In this analysis, I have identified two key mechanisms that can be counted on to play a major role in Cuba's transformation—U.S. interventionism and Cuban nationalism—as well as the growing significance of a third mechanism, *Chavismo*. We could look at them as "catalytic mechanisms" that will be centrally involved in all change processes, along with a range of contingent and stochastic mechanisms that can steer the course and outcomes of transformation in different and unpredictable directions. Having examined the U.S. role as key catalytic mechanism in earlier sections, let us look more closely at the significance of Cuban nationalism.

A second key catalytic mechanism in the U.S.-Cuba system after Castro will be what I call the nationalizing mechanism.²² This concept refers to a number of basic political and cultural processes that will continue

21. For a useful overview of non-state organizations in Cuba, see Dilla and Oxhorn 2002.

22. This conception of nationalism as part of a nationalizing mechanism differs fundamentally from the widely held view of nationalism as an – anachronistic – ideology, and is close to what Michael Billig (1995) has referred to as "banal nationalism." See Pickel (2006) for a systematic exposition.

functioning after Castro. The nationalizing mechanism revolves around Cuba's historically evolved national culture, collective identity, national discourse, and national habitus.²³ In short, it is the country's cultural infrastructure—from national identity to the norms and practices of everyday life. This is not to suggest that a unified Cuban nation is solidly behind the communist regime. The economic changes of the last 15 years, brought on by the collapse of the Soviet Union and Cuba's political and economic isolation, have produced a high degree of social polarization and renewed class formation (Dilla 2000; Monreal 2001). A majority of the population is confronted with poverty resulting from the decline of the state economy, while a substantive minority of Cubans can benefit economically from access to the "second economy."²⁴ The dissatisfaction bred by this new class dynamic suggests that there may be considerable reform willingness among Cubans.²⁵

The two key mechanisms—U.S. interventionism and Cuban nationalism—are of course closely related. Over its almost half-century long existence, the Communist regime has successfully fused nationalism and socialism. By posing a consistent threat to the Castro regime the U.S. has faithfully reinforced the connection between nation and regime. This basic mechanism will remain in place and will be a rich reservoir for mobilization and rhetoric after Castro's demise. The far-reaching and comprehensive intervention planned by the United States would provoke resistance at various levels—from the dependence of a new regime or government on a strongly involved U.S. administration to the rapid invasion of U.S. capitalism and the direct role American and Cuban-American actors would play in virtually every sector of Cuban public life. Clearly, the U.S. administration, Cuban-Americans and their future allies on the island will attempt to define themselves as the defenders of democratic Cuba's true national interest. On the other hand, the Cuban Communist

23. For an attempt to map Cuba's national culture and its implications for social change, see Dilla and Oxhorn 1992; Fernandez 2000; Haddad 2003; Galati et al. 2004. For a useful ethnographic account, see Rosendahl 1997.

24. The phrase "second economy" is used loosely here to refer to any kind of economic activity that gives access to the dollar (or convertible peso) – from workers in the tourist industry to legal and illegal private economic activities.

25. Dilla (2002) discusses some of the limited survey evidence there is on public opinion in Cuba.

Rapidly Changing Systems: (c) The Cuban Political Economy after Castro

Party, and the military and other institutions of the socialist state, whether conservative or reformist, will claim to be the true defenders of the national revolution. The heavy handed intervention of the U.S. administration and its Cuban allies that is designed to shift into high gear after Fidel Castro's death is likely to reinforce this longstanding image of the Cuban nation and its major external enemy. The political parties and organizations that will be supported by the U.S. will have to prove themselves in this context. Neither the U.S. nor Cuban-Americans will be welcomed as liberators by dancing crowds in the streets of Havana. At the same time, both will see themselves precisely in this light, exerting their considerable economic, political and military power as they try to steer the country's transition. However, any redefinition of the Cuban nation and its future would have to be achieved against the background of this sudden and far-reaching political and economic intervention by the U.S. and Cuban Americans. The absence of a significant degree of national unity, as the Eastern European experiences have shown, constitutes a major liability for political and economic transformation processes (Pickel 2006). The existence of relative national unity, on the other hand, constitutes a major resource for new regimes. National independence in an age of de facto declining sovereignty continues to be a fundamental issue. Take the postcommunist countries that joined the European Union in 2004. They had to submit to extensive foreign interference from Brussels in order to be granted membership, while membership in the EU of course itself represents a reduction in a state's legislative authority. Yet the elites of those countries, and usually a majority of their voters, voluntarily and explicitly opted for integration into this—rather different—hegemonic order, which radically reduced the tension between national identity and supranational subordination. Given the very different regional context for a postcommunist Cuba, no such optimistic scenario is on the horizon. In fact, Cuba's nationalizing mechanisms will work in the opposite direction, guaranteeing a high level of tension between national identity and U.S. enforced hemispheric reintegration. Venezuela's Chavez regime and the success of the alternative "Bolivarian" regional integration process in Latin America, however, provides Cuba with considerable resources for resistance to the subordination mechanism that will be at work in the U.S.-Cuba system.

Concluding Comment

This paper has proposed that, from a social science perspective, the future of Cuba after Fidel Castro is open. The fact that different, often mutually inconsistent scenarios for regime transition can be developed plausibly suggests that Cuba's future is at the same overdetermined. Both features of social reality—openness and overdetermination—create space for visions, ideologies, strategies and other normative interventions designed to impose a particular cognitive and political order on social reality. While social science should try to include such “subjective factors” in its objective account, it must qua social science maintain a critical distance to the normative closure and hopeful predictions that ideologies and strategies of necessity imply. Based on an analytical distinction between relatively stable systems and rapidly changing systems, this paper has identified and discussed the major systems of primary relevance for Cuba's future—global and regional systems, the transnational U.S.-Cuba system, the U.S. political system, and Cuba's political economy—each with their own dynamics and mechanisms. Two mechanisms were characterized as key change mechanisms that especially more normatively minded analyses tend to ignore or misinterpret: U.S. interventionism and Cuban nationalism. The predictive value of this analysis is limited for reasons of theoretical integrity—the latter of course being central only for social scientists who themselves often find it difficult enough to accept such limitations on their scientific expertise.

Concluding Comment

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CHAPTER 12

The US Strategy for Transition in Cuba

Gary H. Maybarduk, PhD

Abstract: America needs a new strategy for Cuba. The United States should shift its focus from overthrowing the current Cuban Government to protecting the United States from serious threats to its national security interests. There are at least two competing views on the nature of the transition from the Castros' era to something new. The US envisions a collapse of the current regime, perhaps accompanied by a military takeover. That vision, however, would not ensure the establishment of a stable democracy. It could lead to mass migration and turn Cuba into a major trafficking point for the drug trade. The Cuban Government's solution will likely evolve into an attempt to follow a variation of the "Chinese solution." It will move forward on some economic reforms, but keep tight control of political power. Such a scenario is anathema to US national values for a free and democratic Cuba. The rigidity of current US policy, as defined by the Helms-Burton Act, does not allow the United States to deal with a governmental collapse or a Chinese scenario. Nor will it allow the US to navigate the intricacies of a more likely and messier combination of the two. We should repeal the Helms-Burton Act and return foreign policy making to the Executive Branch where it belongs. We should allow Cuban diplomats to move freely around the United States, if the Cuban Government agrees to give the same freedom to our diplomats in Havana. We need that freedom to gain the knowledge necessary to assist a successful transition. To give the President the flexibility to deter another mass exodus from Cuba, we should give him the power to suspend the Cuban Adjustment Act. These changes are not concessions to the current Cuban Government, but rather actions needed to serve US national interests.

What are American national interests in Cuba? At first the answer seems obvious. For fifty years America's leaders have called for a democratic and prosperous Cuba. Those same words are still used today, even as the reality is and has long been much more complex. For several decades we worried about Cuba's alliance with the Soviet Union, its support of anti-American revolutionary movements, the problems of mass migration, and the use of Cuba as a waypoint for drug smuggling. Even as we continued to call for the overthrow of the Cuban regime, we made deals with the

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government of Fidel Castro to prevent mass migration and to cooperate on drug smuggling.

Today with the imminent possibility of change in Cuba, we need to take stock of our national interests, to understand the ways they are in conflict, and to plot a strategy that sets and helps us achieve our priorities.

America's national interest always has two parts: national values—what we want for the Cuban people, and our own national security. Most Americans and their government would agree on the values. We want for Cuba what we want for ourselves:

- A Cuba where the people can decide their future in a free and fair democratic process.
- A Cuban Government that respects and protects basic human and political rights and is capable of providing security and justice to its citizens.
- A Cuba where citizens will enjoy a good standard of living and possess a sense that they will have an opportunity to progress in the future.

Our national security interests are also relatively easy to list. We want to:

- Avoid one or more mass migrations the size of the Mariel Boat Lift or the 1994 Rafter Crisis.
- Prevent Cuba from becoming another porous border that allows continuous large-scale migration.
- Prevent Cuba from becoming a major source or transshipment point for the illegal drug trade.
- Avoid Cuba becoming a state with ungoverned spaces that would provide a platform for terrorists and others wishing to harm the United States.

Cuba is in the beginning of a transition from almost fifty years of Fidel Castro's rule. If we handle our part wisely a new Cuba may emerge, democratic and with growing prosperity. We will not of course be the principal player in Cuba's future—that belongs to the people of Cuba—but if we mishandle our role, we could delay or short-circuit that desired future. Current US policy is governed by the 1994 Cuban Libertad Act (Helms-Burton), the goal of which is the overthrow of the current regime and the prevention of its continuation under new leadership. It sets conditions for our assistance to a post-Castro Cuba, but remains mute on issues of national security. To his credit, President Bush has tried to think

through the issues we will face after Fidel leaves the scene. His appointment of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba was a good first step, and in its second report, CAFC II, the Commission defined key issues and proposed some workable solutions. Unfortunately, the Commission could only go so far, because the Administration limited its recommendations to those allowed by Helms-Burton.¹

Helms-Burton assumes the current Cuban regime will be overturned by some combination of a civil uprising and internal coup, perhaps led by the Cuban armed forces. This assumption has dominated U.S. planning for a post-Castro Cuba for several past Administrations. It was most recently articulated in President Bush's October 24 remarks on Cuba. Such an uprising is unlikely to happen anytime soon. The act rejects American cooperation with any Cuban regime that makes partial reforms or plans to take more than 18 months to turn Cuba into a democratic state. It is an idealistic, but not pragmatic, policy.

Any change in Cuba is more likely to start from the top. Cuba today is a totalitarian state, with an effective security system. The State Security branch of the Ministry of Interior provides the political policing function, including the secret police, as well as most of the crime-fighting units - drug enforcement, criminal investigation—and the Territorial Border Guard, which in turn contains the Cuban Coast Guard. The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) monitor every block for political and civic correctness, and can grant and take away “privileges” at will—jobs, educational opportunities, or the ability to obtain certain goods. The past year has demonstrated the Cuban leadership can stay together under Raúl Castro's leadership. So far, Castro biographer Brian Latell's analysis that Raúl is an effective administrator who has built a closely-knit team appears justified. However, change is coming.

It is highly likely, and there is evidence to believe, that much of the current leadership knows the current system cannot continue indefinitely. Cuba's leaders have studied the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and they are determined not to make the same mistakes. Raúl has visited China to study its reforms. The post-Fidel leadership, mindful of its own security,

1. The Second Report of the Commission on Assistance for a Free Cuba is available at <http://www.cafc.gov/>.

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will likely experiment with economic reforms, but will postpone sharing political power. A key question for American policy makers will be to decide if we engage that leadership to push for further reform or if we continue our all or nothing approach. That decision should also take into account the problems a rapid transformation of Cuba into a democratic state will create for U.S. border security.

Cuba is 700 miles long with almost 11 million people. It has 5400 miles of coastline, numerous harbors and even more beaches. It is surrounded by 3700 smaller islands. Able to stage along the Cuban coast, would-be emigrants and smugglers will have an almost unlimited supply of routes to reach our Southern shorelines. Despite our Coast Guard's best efforts, annually almost 20,000 undocumented Cubans reach our shores. Half come through the Florida Straits. The other half go first to Mexico and then cross into the US. Unlike other undocumented aliens, the latter do not have to sneak through the desert. Under the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act and the Wet Foot/Dry Foot policy, Cuban refugees need only take the first step onto US soil. The major deterrent to Cuban emigration is not maritime interdiction, but rather the ability of Cuba's Territorial Border Guards to stop mass migration on the beaches and on roads to the beaches.

The same border guards and the Cuban Coast guard act as a deterrent to drug smugglers who might otherwise base their operations on the Cuba shore or its myriad islands. A free Cuba, like a free Mexico, will not prevent its people from emigrating. A democratic Cuba, like our own country, will have difficulty fighting the drug trade. A free but poor Cuban population, without immediate economic opportunities, will gravitate, as did post-Soviet Russians, towards the rewards of criminal activity. A Cuba with a collapsed government will leave, as in Iraq, gapping open spaces for organized criminal activity of all types. A violent transition could force tens of thousands of Communist officials and their families to seek refuge on Miami's beaches. We need a strategy to deal with those eventualities.

The Cuban Libertad Act allows for no concessions to a government headed by Raúl, even if he were to start a reform process. It requires, among other things, the abolishment of the State Security division of the Interior Ministry. This appears morally unassailable until one realizes that State Security also includes the Territorial Border Guards and their Coast

Guard counterpart, anti-drug units and major crime investigation units. Its total abolishment, as demanded by US law, would leave Cuba in much the same state as Iraq after we abolished its army and police.

The Elements of a Strategy

To maintain our vision of a free Cuba while protecting our national interests will require an informed and flexible strategy that will be able to respond to the changing situation in Cuba. When the Cuban Government is ready, we need to develop a policy of engagement, much as we did with the former Soviet Union and its satellite states. It should not be a policy of unilateral concessions, but it should allow us to act in our own national interest.

As a first step, we should reestablish full diplomatic relations with Havana. This would demonstrate our willingness to respond in measured steps to positive events in Cuba. Raúl Castro has toned down the rhetoric against the US Government. Cuba recently signed two Human Rights treaties. We could use these actions to justify the establishment of full relations. However, we do not really need this type of justification. US interests also require this step. Any coherent strategy requires good information. Today, we have far too little of the information needed to respond to events in Cuba. We need to give our diplomats in Havana the space to do their normal job of reporting on personalities, conditions, institutions, and attitudes in Cuba. This will require reducing restrictions on Cuban diplomats in the United States. Cuba has retaliated to those restrictions by preventing US diplomats from going outside of Havana or talking to any government employee other than those in the Ministry of Foreign relations. Cuban diplomats can of course learn almost anything they need to know about us by reading our newspapers and watching our television. Our diplomats do not have that luxury. We should lift our restrictions if the Cubans do the same, and then get on with the job of understanding the reality ahead.

To prepare ourselves for whatever happens in Cuba, we should repeal the outdated Helms-Burton Act, which places a straitjacket on US policy. An argument could be made that we should keep the act as an incentive for further reform. Such an argument, however, ignores the difficulty and time it takes to make policy changes in Washington.

We should not tie ourselves in knots trying to define what would constitute a hypothetical transitional Cuban government and putting prior restrictions on the type of assistance we could provide. Under current US policy, very little economic assistance can be given to a transitional government before a democratic government is elected. Yet during this transitional period many problems will arise that could derail the evolving democratic process. We will need to be able to make judgment calls during this period, to assist the transition process, to strengthen Cuba's ability to fight narcotics trafficking, and perhaps boost the economy. This would not require that we assist a government unwilling to implement political reforms, but would return the decision to the discretion of the Executive branch and the Congressional appropriations process where it belongs.

We should also amend the requirement that we provide no assistance until the transitional Cuban Government abolishes State Security. The President's Commission did its best to avoid, but not repudiate the Helms-Burton language, and proposed language that would serve us well for discussions with any Cuban government. It proposed that we:

... assemble and maintain a current list of criminal justice system personnel implicated in abuse or corruption that will be available to all U.S. Government personnel discussing conditions for potential U.S. assistance with a Cuban Transition Government.²

We can refuse to give support to a government full of thugs, but we cannot afford to demand the abolishment of the entire system of law enforcement.

We, the American people, should also give serious thought to what guidance should be given to the President regarding implementation of the Cuban Adjustment Act once Cuba begins to move towards democratic elections. There is no right answer to that issue, but it deserves more public debate.

Finally, we should not unilaterally lift the embargo. That should wait until the process of political and economic liberalization is well underway. Lifting the embargo would be a big boost to the Cuban economy but,

2. The Second Report of the Commission on Assistance for a Free Cuba, Chapter 3.

contrary to the claims by those anxious to do business in Cuba, its value to the economic welfare of the American people would be minimal.³ For humanitarian reasons, however, we should lift the restrictions on family visits and remittances.

Thinking Through Various Transitional Scenarios

There is no reliable method to predict Cuba's path in the next few years. A few moments thought can easily lead to a dozen different scenarios, but two polar examples are worth mentioning.

A Regime Collapse

Collapse could follow from a military coup or, in a more likely scenario, from a series of public protests that turned violent. The government has a wide variety of tools it uses to contain demonstrations when they occur. Violence is seldom necessary. Punishment of demonstrators usually comes after the demonstrations are over.

Over time, perhaps not until Raúl departs, there is likely to be a weakening of unity among the leadership. Disagreements over policy and personal ambitions will eventually leak to the public. The weaker the government appears or the more hesitant it is to react decisively against public protests, the more likely the size and number of demonstrations will grow. If a collective government falters in its decision making and/or if the security forces make an uncharacteristic mistake in crowd control, the potential for violence is great. If the government loses control, generalized violence—political, criminal, and score settling—is likely.

This will be a critical period for US policy. We may want to support a new government promising a return to democracy. Such a government could come under severe financial pressure. Other governments, with their own agendas, may want to fill an economic and political void. We might wish to provide fast disbursing economic assistance. This is when knowledge of personalities, institutions, and regional differences will be

3. Gary H. Maybarduk (August 2001). Comments and Observations on the U.S. International Trade Commission Report. In *Cuba in Transition - Volume 11*. Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Washington, D.C. Available at <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/asce/pdfs/volume11/maybarduk.pdf>.

important. This is when I would hope the American government would call on our Cuban scholars to fill our gaps in knowledge.⁴

The Chinese Solution

There has been much speculation whether a transition from above is likely under Raúl or his immediate successors. This is the “transformation-from-above scenario”. It is possible but far from certain. The current regime could reject free market economic reform, either because of ideology or because it appears too dangerous, as it would require the government give up too much control over its citizens.

The economic reforms could be far-reaching or limited, but even limited economic reforms could have a major impact on Cubans’ standard of living. In economic terminology, Cuba is well within its production possibility frontier, and could substantially increase its production even with the country’s current stock of capital.

At a minimum, it is likely that transition governments will return to the economic liberalization process of the “special period” of the early nineties, with the freeing of many prices, greater freedom for the farmers’ markets, and legalization of small enterprises.

More far-reaching reforms would include legalization of private imports, encouragement of foreign investment, decentralization of decision-making to state enterprises and requiring that state enterprises become self-financing. All of the above reforms would threaten the viability of state enterprises, which depend on captive markets for both buying and selling, but the new private sector would generate new employment opportunities. Based on the experience of the “special

4. For a more detailed discussion of what needs to be done see: Gary H. Maybarduk (August 2001). *The Post Fidel Transition - Mitigating the Inevitable Disaster*. In *Cuba in Transition - Volume 11*. Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Washington, D.C. Available at <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/asce/pdfs/volume11/maybarduk2.pdf>. Two earlier articles by the same author that are largely still relevant are: *The State of the Cuban Economy 1989-1999*. In *Cuba in Transition - Volume 9*. Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Washington, D.C. Available at <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/cuba/asce/cuba9/maybar1.pdf>, and *Measures Not Taken: Issues for Today and Tomorrow*. Also available in the same issue at <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/cuba/asce/cuba9/maybar2.pdf>.

period”, reform could rapidly increase personal incomes and be well received by most ordinary citizens.

There would be several advantages for the U.S. in this scenario. The Cuban government would be able to maintain much of its current control over migration, while rapid economic growth and the expectation that such growth would continue could eventually decrease pressures to migrate.

Although that same growth would lessen the social controls imposed by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution—again as it did during the “special period”—the State’s police system would remain in place, reducing the likelihood of organized drug trafficking.

These advantages, however, would come with at a serious cost to our shared national belief in human rights and political freedom. The Chinese model that this scenario would mimic, has allowed the Chinese Communist Party to remain in power. The same could happen in Cuba. It could also lead to a Soviet-type transition where party and military leaders transfer ownership of State enterprises to themselves or their families.

Cuba, however, is not China. Outside influences will have a much easier time penetrating its relatively small population and geographical area. Its location in a sea of almost universally democratic nations will make it much harder to continue authoritarian government. Cuba is not and never will be a superpower. The charismatic Fidel, who appeared on the world stage standing up to the American colossus, just before and during the Vietnam War, was an icon to many future political leaders during their political coming of age. Over the years those leaders have remained entranced by the Cuban revolution and have given political and economic assistance to Cuba, even if contrary to their own countries interests. As they and Fidel fade from power, romanticism is likely to give way to more realistic policy making (Hugo Chavez and his oil money is a counter-example to this argument).

Internally, there will also be forces for change. Unlike China, Cuba has had previous experiments with democracy. With time and economic growth, government control is likely to loosen as it did in the special period. Once it becomes acceptable to make money and the general populace no longer has to depend on the “generosity” of their state employer or the acquiescence of their CDR to obtain luxury goods—such as an extra

ration of meat, or a television, or a computer—it becomes harder to control the population. The requirements of more complex commerce and greater integration into the world economy will bring greater opportunities for Cubans to travel and to meet foreigners within Cuba. With greater integration in the world economy, Cuba would also be more vulnerable to international pressure. Under this scenario, Cuba might retain an authoritarian government for some time, but would be likely to lose its totalitarian nature. Personal freedom would increase.

There are too many variations of this scenario to give it hypothetical approval. Our policy makers will need to evaluate the choices at the time, taking account of the risks, the likely outcomes, and American public opinion. That, of course, is the nature of strategy. It requires setting priorities, evaluating risks and setting a path from point A to point B. It cannot, however, be conducted under invariant rules established two decades earlier.

CHAPTER 13

Cuba and the US in a Sandbox: Cuban Funny Papers

Sara E. Cooper

Abstract: The current precarious state of affairs between Cuba and the United States stems from a legacy of some very questionable political decisions made on both parts. Contemplating the series of events that transpired between January 1, 1959 and December 2, 1961, one can easily see an absurd back and forth political tit-for-tat in which each country tries to establish itself as king of the sandbox.¹ Nowhere does this play itself out more remarkably than in the Cuban funny papers, where in the great tradition of caricature worldwide, Cuban graphic artists vilify the United States, call into question US power and manhood, and taunt Uncle Sam and his forces with invitations to test the resolve of the Cuban people to resist invasion and political control. Appealing to the notorious Cuban sense of humor, and in particular the choteo as discussed by Mañach, graphic humor of the day mocks Uncle Sam, President Kennedy, U.S. intelligence organizations, and global associations that follow the lead of the United States. This paper explores political cartoons from 1959-1960 and 2007-2008, to determine what has changed and what remains the same in this longstanding graphic battle.

The current precarious state of affairs between Cuba and the United States stems from a legacy of some very questionable political decisions made on both parts. I say the choices are questionable not because one specific alternate route stands out that would have made the last forty years easy, but rather because in order to understand the intransigence of the US around the issue of the economic embargo and the vehemence of Cuba's belligerent stance toward their enormous neighbor, one does have to ask certain questions about the history of US-Cuban international relations. Several scholars have made a cogent (if obvious) case that the United States' implementation of an economic blockade of the island is a direct result of Cuba's alignment with its absolute worst ideological enemy dur-

1. An excellent chronology of events is included as the first Appendix in Brenner, LeoGrande, Rich & Siegel (527-35).

ing the Cold War, the USSR. However, Cuba's choice in this matter was a response to the manipulative move of the US canceling the import agreement that formerly had counted for approximately 80% of the Cuban GNP.

Contemplating the series of events that transpire between January 1, 1959 and the end of 1962, one can easily see an absurd back and forth political tit-for-tat in which each country tries to establish itself as king of the sandbox. Not only do the leaders of both nations figuratively pick up their toys and refuse to play anymore, they engage in the sort of taunting and name calling reminiscent of the most puerile of our childhood days. Despite the abundance of evidence of such behavior in the mass media of the United States, due to space constraints I exclusively look at the Cuban reactions in this paper. Nowhere does this play itself out more remarkably than in the Cuban funny papers, where in the great tradition of caricature worldwide, Cuban graphic artists vilify the United States, call into question US power and manhood, and taunt Uncle Sam and his forces with invitations to test the resolve of the Cuban people to resist invasion and political control. Half a century later, the game playing through satirical caricature continues, reflecting the lack of any real progress toward détente. Here I will explore the representation of the United States in Cuban comics from two distinct eras: the first years of the Revolution, and in the here and now, 2007-2008. The principal questions addressed include: How exactly is Cuba laughing at its political enemy? What changes, if any, have occurred in the content or style of this comic mud-slinging? And finally, to what extent can this sort of graphic humor be understood as the Cuban choteo?

I'll See You in the Funny Papers

The trajectory of Cuban graphic humor railing against colonialism and advocating independence finds its beginnings around 1848, according to Evora Tamayo, in subversive bills posted on public walls, as with the anti-Spanish caricature "found" by Cirilo Villaverde on the wall of the Tacón Theater (Figure 13-1; "la vaca de leche"). The target of Cuban comic artists shifts to the United States at the turn of the 19th century, as is to be expected, as the Platt Amendment and increasing US holdings make Cuban independence feel like a sham to many (Figure 13-2; "Bromas de la intervención," *La política cómica* 1906, in Tamayo 67). How-

ever, after the triumph of the 1959 Revolution and the subsequent intensification of political enmity between the two nations, anti-imperialist and especially anti-United States political cartoons become an official weapon of the government. As newspapers and popular magazines depend entirely on state financing, and their content must pass through the offices of the censors, their status as governmental organs of communication is inarguable. So it is that *Bohemia* prints verbatim speeches by Fidel as well as inaugurating a supplementary page of cartoons, entitled "Humor y Revolución," both of which are utilized to disseminate policy nationally and internationally, as well as to influence beliefs and behaviors of the reading public. Also at this time, with the triumph of the Revolution, the new periodical *Palante* will replace *Zig-Zag* as the voice of rebel humor, which now is converted from a semi-underground and subversive posture to the official Cuban stance.

The political cartoons of the era serve crucial functions, one of which is to provide visual elucidation of the current events in the news to a newly literate population. Similar to the editorial commentaries, or even the news stories that appear in the newspapers and variety magazines, the comics offer interpretations of world happenings and the role Cuba plays in them. Appealing to the notorious Cuban sense of humor, and perhaps in particular the choteo as discussed by Mañach, graphic humor of the day mocks Uncle Sam, President Kennedy, U.S. intelligence organizations, and global associations that follow the lead of the United States. Taking their opponents down a notch or two, Cuban caricaturists (and their compatriot readers) assert their ideological and moral superiority, and most significantly their independence from an authority that wishes to be recognized as ethically correct, if not divinely mandated.

The bar against which Kennedy and the like will be judged are Che Guevara's ideals of the New Cuban Man and the Guerrilla as Social Reformer. In 1960 Guevara writes that, "in Cuba a new type of man is being created, whom we cannot fully appreciate here in the capital, but who is found in every corner of the country..." He refers first to the peasants, wielding hoes and pickaxes, who fought alongside the rebels from the Sierra Maestra during the revolution. He speaks of the men who believe in working toward the collective good and deem that "far more important than a good remuneration is the pride of serving one's neighbor; that much more definitive and much more lasting than all the gold that

one can accumulate is the gratitude of a people” (“On Revolutionary Medicine” n.p.). He also speaks of the rough and ready guerrilla fighters, who have survived the harsh conditions of combat as well as life in the mountains, and who are ready to sacrifice their own lives for the cause. The guerrilla warrior, who in many cases comes from the landed classes, also must dedicate himself selflessly to the betterment of the poor, in every area, until all Cubans achieve a high level of economic, cultural, moral, and technological improvement. This, then, is the first image of the New Man in Cuba: manly, risk-taking, disciplined, principled, humble, accustomed to a simple existence, close to the land, and dedicated to building a just (and eventually classless) society. The United States government and their allies will be judged as corrupt, money-hungry, effete, manipulative, egocentric, and childish. Drawing them as such in the comics will inculcate a sense of pride in Cuban advancement and a parallel derision of the number one enemy of the Cuban Revolution.

Felo’s “Panorama de un campamento Yanqui,” for example, depicts clownish and dissipated military officers, who wield bullwhips, drink to excess, play dice, and force their soldiers to engage in ridiculous training exercises, such as balancing upside-down on a beach ball. The soldiers themselves are hapless and undisciplined, tricked into joining the army, then ill-trained and poorly treated. In the two-page spread, one soldier expresses a sense of futility, saying, “¡La verdad, yo no sabía que el imperialismo era así, pero ya estoy embarcao!” [To tell the truth, I didn’t know that imperialism was like this, but I’ve already come aboard!] FBI and CIA agents wander through the campground, sometimes contributing to the chaos, often in emasculating disguise, such as a showgirl or a blind man (Figure 13-3; *Palante* Suplemento “Life en Español” p.XI, 1961). The artist Dagoberto also lampoons organizational corruption in his cartoon depicting FBI and CIA as piglets who eat Nazi slop and mildly look on as an enormous sow lays on top of the wire news services (AP and UPI) while dreaming of money (Figure 13-4; *Palante* #3 p.VIII, October 30, 1961). Portrayed as both lazy and avaricious, they are diametrically opposed to the New Man ideals that dictate social evolution in Cuba.

In general the United States are painted as unrepentant bullies with unilateral control in the international sector. In a *Palante* cover from 1961, Kennedy is shown feeding a baby Rómulo Betancourt with a bottle, indicating Cuba’s blame of the United States for Venezuela’s President’s

changing political stance (Figure 13-5; Cover, November 6, 1961). In one of the hundreds of Uncle Sam cartoons that were penned in the early years of the Cuban Revolution, one that particularly stands out is his introduction of a sexily clad woman labeled “OEA” (OAS-Organization of American States) into a brothel staffed by sirens labeled “CENTO” (Central Treaty Organization), “OTAN” (NATO-North American Treaty Organization) and “SEATO” (Southeast Asian Treaty Organization) (Figure 13-6; *Palante* vol.20 p.6, February 26, 1962). A response to the OAS conference in Uruguay from January 22-30, 1962, where Cuba is excluded “from participation in the inter-American system,” and “OAS members are blocked from providing weapons to Cuba,” this comic none too subtly recalls that the measure originated in the White House (Chang and Kornbluh 348). As Cuba by this time has begun to rehabilitate prostitutes, a step in the cleansing of decadent imperialist influences on the island, calling Uncle Sam a pimp and the major treaty organizations whores is a doubly-charged insult.

Nonetheless, Uncle Sam finds himself in many other roles in addition to that of libertine. In a Blanco cartoon from the same year, the United States mascot is in the corner of the boxing ring, obviously badly beaten and on his last legs, but being reassured by a CIA “trainer” that his strategy is a winning one (Figure 13-7; *Palante* vol.13 p.2, January 8, 1962). To put this into context, remember that at this time Cuba is secretly receiving arms shipments and military training from the Soviet Union; the alliance is fairly common knowledge on the island, however, and so the artist taunts the United States for proclaiming imminent victory over his country. In this same year, and shortly after the OAS mandated arms blockade, *Palante* magazine continues to stir up feelings of Cuban pride by recalling the defeated Bay of Pigs invasion (a year ago to the day) in a *Palante* cover captioned “Hace un año en Girón me la hicieron jirones” [In the Bay of Pigs they tore me to shreds.] (Figure 13-8; *Palante* vol.27, April 16, 1962). The vision of a chagrined, bandaged, naked Uncle Sam holding up his shredded costume is a grave violation, placing the iconic male figure in a position of debility and sexual vulnerability. His blackened eyes proclaim defeat, his large red nose dissipation, and his awkward stance embarrassment, overall presenting an easy target for many types of jokes.

After Kennedy is sworn in as President in 1961, and immediately buys in to the CIA plots of assassination and possible invasion, he becomes a popular target for the caricaturists. He consistently is shown as weak although he believes himself to be all-powerful, and corrupt despite seeing himself as selfless. He is drawn as an ugly and awkward ballerina with frilly underpants (*Palante* vol.1 p.3, October 16, 1961), an emaciated and coiffed Superman (Figure 13-9; *Palante* vol.7 p.X, November 27, 1961), a member of the Chicago Mafia (*Palante* Cover vol.14, January 15, 1962), a caveman (*Palante* vol.25 p.13, April 2, 1962), and a little boy who sat on cactus and has trouble removing the spines (*Palante* vol.39 p.6, July 9, 1962). Note that in each case, his manhood, intelligence and/or his integrity are somehow suspect; the Superman portrayal is worthy of special note, as the stance in general and holding of the pinky finger in particular suggest effeminate homosexuality. A puerile tactic oft-used in childish taunting, questioning an opponent's sexuality unfortunately is as ubiquitous as an "adult" insult.

Many comics mix character assassination with political censure. Kennedy is portrayed not only as hypocritical, but also either ignorant or unreasonable, as he rails against the reaction to his offer of foodstuffs to offset suffering caused by the blockade. Covered in tomato juice, he complains to his military officers, "¡Mal agradecidos los cubanos! Les ofrezco los 'alimentos para la paz' para aliviarle nuestro bloqueo y... ¡miren la respuesta!" [Those Cubans are ungrateful louts! I offer them "food for peace" to alleviate our blockade and... look at their response!] (Figure 13-10; *Palante* vol.25 p.3, April 2, 1962). This early in the game of king of the hill, and still buoyed up by substantial financing from the Soviet Union, nobody in Cuba wants to take charity from the enemy. The pride and obstinacy of JFK, mirrored by that of the Cuban exiles who eagerly support his machinations against Castro and the socialist regime, is matched by the stubborn righteous indignation of Fidel himself—the very model for Cuban reactions.

The Cuban upper echelon, and the cartoonists who illustrated their stance, clearly see the series of moves and countermoves in these early years of the Revolution as a game of tit for tat. For each military feint from the USA, Cuba would retaliate. The two page cartoon "Pueblo vs. imperialismo: Una partida clásica" [The People versus Imperialism: a classic board game] brings this amusement explicitly into the public

forum (Figures 13-11 and 13-12; *Palante* vol.30 p.8-9. May 7, 1962). A board composed of sixteen black or white blocks, each outlining actions and reactions of the two governments, carries the ideological and political fight into the living room of a massive number of regular Cubans. Not only are the readers shown that this is their battle, they legitimately (albeit vicariously) can join in the disdain toward an enemy who can't defeat such a relatively small opponent. Joining in the game, regular Cubans would match code words to the description of their nation's righteous self-defense and participate in mocking the almighty world power. This drives home the additional point that for each anti-Castro insult in the world media, Cuba would strike back with scorn and laughter, a threat overlaid with the famous Cuban sense of humor that proclaims them still solid in their national pride, not yet willing to bow to any authority they do not truly respect. If the shark of United States aggression advanced toward the island to rip it apart, the armored and sharp-toothed crocodile, or maybe the Caimán Barbudo himself, would swallow whole its aggressor and lick its chops afterward (Figure 13-13; *Palante* 1962, reproduced in Tamayo 227).

That Was Then, This is Now

In the spirit of the 2008 CUNY conference, which looks at innovation and change on the island, I now turn to Cuban political comics currently being published in print and on the Internet. Unsurprisingly, many similar images and attitudes prevail, although some changes can be noted. The continuity, however, is more easily determined: just as the United States and Cuba persist in their almost half-century battle of wills (or some would say ideology), they still sling mud-verbally and most decidedly graphically. Currently the major graphic humor publications include *Palante*, *Dedeté*, and *Melaíto*; the longer-standing *Bohemia* still maintains two page of cartoons. Although *Bohemia's* general humor pages are lacking political cartoons these days, the full-page panel of "Grafiopinión" by Tomy offers a mordant editorial comic each week and often targets the United States.²

A Tomy panel from February 2, 2007 depicts a confused and frightened George W. Bush resting atop a boot, wherein resides a manacled older man attached to a container of C4 explosives, apparently referring back to the December 22, 2001 incident in which a passenger on Ameri-

can Airlines flight 63 attempted to explode the airplane by igniting the fuse leading to his explosive-filled shoes (see Figure 13-14). Over five years later, the repercussions of the attempt continue to complicate air travel within the United States, with all passengers removing their shoes to pass through security checkpoints. The satirical allusion surely mocks Bush's war against terrorism as ineffective and his strategies as ludicrous; perhaps Tomy points out that Cuba's failure to require similar screening measures haven't allowed any successful shoe bomb attacks.

United States policy is ridiculed in another comic referring to the recent debate over the use of corn to produce ethanol as an alternative fuel; an affluent, appearing Uncle Sam is lecturing a dispirited and barely clothed man of color. He says, while shaking his index finger, "Ustedes no se desarrollan porque en lugar de ocuparse de los biocombustibles se pasan el tiempo pensando en comer" [You are not developing, because instead of getting busy with bio-fuels you spend all your time thinking about food.] (Figure 13-15; *Bohemia* 99.16 p.4, August 3, 2007). The United States government, embodied by a white man wearing tails and the usual top hat with the strips of the national flag, is ridiculed as being hypocritical, ignorant, and without compassion for the millions whose subsistence depends on inexpensive and plentiful corn as a dietary staple. This theme also inspires three comics by Pedreira in the May 2007 issue of *Palante*: in one comic the world wrestles a gangster for an ear of corn (Figure 13-16); in another Uncle Sam fills a five-door limousine with ethanol as an arm in a tattered shirt sleeve holds out an empty plate (Figure 13-17); and finally a talking head of corn addresses the United States public (Figure 13-18). The last comic of course is meant to refer to Bush, whose alleged low level of intelligence is the target of scores of Cuban comics. Here the presidential figure not only has the brain of a vegetable, but also is shown as perplexed, by the air bubbles surrounding his head as well as his scratching his forehead, common signs for confusion.

Comic mockery of Bush tends to vary between this sort of image of a befuddled simpleton, whose ill-founded actions stem from ignorance or

2. April 9, 1999-Dec. 27, 2002 no political satire was included in *Bohemia's* "Humor" section, the comics always found on the last newspaper page of the magazine. Similarly, the "Humor" section from issues 99.3 (Feb. 2, 2007) and 99.16 (Aug. 3, 2007) lack political comics.

stupidity, and a malicious—either satanic or Hitleresque—killer whose hunger for power is his primary driving force. Although the latter may seem a more vicious characterization, Cubans may see an accusation of idiocy to be the worse insult, given the extraordinarily high levels of literacy and higher education on the island. Even those Cubans who make jokes at Fidel Castro's expense and seriously lament the precarious economic state of their country are quick to compare their leader's brilliance, knowledge and eloquence with Bush's relatively poorer attributes. Here a graphic version of the ubiquitous *choteo* is utilized to emphasize Bush's frailty or failing, bringing him down a few notches from his self-proclaimed position as leader of the free world. In this, comics haven't changed much in the intervening decades—we see the same jokes mocking a different world leader.

Actual US-Cuba diplomatic and economic relations still preoccupy the news media, although to a much lesser extent overall, except when discrete events provoke official (and then public) outrage. In a *Palante* panel significant for its implication that Cuban exiles are now less supportive of the economic embargo, Pitín (Gustavo Prado Alvarez) draws a worm that, after having eaten through a report entitled “Plan Bush para Cuba,” [Bush's Plan for Cuba] spits out all he has chewed. The worm exclaims, “¡Esto no hay quien se lo trague!” [Nobody can swallow this!] (Figure 13-19; *Palante* p.2, May 2007). Specific incidents aside, the US economic embargo is always a legitimate topic for humor and derision, as it is blamed for most problems that exist on the island today. One of the 2007 issues of *Palante* is an “edición muy especial” [very special edition] that instead of a volume number or exact date is called merely the “número antibloqueo” [anti-embargo volume]. José Luis's cover art gives the reader a cowboy Bush brandishing pistols and astride a dinosaur (labeled “Bloqueo a Cuba” [Cuban Embargo]), who warns the readers that they will become extinct no matter what (see Figure 13-20). The special issue features multi-panel pages by Lacoste, Pedreira, Ñico, José Luis, Miriam, Wilson, Tomy, and Nuez, as well as a few single panels and essays, and the four-page “play” *Cubicidio: ¿Jura decir la verdad?* crafted by Iscajim, José Luis, Perfecto and Pedreira (see Figures 13-21 to 13-26). The caricatures of the politicians who maintain the blockade, as well as the portrayal of repercussions from the almost fifty years of embargo, range from light-hearted to darkly sinister.

Specific contemporary events provide slightly different topics for the graphic artists' pens; the war in Iraq has provided endless fodder for the art of caricaturists worldwide. In Cuba, most of the prominent comic artists have contributed to the criticisms of United States foreign policy in the Middle East as self-serving and inhumanely callous. Many comics seem to blame Bush personally for the war, while others more generically condemn the military apparatus or the administration as a whole. In a full-color cartoon first published in *Dedeté*, Lázaro Miranda shows Bush looking remarkably like a monkey and sweeping coffins under the White House (Figure 13-27; Miranda). The triple insult is effective in commenting on Bush's intelligence, his duplicity, and his indifference toward the American people. Two *Palante* comics from May 2007 use a combination of graphics and dialogue to make their commentary. Rafael presents two bug-eyed soldiers running away from Baghdad, as one says to the other, "...La guerra está llena de mentiras de Bush, pero nuestros muertos son de verdad" [The war is full of Bush's lies, but our dead are for real] (Figure 13-28; Rafael). Here the common foot soldiers are depicted in a sympathetic light, as frightened, deceived by their leaders, and placing their lives in jeopardy without any personal wish to fight. Lloró depicts the opposite, a soldier with vampire teeth and hard eyes, more heavily armed than Rambo, sporting a U.S. flag, a skull, and a pair of swastikas as decoration. In the background one onlooker facetiously comments to another, "¿Terrorista? ¡No! Luchador por la democracia y los derechos humanos" [Terrorist? No! A warrior for democracy and human rights.] (Figure 13-29; Lloró). As has become second nature for the mass media of Cuba and the United States, each interprets armed intervention by the other as unmitigated aggression and deconstructs the offered rhetoric of justification.

War and peace, as well as environmental awareness, are two major themes that have claimed attention over the last couple years. The mural painted in San Antonio de los Baños to celebrate the 15th Biennial of Graphic Humor, is covered with panels by several of the top artists belonging to IPEC's humor section, and most of the art demonstrates the Cubans' condemnation of US military actions. By way of example, Juan Carlos Pedreira paints a planet-sized, evil-eyed Uncle Sam lurking behind the globe, with his claws grasping the edges (see Figure 13-30). A segmented, writhing, white tube reaches toward the dove of peace; the impli-

cation is that a technological serpent under US control is threatening the planet's possibility of achieving peace. Pedreira is equally concerned with the motivations behind the series of wars and military actions in the Middle East, as is evidenced in his panel "Chupa-petróleo" [Oil-sucker] (Figure 13-31; *Palante* p.12, November 11, 2007) and animated comic "Robando petróleo" [Stealing Oil] (Figure 13-32; *Palante* website January 23, 2008).

Comparing Uncle Sam to the "chupacabras" [goat-sucker, a mythical monster] of Puerto Rican and Mexican legend is a sign of the growing internationalism of Cuban graphic art. Similarly, Lázaro Miranda's elegantly rendered depiction of Iraq as the victim of a U.S. flag-decorated "Alien," reminiscent of the popular United States action-horror film, indicates that Cuba has escaped the cultural bubble that for some time kept its art and literature from wide global understanding and appeal (see Figure 13-33). These factors, together with the increasing presence of Cuban graphic art on major Internet sites, is one of the major signs of change. As of this writing, *Dedeté* is currently in the judging phase of their Biennial, entitled "Dale un chance al planeta" [Give the planet a chance], adapted from John Lennon's famous line (see Figure 13-34). Entries from nations all over the world tend to vilify the role played by the United States in ecological destruction, and the Cuban entries are no exception to that general rule.³ So yes, there has been change, but the nature of the humor that permeates most of the comics in both *Bohemia* and *Palante*, and to a lesser extent *Dedeté*, has remained a constant. If the caricatures and cartoons discussed here do impart a sort of Cuban "flavor" of humor, would that be the style made infamous by Jorge Mañach, the notorious choteo?

To what extent may we say that the Cuban political cartoons, both those currently in vogue and those from the onset of the Revolution, may be characterized as examples of this genre? The answer is partly a question of semantics, and partially a question of politics. To Mañach's initial definition of choteo, "no tomar nada en serio...tirarlo todo a relajo" [to take nothing seriously...to screw everything] (57) the author adds a

3. All of the entries to this competition, as well as the prize-winners, can be found on the official Web site of the journal *Juventud Rebelde* [Rebel Youth], for which *Dedeté* is the humor supplement. <http://www.juventudrebelde.cu/cuba/2007-11-02/bienal-internacional-del-dedete-2008/>

refinement to connote a habitual lack of respect for authority: “ya sea porque el individuo afirma despiadadamente su valor y su albedrío personales o porque reacciona a un medio social en que la jerarquía se ha perdido o falseado” [whether because the individual unashamedly affirms his own worth and free will or because he reacts to a social medium where the hierarchy has been lost or falsified] (58). For Mañach, the infantile burlesque that marks much of Cuban humor shows an unfortunate inability to understand the gravity of a situation, or in other words a lack of critical acumen and adult sensibility that are necessary for social progress; he champions, however, a humor that incorporates intelligence and self-restraint. Such humor would reflect the inherent desire for liberty from oppression and corruption that plague the island. “Ha llegado la hora de ser críticamente alegres, disciplinadamente audaces, conscientemente irrespetuosos” [The moment has arrived to be critically joyful, audaciously disciplined, conscientiously disrespectful] (94). Pérez Firmat further clarifies that Mañach’s “benign choteo consists in a selective disrespect for those kinds of authority that one thinks illegitimate. Since it exposes falsity and pretentiousness, benign choteo can fulfill a salutary function in society” (68). However, Pérez-Firmat asserts that the “choteo comprehends a three-term equation whose members are disorder, dirt, and marginality” (73) and is in essence a verbal comic form differing from the vulgar trompetilla [the “raspberry”] mainly in its use of language.⁴ Both agree in the privileging of a more subtle and intelligent humor, a judicial and multi-layered wit permeated with irony, or at least parody, although for Mañach a serious and salubrious sociopolitical intent is at least as important.

4. I disagree with Pérez-Firmat in his final analysis that the crass and unsubtle “*choteo* is the dialect of the inarticulate...just a notch above the despective grimace and well below parody, satire, and irony in the scale of mockery” (77). I suspect that he doesn’t believe this entirely himself, and that the extraordinarily clever word-play of his essay is an intentional example of what he accuses Mañach of “self-parody or auto-choteo” (77). A critic as incisive as he would not accidentally include that contradictory equation two paragraphs below where he definitively proclaims the two forms of humor are unequal. Instead, the evasive and eloquent prose of Pérez-Firmat’s essay clearly both revels in and reviles a scatological humor that still holds much sway in Cuba and the Diaspora, worthy and witty in direct proportion to the intelligent irreverence of the wielder.

Both Mañach and Pérez Firmat might argue with the application of the term *choteo* to the genre of graphic humor, especially inasmuch as it contains many examples that completely eschew the verbal. Mañach perhaps would classify the comic humor here studied as benign, in that it seeks to uphold a certain social order and differentiates between authority to be respected versus false authority to be mocked. Pérez-Firmat surely would make the political argument that the Fidel-sanctioned comics lack the individuality or finesse to escape the denomination of *choteo*, despite any present evidence of irony, satire, and parody within them. Still, a close study of personal styles developed over the last few decades could well contradict such an assertion.

If something is indeed lacking in these comics, it is perhaps the dispassionate objectivity of the wordsmith or sculptor who is distant enough from her target to be able to play with the words or the clay endlessly (without any end to her available time, without wanting any certain ends to come from the use of her time). Many of these political comics certainly focus on the immediate and project an expected reaction of solidarity. Nevertheless, a wide variety of humor permeates the drawings, captions, and sparse dialogue, ranging from a slapstick comicity to dry and dark sardonic stabs. Placing the comics all in the same category seems inadequate, although two elements do run through them. However adult the themes and concepts, a childish petulance seeps through every panel. Yet however puerile some of the jokes may be, the undeniable reality of the post-colonialist and economically desperate context removes the reader's ability to judge them as completely lacking in substance. The insistent vilification of Tío Sam and a long line of U.S. Presidents and Defense Ministers is without a doubt a continuation of the tit-for-tat characterizing over a century of U.S.-Cuba relations. However, in view of the current international disenchantment with U.S. foreign policy, visible in hundreds of publications worldwide (but perhaps most humorously on Internet sites such as *IranComics*), Cuba is finding a lot of new friends on the playground. The next hundred years in the sandbox could be quite interesting.

Funny Papers: Figures and Images

FIGURE 1. La leche del vaca



Source: Cirilo Villaverde on the wall of the Tacón Theater, 1848.

FIGURE 2. Bromas de la intervención



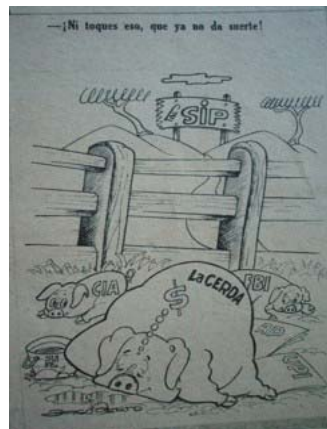
Source: La política cómica, 1906. Found in Tamayo 67.

FIGURE 3. Panorama de un campamento Yanqui



Source: Felo. *Palante* Suplemento “Life en Español” p.XI, 1961.

FIGURE 4. FBI and CIA Piglets



Source: Dagaberto. *Palante* #3 p.XI, 30 October 1961.

FIGURE 5. Kennedy with Baby Rómulo Betancourt



Source: *Palante* Cover, 6 November 1961.

FIGURE 6. Uncle Sam's Brothel



Source: *Palante* vol.20 p.6, 26 February 1962.

FIGURE 7. U.S. Mascot in the Boxing Ring



Source: Blanco. *Palante* vol.13 p.2, 8 January 1962.

FIGURE 8. Girón, Jirones



Source: *Palante* Cover vol.27, 16 April 1962.

FIGURE 9. President Kennedy Superman



Source: *Palante* vol.7 p.X, 27 November 1961.

FIGURE 10. Kennedy: Food for Peace



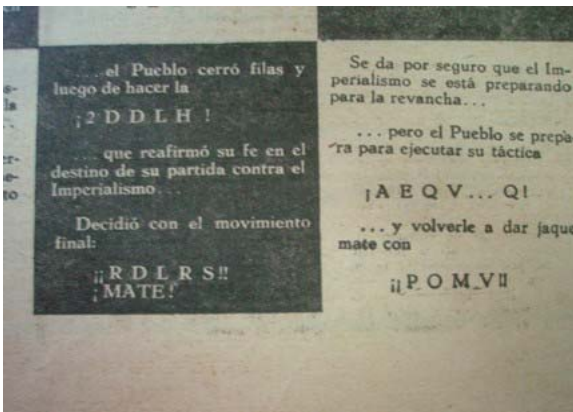
Source: *Palante* vol.25 p.3, 2 April 1962.

FIGURE 11. Pueblo vs. imperialismo: Una partida clásica



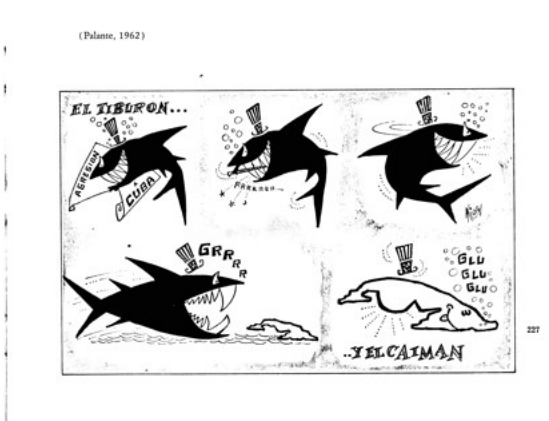
Source: *Palante* vol.30 p.8-9, 7 May 1962.

FIGURE 12. Pueblo vs. imperialismo: Una partida clásica (Final Square)



Source: *Palante* vol.30 p.8-9, 7 May 1962.

FIGURE 13. El Tiburón... y el Caimán



Source: *Palante* 1962, reproduced in Tamayo 227.

FIGURE 14. Bush in an Exploding Boot



Source: Tomy. Panel, 2 February 2007.

FIGURE 15. Uncle Sam and Bio-fuel



Source: Tomy. *Bohemia* 99.16 p.4, 3 August 2007.

FIGURE 16. World Wrestles Gangster for Corn



Source: Juan Carlos Pedreira. *Palante*, May 2007.

FIGURE 17. Ethanol-fueled Limousine



Source: Juan Carlos Pedreira. *Palante*, May 2007.

FIGURE 18. Talking Head of Corn



Source: Juan Carlos Pedreira. *Palante*, May 2007.

FIGURE 19. Bush's Plan for Cuba



Source: Pitín (Gustavo Prado Alvarez). *Palante* p.2, May 2007.

FIGURE 20. Bush Rides Dinosaur, Bloqueo



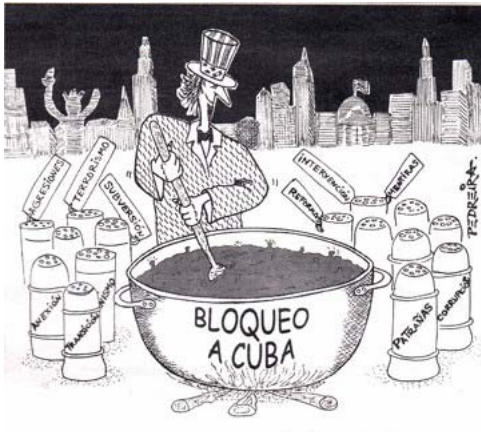
Source: José Luis. *Palante* edición muy especial, número antibloqueo, 2007.

FIGURE 21. Bloqueo (Lacoste)



Source: Lacoste. *Palante* edición muy especial, número antibloqueo, 2007.

FIGURE 22. Bloqueo (Pedreira)



Source: Pedreira. *Palante* edición muy especial, número antibloqueo, 2007.

FIGURE 23. Bloqueo (Nico)



Source: Nico. *Palante* edición muy especial, número antibloqueo, 2007.

FIGURE 24. Bloqueo (José Luis)



Source: José Luis. *Palante* edición muy especial, número antibloqueo, 2007.

FIGURE 25. Bloqueo (Míriam)



Source: Míriam. *Palante* edición muy especial, número antibloqueo, 2007.

FIGURE 26. Bloqueo (Wilson)



Source: Wilson. *Palante* edición muy especial, número antibloqueo, 2007.

FIGURE 27. Bush Sweeping Coffins



Source: Lázaro Miranda. *Dedeté*.

FIGURE 28. Fleeing Soldiers, Bush's War Lies



Source: Rafael. *Palante* May 2007.

FIGURE 29. Terrorist or Human Rights Warrior



Source: Lloró. *Palante* May 2007.

FIGURE 30. Uncle Sam Lurking Behind Globe, Mural



Source: Juan Carlos Pedreira. San Antonio de los Baños Mural.

FIGURE 31. Chupa-petróleo [Oil-sucker]



Source: Juan Carlos Pedreira. *Palante* p.12, 11 November 2007.

FIGURE 32. Robando petróleo [Stealing Oil]



Source: Juan Carlos Pedreira. *Palante* website, 23 January 2008.

FIGURE 33. Alien



Source: Lázaro Miranda.

FIGURE 34. Dale un chance al planeta



Source: *Dedeté* Biennial.

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CHAPTER 14

EU-Cuba Relations

Denis Baresch

Abstract: This paper presents the European Union's policy towards Cuba as well as the European Commission's recent positive engagement in developing a structured dialogue with Cuba, including on political and economic questions.

Framework of EU-Cuba Relations

The European Union (EU) has created a very extensive network of cooperation agreements with almost all countries and regions in the world. Caribbean countries are covered by the Cotonou Agreement, which links the EU to 79 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Latin American countries have signed bilateral agreements with the EU. The EU also has regional agreements with the Mercosur, the Andean Community, Central America and Caricom. Cuba is the only country in the region that does not have a cooperation agreement with the EU.

The EU policy towards Cuba is based on a **Common Position** of the 27 EU Member States of December 1996. This is the founding document. The EU's main aims with this position are to encourage the transition towards pluralist democracy and the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba, as well as to improve the standard of living of the Cuban people. In line with the constructive engagement policy the EU focuses on political dialogue with Cuban authorities and civil society.

The Common Position is a unilateral document of the EU. It can only be changed by consensus of the 27 Member States. It is interpreted and complemented by Conclusions of the Council of Ministers, again adopted by unanimity. A review of the Common Position by the Council of Ministers takes place every year. The next one will be held in June 2008.

In June 2003, the EU adopted **diplomatic measures** as a protest against the Cuban government's crackdown on peaceful political activists in the spring of 2003. These measures included: the reduction of high-level bilateral visits; a reduced participation of EU Member States to cultural events; and the invitation of Cuban dissidents to national celebrations of EU Member States. The measures were suspended in January 2005, following the release of a number of political prisoners, but they were not formally lifted.

The EU Council of Ministers, in its foreign affairs composition, adopts regular **Conclusions** on Cuba. This contributes to shaping the policy framework of EU-Cuba relations. The latest EU Council Conclusions on Cuba are those of 18 June 2007. They mark a change. The Conclusions acknowledge a new situation with the transition from Fidel to Raúl Castro. The EU therefore offers to resume an open and comprehensive dialogue with Cuban authorities on all topics of mutual interest. This includes all areas of possible cooperation: political issues, human rights, as well as economic, scientific and cultural cooperation. This dialogue would be re-launched on a reciprocal and non-discriminatory basis, with no preconditions. The EU also recognises the right of the Cuban people to decide about their future.

At the same time of course, the high-level attention devoted by the EU to human rights remains unchanged. The Council Conclusions deplore that the situation regarding political prisoners hasn't changed fundamentally. They also clearly state that the EU will expose its views on democracy and human rights in its dialogue with Cuba. Furthermore, the EU makes it clear that it will pursue its dialogue with civil society as well as its support to pacific change. It also urges Cuban authorities to undertake the political and economic reform necessary to enhance the daily life of Cubans. Finally, the EU reaffirms its readiness to contribute positively to the evolution of the situation in all sectors, including through development cooperation.

The various components of the EU's policy framework have to be respected by all EU Member States and the European Commission in their bilateral relations with Cuba.

Elements for an EU-Cuba Dialogue

On this basis, the European Commission has identified key elements for a renewed dialogue between the EU and Cuba. There would be three main strands: first, economic and trade relations; second, cooperation in its broadest sense; and third, political dialogue and political cooperation.

Regarding **economic relations**, the latest trade data shows that Spain, which was traditionally Cuba's main trading partner, has seen its position progressively eroded. In the last years, trade with Spain has been eclipsed by the growth of trade with Venezuela and China. The Commission expects this trend to continue. Among EU countries, the Netherlands and Germany follow Spain, although with a less diversified export base. Overall, the EU remains Cuba's main trading partner with 3 billion dollars worth of exchanges. Cuba imports are mostly comprised of tobacco, fisheries products, sugar and rum. In 2006, EU exports amounted to 2.1 billion dollars and imports to 900 million dollars. This corresponds to 28% growth of exports but only a 2% growth of imports. This being said, the EU is clearly losing ground to Venezuela and China.

European investment in Cuba is concentrated in a limited number of sectors, the main ones being tobacco, spirits, telecommunications and tourism. Tourism plays an increasing role in the Cuban economy. Taken as a whole, the EU contingent of tourists is the largest. European tourism is dominated by the UK, with close to 10% of the total (around 200.000), followed by Spain. Yet as an individual country, Canada provides by far the largest number of tourists to Cuba: in 2006, this amounted to over 600.000 tourists (or 27% of the total).

Regarding **development cooperation**, bilateral cooperation with the Commission has been stopped by Cuba following the adoption of the 2003 measures. Cuba's position is that bilateral cooperation can only resume once the measures have been lifted – suspension is not enough. Commission cooperation with Cuba mainly concerned humanitarian aid, food security, technical assistance, and support to NGOs. The Commission also finances a few microprojects directly from its Delegation in La Havana.

At regional level, the cooperation continues or is open to Cuban participation. This mainly concerns a few regional programmes between the EU and Latin America. For instance, in 2007 seven Cuban students

received Erasmus Mundus scholarships to study in the EU (that amounts to \$21,000 a year, for a maximum of two years). Cuba can also participate in the Commission thematic programmes, which complement its bilateral cooperation.

The Commission's view is that there is considerable potential for expanding the development cooperation with Cuba at all levels. The Commission is ready to resume its bilateral cooperation with Cuba, which was suspended unilaterally by Cuba. Regional and thematic programmes are open to Cuban participation. In the future, one could even envisage the possibility to discuss a bilateral cooperation agreement with Cuba.

More originally, the Commission considers that triangular cooperation involving the EU, Cuba and other partner countries could be of interest. Cuba has strong capacity or experience in areas like health or risk prevention and disaster preparedness. Combined with the EU financing capacity and its own expertise, this could be interesting for countries in the region, or even in other parts of the world.

Regarding themes of common interest for a **political dialogue**, the most obvious one would be human rights and democracy. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) would also be of particular interest given Cuba's mixed record regarding progress towards the MDGs. Overall, it is doing well on education and health-related MDGs, but more progress is needed on the eradication of poverty and hunger as well as on sustainable development, particularly access to water and sanitation. This being said, the MDGs could be potentially met in Cuba. This is also why the EU calls for economic and political reform, and offers its assistance. Climate change, sustainable development and environmental protection are other potential areas of cooperation, and so are disaster preparedness and risk preparedness, and the fight against drug trafficking.

There are several fora where political dialogue with Cuba could unfold. First, the Bi-annual Summits the EU holds with Latin America and the Caribbean. The next one will be held in Lima in May of this year and will address many of the issues mentioned above. Other options include meetings of the EU Troika with Cuba are, bilateral contacts with Member States and the Commission, and of course the United Nations system in the widest sense.

Visit of Development Commissioner Louis Michel, 7-8 March 2008

Mr. Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, travelled to Cuba on 7-8 March 2008 for official talks with Foreign Affairs Ministers Roque and a number of other key interlocutors. The visit pursued two main objectives: on the one hand, contribute to the normalization of EC-Cuba relations, and on the other, discuss the possibility of resuming the EC-Cuba cooperation.

Commissioner Michel held open and frank discussions with his interlocutors on a wide range of issues of mutual interest, including political issues, human rights, trade and the economy, the MDGs, science and culture. They identified a number of areas for a political dialogue, for instance the environment, access to EU markets, food security, science and technology, cultural exchanges, and disaster prevention and risk preparedness.

Regarding the future of the EU-Cuba relation, Cuba made it clear that the main obstacle to normalization were the 2003 measures. Yet both sides reaffirmed their readiness to continue working towards the normalization of the relations. They concurred that a constructive dialogue is the best way to achieve this.

Conclusion

To summarise, the Commission's view is that there is an opportunity to normalize the relation with Cuba and resume cooperation. The Commission has therefore engaged positively in developing a structured dialogue with Cuba including on political and economic questions. Of course, things remain at a very preliminary stage. Much will depend on further discussions with Cuba and the next review of the EU Common Position, which is expected to take place in June-July 2008.

CHAPTER 15

Cuba's Medical Diplomacy

Julie M. Feinsilver

Abstract: Medical diplomacy, the collaboration between countries to improve relations and simultaneously produce health benefits, is a form of soft power that has major benefits for both countries involved and should be seen as a model for international relations. Cuba has adeptly used medical diplomacy since 1960 to garner symbolic capital (prestige, good will, and influence) way beyond what would otherwise have been possible for a small, developing country. This has helped cement Cuba's role as a player on the world stage. In the twenty-first century, Cuba's medical diplomacy has provided considerable material capital (aid, credit and trade) that has been crucial to keeping its economy afloat. Cuban medical diplomacy also poses a threat to the status quo in health service delivery and forces the re-examination of societal values. This paper will discuss why and how Cuba has conducted medical diplomacy, selected examples of Cuba's external reach in the twenty-first century, medical diplomacy as the Cuban threat, and some other results such as symbolic capital accumulation and its conversion into much needed oil and other material capital.

One might ask, what is medical diplomacy and why does Cuban medical diplomacy matter? Medical diplomacy is the collaboration between countries to improve relations and simultaneously produce health benefits. It is a form of soft power that has major benefits for both countries involved and should be seen as a model for international relations. Cuban medical diplomacy matters because it has garnered symbolic capital (prestige, good will, and influence) for this small, developing country way beyond what would otherwise have been possible and has helped cement Cuba's role as a player on the world stage. Symbolic capital can be accumulated, invested and spent, and ultimately converted into material capital (aid, credit, and trade).¹ It also matters because this is the real Cuban threat. This threat to the status quo in health service delivery also forces the re-

examination of societal values. This paper will discuss why and how Cuba has conducted medical diplomacy; selected examples of Cuba's external reach, particularly in the twenty-first century; medical diplomacy as the Cuban threat; and some other results such as symbolic capital accumulation and its conversion into much needed oil and other material capital.

Cuba's Early Launch of Medical Diplomacy

Medical diplomacy has been the cornerstone of Cuban foreign policy and foreign aid since shortly after the triumph of the 1959 revolution. Despite Cuba's own economic difficulties and the exodus of half of its doctors, Cuba began conducting medical diplomacy in 1960 by sending a medical team to Chile to provide disaster relief aid after an earthquake. Three years later, and with the US embargo in place, Cuba began its first long-term medical diplomacy initiative by sending a group of fifty-six doctors and other health workers to provide aid in Algeria on a fourteen-month assignment. Since then, Cuba has provided medical assistance to scores of developing countries throughout the world both on a long-term basis and for short-term emergencies. Not only that, Cuba has provided free medical education for tens of thousands of foreign students in an effort to contribute to the sustainability of their assistance. One must ask why a country in the straits in which Cuba found itself would engage in such far-flung ventures?

Why Do It?

Because Cuba had received so much support from other countries and individuals during the early days of the revolution, the revolutionary government's health ideology explicitly recognized this contribution. It was

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1. For a more detailed discussion, see Julie M. Feinsilver, "La diplomacia médica cubana: cuando la izquierda lo ha hecho bien [Cuban Medical Diplomacy: When the Left Has Got It Right]," *Foreign Affairs en Español: Vol. 6 No. 4* (oct.-dic. 2006): 81-94. The English version is available at <http://www.coha.org/2006/10/30/cuban-medical-diplomacy-when-the-left-has-got-it-right/>; and Julie M. Feinsilver, *Healing the Masses: Cuban Health Politics at Home and Abroad*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, Chapter 6: "Cuban Medical Diplomacy," pp. 156-195. Although the statistical data in the book are dated, the overall analysis has, as Dr. Peter Bourne indicated, "withstood the test of time." Personal communication from Dr. Bourne, Executive Producer of *Salud! The Film*, November 13, 2006.

considered Cuba's duty to help other nations less fortunate in an effort to repay a debt to humanity for the assistance they received. Cuba also has utilized medical diplomacy as an instrument of soft diplomacy, a way of winning friends and influencing people, and of capturing the hearts and minds of aid recipients. This is particularly important for geopolitical reasons because Cuba lives in a hostile neighborhood. The practice of medical diplomacy is a means of gaining prestige, influence, and goodwill (symbolic capital) and therefore, material capital. It also is a way of projecting Cuba's image abroad as increasingly more developed and technologically sophisticated and this is important in Cuba's symbolic struggle as David versus the Goliath of the United States.²

How has Cuba been able to conduct medical diplomacy?

Four key factors enable Cuba's medical diplomacy program. The first is political will and vision to focus on health as a basic human right and responsibility of the state. Taking this to the extreme, Fidel made the health of the individual a metaphor for the health of the body politic. Therefore, and the second factor, he made the achievement of developed country health indicators a national priority. Rather than compare Cuban health indicators with those of other countries at a similar level of development, he began to compare them to those of the United States. This is particularly true for the infant mortality rate and life expectancy at birth, which are considered to be proxy indicators for socioeconomic development because they include a number of other indicators as inputs. Among the most important are sanitation, nutrition, medical services, education, housing, employment, equitable distribution of resources, and economic growth. With this focus and intent, Cuba long since achieved health indicators comparable to those of the United States.

A third factor, and one that facilitated the achievement of developed country health indicators, is the establishment of a free, universal health care system that is widely respected in international health circles. It is even considered a model primary care based system that embodies the ideals and principles of the World Health Organization's Health for All declaration (Alma Ata, 1977).³ Although the Cuban model is far from per-

2. On the symbolic issues, see Feinsilver, *Healing the Masses*, particularly Chapter 1.

fect and there have always been certain deficiencies and shortages, its focus is on disease prevention and health promotion. Moreover, it has contributed to the production of good results. A fourth factor without which the conduct of medical diplomacy would be impossible is the overproduction of medical personnel, particularly doctors specifically for export. This was not just the creation of the sheer volume of doctors, but also it was a change in the type of practitioner. About twenty-five years ago medical education was changed to create specialists in Comprehensive General Medicine, a kind of specialized family doctor. These were precisely the type of physicians that could be sent out to the hinterlands of far-flung developing countries and work without all of the high-tech paraphernalia developed countries' doctors require.

From the beneficiary countries' side, some key factors are an insufficient number of doctors to meet their populations' needs, the mal-distribution of medical staff within the country both in terms of geographic location and specialization, the unwillingness of local physicians to practice where the Cubans are willing to serve, and the relatively low cost for solving their health care delivery problems by contracting the Cubans.

What does Cuba have to offer? Selected recent examples of Cuban medical diplomacy

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Cuba already had a well-honed medical diplomacy menu of activities of great relevance to its beneficiaries. This was based on four decades of disaster relief activities, direct provision of medical care both in the host country and in Cuba, and training efforts at home and overseas to contribute to the sustainability of host country health systems. In more recent times, a key element in Cuba's medical diplomacy program was the establishment abroad of adaptations of the Cuban Comprehensive Health Program. What changed in Cuba's fifth decade of medical diplomacy was the scope of its program due to third-party financial support specifically for this purpose. This support

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3. Reference to an adaptation of the Cuban model to Venezuela in Pan American Health Organization, *Mission Barrio Adentro: The Right to Health and Social Inclusion in Venezuela* (Caracas, Venezuela: PAHO), 2006, quotation from the Foreword by Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, Director of PAHO in Washington, DC, pp. 5-6 passim.; see also, pp. 22-27 on Cuba's involvement in assisting Venezuela in the development of this program.

was either from Hugo Chavez' government in Venezuela in the large oil-for-doctors trade agreements, the South Africans for aid to some of their neighbors, or international organizations, the World Health Organization in particular, and bilateral aid agencies. Moreover, close to one hundred NGOs also provided support to further extend the Cuban programs' reach.⁴ What follows are a few selected recent examples of these phenomena. Historical data are available in my earlier work (See footnote 1).

Direct Provision of Medical Care and the Establishment of Cuban-model Comprehensive Health Programs Abroad

Cuban medical teams have worked in Africa and Latin America for decades. In April 2008 more than 30,000 Cuban medical personnel were working in 70 countries across the globe. More important, by 2005 they were making major changes in the practice and organization of health service delivery in a large number of countries by implementing Cuba's Comprehensive Health Program. The beneficiary countries are as follows: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conkary, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, East Timor, Belize, Bolivia, Dominica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Venezuela. The Cubans also established Comprehensive Diagnostic Centers on the island of Dominica and on Antigua and Barbuda. Agreements also were reached between Cuba and Suriname as well as Cuba and Jamaica to bolster their health systems with Cuban medical personnel.⁵ And, in the Pacific Ocean, both the Solomon Islands and Kiribati have benefited from medical diplomacy programs with Cuba. In fact, since 2006 Cuba has supplied one third of the thirty doctors on Kiribati and the majority of doctors in East Timor.⁶ Although the actual numbers of Cuban doctors and allied health personnel working in these countries are small by comparison with those in Venezuela, their impact may be as great.

4. See Feinsilver, "La diplomacia médica cubana." *Foreign Affairs en Español*.

5. <http://www.cubacoopera.com> and "Cubans to Help Boost Local Health Sector." *Jamaica Observer*, May 10, 2008. http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/html/20080510T0000000-500_135451_OBS_CUBANS_TO_HELP_BOOST_LOCAL_HEALTH_SECTOR_.asp.

6. Peter Boyle, "Solomon Islands: Cuban Doctors a 'Blessing'" 22 June 2008. <http://www.greenleft.org.au/2008/756/39090>

This is particularly true where they comprise a large proportion of the total medical professionals population. It is also the case where they have considerable influence over the type of overall health care programs and system the countries adopt.

In a narrower form of direct provision of health care and with a little help from a Venezuelan friend through Operation Miracle, Cuba also has provided vision-saving and restoring surgery for tens of thousands of Latin Americans and Caribbean nationals, including among others, Argentines, Uruguayans, Panamanians, Peruvians, Jamaicans, Bolivians, Venezuelans, and Ecuadorans. For obvious reasons, this program has been extremely popular among the disadvantaged populations of beneficiary countries. Anecdotal reports abound from various countries on the joy of renewed eyesight, including from people previously opposed to the Cuban government, including the Bolivian soldier who killed Che Guevara. That is quite an irony.

Throughout the years, Cuba also has provided free medical care in its hospitals for individuals from all over Latin America (and the world) and not just for the Latin American left. For example, over a ten-year period, 18,000 Russians and Ukrainians were also treated free of charge in Cuba, many for post-Chernobyl radiation-related illnesses.⁷ That a developing country like Cuba has been providing health care for citizens of a former superpower is symbolically important.

The Venezuelan Connection: Barrio Adentro⁸

Clearly, Cuba's largest and most far-reaching medical cooperation program ever is with Hugo Chávez's Venezuela. The two countries signed an oil-for-doctors trade agreement in 2000 and renewed it in 2005. These accords allow for preferential pricing for Cuba's professional services

7. Aleksei Aleksandrov, "Health Care: The Secrets of Cuban Medicine," *Argumenty i Fakty* (mass-circulation weekly), Moscow, Russia, Sept. 17, 2003 reprinted in December 2003 issue of *World Press Review* (VOL. 50, No. 12). <http://www.worldpress.org/Americas/1659.cfm#down>

8. Julie M. Feinsilver, "Médicos por petróleo. La diplomacia médica cubana recibe una pequeña ayuda de sus amigos [Oil-for Doctors: Cuban Medical Diplomacy Gets a Little Help From a Venezuelan Friend]," *Nueva Sociedad* (Buenos Aires): Núm. 216 (Julio-Agosto 2008): 107-122. The English version is available at www.nuso.org/revista.php?n=216.

exports vis-à-vis a steady supply of Venezuelan oil, joint investments in strategically important sectors for both countries, and the provision of credit. In exchange, Cuba not only provides medical services to un-served and underserved communities within Venezuela (30,000 medical professionals, 600 comprehensive health clinics, 600 rehabilitation and physical therapy centers, and 35 high technology diagnostic centers, 100,000 ophthalmologic surgeries, etc.), but also provides similar medical services in Bolivia on a smaller scale at Venezuela's expense as part of the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America, a Venezuela originated trade and mutual aid grouping that, as the name implies, is an alternative to the United States' backed free trade agreements. An additional recent agreement includes the expansion of the Latin American and Caribbean region-wide ophthalmologic surgery program (Operation Miracle) to perform 600,000 eye operations over a ten-year period.

The main medical aid programs through which Cuban assistance in the provision of integral health services throughout Venezuela is channeled are the Barrio Adentro programs (Barrio Adentro I and Barrio Adentro II). The 2006 PAHO study estimates that as a result of Barrio Adentro, close to one hundred percent of the population had access to primary health care services in 2006. Inputs to the program as of March 25, 2006 included a total of 31,390 medical personal (mostly doctors) providing services through Barrio Adentro I, the comprehensive primary care program. Of that number, 23,382 were Cubans (of which 15,356 were doctors) and the 8008 were Venezuelan (of which 1234 were doctors). Among the outputs of these Cuban "medical diplomats" were 171.7 million medical consultations conducted, of which 67.9 million were carried out in the communities (schools, workplaces, and homes). They also visited 24.1 million families at home, something previously unheard of on that scale and in those locales. Moreover, these personnel provided 103.1 million health educational activities as well. Key childhood mortality and morbidity trends tracked by PAHO indicate net declines in rates during the period of Barrio Adentro, attributing some portion of those declines to the Barrio Adentro program.⁹

9. PAHO, *Mission Barrio Adentro*, p. 92-94, and 116-121.

During the same period, under Barrio Adentro II, which provides medical diagnostics and physical therapy and rehabilitation, 10,856 histological exams were conducted, 84.4 million clinical laboratory exams were done, 808,153 CAT scans and 47,454 nuclear magnetic resonance exams were performed, among others activities. The newly established Integrated Diagnostic Centers (CDI) had handled 886,609 emergency room visits and performed 7.2 million diagnostic exams; and the Integrated Rehabilitation Centers also established under Barrio Adentro II handled 520,401 rehabilitation consultations and applied 1.6 million rehab treatments. Although these outputs do not indicate what the health impact is on the population, they suggest improvements in the health of the population attended through disease detection and physical rehabilitation.

The magnitude of Cuba's contribution to Barrio Adentro should not be measured just in the sheer number of doctors and other medical personnel deployed, health establishments created, medical interventions performed. More importantly, it should be viewed with regard to the effort to transform the practice of health care delivery, the role of community participation, and the role of the state in Venezuela as corroborated by the PAHO study.¹⁰

Medical Training

Since the 1960s, Cuba has provided free education, including medical education, to students from other developing countries. However, this effort increased dramatically after Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998. The support Cuba provided to the affected Central American countries highlighted the need to increase the medical training opportunities for the local populations. This would contribute to the sustainability of any support Cuba provided. Therefore, the following year Cuba opened the Latin American Medical School (ELAM) in Havana. In the 2006-2007 academic year, 24,621 foreign medical students were enrolled at ELAM.¹¹ The six-year medical school program is provided free for low-

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29 and 127-130.

11. *Cuban Cooperation*. Website of the Cuban Governmental Cooperation in the Health Sector. www.cubacoop.com.

income students who commit to practice medicine in underserved communities in their home countries upon graduation.

Medical education was also part of the Cuban-Venezuela cooperation agreements whereby Cuba agreed to train 40,000 doctors and 5,000 healthcare workers in Venezuela and provide full medical scholarships to Cuban medical schools for 10,000 Venezuelan medical and nursing students. During ELAM'S first graduation in August 2005, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez announced that his country would establish a second Latin American Medical School, so that jointly with Cuba, the two countries will be able to provide free medical training to at least 100,000 physicians for developing countries over the next 10 years. The humanitarian benefits are enormous, but so are the symbolic ones. Moreover, the political benefits could be reaped for years to come as students trained by Cuba and Venezuela become health officials and opinion leaders in their own countries. Today, some of the 50,000 foreign scholarship students who trained in Cuban universities as doctors and nurses in various medical disciplines since 1961 are now in positions of authority and increasing responsibility.¹²

Disaster Relief Activities

Some recent examples of disaster relief efforts include a 35 member medical team and 4.5 tons of medical aid sent to Chengdu, China after the May 2008 earthquake and subsequent floods.¹³ Shortly after the May 2007 earthquake in Java, Cuba dispatched a 135 person medical team and all the necessary supplies to establish two field hospitals. The Javanese asked the Cubans to remain another six months to provide primary care since the Indonesian government provided little. Regional Health Coordinator Dr Ronny Rockito told the BBC that “the Cuban hospitals are fully complete and it's free, with no financial support from our government. We give our special thanks to Fidel Castro..... We felt very surprised about doctors coming from a poor country, a country so far away that we know little about.”¹⁴

12. *Prensa Latina*, April 11, 2008.

13. “Cuban Medical Aid Arrives in China,” *Mathaba.Net*, May 28, 2008. <http://mathaba.net/news/x=593555>.

Cuba also sent approximately 2500 medical personnel, supplies, medicines, and fully equipped field hospitals to Pakistan after the October 2005 earthquake. That medical mission remained in country providing both disaster relief as well as routine medical care. After the tsunami in December 2004, Cuba sent medical assistance to Indonesia and Sri Lanka, where again the team remained well beyond the immediate disaster relief stage to provide routine health care. A number of doctors who had served in the post-tsunami medical brigades also went to Pakistan and Java thereafter. In what might be seen as the most symbolically significant case of Cuban medical diplomacy in recent years was an offer to send 1500 doctors trained in disaster relief work to the United States after Hurricane Katrina. The Bush administration refused the offer, which could have led to joint efforts of Cuban and US doctors working side by side. Who knows what potential diplomatic good might have come from that type of collaboration? In any event, the symbolism of a poor, developing country offering assistance to the world's superpower and its arch-enemy of almost half a century, was truly striking.

Concluding Remarks

Over the past half century, Cuba's conduct of medical diplomacy has improved the health of the less privileged in developing countries while improving relations with their governments. Currently Cuban medical personnel are collaborating in 70 countries across the globe. Consequently, Cuban medical aid has affected the lives of millions of people in developing countries each year. And to make this effort more sustainable, tens of thousands of developing country medical personnel have received free education and training either in Cuba or by Cuban specialists engaged in on-the-job training courses and/or medical schools in their own countries. Today, with over 10,000 developing country scholarship students studying in Cuban medical schools, Cuba's influence over future generations of health officials will increase considerably. Furthermore, Cuba has not missed a single opportunity to offer and supply disaster relief assistance irrespective of whether or not Cuba had good relations with that government.¹⁵ This is a remarkable use of soft power by a devel-

14. Tom Fawthrop (in Java), "Cuba Doctors Popular in Quake-Stricken Java," *BBC News*, 18 August 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4792071.stm>.

oping country and a civilian aid program more befitting a highly developed country. Indeed, it should be emulated.

Cuba's success in this endeavor has been recognized by the World Health Organization and other United Nations bodies, as well as by numerous governments, at least 70 of which have been direct beneficiaries of Cuba's largesse. It also has contributed to support for Cuba and rebuke of the United States in the United Nations General Assembly where for 16 consecutive years Members voted overwhelmingly in favor of lifting the US embargo of Cuba. In fact, only Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands have supported the US position in recent years.¹⁶ Since the rise of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Cuba's medical diplomacy has been bolstered by trade with and aid from Venezuela in a large-scale oil for doctors exchange that is reported to have transferred around US\$2.3 billion dollars to Cuba in 2007. The rise of medical diplomacy as a technical assistance or services export business is considered the real bright spot on Cuba's economic horizon.¹⁷

Recognizing the political and economic benefit to Cuba of its medical diplomacy program, in August 2006 the U.S. government formalized efforts to thwart it by offering fast-track asylum to Cuban doctors providing medical aid in third countries. The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program has encouraged more defections and even has provided a reason for some Cuban doctors to go abroad in the first place, many have found that they are held in limbo in Colombia or other points of arrival, without the promised fast-track visa approval and with little or no money.¹⁸

Cuba's own population, however, has expressed increasing dissatisfaction about the quantity of medical staff that go abroad and leave their health facilities and programs with insufficient staff despite the impres-

15. Feinsilver, "La diplomacia médica cubana," *Foreign Affairs*.

16. http://secap480.un.org/search?ie=utf8&site=un_org&output=xml_no_dtd&client=UN_Website_English&num=10&proxystylesheet=UN_Website&oe=utf8&q=vote+on+US+embargo+of+Cuba&Submit=Search.

17. Remarks by Carmelo Mesa-Lago at the CUNY Conference, "A Changing Cuba in a Changing World."

18. Mike Ceasar, "Cuban Doctors Abroad Helped to Defect by New U.S. Visa Policy," *World Politics Review* (August 1, 2007).

sive ratio of doctors to population. This is particularly acute because of the massive deployment of family doctors to Venezuela as well as other countries. Ironically, Venezuelans also began to complain about the same issue when a number of Cuban doctors were redeployed to Bolivia. Populations that quickly grow accustomed to having easily accessible doctors on their blocks or at least in their communities have had rising expectations about their access to health services. Their unfulfilled expectations could lead to de-legitimization of the state. For this reason as well as more altruistic health concerns, Raúl Castro announced in April a revamping of Cuba's family doctor program to make it more efficient and effective.

Cuban medical diplomacy is a great benefit to the recipient countries, but also a threat. The threat lies in the fact that Cuban doctors serve the poor in areas in which no local doctor would work, make house calls a routine part of their medical practice, and are available free of charge 24/7. Because they do a diagnosis of the community and treat patients as a whole person living and working in a specific environment rather than just clinically and as a specific problem or a body part, they get to know their patients better. This more familiar approach is changing expectations as well as the nature of doctor-patient relations in the host countries. As a result, Cuban medical diplomacy has forced the re-examination of societal values and the structure and functioning of the health systems and the medical profession within the countries to which they were sent and where they continue to practice. In some cases, such as in Bolivia and Venezuela, this threat has resulted in strikes and other protest actions by the local medical associations as they are threatened by these changes as well as what they perceive to be competition for their jobs. As Cuba's assistance concentrates more on the implementation of some adaptation of their own health service delivery model, the threat will become more widespread.

Since the outset of the Cuban revolution, the government has skillfully utilized medical diplomacy to capture the hearts and minds of aid recipients. Medical diplomacy has been a critical means of projecting Cuba's image abroad as an increasingly more developed and technologically sophisticated country. It thereby gained prestige and goodwill (symbolic capital), which has been translated into diplomatic support at United Nations agencies and elsewhere. This symbolic capital has been parlayed into a very lucrative trade deal with Venezuela (material capital), among

others, including various oil-producing Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, this use of soft power has allowed Cuba to maintain a presence on the world stage much greater than its socioeconomic status would suggest.

CHAPTER 16

Rethinking Socialism in Today's Latin America

Ted Goertzel

Abstract: Four models of "socialism" are current in Latin America today: Chilean social democracy, Cuban revolutionary socialism, socialism as self-management, and the ill-defined "twenty-first century socialism" espoused by Hugo Chávez. The best known theorist of "twenty-first century socialism" is Heinz Dieterich who believes that computers will make it possible to realize a utopian vision that failed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But computers do not solve a fundamental difficulty with the utopian vision: a lack of material incentives for work and investment. Social democracy is the hegemonic vision in Latin America today because of its tangible success in many parts of the world. Socialism as self-management, as advocated by Brazilian economist Paul Singer, can nurture a truly socialist alternative within the social democratic framework if its advocates have the energy and resourcefulness to compete with the private sector.

The word "socialism" is used in at least four ways in Latin America today. There is the social democracy of the Chilean and Uruguayan Socialist Parties.¹ There is the still "actually existing" socialism of the Cuban revolution.² There is socialism as self-management as espoused by progressive elements within the Brazilian Workers Party.³ And there is something called "Twenty-first Century Socialism," advocated primarily by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.⁴

1. Partido Socialista de Chile. 1990. *Declaración de Principios*. <http://www.ps Chile.cl/ps.php>. Partido Socialista del Uruguay, *Declaración de Principios*, http://www3.ps.org.uy/doc_ps/dppios.htm.

2. Marifeli Pérez-Stable, ed. 2007. *Looking Forward: Comparative Perspectives on Cuba's Transition*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

3. Benjamin Goldfrank and Aaron Schneider, "Competitive Institution Building: The PT and Participatory Budgeting in Rio Grande do Sul," *Latin American Politics and Society* 48: 1-32, 2006.

“Twenty-first Century Socialism” is an appealing slogan, until one asks for specifics. When asked exactly when he meant by socialism, Chávez told Venezuela's Catholic bishops they should “look for the answer in the works of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and in the Bible...the first book is the Bible, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Sermon on the Mount.”⁵ Chávez claims that Jesus is the “greatest socialist that ever lived.”⁶ But he also says “I am a Trotskyist, I am very much of Trotsky's line, the permanent revolution.”⁷

For Chavista legislator Carlos Escará Malavé “socialism represents the sword of all the men and all the movements who have fought and continued to fight for the liberty and equality of human beings [and] for the rights of the oppressed.”⁸ So conceived, socialism is the battle cry of victims against oppressors everywhere. But what shall these victims do once they achieve power? The only scholar who has written seriously on “twenty-first century socialism” as an answer to this question is Heinz Dieterich, a German who has lived mostly in Mexico since 1970.⁹ Dieterich seeks to revive the nineteenth century vision of socialism as true equality where everyone has the same income. The market will be abolished. Goods and services will be exchanged according to the number of

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4. Sustar, Lee. 2007. "Chávez and the meaning of twenty-first century socialism," *Znet: International Socialist Review*, <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=13351>. Marco Herrera, Chávez: Socialismo del Siglo XXI, Publicaciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, 2005. Bowman, Michael. 2007, July 9. "Many Venezuelans Uncertain About Chavez' `21st Century Socialism," *Voice of America*, <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-07/2007-07-09-voa37.cfm>.
 5. Hugo Chávez, "Palabras del presidente reelecto," 8 January 2007, http://www.abn.info.ve/discurso_presidente.php.
 6. Romero, op. cit
 7. Hugo Chávez, "Palabras del President Reelecto," 8 January 2007. http://www.abn.info.ve/discurso_presidente.php.
 8. Carlos Escarrá Malavé, "Presentación: A manera de diálogo con el autor," in Heinz Dieterich, *Hugo Chávez y el Socialismo del Siglo XXI*, Segunda Edición revisada y ampliada. Edición Digital, 2007, p. XXIX. <http://www.rebellion.org/docs/55395.pdf>.
 9. Heinz Dieterich, *Hugo Chávez y el Socialismo del Siglo XXI*, Segunda Edición Revisada y Ampliada. Edición Digital, 2007, p. 2. <http://www.rebellion.org/docs/55395.pdf>. Dieterich, Heinz. *El Socialismo del Siglo XXI*. 2002. <http://www.rebellion.org/dieterich/dieterich070802.pdf>.

labor hours it takes to produce them, not according to supply and demand. Dieterich believes that socialism failed in Eastern Europe because its leaders were unable to realize these ideals.

These ideals inspired early utopian socialist communities. They inspired works of fiction such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, one of the most influential books of the nineteenth century. They have been put into place, with mixed success, by the Israeli kibbutzim, by landless workers' settlements in Brazil, and by Mennonite settlers in the Paraguayan Chaco. But nineteenth and twentieth century socialists never made this model work in an entire society. Why should it be possible now?

Because, Dieterich says, now we have computers. Dieterich adopts the argument of European thinkers Arno Peters, Konrad Zuse, Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell that modern digital computers make it possible to efficiently manage a complex planned economy without market mechanisms.¹⁰ Critics argue that the scheme is impossible without establishing a market in "labor coupons" which would have the same defects as financial markets.¹¹ Cockshott and Cottrell's own computations show that "market prices are well correlated with the sum of direct and indirect labour content," so it is not even clear that valuing things in this way would change prices much.¹²

The Achilles heel of this vision is the lack of material incentives. Put into practice, it can easily degenerate into a system where, as Soviet workers used to say, "We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us." Another stumbling block is its resistance to change and innovation. Deci-

10. Cockshott, Paul and Allin Cottrell, *Towards a New Socialism*. London: Spokesman Books, 1993. Dieterich, Heinz. *El Socialismo del Siglo XXI*. 2002. <http://www.rebelion.org/dieterich/dieterich070802.pdf>. Peters, Arno. Was ist und wie verwirklicht sich Computer-Sozialismus: Gespräche mit Konrad Zuse. Verlag Neues Leben, Berlin 2000. Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, *Towards a New Socialism*, 1993 and later editions. Free download at: http://www.ecn.wfu.edu/~cottrell/socialism_book/.

11. Len Brewster, "Review Essay on Towards a New Socialism," *The Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*, Vol 7, No 1, Spring 2004, pp. 65-77. http://mm.mises.org/journals/qjae/pdf/qjae7_1_6.pdf.

12. Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, "Labour time versus alternative value bases: a research note," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Vol 21, No 4, pp. 545-549. <http://cje.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/21/4/545>.

sions about investment in new products or improved technology must be made by a government bureaucracy or a political body, instead of by venture capitalists. Bureaucrats and politicians tend to be risk-averse. Neither of these problems can be resolved by using computers.

Venezuelan Defense Minister Raúl Isaías Baduel wrote a prolog to Dieterich's book in which he urged Venezuelan intellectuals to take up President Chávez's challenge to "invent the socialism of the twenty-first century." But he didn't see it happening. He asked "where are the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of mathematicians, statisticians, economists, systems engineers, programmers, and information systems experts, committed to socialist ideology and with the change to a system different from capitalism, who will form the central planning team that will have the formidable and enormous mission of replacing nothing more and nothing less than the market and the businessmen?"¹³

Baduel soon became disillusioned. He opposed "state capitalism" which he believed is what failed in Eastern Europe and called for a socialism that respected "bourgeois" concepts such as the division of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Within a few months of his resignation, he broke with Chávez and with the concept of "socialism" altogether, concluding that a socialist state is contrary to the Christian view of society because "it grants the state absolute control over the people it governs."¹⁴

Heinz Dieterich has little to say about the politics of twenty-first century socialism, although at some points he refers to it as a form of participatory democracy. Hugo Chávez talks about "participatory and protagonistic" democracy, which apparently means rule by social movements and activist organizations instead of by formal state institutions. His primary thrust has been to increase his personal power and the power of social movements loyal to him. He claimed to be moving to fully implement socialism in 2007, defining it not in economic terms but by five steps to give him and his movement a monopoly on political power.¹⁵

13. Baduel, op cit., p. XII.

14. Raúl Isaías Baudel, "Why I Parted Ways With Chávez," *New York Times*, December 1, 2007.

The defeat of the December, 2007, referendum to “reform” the constitution was a setback to this agenda, and public opposition to Chávez's plans is stiff among college students and the middle classes.¹⁶ The opposition is fueled by Chávez's threats to democratic legality and press freedoms and by food shortages and other economic problems caused by attempts to control supermarket prices by administrative fiat.

Participatory democracy is an attractive and important idea, but not a new one. It has been tried in Yugoslavia under Tito, in the Mondrón cooperatives in Spain, and in cooperatives in Israel and around the world. Brazilian economist Paul Singer is perhaps the leading Latin American theorist of socialism as self-management, and he is working to implement it within the Lula da Silva government. The Brazilian Workers Party followed Singer's thinking in adopting “Socialism” as its guiding theme at its Third National Congress in August, 2007. The Party document includes considerable anti-capitalist rhetoric and nostalgic references to the Party's militant past. It emphasizes that “the challenge which confronts us in this new century is to reconstruct a socialist alternative with liberty,” and that this must involve “construction of a new economy in which economic growth and the redistribution of income will live together harmoniously.”¹⁷

The Workers Party platform defines “socialism” as a system with competitive multiparty elections, full respect for human rights, and a mixture of private, cooperative and state ownership of property. Paul Singer insists that every citizen has the right to organize his or her economic activities as he or she chooses, with only slavery and indentured servitude prohibited. He recognizes that: “the socialist economy will probably suffer (for how long no one knows) competition with other modes of production. It will be permanently challenged to demonstrate its superiority in terms of self-realization of products and satisfaction of consumers. This

15. Ángel E. Álvarez. 2007. "Venezuela 2007: los motores del socialismo se alimentan con petróleo," *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Volumen Especial, pp. 265-289. <http://www.scielo.cl/pdf/revcipol/v27nEsp/art16.pdf>.

16. *The Economist*, "The Wind Goes Out of the Election," December 6, 2007. http://www.economist.com/world/la/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10251226.

17. *Partido dos Trabalhadores*. Socialismo. 3o Congresso do PT. August 2007. http://www.pt.org.br/sitept/index_files/fotos/file/Socialismo%20Petista.zip.

leads to the conclusion that the struggle for socialism will never cease. If this is the price which socialists must pay to be democrats, I venture to say that it is not too much."¹⁸

Heinz Dieterich has not yet been able to publish his book in Cuba, and he denounces Cuban social science for its lack of imagination.¹⁹ Cuban social scientist Dario Machado Rodriguez denounces him as Eurocentric and out of touch with socialist reality as lived by the Cubans.²⁰ Dieterich responds that Cuba is not truly socialist, yet not state capitalist either. Lacking a good term for the Cuban system, he characterizes it as "an economy primarily of the market, not chrematistic."²¹

Cuban writer Camila Piñeiro Harnecker has written about the importance of building an economy based on solidarity and moral incentives. She argues against the pressure to introduce market mechanisms in the Cuban economy, arguing that that "the fundamental problem with the market is that it uses mechanisms of motivation based on egoism, which makes it difficult to be able to later adopt others based on solidarity."²² In the same journal, editor Juan Valdés Paz criticizes her observations as being abstract and not rooted in Cuban experience, and Aurelio Alonso argues that what Cuba needs is "less fear of people making money."²³ Most observers off the island assume that Cuba will move towards a market economy, and recent reforms seem to be moving in that direction.²⁴

18. Paul Singer, *Economía Socialistas*. São Paulo: Editora Fundação Abramo, 2000.

19. Dieterich, Heinz. "La ciencia social cubana, Dario Machado y el Socialismo del Siglo XXI," *Rebelión* Web Site, 2007. <http://www.rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=54033>.

20. Machado Rodriguez, Dario. "En Cuba rechazamos la práctica de escribir artículos prepotentes dedicados a demostrar lo equivocados que estaban los otros," *Rebelión* Web Site, 2007, <http://www.rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=53585>.

21. Dieterich, Heinz. "The Alternative of Cuba: Capitalism or New Socialism," *Axis of Logic*, April 12, 2006. <http://axisoflogic.com/cgi-bin/exec/view.pl?archive=144&num=21734>.

22. Piñeiro Harnecker, Camila. "El socialismo requiere la solidaridad y esta no se construye apelando al egoísmo," *Temas* 52, Oct-Dec 2007.

23. Juan Valdés Paz, "Notas sobre otras notas y el socialismo del futuro," "El socialismo requiere la solidaridad y esta no se construye apelando al egoísmo," *Temas* 52, Oct-Dec 2007. Interview with Aurelio Alonso by Manuel Alberto Ramy, *Temas* 52, Oct-Dec 2007.

Meanwhile, the Chilean Socialists have fully accepted market economics. Two of the most prominent leaders from the Allende era, Carlos Altamirano and Erich Schnake, have written thoughtful autobiographical works about their reasons for abandoning revolutionary socialism for social democracy.²⁵ They see no need to change the name of their Party, but they define “socialism” as a market economy with a strong interventionist state to distribute benefits to the poor. In Brazil, several prominent Workers Party leaders close to Lula da Silva, including José Dirceu and José Genoíno, have gone through similar changes in their views.²⁶ Lula himself recently created a stir by telling critics he is not a “socialist” but a “social democrat.”²⁷

Social democracy is the hegemonic alternative for Latin America in the twenty-first century. It has successfully combined economic growth with progressive social programs and respect for human rights in many parts of the world. Truly socialist enterprises are free to grow within the framework of social democracy, so long as participation is voluntary. Some of the landless farmers’ settlements in Brazil have set up communal systems where produce is shared equally within the community. The Brazilian government encourages workers’ cooperatives with tax subsidies and exemption from some of the rigidity of Brazilian employment law. These are small-scale enterprises, and individuals who do not choose to participate are free to seek employment in the market economy or in government agencies.

24. Marifeli Pérez-Stable. 2007. *Looking Forward: Comparative Perspectives on Cuba's Transition*. University of Notre Dame Press

25. Altamirano, Carlos. *Dialéctica de una Derrota*. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno. 1977. Altamirano, Carlos and Hernán Dinamarca. *Después de Todo*. Santiago: Ediciones B Chile. 2000. Schanake, Erich. 2004. Schnake: *Un Socialista con Historia*. Santiago de Chile: Aguilar, 2004.

26. There's a Place for All Kinds of Socialists at Brazil's Power Table, "Brazil Magazine, January 20, 2008. <http://www.brazzil.com/content/view/10031/1/>." Genoíno's Path from Guerrilla to Socialist Lite in Brazil's Congress," *Brazzil Magazine*, November 14, 2007. <http://www.brazzil.com/content/view/9998/1/>

27. *La Jornada*, "Lula genera malestar tras afirmar que a cierta edad ya no se es de izquierda," December 14, 2006. <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/12/14/index.php?section=mundo&article=037n1mun>.

Hugo Chávez's government has spent billions of dollars supporting a large number of cooperatives and other alternative enterprises, reportedly employing more than 5% of the labor force as of 2006.²⁸ If these are successful, they could provide a long-term basis for developing non-market alternatives. Betsy Brown and Bob Stone argue that they have the potential to fulfill a number of the aims of the Bolivarian revolution, including combating unemployment, promoting durable economic development, competing peacefully with conventional capitalist firms, and advancing Chávez's still-being-defined socialism."²⁹

But they also note many problems. The cooperatives are dependent on government grants, paid for with money generated by the global market for petroleum. Some people set up phantom cooperatives just to get the grants. Some enterprises are listed as coops on paper, but function as traditional enterprises with hierarchies and unequal salaries. Giving poor people loans to start small private businesses may be a more successful strategy.³⁰

Building socialist enterprises that can compete in a free economy is a task that requires entrepreneurial drive and talent. Dedicating one's energy to building a collective enterprise, instead of to getting rich in private business, requires revolutionary enthusiasm. But revolutions are better at destroying oppressive systems than at building new ones. No one shouts "participatory management or death!" If socialism is to thrive in the twenty-first century it needs more than computers. It needs to be able to attract people who could be working anywhere.

28. Betsy Bowman and Bob Stone, "Venezuela's Cooperative Revolution," *Dollars and Sense: the Magazine of Economic Justice*, 2006. <http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2006/0706bowmanstone.html>.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Muahmmad Yunus, *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism*. New York: Public Affairs, 2008.

CHAPTER 17

A Contribution to the Assessment of a Changing Cuba

Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir

Abstract: This paper examines Cuba in the context of broader global realities affecting the lives of the vast majorities. Using the UN Millennium Development Goals data as a base, the study traces the historical and ideological underpinnings which determine the indicators displayed by Cuba in terms of material well being. It also applies a comparative approach with other Latin American countries to contrast overall direction and impact of policies taken during times of crisis, as a measure of the actual orientation of a given government and the guiding vision for the practices it pursues and implements.

A Changing Cuba in a Changing World, the title for this conference, provides the only accurate framework for assessing Cuba's complex and often contradictory realities. It is in the context of those defining the world at large, that the realities specific to Cuba can become ultimately significant. What are the most salient features of the changing world and of a changing Cuba? What are some determining factors shaping them? In the case of Cuba, the supporting evidence for my assessment stems from a two-fold empirical base: 1) Indicators and statistics provided by major international organizations, and 2) direct observations and tracking of data made possible by years of leading a program of cross-disciplinary research conducted in Cuba by Tufts graduate students in fields ranging from health, education and the environment to culture and governance. This work has allowed me broad exposure to multiple spheres of Cuban society as well as to specialized scholarly and technical literature combined with and tested against direct observation of actual practices *in situ*. Although I have also compiled a wealth of incidental evidence, I rely, for my assessment, only on data with enough prevalence as to constitute distinctly significant patterns.

As for the broad and overarching state of the changing world, I base the assessment on the most reliable and far reaching corpus of demonstra-

ble data available today: The one compiled by the UN under the Millennium Development Goals initiative. Articulated in 2000 and adhered to by the UN signatory countries, the MDG initiative has undertaken the most comprehensive tracking of key aspects of human development and well-being starting with 1990 data periodically updated, and with targets set to be reached by 2015.¹ All UN derived international programs (i.e. United Nations Development Program and Human Development Index) and organizations (i.e. UNESCO and World Health Organization) as well as a myriad of NGOs and national and local official agencies, ministries and institutions currently feed the data base for the MDG's broad set of statistics and indicators. Even acknowledging the potential distortions and insufficiencies inherent in the compiled results -and their interpretation through filters not exempt from partisan readings- the body of evidence amassed so far comprises one of the most revealing pictures of the state of the world, its inhabitants, and its environment, and points to realities hard to ignore.

What are the most salient features of today's changing world as projected through that evidence? Representative sample facts from the MDG: 80% of the world's population lives in the "developing" world. 46% of the world's population lives in *extreme* poverty (income of \$1.08 p/day). Half of the world's population in the "developing" world lacks access to basic sanitation. 200 square kilometers (equivalent to the size of Paris) of forested areas in the "developing" world are lost every day to logging and other economic activities. 1 in 3 of the world's urban dwellers lives in slum conditions (inadequate sanitation, clean water supply, living space). 98% of those severely affected by natural disasters between 2000 and 2006 live in the "developing" regions.²

What are the most salient features in today's changing Cuba? Representative sample facts: In 1998 the *WHO* awards Cuba "Health For All" medal for topping the "Healthy Life Expectations" index among non

1. The 8 areas under scrutiny are: eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; achievement of universal primary education; promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women; reduction of infant mortality; fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; reduction of maternal mortality; ensuring environmental sustainability; developing global partnerships for development (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>)

2. www.un.org/docs/summit/2005/MDGBook.pdf

industrialized nations. In 2001 The *World Bank* praises Cuba for topping most poor countries in outstanding welfare benefiting the population. In 2003 the *Food and Agriculture Organization* praises Cuba as one of the few countries seriously pursuing the fight against urban and rural poverty. In 2006 the *World Wild Life Fund* cites Cuba as the only country in the world demonstrating significant achievement in sustainable environmental development. In 2007 the UN *MDG* shows that the infant mortality index of 5.3 p/1000 live births places Cuba among 30 countries in the world with best indicators, and second in the Americas after Canada. The latest UN *Human Development Index Report* (2007-2008) places Cuba in the highest of the three human development categories, a rank it now shares with the industrialized countries (51st among 70 nations in that category). The report also places Cuba as first in the world in the category measuring relationships between economic means and capacity for human development.

What is Cuba, and what in its evolving process can account for the achievements that are in such marked contrast with more generalized world conditions? The question is inevitable, and some key pointers to sharpen the focus and to place Cuba in proper context will admittedly simplify—yet not distort—complex realities. Cuba is a poor and underdeveloped country in Latin America, a region which, after Sub-Saharan Africa, displays the world's widest gap between wealth and poverty. The underlying conditions generating such gap are not new but have been fixed, in their primary form, by the realities of its colonial past and the resulting rigid, hierarchical and quasi-pyramidal social structure allowing the exercise of economic, cultural, and socio-political power from a narrow top of select minority rule over a broad base of marginalized majorities. The end of colonial rule in the 19th century signaled, for all Latin American countries—Cuba included—little change in that overarching social structure beyond a transfer of guard for the sector exercising control at the top. The historic siphonage of the region's wealth towards the development of hegemonic countries, accomplished first via direct colonial domination and later with the mediation of local ruling elites profiting from the arrangement, proved to be effectively served by this vertical social configuration. It is only in the 20th century that this historic status quo becomes significantly challenged through social revolutions (Mexico, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua), national liberation movements in many coun-

tries, and the ballot (Guatemala, Chile, and most recently, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia). Cuba's 1959 revolution is the only one which has succeeded in consolidating and, so far, sustaining a different status quo. Far from being imported from abroad, its foundational thrust lies deep in Cuba's own history and its long and uniquely radical struggle for national independence, emancipation, and social justice going back to the 19th century, and to Jose Marti's vision of a "Cuba Libre."

What were, from the start, the Revolution's most salient features? The course over the past 48 years has been mixed, and the retreats as numerous as the advances, yet two foundational pillars remain evident:

1) The Revolution is fiercely **nationalist**. That means that at every turn and critical juncture it has placed Cuba's interests above those of other countries, thus radically subverting the colonial and neo-colonial status quo by which the national wealth serviced predominantly the growth and development of more powerful countries with direct or indirect hegemony over the region. Clear evidence of this is the impossibility for foreign owned enterprises and interests to operate in Cuba except under contract with and strict control of the Cuban state. This characterized the terms under which Soviet and Eastern European enterprises were present in Cuba before 1990, as well as all foreign investment ventures starting with the Special Period until the present, in spite of the marked differences in the nature of the relationship in each of these two phases. Cuba's Foreign Investment Law mandates that all foreign ventures operate in partnership with the Cuban state, and be barred from owning Cuba's national resources, including land. It also gives national institutions and organizations (spanning the Confederation of Cuban Workers to the Ministry of Environmental Policy) control over terms and practices of production, profit allocation, salaries and work conditions. A very different picture, indeed, from the way in which foreign interests operate in most of Latin American countries, where the recently revived historic struggle for asserting a measure of sovereignty over national resources in several of them (Bolivia and Ecuador, the latest ones) points to centuries-old unresolved problems of dependence and subservience, in spite of (or, perhaps, because of) current globalization and "free-trade" agreements.

2) The Revolution is also radically oriented towards the **defense and preservation of the interests of the majorities over the minorities** thus

effectively turning the historic pyramidal structure on its head. It placed at the front the interests of the broad masses of peasants and workers, historically at the bottom, through massive campaigns of empowerment to educate, provide health, culture, housing, civic space for action, and employment. All available data pertaining to material conditions of Cuba's broad majorities demonstrate this.³ Abolishing centuries-old practices of privilege produced a highly egalitarian society in which -from 1959 to 1990- 99% of earnings came from salaries, with only a 1 to 5 differential between the highest and the lowest ones, something unheard of anywhere else, not just in Latin America, but the world. Indicators relating to culture and education also point to profound transformations, which have Cuba sustaining highest rates of literacy and scholarly performance in Latin America (UNESCO, 2007), and producing 11% of scientists in a region where Cubans account for only 2% of the total population.

It could be argued that the goal of preserving and advancing national interests in tandem with the interest of the majorities is a feature also figuring in the agenda of populist governments such as Peron's in Argentina or Vargas' in Brazil. The difference, however, is radical. While those governments may have introduced reforms oriented towards boosting national interests and the welfare of workers and farmers, none actually changed the prevailing capitalist system of property and the set of social relations built upon it. At the heart of the radical thrust of the Cuban Revolution (and undoubtedly also at the heart of the intractable opposition by those affected by it) lies the principle of *social ownership* of the country's wealth, and modes of production and distribution. This socialization of property, as a principle enshrined in the Cuban Constitution (Art. 14) and orienting the country's policies and practices, marks the most profound distinction between the Cuban Revolution and attempts at reform elsewhere.

These two features have shaped a course not always even yet clearly discernible to this day; and still not qualitatively subverted even by the glaring inequalities and disparities arising under the stress of the crisis unleashed by the post Soviet-block collapse in 1990. Since 1959 the sys-

3. Glazer, H., "The Building Industry in Cuba," in Chaffee W. and Prevost, G. (eds.) *Cuba: A Different America*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989, pp 75-8

tem has gone through prolonged periods where power, sucked out from the base, concentrated at the top of bureaucratic cliques and commissar-like administrators savvy in the exercise of privilege. The infamous “quinquenio gris”⁴ of the 1970s can be attributed to Cuba’s adoption of a Soviet-style organization of society and orientation of politics; the problems of the latter years of the post-Soviet Special period have the markings of home-grown versions of those persistent ills. What is uniquely distinct about Cuba, however, is how each problematic period has, so far, always given way to a process of questioning of root causes of corruption, deficiencies and abuse of power, with broad engagement at the social base in the articulation of adequate responses and solutions to the identified ills. The Rectification process of the late 1980s,⁵ the broad popular consultation assemblies of 1994,⁶ and the current nation-wide debate about a range of questions from the practical to the ideological are a test of the real degree of empowerment of the social base. Furthermore, the recent electoral process culminating this past February, attest as well to the degree of active popular engagement in the practices of national governance.⁷

Other relevant variables become significant when Cuba is examined in the context of Latin America; the region sharing Cuba’s formative character. If until 1959, Cuba had fundamentally the same terms of relations with the international centers of historical control of the region as did the rest of the Latin American countries, the repercussion brought to Cuba by the revolution signified a dramatic change of course. The radical process of 1959 (as radical as the French, the American and the Russian revolutions before it) met the full force of opposition from the powerful

4. 1971-1976; the height of the period of Cuba’s appropriation of Soviet style policies for all spheres of national life, marked by retreats from the original revolutionary thrust, and a curtailment of artistic and intellectual freedoms, and gay rights.

5. Conceived as an effort to “revolutionize the revolution,” it was launched in 1986 to fight –with a re empowered citizenry- pervasive corruption, stagnation and social differentiation brought by policies in place since the late 1960s (i.e. while only 20 badly needed day-care centers had been built in 5 years in Havana, 100 new ones were completed in 2 years by micro-brigades of volunteers).

6. See footnote #12.

7. Koppel, M and O’Shaughnessy, B., “National Assembly Elects Cuban Leadership,” in *The Militant*, March 10, Vol. 72, No. 10.

economic and political forces dominating the traditional status quo. The clash with the old guard so radically dislodged from power was as inevitable for the Cuban revolutionaries as for the revolutionaries of 1776 in the thirteen colonies, which was also placing a new class and system of ownership at the helm. No imperial power has, after all, ever yielded control by choice. Yet the context was profoundly different in the two revolutions. While the thirteen colonies had already succeeded in building a strong independent economic base of manufactures and trade to stand on, no Latin American country was ever born with that privilege, and neither was the 1959 Cuban Revolution. The handicap of dependency, inherited from the particular terms of Latin America's colonial condition was unequivocally exposed already in 1891 by Jose Marti (*Nuestra América*). He also understood how radical the struggle would need to be in order to change that course, and prophetically outlined the inevitable hostility from the U.S. to be faced by any Latin American country seeking an independent path towards political and economic sovereignty.

Indeed, since 1959, that hostility, its form, and its impact, constitute the most significant **external factor** the Cuban process has had to contend with to this day. Aside from armed invasion, and well documented various forms of warfare, assassination attempts, and forced isolation in the international arena, the imposition of the longest and strictest embargo of a country in modern history—and perhaps in all of history—has affected the way Cuba has been forced to function in every sphere of national life. If the embargo shaped in major ways Cuba's early need for allies in the Soviet block, it also defined the apocalyptic nature of the crisis engulfing the country in the aftermath of the 1990 collapse of the Soviet block as a whole. "It was as if the sun had not come up at 6 am, nor at 9 am, nor at noon. And in the midst of the darkness we had to look for solutions," is the aptly poignant description by Fidel Castro himself. The nature of the crisis is revealed in figures such as the loss, overnight of 85% of sources of trade and energy acquisition; a shrinking of the economy to 65% of its size in two years; the decline of Cubans' caloric intake by 40%; and the almost total paralysis of industrial and agricultural production, and transportation capacity. The Torricelli and the Helms-Burton Acts passed by the US Congress under the Clinton administration in 1992 and 1996 further tightened the embargo in the hopes of providing the last catastrophic push.

Unlike times of calm and prosperity, crises are economic, political and social “tipping points” exposing the real anatomy of a system and the underlying character of its social relations. Perhaps no other period, since 1959, has provided a better vantage point to accurately assess the overarching character of the Cuban system as the apocalyptic meltdown of the early 90s and its aftermath. But the most superficial review of MDG charts would indicate that crisis is a present reality most everywhere else in the world and, as of this writing, unequivocally also finding expression even in the wealthy and advanced United State. The global crisis, in fact, yields the most accurate (albeit unfortunate) framework for comparative assessment of the underlying nature of every existent socio-economic and political system. In the Latin American region alone, the last two decades have seen a number of countries at the “tipping point” besides Cuba (Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina Bolivia and Venezuela, to list a few). Yet the crisis’ impact on Cubans and on the various other Latin American populations and their environment becomes dramatically differentiated when surveying the MDG charts for the entire region. As an example: By the early 2000s, in contrast with the rest of the region, Cuba registers the smallest number of slum dwellers, of HIV/AIDS cases, of infant deaths (the only country to have already achieved the MDG mortality reduction target set for 2015), and the largest number of regained forested areas and of women serving in legislative positions. It is also the country whose annual expenditure in social services per year tops that of Japan, Australia and USA, and twice the amount of all of Latin America combined.⁸

What else but the particular character of the Revolution itself --its defense of national interests at the service of the interests of the majority, as a constitutionally guaranteed priority and right—can convincingly explain such indicators? A quick comparative contrast with another Latin America country with its own “tipping point” experience, can clearly illustrate systemic differences in objectives and modalities. I will use

8. *A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective* (<http://www.eclac.cl/egibin/get-Prod.asp?xml=/publicaciones/xml/0/21540/P21540.xml&xsl=/tpl/p9f.xsl&base=/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>) Chapter IV, figs. IV.7 and IV.26; chapter V, figs. V.1, V.2, V.10 and V.15; chapter VI, fig. VI.1; chapter VIII, fig. VIII.7.

Argentina, my country of origin, and one I am deeply familiar with in broad and personal ways.

In *economic* terms, the 2001 crisis which plunged Argentina into near meltdown revealed with glaring clarity the extent to which resources, production, trade, financing and profits have been and continue to be mostly arranged to serve the interests of select national dominant sectors and of foreign enterprises and investors. Not much else could explain how it is that one of the richest countries in the region, as favored in financial, investment and trade terms as a “developing” country could be; in fact, the one so often cited, at the time, as virtual poster child for economic “reform” in the “new global economy—could end up with 54% of its population falling below the poverty line by 2002 while still some privileged local sectors and a host of foreign investors prospered even further in the midst of the catastrophe. A country which despite being for some time the world’s third largest exporter of soy beans and despite possessing roughly twice as many head of cattle as inhabitants, has today more malnourished people than ever before in its history (BBC report, August 2007), and has close to 50% of children between 13 and 15 leaving school because of economic reasons (UNESCO 2003/Universidad Catolica Argentina report, 2007). While the evidence shows that Argentina’s economy registers high rates of growth today compared to 2001 and, thus, is ostensibly on the path to recovery, with a government that is more careful in the management of popular discontent, a closer look reveals the extent to which the systemic problems which reached a point of explosion in 2001 are still very much alive and boiling under the surface. They go on, in fact, thoroughly unaffected and clearly unresolved by “growth” rates, as they are habitually measured. The recovery, in turn, continues expanding selected pockets and waist-lines, to be sure; but not exactly those of a shaky middle class or the growing ranks of the poor, further victimized these days by an inevitably encroaching inflation.

In Cuba, meantime, all economic measures taken to survive the crisis (development of the tourism and biotechnology sectors, opening the country to foreign investment, restructuring of the sugar industry and the system of state farms, etc.) were implemented without ever surrendering control of the overall direction and aim of the economy. Furthermore, it is precisely with profits from the new ventures (be it in biotechnology, tourism, or international cooperation missions) that Cuba has been able to

ensure the sustainability of social programs and the economic infrastructure of the nation in the midst of the crisis. In my experience, this direct funneling of gains from foreign investment ventures not into the private pockets of a few but into the coffers of the state where it could be directed to the welfare of the general population is the palpable manifestation of real *social ownership* of the country's wealth.⁹ This has been one of the most challenging features for our students to come to terms with in their work in Cuba, since it invariably turns all learned logical assumptions about the "natural" course of business and the economic practices on its head. It is not "profitable" after all, in common business logic, to have the maternity homes as well as the community centers, the grandparents' circles, and the schools of Old Havana be supported and serviced by the luxury tourist facilities proliferating in that historic neighborhood, just as the profits from tourist facilities all across the island service their immediate communities –or to have revenues from health tourism and biotechnology ventures financing the free health care of all Cubans.

In *social* terms, the Argentine crisis has revealed the extent to which it is the vast majorities of workers and peasants who are the ones to bear the brutalizing brunt of policies of economic "rescue;" whether austerity measures or structural reform packages. The near total dismantling of the public health system, the system of public education, and social security network has resulted in millions of people left to fend for themselves. The unending practice of road blockages, a daily occurrence across the country, would appear to be, in fact, one of the sole means still available at the grass-roots to gain a minimum of visibility within the system.

In Cuba under crisis, in contrast, there is ample evidence of how in the midst of scarcity the state has sought measures that equalize as much as possible the life conditions of the population, and evenly spread out resources both in the urban and rural sectors,¹⁰ and that measures be implemented to equalize as much as possible the life conditions of the

9. See Sinclair, M, and Thompson, M., *Cuba: Going Against the Grain*, Washington: Oxfam America, 2000.

10. This conscious emphasis on urban/rural equality is something unheard of in the rest of Latin America and has been a remarkable hallmark from the Cuban revolution from the start. Saney, Issac, *Cuba: A Revolution in Motion*, Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2004, pp.35-6.

population. Demonstrable evidence of this: while cut off from all main sources of international financial aid and loans, with trade made tremendously difficult and costly as the result of the embargo, Cuba did not close schools nor hospitals during the 1990s. Instead, between 1990 and 2003, the number of doctors serving the population increased by 96%, the number of maternity homes grew by 86%, and that of elderly care centers by 107.8%. By 2001, the average caloric intake went up to normal, and life expectancy has increased to 76 for men and 78 for women; one of the highest in the Americas. The inequities brought about by the measures enforced to withstand the storm have severely affected the equalizing thrust of the revolution, to be sure. The glaringly growing disparities between those with and without access to hard currency, the all pervasive old and new forms of corruption and individual dishonesty, the crippling effect of functional inefficiencies, are all very much in evidence. So are the increasing signs of recurrent ills from the past, like racism and sexism. The evidence of an emerging privileged sector of smooth operators milking the system both at the production and the managerial levels is there for anyone to see.

The picture may appear the same as in Argentina. There is a fundamental contrast, however, that stems from the systemic differences shaping the reaction *against* those ills in the two countries. In Cuba, over the course of the Special period and beyond, the system has refused to “naturalize” the inequalities and has, in fact, continually sought to regulate and control them through various measures and policies. The rounds of public consultation and debate currently taking place across the country are a self-regulating prophylactic measure organized and encouraged by the state itself. Nothing remotely similar has never taken place in Argentina. Quite the opposite: “¡Qué se vayan todos!” (“Out, all of them!”), the angry slogan against the Argentine government and the entire political class during the 2001 crisis and its aftermath, reveals a keen popular awareness of the fundamentally intractable nature of corruption in the exercise of power in that country.

In Cuba, the measures to combat corruption have varied in scope and in effectiveness of implementation, yet they have been and continue to be comprehensive efforts in which the system re-empowers itself by legitimizing and upholding the thrust against corruption and abuse coming as well from the broad base of the workers and peasants themselves. They

seek to actively involve the population in the fight against and the control of corruption and abuse, placing the fight back in people's hands and thus reclaiming for the popular base its centrality within the system. It is an army of young social workers, organized and empowered by the state, which has dealt with control of theft at the gas pumps in Havana, and workers in the assemblies the ones responsible for the house cleaning in work places.¹¹ The process is far from perfect in its concrete results, to be sure. Yet in social and political terms it goes a long way to deepening the power, symbolically and concretely of the base. Corruption and abuse, *quantitatively* present as they are in Cuba, have not succeeded in *qualitatively* transforming the overall nature and character of the system itself. The case of Argentina, in turn, shows how *qualitatively* unaffected the system remains by protests and measures against corruption and abuse – however *quantitatively* present they may be.

In *political* terms, the comparison between the two countries also attests to potential and the means available for popular participation and representation within each system. No measure implemented in Argentina before or after the crisis (privatizations, dismantling of social services, closures of work places, etc) underwent at any point a process of citizens' consultation or in-put. The overwhelming majority of the population remains, in fact, shut-off from any form of effective control, other than the periodic elections where a myriad of political parties participate, and only 2 or 3 of the traditional ones effectively compete for power. It is well known that even the Peronista party, under the banner of defender of the working majority's interests, can also morph into the party responsible for implementing policies most detrimental to that social sector. As a political phenomenon, the vast organizing drive generated at the grass-roots to weather the 2001 crisis (neighborhood assemblies, soup kitchens, barter clubs, etc) functioned, while it lasted, either on the margins or in direct confrontation with the government and its agencies. In Cuba, in contrast, all measures taken to weather the crisis were presented for citizens' evaluation and discussion in a broad and deep consultation process encompassing over 80,000 public assemblies in work places across the country (January-March 1994).¹² The population had an in-put in decisions rang-

11. Examples of measures through which corruption and abuse stemming from the crisis in the Special Period were dealt with in 2006.

ing from opening the country to foreign investment to allowing small private business practices. Far from being merely formulaic, the consensus reached in the assemblies affected the fate and character of measures originally favored by the government at the national level—for instance a proposed tax on wages which was rejected in the consultation process and subsequently dropped by the government in response. Moreover, the implementation of measures taken continues to involve a high degree of volunteering and organizing at the grass-roots level, operating in concert with the formal structures of power. The innumerable self-generated initiatives undertaken by neighborhood groups to improve housing, street lighting, food distribution and production, elderly and child care, cultural outreach, etc., can be easily verified by any observant visitor to the Island nation.

In political terms, furthermore, it is axiomatic that governments without a base of legitimacy are vulnerable to collapse in times of crisis. The prevailing view of the Cuban government in the U.S. as lacking legitimacy and broad popular support fails to account for the fact that it has been able to survive, endure, and even organize a leadership transition without recourse to states of emergency or harsh measures of containment of popular discontent even in the face of the most severe and precipitous decline of living standards across all sectors of the population. It has not only survived but also its high degree of legitimacy is evident in all the rounds of elections held since the start of the crisis in 1990, each registering the highest degree of participation (around 98%) in a process which is not obligatory, as it is in Argentina and so many other countries, and where voting is secret.¹³ No amount of campaigning from the inside or from abroad for a protest vote against the system has ever produced more than utterly insignificant results in the ballot box, as attested in the most recent elections where only 5% of ballots were spoiled or left blank. In

12. During the first month of 1994, over 80,000 assemblies were held in factories, farms, and other work places across Cuba, where people discussed and made recommendations on measures to best survive the crisis post-Soviet collapse. Also see Lopez Vigil, *Cuba: Neither Heaven nor Hell*, Washington: Epica Press, 1999, and Waters, M-A., "Defending Cuba's Socialist Revolution" in *New Internationalist*, No. 10, 1994.

13. See Azicri, M. *Cuba Toda and Tomorrow: Reinventing Socialism*. Miami: University of Florida Press, 2000, and August, A. *Democracy in Cuba in the 1997-1998 Elections*, Havana: Editorial Jose Marti, 1999.

contrast, in the thick of the crisis, Argentina saw five different presidents come and go in the course of two weeks, forced out by popular protests which went as far as to defy and defeat, for the first time in the country's history, even the terms of a state of emergency and curfews imposed by the government desperate to restore order. There are few other examples as glaring as those, of what lack of legitimacy truly looks like for the representatives of a system.

And finally *in accordance with what set of guiding principles is the changing world (Argentina, a case in point) actually changing?* Against what *vision*, what notion of what the course *should* be, is the present evidence to be measured? That is the ultimate conceptual question on the one hand but also, on the other, the one that unavoidably separates rhetoric from substantive action and practice. The UN holds up the MDG's vision of what must constitute the necessary foundation for human development and progress. An identical vision informs in one way or another the normative principles embodied in codes, charters and emblematic symbols in nations across the planet; Argentina included. The substantive body of **evidence** provided by the MDG underscores, on the other hand, the degree to which stated principle is rendered mostly inoperative in the actual configuration of concrete, material realities affecting the lives of the majorities; certainly of the bulk of Argentines and those in the rest of the "developing" regions today. That gap constitutes, in the end, the real litmus test for any society. The terrible realities prevailing for most of the world's peoples appear, in fact, shaped by principles at best indifferent and at worst inimical to any aspiration to collective human well-being.

And what would constitute, for Cuba, an equivalent body of principles within which to frame the litmus test for its own set of changing realities? The 1956 *Program Manifesto of the July 26 Movement* synthesizing the Revolution's own vision for the desired shape of society, draws directly from the set of ideas and norms already articulated by Jose Marti (*Manifesto of Montecristo, 1895*), and projects 100 years later, into the country's present Constitution and body of laws: Cuba will be independent and sovereign; it will safeguard the interests of the majority of peasants and workers over those of the few through a radical conception of social ownership of property, land, capital, industry and production; it will orient development towards social welfare as opposed to individual

profit, and it will pursue a socially just course by upholding the right to education, work, housing, culture, health, and civic participation.

Measured against the substantive body of evidence in the data available, one can conclude that the country's present course, mixed and contradictory as it is, is consistent with the orientation of its foundational vision, and clearly also with the one shaping the MDG initiative as well. It is the social realities resulting from that course what compels the recognition of not just the UN (HDI Report, 2007-08) but also of an institution like the World Bank, hardly sympathetic to Cuba. Furthermore, Cuba challenges to the very core the accepted norms and standards by which *development* and *economic growth* are routinely measured. On the one hand, there is the model implemented in most "developing" countries where development means an economy expanding, but **in tandem** with growing social inequalities and environmental degradation (China); or where access to the expansion's benefits is mostly blocked to close to half of the country's population (i.e. the Dalits of India's lowest caste) by the strictures of tradition; or, most dramatically, the case of Sub-Saharan Africa; a region which according to the World Bank (2007) has registered a 5.4% average GDP growth in the last decade (even better than the US economy), yet where its inhabitants live in conditions ranked the worst in all comparative indicators for well being. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the paradigm represented by Cuba.

What is the ultimate function of development? Development for what? Development for whom? The answers as they arise from the empirical evidence reviewed would be obvious, I believe, to someone surveying the scene with unadulterated eyes. They must be obvious as well to those shaping the relentlessly hostile and isolating policy towards Cuba. The course pursued by the country since 1959, uneven as it is, still represents an exceptional break from a generalized status quo that clearly does not benefit the majorities' interests. With increasing challenges and unrest, **still**, most of the world continues to be "business as usual" for the sectors controlling the mechanisms for major economic and political decision making, regardless of nuance, with Cuba clearly **still** remaining outside the realm of the usual "business." Thus, terms like *regime change* and *transition*, as commonly used, are most often euphemisms referring to the need to redress that exception; and embargoes, travel bans, and all other means of isolating and weakening Cuba, far from being capricious have a

sound logic: in the context of a status quo prevailing most everywhere, the example set by a lone dissenter is problematic in itself. It is doubly intolerable, moreover, when it not only ends up displaying some remarkable capacities to succeed, but it does it precisely in those areas that are of fundamental urgency to the majority of the world's population: health, education, and the opportunity for a decent life.

So, the question of what, in the end, makes possible for Cuba the achievements so glaringly lacking in other regions is too fundamental to be merely rhetorical. It is, in fact, the only one worth placing at the core of this comparative assessment. Its answer contains, after all, the key to the potential for addressing the most pressing issues facing the changing world, as it presently is. What enables Cuba to perform as it does, clearly does not stem from an economic advantage. Cuba's per capita GDP is *one fifth* that of Mexico (a sister country **not** embargoed, **not** cut-off from access to standard lending sources, and **not** facing the crippling strictures to its international trade flow), yet the country registers today quality of life indicators not only above those of Mexico but on par, in many cases, with the first world. And while in the United States, the richest country in the planet, 65% of black male school drop-outs are not working, and 59% of them are in prison,¹⁴ Cuba, embargoed and poor, is unfolding programs that successfully target the almost totality of youth neither studying nor working, and actually paying them a salary while training them as social workers at the same time as they prepare to pursue a career of their choice in exchange.¹⁵ What enables Cuba to do for its citizens what more developed countries with stronger economies fail to do for their own, stems firstly from the very conditions made possible by a radical revolution in power, and secondly with the persistence of an active political will to continue upholding the principles of national sovereignty and egalitarianism at every critical turn and in every sphere. That is what sets Cuba apart from Argentina and most any other place in the changing world, what determines all responses to the crisis of the 1990s, what makes possible the programs that yield indicators outside of the norm for a poor, non -

14. Western, B., *Punishment and Inequality in America*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004, pp. 60 and 99.

15. The School of Social Work is one of the several programs comprising the *Battle of Ideas* initiative.

industrialized country, and defines the special character of its struggle against corruption and privilege. Guiding political wills are not written in stone, neither in Cuba nor anywhere else, to be sure. The most one can say at this stage is that, with advances and retreats, with plenty of mistakes, and blurred by the weight of deviations and weaknesses both individual and systemic; the political will that guided the principles for which the revolution was fought in 1959 has so far prevailed in a qualitative way at each difficult juncture of Cuba's changing process.

This is a useful axis, I suggest, even for spinning the inevitable questions of "What will happen after Fidel dies? What will change under Raul?" Here again, the answer will have to be grounded in the orientation of the *politics* that organize the course of the material, social, and cultural life of the country, and the underlying economic and social realities. What has happened in Cuba since 1959, and particularly since 1990, can only be understood by focusing on the degree of correspondence between stated **principles** for what society should be, and the nature and character of the actual **policies and practices** put into place in the course of both long time organizing and insuring survival in the short term: Who do they benefit; whose interests do they seek to uphold, put forth, and protect. That interplay, fundamentally political and in constant state of flux and tension, will be what determines in the end the shape of things to come, after Fidel, after Raul, after lifted embargoes...

Part III

Economy

CHAPTER 18

Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourist Development

Hilary Becker

Abstract: Cuba since the early 1990's has made a fundamental shift in economic policy toward hard currency endeavors such as tourism and trade. The shift was thought to come from the fall of the Soviet Union and the loss of billions of dollars in economic subsidies, but the changes towards development of tourism was completed prior to the fall of the Soviet Union. The present paper will discuss the history of the development of tourism in Cuba and the current state of tourism as well as provide insight into the future growth of tourism. The paper also discusses a project underway in Cuba to develop sustainability in tourism growth as Cuba moves forward. The current project funded by the World Wildlife Fund and working in conjunction with the Fundacion Antonio Nunez Jimenez del Hombre and MINTUR will be presented. This project addresses the process of developing sustainable tourism measures as well as development of ecotourism in 4 poles in Western Cuba; Vinales, Las Terrazas, Cienega de Zapata and Varadero, utilizing the Blue Ocean Strategy process, and will serve as a roadmap for a rollout of sustainable tourism to the rest of Cuba's tourism industry.

In the early 1990s the collapse of the Soviet Union started the special period for Cuba. This was a period of economic hardship for Cuba and its citizens and the government was required to make serious decisions. These decisions included preliminary looks at currency and GDP. Decisions regarding shifting currencies to a new peso (de-dollarization) were discussed and rejected until 2003. The other major shift which was announced in the Cuban Economic Resolution in 1997, that called for a fundamental shift in production of the economy away from agriculture towards tourism which could bring in hard currency. This was allowed due to Ley 77 "Foreign Investment Act" in 1995, which allowed for foreign joint ventures to be introduced into Cuba. The law is designed to allow for up to 100% foreign ownership for the first time since 1959, but this is not found in practice. The current mechanism for tourism is through joint ventures with Cuba holding as much as 80% of the joint

venture. Typically, the foreign investment involves management training and capital, while the Cuban partners put up the land, building material and labour.

Through this partnership, currently more than 300 joint ventures exist. In the area of tourism, there are more than 50 joint ventures. The resultant shift in GDP has seen tourism grow from 6% of GDP (services and tourism) to nearly 69.3% of GDP in 2007, while agriculture fell from 75% to just 4.6% in the same period, however, this should be considered with caution as Cuba made a shift in the inclusion of medical services employed in other countries as part of the calculation of GDP, and this represents a greater contributor to GDP than tourism.

Cuban Tourism has been developing steadily since the 1950s. The centralized planned development of Cuba's tourism has been concentrated in the Havana-Varadero (70%) core with other poles, notably Guadalavaca and some of the keys such as Cayo Coco and Cayo Largo also receiving attention. In the 1950's the U.S. congress was putting added pressure on the Crime Syndicates in Las Vegas and they were on the lookout for a new playground if the U.S. Congress shut down Las Vegas. This fuelled the growth of tourism in the 1950's up until the time of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Between the 1950s and 1970s tourism growth slowed, but then started again with the development of Varadero. Cuban tourism grew from 340,000 in 1990 to over 2.3 million in 2006. Varadero has undergone many growth spurts, with the largest coming in the early 1990s following the announcements of the Ley 77 which allowed for foreign ownership following the collapse of the Soviet Union. A major problem, however ensued from this growth in that the focus of the growth was in the area of development of hotels and tourism products in an attempt to accumulate hard currency without consideration of sustainable development and any significant discussion or focus on the environment, despite the introduction of Law 81 which calls for environmental assessments to be conducted, especially when foreign investment is involved.

A common misconception is that the growth and focus on tourism in the early 1990's was the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, however the focused plan by the development group at MINTUR, a group of 8 individuals had completed their growth plans for Cuba 8 months prior to

the collapse of the Soviet Union. The resulting growth in hotel rooms and tourism was achieved as tourism in Cuba grew from under 30,000 rooms in 2000, to the current 70,000 rooms, and planned growth to 90,000 in 2010, with a planned maximum capacity of 207,200 rooms for future development in Cuba. In Varadero, growth is expected to expand from the current 15,200 to 27,100 rooms, while other planned major expansions in Havana (10,400 to 36,600 rooms), Jardines del Rey and Camaguey combined (5,200 to 52,300) and Holguin (4,500 to 15,300). Growth in these areas over the past 20 years has come at a cost due the lack of consideration of the environment. Implicit with this growth, there have also been a substantial decline in the quality of the reef and beach in Varadero. Since that time, CITMA, Centro de Investigacion de Tecnologia y el Medio Ambiente has shown a destruction in the beachfront property.

FIGURE 1. Beach Erosion



Note in the above photograph to the left the destruction of the grass where sand has been allowed to overrun the grass areas to accommodate the easy access for tourists to the beach area, while the property on the right has had little erosion of the beach area, and is limited to the entry location for tourists. This erosion has caused the natural changeover cycle of the beach every 10 years to be changed and has resulted in the destruction of virgin sand that Varadero enjoyed prior to the 1990s.

Other problems which have occurred due to the lack of focus on sustainability and the environment has been the destruction of property in Las Terrazas in the western part of Cuba in the Sierra de Rosario moun-

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tain range. This complejo de Las Terrazas was originally settled by the French escaping slavery from Haiti and settled in this area. To build their houses and farm the land, they clear-cut much of the forest region, causing major destruction to the land. The Cuban government, in 1968 embarked on a re-forestation project which saw much of the land reclaimed with natural landscape, but the underlying destruction can still be viewed today.

FIGURE 2. Deforestation



Today, the development group of MINTUR has major expansion plans for growth of tourism in the Cuban economy. This growth must be done with sustainability in mind.

In 2003, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), working on the initial works in sustainability by the World Tourism Organization meetings in 1995 in the Canary Islands and the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, in a meeting determined that Cuba has 4 major areas which could be looked at to evaluate sustainable tourism. The four areas determined by the ACS were Varadero, Cienega de Zapata, Vinales and Las Terrazas. To this end the current project was developed and proposed and has been supported by the World Wildlife Fund as the principle agent working in conjunction with Transat A.T., the largest tour operator in Canada and 5th largest in the world, The Foundation Antonio Nunez Jiminez del Hombre y la Naturaleza and the Ministry of Tourism of Cuba (MINTUR).

The current project is situated into the 4 poles identified by the ACS. Tourism figures from 1996 indicated Varadero had 880,961 visitors, followed by Vinales with 180,774 visitors, Cienega de Zapata with 156,366 visitors and Las Terrazas with 34,210 visitors.

A brief listing of the locations are presented below:

1. Varadero: Varadero is located on the north shore of Cuba representing a peninsula of more than 20 km. Currently, Varadero has a total 17,306 hotel rooms and is separated into 7 sectors, averaging 47,000 visitors per day. Varadero is considered well developed and is expecting major growth in the next 10 years which will see the number of rooms nearly double to 27,000. To accommodate this growth, new hydro-electric facilities have been built and new infrastructure and roads are being designed. Major expansion and growth is planned along the coast toward the airport and the Oasis Zone. Varadero has historically had one of the best beaches in the Caribbean and has attracted many tourists worldwide for its beaches and nightlife, as well as its beach and marina facilities which is expected to grow to 1900 total yacht births.

2. Cienega de Zapata: Well known for its historical place in history as the failed US attempt in 1961 to overthrow the Castro government, it is also referred to as the Bay of Pigs. It was awarded a UNESCO world heritage biosphere reserve in 2001, and its 600,000 ha. makes it the largest and best preserved wetland in the Caribbean. It represents the largest collection of crocodiles on the island of Cuban and is a natural location offering bird watching with in excess of 150 species of birds, manatees and fishing, both for bone fish in the flats and such fish as tarpon in the inlets and mangrove swamps. The area only has 2 major hotels and few casa particulars. There are 2 small beaches in the area and it is also a haven for scuba diving directly off the shore, including a big blue hole.

3. Vinales: The vinales region is known for its unique geography of mogotes and hills as part of the mountain region. The Vinales was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. The caves inside the chain of hills go on for 43 km. representing some of the largest in the Caribbean and is studied by la escuela de espiologia (School of Caves). The area also has unique flora and fauna with dense jungles and offers medicinal baths for health tourism. At night, tourists can see thousands of bats as the leave

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the caves or can explore the *cueva del indio* (Cave of the Indian) or explore the *Murales prehistorico* (Prehistoric Murals). The Vinales area is controlled as a national park. The Vinales has 193 hotel rooms and 342 *casa particulares* to accommodate guests, although the majority of tourists are day-trippers from Havana, about 2 hours away.

4. *Las Terrazas*: This is a unique *complejo* (zone) in the Sierra de Rosario mountains and represents a UNESCO biosphere reserve awarded in 1985. It has 50km of mountain range within the national park representing *Las Terrazas* and is between Havana and the Vinales region. It is unique in that it is totally integrated with the local population, with the 2000 people living in the park working there as well. The major hotel *Moka* complex has 22 rooms and is integrated into the environment completely. In 2006 it was awarded the National Award for the Heritage Conservation.

FIGURE 3. Moka Hotel Complex



Las Terrazas offers a number of recreation activities including hiking, canopy tours with zip lines, medicinal baths and is controlled by the *consejo de vecinos* (neighbourhood council).

A unique feature of *Las Terrazas* is that this is only one of two locations to be able to maintain the tourist dollars in the continued development. The other being *Havana Vieja* (Old Havana), which is using the tourist dollars for the reconstruction of the *malecon* and old Havana region.

The Project

In response to the ACS conference, the current project was proposed by the WWF in conjunction with the Fundacion Antonio Nunez Jiminez del Hombre y la Naturaleza and the Ministry of Tourism. The main focus of the project is as follows:

- i) Determination of problems in each of the four selected zones.
- ii) Coordination an integration of actors involved in each selected zone and with Canadian Tour operators.
- iii) Determination of effective indicators which can be used to determine the effectiveness of the current strategy in sustainable tourism development and growth.
- iv) Development of new tourism products which coordinate between sustainable development and ecotourism to promote conservation and allow tourists to be able to experience the unique environment that Cuba offers.
- v) Development of a methodology to expand the current process to other tourism zones within Cuba and the Caribbean.

The Team

The project was officially started in 2007 with the development of an implementation team.

The WWF contacted the author as a consultant in the project as the author has experience in Cuba having worked in projects in tourism for more than 10 years and completed his Ph.D. at the University of Havana in development of the Balanced Scorecard in the tourism industry between Cuba and Canada. The author is an assistant professor at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, where he instructs courses in Management Accounting, Performance Measurement Systems, Enterprise Development, Finance and Strategic Management. He is also certified in Blue Ocean Strategy from INSEAD University, France and is utilizing the process in the development of ecotourism products in Cuba.

Telmo Ledo works in the development department of the Ministry of Tourism with 25 years experience in the development and growth of

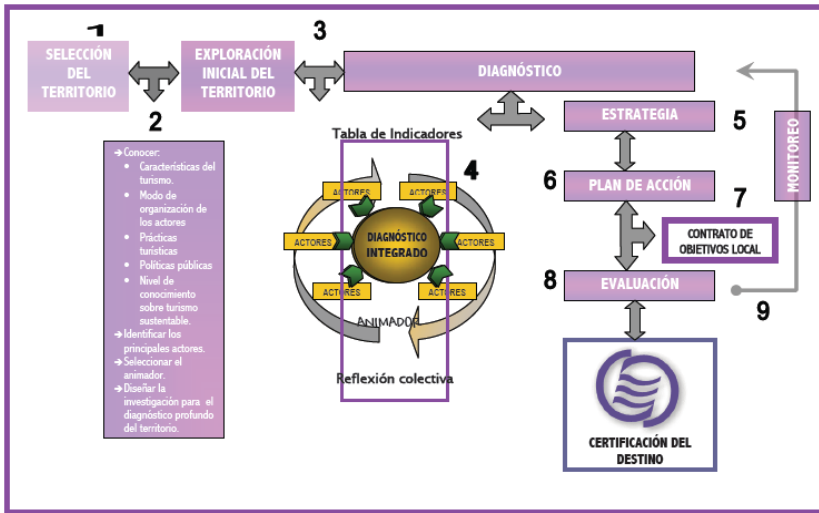
Cuban Tourism. His knowledge of the government requirements and contacts has been instrumental in the success of the project to date.

Esther Velis and Halema Prado from the Fundacion Antonio Nunez Jiminez have coordinated the project and have made all arrangements necessary to be able to implement the project. They have also been involved in the strategic direction and policy analysis of the project.

Dr. Alfredo Norman and Dr. Gisela Diaz, where contracted by the ACS to develop the indicators utilized in the ACS project, coordinating information from the World Tourism Organization, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism, AFIT-GEOSYSTEM and other organizations specializing in Tourism in the Caribbean, and are spearheading the development of indicators and workshops in the current project.

The methodology implemented in the first phase of this project is utilizing that which was determined in the ACS process as elaborated below in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4. Process for Sustainable Tourism in Tourist Destinations (ACS)



The Process

Once the implementation team was assembled, the first stage was to prepare a diagnostic of the problems and issues facing each location. A site visit was conducted with the initial team and coordinated with actors in each location. This allowed the implementation team to see first hand the conditions, problems and opportunities that could exist in each location as well as to be able to determine a plan of action for the process.

Next, workshops were established in each location with various levels of governments, tour operators, hotel chains, directors of national park lands, FORMATUR (the National Cuban Tourism School), and CITMA (The Ministry of Science and Technology and the Environment) as well as police, city and municipal officials and other stakeholders. The purpose of this was to avoid the mistakes made in earlier tourism development and include all parties involved in the process from the beginning to ensure complete and total buy-in of relevant stakeholders and make a coordinated effort where everyone was aware and had a say in the future development and growth of tourism in Cuba.

In each of the workshops, diagnostics of problems identified in the initial meeting were discussed in a root-cause analysis. The workshop was led by team leaders who aided in the process of discussing each of the problems in small breakout groups which were later unified to discuss the problems, solutions and indicators that could be used to monitor the problems.

The following day, the team leaders again led the sessions and identified the need for the indicators in developing sustainable tourism and aided smaller breakout groups in discussing possible indicators. The basis of the indicators, were those identified in the ACS process developed by Alfred Norman and Gisele Diaz. Discussion of each indicator, included determination of whether they were adequate for the region as each of the four poles are unique and require different sets of indicators to determine sustainability, for example, Cienega de Zapata and Varadero have concerns with water, beach and reefs while Vinales and Las Terazzas have soil erosion and mountain range destruction. Each has unique flora and fauna which must also be monitored.

An additional aspect to the workshop was discussion around development of unique ecotourism opportunities which would meet the need of

growth, while monitoring and maintaining the environment. Discussions in Cienega de Zapata focused on the use of the wetlands, marshes and flats for fishing and river tours, Vinales focused on the unique system of caves, bats and animals, Las Terrazas will focus on the undeveloped parkland for hiking, camping and ecology, while Varadero will focus on new opportunities in the surrounding region such as golf courses and water activities, as well as determining the number of tourists per zone that is sustainable, thus leading the maximum number of hotel rooms per zone. Raúl Castro, in 2008 indicated that Cuba would likely open an additional 10 golf courses; however these do have a dramatic impact on the environment which must be weighed in these delicate environmental regions.

As a final aspect to the workshop, discussion around developing a unique slogan and logo for each pole were discussed which could act as a unifying phrase that could be used to identify the region and could be used in advertising as a branding technique to identify a customer value proposition for each of the 4 poles. Each participant was asked to identify a unique slogan. The slogans were discussed and improved upon until a final slogan was determined.

Continuation and Reflections

The major focus of this process is 3 fold:

i) Education of tourists and local Cubans about guarding the environment.

In Canada, the effort to development an effective recycling program took nearly 20 years to change the mentality of the Canadian public. This process is starting in Cuba, but needs to be expanded. The project has an aim of developing local commercials and eventually a program for University for All to discuss guarding the environment and recycling programs. Many Canadians now are conscious of the changes in the environment, global warming and energy crisis with rising petroleum prices. However, despite the focus in their home country, this way of thinking is often relaxed when on vacation. It is our goal to keep this in the forefront of tourists. To this end, the project has an aim of developing a 5-7 minute video, to be played on airplanes traveling to Cuba for tourists. The focus of this video will be on conservation of the environment

primarily and eventually to include aspects of available ecotourism products.

Our partner Transat A.T. is also involved in this process by promoting the project in their corporate literature, including the annual report, corporate website and in-flight magazine. The project is also being promoted on the WWF website.

ii) Development of Sustainable Tourism Indicators

The workshops in each of the 4 poles will be the key promoter of sustainable tourism indicators to monitor the environment and promote sustainability. The indicators will aid in further development of the strategy of the Ministry of Tourism in developing tourism in Cuba. It is not enough to just develop the indicators, but they must be incorporated into the strategy of tourism development, similar in nature to the use of the Balanced Scorecard in measuring and supporting a corporate strategy, which focuses on understanding the linkage of profitability, customer, internal management processes, and infrastructure growth, such as training and development. The development of indicators must achieve the same purpose as the balanced scorecard which is to allow for both evaluation as well as formulate growth plans in each pole.

iii) Development of a methodology

A third critical output of this process is the development of a methodology for the implementation of sustainable tourism measures. The current project is working in 4 poles, but it is the goal to eventually roll this process out to other areas of Cuba, and the Caribbean including Camaguey/Savannah, Trinidad, Holguin, Santiago de Cuba, and Baracoa and the Isle of Youth as well as other destinations.

Problems and Future

In the evaluation of this present project, concerns lie in adequate participation of key stakeholders and the ability to successfully implement the changes necessary to tradeoff environmental concerns against the profits that can be attained by tourism growth. Cuba's government has learned from the destruction of the environment caused by the last rapid growth. To this end, the present project organizers have been adamant in engaging all stakeholders in the process. The process is being led by well respected

international organization WWF and local key stakeholders of the Ministry of Tourism as well as the Fundacion Antonio Nunez Jiminez del Hombre y Naturaleza.

Time is another issue as the project has a defined time-limit and budget. To this end, a key outcome will be the methodology to continue the current work in other tourism zones in Cuba. The recent hurricane season has caused significant damage to three of the four locations under study and the project has moved to the back burner from the Cuban side as the struggle to maintain infrastructure and repair damage is strategically significant in getting operations running.

It is hoped the present paper will be updated in 2009 upon completion of this project, but this provides an insight into the process and work being done to ensure sustainability in the growth of Cuba's Tourism industry.

CHAPTER 19

Cuba's New Export Commodity: A Framework

Orlando Pérez and Angela T. Haddad, with assistance of Frank Klackle¹

Abstract: The Cuban revolution has been as much a struggle for economic independence as it has for political sovereignty. For nearly five decades now, often times under the personal guidance of Fidel Castro, Cuba has pursued a variety of economic development strategies intended to lessen the country's dependency on a single product or political ally and break with its history of dependent underdevelopment. In contrast to the aspirations and rhetoric of economic modernization and independence, stands Cuba's near catastrophic past economic strategies. While some Cuba observers have concluded that the country's political and economic alliances with Venezuela are once again leading the country down the same road of dependence and economic stagnation, this paper aims to examine the more nuanced internal social, political, and economic rationales and consequences of this relationship. Using publicly available data, our paper will present data that supports the conclusion that Cuba has a sizable reserve army of professional-service sector laborers and that the regime benefits politically and economically from exporting this labor force. However, recognizing that "policies addressing one state concern may undermine another,"² the paper will conclude by presenting qualitative and quantitative data that suggest ways in which political and economic rationality may collide to undermine long-term sustainable development and key socio-political values.

The Cuban Revolution has been as much a struggle for economic independence as it has been a struggle for political sovereignty. From the start of the revolution, Castro and other revolutionary leaders called for political and economic independence from the hemispheric hegemon, the

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1. The authors wish to acknowledge financial assistance from Faculty Inside Team Grant, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Central Michigan University. Dr. Pérez wishes to thank the financial assistance of a Summer Faculty Scholar Grant, College of Humanities and Social & Behavioral Sciences. The author also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Michael Cutino, undergraduate political science student.
 2. Eckstein, Susan. 2004. "Dollarization and Its Discontents: Remittances and the Remaking of Cuba in the Post-Soviet Era." *Comparative Politics*: 315.

United States. To achieve its vision of an independent Cuba, the revolutionary regime implemented a radical domestic agenda that included the nationalization of industries and significant agricultural holdings. Although nationalistic economic policies drove U.S. industries from the island, economic prosperity, and independence did not materialize. Half-hazard and chaotic development strategies, ambitious social welfare programs, and legal and extra-legal antagonisms from its northern neighbor dampened the nation's economic prospects. After the failure of various and at time contradictory development strategies, which vacillated from rapid industrialization to agricultural diversification, the revolutionary leadership settled upon a more secure though less independent economic development plan. With U.S. markets closed and the terms of trade disadvantaged by poor credit ratings and dwindling hard currency resources, the Cuban revolutionary regime tied the island nations' economic fate to sugar and trade with a single partner, the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet's very generous trade agreements subsidized the revolutionary society and shielded it from the vagaries of the world market³, the Cubans never diversified the economy and their trading partners enough to withstand the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of their aid (Eckstein, 1994; Mesa-Lago, 1998; Perez Stable, 1999). By 1994, the evidence about Cuba's economic dependence and the risks of such dependency was undeniable.

The break-up of the Soviet Block and the Soviet Union in 1991 exposed Cuba's weaknesses and launched the country into a near economic collapse. The unprecedented free fall of the Cuban economy threatened the social peace and ultimately the survival of the regime. To survive the crisis, the Cuban regime declared a "Special Period" of austerity and enacted capitalist-like domestic and international reforms that stopped the economic hemorrhaging. While these reforms improved the domestic economy and expanded Cuba's international trading partners and hard currency revenues, the pace of recovery was slow and fraught with political and social perils. Cuba's economic entanglement with western trade partners and the access of Cubans to foreign products, people, and ideas resulted in internal and external challenges to a regime that had

3. For a summary of the Cuba's changing economic development strategies see Susan Eckstein (1994).

come to expect absolute control and acquiescence. In 2004, as the Bush administration enacted the domestic leg of its policies to strangle Cuba's economy and the European Union demanded that Cuba clean-up its treatment of dissidents, the revolutionary regime found a new economic survival strategy. Rather than accept defeat and crumble before the West, Castro tied the survival of Cuba to yet another oil rich and politically simpatico nation and leader. Relying upon his protégé and confidante, Hugo Chávez, Castro wagered the economic survival of his revolutionary legacy once again upon socialist solidarity.

Cuba's alliance with Chávez, and the nation's reliance upon aid and trade from this oil rich nation⁴ has prompted debate about the long term economic and political consequences of Cuba's reliance upon a foreign power for trade and aid. While various Cuba scholars have noted the likely economic consequences and long term sustainability of trading Cuban doctors for Venezuelan oil, still to be examined are the human and social consequences of an economic development and trade policy that relies upon the export of people for oil and other forms of economic assistance. This presentation enters this debate by examining the emerging and human, economic, and sociopolitical consequences of a national economic program that exchanges human labor for resources and aid. To accomplish this goal, we focus our attention upon evidence that illuminates the likely benefits and drawbacks for Cuba of participating in agreements that dramatically alter the socially accepted arrangements of labor, emigration, and trade. Recognizing that "policies addressing one state concern may undermine another" (Eckstein, 2004: 315), we consider the political and human consequences of trading labor for oil through Bolivarian trade agreements. To consider these human and political consequences we present preliminary results of qualitative data from Cubans about their motivations for participating in and reactions to the exporting of professionals for Venezuelan aid and resources. Taken together the data presented here suggests the limits of a development strategy that has the state recruiting, managing, and ultimately benefitting from the sale of citizen's labor to other states. We conclude this presentation by suggest-

4. Outside of the Middle East, Venezuela has the second largest reserves. Petroleum accounts for nearly eighty percent of the country's total exports and about half of the government expenditures.

ing that the short term economic and political rationalities of the Venezuelan-Cuban pacts are likely to collide with long term sustainable development and key sociopolitical values.

Brief Overview of the Cuba-Venezuela Alliance and their Agreements

The political and personal alliances between Cuba and Venezuela have evolved into various formal trade agreements. In 2000, the two leaders signed an accord in which Chávez agreed to provide Cuba with 53,000 barrels of oil a day at preferential prices from his country's extensive oil stock. In exchange, Castro pledged to supply Venezuela with 20,000 medical professionals and educators. In August 2004, shortly after Chávez easily won a referendum on his presidency, the agreement was expanded: Venezuela now provides over 90,000 barrels a day and Cuba upped the number of medical, public health officials and teachers to 40,000 in order to help staff the increasing number of health care and teaching centers it has in Venezuela. In April 2005, Castro and Chávez signed the Regional Integration Project to further meld their countries' respective economies by ensuring an influx of Venezuelan capital (the Venezuelan state oil company and bank opened offices in Cuba) into the Cuban economy and providing for the Cuban purchase of US \$412 million worth of heavily subsidized goods from Venezuela that are critical to the well being of the Cuban economy. While the evolving nature of these agreements and the lack of public accountability practiced by each executive cloud the details of the Cuba-Venezuela alliance, public records and scholarly sources enable us to provide at least an overview of the economic arrangements.

The first formal negotiations between Chávez and Castro were codified on October 30, 2000, through an agreement entitled, the "*Convenio Integral de Cooperación entre la República de Cuba y la República Bolivariana de Venezuela*," better known as the Integral Cooperation Accord (CTP, 2004). For Venezuela, the primary export would be oil and petroleum products, while Cuba would offer doctors and health care workers, as well as various health related supplies. Originally, Venezuela's state oil company would sell, at market prices, just over 50,000 bpd of crude oil and gasoline to Cuba. These sales were made alongside three very favorable terms of payment made exclusive to Cuba within the Integral Coop-

eration Accord (ICA). First, PDVSA would offer Cuba a 90 day short-term financing on oil purchases, as opposed to the 30 day program to other buyers. Second, PDVSA allowed Cuba's Central Bank to use IOUs when receiving petroleum shipments. Finally, long-term low interest financing plans were created and could be applied on up to 25 percent of the total value of oil shipments. In exchange, Cuba committed thousands of Cuban physicians and health care workers to live and work in disadvantaged areas of Venezuela (Barrionuevo and De Cordoba, 2004).

In 2001, the two presidents met in Caracas and amended the ICA to include cash payments for goods and services rendered through the agreement (CTP, 2004). The revisions also created a permanent market in Venezuela for additional goods manufactured by Cuba's state-owned companies (CTP, 2004). Behind the scenes, even the stipulated 53,000 bpd of oil that was to be the maximum sold to Cuba was increased. By 2003, the Venezuelan press reported on internal PDVSA documents which stated that this amount had reached over 80,000 bpd (CTP, 2004). To "amplify and modify the Integral Cooperation Accord" (CTP, 2004), Venezuela and Cuba co-founded what is known as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), which was drafted in December 2004. To date, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador have agreed to join ALBA.⁵ Cooperation between Venezuela and Cuba under the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) amounted to some USD 700 million in 2006 and is expected to total USD 1 billion in 2007.⁶ The main focus of the agreements signed in April 2005, were infrastructure, especially in the area of transportation such as air, maritime, and rail. Six months later, the two governments came together once again and agreed on 192 joint projects worth \$800 million. Among these projects was the construction of 600 health clinics, 600 rehabilitation and physical therapy facilities, and 35 fully equipped medical centers in Venezuela with the assistance of Cuban medical personnel assistance. For its part, Venezuela agreed to send about 90,000 bpd of oil to Cuba (Suárez Salazar 2006). In January 2008, at the 7th Meeting of the Joint Committee of the Cuba-Venezuela

5. For a partial analysis of the origins of ALBA, see <http://www.alternativabolivariana.org>.

6. "Venezuelan aid to Cuba expected to total USD 1 billion in 2007," *El Universal*, Caracas, February 28, 2007.

Integral Cooperation Agreement, the two countries signed agreements for an additional 76 projects totaling USD 1.3 billion in 2008.⁷

Today, the number of Cuban professionals in Venezuela is estimated to be between 20,000 and 22,000 (Mesa-Lago 2007). These professionals include doctors and allied health professionals, as well as teachers, athletic coaches, and according to some sources, intelligence personnel and political consultants.⁸ According to 2007 data, Venezuela accounts for about 10.6% of Cuba's exports and is the third most important export destination for goods after the Netherlands and Canada (EIU 2007). Nonetheless between 2000 and 2007, the value of Cuban goods exported to Venezuela rose by 17% from \$4.9 to \$28.3 million constant 2006 dollars (GMID 2007). The value of oil subsidies to Cuba has reached an estimated \$3 billion (Piñón 2007). For 2006 alone, oil subsidies are estimated at \$1.8 billion. Venezuela is Cuba's main import partner and in 2006 accounted for about 23% of the total value of imports, second only to China (EIU 2007). According to Mesa-Lago (2007), excluding service exports, Venezuela accounted for 35.4% of Cuba's total trade, with China a distant second at 14.9%. Cuba's oil debt is estimated at about \$2.5 billion and total debt jumped 148% to \$15.4 billion. Mesa-Lago concluded that "Venezuela is approaching the role of the great subsidizer of the Cuban economy that the USSR played from 1960-2000" (2007: 19).

Barrio Adentro: Cuba's Medical Mission to Venezuela

Over the past forty-five years, Cuba's conduct of medical diplomacy has served as one of the most important tools for enhancing Cuban interest internationally, and as a tool to compensate for economic problems domestically. By the close of 2005, Cuban medical personnel were working in 68 countries across the globe. Over 10,000 students from developing countries were studying in Cuban medical schools.⁹

7. "Cuba and Venezuela strengthen bilateral cooperation agenda," *http://141opccmeeting.venezuela.menpet.gob.ve/*, January 18, 2008.

8. Figure is an estimate based on various sources.

9. Statement by Dr. Jose Ramon Balaguer Cabrera, Minister of Health of The Republic of Cuba, at the General Debate of the 59th World Health Assembly, 23 May 2006, Permanent Mission of Cuba in Geneva, *http://www3.itu.int/MISSIONS/Cuba/DiscBalaguer230506ing.htm*.

The most significant and comprehensive Cuban Medical Mission is the one in Venezuela under the auspices of the Barrio Adentro program. Barrio Adentro is a key component of the social missions—there are over half a dozen missions ranging from literacy campaigns, subsidized housing and basic commodities, to rural cooperatives—implemented by the Chávez government.¹⁰ Barrio Adentro was initiated in 2003 in direct response to a request by the mayor of the municipality of Libertador—a poor community in metropolitan Caracas—to the Cuban Medical Mission to assist with the shortage of health professionals working in community health centers. By July 2006, Barrio Adentro had built 1,612 primary care facilities (or modules), 139 diagnostic centers and 151 rehabilitation centers (Pan American Health Organization 2006, 47). By 2006, a total of 31,439 professionals, technical personnel, and health technicians were working in the primary care network, with over half being Cubans. According to the Pan American Health Organization, since 2003, the program has performed over 150 million consultations and saved over 18,000 lives (Pan American Health Organization 2006).

Analyses of Barrio Adentro, however, have noted some of the program's deficiencies and shortcomings. Only about 20% of the proposed modules¹¹ had been built by August 2007—2,708 of the 8,573 proposed in 2004. In addition, a substantial number of modules in Metropolitan Caracas have been closed due to faulty construction and breakdown of their sewer and drainage systems.¹² Moreover, the Venezuelan Medical Federation (FMV) has repeatedly complained about the qualifications of the Cuban health professionals, and others have argued that Cuban doctors are used by the Chávez government as ideological tools to indoctrinate the Venezuelan people (Forero 2007a). Critics say Barrio Adentro has grown at the expense of the former health-care system and has yet to

10. For a description of each mission and their basic function, see <http://www.misionesbo-livarianas.gob.ve/>. For critical analyses see, (Corrales and Penfold 2007; Muntaner, Guerra Salazar, Benach and Armada 2006; and Rodriguez 2008).

11. Modules are the basic Primary Care Units of the Barrio Adentro program. These simple structures are built of brick with two floors and a hexagonal shape. Each are normally manned by a single Cuban doctor, and a nurse, and in theory are to provide services to 250-350 families.

12. See report by PROVEA, a Venezuelan human rights group at http://www.derechos.org.ve/publicaciones/infanual/2006_07/pdf/07salud.pdf.

lessen the number of patients in traditional institutions. The attention the government gives to Barrio Adentro has also been an issue with Venezuelan public-health workers, who complain of low wages, shortages of basic supplies, and poor working conditions.

The Emerging Consequences of Cuban-Venezuelan Trade

There is no doubt that the Cuban economy has been boosted by Venezuelan oil subsidies and direct and indirect cash payments. Venezuela provides nearly all of the 61 percent of imported oil needed for the country's domestic use (EIU 2007; Mesa-Lago 2007; Piñón 2007). Aside from very generous credit arrangements and reduced prices for oil (Cuba is estimated to pay between 34% to 66% of market value), the Cubans have received an estimated payment of between \$10,000 to \$14,000 per Cuban professional on temporary foreign contracts that are part of ALBA. Between 2004 and 2005, Venezuelan allowances and payments boosted Cuba's tourism and service exports by 56% to about \$4.2 billion (Mesa-Lago 2007). The Economic Intelligence Unit estimated that in 2006, Cuba earned as much \$3 billion from professional services and that this revenue came almost exclusively from Venezuela. Other estimates have placed Venezuela payments to Cuba for trade and services somewhere between \$550 and \$600 million (CTP 2004).

The data from Cuba's National Office of Statistics confirms the economic pay-off for Cuba of their participation in the Bolivarian trade accords. In 2006, the Cuban economy experienced the largest growth rate since the 1994 economic crash. While economists question the validity and degree of growth, it is clear that 2006 was an economically vibrant year for the Cuban economy and that much of this good news was due to Venezuelan trade and aid. Between 2004 and 2006, the value of domestic personal consumption increased by 16 percent (ONE 2007). During the same time period, revenues from the export of goods and services increased by 33 percent.

On the down side, generous credit allowances and direct and indirect payments for services from Venezuela have increased the country's debt, foreign dependency, and fueled domestic inflation. Increased revenues in the hands of the population resulted in inflation that reached a high of nearly 6 percent in 2006 and spurred shortages of goods at retail markets (EIU 2007; Mesa-Lago 2007). Further, the generous trade credits from

Venezuela have increased Cuba's foreign debt. Mesa-Lago (2007) estimated that Cuba's external long term debt rose by 73 percent and that in 2005, Cuba's debt to Venezuela reached over \$2.5 billion. Cuban national statistics place the growth of their external debt at 26 percent.

Cuba's trade of professionals for Venezuelan oil and aid has affected the supply of professionals on the island. On the positive end of the scale, Cuba's export of doctors and other professionals has reduced what arguably has been a surplus of workers in this occupational sector. In 2006, the service and white collar workers comprised 61% of Cuba's labor force (ONE 2007). According to the most recent labor force data, Cuba has the highest proportion of workers classified as professional, managerial, sales, or service workers in Latin American (ILO 2006). Even countries with a more developed economy and a larger service sector, such as Argentina, Panama, and Uruguay have fewer service and white collar workers. In Argentina, Panama, and Uruguay white collar and service workers comprise between 43 and 49 percent of the labor force. Only Venezuela comes close to having as high a proportion of workers in white collar or service occupations (61%). By contrast, about 76 percent of the U.S. labor force, a post industrial nation, is classified in the service or white collar categories.

Data on Cuba's public health system suggests that the export of doctors to Venezuela has eroded Cuban citizens' ready access to their neighborhood doctors. Between 2001 and 2003, the national statistics office reported a decline in the number of emergency room visits from 19,777 to 18,847. Starting in 2004, the number of emergency room visits started to rise again, and by 2006, the Cuban statistical office reported 22,247 emergency room consultations (ONE 2007). This 15 percent increase between 2004 and 2006 was most likely the result of decreased access to neighborhood doctors. A more detailed examination of Cuban government data about medical visits shows that between 2004 and 2006 emergency visits to policlinics increased 22 percent, from 10,446 to 13,394. In contrast during the same time period, annual private medical and dental consultation per inhabitant declined from 5.2 to 3.5 and from 3.5 to 1.6 respectively. During this time, visits to doctors on duty at hospitals increased from 1.8 to 2.0 (ONE 2007). This data supports reports from the media and our informants that Cubans' easy access to their doctors has been eroded (Dorschner 2007; Lakshmanan 2005). Cuba watchers and Cuban

citizens have voiced concerns that one of the major achievements of the revolution, accessible public healthcare, is being eroded by the government's export of Cuban medical professionals.

Contracts and Consequences

Interviews with Cuban doctors and their families provided details about the material and nonmaterial benefits and the conditions of their foreign employment contracts. Cuban informants on the island told us that doctors working in Venezuela were paid \$160 per month. According to these sources, the employee's family in Cuba received an additional \$50 per month on a debit card. We further learned that every month, the Cuban government deposited 200 pesos in a Cuban bank account for the contracted professional. However, this bank account was frozen and the workers were told that they would have access to this fund only after they had successfully completed all the terms of their foreign employment contract. According to our informants, the foreign employment contracts were typically for three years and family members were only rarely allowed to have foreign assignments together. The contracted employee's air travel was covered by the government, and every six months the worker was entitled to receive free air travel to Cuba to visit family on the island. We were also told by our informants that during their time in Cuba, the government stopped all payments to the foreign contract employee and their families.

Most informants told us that they did not pay for their food or lodging, but some said that they knew of some doctors in Venezuela who had to pay for their own food. As for their work and living arrangements while on foreign assignments, Cuban doctors were usually assigned in teams of at least two per location and could be placed with a family or in a neighborhood apartment near a clinic. These Cuban medical teams or household were allotted a computer and a 13 inch television with a built-in VCR. We were told by one source that at the end of their 3 year employment contracts, the team would divide-up and keep the allotted equipment. Nearly all informants talked to us about other job perks and inducements given to foreign workers as one of their motivations for joining the program. They noted that they were allowed to bring back to Cuba energy efficient non-communication electronic equipment and home appliances. While we were unable to see the "list" of specific items that

workers were permitted to purchase abroad for shipment home, Cuban workers who were or had been on foreign assignments told us that they could bring back to Cuba small capacity refrigerators, computers without internet connections, and televisions without antennas or satellite dishes. We were told that the workers could purchase these items in Venezuela with their own money and that during specified visits home, the government allowed them to bring the purchases back to Cuba for no charge. In addition, informants on foreign missions as part of ALBA and other programs told us that they could receive special rewards or prizes from the government for successfully completing their missions. We know of Cubans that after returning from their foreign missions received permits to buy a car or to *permutar* or trade-up to a better home.

The employment condition for Cuban professionals on foreign missions can be arduous and stressful. One informant noted that while the team she participated in had manageable responsibilities and workloads, other professionals had very long days in very dangerous areas. She noted that many doctors were given responsibilities for several hundred families in a neighborhood and had very poor facilities. She stated that her two person team looked after several families in the rural area that she was assigned to and that they attended to all of the families' medical and health needs. She said that they worked six days per week. An informant who knew of several health care providers assigned to one of the slums on the outskirts of Caracas stated that these professionals had several hundred patients in a neighborhood as part of their regular load and that they had to work seven days a week under very difficult conditions. Still others who were observers at a clinic with Cuban doctors working as part of "*Operación Milagros*," the program to perform pro-bono cataract surgeries for indigent patients in Cuba and throughout parts of Latin America, told us that Cuban eye surgeons performed on average about 35 operations per day and that "they seemed weary."

Other sources substantiate the strenuousness of the workloads and responsibilities Cuban health workers on foreign contracts. A study of Cuban doctors on assignment in South Africa reported that doctors' case-loads were heavy and ranged as high as 75 cases per day (Baez 2004). A recent Washington Post story (Forero 2007a) detailed the plight of a number of Cuban doctors in Venezuela and the rate of desertions among them. The article noted that 63 Cuban health professionals sought asylum in

Colombia in 2006, and an estimated 500 Cuban doctors worldwide have applied to a U.S. sponsored program to help medical personnel seek asylum in the United States. The article went on to state that although Cuban doctors received an average of \$200 a month for their services, far more than the \$15-20 they would receive in Cuba, a number of those who defected complained about the harsh working conditions. Some pointed to sharing crowded substandard housing with a dozen or more other health professionals. Others complained about facilities that were so understaffed that they would have to remain in the modules for 3-4 days without going home, working 15-17 hour days and treating hundreds of patients (Cesar 2007).

The Cuban doctors and other professionals on foreign employment contracts have been able to greatly improve their and their family's quality of life. We know of Cuban workers on foreign assignments that received permits to purchase used cars with their earnings. These vehicles enabled these ex-foreign workers to resolve transportation problems and to earn some additional cash transporting other Cubans. We were also shown how some foreign contract employees improved the quality of their homes and apartments. We saw the home of one doctor on a foreign assignment that had been able to purchase new furniture and several new domestic appliances because of their earnings. Yet, another family told us about using their earnings to repair the roof of their home that had been leaking for years. We were also able to observe that the family of professionals with foreign employment assignments had access to better quality goods and products than the families of other Cuban professionals. We were told by several Cuban informants that securing a foreign assignment was a real financial asset for the family.

Regardless of migrant professional workers' material motivations, many of these professionals expressed pride in their work abroad and in their service to other countries and people. Most Cuban professionals spoke with pride of the many people they helped and the families they served on their foreign assignments. Although it was not the prime factor, dedication to their work and to serving others was an intrinsic reward of foreign employment contracts. In addition to these motivations, professionals also said they were seeking or went on foreign assignments because they wanted to travel and know other parts of the world. One informant said that he intended to use his foreign assignments as an

opportunity to permanently leave the country. Media reports have confirmed that Cuban health workers use their assignment in Venezuela as stepping stones to defect to the United States (Forero 2007b).

Conclusions

In this paper, we reviewed Cuba's trade agreements with Venezuela and presented a variety of data that examined the economic, sociopolitical, and real human consequences of Cuba's trade agreements and arrangements with Venezuela. The socioeconomic data indicates that the Cuban economy and individual Cuban households have benefitted materially from the "oil for doctors trade." Equally important, the macroeconomic indicators confirm that at least for the moment, the Cuban regime has been able to not just survive but improve the country's economic prospects without having to acquiesce or even respond to western demands for domestic reforms that could ultimately challenge the existing political and economic system. As in the past, Cuba's revolutionary government opted for an economic trade and development policy that tightly linked the country's future to a politically simpatico oil rich nation. As in the past, the macro level indicators confirm that at least in the short term there is an economic pay-off to the regime's increasing alliance and economic dependency upon Venezuela. At the same time, we presented macroeconomic and social indicators that specified why the export of Cuban professionals is not a sustainable development policy.

In particular, we presented indicators that showed how Cuban sources of revenue declined as the regime focused its attention on meeting the terms of Bolivarian trade agreement. Starting in 2004, Cuba reported a decline in tourism revenues and a decrease in industrial and agricultural production that have fueled a rise in imports. This is during the same time period in which Cuba focused its attention on trade with Venezuela and China, and reduced foreign joint ventures and direct investment in the country. This data suggests that as in the past, Cuba is emphasizing a single cash commodity and political solidarity at the expense of domestic economic diversity, development, and national independence. As suggested by other scholars this may prove to be a perilous gamble that links the country's economic survival to the survival of Chávez as President of Venezuela and rising oil revenues.

Recent events in Venezuela should raise questions as to the sustainability of the relationship with Cuba. While Chávez remains in full control of the regime, the failure of constitutional reforms in December 2007 that would have allowed Chávez to run for office indefinitely means that unless changes are made to the Venezuelan constitution Chávez will be forced to relinquish power in 2013. The failures of the constitutional reforms and other political events have emboldened the opposition in Venezuela, which is expected to do well in municipal and gubernatorial elections to be held in November 2008. The revival of the opposition will put further pressure on Chávez to revise his foreign policy, including the subsidies it provides to Cuba. Additionally, there is growing opposition among Venezuelans to the give-a-ways to Cuba. At a time of growing inflation—ranging from 20-25 percent annually—and scarcity of basic goods such as milk, bread and rice, Venezuelans are questioning their government's generosity abroad. Venezuelans also are questioning ties to the Caribbean Island. An editorial in the *El Nacional* newspaper said "Venezuela is being colonized by Cuba. For everything, the government looks to Cuba, consults with Cuba and tries to read the signs coming from Cuba. We cannot do anything without approval from Havana" (quoted in Robles 2003). While little to no change in Cuba-Venezuela relations is expected in the near future, the Cuban government must be concerned about the long-term implications of political and economic rumblings in their patron state. Just as the Soviet Union did not last forever, Chávez's regime may not either, thus inflicting on Cuba another significant blow as the one experienced in the early 1990s.

Equally if not more important, labor and human rights organizations have already raised serious concerns about the export of human labor and the responsibilities of host nations to protect and assure the safety, security, and liberty of migrant workers (American Friends Service Committee 2008; United Nations 2008). As the presence of Cuban migrant workers has expanded throughout Latin American and other parts of the developing world, reports about the harsh working conditions and the restrictions of the contracted Cuban professionals' individual liberties have mounted. Unlike the migrant labor force of other countries, the Cuban government recruits, organizes, controls, exports, and directly receives economic benefits from the export of these laborers. As such, it is likely to come under increasing international scrutiny for the arrange-

ments and treatment of this migrant labor force. Additionally, host countries are likely to be expected to protect and enforce the rights of these migrant laborers. In accordance with international declarations of human rights, countries that host Cuban workers should be expected to manage the requests of Cuban asylum seekers and the complaints of organizations seeking to protect these migrant laborers.

Finally, although Cuba has benefitted economically from exporting its reserve labor army of health and service professionals, this export has undermined key revolutionary programs and values. The data we presented suggested that the export of Cuban doctors and allied health professionals has decreased Cubans' access to their neighborhood doctors. As media reports have already shown, the increasing export of Cuban doctors is undermining what many Cuban citizens point to as the shining achievement of the revolution. Eroding this revolutionary accomplishment, at the same time that migrant Cuban laborers and their families are exposed to the alternative lifestyles and ideas of their host countries is likely to further threatens citizens' confidence in and support of the revolutionary regime. Cuban foreign workers witness and experience the daily material existence of professionals in other countries. These migrant workers recognize and openly discuss the material hardships and the limits placed upon their individual liberties in Cuba are unique to the island. At a time when the government is undergoing a transition in leadership, maintaining citizens' trust is imperative to Cuban citizens' support of and acquiescence to the ruling regime. It seems that Cuba's economic policy that trades doctors for Venezuelan oil and aid, is undermining the support of the most educated citizens in the island.

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CHAPTER 20

Dollarization, Distortion, and the Transformation of Work

Emma Phillips

Abstract: One of the most significant changes for Cubans since the start of the Special Period has been the development of a range of new income-earning opportunities ranging from work in the formal state sector, to a newly established "private" sector, and/or in growing informal and black markets. While the significance of the increasing heterogeneity of Cuba's labour market may be difficult to imagine from the perspective of the North American labour market, which is itself based upon a great diversity of economic activity and forms of property ownership, it represents a dramatic shift for Cuban workers. This article explores the significance of the transformation of work in Cuba from the perspective of Cuban workers and asks what broader implications these changes might have for Cubans' changing ideas about work, citizenship and models of political governance.

The Cuban economy today is in a state of flux and President Raúl Castro has already signalled his intention of continuing to implement a process of change.¹ For ordinary Cuban workers, one consequence is a constantly shifting constellation of income-earning options, including work in the formal state sector, a newly established "private" sector,² and/or growing informal and black markets. This paper assesses the choices facing Cuban workers in this new labour context, examining the options available to

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1. For example, at the end of March, 2008, the Raúl Castro government authorized the sale to Cuban citizens of computers, DVD players and other electronic products, including air-conditioners and toasters. The government further announced that it would allow unrestricted use of mobile telephones by all Cubans and lifted the ban that prevented Cubans from staying in tourist hotels.
 2. This term is used loosely to connote self-employment and work for for-profit organizations. Technically, Cuban workers working for foreign enterprises are in fact employed by state-operated employment agencies and are not directly employed by the foreign enterprise. Nominally, therefore, they continue to be employed in the state sector.

Cuban workers and the strategic decisions they must make to determine where best to devote their labour time and energy. At the same time, it asks what consequences the changing nature of “work” in Cuba has for citizen-state relationships, and how the reconceptualization of work may affect broader models of citizenship and political governance. As others have argued, “work” is tied intimately not only to individual identity but also to models of community and authority.

“Imagine a Cuban worker—we’ll call him ‘Tomás’—faced with the option of working in one of three factories,” Arnaldo Pérez García,³ a Cuban psychologist at the Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociológicas, tells me.

They all produce beer. The first factory was built in the 1980’s and continues to be run by the state. Salaries are paid in pesos nacionales, there have been no capital improvements since it first opened its doors, machines break down, and there is no air conditioning. The second factory is a joint venture enterprise between a Spanish company and a Cuban state enterprise and makes a better beer. Workers are paid in pesos nacionales, but are given baskets of goods as production incentives. The building is new and the working conditions are more comfortable. The third factory is owned and operated by a Canadian corporation operating in Cuba through its Cuban subsidiary. Working conditions are even more comfortable than in the joint venture factory and wages are paid in part in pesos convertibles. Where would the worker most wish to work?

To Pérez García, the answer is obvious: Tomás would prefer to work at the old, crumbling “socialist” factory, because here it will be easier to steal beer to sell on the black market, and his income-earning potential will be much greater than in the other, purportedly higher-paying, factories.

The story is, of course, both fictitious and exaggerated.⁴ Not all Cuban workers are willing to steal to improve their economic situation,

3. Paraphrase of interview with the author, February 2005, Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociológicas, Havana.

nor do most Cubans have the option of working for a joint venture company or foreign enterprise. However, the story helpfully illustrates a number of important transformations occurring in the Cuban labour market.

First, as any Cuban will attest, there is a significant disjunction between wage levels and the cost of living. As a consequence of what Pérez García calls the “desalarization” of employment, most Cubans are forced to seek income from a variety of sources in addition to their formal employment, whether it be remittances from family members abroad or through participation in Cuba’s “second economy.”

Second, Cubans now have the possibility of seeking work in the private sector, an option previously unthinkable under the socialist model. While the number of such jobs is very small, the fact that they exist at all is a radical departure from the state monopoly of labour that has characterized Cuba from 1959 to the start of the Special Period.

Third, wage incentives have begun to creep gradually back into the labour equation in Cuba. Indeed, in 2006 the Cuban government officially amended the labour code to tie wages directly to the quality and productivity of work performed.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the story of ‘Tomás’ illustrates the dramatic shift that has taken place in the Cuban labour market towards what Pérez García characterizes as “la multiespecialidad económica,” or the growth of multiple economic spaces. Where the state previously employed 95% of the Cuban workforce, it now employs around 79% of the working population, a reduction of about 687,000 workers (Locay: 6). Many of those still working for the state, moreover, are severely underemployed and supplement their wages through informal and black market activities. The significance of this change from a largely homogenous to a more heterogeneous labour market is difficult to imagine from the perspective of the North American labour market, which is itself based upon a great diversity of economic activity, forms of property ownership, and employment. Yet it represents a dramatic shift for the Cuban market, which was founded on precepts of monopoly and national control. Moreover, it is a shift which is affecting not only owner-

4. Moreover, Pérez García might frame the story differently today, given the steps taken by the Cuban government to crack down on corruption.

ship over means of production and control over the workplace, but also the way in which workers think about the value of work and their relationship to the state. Because of the close relationship between work, identity and citizenship under Cuban socialism, the transformation of Cuba's labour market has significant implications for Cuba's evolving political and economic transition.

“New Socialist Man” Getting Old?

The significance of Pérez García's story can only be understood in relation to the ideal of work and worker central to the Revolution. The deeply symbolic role of “worker” in Cuban socialism is established in the first article of the Cuban Constitution, which states: “Cuba is a country composed of workers, peasants, and other manual and intellectual laborers” (Article 1, *Constitución de la República de Cuba*, 1992). This provision effectively puts workers at the heart of the country's ideological, social and moral design. The powerful role of the worker in Cuban socialism and its deep ties to the Revolutionary movement was perhaps most clearly articulated in Ernesto Ché Guevara's conceptualization of the “New Socialist Man” (el hombre nuevo) in the 1960's. The new socialist man implied more than a productive worker or an individual dedicated to revolutionary ideals; he also signified the forging of a new morality and consciousness (Pérez: 340). He was disciplined, self-sacrificing, and motivated not by personal gain but by the collective good.

Most importantly, the new socialist man represented an absolute identification between worker and state. With the exception of a very small number of subsistence farmers, the state owned all forms of production, and workers participated in labour production not for personal gain or monetary incentive, but as a social contribution. Thus, Ché Guevara wrote in his influential *Man and Socialism*:

Man dominated by commodity relationships will cease to exist...Man will begin to see himself mirrored in his work and to realize his full stature as a human being through the object created, through the work accomplished. Work will no longer entail surrendering a part of his being in the form of labor-power sold...but will represent an emanation of himself reflecting his contribution to the common life, the fulfillment of his social duty. (Ché Guevara 1966)

Work was considered an end unto itself, the means by which to purge persisting bourgeois vices and bring about the Revolution (Pérez: 340).

Fast-forward to Cuba in 2008. The tale of Cuba's economic collapse in the early 1990's is by now well known. The dramatic contraction of the economy following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the resulting shortage of the most basic industrial and household goods brought the island to a near standstill. Since the collapse of the Soviet block, salaries have declined over 45 percent; in 1998, the average monthly salary was around 232 pesos, or \$10 USD (Ritter 1995:5). According to one report, as a result of the high cost of food and low salaries, food purchases now take up to 66 percent of the average Cuban salary (Sinclair & Thompson: 162). In a desperate attempt to stabilize the economy and avert the breakdown of the socialist state, the government instituted radical economic and political reforms—liberalization policies termed by many in the government as “necessary evils”—to cope with this new, drastically different landscape.

One of the most important of these liberalization measures was the legalization of the US dollar, resulting in the bifurcation of the Cuban economy into a peso socialist economy and a dollar market economy. Despite Cubans' dramatically decreased consumer power, most consumer goods are sold through state-run “dollar stores,” where prices are marked up around 140 percent from world levels (Ritter 2006:7). As a result, for those Cubans who do not receive remittances from abroad, the incentives to seek out work in the dollar economy are almost irresistible. Inevitably, the bifurcation of the Cuban economy has therefore been accompanied by the growth of an extensive “second economy” comprised of informal and black market activities (Ritter 1995).

It is within this context of dollarization and distortion that ‘Tómas’ and his labour market decisions must be examined. While deep-rooted models of work, productivity, volunteerism and collectivism remain, they are coming increasingly into conflict—or at the very least contact—with resurgent concepts of commercialization, individualism, autonomy and efficiency.⁵ The result is a shifting conceptualization of the worker as a

5. This is not to say that concepts such as volunteerism have not retained any value for Cubans, or may not have an impact on the labour market strategies they adopt.

vehicle of the Revolution to a reconfiguration of the worker as increasingly disassociated from the state.

The Desalarization of Employment and Diversification of Income

One key dimension of Pérez García's story is the motivation of 'Tomás' in obtaining a job at the "socialist" factory. As a result of the dollarization of the Cuban economy, most salaries are inadequate for basic economic survival. As Cuban economist Carranza Valdés has pointed out, the disjunction between wages and consumer power has "had a very negative impact on a workers' society, not only in economic terms but also in ideological terms, given that the wage—the economic and social reason to work—ceased to be the fundamental route for obtaining individual and family well-being"(Carranza Valdés: 15).

Often, this means that a worker's employment strategies are influenced less by a job's formal salary than by its potential for more indirect means of "earning" an income—whether by legal or extra-legal means. Moreover, as a result of the "desalarization" of employment, workers must now look to a variety of sources to cobble together a monthly income outside of their formal workplace. Some Cubans may receive remittances from family members abroad, but many more seek income through informal and black market activities. For example, burning and selling CDs, selling homemade desserts or running an informal hair salon are common activities to increase household income. State employees may also make use of their workplace facilities to carry out private, for-profit work, either during or after work hours. A car mechanic, for example, may make use of the state-run workshop where he or she is employed to fix privately owned cars for personal profit. An office worker may similarly use an office photocopy machine or computer to carry out services for a small fee: for example, sending e-mails, printing documents, or making photocopies.⁶

Since the informal activities associated with a worksite provide a greater source of income than official wages, the desalarization of employment and the growth of the second economy are intimately intertwined. Thus, the existence of the black market, while not an official "employment option," cannot be ignored in any analysis of the contempo-

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rary Cuban labour market. Incentives offered by black market activities may play an important role in daily strategies for economic survival, taking workers' time and energy away from formal employment and the state control of productive activity. Moreover, while some informal activities are relatively innocuous, of greater concern is the widespread theft of state-owned goods for sale on the black market. From the sale of extra rations off the books at the bodega, to the theft of gasoline or building materials, theft has become a ubiquitous aspect of Cuban daily life. Such low-level corruption is a concern for the state. Not only is it a drain on state resources, but also it may lead to more grave incidences of corruption—of government officials, for example—but it also represents an increasingly deep disillusionment with the rule of law and the power of the state.

The Creation of a Private Sector

A second, prominent feature of the story of 'Tomás' is the existence of employment options in the "private" sector, an option previously unthinkable under the prior socialist model. Employment in foreign-owned or joint venture enterprises, for example, is highly coveted. Working conditions are considerably better than in state-run enterprises and employees frequently enjoy a more open and flexible schedule than their counterparts in the state sector. Most importantly, employees may earn a significantly higher income in the form of salary, incentives, and under-the-table benefits. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in some cases qualified employees have even entered into profit-sharing or share-holding arrangements with foreign management. Such arrangements are strictly prohibited, of course, and are formed under the strictest secrecy (Personal Communication; June 2005).

Another work option in the private sector is self-employment, or *trabajo por cuentapropia*. As with employment in joint venture and foreign-

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6. It is worth noting that the inappropriate use of computers and other "communication media" is now specifically prohibited under the Labour Code. Pursuant to Regulation No. 188/2006 on internal disciplinary regulations, all internal disciplinary regulations must include, among other things, a prohibition against "irrationally making use of the entity's communication media in matters unrelated to the labour activity that he performs."

owned firms, *cuentapropismo* is a highly desirable, but limited, work sector. Both the number of licenses and the number of trades in which self-employment can be practiced are very carefully controlled, and in 2004 there were only about 100,000 licensed *cuentapropistas* on the island—about half as many as there were in 1997.⁷ Although constituting a relatively small component of the work sector, the creation of *cuentapropismo* has been an important—and symbolically fraught—development (Phillips 2007; Henken 2008). As the first Cubans to work for profit and to control the means of production since the start of the Revolution, *cuentapropistas* raise the spectre of the growth of a petit bourgeoisie (Núñez Moreno: 44). *Cuentapropistas* set their own schedules, determine how much they wish to earn, based to some degree, on their own level of effort or initiative, and are monetarily rewarded for their entrepreneurialism and creativity.

The development of a private sector is not a comfortable development for the Cuban government. As Lilia Núñez Moreno, a Cuban sociologist, observes, “Of all the changes introduced by the current reforms, the extension of private activity is perceived by many as the change that has the greatest capacity to dissolve Cuban socialism” (Núñez Moreno: 41). Numerous restrictions govern the private sector, controlling both the number of people who can enter it and their earning potential. For example, in the case of employees of foreign and joint venture companies, the government has reserved for itself the screening and control of human resources. Rather than allowing foreign enterprises to hire Cuban workers directly, the company notifies a state-run employment agency of its staffing needs, and the agency recruits the necessary employees (Law No. 77).⁸ Salaries are paid in hard currency to the employment agency, which

7. "Life in Cuba: Small business just got smaller" *The Economist* (16 October 2004) 33.

8. The triangular employment relationship between the foreign enterprise, the state employment entity, and the employees is structured differently, depending on the nature of the foreign or mixed enterprise. As provided in Article 33 of Law No. 77, workers in mixed companies, with the exception of the members of management, shall be contracted by an employing entity proposed by MINVEC and authorized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. In totally foreign owned companies, Cuban workers are hired through a contract between the company and an employing entity proposed by the MINVEC, and authorized by the Ministry of Social Security. In the case of "international joint venture contracts," workers are hired by the Cuban entity (Mercader Uguina 2006a: 4-6)

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then pays employees a portion in national pesos. Professional qualifications are, however, often the least important factor in whether a particular individual gets hired for the job. As Yovani, a former employee of an Italian company operating in Cuba observes,

First of all, they are looking to make sure that the person is reliable—not someone who is anti-Revolutionary or a criminal. A person who has a good reputation in his neighbourhood. And also, at the end, they will look to see if this person has the skill to do the job that they are asking for—but that's the last criterion.⁹

Yovani's impressions are confirmed in Article 29 of Resolution No. 3/96, which requires workers to “act according to the best interests of our society,” to “subordinate his/her acts and decisions to the best interest of our people,” and to “neither accept from, nor ask the persons above or around him/her for any payments, gifts, handouts or preferential treatment contrary to the adequate labor and personal behaviour expected from our cadre and workers.” As such, notes Spanish labour lawyer Jesús Mercader Uguina, workers in foreign investment companies are evaluated in part on the basis of their ability “to maintain social conduct worthy of his/her fellow citizens' respect and trust,” primarily “by not allowing any conspicuous signs or privileges, and by keeping a lifestyle in line with society” (Mercader Uguina 2006: 7-8).

In this way, employees of foreign investment companies are required to play dual roles, capitalist and socialist, each with equal dexterity. On the one hand they must be skilled workers capable of moving in and out of the international, globalized economy, on par with their North American or European counterparts, while on the other they must avoid all signs of conspicuous consumption or material motivation.

9. Personal communication, translation by author, June 2005. Similarly, the “voluntary” nature of membership in the state-organized union is illusory because of the constant pressure to show support for state socialist policies. Yovani recalls being frequently called upon by his union to participate in activities and protests and feeling unable to refuse. “You have to participate in every political institution...You have to go, whether you want to or not, otherwise they mark you.”

Wage Incentives

A third feature of the story of ‘Tomás’ is the reappearance of wage incentives as part of labour relations.¹⁰ One of the key features of labour and production under the socialist model was the belief that work should be performed for the collective and not the individual good. Incentives should not come in the form of personal economic gain, but from the fulfilment of the Revolution and the collective good.

This model has been under strain for some time, even prior to the collapse of the Soviet bloc. In 2006, however, the Cuban government made an explicit ideological departure from the ideal of the new socialist worker when it introduced the *General Regulation on Wage Organization* (Resolution No. 27/2006), which establishes that wages should reflect the quantity and quality of work performed, and encourage more efficient and higher quality work product (Mercader Uguina 2006b:2). According to Article 2 of the Resolution, these changes were effected in order that:

efficient and higher quality labour would be better compensated. The wage level depends on the complexity and responsibility of the work performed, on the yield, time worked, conditions under which the work is performed and on its results, as well as other authorized additional payments.

Art. 2, Resolution No. 27/2006

Article 4 establishes the principles that govern the new wage policy. Wages should: (1) compensate the work according to its quality and quantity; (2) stimulate productivity, labour efficiency and contributions of the State; (3) stimulate professional qualifications and excellence; and (4) guarantee that equal wages will correspond to equal labour (Art. 4, Resolution No. 27/2006; Mercader Uguina 2006b: 2).

The amendment of the wage policy establishes a new framework in which production and efficiency, rather than contribution to the Revolu-

10. Material incentives were briefly introduced in some sectors, for example, in the early 1970's to boost production. Workers were allowed to work overtime at a higher wage range and more workers could earn the right to purchase refrigerators, air conditioners, and other appliances.

La multiespecialidad económica

tion, are established as the new goals for the Cuban worker. Workers themselves are evaluated individually as well as collectively in terms of their productive capacity (Mercader Uguina 2006b: 3). Neoliberal terms more typically associated with capitalist enterprise, such as “productivity,” “competition,” “efficiency,” and “human resources” have been incorporated into the language of Cuban labour relations (Mercader Uguina 2006b: 1), and for the first time since the Revolution, Cuban workers are explicitly directed to work for monetary gain.

La multiespecialidad económica

The fourth, and perhaps most important, aspect of Pérez García's story is the fact that ‘Tomás’ is faced with a variety of work options involving different employers and economic activities. These “multiple economic spaces” represents a fundamental shift in the Cuban political and economic model from a more homogeneous labour market dominated by a state monopoly of employment, to a more heterogeneous marketplace characterized by choice and inequality. The very fact of differentiation—the notion that workers carrying out the same kind of activity but for different employers may receive vastly different remuneration—is anathema to the ideal of egalitarianism at the centre of Cuban socialism.

An important result of *la multiespecialidad económica* and the breakdown of the state monopoly of employment is that Cubans are increasingly forging economic and contractual relationships on their own, without the intermediary of the state. As one *cuentalpropista* commented:

Before, the state provided you with the necessities of life. Now, the *trabajador por cuenta propia* can acquire things, and we control ourselves. The state doesn't interest us, because it doesn't do anything for us. We even have to pay to do our work. What it does do is sell us things at a high price, and at the same time imposes more taxes and sends more inspectors. [The government] realizes that they are losing control of *trabajo por cuenta propia*, although we don't have any kind of capitalist mentality....And so it seems to me that that's what the government fears, not that we have a capitalist mentality, but that we don't depend on the state for anything, nothing more than to pay our \$163 each month. (Personal communication, Malecón Market, August 1999)

Whether it is by seeking out a job in the private sector, renting DVDs from a private individual, or hiring a neighbour to teach English to a school-aged child, Cubans are forming commercial relationships which cut the state out of the picture. This is, of course, precisely the situation the state wishes to avoid, since it loses control over both productive activity and the revenue it generates.

Conclusion: Implications for Individuals and State

The growth of multiple economic spaces and the increasing heterogeneity of the labour market is having a transformative impact on the way Cubans are thinking about work, the workplace and their relationship with the state. Rather than regarding themselves as simply members of the collectivity, workers in the new labour paradigm must assess a variety of state, informal, private and illegal work options, develop strategies for economic survival—often involving more than one work option—deal with new forms of property, and make independent decisions unnecessary under the socialist system. This new level of individual autonomy, risk-taking, and decision-making has implications far beyond the workplace, extending to other realms of social and family life. As Pérez García observes, “the impact [of the measures] has not been limited to a specific sector, but has embraced all ambits of social life (family, labour, recreation) and all levels of daily life (individual, group, and social) in a very short period” (Pérez García: 136).

Scholars have noted how particular sites of governance, such as the school, welfare office, or workplace, are integral to the exercise of governmental power (Rose: 31). Worksites, in particular, are a powerful mechanism for the exercise of power and the construction of subjectivity. By structuring workers' time, activities, aspirations, economic remuneration, and social interactions, worksites play a formative role in conditioning the interests and desires of workers to align with those of the employer and the state (Rose: 157). As Cuban sociologists José Luis Martín Romero and Armando Capote González observe, the bond between individual and workplace:

generates a set of relations which are incorporated, as part of the individual's experiences, into the existence of the person and, as such, into his or her subjective internal world...Through this bond, people con-

Conclusion: Implications for Individuals and State

struct a form of existence which converts employment into a social condition necessary for self-realization... (Capote González & Martin Romero: 41).

Self-evidently, the introduction of new forms of property, economic activity and employment has important implications for this process.

In Marxist regimes, the link between work, governmental power and the construction of citizenship is particularly clear because of the state's monopoly over employment and its ideological position as the voice of the workers. The legitimacy of the state depends, at least rhetorically, on its identification with workers' interests; reciprocally in a "workers' state" workers are presumed to be in accord with state policies encouraging productivity and efficiency. The state, moreover, has direct control over worksites to ensure the implementation of these policies. The omnipresence of the state as employer in socialist states thus reinforces the importance of worksites as a "governable space" (Rose: 31) for the dissemination of state power and the construction of identity.

The central role of work in the construction of identity thus makes the conception of labour, both that held by the individual and held by the state, a particularly important factor in periods of economic and political upheaval. With the diversification of employment and forms of property, the individual no longer exists purely as a member of the collectivity but must begin to explore new spheres of individual decision-making and self-reliance. The rise of market relations, in particular, requires workers in the new labour paradigm to make independent decisions unnecessary under the socialist system, requiring a greater degree of self-reliance and autonomy. As worker subjectivities are reconstructed to encompass a growing range of individual choices and opportunities, new ideas evolve about who is a productive member of society and how citizen-state relationships should be mediated. This in turn has an impact on how new models of governance are envisioned and within what parameters. Work—both in official discourse and in day-to-day practice—thus becomes a battleground for the development of new governmental powers.

Cuba's state sector has not collapsed, and many workers continue to devote a large portion of their time and effort to their formal work and state-sponsored volunteerism. Yet as the state loses its monopoly over

ownership of property, human capital, and labour relations, the systems of power that have defined Cuban socialism for over forty years are increasingly in flux. As the first article of the Cuban constitution states, “Cuba is a country composed of workers, peasants, and other manual and intellectual laborers,” but as these workers’ ideas change about what constitutes productive work, how work should be remunerated, and who should control the processes of production, Cuba’s social and political model will be fundamentally altered.

Conclusion: Implications for Individuals and State

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CHAPTER 21

Cuban Remittance Agencies in the U.S.: A Survey

Mario A. González Corzo and Scott Larson

Abstract: This paper examines the principal characteristics of U.S. based "bricks and mortar" Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs). Particular emphasis is given to the analysis of their geographic concentration, product and service offerings in terms of cash remittances, the transaction costs associated with these products and services, and the amount of time required to send and receive these remittances to Havana and other parts of the island.

Despite the implementation of remittance and travel restrictions (RTRs) by the Bush Administration on June 30, 2004, and the replacement of the U.S. dollar (USD) with the convertible peso (CUC) by the Cuban government in October of that year, family remittances continue to play a key role in the Cuban economy. During the 2001-2006 period, remittances to Cuba increased 27.5%, from \$730 million in 2001 to an estimated \$931 million in 2006, representing an annual growth rate of 5.5% (Pérez-López & Díaz-Briquets, 2005; González-Corzo and Larson, 2006; International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2007). In 2001, remittances represented 45.4% of the value of Cuba's merchandise exports, and 43.1% of the gross hard currency receipts generated by international tourism. By the end of 2006, the ratio of remittances to merchandise exports declined to 33.7%, mostly due to an increase in Cuba's export capacity; however, the ratio of remittances to gross receipts from tourism remained virtually unchanged at 43.5% (Anuario Estadístico de Cuba (AEC), 2006).

A recent World Bank report titled, "Remittances and Development: Lessons from Latin America," shows that remittances are directly linked to lower poverty levels, improvements in education, and better health indicators in receiving countries (Fajzylber and López, 2008). Remit-

tances also contribute to economic growth and investment, and are associated with lower levels of macroeconomic and exchange rate volatility (Fajzylber and López, 2008).

At the microeconomic, or more precisely the household level, remittances also play a critical role in the economies of the receiving countries. The World Bank study (referenced above) also found that for each percentage point increase in the ratio of remittances to gross domestic product (GDP), the share of the population living in poverty is reduced by an average of 0.4% (Fajzylber and López, 2008). Remittances also have a positive impact on bank deposits and the mobilization of credit in receiving countries. According to the World Bank, a 1% point increase in remittances results in approximately 2% to 3% increase in bank deposits and credit in receiving countries (Fajzylber and López, 2008).

In the case of Cuba, an estimated 60% of the population receives remittances on a regular basis (Mesa-Lago, 2005), and the majority of remittances (90% or more) are used for consumption (González-Corzo & Larson, 2006). Despite existing limitations on small-scale, privately operated enterprises, and the lack of comprehensive field studies analyzing the effects of remittances on these types of firms in Cuba, anecdotal accounts suggest that in some cases remittances are channeled towards productive investments, mostly in the informal sector.¹

Given the importance of remittances in the Cuban economy, and despite the critical role that U.S. based remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) play in facilitating the transfer of these unilateral flows of private capital, very few studies have focused on these agencies, which are vital components of Cuba's "remittances market."² To address this gap in the

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1. During a recent visit to Cuba on January 2008, one of the authors spoke with several small business operators in *Villa Clara* province. Many of these entrepreneurs relied on regular family remittances to obtain essential inputs from state-run "hard currency stores" (or *tiendas de recaudación de divisas-TRDs*), and the informal economy. The majority operated privately owned restaurants or *paladares*, one or two-room *hostals* or *casas de huéspedes*, and private taxis (*taxis particulares*). Some of these enterprises were registered or authorized to operate legally, while others operated without official government authorization.
 2. A country's "remittances market" consists of the remittances senders (or remitters), the receivers, and the channels and mechanisms to send and receive remittances. For more on Cuba's remittances market, see Gonzalez-Corzo and Larson (2006).

literature on remittances to Cuba, this study examines the principal characteristics of U.S. based, “bricks and mortar,” Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs), with a particular emphasis on their geographic concentration, their product and service offerings, the transaction costs associated with these products and services, and the amount of time required for their delivery to Havana and other parts of the island.

To achieve this objective, we compiled a list of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) operating in the United States. Upon completion of this list, we conducted a longitudinal survey, which was used as the primary tool to gather data for our study. We employed a purposive approach to the selection of the sample included in our study. All the remittance forwarding agencies (RFs) included in our survey were authorized to provide remittances forwarding services to Cuba, operated in the United States and its territories, and functioned as a “bricks and mortar” operation (i.e., had a physical location such as a branch or office, where customers can go in person) rather than a Web-based money transfer organization (MTO).

During the course of this study, we conducted a total of 88 surveys or interviews. Whenever possible, the survey included face-to-face (or in person) interviews with the employees or representatives of the Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) included in our study. This type of fieldwork required multiple visits by the researchers (or authors of this study) to 15 remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in Miami, FL, Hialeah, Florida, West New York, NJ, and Union City, NJ. The rest of the surveys or interviews (73) were conducted over the telephone.

The data were collected over a six-month period ranging from October 1, 2007 to April 30, 2008. At the end of the survey (or data collection) period, we conducted a post-survey validation, involving callbacks or revisits to 25% (or 22 remittances forwarding agencies—RFs) of the sample of included in our study.

Findings

Geographic Concentration

Our survey revealed that out of a total of 88 “bricks and mortar” Cuban remittances forwarding agencies registered in the United States, 67 were located in Florida, and the rest (31) were scattered across states and territories with a notable Cuban presence such as California (6), New Jersey (5), and Puerto Rico (3). Other U.S. states where these agencies were located also included: the District of Columbia (1), Illinois (1), Louisiana (1), Nevada (1), New York (1), and Oregon (1). Table 21-1 shows the distribution of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) by state at the end of 2006.

TABLE 21-1. Cuban Remittances Forwarding Agencies (RFs) by State

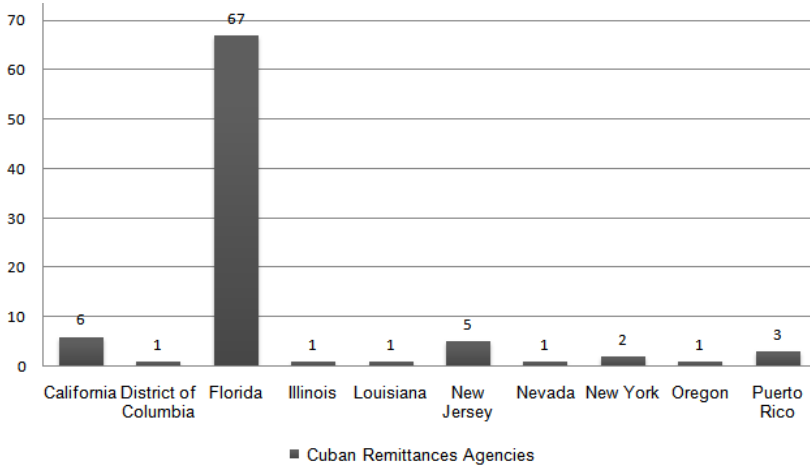
State	Cuban Remittances Agencies	Percentage of Total RFs
California	6	6.8%
District of Columbia	1	1.1%
Florida	67	76.1%
Illinois	1	1.1%
Louisiana	1	1.1%
New Jersey	5	5.7%
Nevada	1	1.1%
New York	2	2.3%
Oregon	1	1.1%
Puerto Rico	3	3.4%
TOTAL	88	100.0%

In percentage terms, more than three-quarters of the Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in the U.S. at the end of 2006 were located in Florida (76.1%), and the rest were located in states and territories with relatively large concentrations of Cubans and Cuban-Americans such as California (6.8%), New Jersey (5.7%), Puerto Rico (3.4%), and New York (2.3%). Figure 21-1 shows the distribution of Cuban remit-

Findings

tances forwarding agencies (RFs) by state, and their corresponding share of the total agencies registered in the United States at the end of 2006.

FIGURE 21-1. Cuban Remittances Forwarding Agencies (RFs) by State



One interesting finding from our research is the fact that there are no agencies registered in Texas, even though at the end of 2006 approximately 2.4% of the Cuban population in the United States lived in the Lone Star State, and Texas was ranked in fifth place in terms of its share of the U.S. Cuban population (González-Corzo, 2007). Another rather surprising, and interesting, finding was the relatively small number of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) located in New Jersey (5), given the Garden State's traditional role as a principal destination for Cubans residing in the United States.

We used a linear regression model to analyze the relationship between the geographical concentration of the Cuban community in the United States and the concentration of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs). The number of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in U.S. cities with three (3) RFs or more was defined as the dependent variable, and the Cuban population as the independent variable.³

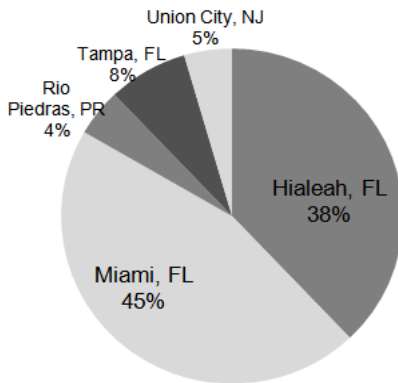
As Table 21-2 indicates, the U.S. cities with the largest share of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) were: (1) Miami, FL

TABLE 21-2. Cuban Remittances Forwarding Agencies (RFs) by City (Cities with 3 or More RFs)

City	Remittances Forwarding Agencies (RFs)	Percentage of Total RFs
Hialeah, FL	25	28.4%
Miami, FL	30	34.1%
Rio Pedras, PR	3	3.4%
Tampa, FL	5	5.7%
Union City, NJ	3	3.4%

(34.1%); (2) Hialeah, FL (28.4%); (3) Tampa, FL (5.7%); and (4) Union City, NJ (3.4%).

FIGURE 21-2. Cuban Remittance Forwarding Agencies (RFs) by City (Cities of 3 or More RFs)

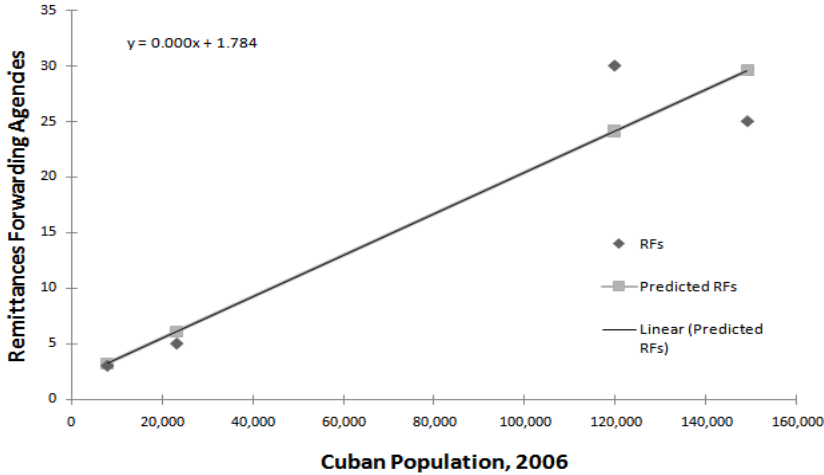


As expected, our study found a strong (positive) correlation between the concentration of the Cuban community and the concentration of agencies authorized to send remittances to Cuba in the United States (see Figure 21-3).⁴

3. The estimates for the Cuban population (the independent variable) were obtained from the most recent (2006) American Community Survey (ACS) Fact Finder report.

Findings

FIGURE 21-3. Relationship Between Concentration of Cuban RF Agencies for U.S. Cities with 3 or More RFs



Given that approximately 17.7% of the Cuban population in the United States resides in Miami, FL and Hialeah, FL (“American Community Survey” [ACS], 2006), we found a disproportionate concentration of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in these historical Cuban (ethnic) enclaves.⁵ The agencies located in Miami and Hialeah (FL) repre-

4. Our regression analysis produced a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.8996, and an “adjusted R^2 ” of 0.8495, suggesting that there is a strong (positive) correlation between the two variables included in our study.
5. According to the 2006 American Community Survey (ACS), an estimated 148,965 persons of Cuban origin or ancestry lived in Hialeah, FL in 2006. Similarly, in 2006 there were approximately 119,685 persons of Cuban origin or ancestry living in Miami, FL. Combined, the Cuban-origin population of these two Miami-Dade County (FL) municipalities (268,650) represented 17.7% of the total U.S. Cuban population in 2006 (1,520,271). In Hialeah (FL), the Cuban-origin population (148,965) represented more than three-quarters (75.4%) of the Hispanic or Latino population in 2006. Miami’s (FL) Cuban population (119,685) represented close to half (48.5%) of the Hispanic or Latino population in 2006. At the county level, the 767,349 persons of Cuban origin living in Miami-Dade County (FL) at the end of 2006 represented an estimated 52.1% of the County’s total Hispanic or Latino population.

sent (a combined) 62.5% of the total Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in the United States at the time of our study.

Services Offered

While 54 out of the 88 agencies licensed to forward remittances to Cuba (RFs) included in our survey (or 61.4%) currently send remittances on behalf of their clients, our study found that 34 agencies (or 38.6%) no longer offer such services. The principal reasons cited for the apparent exit of these agencies from the remittances forwarding (RF) business included: increased competition from online and non-U.S. sources (i.e. virtual and “real” agencies located in Canada, Europe, and Latin America), higher operating costs (i.e. labor, rent, and other inputs), new regulations, on both the Cuban and U.S. sides, governing each country’s respective “remittances markets.”

Transaction Costs

Our survey revealed that the commissions (or transaction costs) charged by U.S. based Cuban remittances forwarding (RF) agencies primarily depend on the amount sent.

Compared to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, Cuban remitters pay extremely high transaction costs (or commission fees). As Table 21-3 demonstrates, the typical commission fee charged by the agencies included in our study varies in inverse relation with the amount sent. For instance, a remitter wishing to send \$50 to a relative in Cuba would pay a commission fee of \$20, or 40% of the amount sent. By contrast, if the same person were to send \$300 (the maximum quarterly amount allowed under current U.S. law),⁶ he or she would have to pay a commission fee of \$25, or 8.3% of the amount remitted.

However, given the unique characteristics of the Cuban remittances market González-Corzo and Larson, 2006), focusing only on the commission fees charged by the remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) understates the real cost of sending remittances to Cuba. Since the implementation of Resolution No. 80 in 2004, and Agreements 13 and 15

6. See Sullivan (2007) for more details on current U.S. Remittances and Travel Restrictions (RTRs) to Cuba.

Findings

TABLE 21-3. Estimated costs of sending remittances to Cuba using data collected in our survey

Amount Sent (USD)	Currency Delivered in Cuba	Com-mission Fee (USD)	Com-mission Fee as % of Amount Sent	CADECA USD/CUC Conversion Fee	Amount Received by Recipient (CUC)	Total Transaction Cost for Remitter (USD)	Total Transaction Cost as % of Amount Sent
\$50	USD	\$20	40.0%	20.0%	40	\$30	60.0%
\$100	USD	\$15	15.0%	20.0%	80	\$35	35.0%
\$150	USD	\$20	13.3%	20.0%	120	\$50	33.3%
\$200	USD	\$25	12.5%	20.0%	160	\$65	32.5%
\$250	USD	\$25	10.0%	20.0%	200	\$75	30.0%
\$300	USD	\$25	8.3%	20.0%	240	\$85	28.3%

in 2005 by Cuba's Central Bank (Banco Central de Cuba [BCC]), remittances receivers in Cuba are charged a 20% "conversion fee" each time they exchange U.S. dollars for Cuban convertible pesos (CUCs). Technically speaking, the remitter (or sender) incurs this additional cost, which increases the total cost of sending remittances to Cuba. As Table 3 shows, after incorporating the 20% "conversion fee" charged by State-run exchange house, CADECA, the total cost of sending \$50 to Cuba increases from \$20 (or 40% of the amount sent) to \$30 (or 60% of the amount sent). Similarly, adding the 20% "conversion fee" increases the cost of sending \$300 from \$25 (or 8.3% of the amount sent) to \$85 (or 28.3% of the amount sent).

Delivery Times

The amount of time that it takes to deliver remittances sent to Cuba using the services offered by the agencies included in our study varies by destination. On average, we found that it takes between 48 and 72 hours (or 2 and 3 days) to deliver remittances to the City of Havana (Table 21-4). However, remittances sent to cities and towns located in other provinces, particularly in Eastern Cuba, can take as long as 10 to 15 days to reach their final destination (Table 21-4).

Some of factors that influence the time it takes to delivery remittances to destinations outside the City of Havana include: the distance between the final destination and Havana, the relative accessibility of the receiver's

TABLE 21-4. Cuba: Remittances Delivery Times

	Distance from Havana (km)	Delivery Time (Days)
Havana	-	1-2
Matanzas	81.1	1-3
Cienfuegos	256	4-5
Santa Clara	268	4-5
Camaguey	545	7
Holguin	760	7-10
Santiago de Cuba	880	7-10

home (rural destinations typically require more time than their urban counterparts), and the ability of the “delivery person” to secure an effective and reliable means of transportation.

Conclusions

This study examined the principal characteristics of “bricks and mortar” Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in the United States. In particular, we analyzed their geographic concentration; product and service offerings, transaction costs, and the amount of time required deliver remittances to Havana and other parts of the island.

To accomplish this goal, we conducted a total of 88 surveys or interviews between October 2007 and April 2008. Whenever possible, we included face-to-face (or in person) interviews with the employees or representatives of the Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) included in our study.

In terms of the geographical concentration, we found a strong (positive) correlation between the concentration of the Cuban community and the concentration of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in those communities. Not surprisingly, we found the majority of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) in the United States (67 out of 88) were located in Florida. The rest were scattered across different cities in the United States and Puerto Rico with a notable Cuban presence. The U.S. cities with the largest share of Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) were: Miami, FL (30); Hialeah, FL (25); Tampa, FL (5); and Union City, NJ (3).

Findings

With respect to the types of services offered (i.e., whether or not they send remittances to Cuba), we found that 54 out of the 88 Cuban remittances forwarding agencies (RFs) (or 61.4%) included in our survey currently send remittances on behalf of their clients, while 34 agencies (or 38.6%) no longer offer such services. This was primarily attributed to increased competition (particularly from online money transfer organizations (MTOs), higher operating costs, and more stringent U.S. and Cuban regulations.

In terms of transaction costs, our study found that Cuban remitters pay relatively high transaction costs compared to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. Commission fees for sending remittances to Cuba range from 8% on the low end of the spectrum to 40% on the high end, placing Cuba among the most expensive “remittances markets” in the world in terms of transaction costs.

Finally, our study revealed that, similar to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and the rest of the world, the amount of time that it takes to deliver remittances sent to Cuba varies by destination, with remittances sent to Havana and its vicinities taking less time than those sent to the rest of the island.

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Part IV

History, Culture and Race

CHAPTER 22

State Agenda and Race

Alejandro Campos-Garcia

Abstract: The first argument of this paper is that the Cuban State's agenda and policies against racism could be divided in two periods 1959-85 and 1985-present. During the period of 1959-85 both the agenda and the policies of the State was the elimination of social inequality in Cuba. Racial discrimination, in this context, was not perceived as an independent variable that deserved focused attention, but a dependent variable emanating from a society divided into classes that would be properly handled through the implementation of a classless society. On the other hand, the period from 1985-present is characterized by the recognition of the persistence of social inequalities in Cuba where racial inequalities are the most salient in the State's point of view. Unlike the preceding period, in the last twenty years the State has started considering racial discrimination as an independent variable that deserved focused attention. In that regard some preliminary actions have been taken in order to create racism oriented policies. The second issue that will be discussed in this paper includes the new official approach to racial issues in which the Cuban socialist State faces two main challenges. Firstly, the State should move from the phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to a phase of design and implementation of policies. Secondly, the issue of racism needs to become a State priority.

In 1959, the Cuban revolutionary government had as a project the creation of an egalitarian society where all social groups (independently of race, gender, age, social class, etc.) could have equal welfare levels and equal access to public goods and services (health, education, housing and employment). In order to achieve this goal, the state implemented social policies focused on eliminating the structural dimension of social inequality. Three years later (1962), the Cuban state considered that these social policies had achieved their goals and that all phenomena linked to inequality, such as racism, class differences and gender discrimination, should be considered eradicated.

Since approximately twenty years ago (1985-present), the Cuban government has been increasingly recognizing that racial inequalities are still alive in Cuba in areas such as the State decision making positions, access to labor, quality of life and social mobility. This recognition worked as a departure point to include, in the state's agenda, the social concern facing the existence of racial inequalities. Particularly the State has considered necessary to analyze the impact that the persistence of inequalities based on race is having upon the political, economic and social structure of the socialist regime.

The main purpose of this reflection is to analyze the past, present and future of the public agenda and the policies of the Cuban Socialist State in regard to racism in Cuba. The following questions guide this paper: What have been the particularities of the Cuban Socialist State's agenda and policies in relation to racism? What challenges related to racism will the Cuban socialist state face in the future?

The first argument of this paper is that the Cuban state's agenda and policies against racism could be divided in two moments 1959-85 and 1985-present. During the period 1959-85 both the agenda and the policies of the State's main goal was the elimination of the structural dimension of social inequality in Cuba. Racial discrimination, in this context, was not perceived as an independent variable that deserved focalized attention but as a dependent variable emanated from a society divided into classes that would be properly handled through the implementation of classless society. On the other hand, the period 1985-present has been characterized by the progressive recognition of the persistence of social inequalities in Cuba, being racial inequalities the most salient in the state's point of view. Unlike the preceding period, in the last twenty years the state has started considering racial discrimination as an independent variable that deserved focalized attention. In that regard some preliminary actions have been taken in order to create racism oriented policies.

The second argument defended in this paper is that taking into account the new official approach to racial issues, the Cuban socialist State faces two main challenges. First, the policy addressing racial issues should move from the phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to the phases of design and implementation of policies. Second, in order to ensure the efficacy of racism oriented policies it is necessary that the issue of racism become a state priority.

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In developing these arguments, this paper is structured in three parts. The first one provides a historical background of Cuban state policies regarding racism in the period 1959-1985. The second part, offers a similar approach this time to the period 1985-present. Finally, the last part of this paper evaluates the racism-related challenges that the state will face in the future.¹

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The principal singularity of the state agenda during this period is that despite it was not in any regard racism oriented, it had an important impact upon racial dynamics. The Cuban Revolution began in the first days of January 1959. Just two months later, the leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, affirmed its commitment to facing and solving the problem of racism in Cuba (Serviat, 1986; Sawyer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007). Tacitly the revolutionary State would work with two meanings of racism as social problem. On the one hand, racism was understood as a system of exclusion, based on race, that limits or prevents equality and social rights of certain racial groups (e.g. education, medical attention, work, housing, and recreation). In that sense, a practice, a behavior, an action could be labeled as racist only when it manifests itself as visible act of racial discriminatory practices, specifically when it was related to limitation to rights, access to goods, services, and opportunities. In short, the State understood racism as acts of open discrimination. (Serviat, 1986) On the other hand, racism was defined as an ideological manifestation of a society divided by class. As an ideology, racism's main social function is to justify the relationships of domination and subordination that are established among social groups of different phenotypes and cultures (Serviat, 1986).

1. In this essay, I only focus on the state, its agenda, and its policies. This decision is based on the fact that the Cuban state is the principal actor, if not the only actor, with influence in the public sector. This is fundamental to this analysis given that the public nature of racism as a problem will lead to an inquiry on other aspects such as the participation of citizens and other political actors (political parties, for example) in processes associated with the formation of the agenda, design, and evaluation of public policy. To clearly understand these characteristics of Cuban public life saves us from these inquiries and gives us the institutional framework to conduct this analysis.

Coupled with the definition of racism as a social problem, Cuban state defined an outline of its solution. In perceiving racism as a super-structural emanation, the state considered that racism could be eliminated with the arrangement of a new type of society: an egalitarian one. Given that the society divided by class is the source of exclusion or discrimination of certain racial groups, the marginalized groups could gain equality through the elimination of this type of society. Consequently, the focus of state attention was on the elimination of the structural order that caused racism as a discriminatory practice (Serviat, 1986).

As a complementary strategy in order to enforce the consolidation of an egalitarian social arrangement, the state considered pertinent to take three measures. The first one was the implementation of an official ideology of color, gender and class blindness; the second one was the establishment of the principle of revolutionary merit and ideological compromise with the political project of the Revolution as principal criteria to determine the social worth of individuals and to manage their access to social mobility; finally, the third measure was the implementation of a sort of State's transcendental model of ethnicity: the revolutionary culture.

The eradication of all racial bias through an official ideology of color, gender and class blindness was based on the idea that public treatment of individuals should not consider any racial typology, gender or socioeconomic origin. The goal was to create a society that treats everyone equally, in which race, gender and socioeconomic origin becomes an irrelevant piece of information. In accordance with the policy of color, gender and class blindness, the state required the existence of a society whose legal framework safeguard equal treatment for all individuals in terms of basic rights and economic, political, and social opportunities. As a complementary measure, the state should give priority to an equitable distribution policy that allows individuals equal access to basic goods and services. Finally, any public act that promoted racism, gender discrimination or socioeconomic exclusion should be considered punishable.

The second pillar of the government's agenda against social inequalities was the establishment of principles of revolutionary merit and ideological compromise with the Revolution as criteria for evaluating the social worth of individuals and guaranteeing their social mobility. The government would define revolutionary merit as the contribution (produc-

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tive, intellectual, and patriotic) that individuals make to the revolutionary project of society. In accordance with this definition, the government identified social contribution, educational training, and the ideological compromise (and not socioeconomic origin, race or gender) as the only factors to determine positions in the social hierarchy and to establish the assignment of resources in society. On the other hand, the ideological commitment would mean the unconditional submission of the revolutionary subjects to the political principles of the Revolution as a social project.

The last point in the State agenda was the set up of a homogenized and monolithic social culture: the revolutionary culture, a peculiar combination of some ideals and principles from Enlightenment and Marxism, and a secularized version of the Christian axiology. In that sense, it was important to the state to include in the agenda the socialization of individuals in the revolutionary culture. Through this, the state sought to construct an inclusive and encompassing model that make possible the homogenization of lifestyles, cognitive foundations, basic assumptions of action, and moral principles. In short, through the implementation of the revolutionary culture the state sought to form an undifferentiated, monolithic (de-racialized, classless, gender neutral) cultural subject.

Early in the administration (1959-1962) the Revolution leaders began to make decisions that, even though not focused on solving the racial problem, their purposes had a positive impact in the previously excluded racial groups (De la Fuente, 1995; 1998). As a first step, the government made any form of discrimination punishable by law in the Fundamental Law of the Republic in 1959 (Serviat, 1986). Furthermore, the new government gave priority to socioeconomic changes that eliminated the barriers to access of basic services, such as education, health, housing, and employment (Casal, 1979).

Fundamentally, the changes consisted of nationalizing the educational system, sanitary system, the labor market, and the distribution of goods and services. With these reforms came to birth a system blind to class, gender and race. The state based its criteria on the idea that equal opportunity for excluded groups could only be achieved when these groups could reach the same levels of education, labor, sanitation, and well-being as those that had always been favored due to class privileges.

On the other hand, the progressive consolidation of the socialist regime as an operative and uncontested project of nation brought the closure of institutional routes for the legal existence of alternative political actors. This led to the radicalization of tensions between the new group in power and the dissident actors inside and outside of Cuba. As a strategic resource, the state decided to convoke to the unification of all political and social forces that shared “similar” political agendas as a way to protect the new regime (De la Fuente, 2005; Caño, 1996).

Before the Revolution, many different societies and clubs whose membership was segregated by color of skin or income level existed (Montejo, 2004). The principle of “national unity” was a decisive element in the disappearance of these societies and clubs. On the one hand, the form in which the new government perceived the racism as a public problem was not compatible with the existence of racially-differentiated organizations with disaggregated and independent social and political agendas. From the state’s perspective, these social groups were only one component of the disjoint that hindered the solution to the racial problem. They only obstructed the state anti-racism agenda through the creation of biased and divergent agendas focused on particular interests (Morales Dominguez, 2007). Another aspect that influenced the disappearance of these societies and clubs was the fact that a large number of the demands that had been requested in the fight against the racial discrimination had been satisfied with the measures taken by the new government (Montejo, 2004).

In addition, the color blindness policy of the state would label any race-oriented claim as an act of racism. Demands such as self-determination, more opportunities for greater power and compensatory measures articulated by any racial group were considered as threats to the national unity, because they implied a potential incitation to undermine the racial egalitarianism. In order to enforce its color blindness policy, the state legally persecuted and punished any kind of race-oriented practices (Sawyer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007).

The state solution to the closure and disappearance of race oriented societies and clubs was the implementation of a colorblind policy in regard to the access of every individual to the Socialist political system and its formal structures of leadership. In the early phases of the Revolution, social and public organizations adapted to the principle of being anti-

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segregationist, which was an explicit invitation for the acceptance of any individual, without taking into account her/his race, into the political realm: the communist party, the army, the government, and the organizations of public representation (Caño, 1996). This entire outline of assimilation was complemented with the implementation of the principles of revolutionary merit and political compromise with the Revolution as exclusive criteria for the inclusion of any individual, independently of her/his race, in positions of political and administrative leadership.

Also during this period, one of the most important State priorities was the set up of a monolithic revolutionary culture. As previously mentioned, this revolutionary culture was a very peculiar combination of some ideals and principles from Enlightenment and Marxism, and a secularized version of the Christian axiology. Through this transcendental ethnicity the state institutionalized a single and legitimate vision of the world, spiritually and gnoseologically speaking, and created a number of principles for-validating social behavior.² It also created the basis to the formation of an undifferentiated and monolithic cultural subject: the revolutionary man.

Such a transcendental culture worked as a referent from where to deal with the multiethnic design of the nation. The state considered that the different ethnic sources that were part of the national cultural heritage should be tolerated and supported so long as they do not contradict or contravene the revolutionary culture. This belief created two policies. On the one hand, in order to guarantee the preeminence of the revolutionary cultural model, the plural sources of Cuban culture were reduced to its most innocuous manifestation, which means they should be treated as folklore. On the other hand any alternative lifestyles, customs, world-views, and moral principles were placed under surveillance and in cases of open confrontation against the mainstream revolutionary culture they were legally penalized and persecuted. Probably the most salient examples of these policies were the reduction of the Afro-Cuban cultural heritage to a folkloristic status, the proscription and persecution of every cultural manifestation of religiosity and the criminalization of social prac-

2. In the implementation of this policy the educative system, the media, and the corporative mass organizations played an important role, being the channels of socialization and diffusion of the revolutionary culture.

tices that, labeled as deviant, did not fit into the core principles of the revolutionary culture (Morales Dominguez, 2007; Swayer, Mark Q., 2006).³

In the 1970s, the Constitution of the Cuban Socialist State was issued. This constitution legally reaffirmed the principal norms related to discrimination. First, it delineated the equality of the rights of all citizens and it subjected citizens to the same obligations. Second, the constitution made specific reference to the state refusal to discriminate in regards to race, color, gender, or national origin. Third, the state granted individual rights to all Cubans such as the opportunity to enter into the political system, the government, and the labor sector based solely on personal merit and abilities; mobility in the Armed Forces; access to the equal salary for equal work; access to teaching, medical assistance, housing; attention in public service establishments; and the enjoyment of recreation (Serviat, 1986; Constitución, 1999).

In this same decade, the Cuban state institutionalized atheism as official state position toward spiritual, moral and cognitive beliefs and practices. This reaffirmed the foundations to maintain a restrictive policy towards religious practices and to consolidate the culturally homogenous system.⁴ Besides this state atheism reinforced the legitimization of a single model of cognitive, spiritual and epistemological construction of reality, materialized this time in the historical and dialectical materialism perspective.

As a consequence of all those measures, during the first twenty-five years of the Revolution, the institutional dimension of discrimination was

3. During the last years of the 60s and during the 70s there was a severe process of persecution and criminalization of the Afro-Cuban religions (Swayer, 2006). Also the state implemented legal measures in order to enforce the assimilation of the revolutionary culture, such as the Law on Loafing that played both a preventive and a punitive role to control deviance.

4. The institutionalization of atheism brought with it the establishment of a set of non written restrictions to religious people: the restriction of membership in the Communist Party, the limitation of their access to decision making positions in the government, the denial of access to social political organizations, and the imposition of restrictions on their access to higher levels of the educative system. All of these non written restrictions excluded religious people from the process of social mobility and access to the political realm, and as a consequence created incentives to silence and hide non-mainstream identities and beliefs.

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considerably reduced. The preliminary results led the state to declare that Cuba had eradicated racial discrimination (De la Fuente, 2001; Serviat, 1986).

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In 1985, at the Third Communist Party Congress, the institutional space where the Cuban State defines its politic, economic and social agenda, Fidel and Raúl Castro made speeches in which they recognized that racism still persisted in Cuba. (de la Fuente, 1998; Morales Dominguez, 2007) Particularly they identified the problem in regard to the underrepresentation of Afro-descendants in major positions in the political system. For the first time in the Cuban Revolution period, it was recognized that an egalitarian legal framework based on colorblind principles had not been enough to eliminate the long term effects of racial inequalities.

With the disappearance of the Communist block at the beginning of the 1990s, Cuba experienced an extreme economic and political crisis. To address this situation, the state saw it necessary to redefine some of its ideological and structural foundations. The economic lull produced the weakening of the citizen consensus favoring the state political project. In light of this, the state decided to implement some modifications in the political realm.

The principal project was to move to a more inclusive political model, more flexible in the way of defining ideas such as revolutionary merit and ideological commitment. In addition, the ideological foundations of the revolutionary culture was redefined, acquiring a more nationalist fashion and a less Marxist orthodox content. The state sought to move from a model focused on the homogenization of lifestyles, cognitive foundations, basic assumptions of action, and moral principles to a heterogeneous one. In short, the state modified the very foundations of what meant to be a revolutionary subject, in order to enhance the amount of potential supporters to the endangered Revolution.

On the other hand, the crisis had a negative impact over the political and ideological basis of the socialist regime. Facing the economic juncture, the state used market as a complementary mechanism of regulation of the national economy. This decision brought back to Cuba some of the

characteristics of a market society, such as social stratification in accordance with market regulation and the presence of social inequalities in consumption and quality of life.

This new social reality allowed individuals with better social networks in the labor sphere and with better links to the Cuban community abroad (within which whites were the absolute majority) to have better conditions to face the critical situation (De la Fuente, 2001; Swayer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007). The economic crisis revealed that those groups that historically occupied the lowest levels in the society still continued in this position. Particularly, in the case of the Afro-Cubans, the crisis exposed that they were underrepresented in the best-paid jobs, which translated into a lowest quality of life. It was also visible that they experience more difficulty being hired in more lucrative jobs (and therefore those with more social prestige), such as those related to the tourist sector and state firms in charge of managing businesses with foreign capital (De la Fuente, 2001).⁵

On a visible level, the new reality put the two pillars of the state anti-inequality agenda into crisis: the color, gender and class blindness principle and the principle of revolutionary merit and ideological compromise with the regime as criteria to evaluate the social worth of individuals and to guarantee their social mobility. In 1998, at the Fifth National Congress of the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, Fidel Castro made public his interest in including in the state agenda the social concern facing the existence of racial biases in the labor sphere that were impacting social mobility. This interest was reaffirmed five years later in the congress *Pedagogia 2003*, and in 2004, in the 8th Congress of the Communist Youth. (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

Following the same position stated in 1985, the state recognized that even when the measures it had implemented have contributed to a higher level of racial equality in Cuba, its achievements fell short of being optimal. The principal outcome of this process of “awareness” would be the progressive modification in the way of dealing with racial issues.⁶ The

5. The principal reasons cited were the “lower” level of civil and scholarly education and the problems associated with the “low level” of “suitability in physical appearance” to perform certain social roles (De la Fuente, 2001).

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first change the state agenda dealing with racial inequalities experienced was in the way of perceiving racism. (Morales Dominguez, 2007)

Previously, the state perceived a close relation between racism and the societies divided into class, identifying the former as a consequence of the latter. This definition interpreted racism as a phenomenon that lacks of an independent institutional foundation made of long term internalized values and practices. It also overlooked that a “classless” society could be a racialized society. Facing the fact that in a classless society racism could persist, the state was in some regard forced to amend this point of view. The first shift was recognizing racism as an autonomous phenomenon that could survive beyond its historical context of origin. The second modification was acknowledging that racism was not a static phenomenon, but it could transform itself according to the particularities of a new context, with new discursive and practical resources and new strategies of justification (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

The third change was in the understanding of racism solely as acts of open discrimination, which means that it only existed when it manifests itself as visible behavior in discriminatory practices, specifically in limitation to rights and access to goods, services and opportunities. The state would start paying attention to indirect racism and hidden discrimination. These elements would include deep-rooted systems of beliefs, shared values, socialization that is carried out in private spaces, and the racist beliefs that penetrate public space without converting into open demonstrations of the limitation of rights and access to goods, services, and opportunities. (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

Coupled with the redefinition of racism as a social problem, the Cuban state started a progressive modification of the outline of its solution. This new outline would be complemented by some non-racism oriented policies that will be commented in the next section. In perceiving racism as an autonomous phenomenon that could survive beyond its historical context of origin, the state tacitly recognized that racism should receive a focalized attention. The establishment of a society based on the principle of color blindness had meant the creation of a society based on

6. This process of “awareness” started explicitly in 1998 at the Fifth National Congress of the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba. However its consolidation took place after 2003.

the right to equal treatment for all individuals. However, it was visible that the implementation of equal treatment without truly equal conditions had contributed to the preservation of inequality among individuals of different racial groups. The state acknowledged that in a society that had inherited profound differences in education, economy, and channels of identity formation, there is an inequality of origin that can hardly be repaired voluntarily without an explicit aid from the state. (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

During this period, the Cuban state issued both racism oriented and non-racism oriented policies that had an impact upon racial dynamics. The first policy was enunciated in the 80s. In 1985-86, as a decision made in the Third Communist Party Congress, the state considered pertinent to design an affirmative action that guarantee a proportional numerical participation of Afro-descendants in positions of political and administrative leadership. This policy was not fully and systematically implemented, taking into account that at the beginning of the 90s the state had to re-define its political priorities as a consequence of the deep economic and political crisis that Cuba got into during that decade (Sawyer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007).

At the beginning of the 90s the Cuban state implemented some non-racism oriented policies that had an important impact in racial dynamics in Cuba. One of the first changes in facing the political and economic crisis was the substitution of state atheism for state secularism. This new status softened both the penalization and persecution of alternative lifestyles, customs, worldviews, and moral principles. In addition it legalized the free public choice of beliefs and gave legal coverage to the existence of certain expressions of cultural pluralism. Only the open confrontations against a more relaxed and less restrictive mainstream revolutionary culture remained under surveillance and legally penalized and persecuted. The substitution of state atheism for state secularism also eliminated the institutional barriers that had excluded religious people from the state benefits (educational mobility, politic mobility, and job access) and the state profit system. It derogated the imposition of restrictions on their access to the higher levels of the educative system.

At the same time, in 1992, the state gave its consent to the acceptance of religious people in the Communist Party. This opened an institutional door to their political mobility and derogated the limitations to their

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access to decision making positions in the government. As a corollary at the beginning of the first decade of this century, as a decision without historical precedents, the state granted recognition of black religious organizations (Abakuas, Cultural Association Yoruba) as civil associations. It eliminated the official public stigma over Afro-Cuban religions and allowed them to reach public status.

In regard to the racism oriented actions the state's main point has been defining the factual singularities of racism as public problem in order to design a social policy. On the one hand the state considered pertinent to explore the problem of emerging inequalities (political, economic, and social), taking race as one of the main variables, in order to measure its social impact and to design a social policy to fight against it. The state's priority in that regard would be to define the relationship between racial inequality and job access, level of income, quality of life and access to decision making positions in the political and economic spheres.⁷ On the other hand, the state also promoted researches focused on analyzing the persistence of racial prejudice in the population.⁸ In this case its main interest is to explore the role that the public models of socialization used by the media and the educational system were playing in the reproduction of racial prejudices and racist representations. Finally, the state authorized studies focused on recovering the multiraciality and multiethnicity as elements of national identity, and also making visible the role of the different racial groups in the nation formation (Arandia 2005; Morales Dominguez, 2007).

This process of exploration and definition of the factual singularities of racism as a social problem has been conducted from three state institu-

7. Since 2002, the Anthropology Center (CITMA) has been researching issues of social marginality and social mobility that have included race as a variable of analysis. Also Catauro the Fernando Ortiz Foundation's journal has been publishing articles related to the topic of marginality and race. In 2007 the publisher Fuente Viva, published Esteban Morales Dominguez's book *Desafios de la problematica racial en Cuba*, a book that explicitly presents a critical approach to the racial politics in revolutionary Cuba.

8. There are a number of examples in that sense. In 1996 the official journal *Temas* published a group o of articles focused on race and racism in Cuba (*Temas*, No. 7, July-September 1996). In 2001 was published "The Black and Social Representation" a research that has being awarded in the national essay contest "Pinos nuevos". In 2005, magazine *La gaceta de Cuba* (January-February 2005) was totally focused on the topic of race and racism.

tions: the Anthropology Center (CITMA), the Fernando Ortiz Foundation and the Economy Institute. In addition, the project “Color Cubano” (Cuban Color), that belongs to the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, works as a space for discussing racist manifestations that affect the principle of racial equality in regard to access to social goods and services; to recover the multiraciality as an element of national identity; to make visible the role of the Afro-Cuban population in the nation formation; and to analyze the role of mass media and educational system socialization and education sources in regard to the formation of racial prejudices. (Arandia, 2005) This project gathers academics in the social sciences, historians, actors and community activists.

The principal outcome of this policy has been the creation of data bases that have gathered statistical information about racial distribution in job access, level of income, quality of life, marginality levels and access to decision making positions in the political and economic spheres (Morales Dominguez, 2007). The project Color Cubano, on the other hand, has been organizing forums, seminars and book presentations related to the goal of making visible the role of the Afro-Cuban population in the nation formation.⁹ This project has been, also, giving public recognition to Afro-Cuban intellectuals and politicians making visible their contribution to the national history.¹⁰

Challenges

The new official approach to racial issues of the Cuban socialist State faces two main challenges. First, the actions against racism should move from the phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to the next phases of design and implementation of policies. Second, in order to ensure the efficacy of a race oriented policy it is necessary that the issue of racism become a state priority.

As discussed before, the current race oriented policies of the state are in a preliminary phase, which means in the moment of gathering informa-

9. <http://www.lacult.org/noticias/showitem.php?lg=1&id=516>; http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2003/n095_03/095_06.html;

10. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2008/02/06/cultura/artic11.html>; <http://www.cuba-travel.us/dtc/shownews.aspx?c=24776&lng=1>

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tion and defining the problem, its characteristics and impact, in order to design a social policy. The first challenge that the state should face is precisely to proceed to design the policy and implement it.

The design and implementation of a race oriented policy should remove the obstacles that cause groups to remain economically, educationally, politically, and socially unequal and also the social order of social validation that is blind to previous disadvantages. This removal implies the design and implementation of compensatory measures and should be coupled by changes in the legal framework and the implementation of a new institutional arrangement. It is necessary to modify the colorblind legal system in order to design a new one that recognize and, more important, to legalize positive differentiated treatment to disadvantaged racial groups. This new legal framework should identify some racial groups as moral minorities whose undeserved disadvantages convert them into a vulnerable group that requires special state support. In addition, the implementation of compensatory measures demands the modification of the current colorblind current state institutions and their conversion in racially proactive ones. These institutions should be able of operating with positive measures to reverse the effects of the accumulated racial disadvantages.

The second challenge that the new official approach should face is to ensure that the both the design and the implementation of race oriented policies become a state priority. It depends on how the state manages its agenda of high priority issues. Cuba is getting in a transitional moment, where the state demands to promote macro social changes in a controlled political environment (political themes, social problems, social demands and possible reforms). In this condition it seems logical to think that the state will try to reduce the amount of issues that it should pay attention to. At the same time this transitional moment demands that the state enhance its legitimacy basis. Designing and implementing racism oriented policies could work as a mechanism of reaching social support, at least from the racial groups that will receive the benefit of such policies.

It has been a common place in Cuban revolutionary history that racial issues have been used strategically in accordance to the political circumstances. In some contexts of crisis or transition the racial issues have been delayed or literally expelled from the state priority list. Both the period 1962-1985 and the first five years of the 90s are examples of this. Also in

other moments of state transition, such as the first two years of the revolution and the last ten years, the racial issues have reached visibility as a theme of political importance. The exclusion or inclusion of racial issues in the state agenda has been related to the perception of its dichotomist meaning on the one hand, as source of social division and on the other hand, as a source of legitimacy. Taking this into account, the challenge is to enforce the meaning of racial issues as a matter of legitimacy in order to ensure its inclusion in the high priority list of the state.

Conclusions

This paper analyzed the role that the agenda and the policies of the Cuban Socialist state have placed in combating racism in Cuba. It was evidenced that the Cuban state's agenda and policies against racism could be divided in two moments: 1959-85 and 1985-present. During the period 1959-85 both the agenda and the policies of the State that had an impact upon racial issues were not race oriented. The main goal of state policies was the elimination of the structural dimension of social inequality in Cuba. The period 1985-present has been characterized by the progressive recognition of the persistence of social inequalities in Cuba, being racial inequalities the most salient in the state's point of view. Unlike the precedent period, in the last twenty years some preliminary state actions have been taken in order to create a racism oriented policies.

In its second section, this paper explored the two challenges the Cuban socialist State should face, in regard its new official approach to racial issues. The first challenge is to move from a phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to the phases of design and implementation of policies against racism. The second challenge that the new official approach should face is to ensure that the both the design and the implementation of race oriented policies become state priorities.

Conclusions

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CHAPTER 23

Benjamin no llegó a la Habana

Rafael Rojas

Resumen: Este ensayo propone un recorrido por la recepción de Walter Benjamin en la Cuba socialista, a partir de la eventualidad histórica de que el importante pensador marxista viajara a la Habana, en el verano de 1940, para luego reunirse con Theodor W. Adorno en Nueva York. La conclusión que ofrece el trabajo es que la recepción de Benjamin en la Cuba marxista ha sido sumamente limitada y que, apenas en el período postsoviético, es decir, de 1992 a la fecha, comienza a leerse con cierta regularidad por los más jóvenes escritores de la isla y la diáspora. El Benjamin que interesa en esas lecturas no es, precisamente, el filósofo marxista sino el escritor fragmentario y suicida.

El 15 de julio de 1940, día del cumpleaños 48 de Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, desde Nueva York, escribió la última carta a su amigo, por entonces fugitivo en el santuario de Lourdes. Adorno le informaba a Benjamin que debía trasladarse a Marsella para que el consulado norteamericano en ese puerto le expidiera una visa, con la cual embarcarse rumbo a Estados Unidos. Para alentar a su amigo, atrapado por la ocupación nazi de Francia, Adorno decía a Benjamin que él y Max Horkheimer “no se limitaban al intento de traerle a Estados Unidos, sino que estaban probando otras alternativas. Una de ellas es la posibilidad de prestarle como profesor invitado a la Universidad de la Habana.”¹ Una vez en esa ciudad caribeña, Benjamin podría trasladarse fácilmente a Nueva York e incorporarse a los trabajos del International Institute of Social Research.

En su respuesta a Adorno, el 2 de agosto desde Lourdes, Benjamin no pudo ocultar su alegría: en medio de la “inseguridad que traerá el próximo

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Correspondencia (1928-1940)*, Madrid, Editorial Trotta, 1998, p. 322.

día” y del “derrumbamiento en el abismo,” una posible notificación del consulado de Marsella lo “movía a la esperanza.” Y agregaba: “tomo nota de su negociación con la Habana... Estoy plenamente convencido de que usted hace todo lo que está en su mano, o más de lo posible. Mi temor es que el tiempo de que disponemos resulte ser mucho más corto de lo supuesto.”² A pesar de las restricciones a su libertad de movimiento en territorio francés, Benjamin se trasladó a Marsella a mediados de agosto y permaneció en esa ciudad hasta el 23 de septiembre de 1940. El *affidavit* gestionado por Adorno y Horkheimer había llegado a las oficinas consulares, pero, para embarcarse se requería un visado francés que Benjamin, como fugitivo o *apatride*, no podía conseguir.

Cuando Benjamin llegó a Port Bou el 25 de septiembre, luego de caminar nueve horas seguidas, por la “ruta de Líster,” se encontró con que las autoridades aduanales de Cataluña exigían el mismo visado de salida francés para autorizar el tránsito por España. El jefe de la policía fronteriza tenía instrucciones de que todas las personas “sin nacionalidad determinada” fueran puestas a disposición de la más cercana gendarmería francesa. La noche de aquel día, en Port Bou, el autor de *Calle de dirección única* (1928) se suicidó con una sobredosis de tabletas de morfina, que llevaba en el bolsillo desde Marsella y que, según le comentara a Arthur Koestler en una taberna de aquel puerto, era suficiente para matar a un caballo: “en una situación sin salida, no tengo otra elección que poner aquí un punto final. Mi vida va a terminar en un pequeño pueblo de los Pirineos donde nadie me conoce.”³

La carta del 2 de agosto a Adorno está firmada en el número 8 de la rue Notre Dame, en Lourdes, desde donde Benjamin se desplazó a Marsella. Es probable que sus últimos días de cierta serenidad hayan sido aquellos que pasó cerca del santuario, esperanzado con su posible embarque hacia el Caribe. En el tono de aquella carta, había un espíritu de resignación o de cristiano estoicismo—“he visto en estos últimos meses múltiples casos no ya de pérdida de la existencia burguesa, sino de derrumbamiento en el abismo, de modo que toda garantía me da un sostén

2. *Ibid*, p. 323-324.

3. *Ibid*, p. 325. Ver, también, Arthur Koestler, *Autobiografía. La escritura invisible*, Madrid, Debate, 2000, p. 466.

que si en lo externo puede ser precario, en lo interno es menos problemático”—que es difícil no relacionar con la atmósfera de Lourdes.⁴ Es tentador imaginar la lectura que habría hecho Benjamin de *La canción de Bernadette* (1942), la novela que Franz Werfel escribió a partir de su experiencia mística en el monasterio, en el verano del 40, y, partir de la misma, remontar la relación de Benjamin con el catolicismo.

Werfel, escritor perteneciente a la gran tradición de la literatura centroeuropea de principios del siglo XX (Kafka, Schnitzler, Hoffmannsthal, Musil, Broch, Meyrink, Roth), que Benjamin conocía muy bien, había dedicado buena parte de su obra a bordear las fronteras entre judaísmo y cristianismo. En su relato *La muerte del pequeño burgués*, hay una escena en que un judío, que se ha convertido al catolicismo por la presión social del antisemitismo, se arrepiente de dejar escapar, en medio de una conversación, la frase “que conste que no soy judío. Soy partidario de la Virgen Santísima.”⁵ Werfel desarrolló plenamente su interés en el catolicismo y su creencia en la traductibilidad entre confesiones judías y cristianas en el libro que dedicó a la veneración mariana de Lourdes. Allí encabezará su reconstrucción del milagro de la primavera de 1858 -su conocimiento de la época de Napoleón III era exhaustivo, como proba en la pieza teatral *Juárez y Maximiliano*- con la siguiente confesión: “I have dared to sing the song of Bernadette, although I am not a Catholic but a Jew; and I drew courage for this undertaking from a far older and far more unconscious vow of mine.”⁶

La última esperanza de Benjamin fue atravesar España, llegar a Portugal, país neutral en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y desde allí viajar a Nueva York, como lograron hacerlo tantos intelectuales y artistas judíos (Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Heinrich Mann, Hannah Arendt, Albert Hirschman y el propio Werfel y su esposa, Alma Mahler) con la ayuda del legendario editor norteamericano Varian Fry. Sin embargo, en las semanas que pasó en Marsella, durante aquel verano angustioso, la posibilidad de embarcarse hacia la Habana y permanecer algún tiempo en esa ciudad

4. *Ibid*, p. 323.

5. Franz Werfel, *La muerte del pequeño burgués*, México, Ediciones El Equilibrista, 1992, p. 91.

6. Franz Werfel, *The song of Bernadette*, New York, The Viking Press, 1942, p. 7.

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debió rondar su imaginación. Aunque Adorno se refirió siempre al “plan de la Habana” como “algo demasiado lejos de materializarse,” que “no debía considerarse como una posibilidad inmediata,” en sus últimas cartas Benjamin contempló la estancia en la ciudad caribeña como una opción factible. No hay manera de documentar la fantasía habanera de Walter Benjamin, pero sí de reconstruir el proyecto tentativo de Adorno y Horkheimer de “prestar” a su amigo a la Universidad de la Habana.

En aquellos meses de 1940, mientras Benjamin vagaba por los Pirineos franceses, la política exterior cubana, en consonancia con la norteamericana, experimentó un giro sustancial frente al nazismo. Todavía en el verano de 1939, el gobierno cubano, encabezado civilmente por Francisco Laredo Bru—un veterano de la guerra de independencia, negociador y melindroso—pero militarmente controlado por el entonces coronel Fulgencio Batista, había negado la entrada al buque Saint Louis, en el que viajaban 936 refugiados judíos desde Hamburgo, la mayoría de los cuales fue devuelta a Europa y pereció en los campos de concentración de Hitler. Aquella medida estuvo precedida por una intensa campaña antisemita en la prensa de la isla, encabezada por el Partido Nacional Socialista Cubano de Juan Prohías y respaldada por la colonia española franquista, que tenía a su favor el más importante periódico de la Cuba prerrevolucionaria: *Diario de la Marina*.

La escandalosa tragedia del Saint Louis, narrada luego por Max Morgan Witts y Gordon Thomas y llevada al cine por Stuart Rosenberg en *Voyage of the Damed* (1976), contribuyó a que el nuevo gobierno de Fulgencio Batista abandonara la “neutralidad” y decidiera inscribirse en la estrategia antifascista de Roosevelt. A partir del verano de 1940, el American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee de Nueva York, y su representante en la Habana, el incansable Jacob Brandon, redoblaron sus esfuerzos para lograr el arribo a Cuba de decenas de miles de judíos. Como ha estudiado la historiadora Margalit Bejarano, muchos de aquellos refugiados, en vez de seguir rumbo a Nueva York, se establecieron en la Habana, hasta que veinte años después otro totalitarismo, el castrista, perturbara sus vidas y los obligara a un nuevo exilio.

Fue en esa fugaz coyuntura de un Caribe antifascista, donde Hemingway perseguía submarinos nazis y Trujillo firmaba un tratado de amistad con Cordell Hull, que Adorno y Horkheimer pensaron trasladar a Benjamin a la Habana. Entonces las relaciones del medio universitario haba-

nero con Nueva York eran, por demás, sumamente fluidas. El Instituto de las Españas, fundado por Federico de Onís en la Universidad de Columbia, y la facultad de Lengua y Literatura Hispánicas de esa institución, acogían a importantes intelectuales cubanos como Fernando Ortiz y Jorge Mañach. Por aquellos años, la prestigiosa *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, editada en Columbia, dio a conocer en Estados Unidos a destacados escritores de la isla como Juan Marinello, Nicolás Guillén, Félix Lizaso, Eugenio Florit y Agustín Acosta.

En 1940 llegaba como representante consular a Nueva York el poeta Eugenio Florit, quien luego terminaría, como Mañach, afiliándose al *Barnard College*. Curiosamente, Florit, aunque nacido en Madrid en 1903, había vivido hasta sus 15 años en Port Bou, aquel puerto fronterizo donde se suicidó Benjamin, en el que su padre trabajó como alcalde de aduana. Los poemas del cuaderno *Niño de ayer* (1940), incluido en el libro *Poema mío* (1920-1944), se inspiraron en las mismas montañas cubiertas de flores amarillas, los mismos acantilados grises y el mismo mar azul oscuro que vio Benjamin en su última tarde. En 1940, en Nueva York, mientras Benjamin se suicidaba en los altos de una fonda catalana, Florit soñaba con el mar de Port Bou: “ahora lo sueño/ azul bajo la pesca iluminada,/ azul y suave, hundido entre las rocas.../ negro en la noche acariciando tumbas/ y mármol roto en escaleras muertas,/ y columnas caídas de su altura.” Un mar sobre el que volaban pájaros insomnes, que morían secretamente: “viven en cálido nido/ aves de tu luz, inquietas/ por un juego de saetas/ ilusionadas del cielo,/ profundas en el desvelo/ de llevar muertes secretas.”⁷

¿Qué ambiente filosófico habría encontrado Benjamin en la Habana de 1940? Como en Madrid, Buenos Aires, México o cualquier ciudad hispanoamericana, se habría topado con algunos lectores de Nietzsche, como Alberto Lamar Schweyer, de Schopenhauer, como Alejandro Ruiz Cadalzo, de Husserl, como Antonio Hernández Travieso, de Bergson, como Luis A. Baralt, de Heidegger, como Humberto Piñera Llera, de Kant, como Máximo Castro Turbiano, y, sobre todo, de Ortega y Gasset, como Jorge Mañach y tantos otros, y de Marx, como Juan Marinello y

7. Eugenio Florit, *Poema mío, 1920-1944*, México, Editorial Letras de México, 1947, pp. 27-30. Ver también Cintio Vitier, *Cincuenta años de poesía cubana* (1902-1952), La Habana, Dirección de Cultura del Ministerio de Educación, 1952, pp. 196-205.

tantos otros.⁸ ¿Qué interlocución habría logrado el Benjamin maduro, de vuelta ya del judaísmo radical de *La metafísica de la juventud* (1916) y, también, de la fuerte gravitación hacia un marxismo ortodoxo, que se encuentra en *Tentativas sobre Brecht* y otros textos de principios de los 30, escritos bajo la influencia de Lukács, con una filosofía del Caribe hispano, que oscilaba entre el marxismo acartonado de Marinello y el existencialismo elusivo de Piñera Llera?⁹

Huellas de lo no leído

El Benjamin maduro, el que se suicida en Port Bou, es, como se sabe, el más fragmentario, el más escurridizo, el que mejor escapa a las seducciones doctrinales de sus amigos. Escapa del proselitismo judío de Gershom Scholem y del magisterio marxista de Bertolt Brecht.¹⁰ Un Benjamin exiliado en París y a punto de volver a exiliarse, en un despliegue infinito de la condición del exilio, que terminará por convertirlo en un desterrado de la cultura europea, fundamentalmente alemana y francesa, de sus lenguas y sus ideologías: un desterrado de sí que asume la muerte como el último acto de desplazamiento y traducción.¹¹ Es en ese distanciamiento de sí, que moviliza la curiosidad intelectual hacia múltiples horizontes, a la manera de un coleccionista, un bibliotecario o un archivista, donde habría que encontrar la anatomía del espíritu benjaminiano.

Lo mismo en sus estudios sobre Goethe y Kafka, que en sus grandes ensayos sobre Baudelaire y Proust, Benjamin se asoma a las literaturas y las lenguas alemana y francesa como un extranjero o un inmigrante. Entre el texto y sus ojos se ha interpuesto una distancia de conceptos—arte, ciu-

8. Pablo Guadarrama y Miguel Rojas Gómez, *El pensamiento filosófico en Cuba: 1900-1960*, La Habana, Editorial Félix Varela, 1998, pp. 134-171; Alexis Jardines, *Filosofía cubana in nuce. Ensayo de historia intelectual*, Madrid, Colibrí, 2005, pp. 61-80.

9. Walter Benjamín, *La metafísica de la juventud*, Barcelona, Paidós, 1993, pp. 99-106; Walter Benjamín, *Tentativas sobre Brecht*, Madrid, Taurus, 1999, pp. 9-14.

10. Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin y su ángel*, México, FCE, 1998, pp. 37-75; Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin. Historia de una amistad*, Barcelona, Mondadori, 2007, pp. 31-96; Walter Benjamín, *Tentativas sobre Brecht*, Madrid, Taurus, 1999, pp. 137-152.

11. Elizabeth Collingwood-Selby, *Walter Benjamin. La lengua del exilio*, Santiago de Chile, Arcis-Lom, 1997, pp. 77-112.

dad, objetos, memoria, burocracia, moda, multitud, tiempo—que le permiten internarse en un territorio desconocido, fijando la mirada en rincones inadvertidos por el lector común. Ese distanciamiento produce, por momentos, lecturas instrumentales, en las que lo que se lee no es más que el eco de otra lectura, como cuando aprovecha *Las afinidades electivas* de Goethe para criticar la teoría del matrimonio de Kant, en *La metafísica de las costumbres*, y de paso ajustar cuentas con ese filósofo, que fue uno de sus genios tutelares, cuando encuentra en Proust, no una disquisición sobre la memoria, sino una refutación de las fronteras entre los géneros literarios, o cuando desentraña una filosofía de los relojes en *El spleen de París* o un vislumbre de la multitud en *Las flores del mal* de Baudelaire.¹²

Benjamin parecía concordar con su admirado Hugo von Hoffmannsthal en la idea de que un escritor debe amar su cultura y su lengua como un “desterrado ama el humo de las cabañas desde su casa.”¹³ Esa lejanía no sólo era recomendable, según él, para acercarse lentamente a los clásicos de la literatura, sino también a los grandes sistemas filosóficos e ideológicos. De ahí, como ha recordado Scholem, su simpatía por Kant, no por Hegel, y su personal aproximación al materialismo histórico. La “acedía,” la “pereza de corazón,” que Benjamin asociaba con el universo de la historia materialista—mercado, técnica, urbe, dinero, industria, capital, burguesía, proletariado—tenía que ver con lo que, siguiendo la teología medieval, él llamaba el “fundamento originario de la tristeza.”¹⁴ La frase de Flaubert a propósito de que sólo un historiador muy triste es capaz de resucitar Cartago, que tanto le gustaba, capta la clave del ejercicio histórico, el cual, según Benjamin, debe practicarse melancólicamente, pero sin nostalgia.

Walter Benjamin no llegó a la Habana, pero pasó el invierno de 1926 en Moscú. Los dos meses que vivió en la capital del comunismo, a donde

12. Walter Benjamin, *Dos ensayos sobre Goethe*, Barcelona, Gedisa, 2000, pp. 13-47; Charles Baudelaire, *El Spleen de París*, México, FCE, 2000, pp. 61-62; Walter Benjamin, *Ensayos escogidos*, México D.F., Ediciones Coyoacán, 2006, pp. 7-61.

13. Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, *Instantes griegos y otros sueños*, Madrid, Cuatro Ediciones, 1998, p. 44.

14. Walter Benjamin, *La dialéctica en suspenso*. Fragmentos sobre la historia, Santiago de Chile, Arcis-Lom Ediciones, 1995, p. 52.

llegó tras los pasos de Asja Lacis, de quien estaba salvajemente enamorado, le bastaron para observar la estalinización del bolchevismo y rechazar la censura de obras teatrales, literarias y pictóricas y la persecución del pensamiento crítico. En su *Diario de Moscú* (1927), como un perito de la libertad de expresión, anota la censura de la puesta de Stanislavski de *Los días de los Turbin*, adaptación teatral de la novela *La guardia blanca* (1924) de Mijaíl Bulgakov, los *pogroms* antisemitas en Ucrania, la estigmatización de Trotski, Zinoviev, Kámenev y otros líderes bolcheviques, la “universalidad e inmediatez carentes de método que caracterizan a los planteamientos completamente idealistas y metafísicos de la *Introducción al materialismo histórico*” de Bujarin, la “nueva iconolatría rusa” del culto al retrato, el busto y la momia de Lenin, la fascinación soviética con la tecnología, el capitalismo de Estado y la resurrección del realismo decimonónico en la literatura y las artes.¹⁵

El estalinismo, según Benjamin, no era más que un “giro reaccionario,” desde el punto de vista ideológico y cultural, disfrazado de institucionalidad comunista. Los intelectuales, bajo un régimen así, conforman la “vanguardia,” no de una ideología avanzada, sino de una incultura secular. El propio Benjamin sería víctima de ese “ejército de incultos,” cuando el Comisario del Pueblo para la Instrucción, Anatoli Lunacharski, censuró su ensayo sobre Goethe para la *Enciclopedia soviética* porque la frase “los revolucionarios alemanes no eran ilustrados y los ilustrados alemanes no eran revolucionarios” le pareció una “manifestación contra toda clase de Revolución y contra todo Estado.”¹⁶ Y tenía razón Lunacharski—los censores siempre tienen razón—ya que Benjamin observaba en la Revolución de 1917 el mismo proceso de involución ideológica que, a su juicio, había caracterizado a la Revolución de 1789: un cambio político producido por ideas redentoras que, al configurarse como poder, se vuelve contra las mismas ideas que lo generaron:

Una historia de la incultura de tales características enseñaría la manera en que, entre las capas incultas, un proceso de siglos genera la energía revolucionaria a partir de su metamorfosis religiosa, y los intelectuales

15. Walter Benjamin, *Diario de Moscú*, Madrid, Taurus, 1988, pp. 50 y 64-66.

16. *Ibid*, pp. 161-163.

no aparecerían siempre como un ejército de simples renegados de la burguesía, sino como línea de avanzada de la incultura.¹⁷

La educación “revolucionaria,” dice Benjamin, es un implacable adoctrinamiento de jóvenes, a quienes:

Lo revolucionario no les llega como experiencia, sino en forma de consignas. Se intenta suprimir la dinámica del proceso revolucionario dentro de la vida estatal: queriendo o sin querer, se ha iniciado la restauración, pero tratan de almacenar en la juventud la desacreditada energía revolucionaria como energía eléctrica dentro de una pila. Y eso no funciona.¹⁸

El viaje a la URSS, en 1926, lejos de encauzar su marxismo por vía de la militancia comunista, lo reafirmó en su moderna vocación de intelectual autónomo: “ser comunista en un Estado bajo el dominio del proletariado supone renunciar completamente a la independencia personal.”¹⁹ Aquella experiencia lo persuadió de la necesidad de “evitar ciertos extremos del materialismo” en su trabajo intelectual y de acogerse a su personal interpretación del libro *Historia y conciencia de clases* de Lukács. Según Benjamin, el mensaje central del marxista húngaro era que el materialismo histórico sólo podía aplicarse plenamente a la naciente historia del movimiento obrero, por lo que su funcionalidad para el estudio de las épocas antigua, medieval y moderna era muy limitada. En su siguiente libro, luego del viaje a Moscú, *Dirección única* (1928), Benjamin avanzará en esta apropiación crítica del método del materialismo histórico:

La idea de la lucha de clases puede inducir a error. No se trata de una prueba de fuerza en la que se decide la cuestión de quien vence o quien sucumbe, ni de un combate a cuyo término le irá bien al vencedor y mal al vencido. Pensar así es disimular los hechos bajo un tinte romántico... La historia nada sabe de la mala infinitud contenida en la imagen de esos dos luchadores eternamente en pugna.²⁰

17. Ibid, pp. 37-38

18. Ibid, p. 69

19. Ibid, p. 94.

20. Walter Benjamin, *Dirección única*, Madrid, Alfaguara, 2005, p. 64.

Junto con esta visión acotada del materialismo, que lo acompañará hasta sus *Tesis de filosofía de la historia* (1940), Benjamin descubrió en Moscú una manera de leer la ciudad, un modo de practicar el *flaneur*, que él mismo estudiaría en el París de Baudelaire, fijando la mirada en los objetos que produce una cultura determinada. Flores, billetes, monedas, relojes, teléfonos, gramófonos, coches, juguetes, trenes... eran los medios de desplazamiento y contacto de una subjetividad que, en resumidas cuentas, no era muy diferente en Moscú y en Berlín. También en la Alemania de la República de Weimar había un Ministerio del Interior, un lenguaje imperial, una bandera, un himno, un nacionalismo maniqueo, una burocracia y un “ejército de la incultura,” con su oficialidad y su soldadesca de censores y manualistas.²¹

La máxima “convencer es estéril,” que presidía el cuadernito *Dirección única* (1928), puede ser leída como el iceberg de toda la estrategia intelectual de Benjamin: escritura fragmentaria, independencia teórica, desconfianza política, marxismo crítico, lectura de la ciudad, melancolía, coleccionismo, exilio. La obra de Benjamin, hasta su inconcluso *El libro de los pasajes* (1940), del cual las Tesis de filosofía de la historia son una confesión metodológica, es un permanente ejercicio de liberación. El materialismo histórico, que acompañó a Benjamin desde los años 20, no quedó fuera de aquella perenne exploración del límite. Cuando en la primera tesis, presenta esa teoría como el enano ajedrecista que, oculto bajo el disfraz de un autómatas, vence a todos sus rivales, Benjamin no está exaltando la naturaleza “invencible” del marxismo, sino aduciendo que toda perfección doctrinal no es más que apariencia o quimera de la razón.²²

Como se observa en “París, capital del siglo XIX,” “El anillo de Saturno” y otros fragmentos del *Libro de los pasajes*, el conocimiento del pasado nunca implica una reconstrucción del mismo “como verdaderamente ha sido.”²³ La intervención del historiador como sujeto, en la escritura de la historia, es inevitable, pero, además, el propio pasado,

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-46.

22. Walter Benjamin, *La dialéctica en suspenso. Fragmentos sobre la historia*, Santiago de Chile, Lom-Arcis, 1995, p. 47.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 51. Ver también Walter Benjamin, *Libro de los pasajes*, Madrid, Akal, 2005, pp. 37-49 y 877-882.

condensado en la forma más vertiginosa de experiencia de la modernidad, que es la vida urbana, sólo se manifiesta como atisbo, como vislumbre de un universo inagotable. De ahí que en la tesis quinta, Benjamin apunte que la “verdadera imagen del pretérito pasa fugazmente. Sólo como imagen que relampaguea en el instante de su cognoscibilidad para no ser vista ya más, puede el pretérito ser aferrado.”²⁴ Advertencia ésta, contra el apetito cognoscente del marxismo y a favor de retomar el legado kantiano como conciencia del límite, como elusión de la arrogancia de la razón.

Una similar vuelta a Kant, por cierto, se encuentra en otro ensayo muy leído de Benjamin, del que puede desprenderse una crítica de la Revolución más profunda que la del *Diario de Moscú* (1926). Me refiero al manoseado texto “Para una crítica de la violencia,” que frecuentemente ha sido leído como una apología del acto revolucionario, forzando un parentesco entre Benjamin, Trotski, Fanon y Guevara, cuando se trata en realidad, como indica el título, de una crítica paralela a dos tipos primordiales de violencia: la “sancionada y la no sancionada por el poder,” la “destinada a fines justos o injustos,” la “destructora y la creadora de derecho.”²⁵ Al enmarcar su crítica dentro de la “filosofía de la historia,” Benjamin buscaba colocarse en una perspectiva similar a la de Kant, en textos como *¿Qué es la ilustración?* (1784) e *Idea de una historia universal en sentido cosmopolita* (1784), para analizar fríamente el fenómeno de la violencia despótica o revolucionaria. A Benjamin, como antes a Kant y después a Habermas y Blumenberg, le interesaba impulsar una visión antimachiavélica, en la que la violencia con fines “ustos” también fuera sometida a crítica desde las vastas posibilidades de comprensión que ofrecía la razón humana. “¿Es en general posible una regulación no violenta de los conflictos?” se preguntaba. “Sin duda. Las relaciones entre personas privadas nos ofrecen ejemplos en cantidad. El acuerdo no violento surge donde quiera que la cultura de los sentimientos pone a disposición de los hombres medios puros de entendimiento.”²⁶

24. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

25. Walter Benjamin, *Ensayos escogidos*, México D.F., Ediciones Coyoacán, 2006, pp. 169-201. Ver también Walter Benjamin, *Reflections. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, New York, Schocken Books, 1986. pp. 277-300

26. *Ibid.*, p. 186. Ver también Hans Blumenberg, *La posibilidad de comprenderse*, Madrid, Editorial Síntesis, 1996, pp. 97-112.

Benjamin comprendía el fenómeno de ambas violencias—“la clase obrera organizada es hoy, junto con los estados, el único sujeto jurídico que tiene derecho a la violencia”—y su impugnación de los métodos parlamentarios lo ubicaban, claramente, en la izquierda socialista de la primera mitad del siglo XX. Sin embargo, su acendrada prevención contra el Estado lo convierte en un crítico pertinaz de cualquier forma de poder revolucionario. En sus glosas sobre *Réflexions sur la violence* (1919) de Georges Sorel, Benjamin simpatiza con la idea de una “revuelta pura y simple,” ajena a cualquier racionalismo, pretensión de cientificidad o arrobamiento utópico. Pero, precisamente, en su momento más socialista, Benjamin se vuelve más consciente de que el origen de la violencia revolucionaria se encuentra en una administración del mito, destinada a la destrucción cultural y el despotismo político. El derecho del Estado comunista, creado por la Revolución, funciona entonces como una réplica moderna de los gobiernos teocráticos de la Edad Media:

La violencia creadora de derecho, en cuanto se instaure como derecho, con el nombre de poder, no es ya un fin inmune e independiente de la violencia, sino íntima y necesariamente ligado a ésta. Creación de derecho es creación de poder, y en tal medida, un acto de inmediata manifestación de violencia. Justicia es el principio de toda finalidad divina; poder, el principio de todo derecho mítico.²⁷

Las palabras finales de aquel ensayo han sido olvidadas por los lectores “revolucionarios” de Benjamin:

Es improbable toda violencia mítica, que funda el derecho y que se puede llamar dominante. Y reprobable es también, la violencia que conserva el derecho, la violencia administrada, que la sirve. La violencia divina, que es enseña y sello, nunca instrumento de sacra ejecución, es la violencia que gobierna.²⁸

No es ahí, en la crítica del fenómeno revolucionario o en la teoría de “la memoria de los oprimidos,” donde habría que encontrar sintonías entre Benjamin, Fanon y Guevara, sino en la idea del carácter performático y movilizador de la violencia. Cuando Benjamin se asoma al mito de

27. *Ibid*, pp. 194-195.

28. *Ibid*, p. 201.

Robin Hood, el “gran delincuente,” se detiene a pensar el efecto teatral de la muerte y el sacrificio. La “admiración popular” que logra el “defensor de los pobres” es producida por la “violencia de la cual son testimonio sus acciones” y no por las ideas que dichas acciones pretenden encarnar.²⁹ El arquetipo del “gran delincuente,” descrito por Benjamin, podría relacionarse con el del “perdedor radical,” desarrollado recientemente por Hans Magnus Enzensberger.³⁰ Hay entre los hombres de la guerrilla y los hombres del terror una coincidencia insoslayable: unos y otros valoran altamente la teatralidad de la muerte, la estetización religiosa del martirio.

La crítica de la violencia de Benjamin es impensable sin el distanciamiento que implica la condición de espectador del evento revolucionario. Benjamin, como Kant, constata el entusiasmo que genera la Revolución en un sentido cosmopolita, es decir, desde la certidumbre de que el triunfo bolchevique en Rusia puede producirse en cualquier lugar del mundo.³¹ Pero él mismo nunca deja de considerarse un espectador, que afina su mirada desde el desplazamiento del viajero o el exiliado. La Revolución, como aparece desde el *Diario de Moscú* (1926), es un espectáculo que, para ser percibido en su plenitud, debe contemplarse desde la libertad del exilio. El sujeto inmerso en la dinámica revolucionaria, lo mismo que el proletario y el burgués arrastrados por el torbellino moderno, que Marx atisbó desde la distancia de un gentleman victoriano, carece de la perspectiva histórica que requiere la libre reconstrucción del pasado.

Ese marxismo del espectador ha hecho de Benjamin un autor muy leído en la América Latina de las dos últimas décadas. Su condición de gran lector, reacio a ideologías y doctrinas, lo convierte en una figura reverencial dentro de una comunidad intelectual fácilmente seducible por ideólogos y doctrinarios. América Latina, región despreciada por los clásicos del marxismo y que, a su vez, probablemente posea, hoy, la mayor cantidad de marxistas que quedan en el mundo, ha descubierto a Benjamin en

29. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

30. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *El perdedor radical. Ensayo sobre los hombres del terror*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 2007, pp. 7-67.

31. Emmanuel Kant, *Filosofía de la historia*, México, FCE, 1978, pp. 25-65. Ver también Jean Francois Lyotard, *El entusiasmo. Crítica kantiana de la historia*, Barcelona, Gedisa, 1994.

el momento postcomunista. El argentino Ricardo Forster leyó el “problema del mal” en el pensamiento benjaminiano, la chilena Elizabeth Collingwood-Selby la “lengua del exilio” y el mexicano Bolívar Echeverría y el chileno Pablo Oyarzún Robles han tratado de averiguar qué entendía finalmente Benjamin, en su libérrima lectura de Marx, por materialismo histórico.³² Ningún latinoamericano lee a Benjamin como revolucionario, a la manera, digamos, de Susan Buck-Morss, sino, precisamente, como crítico de la Revolución hecha poder, como marxista antifascista y anties-talinista, que rechaza, con la misma intensidad, los dos totalitarismos del siglo XX: el de derecha y el de izquierda.³³

Buena muestra de una lectura latinoamericana de Benjamin es la de Roger Bartra en *El duelo de los ángeles* (2004). Estudioso de la melancolía en el Siglo de Oro español y en la construcción de la identidad nacional mexicana, Bartra se acerca al tedio y la tristeza de Benjamin como sentimientos constitutivos de una conciencia plenamente moderna.³⁴ La figura evanescente del Ángelus Novus, que emergía en el cuadro de Paul Klee y que Benjamin convirtió en emblema de su teoría del pasado, aparece aquí como visión que es síntoma de una “enfermedad del alma,” ya no barroca ni mexicana, sino propia del racionalismo moderno.³⁵ La angustia de la conciencia que sabe no poder racionalizar cabalmente la realidad y que llega a convencerse de que no hay escapatoria posible a un régimen totalitario, es desarrollada por Bartra como un temperamento melancólico que fácilmente puede atribuirse a toda la izqui-

32. Ricardo Forster, *Walter Benjamin y el problema del mal*, Buenos Aires, Grupo Editor Altamira, 2003; Elizabeth Collingwood-Selby, *Walter Benjamin y la lengua del exilio*, Santiago de Chile, Arcis-Lom, 1997; Bolívar Echeverría, ed., *La mirada del ángel*. En torno a las Tesis sobre la historia de Walter Benjamin, México, UNAM/ Era, 2005; Pablo Oyarzún Robles, "Cuatro señas sobre experiencia, historia y facticidad", en Walter Benjamin, *La dialéctica en suspenso. Fragmentos sobre la historia*, Santiago de Chile, Arcis-Lom, 1995, p. 7-44.

33. Susan Buck-Morss, *Walter Benjamin, escritor revolucionario*, Buenos Aires, Interzona, 2005, pp. 9-78.

34. Roger Bartra, *La jaula de la melancolía. Identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano*, México, Grijalbo, 1987; Roger Bartra, *Cultura y melancolía. Las enfermedades del alma en la España del Siglo de Oro*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 2001.

35. Roger Bartra, *El duelo de los ángeles. Locura sublime, tedio y melancolía en el pensamiento moderno*, México, FCE, 2005, pp. 119-167

erda democrática en América Latina, consciente de la estrechez del horizonte político que se abre entre populismo y neoliberalismo.

Ética de la lectura

El interés por Benjamin en América Latina contrasta con la visión exótica de la región que aparece en algunos textos del autor del *Fragmento teológico-político*. Como casi todos los marxistas, desde el propio Marx hasta Lenin, estudiados por Arturo Chavolla, Benjamin vislumbró América Latina como un territorio de barbarie premoderna, donde reinaban el atraso, la superstición y el “pensamiento mágico.”³⁶ En *Dirección única* (1928), por ejemplo, Benjamin comentaba con desprecio la impresión kitsch de los sellos del servicio postal latinoamericano, por su afectada imitación de la estética europea: “la raza de los advenedizos postales, aquellos formatos grandes y chillones, de dentado imperfecto, de Nicaragua o Colombia, que con su atuendo pretenden dárselas de billetes de banco.”³⁷ Y en otro pasaje de ese mismo libro, luego de recordar una alusión de Baudelaire a los ídolos mexicanos, transcribía un sueño en el que se escenificaba el choque cultural de la evangelización cristiana en Mesoamérica:

Soñé que estaba en Méjico. Después de atravesar una selva virgen de árboles muy altos, desembocamos en un sistema de cuevas excavado al pie de una montaña, donde, desde la época de los primeros misioneros, se había mantenido una orden cuyos hermanos proseguían su labor de conversión entre los indígenas. En una inmensa gruta central, rematada por una bóveda gótica, se estaba celebrando un oficio según un rito antiquísimo. Al acercarnos, pudimos presenciar un momento culminante: un sacerdote elevaba un fetiche mejicano ante un busto de madera de Dios Padre, colocado muy alto, en una de las paredes de la gruta. En ese momento, la cabeza del dios se movió negando tres veces de derecha a izquierda.³⁸

36. Arturo Chavolla, *La imagen de América en el marxismo*, Buenos Aires, Prometeo, 2005, pp. 191-237.

37. Walter Benjamin, *Dirección única*, Madrid, Alfaguara, 2002, p. 83.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Walter Benjamin no llegó nunca a la Habana: ni como refugiado judío, en aquel verano de 1940, ni como clásico del marxismo occidental en la segunda mitad del pasado siglo. Veinte años después de su muerte, el comunismo se impuso en Cuba, pero los ideólogos de la Revolución jamás se interesaron en el autor de *El origen del drama barroco alemán* (1928). Tras el intento abortado de la revista *Pensamiento Crítico* (1967-1971), por dar a conocer a marxistas heterodoxos como Rosa Luxemburgo, Karl Korsch, Antonio Gramsci, Herbert Marcuse, Roger Garaudy, Louis Althusser o Jean Paul Sartre, el marxismo que se editó y difundió ampliamente en Cuba fue el soviético. Todavía en los años 80, la única obra de Benjamin que se leía en círculos reducidos de la crítica insular era el ensayo *La obra de arte en la época de su reproducción técnica* (1936), que había logrado una furtiva edición en la revista Cine Cubano.³⁹

En una revista tan actualizada como *Criterios*, dirigida desde 1972 por el teórico Desiderio Navarro, donde se editan autores como Zygmunt Bauman, Slavoj Zizek, Terry Eagleton, Hal Foster y Stefan Morawski, Benjamin ha tenido una existencia más bien precaria, en tanto referencia básica de buena parte del pensamiento postmoderno.⁴⁰ La idea de “campo intelectual” de Pierre Bourdieu, la de “estado de excepción” de Giorgio Agamben, por no hablar de algunos de los últimos libros de Jacques Derrida (*Dar el tiempo, Políticas de la amistad, Espectros de Marx, Dar la muerte*), son desarrollos de algún fragmento de Benjamin. Sin embargo, hoy en Cuba, a Benjamin se le lee menos que a Antonio Gramsci, por ejemplo, el marxista crítico italiano, quien ha sido virtualmente descubierto en los últimos diez años.

Que Walter Benjamin, tal vez el intelectual marxista más genuino y refinado del siglo XX, no haya sido debidamente editado en Cuba, en cincuenta años de “socialismo,” es una buena señal de lo poco ilustrados que son los socialistas habaneros y del desprecio por la tradición crítica del marxismo occidental que siempre ha caracterizado al castrismo. El Estado cubano, de acuerdo con su constitución vigente es “marxista-leninista” y el “marxismo-leninismo,” como se sabe, fue la ideología creada por Sta-

39. Ver Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, New York, Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 217-252.

40. Desiderio Navarro, *El Postmoderno, el postmodernismo y su crítica* en *Criterios*, La Habana, Centro Teórico-Cultural Criterios, 2007.

lin para legitimar el totalitarismo comunista. No es extraño, pues, que un pensador como Benjamin, quien en sus *Tesis de filosofía de la historia* (1940) se refería a los políticos estalinistas como “traidores a su propia causa,” que profesan una “terca creencia en el progreso,” una “ciega confianza en la fuerza” y una “servil inserción en aparatos incontrolables,” sea un perfecto desconocido en la Habana de hoy.

Las recepciones más genuinas de Benjamin en Cuba se han producido en un territorio ajeno a la ideología y las ciencias sociales. Algunos escritores (Francisco Morán Llul, Victor Fowler, Antonio José Ponte, Ernesto Hernández Busto, Pedro Márqués de Armas...), entonces jóvenes, se interesaron en el poeta modernista Julián del Casal, entre fines de los 80 y principios de los 90 del pasado siglo.⁴¹ Aquel melancólico y nihilista tropical, que vivió en la Habana del XIX como un poeta parisino (buhardilla, biombo, quimono, reproducción de Moreau, cartas de Darío y retratos de Le Comte Villers de Lisle Adam, Jean Richepin y Theodore Banville) remitía directamente a Baudelaire y Baudelaire a Benjamin. Leyendo a Benjamin, un escritor como Antonio José Ponte aprendió a leer la Habana como se lee una urbe moderna, con sus galerías, alamedas y pasajes, con sus vagabundos, sus dandys y sus policías.⁴²

En su temprano texto *Un seguidor de Montaigne mira la Habana* (1985), Ponte relaciona a Benjamin no con Casal o con el poeta católico José Lezama Lima, cuyos Tratados en la Habana le parecen ubicarse en las antípodas de Tres tristes tigres de Guillermo Cabrera Infante, sino con el Caballero de París, el vagabundo más famoso de la ciudad en la época revolucionaria. La mención al Caballero de París en el texto de Ponte se halla deslizada en un momento en que el autor rinde homenaje a grandes figuras letradas de la isla, como el propio Lezama, Alejo Carpentier o Virgilio Piñera. El vagabundo queda, pues, naturalmente incorporado a una galería de cronistas de la ciudad, en cuyo último rincón se ubica el mismo Ponte:

41. Ver, por ejemplo, Francisco Morán Llul, *Casal à Rebours*, La Habana, Casa Editora Abril, 1996, pp. 124-162; Antonio José Ponte, "Casal contemporáneo", en su *El libro perdido de los originistas*, México, Aldus, 2002, pp. 33-41; Victor Fowler, "Casal disputado y una nota al pie", *La Habana Elegante*, No. 18, verano de 2002.

42. Antonio José Ponte, "Cómo pagarle a la Habana con la misma moneda", *Letras Libres*, México. D.F., septiembre de 2006.

Vine a la Habana después de su muerte (la de Lezama). Habían muerto también Carpentier y Piñera. No vi nunca en la calle al Caballero de París, ya estaría recluso supongo. Sin embargo, he creído ver en ellos a guías míos en la ciudad. De éstas, la enseñanza que puede parecer más descabellada, la del Caballero, merece una corta explicación. He supuesto en él el espíritu del flaneur que existió en Baudelaire, que destacó otro maestro en ver ciudades, Walter Benjamin. El Caballero representa además el tipo que ha hecho de las calles su casa y encuentro en él el mismo impulso de hacer suya la ciudad, de domesticarla, que puedo entrever en Lezama. Es el loco emblemático.⁴³

Desde este libro hasta su reciente *La fiesta vigilada* (2007), la obra de Ponte es una pertinaz lectura de la Habana, en la que se afirma la condición autónoma del escritor en la ciudad. Benjamin, por más de una razón, es presencia en la escritura de Ponte, desde sus aproximaciones a cronistas de la ciudad, como Casal, Lezama, Carpentier, Piñera o García Vega, hasta su interpretación, de la mano de George Simmel, María Zambrano y Christopher Woodward, de las ruinas habaneras.⁴⁴ Pero aún en los momentos en que más se aleja de su ciudad, como en el fragmento sobre Berlín, donde la fotografía, el monumento y la policía se entrelazan en una reflexión sobre el poder totalitario y su instinto museográfico, es posible percibir a Benjamin planeando sobre la escritura de Ponte.⁴⁵

Otros escritores de la misma generación (José Manuel Prieto, Rolando Sánchez Mejías, Carlos Alberto Aguilera, Gerardo Fernández Fe...) se han acercado a Benjamin como practicante de formas fragmentarias de la escritura como el diario, la viñeta, el aforismo o la carta. En *Cuerpo a diario* (2007) de Fernández Fe, por ejemplo, asistimos un ejercicio de reescritura de diarios de grandes escritores occidentales (Sade, Kafka, Drieu La Rochelle, Jünger, Martí...), en el que el *Diario de Moscú* de Benjamin es glosado desde la perspectiva de un poeta cubano de principios del siglo XXI. Anotando en los márgenes de aquel diario juvenil,

43. Antonio José Ponte, *Un seguidor de Montaigne mira la Habana*, Madrid, Editorial Verbum, 2001, p. 33.

44. Antonio José Ponte, *La fiesta vigilada*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 2007, pp. 143-204.

45. Ibid, pp. 207-239. Ver también Alejandro Armengol, "Ponte y Benjamin", en *Cuaderno de Cuba*, 11 de abril de 2007.

Fernández Fe desemboca en una reinterpretación del suicidio de Benjamin como un evento de ficción literaria:

Pero poco tiene que ver aquí el suicidio de Walter Benjamin con los reclamos sociales, la imponente ciudad y esta otra heroicidad que la modernidad demanda. Por mucho que lo pretenda cierta posteridad necesitada de nuevos íconos -*ídolos de repuesto*: Cioran en su diario en febrero de 1969-, esta seguirá siendo una muerte romántica y novelable, con el telón de fondo de un estado totalitario y un camino que se cierra; una muerte a la que le sobrevivieron varias versiones del suceso, algunos compañeros de circunstancia que al día siguiente lograron pasar la frontera, la legitimación de su deceso con el eufemismo de *hemorragia cerebral*, según el acta de defunción asentada en la municipalidad de Port Bou, así como la descripción policial de las pertenencias encontradas en su habitación: un reloj de hombre, una pipa, fotos, un par de espejuelos, cartas, una radiografía, algo de dinero y la cartera de cuero en la que conservaba sus manuscritos.⁴⁶

Y concluye:

Todo suicidio será ficcionable. La primera reacción de quien conoce de un suicidio cercano consiste en imaginar la escena, los detalles, el rictus del decidido medio minuto antes de acercar el arma o dejarse caer al vacío. *Paul Celan se lanzó al Sena. El lunes pasado encontraron su cadáver*—anota Emil Cioran en su diario el 7 de mayo de 1970. Ficcional será siempre nuestro primer gesto. Desconocemos, sin embargo, el margen nebuloso que separa al suicida de la última hoja de su diario.⁴⁷

George Steiner ha propuesto varias vías de acceso al pensamiento de Benjamin: la “salida del gueto” de la burguesía judía, los movimientos juveniles de principios del siglo XX, el pacifismo europeo, la lengua alemana, la imposibilidad de un lugar en la academia, la bibliofilia, el coleccionismo, la grafología, los narcóticos, el marxismo, la traducción, el erotismo y la teología.⁴⁸ En su abarcador recorrido, olvidó Steiner una de las coordenadas decisivas del pensamiento de Benjamin: la ciudad mod-

46. Gerardo Fernández Fe, *Cuerpo a diario*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Tsé Tsé, 2007, pp. 121-123.

47. *Ibid.*

48. George Steiner, *Los logócratas*, México, FCE, 2007, pp. 31-47.

erna. Como lector de ciudades es que Benjamin ha llegado a Cuba. Aquella presencia vaga, que Eduardo González detectó en el Guillermo Cabrera Infante de *La Habana para un infante difunto*, hoy se reproduce en algunos de los escritores más interesantes de la isla y la diáspora.⁴⁹

En esa zona refinada y cosmopolita de la literatura cubana se relee a Benjamin en busca de aquella “otra manera de regir la ciudad,” de que habló José Lezama Lima. Pero la nueva escritura supone una forma de lectura que se desentiende de la maquinaria instrumental de la política, es decir, del leer como método de producción discursiva. Leer a Benjamin en la Cuba de hoy supone un reencuentro con el sentido trágico de toda erudición y con la soledad de quien descubre un tesoro inútil. Walter Benjamin ayuda a dotar de un sentido disfuncional las lecturas cubanas y a colocar el acto de escribir en un territorio ajeno al totalizante aparato de legitimación del socialismo. Leer a Benjamin es alcanzar un estado de familiaridad entre juguetes inservibles y, al mismo tiempo, un modo seguro de bordear la estetización del suicidio.

49. Eduardo González, *Cuba and the Tempest. Literatura & Cinema in the Time of Diaspora*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2006, pp. 71-73.

CHAPTER 24

Fernando Ortiz: Pensamiento y acción

Judith Salermo Izquierdo

Resumen: Es objetivo de este trabajo el subrayar el aporte que la labor práctica de Fernando Ortiz representó para el desarrollo y maduración de las disciplinas sociales en Cuba, y entre ellas, la Sociología; no sólo desde su papel como fundador y animador de instituciones, sino también como conferencista, editor y director de importantes publicaciones, y en general como promotor y gestor de cultura.

Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) es uno de los pensadores más importantes del siglo XX cubano; y ello puede afirmarse sin temor a equivocaciones. No es extraño que muchas de las ciencias sociales de Cuba intenten reclamar para sí el pensamiento de este autor, por lo útil y novedoso de sus hallazgos y por el alcance de sus diversas propuestas. Así lo reclaman antropólogos, historiadores, juristas, sociólogos; cada quien para su campo de estudio. Probablemente porque todos encuentran en su obra algo que les es familiar, algo que sienten propio y aplicable a sus disciplinas. Ese es uno de los indiscutibles valores de la enciclopédica obra ortiziana.

La investigación que produjo estas páginas se dedicó a la tarea de ofrecer una visión entorno a los aportes que este investigador realizó a la Sociología en Cuba, desde el punto de vista de su obra escrita y de su labor práctica. No cabe dudas de que una ciencia de tan compleja historia, no puede darse el lujo de ignorar contribuciones de semejante alcance y trascendencia; aquellas que por su sola mención ya prestigian nuestro acervo cultural.

La idea surgió como parte de un proyecto más abarcador que persigue elaborar una Sociología de la Sociología Cubana. El grupo de investigación que generó tan oportuna tentativa—Grupo de Pensamiento Sociológico Cubano del Departamento de Sociología de la Universidad de La

Habana—ha pretendido retomar el quehacer sociológico de nuestro país, en su pleno desarrollo, intentando comprender su trayectoria mediante el uso de la propia Sociología.

Una buena parte del pensamiento social cubano, desde sus primeros ejercicios intelectuales, se acercó a su entorno con una mirada, podríamos decir, “sociológica;” aún cuando esta disciplina no había nacido oficialmente en países desarrollados de Europa, como Francia e Inglaterra. Así fue, porque aquellos investigadores se preocuparon más por los problemas concretos de la vida, las relaciones sociales y las instituciones; que por elaborar abstracciones filosóficas (Tórres-Cuevas “Introducción” X).

Es evidente entonces, que son muchas las personalidades e instituciones que pueden contarse entre los que, de algún modo, tributaron al desarrollo y difusión de la ciencia sociológica en Cuba; de los cuales sólo se han reconocido unos pocos. Para contribuir a que también se reconociera el papel de Fernando Ortiz en este campo del conocimiento, y lograr rescatar al menos un poco de todo lo útil que produjo en este sentido, es que nos propusimos realizar este trabajo.

El hecho de si hay Sociología o no en la obra orticiana, no había sido lo suficientemente valorado. Algunos autores al referirse a esta notable figura, habían utilizado muchas veces los calificativos de etnógrafo, antropólogo, historiador..., y hasta sociólogo. Sin embargo, no existían estudios que demostrasen concretamente, por qué se puede decir o no, que en alguna medida, Ortiz también contribuyó al desarrollo de dicha disciplina en Cuba.

Es necesario poner en claro que estas reflexiones no pretenden encasillar al pensador dentro de una determinada especialidad. No se puede ignorar que aquel no era un hombre de límites, ni de esquemas; no lo fue en la política, como no en la ciencia, como no en el pensamiento...; así que intentar encerrarlo en uno u otro rótulo sería de antemano comenzar por un error.

El objetivo en este caso es rescatar, dentro de su vasta y multifacética obra—reflejo de una mente ilustrada, libre, ambiciosa, robusta—aquellos elementos que denotan la existencia de una perspectiva sociológica al abordar el objeto de estudio; y, en alguna medida, descubrir el papel que juega dicho enfoque dentro de los múltiples puntos de vista desde los cuales Ortiz observó y analizó el contexto sociocultural cubano.

El aporte de Fernando Ortiz a las ciencias sociales cubanas, y en particular a la Sociología, es capital. Sus propuestas no sólo enriquecen nuestra tradición intelectual por la atención a temas vírgenes dentro del contexto del pensamiento social cubano, e incluso, latinoamericano de la época—Ortiz abre, junto al brasileño Raimundo Nina Rodríguez, los estudios afroamericanos integracionistas. (Le Riverend “Fernando” 50).

El uso de fuentes teóricas diversas por sus contenidos y orígenes, es otra cualidad enriquecedora del pensamiento de Ortiz. El aporte no queda únicamente en que la suya viene a ser una obra que sintetiza y divulga una buena parte del saber universal más reconocido hasta la época. Sino sobre todo, porque en su caso podemos encontrar una asunción crítica y enriquecedora de las fuentes, que va dirigida siempre a la búsqueda de todas las herramientas útiles para un más eficiente y certero estudio de la sociedad; y que a ratos deriva en la creación de concepciones nuevas, dentro de las que se destacan sus criterios en torno al proceso de transculturación.

También en lo metodológico su quehacer revoluciona las prácticas más habituales de las ciencias sociales cubanas que le fueron contemporáneas, en especial de la Sociología Académica¹—por el peculiar enfoque de análisis empleado, y por el uso de novísimas técnicas de investigación social como la observación participante y no participante, el empleo de informantes clave, la entrevista, la historia de vida, etc; y desde

1. El término “Sociología Académica u oficial” ha sido entendido en este trabajo con relación al quehacer sociológico desarrollado exclusivamente en los marcos de la Universidad y otros centros docentes oficiales desde el momento en que queda institucionalizada la ciencia en 1900, tras las gestiones de Enrique José Varona. La etapa analizada concluye en 1958 antes del cambio político que marca el fin de lo que se ha considerado como La República dentro de la historia de Cuba. Dicha Sociología tiene un desarrollo ascendente—impulsado por figuras notables como Roberto Agramonte y Elías Entralgo—en cuanto a la extensión de la asignatura por las distintas Escuelas de la Universidad y otras enseñanzas, al número de estudiantes que la recibían y a la actualización paulatina de sus fuentes teóricas. Sin embargo, se caracteriza, de forma general, por el énfasis marcado en las propuestas teóricas de los clásicos de la ciencia, en detrimento de creaciones verdaderamente autóctonas, y de la aplicación y divulgación de métodos y técnicas para acceder a la realidad social. Su enfoque básicamente abstracto y positivista, la mantiene un tanto alejada de las polémicas del entorno social, aproximadamente hasta los años '40 en que comienza a recibir, del dinámico ambiente intelectual que se impone, un nuevo y renovador espíritu. Ver Moreno *La Enseñanza* pp. 54-55; Salerno *Otra vez* pp. 50-60.

el punto de vista de la creación de espacios para el debate –por las instituciones y revistas fundadas, por su labor en el magisterio, por el aprovechamiento de espacios internacionales...

De alguna manera la argumentación de estas aseveraciones, constituyen el cuerpo del libro *Fernando Ortiz: Notas acerca de su Imaginación Sociológica*, publicado por el Centro de investigación y la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, en La Habana, Cuba, en el año 2004, bajo nuestra autoría. Hoy, por razones de tiempo, sólo podremos abordar una de sus aristas.

Es, por tanto, objetivo de esta ponencia el subrayar el aporte que la labor práctica de Ortiz representó para al desarrollo y maduración de las disciplinas sociales en Cuba, y entre ellas, la Sociología; no sólo desde su papel como fundador y animador de instituciones, sino también como conferencista, editor y director de importantes publicaciones, y en general como promotor y gestor de cultura. Semejantes argumentos vendrían quizás a enriquecer la visión del sabio como un estudioso de los fenómenos culturales cubanos sólo desde la comprensión teórica de los mismos.

El afán obsesivo de Ortiz por superarse y alcanzar una cultura sólida y completa, no se debió simplemente a la gloria o vanidades personales; sino que fue la herramienta con la que rebatiría incansablemente la ignorancia, el atraso, la discriminación y el subdesarrollo predominante en la sociedad en que su obra se desarrolló. En no pocas ocasiones expresaría que investigaba los fenómenos socioculturales de la Cuba republicana, con un fin práctico, para discutir y convencer con el peso supremo de la sabiduría; con la incuestionable razón que otorga el saber objetivo bien fundamentado.

Él definiría así mismo sus objetivos: “mi faena de etnografía no era un simple pasatiempo o distracción... sino que era base para poder fundamentar mejor los criterios firmes de una mayor integración nacional”(Ortiz *Órbita* 185).

Fueron precisamente sus conocimientos científicos los que le otorgaron ese espíritu fundador que nace en él sobre todo a partir de los años ‘20. Porque conocía el valor que poseen las instituciones dentro de una sociedad, y era consciente del importante rol que ellas pueden ejercer entre grupos y grandes colectividades, fue seguramente que se empeñaría en fundar numerosas entidades culturales, políticas, sociales...

Las instituciones fundadas por Don Fernando, muchas veces respondían a sus intereses investigativos de ahondar en cada una de las raíces forjadoras de nuestra cultura nacional. Tal es el caso de la Sociedad del Folklore Cubano—dedicada principalmente al estudio de nuestros componentes africanos—y la Institución Hispanocubana de Cultura (IHC) preferiblemente encargada de fomentar el contacto y el conocimiento mutuo entre Cuba y España, aunque extendió sus fronteras a otras muchas regiones del mundo (Del Toro 14).

Mucho se ha hablado y escrito sobre la extraordinaria labor realizada por Fernando Ortiz dentro de aquella institución. Afortunadamente se cuenta con un texto que recoge de manera sustancial todo el funcionamiento y las particularidades alcanzadas en ese marco, así como el papel tan activo y provechoso que bajo sus fronteras desempeñara Ortiz (Del Toro). Sin embargo, en este momento lo que interesa es subrayar, dentro de todo lo que produjo y significó la IHC, aquello que constituye inequívocamente un aporte al desarrollo y maduración de las disciplinas sociales en Cuba, y entre ellas, la Sociología.

La IHC fue fundada por Fernando Ortiz, junto a un valioso grupo de intelectuales cubanos, en el año 1926, bajo la égida de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País (SEAP). Su trayectoria ha quedado definida en dos etapas históricas, la primera, desde su fundación hasta 1932, y la segunda de 1936 a 1947.

Los animadores de la IHC—inspirados por el fuerte estímulo que constituía la figura de Ortiz—tenían el propósito de crear una entidad que permitiera el intercambio y la saludable restitución de los lazos culturales entre Cuba y España. Aquella sería, además, una vía para propiciar el contacto intelectual con otras figuras y realidades del mundo, y contribuir en alguna medida a la intensificación y promoción de la cultura nacional. Tal estrategia respondía a los ideales de Fernando Ortiz sobre la necesidad de “mundializar” a Cuba:

[...] aprovechando la excelencia de nuestra centralidad geográfica en América, abriendo a todos los vientos del saber humano los centros educativos, llevando hacia ellos las más brillantes vibraciones de la vida intelectual del mundo, y enviando a nuestros mejores estudiantes a cursos de perfeccionamiento y especialización en las más renombradas cátedras del extranjero (Ortiz “Afirmaciones” 80).

Según expresara Antonio Hernández Travieso en su trabajo sobre la Hispanocubana, fueron aquellas propuestas, y el ejemplo de la Institución fundada por Ortiz, las fuerzas que generaron en el medio intelectual cubano, el afán por vincular nuestra cultura al desarrollo más actualizado del pensamiento universal. A su juicio, incluso la Universidad de La Habana, abrió sus puertas al intercambio mutuo con instituciones y centros del exterior, como resultado de los valiosos resultados que en todos los sentidos alcanzara la IHC, sobre todo en su segunda etapa.

Fueron muchas las actividades que se llevaron a cabo bajo la tutoría de aquella Institución. A través de ella se produjo un fuerte intercambio de conocimientos entre profesionales y estudiantes cubanos y extranjeros; se dictaron valiosas conferencias; se publicaron trabajos sobre temáticas útiles y de interés para el mejoramiento de la nación; se impartieron cursos de extensión cultural sobre Bibliotecología, Fotografía elemental, Paleografía y Archivología, Museografía, Historia del Arte, Idiomas...; y se promovieron numerosos espectáculos artísticos de notable calidad, como conciertos musicales, exposiciones de artes plásticas, muestras de cine (Del Toro 26-27, 59-60, 63-75).

Al buscar dentro tan amplia trayectoria los aportes realizados al desarrollo de las ciencias sociales en Cuba, nos encontramos rápidamente con muchas de las conferencias y conferencistas que allí se presentaron. Las temáticas abordadas en general, versaban sobre distintas materias como Filosofía, Ética, Literatura, Arte, Medicina, Ciencias naturales y físicas, Folklore, Economía, Política, Historia, Pedagogía, Sexología, Sociología (Del Toro 24).

Entre los prestigiosos conferencistas extranjeros que allí se reunieron pueden mencionarse José Vasconcelos, Jaime Torres Bodet, Max Henríquez Ureña, Federico García Lorca, Fernando de los Ríos, Gabriela Mistral, Amanda Labarca, Camila Henríquez Ureña, Bronislaw Malinowski. También se pronunciaron en la tribuna de la IHC intelectuales cubanos de la talla de Roberto Agramonte, Salvador Massip, Medardo Vitier, Ramiro Guerra, José Antonio Ramos, Jorge Mañach, Juan Clemente Zamora, entre otros (Del Toro 24, 46, 49-50).

Desde 1927 comenzaron a impartirse conferencias en torno a temáticas sociales y, en particular sociológicas, muy novedosas para la época y de gran actualidad; incluso se disertó sobre asuntos aún no atendidos den-

tro de los marcos de la Sociología Académica Cubana y de la Universidad en general. Nos estamos refiriendo por ejemplo, a cuestiones relacionadas con el papel de la mujer en la sociedad, la cultura, la familia, la vida pública, los movimientos feministas en el mundo; asimismo, los graves conflictos educacionales en cada uno de los niveles de enseñanza del país y de la América Latina en general, los problemas de la vida rural.

Se trató además el tema del racismo, la inserción de la población negra dentro de los distintos sistemas sociales, la desintegración social, la sexualidad y su influencia social, el aborto, la prostitución, los conflictos generacionales al interior de la sociedad; la asistencia social; las problemáticas generadas en la esfera del trabajo y sus efectos en los individuos; los vicios y lacras sociales.²

En el año 1938, Fernando Ortiz invitó a Roberto Agramonte y Pichardo, figura destacada de la Sociología en Cuba, para presentar al conferencista Luis Recasens (Recasens “Lo individual,” “Los usos,” “Mi destino”). No fue casual aquella elección, pues el Doctor Recasens era un prestigioso intelectual, Vicepresidente del Instituto Internacional de Filosofía del Derecho y Sociología jurídica, y profesor de Sociología en la Universidad Nacional de México. Evidentemente con este acto, Ortiz estaba también haciendo un reconociendo público de la labor que Agramonte desempeñaba en la cátedra de Sociología de la Universidad de La Habana, desde 1926.

Otra de las vías a través de las que Fernando Ortiz contribuyó al desarrollo y divulgación de las ciencias sociales cubanas, fue la revista *Ultra*, cuyo antecedente fuera el mensual *Surco*,³ editado por primera vez en el año 1930, y que duraría sólo hasta febrero de 1931. Al igual que su precursor, *Ultra* fue una extraordinaria “revista de revistas extranjeras.”

2. Algunas de las conferencias más importantes en este sentido son: Ver Agramonte “Biologismo” pp. 367-368; Costales “Los problemas sexuales” pp. 83-84; Guerra “Exportación” pp. 372-373; Labarca “Feminidad” 262; Portell “Conflictos” pp. 290-292; Vicente “El delito” pp. 486-488.

3. *Surco*, fue editado por primera vez, en agosto de 1930, y su último número salió en febrero de 1931. También tenía el subtítulo de *Cultura Contemporánea. Revista de Revistas*. Entre sus colaboradores contaron José María Chacón y Calvo, Juan Marinello, Lino Novás Calvo, Jorge Mañach, Emilio Roig, Elías Entralgo y Roberto Agramonte; entre otros. Ver Colectivo Diccionario Literatura pp. 993-994; Del Toro pp. 31-32.

En ella se abordaron temáticas muy variadas, como Filosofía, Historia, Antropología, Sexología, Política, Religión, Física, Química, Biología, Derecho, Folklore, Música, Artes, Filología, Medicina, Pedagogía, Psicología, Religión, Geografía, Sociales.

En las páginas de *Ultra* se publicaron artículos de franco enfoque sociológico, extraídos de las revistas y periódicos más afamados del medio intelectual en que se desarrollaba a grandes pasos la ciencia sociológica foránea. Allí aparecieron trabajos de la *Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, París; *Science*, Washington; *Modern Monthly*, Londres; *The American Journal of Sociology*, Chicago; *Social Problems*, New York; *American Sociological Review*, Menasha; *Social Forces*, Chapel Hill; *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Phil; *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, México; entre otras muchas.

Se abordaron cuestiones de interés sociológico tales como la sexualidad y su relación con lo social; la homosexualidad; el problema sexual en las prisiones; el negocio de los abortos. También acerca de aquellos fenómenos considerados patologías sociales como la drogadicción, el alcoholismo, la prostitución, la delincuencia; la injusticia social, la desintegración de la familia. Otros como la disminución del matrimonio, el aumento del divorcio, el desarrollo o la pobreza en el medio rural, los conflictos raciales o religiosos. Y algunos en torno al debate sobre el papel del intelectual y el científico social en la sociedad; las relaciones de la ciencia con la religión, la política, la cultura, el entorno; y las funciones de las ciencias sociales.⁴ Además, por medio de las gestiones y el canje que *Ultra* propiciaba a nivel internacional, llegó a nuestro país una amplia bibliografía de distintas materias del saber; muchos de los textos recibidos fueron sobre Sociología, o problemáticas de su interés.

Aquella publicación pronto se convirtió en el órgano difusor de la IHC, por eso en sus páginas—en la sección Mensajes—también se encuentran muchas de las conferencias impartidas en la institución; entre las cuales, como ya fue subrayado, aparecían numerosas disertaciones sobre fenómenos de profundo interés y contenido sociológico.

4. Entre los numerosos artículos reunidos se podría Ver Altmann “Medidas” pp. 451-458; Allen “La cuestión” 131; Anslinger “La marihuana” pp. 481-488; Boas, “El problema” 151; Huxley “La ciencia” pp. 171-174; Ortega “El hombre” 507...

En conclusión, puede decirse, sin lugar a dudas, que Ultra tiene un significado profundamente trascendental para el saber sociológico y científico-social en general, de nuestro país. Es evidente que, a través de ella, entró a la Isla, un gran cúmulo de información y conocimientos bibliográficos de la más reciente producción de las ciencias sociales del mundo, y sobre todo, de los países en que más desarrollo habían alcanzado estas especialidades.

Sin dudas, ya desde 1936, esta publicación constituye una de las pocas vías a través de la cual entran a nuestro país las formas y prácticas investigativas más actualizadas; el interés por los fenómenos concretos de la sociedad contemporánea; la atención a nuevas esferas dentro del estudio de lo social, muchas de las cuales no habían sido analizadas desde una perspectiva sociológica, como la sexualidad, los fenómenos sociales de las prisiones, o la drogadicción.

Su labor en la cátedra

Cuando aún era muy joven, y hacía sólo unos pocos años que había regresado de su última larga estancia por Europa; Ortiz formó parte del claustro de profesores de la Escuela de Derecho Público en la Universidad de La Habana (desde 1908 hasta 1916). No se hará referencia ahora a sus desempeños en este sentido, pues no es objeto de las presentes reflexiones. En este momento se dirige la mirada al segundo período en que nuestro pensador asumiera nuevamente tales funciones en dicha institución, de forma más o menos regular; considerando que este constituye otro de los modos a través de los que contribuyó al desarrollo de las ciencias sociales en Cuba, y de la Sociología, como ya se afirmara.

En el año 1941, bajo la égida de la Universidad de La Habana, se crea la denominada *Escuela de Verano*. En esta nueva institución, se brindaban variadas enseñanzas que todavía no estaban incluidas a ninguna carrera universitaria; de igual modo, se ofrecían cursos de extensión cultural para contribuir a mejorar las condiciones de la sociedad y se subrayaba la utilidad práctica de los conocimientos adquiridos. Poco a poco se contribuía así, a la superación del carácter abstracto y limitadamente teórico que caracterizaba a la enseñanza universitaria desde épocas anteriores.

Roberto Agramonte, fue director de esta institución desde 1941 a 1942 y desde 1950 a 1956 (último año en que funcionara); también en

algunas ocasiones fungió como profesor del centro, impartiendo conferencias sobre pensamiento filosófico y social cubano. Bajo su segundo período de dirección, los programas de la *Escuela...* incluyeron importantes y variadas conferencias sobre temas sociológicos y sus contenidos teóricos y prácticos. (Escuela de Verano *Catálogo* 1941-1952).

Es precisamente en este marco donde Ortiz explicaría su curso sobre la formación étnica y social del pueblo de Cuba. Tal era, podría decirse, la temática general, la cual llenó de matices al exponer sus resultados investigativos acerca de las culturas indias, las de origen africano; así como otros componentes menos destacados en el proceso de conformación de lo cubano; en cada una de sus manifestaciones distintivas. Sus disertaciones, como bien han expresado estudiosos de su obra, se destacan por la una magistral utilización de las más diversas perspectivas científicas como la Historia, la Antropología, la Economía, la Sociología. Su incorporación como profesor invitado al claustro de esta institución, se extendió desde 1941 hasta 1948, y de 1950 a 1951.

En el programa de temáticas propuestas para el verano de 1945, en la quinta sesión de la Escuela de Verano (con fecha de julio 12-agosto 21), el curso de Fernando Ortiz aparece bajo la identificación de "Cursos de Sociología". Es importante destacar que no es hasta 1950 que comienzan a aumentar en esta institución, las conferencias en torno a tales temas; por lo que se hace evidente que desde 1941 hasta ese año, el espacio para el saber sociológico de este centro de enseñanza fue casi exclusivamente ocupado por los conocimientos e investigaciones del Doctor Ortiz (Escuela de Verano *Catálogo* 1943-1956).

En el Instituto Universitario de Investigaciones Científicas y Ampliación de Estudios, creado el 20 de agosto de 1943, también ocupó Ortiz el espacio para la enseñanza de la Sociología, la Antropología y la ciencia social en general; siendo la única figura que impartiera un curso relativo a esas materias.

El objetivo máximo de esta institución era contribuir al progreso socioeconómico e intelectual del país, y a la reforma universitaria, otorgando nuevas vías para ampliar la investigación, la difusión cultural y la confianza en la ciencia. Inspirados en el pensamiento de Enrique José Varona, fomentaban la vocación y la curiosidad científica en los estudiantes; así como la aplicación de los conocimientos teóricos a la práctica

social. Lamentablemente este fecundo proyecto sólo se mantuvo hasta el 1946.⁵

La junta de gobierno del centro estaba constituida por el Rector de la Universidad de La Habana, Doctor Rodolfo Méndez Peñate, quien fuera su director; Roberto Agramonte y Pichardo (vice director); Raúl Roa (secretario) y Elías Entralgo (vice secretario). Dentro de las responsabilidades de estas figuras, se incluía la selección de los profesores que conformarían el claustro, la organización de los cursos, y la supervisión de las actividades del Instituto en general. Vemos entonces cómo los dos personajes clave de la Sociología Académica en Cuba—Entralgo y Agramonte—expresan su respeto y confianza en Don Fernando al coincidir en que aquel bien podría representar a la disciplina sociológica en la nueva institución de estudios científicos. Allí fungió Ortiz como profesor de 1943 a 1945, impartiendo ciclos de conferencias durante 8 meses, en cada año académico. Su curso sobre la formación étnica y social del pueblo cubano abarcaba la investigación, el seminario y la divulgación.

En la sesión investigativa Ortiz vinculaba a los estudiantes a temas concretos de la problemática nacional, orientándolos con sus consejos y conocimientos, y encargándoles la elaboración de un informe final, donde debían exponer resultados y recomendaciones. Al concluir el período determinado para la realización de dichas labores, se creaba un espacio para la discusión grupal de los elementos descubiertos. Los trabajos más reveladores y útiles se publicaban luego, a veces dentro del propio Boletín del Instituto.

Los seminarios eran para orientar, encauzar y realizar las investigaciones, y se producían una vez a la semana. Ortiz consideraba que tales encuentros tenían una gran importancia, en tanto servían de complemento y base para las investigaciones prácticas. Ellos dependían directamente de las cualidades y la vocación de cada discípulo, a partir de las cuales se les orientaba en un tema determinado que fuera de su interés.

Este sistema de enseñanza tan novedoso para la época—dinámico, multilateral y práctico—fue la causa de que muchos estudiantes dejaran el curso de seminarios porque al matricularse habían pensado que su papel

5. Para obtener más información acerca del Instituto se puede ver Méndez "Naturaleza" 31.

se limitaría a escuchar las conferencias del profesor, y no que ellos mismos tendrían que realizar los trabajos investigativos (Ortiz “Informe” 35).

En el caso de las conferencias se incluían contenidos más generales, procedentes muchos de estudios realizados por el maestro. A través de ellas se divulgaban los caminos tomados por las ciencias más modernas; se fomentaba el interés de los estudiantes hacia las disciplinas particulares de la ciencia social, y se difundía la preocupación científica por todas las cuestiones de la nación y los conflictos sociales del mundo contemporáneo.⁶

Otro rasgo distintivo del método de enseñanza aplicado por Fernando Ortiz, fue la utilización de fuentes vivas, o sea, de sujetos concretos, aquellos que protagonizaban los fenómenos que eran de su interés. En no pocas ocasiones invitó a miembros de organizaciones religiosas de origen africano: músicos, bailarines, oradores; exponentes todos, de las manifestaciones africanas, y del arte negro en la Isla; para que asistieran a sus conferencias.

Por último, en el Instituto Superior de Periodismo “Manuel Sanguily,”⁷ creado en 1955 bajo la iniciativa y tutela de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Derecho Público, Don Fernando impartió la asignatura de Antropología social (Ortiz “Evocación” 95). El director de este Instituto era el Doctor Adriano G. Carmona Romay, y entre los otros profesores que conformaban el claustro se encontraban, Elías Entralgo, Sociología Cubana; Raúl Gutiérrez Serrano, Psicología Social, y Roberto Agramonte, Filosofía social y otras materias de corte sociofilosófico. Lamentablemente, las actividades del centro concluyeron muy pronto, debido a su clausura en octubre de 1956.

El objetivo del *Manuel Sanguily* era la divulgación de una enseñanza amplia y sólida, que reforzara aquellos aspectos menos atendidos u omitidos hasta el momento en la formación de tales especialistas, y les daría la

6. De una parte de los cursos impartidos en el Instituto en 1944, Ortiz tomó las notas y contenidos que formaron su libro *El Engaño de las Razas*; en ellos había realizado un fuerte contrapunteo entre los conceptos de “raza” y “cultura.” Ver Ortiz *El engaño* 33, “Informe” 34.

7. Sobre este Instituto existe muy poca información en la bibliografía historiográfica de la época, debido a su cortísima existencia. Para obtener datos que confirman su creación se puede ver Roa “Yunques” 42.

posibilidad de alcanzar un título de “Periodista Universitario.” La nueva especialización contaría de tres años e incluiría diversas materias como Historia, Psicología, Filosofía, Sociología; todas con un fuerte acento en el enfoque de la realidad nacional. Su clausura se debe a los complicados conflictos políticos que vivía el país por aquellos años, y que conducen al cierre de la Universidad de La Habana en el propio año 1956.

En general, puede decirse que en este período, a través del acercamiento de Don Fernando a la Universidad, y su participación en no pocos acontecimientos relevantes de la etapa, se propicia una relación marcada entre este y la Sociología oficial; así como con sus principales exponentes; y con otras especialidades de las ciencias sociales. A pesar de que muchas veces Ortiz no fue identificado con el rótulo de “sociólogo,” ya se ve que sus aportes, conocimientos y propuestas fueron incluidos dentro de los planes de Sociología en los nuevos centros educacionales que fueron surgiendo. Ello le otorga, sin lugar a dudas, un rol trascendente dentro del desarrollo de la disciplina en estos años, a la par de las figuras más destacadas en este campo de estudio durante la República.

Haciendo un balance de todo lo dicho, bien se puede afirmar que Fernando Ortiz realizó innumerables aportes al proceso de maduración de las ciencias sociales en Cuba y de la Sociología en particular, al menos desde el punto de vista de su caudalosa actividad práctica, que ha sido lo tratado en este momento. Son las suyas, contribuciones de enorme peso y, sin lugar a dudas, habrá que tenerlas en cuenta por su lugar cimero, dentro de la historia del pensamiento sociológico de Cuba.

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CHAPTER 25

Japanese and Okinawan Cubans

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Abstract: This article considers the complex history of the Japanese and Okinawan migrants to Cuba, beginning with their secondary migration to Cuba, often as an attempt to circumvent restrictive racially exclusionary immigration laws in the United States. Though some of these immigrant families were able to succeed and build other businesses, the majority continued to work in agriculture-related industries until World War II, when the U.S.-supported Batista administration placed 341, mostly male, Japanese and Okinawans in the Presidio Modelo prison on the Isle of Youth. Despite the immense privation forced on both the prisoners and their families, many sought to rebuild their lives in their adopted homelands following the end of the war. As discontent with the government continued to grow in the 1950s, some Japanese and Okinawans actively supported the revolutionary movement, and following the Cuban Revolution, Japanese and Okinawan revolutionary work collectives played an important role in supporting agricultural development in Cuba. Today, though time and intermarriage have impacted the community, a number of groups have continued to work to reinvigorate a sense of heritage and identity amongst the younger generations.

Despite the fact that few people would associate Cuba with Japan, a small but significant Japanese and Okinawan¹ population has continued to make its home in Cuba through the 20th century, contributing to its multiracial and multicultural mix. Following upon earlier Chinese migratory waves, growing demand for laborers after the end of slavery combined with the

1. Though technically a part of Japan today, modern-day Okinawa Prefecture was formerly an independent state known as the Ryukyu Kingdom before Japan forcibly colonized it in 1879. This status lasted until 1945, at which time the Ryukyu Islands were administered separately by the United States. After 1972, administrative control over the Ryukyu Islands was ceded to Japan once again. It is the author's belief that by failing to make the distinction between Japanese and Okinawans, that academics may in fact be replicating the colonial oppression of the Okinawan people by reinforcing Japanese efforts at assimilating and subsuming the Okinawan people and identity.

sugar boom of the early 1910s and 1920s to spur the recruitment of Japanese and Okinawan workers to meet growing labor shortages in the islands. With the passage of restrictive immigration measures by the United States, Japanese immigration to North America was profoundly proscribed, so that in order to circumvent such regulations large numbers of early Japanese and Okinawan migrants came to Cuba through other Latin American countries, with many seeking to eventually migrate to the U.S. Small numbers of these migrants ended up staying and were scattered throughout Cuba, though a large presence settled in the *Isla de Pinos* (named the *Isla de la Juventud* or “Isle of Youth” after 1978). With the U.S. declaration of war with Japan following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, all Japanese and Okinawan male heads of household were incarcerated in Cuba, leaving their wives and families to fend for themselves for the duration of the war. Following their post-war release, many sought to rebuild their lives despite the loss of liberty and property that the war had precipitated. Not long after the war, however, the Cuban Revolution soon swept across the country starting in 1953, and with the victory of the revolutionary forces by January 1, 1959, some Japanese and Okinawans had distinguished themselves for their role in the revolution, and later, with their role in the formation of important revolutionary work collectives. Though outmarriage and loss of traditional culture have impacted the Japanese and Okinawan communities until today, a revival has occurred in recent years with the reclamation of a sense of a Japanese and/or Okinawan identity and sentiment. Through it all, the Japanese and Okinawan communities of Cuba continue to be a small but vibrant part of Cuban society with a unique sense of identity.

Though the first documented Japanese came to Cuba in July 1614 as part of an embassy bound for Europe headed by Hasekura Tsunenaga,² the date of September 9, 1898 has come to be regarded as marking the ini-

2. In contrast to common Japanese practice, Japanese names are listed in the western style of first name followed by the family name in order to accord with standards in the sources cited. Hasekura Tsunenaga was sent by his domainal lord Masamune Date on a seven year voyage that took him across the Pacific Ocean, through the Americas, and across the Atlantic Ocean to Spain and Rome, where he had the opportunity to meet with King Philip III and Pope Paul V. For reference, a statue dedicated to Hasekura Tsunenaga was built on April 25, 2001 by representatives from Sendai Ikuei Gakuen (Sendai Educational Academy) in Sendai prefecture (Tsunenaga's home prefecture) and is located near the entrance of the Bay of Havana on the Avenida del Puerto.

tiation of Japanese immigration to Cuba, with the arrival of a passenger named Pablo Osuna, a Japanese who had arrived on a steamship named the *Olinda* (Álvarez and Guzmán 13). Mr. Osuna arrived to Cuba by way of México, and most likely had changed his name there or in another Spanish-speaking country en route. In his wake, a trickle of additional migrants followed, with the 1899 U.S. census revealing that there were eight Japanese in Cuba, and the 1907 census recording that seven of the 155,252 immigrants entering Cuba between the years 1902-1907 were of Japanese origin (Gardiner 52-53). Instability in Japan and Okinawa owing to the demands of rapid modernization and the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese and 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese Wars undoubtedly contributed to the impetus to leave their homeland. Additionally, the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1903 between Cuba and the U.S. following the 1895-1898 Cuban War of Independence “revived the ravaged sugar industry and enabled a seventeenfold expansion between 1900 and 1925” (Pérez-Stable 15), increasing demand for Japanese and Okinawan laborers. Okinawan migrants were the largest group to migrate to Cuba, owing to the similarities in climate and the existence of vibrant sugar industries in both islands, though other major sending prefectures included Hiroshima, Kumamoto, and Niigata, among others (Álvarez and Guzmán 32). According to a flyer circulated in conjunction with the 100th anniversary commemoration of Okinawan migration to Cuba, the first Okinawan migrant to Cuba was named Masaru Miyagi and arrived in 1907, and from 1920-1940, the peak number of Okinawan migrants was approximately 195 people (Iwai). Many of the Japanese and Okinawan migrants were motivated to leave their homes due to recruitment drives that urged migration as a means to deal with economic difficulties and overpopulation issues, and migrant remittances served as important financial means of aiding families in the homeland.

Through the years 1908-1919, numbers of Japanese immigrants were generally in the single or double digits, with a major spike after 1914 peaking in 1916, when 225 male and thirty-seven female migrants came to Cuba. In looking at these early numbers there are probably gaps in the number of migrants who actually did arrive, since their migrations through other Latin American countries most likely caused undercounting to occur, since entry logs may have coded them according to their country of passage instead of by ethnicity. The post-1914 spike in numbers can be

understood as a move by migrants to seek an alternative to the unstable situation in México brought on by the Mexican Revolution, or as a reflection of “the opening of the Panama Canal, [with] some of the immigrants entering Cuba from Perú” (Gardiner 53). Following this short surge, the next peak in migration occurred in the period 1924-1925, with peaks approaching almost 200 migrants per year, concurrent with the passage of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924. This act, known as the National Origins Act, established quotas that effectively put an end to Japanese and Okinawan migration to the U.S., and many Japanese migrated to Cuba as a “back-door” route in order to circumvent immigration restrictions in an attempt to enter the U.S. As an example of this, in “1926, the Japanese population in Cuba increased only by forty-one, despite the fact that 118 Japanese had entered Cuba that year” (Gardiner 56), demonstrating that a large proportion of the population most likely continued straight through to the U.S. or other Latin American countries from Cuba without settling. The increase in migration, however, did not continue, most likely because “after 1925, when world sugar production exceeded demand and prices fell, crisis overcame the sugar industry” (Pérez-Stable 15), thus decreasing the need for more labor. Population statistics for the post-1925 period leading up to World War II are unclear, with some figures for the years 1925-1938 suggesting that the numbers of Japanese residents in Cuba averaged around roughly 600-800 during this period (Gardiner 58), and other estimates suggesting a peak between 1925-1930 of nearly 1,000 Japanese (Nash and Schaw 254).

At the same time, however, many Japanese and Okinawans did stay in Cuba permanently and set up livelihoods and families. Though a few worked as merchants, such industries were very small in comparison to those developed by other ethnic groups, and since “the majority came as farmers and day laborers” (Gardiner 55) this predominantly male workforce worked throughout the islands generally in agricultural industries. Others in the city of Havana eventually found work as gardeners, barbers, or domestic workers, with a small minority establishing “novelty stores, though “those who had more economic power were very few” (Ropp and Chávez de Ropp 131). There seems to be no mention of any traditional ethnic enclave formation in the big cities, owing perhaps to a general dispersal of the Japanese and Okinawans throughout the provinces of Cuba save for large groupings in the *Isla de Pinos* and in *Herradura* in the city

of *Consolación del Sur* in the province of *Pinar del Río*. Scholars Nash and Schaw have argued that the *Isla de Pinos* is unique to the rest of Cuba in that while it is “predominantly rural and agricultural, it has never had big money crops such as sugar or tobacco. Missing too was the large-scale, hierarchical form of social organization centering on the sugar mill and a landed aristocracy dependent upon the labors of a numerous peasantry” (254). There are some suggestions that this environment allowed for a more rapid acceptance of the Japanese and Okinawans by the “*Pineiros*” than in the rest of Cuba, where they were often mistaken for and stigmatized as Chinese, or “*chinos*.” For Japanese and Okinawan *Issei*³ throughout Cuba, they sought to work diligently and save enough money to eventually return to their homelands. As Jorge Uyema relates:

The Japanese and Okinawans came to Cuba in order to be able to earn money and return to Japan. But when they came to Cuba, they found that work wasn't very easy. It was extremely hard – they had to cut cane – though there were some people able to work and send money back to Japan. Because my father came from Okinawa and worked hard, he was able to send a little money to his brother so that he could finish his studies.

Among those unable to return to their homelands, those fortunate to have saved enough money were able to obtain the assistance of “*casamenteros*” or matchmakers, and send away for “picture brides” from Japan and Okinawa, or sometimes from other Latin American countries. Some, however, were unable to afford such expenses, and many married local Cuban women and raised families. A very small minority, unable to have children of their own, would adopt Cuban children, in order to continue on their name and lineage (Barceló 23), a practice common to Japan and Okinawa.

With the growth of Japanese imperialism in East Asia, and increasing economic contact with Latin American countries, rumors about the Japanese menace in Cuba became increasingly pronounced. In both World War I and following the controversies of the 1916 Cuban presidential elections, political opportunists often used false fears of Japanese spies “to play upon American distrust of the Japanese in order to precipitate yet

3. First generation migrants born in Japan or Okinawa.

another American intervention in Cuba” (Gardiner 55). 1929 proved to be a brief opening in the midst of such rumor-mongering, in that Japan and Cuba made an agreement to protect the rights of citizens in each other’s countries, and also to accord most favored nation status in matters of trade. At the same time, however, with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Cuba increasingly adopted a position closer to the U.S., especially in terms of supporting the Chinese. Indeed, local Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment also proved particularly pronounced, as evidenced by an April 1932 attack on the Japanese embassy in Havana. Concurrent with this, Japanese trade following the 1929 agreement invariably tilted in favor of the Japanese, with Japanese exports far outweighing Cuban imports to Japan. Due to the range of these different political and economic factors, relations between the two countries increasingly became more tenuous and strained.

By the mid-1930s, organized labor had progressively come to power as a significant political force in Cuba and played a major role in the removal of President Gerardo Machado, seen by many as representing the interests of the elites and of foreign (mostly U.S.) capital. Following a military coup in 1933, the newly formed Gras-Guiteras government defied U.S. policy by negating the 1901 Platt Amendment, which had allowed for U.S. intervention in Cuban affairs up to that time. Dissatisfied with the radical reforms occurring under the Gras-Guiteras government, General Fulgencio Batista, backed by the U.S. administration, initiated a military coup to assume leadership of the country and to squelch the growing radicalization of the populace. Batista exercised increased control over the country while launching a number of reforms that culminated in the Constitution of 1940, under which he became the President of Cuba. With the entry of the U.S. in World War II following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Batista quickly fell in line with his American allies and issued a Cuban declaration of war on December 9, 1941. In the immediate aftermath of Cuba’s entry into the war, Batista issued a series of presidential decrees which effectively limited the ability of the Japanese and Okinawan residents to operate in the country. These decrees limited the ability to move of Japanese and Okinawans who could reside near ports, forced them to register any changes in address, allowed for the seizure of property of detained or interned enemy aliens, restricted banking payments to enemy countries, halted withdrawals of funds by

enemy aliens, stopped the issuance of exit visas for enemy aliens from the country, disallowed postal orders to be payable to enemy aliens, and suspended firearms licenses issued to enemy aliens. The developments that precipitated the incarceration of the Japanese and Okinawan Cubans occurred on December 19, 1941, when “a resolution of the Cuban Department of the Interior published a list of the Japanese aliens resident in Cuba and ordered their detention and internment as well as providing for the custody of their property” (Gardiner 60). Unlike the case for Japanese and Okinawans from other Latin American countries during the war, those incarcerated were not turned over to the U.S. to be used as prisoner exchanges with Japan. Instead all males above eighteen years of age were taken first to the Castillo del Príncipe prison in Habana, and then were taken to *El Reclusorio Nacional para Varones de la Isla de Pinos*, or the Presidio Modelo. In total, 341 male Japanese and Okinawans were incarcerated in the Presidio during the war. Only three women were interned in the prison (Álvarez and Guzmán 151) and the majority of those incarcerated were *Issei*, with a few *Nisei*⁴ as well. Additional enemy aliens, including 114 Germans and thirteen Italians were also incarcerated, though these populations in Cuba were not subjected to the wholesale roundup that the Japanese and Okinawans had been subjected to.

The Presidio Modelo was known as a prison geared especially towards the incarceration of serious criminal offenders, where torture and other cruelties were not uncommon as a means of “reform.” Modeled after the Joliet, Illinois prison designed under the panopticon model theorized by Jeremy Bentham,⁵ the Presidio Modelo would serve to house the Japanese and Okinawans throughout the entirety of the war. Even after the surrender of Japan many were unable to obtain their release until March 1946. Conditions in the prisons were terrible, with cramped cells, insufficient medical attention, censorship of all communications, and inferior living standards. As Goro Naito, an *Issei* from Hiroshima Prefec-

4. Second generation Japanese or Okinawan Cubans, who had been born in Cuba.

5. For a discussion of the panopticon model, please refer to Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 200. Incidentally, this is also the prison in which Fidel Castro and his revolutionary compatriots were incarcerated following the attacks on the Moncada Barracks and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes garrisons. Today the prison is a National Monument serving as an educational museum.

ture, described, the bed in which he slept was extremely small, and he would have to wrap his shoes in a towel in order to use it as a pillow. Naito also described other inmates who would be forced to sleep on the floor, which had no carpet, and who would try to fashion a futon to sleep on out of used sacks (Naito). These dire conditions soon took their toll on the inmates. In 1944, for example nine prisoners died, with two more perishing in 1945 (Álvarez and Guzmán 154). Though the prisoners had quickly organized themselves into an organization to represent issues to the authorities of the prison, such attempts to address prisoner needs often were met with few results. Through their own initiative the Japanese and Okinawans were forced to organize their own medical practice to administer to the health needs of the incarcerated. Beginning in 1943, the Spanish Embassy in Cuba, acting on behalf of the Japanese Consulate, was able to send a modest monthly stipend of three pesos for expenses while incarcerated (Álvarez and Guzmán 165). Many, however, did not know about this opportunity, and did not receive such monthly assistance. In contrast to the experience of the Japanese Americans in the U.S., those incarcerated in Cuba did not have the company of their families and suffered great privation.

In addition, the incarceration process had tremendous impacts on the families of the imprisoned as well. Many wives and children of the incarcerated lived in remote locations, far from the *Isla de Pinos* where the prison was located. Barely able to make ends meet, some were able to relocate to the island, though many others were unable to make such a difficult move on their own. The wives of the incarcerated were often isolated from other Japanese and Okinawans, and often depended for their aid on the few Cubans willing and able to offer them assistance. When visits could be made to the prison, they were allowed only once a month and in the beginning were only five minutes in duration. Later, these visits were increased in time to fifteen minutes, but most of the time the exorbitant expenditures of these visits proved to be cost-prohibitive, especially for those traveling from far-flung provinces, and many wives did not see their husbands for the entire five years of the incarceration process. Concurrently, wives of the incarcerated had to work additional jobs in order to cover the living expenses lost by the men, while also taking care of and raising the children. As *Nisei* Benita Eiko Iha Sashida (whose father had emigrated from Okinawa in 1924) relates:

The time that my father was interned in the Presidio I remember as a time of great sadness. His jail number was #223. I was very small, but I can't forget the cloud of sadness that fell over our home. Mom didn't laugh as she had before, and didn't sing to us in the afternoons with her sonorous and harmonious voice. Now I realize that she forced herself to keep us moving forward and to protect us from hardship, but even still, memories of my childhood told me that the time of our family's happiness had ended (Sashida, 23).

When the hurricane of 1944 destroyed their home and crops, Sashida's family had to start anew, without the help of their father, who was still incarcerated. These proved to be difficult times indeed and many of the wives on the *Isla de Pinos* were at least able to pool resources together to survive. As Álvarez and Guzmán relate:

In the *Isla de Pinos*, Kesano Harada, with other Japanese wives of the imprisoned, exchanged whatever products that they harvested for black sugar, the cheapest available, and also sold other products, while going in groups to fish at night. Whatever they caught served not only to nourish their children, but also to alleviate the hunger that plagued the families of the *Presidio* (Álvarez and Guzmán 158-159).

At least for those families on the *Isla*, some collective resources were available to them. Yet as Kaoru Miyazawa, who died at the age of 91 in 2007, stated, "the Japanese were like 'beggars' during the war" (Hirayama). Due to this fact, support from other Cubans proved essential towards supporting many of these families, so that as Francisco Miyasaka has stated "thanks to many of [the non-Japanese Cubans] we were able to survive and to have a decent life during that time" (Ropp and Chávez de Ropp 135). All told the incarceration process drastically overturned the modest lives of the Japanese and Okinawans before the war, severed family connections, altered traditional family roles, and caused a loss of traditional culture and customs that continues to affect Japanese and Okinawan Cuban families to this day.

In the aftermath of the war, many of those who had been incarcerated at the prison left to rejoin their spouses, went to other places to resettle, or stayed in the *Isla* to start anew. Many tended to move to the capitol or to the *Pinar del Río* region as well. There is little proof of a mass exodus back to Japan or Okinawa, most likely because of insufficient funds, and

insecurity related to the tenuous situation back home. Post-war remittances to Japan, and especially to Okinawa, proved particularly crucial to the rebuilding effort in the homeland owing to the fact that Okinawa was the site of the only battle on “Japanese” soil during the war, and was particularly devastated in the fighting that ensued. As Antonio Yohena related:

My father, and other Okinawan families, told me that after bettering their economic situation, he helped a lot with means that he had here in order to send to Okinawa - money, clothing, and other utensils - that the family here sent for Okinawa with the goal of helping better the difficult situation that Okinawa was in.

Okinawan infrastructure was entirely devastated during the war and local communities were often forcibly relocated due to the impacts not only of the war but also because of the post-war U.S. military base construction that occurred there. With the loss of much of the island’s industry and agricultural land during this time period, international remittances from places like Cuba were essential towards guaranteeing the survival of many families in the homeland.

In 1952, Cuba was among the many nations that signed a Treaty of Peace with Japan, and with the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Japan was eager to establish trading opportunities with Cuba. Trade with Cuba, especially in terms of the procurement of sugar from Cuba in exchange for the sale of Japanese textiles provided the main avenues of international commerce between the two countries. For Japan, the limitations in its trade with China due to the Chinese Civil War and in its trade with Korea due to the onset of the Korean War, combined with abiding resentments from these countries towards Japan shifted Japanese trade policy to emphasize trading relationships with Southeast Asia and with Latin America. In fact, up through to the 1970s, Japan maintained an imbalance of trade with Cuba. For example, “the twelve years of postwar Japanese-Cuban trade between 1947 and 1959, everyone of which had a balance adverse to Japan, represented an aggregate deficit of more than \$387,000,000” (Gardiner 65). Even after the Cuban Revolution and the recovery of Japan to its pre-war economic levels by the mid-1960s, this huge imbalance of trade continued to exist much to the benefit of Cuba. In July 1959, for example, Che Guevara and

a commercial delegation visited Japan in order to firm up trade relations with Japan following the revolution, since he considered sales of sugar to Japan as crucial towards financing the industrial and technological development that Cuba sought in order to wean itself off of sugar dependency. Indeed, Japan was second only to the U.S. in Cuban sugar imports prior to the revolution, and afterwards was third next to the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Additionally, following the U.S. imposed embargo on Cuba, initiated on February 7, 1962, Japan continued to circumvent the embargo to trade with Cuba. Such trade relationships proved particularly crucial for Cuba's economic well-being.

With the seizure of power by Batista prior to the June 1952 elections in which he was expected to lose, the Cuban Revolution can be considered to have started with Fidel Castro's July 26, 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks. The July 26th Movement sparked by this incident was outraged by Batista's military coup and sought to remove the dictator from office. The next six years saw attempts by the Batista dictatorship to regain control of the country, though the December 2, 1956 landing of the *Granma* in the Oriente soon saw the conflagration of armed conflict in the countryside. By January 1, 1959, Batista had fled the country, and the Cuban Revolution had commenced. Initiating a range of moderate reforms at first, including agrarian reforms and progressive tax policies to encourage Cuban investments, the newly formed government could not be considered that radical, though widespread support for the new regime was profound and ushered in a politics that widely appealed to the masses and the interests of the nation over the foreign interventionism that had held sway before. Some Japanese and Okinawans in Cuba also supported the removal of Batista and the goals of the revolution, undoubtedly remembering with resentment Batista's role in their wartime incarceration. As Miyasaka relates:

In these activities, the Nisei were fundamentally anti-government. I don't know if there were Issei. I know of one family who lived in the center of the country, whose Nisei members collaborated in this type of activity. One of them achieved the rank of Captain after the revolution" (Ropp and Chávez de Ropp 139).

Additional examples of Japanese participants in the revolution also existed. For example, Alberto Takahashi and Goro Enomoto were two

young *Nisei* who played a role in clandestine activities against the Batista dictatorship before joining the revolutionary forces under Commander Víctor Bordón Machado. As Álvarez and Guzmán relate:

Upon speaking with this guerrilla leader [Machado] about Takahashi and Enomoto, one being from the area of Yaguarama and the other being from Horquita, in the ancient province of Las Villas, the valor of the two stood out and this is how they came to form part of Column No. 8, the “*Ciro Redondo*,” under the leadership of Commander Ernesto Che Guevara, upon the joining of all the forces of the July 26th Movement that operated in Escambray. Today, these two Japanese Cubans feel a great pride in having fought next to Commander Guevara and his rebel forces in frequent combat and in the decisive battle for the strategic city of Santa Clara (143).

Other Japanese and Okinawan Cubans also served in the revolutionary forces and made significant contributions to the revolutionary effort. Others also benefited from the changes in agricultural practices that accompanied the revolution. According to one article about Miguel Miichiro Shimazu, a resident of the Isle of Youth who reached the age of 100 years old in 2007, “With the triumph of the revolution, Miichiro was a beneficiary of the Agricultural Reform Law, and received ownership of the land where he cultivated—as much as he could—melons, cucumbers, and other vegetables” (P.L.). In a sense, some could say that the agricultural changes that occurred following the revolution were avidly supported by the Japanese and Okinawan communities. For example, in 1961, following the growth of the National Association of Small Peasants (ANAP), the three agricultural collectives of the *Isla de Pinos* that had been the main agricultural organizations prior to the revolution were soon converted into cooperatives. “It was the Japanese of the first generation that were the first to integrate these collectives, and always had formed part of the vanguard” (Barceló 19), and these cooperatives were called the Jesús Menéndez Cooperative, the Camilo Cienfuegos Credit and Services Cooperative, and the Free Nicaragua Cooperative of Farm Production. Through these cooperatives the Japanese and Okinawan Cubans made significant contributions to the development not just of the nation but also to the revolutionary cause, demonstrating their willingness to contribute to their adopted homeland.

The Society of the Japanese Colony of the Isle of Youth (*La Sociedad de la Colonia Japonesa de la Isla de la Juventud*) has been particularly active following the end of the war, in bringing people together not just to form the abovementioned collectives, but also to provide a community space for the Japanese and Okinawan descendents in the island. In 1951, for example, the organization collected donations from local families in order to construct a burial vault for the Japanese collective in the Cemetery of Nueva Gerona. This has provided an important space for the families of the deceased, particularly with many of the original *Issei* having passed away. In 1980 the Society for the Japanese Colony of the Isle of Youth was officially recognized in the General Registry of Associations of the Cuban Ministry of Justice by Resolution 142-98 and is “the only one officially recognized in the country, with more than a half a century of existence, that has maintained itself as active and numerous, with a total of immigrants and descendents through the fifth generation of 198, and a general membership total of 119” (Barceló 17). This group has been crucial towards revitalizing traditional customs, and has held festivals such as the Obon festival (traditional Japanese Buddhist “Day of the Dead”), Hinamatsuri (Doll Festival), and Kodomo-no-Hi (Children’s Day). Other aspects of traditional Japanese culture, such as language classes and other traditional arts have also found their expression through the group.

In Havana, the Organizing Committee of the Cuban Japanese Society (Comité Gestor de la Sociedad Cubano Japonesa), has been active for many years in its attempts to develop a government recognized national all-Nikkei organization. This committee, currently headed by President Francisco Miyasaka, has proven crucial towards the development of local initiatives to preserve Japanese and Okinawan culture, and in 1964 they constructed the cemetery for the Japanese Society of Cuba, which currently exists in the Cemetery of Christopher Columbus near the Vedado district of Havana. This committee has also conducted a census of the Japanese and Okinawan descendents of Cuba from 1996 to 1997 as part of the process of obtaining official recognition from the government. As Francisco Miyasaka stated in regards to this census:

Today in Cuba, there are an estimated 1,300 persons of Japanese blood that got to the fifth generation. Some do not have Japanese names because they are the children of children of children, and in Cuba—as in many Spanish-speaking countries—children maintain the last name of

the father and of the mother. But at the same time, it is the mother's name that gets lost because the father's name always goes first, so after two generations, if the children continue to be female, they lose the last name (Ropp and Chávez de Ropp 132-133).

Thus, despite the fact that their census has been able to locate and register 1,300 people of Japanese and Okinawan descent in Cuba, such numbers may be undercounted due to the difficulty of finding people outside of the known family networks and who don't have easily traceable surnames. Despite the far-flung nature of the community in Cuba, Francisco Miyasaka and others have been influential in working towards the inculcation of a sense of Japanese identity amongst the youth. For example, in the spring of 2004, this author had the opportunity to observe a newly formed choral singing group composed of *Nisei* and *Sansei*⁶ that the Organizing Committee had formed, that practices singing traditional Japanese songs, and has performed at various venues throughout Cuba. Though all of the young participants may not know the full meaning of the songs that they sing, the group's presence has brought together young and old in a way that helps to re-inculcate a broader sense of community. Additionally, the work of people involved in the Organizing Committee, such as Goro Naito, has been essential towards the preservation of the history of the Japanese in Cuba. This work has even been recognized by the Cuban government, so that in 2004, shortly after reaching 96 years of age, Goro Naito was the recipient of the Medalla de la Amistad (Medal of Friendship) by the Cuban Counsel of the State. At the ceremony, Eva Seoane, Vice President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People stated that this award was "a recognition of his joint work, honesty, and simple humility, demonstrated by his offering of help to the members of the Japanese community residing in our country" (Musa). All told both the group in the Isla and the one in Havana have worked together in providing a space for the preservation of culture and traditions amongst this diasporic community.

Additionally, exchanges between the local Okinawan community and their homeland in Okinawa have also increased in recent years, due to increased outreach from the Okinawan Prefectural Government to con-

6. Third generation descendents.

nect with members of the Okinawan diaspora that began in the late 1980s. Based on the census that Japanese and Okinawan groups conducted, local Okinawans have stated that there were approximately 215 people of Okinawan descent (Iwai) in Cuba in 2006 (suggesting that Okinawans represent approximately 17% of the total population of 1,300 Japanese in the islands). Sadly, no Okinawan *Issei* are currently alive today (Yohena). Antonio Yohena, in his capacity as Chairman of the Cuban Okinawan *kenjinkai*, has been able to maintain relations with the Governor of Okinawa Prefecture and also with the Cuba-Okinawa Association in Okinawa, and was even able to visit Okinawa in October 2006 in order to attend the Fourth Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival, a prefecture-sponsored gathering of Okinawan descendents from around the world that has occurred roughly every five years since 1990. These linkages between people in Okinawa and the Okinawan Cuban community were also significant in the recent centennial celebration of Okinawan migration to Cuba, an event which was attended by representatives from numerous far-flung places such as Okinawa, the United States, México, and Brazil. At this gathering, statements of solidarity with the Cuban people were expressed, as seen in the following statement by Masayuki Oshiro, representative of the Okinawan Prefectural Government:

In this difficult moment for Cuba, we express solidarity and admiration for the road that you are following and your fortitude in the face of the blockade and hostility of the United States, whose cruelty we know in our own body, in the island of Okinawa, which today is full of humiliating American military bases (Molina 1).

These sentiments, suggest that a common sense of resistance to U.S. hegemony is being articulated as a way of linking solidarity against the U.S. military bases in Okinawa with solidarity against the U.S.-led blockade and embargo on Cuba.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of activity in matters pertaining to Japanese and Okinawan culture, particularly amongst the younger generations. While postwar migration from Japan to Cuba has been practically negligible, especially when compared to the larger migratory flows that occurred to places like Brazil or Bolivia, such an interest has not come about because of an influx of new Japanese or Okinawan immigrants. Instead, it may be that the stigma of the incarceration experi-

ence has lessened over time. In addition, racial boundaries in Cuba have often been considered to be more accepting than in other countries such as the U.S., even for such a small minority group such as Asians compose in overall Cuban society. Furthermore, with the loss of trade with the U.S.S.R. following the collapse of communism Cuba has been forced to make major structural adjustments in order to cope with these changes. “Between 1989 and 1993, Cuba’s economy shrunk 35 to 50 percent; [and] already austere living standards plummeted” (Pérez-Stable 174), causing the Special Period of economic adjustment from 1992-1998. Part of the adjustment process has been the continued move away from previous agricultural and industrial sectors towards the growth sector of tourism. Japanese visitors to Cuba, while still small compared to tourists from other Latin American countries or Europe, nevertheless represent the bulwark of more recent Cuban economic development policy. These official encouragements may also have played a small role in encouraging the development of greater “multicultural” awareness (for lack of a better word) amongst the younger generation.

All told, the history of the Japanese and Okinawan Cubans has existed for over a hundred years now, with the celebration of the centennial of Japanese migration to Cuba in 1998 and the recent celebration of the centennial of Okinawan migration to Cuba in 2007. From their original roots as contract and migrant laborers, Japanese and Okinawans in the early decades of the 20th century often came to Cuba via other Latin American countries, with the pace of migration to Cuba coinciding either with political unrest in other Latin American countries or exemplifying attempts to find an alternative route to enter the U.S. following the imposition of restrictive immigration measures. Upon settling in Cuba most of these migrants took up work in agriculture with a few in small businesses. Though located throughout the provinces of Cuba, certain concentrations of migrants did coalesce, particularly in the *Isla de Pinos*, which maintained a very active organization for the migrants. The entrance of Cuba into World War II changed the situation for these migrants considerably when the Batista government classified all males over the age of eighteen as enemy aliens and placed 341 of them in the Presidio Modelo prison for the duration of the war. This incarceration process differed in dramatic ways from the fate of Japanese Americans in the U.S. and in Latin America in that their incarceration in prison was a more extreme process of pri-

vation and separation from their families. In addition, the impacts on the families of the incarcerated were profound, and wives often had to take up matters on behalf of their husbands in order to provide for their children. Following the war, many families focused on rebuilding, though the upheaval of the Cuban Revolution soon took people's lives in a different direction altogether. Quite a few Japanese and Okinawans contributed to the revolutionary movement, and helped to usher in the socialist experiment in Cuba. In addition, on the *Isla de Pinos*, Japanese and Okinawan collectives served as revolutionary examples of collectivization that contributed to the overall movement. To this day, the Japanese and Okinawan communities in Cuba continue to maintain community organization structures and a resurgence of cultural traditions and practices has grown, particularly in recent years. In many ways, the younger generations have been wrestling with the question of their identity as Cubans of Japanese and Okinawan descent, especially as the original *Issei*, who now number in the single digits, continue to pass away.

Fernando Ortiz, prominent Cuban intellectual of the early part of the 20th century argued that in Cuba, that each community, "torn from [their] native moorings, faced with the problem of disadjustment and readjustment, of deculturation and acculturation—in a word, of transculturation" (27) has contributed to the changing nature of Cuban society and in the process, has been changed by contact with the range of different cultural traditions and mores of the people met in the country. The Japanese and Okinawan communities are no exception, and have played a small but significant role in contributing towards the development of Cuban society and the interests of the nation. In the context of growing scholarly interest in the study of Asians throughout the Americas, the study of the history of the Japanese and Okinawans in Cuba has the potential of "not only connect[ing] the experiences of Asians throughout the Americas together; it also links the Americas to the global world" (Lee 237). Indeed, the history of the Japanese and Okinawan Cubans presents a fascinating and little known story full of linkages and details unique and important in the ever-changing global picture.

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CHAPTER 26

Eduardo Chibás: Incurrigible Man of Cuban Politics

Ilan Ehrlich

Abstract: Eduardo Chibás (1907-1951) was a unique figure in Cuban politics between 1947 and 1951 - the last years of democratic rule before a military coup in March of 1952. His flamboyant manner and shocking public accusations, transmitted to a nationwide audience via radio, allowed him to dominate the island's political discourse, introduce an original political style and present himself as a preferable alternative to the ruling Auténtico party. Chibás was a charismatic senator and presidential candidate who headed the newly formed Ortodoxo party and attracted a large, varied and often fanatical following. Supporters were drawn to Chibás' personal integrity, his appeals for honesty in public life, his denunciation of gangster violence, his insistence that schools and hospitals be improved and his revelations of malfeasance by contemporary politicians. He thus revitalized enthusiasm for the island's democratic institutions at a time when successive corrupt administrations had engendered widespread disappointment and cynicism.

By spring of 1947, the mayor of Havana was frustrated, perplexed and contemplating drastic measures. Having been elected on a platform of bringing water to the parched capital city, Manuel Fernández Supervielle had failed and his constituents were irate. Upon being recognized in public, chants of "agua" trailed him relentlessly. During trips to the cinema, he sat apart from the crowd so as not to be seen and if his image appeared on a newsreel it was greeted with derisive whistles. Even Havana's merchants, whom Supervielle had saved from a series of onerous taxes in his former post as treasury minister, turned their backs on him. Presiding over the celebration of Retailer's Day, in the lush gardens of the Tropical brewery, the mayor was greeted by angry demands that he fulfill his pledge to build a new aqueduct.¹

1. en Cuba, "Duelo," *Bohemia*, May 11, 1947, 43.

Supervielle was a proud man who took these slights to heart. His campaign, marked by the slogan, "Havana will have water!" had aroused a genuine fervor - especially as the city, with a population of 600,000, contended with a water supply suited for 150,000.² Now, a short while later, and despite his lengthy career as an honest and conscientious politician, Havana's denizens assumed he was a fraud and a liar. Even so, he was not the sort to complain or welter in pity. At times, Supervielle attempted to explain his predicament but always did so privately. One such case was on Sunday, April 20, when, accompanied by a group of municipal employees, he visited a hospital where the chief of the city's education department was convalescing. Finding himself among a sympathetic crowd and perhaps responding to some gentle prodding, he began recounting the details of his ordeal.³ He confessed that his friend Ramón Grau San Martín, Cuba's president and a fellow member of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (Auténtico), had persuaded him to leave his post as treasury minister and run for mayor. After taking office in September of 1946, everything initially proceeded smoothly and with the president's full support. Grau's enthusiasm was such that he once kept Clinton P. Anderson, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture waiting (and hungry, as Anderson had been invited to dinner) for two hours while he and Supervielle examined preliminary plans for the aqueduct.

Once the blueprints were finalized, Supervielle estimated the cost to be six million pesos.⁴ He then contacted José Morell Romero, president of the Sugar Workers Retirement Fund, who had offered to finance the aqueduct.⁵ Morell Romero not only considered lending to the city a good investment, he confessed to unhappily presiding over 21 million "unproductive" pesos.⁶ The two quickly reached a verbal agreement and then considered the legality of their proposed transaction. Supervielle, who was a lawyer before entering politics and had been an elected member of

2. Humberto Vázquez García. *El gobierno de la Kubanidad*. (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2005), 316.

3. Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás. Legajo 35, Expediente 1097: 104-106. Armando Mier Vega and Rafael Fernández Núñez, both of whom were present at the hospital where Supervielle spoke, reproduced his words from memory just over two weeks later. A slightly different account of the situation also appears in, en Cuba, "Municipio," *Bohemia*, January 26, 1947, 38-39.

4. The Cuban peso during this period was interchangeable with the United States dollar.

the constituent assembly that drafted the island's constitution, devised a formula by which the loan would jibe with the city's legal code. The following day, Supervielle arranged a meeting with Grau, Morell Romero and Jesús Menéndez, president of the National Federation of Sugar Workers. Menéndez expressed approval, saying that water was always a good business and the aqueduct would represent "another triumph for the working class."⁷ As everyone prepared to leave, Grau, who had been silent until then, warned in his smiling, affable manner that the loan presently being negotiated did not fulfill "specific requirements" of the constitution and urged them to be careful. According to Morell Romero and Menéndez, the mayor turned "intensely pallid" upon hearing these words and for good reason.⁸ Instantly, the project was thrust into political quicksand. First, a commission of legal experts was convened to examine the issue. After they assented, Grau convoked a committee of engineers to inspect the aqueduct's blueprint for design flaws. When none were encountered, the president contracted a panel of financiers to analyze the cost. Finding no irregularities, Supervielle once again approached Morell Romero. In the intervening two months, however, the president of the Sugar Workers' Retirement Fund had developed a case of cold feet. Claiming the loan was now "a very big responsibility," Morell Romero deferred to the assemblies of workers, tenants and landowners that governed the fund.⁹ When two of these delegations attached unreasonable conditions to their consent, Supervielle was forced to abandon this avenue.¹⁰

At various points during Supervielle's monologue, his listeners suggested he make a declaration that would clarify the facts. The mayor

5. Financing the aqueduct through a loan from the Sugar Workers' Retirement Fund had been the centerpiece of Supervielle's plan, in large part for nationalistic reasons. President Grau had devised the refrain, "An aqueduct without concessions and with Cuban money," in response to a previous proposal under the mayoralty of Raúl García Menocal (1943-1946), who was a Democrat, and which called for concessions and foreign financing.

6. Archivo Nacional de Cuba. Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás: Legajo 35, Expediente 1097, 104.

7. *Ibid*, 105.

8. en Cuba, "Municipio," *Bohemia*, January 26, 1947, 39.

9. Archivo Nacional de Cuba. Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás: Legajo 35, Expediente 1097, 105.

replied that he preferred not to harm anyone nor did he wish to hinder the country's progress. As treasury minister, he had witnessed the negative effect of scandals on Cuba's economy. At the same time, Supervielle repeatedly wondered why he had been made mayor if he was only going to be thwarted. He also groped for an explanation as to why Grau, whom he had believed to be a close friend, had changed his mind suddenly and so completely. While the president's behavior was surely vexing, both the mayor and his sympathizers were wrong to imply his harassment in the street was the result of an ignorant citizenry. For example, *Bohemia*, the nation's most popular magazine, reported on every stage of the negotiations.¹¹ A piece appearing on January 26, 1947 informed readers not only of Grau's reservation regarding the Sugar Workers Retirement Fund but also of shady dealings in the municipal council, where opposition aldermen demanded a "slice" of the six million pesos earmarked for the project in exchange for their support.¹² The public was even aware that the "municipal first lady" had suggested her husband visit a blood bank as a way of drumming up positive publicity. Cubans were also notified that Supervielle had deceived them even in this small endeavor. After being photographed by the Havana papers with his shirtsleeve rolled up, the mayor refused to have his blood drawn on account of his fragile health.¹³

As Supervielle wrestled with mounting disappointment, he was acutely aware of the looming first anniversary of his election. With the Sugar Workers Retirement Fund off limits, the mayor had no choice but

10. The tenants' assembly approved the loan on the condition that Cuba's legislature pass a law establishing a Tribunal of Accounts. This, obviously, was outside of Supervielle's control. The landowners' delegation also desired something from Cuba's legislators.

They demanded that the Sugar Workers' Retirement Fund, which had been established by presidential decree, must be formalized by an act of Congress. Supervielle was powerless here as well. The workers' delegation, perhaps swayed by the enthusiasm of Jesús Menéndez, approved the loan without reservations.

11. *Bohemia's* weekly circulation at this time was 140,000. Subsequently, the magazine conducted a study in urban and suburban areas revealing that approximately six people read each issue. When *Bohemia's* rural subscribers were taken into account, the number of total readers each week was "conservatively" estimated to be more than one million, or 20 percent of Cuba's population. See: "Un Survey de *Bohemia* Sobre Sus Lectores Adultos," *Bohemia*, March 7, 1948: 58-59.

12. en Cuba, "Municipio," *Bohemia*, January 26, 1947: 38.

13. en Cuba, "Política: Ni sangre ni agua," *Bohemia*, April 6, 1947: 35.

to court foreign companies. At the same time, these would almost certainly not pass muster with a president who had sloganeered to the tune of, "An aqueduct without concessions and with Cuban money." Nevertheless, Supervielle entered negotiations with a series of overseas ventures, including Frederick Snare Corporation of the United States and a Canadian investment company among others, but each time he demurred before a deal could be reached. On a different occasion, the mayor apparently considered a loan from the proprietor of the building where he lived - perhaps believing the man, who was Cuban, was preferable to an outsider. The feverish, semi-distracted state of Supervielle's dealings led a Bohemia correspondent to write that, "In municipal circles, there is speculation as to the identity of the next fortunate mortal who, within a week's time, will enter into negotiations with the mayor, with the objective of beginning the eagerly awaited aqueduct, although it's suspected the mayor will accommodate whomever crosses his path next."¹⁴

Two weeks after that Sunday in April, when Supervielle had unburdened himself before some of the few people who still believed in him, he awoke early and appeared bathed and clean-shaven in his garage at around 7:40 AM. There, as usual, he encountered Sergio Alvarez - the policeman assigned to protect him since his days as treasury minister. "Sergio," said the mayor in a playful tone, "you carry a revolver I don't like. It's old and ugly. Show it to me. One day, I'm going to give you a new one."¹⁵ Alvarez disarmed the pistol, a .38 caliber, and handed it over. Supervielle briefly examined the weapon, insisted again it was not to his taste and told Alvarez to call for a police car as he had an errand that required attention. Alvarez, who was seated next to the mayor, asked for his gun, saying he felt uncomfortable going out into the street unarmed. Supervielle returned the weapon, watched Alvarez insert the magazine, and then snatched it from him. He then quickly shot himself in the chest. Later on, as the mayor's corpse was laid out on a city hospital's operating table, two letters escaped from his jacket pocket: one addressed to the judge of instruction, the other to his wife of 18 years. The former was dated May 2, two days before the suicide. "I deprive myself of life," it read, "because in spite of my efforts to resolve the problem of water in

14. en Cuba, "Municipio: Supervielle el Irresoluto," *Bohemia*, May 4, 1947: 41.

15. en Cuba, "Duelo," *Bohemia*, May 11, 1947: 42.

Havana, due to multiple inconveniences and obstacles that have been placed in my way, I have found it impossible and this implies for me a political failure and leaves unfulfilled the promise I made to the people."¹⁶

Among the first to arrive at Supervielle's residence in the plush suburb of Miramar was Eduardo Chibás, accompanied by his friend and political confidant, Luis Orlando Rodríguez. They, along with two reporters who had preceded them, listened as the mayor's grief-stricken widow, Aurelia Palacios, screamed, "Grau is responsible! He's the only one responsible for Manuel's death!" She then looked at Chibás and said, "You know everything. You have to awaken the people. You have to open their eyes."¹⁷ Chibás, a 39-year-old *Auténtico* senator, cut a unique swath in Cuban politics. Eddy, as he was widely known, was Cuba's most gifted orator, a bona fide radio celebrity and budding messianic figure whose followers sometimes compared him to Jesus Christ.¹⁸ His Sunday evening broadcasts regularly topped the popularity charts, often surpassing the island's famed *radionovelas*.¹⁹ Richard Pack, a *New York Times* correspondent, characterized Chibás as a "reporter, crusader, gossip and muckraker" who treated listeners to a weekly half hour dose of "verbal fireworks."²⁰ The show offered more than mere entertainment, however. Chibás urged his audience to relate examples of injustice or corruption and every week letters poured in from all corners of the island. "As long as any Cuban suffers," he reminded listeners, "I will fight for him." For

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 42-43 See also, Luis Conte Agüero, *El Adalid de Cuba*. (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1955), 502. When President Grau arrived at the Supervielle residence shortly thereafter, he told the mayor's wife, "Señora, the nation has lost one of its most illustrious sons. You were a great help to him." Without missing a beat, she replied, "And you helped him to end up like this."

18. For example, a letter to Chibás by Jorge González Rojas, of Havana, stated, "I admire your bravery, courage and incorruptible dignity and I'm sure that just as God chose Jesus Christ to save Christianity from the wave of perverts that exploited it, He has chosen you to realize a similar labor in Cuban politics." Archivo Nacional, Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás: Legajo 34, Expediente 1089: 1. Another Chibás admirer sent him a poem, the opening lines of which read, "Like Jesus Christ, you tell the truth to men without scruples." *Ibid.*, Legajo 35, Expediente 1094: 155.

19. The first *radionovelas* in Latin America were written and produced in Cuba during the late 1930s.

20. Richard Pack, "Report from Havana." *The New York Times*, April 28, 1946, II, 7.

this reason, Supervielle's widow pinned her hopes on Chibás, adding that some city council members had demanded \$5000 apiece in exchange for supporting the aqueduct.²¹

More to the point, it was no secret that Chibás had lately suffered troubles of his own with Grau. They had met in 1925, when Chibás as an impressionable 17 year old, as passengers on a luxury steamship.²² Eddy, a recent high school graduate at the time, had been set to spend three months in Europe with his parents and younger brother, Raúl. Grau, who was 20 years older, already boasted a lucrative medical practice along with a professorship in physiology at the University of Havana. During the next two decades, they fashioned a close personal and political relationship. In 1927, Grau backed the Directorio Estudiantil Universitario (Student Directorate) of the University of Havana in its opposition to the constitutional "reform" of President Gerardo Machado y Morales (1925-1933) which extended his term and provided for an uncompetitive re-election.²³ As a result, he endured intermittent jail and exile during the next six years but also became the idol of many university students. Chibás returned the favor by nominating Grau for Cuba's presidency on behalf of the Student Directorate on September 8, 1933. By this time, the island was in turmoil after Machado's ouster on August 12 and the overthrow of the United States sponsored successor government of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes on September 5. Grau's brief first presidency, known as the "100 days" (despite lasting 127), formed the basis of his future political career. During this period, he issued a series of popular decrees that enshrined the eight-hour day, minimum wages for cane cutters, voting rights for women, autonomy for the University of Havana, a 45 percent reduction in the price of electricity and a mandate that half of all workers in agriculture, commerce and industry be Cuban citizens. Grau

21. en Cuba, "Duelo," *Bohemia*, May 11, 1947, 43. See also, Conte Agüero, 503.

22. The passenger list of the steamship *Lafayette* was a veritable who's who of Cuba's business and political elite. Others of note who made the voyage were Aurelio Hevia, a hero of Cuba's independence war, and his son Carlos, a future prime minister and political rival of Chibás. Miguel Mariano Gómez, son of former president and war hero José Miguel Gómez was also on board as was Miguel Arango y Mantilla, his father's vice-presidential candidate in 1921.

23. Each of Cuba's three legal parties nominated Machado as their candidate, ensuring his re-election.

was deposed on January 18, 1934, but his decrees, few of which had been implemented due to the government's weakness, remained his calling card. In the decade that followed, when Fulgencio Batista ruled Cuba first as a military strongman (1934-1940) and later as a democratically elected president (1940-1944), the frustrated promise of Grau's tenure grew in the imagination of many Cubans. For this, the former physiology professor owed a considerable debt to Chibás, his most charismatic and popular disciple.

In 1944, Grau won the presidency in what many considered the cleanest elections Cuba had ever held. Chibás, who gained a senate seat in the voting, termed Grau's restoration, "the glorious journey." During the campaign, Grau's adherents had so effusive and greeted him with such ebullience that he suffered broken bones in his right hand, which came to be known as the "hand made sick by popularity."²⁴ He was also inundated with brief, laudatory poems called *décimas*. In one, a female admirer from Santa Clara declared: "In the end, Grau, who could possibly arrive in your presence and explain the impatience with which the People await you?"²⁵ According to *Bohemia*, the new president's inauguration set off "an explosion of popular jubilation never before seen in Cuba."²⁶ Grau thus entered office a near mythic figure, almost more ethereal than human, and in this sense he was certain to disappoint. What no one expected, however, was for the ex physiology professor to prove so tolerant of corruption and contemptuous of the island's constitution. On January 19, 1947, Chibás addressed a 12-page letter to his friend.²⁷ He urged Grau to end the re-election campaign being waged on his behalf by government functionaries, to fire corrupt ministers and send them to the courts for trial and crush the black market that raised the cost of living and made wealthy men of dishonest officials.²⁸ The re-election effort was particularly galling for Chibás on two accounts. First, Cuba's 1940 constitution, which both men had a hand in crafting as members of the constituent assembly, strictly

24. José Pardo Llada, "Gestos, manías y hábitos de nuestros hombres públicos." *Bohemia*, May 4, 1947: 10.

25. Quoted in Vazquez Garcia, 62.

26. en Cuba, "Balance," October 10, 1948: 107.

27. Chibás also sent his letter to the newspapers. On January 21, 1947, *Diario de la Marina* printed it in its entirety.

forbade the practice and Grau's own *Auténtico* party had proposed the measure, which had been approved unanimously.²⁹ Second, Chibás harbored presidential ambitions of his own and longed to correct his erstwhile master's mistakes. In any case, Grau ignored the missive even as many of his policies sowed anger and distrust among Cubans who had expected great things from him. Thus, an editorial in the weekly magazine *Carteles* declared, "Never has a government defrauded the faith of Cubans so rapidly and radically as that of Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín."³⁰

On March 1, 1947 a bloc of pro-Chibás *Auténticos*, known as the *grupo ortodoxo*, met in Senator Pelayo Cuervo Navarro's home to discuss the formation of a new political party. By this time, Grau had renounced re-election but those present were certain he would take revenge. In their view, remaining within the fold would be "political suicide."³¹ Nevertheless, Chibás promptly shocked everyone by asserting that the right "historical juncture," had not yet presented itself.³² Cuba's political sphere was fragmented, with no party attracting more than half the island's votes in presidential polls. As head of a new entity, Chibás reasoned, he would require pacts in order to win the presidency. This would entail diluting the prospective party's platform just as the *Auténticos* had done in 1944 when they allied with the Republicans.³³ Chibás thus told the group, in what would become one of his political hallmarks, that he was interested more in "ideology without pacts than pacts without ideology."³⁴ Aside from an attachment to the organization he had helped build, Chibás also believed

28. The fact that Chibás now criticized Grau for fomenting the black market represented a complete about face. During a broadcast of April 15, 1945, he had strenuously defended Grau's system for supplying Cubans with basic foodstuffs. Moreover, he excoriated Santiago Rey Pernas, a senator from Las Villas, for lacking the moral authority to criticize Grau—especially given his poor record as former governor of that province. Three days later, Chibás and Rey fought a saber duel in which the former was lightly wounded on the forearm and back.

29. Although the constitution forbade consecutive re-election, ex presidents could run again after they had been out of office for eight years.

30. "El Gobierno y la denuncia de Chibás," *Carteles*, January 19, 1947: 25.

31. Conte Agüero, 488.

32. en Cuba, "Política: Conflicto Emocional," *Bohemia*, March 9, 1947: 40.

33. As part of the deal, Grau's vice-president, Raúl de Cárdenas, was a Republican.

34. "Política: Conflicto Emocional," 40.

the *Auténticos* were capable of winning the presidency without coalitions if they chose the right candidate, namely himself, and jettisoned the party's crooked elements.³⁵ Eight days later, on his radio show, Chibás likened the *Auténtico* party to a warship lashed by a tempest, leaking water and infiltrated by enemies. What, asked Chibás, are the responsibilities of loyal crewmembers under such circumstances? They must denounce traitors and struggle to save the boat along with the ideals it represents regardless of the consequences. Amused by this allegory, a Bohemia reporter noted that Chibás had “turned himself into a mariner, whose love of the sea rivaled Sinbad.”³⁶ In a less metaphorical moment, Chibás announced that forming a new “political instrument” and heading a coalition of the island's other parties would almost surely guarantee him the nation's highest office in 1948. Even so, he declared, “I am unwilling to exchange my historic position in Cuba's revolutionary movement for the presidency of the republic.”³⁷ On the other hand, Chibás continued associating with the *grupo ortodoxo*—whose leaders set a date for leaving the party. Manuel Bisbé, a congressman, professor of Greek and one of Chibás' closest friends assured them Eddy would join after resolving his “emotional conflict.”³⁸

More than any Cuban politician, Chibás was obsessed with his legacy. He also felt an intense obligation to honor those who had endured martyrdom during the turbulent 1930s. At all costs, Chibás strived to avoid the fate of Inocente Alvarez, a fellow Student Directorate member and *Auténtico* party founder, who had since gained notoriety for a series of corrupt barter deal scandals as Grau's minister of commerce.³⁹ Cases of this sort betrayed the 1933 revolution and the ideals of those who died in the fight against Machado. Further, they called to mind the harshest stereotypes of

35. On July 14, 1946, the provincial assembly of the *Auténtico* party in Oriente, the largest and most populous of Cuba's six provinces, proclaimed Chibás their choice for the presidential nomination in 1948. This had been arranged beforehand, with Chibás' knowledge, by Emilio Ochoa, the *Auténtico* party president of Oriente. That evening, Chibás addressed a grateful speech to his supporters via radio in which he claimed his popularity coupled with that of the party would guarantee a “definitive and crushing victory” without pacts or coalitions. See Conte Agüero, 445.

36. en Cuba, “Política: Chibás el Marino,” *Bohemia*, March 16, 1947: 43.

37. *Ibid.*

38. “Política: Conflicto Emocional,” 40.

United States officials regarding Cuba's revolutionaries. On December 9, 1932, as a 25-year-old exile living in Washington, D.C., Chibás had listened incredulously while a radio announcer lauded the dictatorial Machado regime and dismissed the opposition as “office seekers.”⁴⁰ Chibás, who earlier that month had been released from prison on Cuba's Isle of Pines, responded by posting a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, excerpts of which later appeared in the *Washington Herald*.⁴¹ Written in Chibás' assured, prep school English,⁴² the five type-written pages bitterly denounced United States policy in Cuba. Among its practical consequences were the gruesome deaths of two friends at the hands of Machado's police after the United States embassy refused to intervene on their behalf. The youngest, Juan González Rubiera, was only 17 years old and his corpse bore 11 bullet wounds and “signs of having been savagely tortured.”⁴³ Chibás thus proclaimed toward the missive's finale that, “the students from thirteen to twenty-five years of age who are daily being victimized with bullets in defense of freedom and justice, are not office seekers.”⁴⁴ Ironically, a passel of office seekers had indeed sprouted from among the students. Chibás dreaded being perceived as one too if he left Cuba's largest revolutionary party and the only one founded by members of the Student Directorate.⁴⁵ In contemplating his future, he therefore proclaimed the “historical aspect,” namely, how he would be remembered by future generations, trumped short-term political considerations.⁴⁶

39. As minister of commerce (1944-1945), Alvarez devised a series of barter deals with other Latin American countries as a way to remedy Cuba's shortage of basic goods. Under this system, Cuba traded excess sugar for commodities such as Ecuadorian rice or Mexican black beans. Chibás himself initially supported the plan, which did, in fact function as advertised. Unfortunately, Alvarez also manipulated the price between crude and refined sugar to earn himself and his collaborators a hefty profit.

40. Department of State Files, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1930-1939, Box 3336.

41. Chibás' message to Secretary of State Stimson resembles an earlier, albeit shorter letter he sent to the United States ambassador in Cuba, Harry Guggenheim. In this version, instead of the Cuban opposition being dismissed on the radio as “office seekers” they are characterized instead as “politicians and grafters.”

42. Chibás was enrolled during the 1924-1925 academic year at the Storm King School, a private school in Cornwall on Hudson, 50 miles north of New York City.

43. Department of State Files, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1930-1939, Box 3336.

44. *Ibid.*

While *Auténtico* bigwigs viewed the man known as *el loco* (the crazy one) with mistrust, the *grupo ortodoxo* wondered when Chibás would realize, as Bisbé had said, “the impossibility of continuing in the party.”⁴⁷ Hence, each new development became a test of Chibás' loyalties and intentions. On March 17, *grupo ortodoxo* senators drew up a motion to interpellate Grau's sleaziest cabinet members: minister of education, José Manuel Alemán and minister of commerce, César Casas. Asked whether he would add his name, Chibás agreed on two conditions. First, the motion must not attack the *Auténticos* as a party and second, no politicians from other parties would be asked to sign. If the *grupo ortodoxo* hoped Chibás would see the futility of his situation, this was indeed a shrewd tactic. In 1945, when Inocente Alvarez submitted to a seven-hour interpellation and Cuba's chamber of representatives subsequently voted “no confidence,” Grau was indignant and resisted removing him. When Alvarez did finally bow to calls for his resignation, Grau flouted the island's semi-parliamentary system by making him foreign minister shortly thereafter. Zeroing in on Alemán and Casas would almost certainly lead to similar contempt—especially as the president considered Alemán his “best minister.”⁴⁸ Though the *grupo ortodoxo* did not intend the motion as a ruse to lure Chibás, its members surely realized the potential symbolism. After all, Chibás and Alemán were nearly perfect foils.

Eddy joined the *Auténticos* in 1938, before the party was allowed to function legally in Cuba and could offer members little aside from persecution. Alemán, on the other hand, had been a Democrat and career civil servant in the ministry of education who supported Grau's opponent in 1944. Elevated to education minister in 1946, the erstwhile chief of bud-

45. The other two “revolutionary” parties were the ABC and the communists. The ABC was founded in 1931, initially as a clandestine terrorist outfit specializing in assassinations against Machado's security forces. The group also devised a detailed political platform advocating the liquidation of latifundia, pensions for workers, legalization of unions, nationalization of public services, voting rights for women and the creation of tribunals to punish graft. The communist party, which took orders from Moscow, was established in 1925 but remained very small. Their primary opposition to Machado took the form of two semi-successful general strikes in 1930 and 1932.

46. “Política: Chibás el Marino,” 43.

47. “Política: Conflicto Emocional,” 40.

48. en Cuba, “Balance,” *Bohemia*, October 10, 1948: 125.

gets and accounts quickly padded his briefcase. When that was full, he employed a suitcase—accumulating an estimated \$20 million in under two years on the job.⁴⁹ With his ill-gotten gains, he acquired a *finca* 12 miles south of Havana and prime Miami real estate for starters.⁵⁰ Alemán was no garden-variety grafter, however. Besides lining his pockets, he used the ministry's funds to become a major power broker within the *Auténtico* party.⁵¹ In this respect, the ministry of education proved an ideal plaything. Its budget was swollen beyond that of other ministries by a nine-centavo tax on each bag of sugar produced, the result of a law passed on April 5, 1943. Known as *inciso K* (clause K) for the section of the law's first article that mandated the tax, it was designed to finance the hiring of new professors, teachers and other necessary personnel. Alemán diverted a substantial portion of this money toward *Auténtico* candidates in 1946, helping the party gain a majority in congress and, fatefully, the mayoralty of Havana. With an eye toward the presidential poll in 1948, Alemán launched an all-purpose political fund known as BAGA (Bloque Alemán-Grau Alsina) in conjunction with Grau's favorite nephew, Francisco Grau Alsina. Chibás, who had taken note of these activities, taunted Alemán over the airwaves—accusing him on December 12, 1946 of stealing the breakfasts of schoolchildren. Being dressed down in this manner before a nationwide audience was undoubtedly embarrassing for Alemán, but the education minister inoculated himself against such attacks by charming the president.

As a longtime bureaucrat, Alemán was adept at cultivating vastly different masters. During Fulgencio Batista's presidency (1940-1944), he

49. Hugh Thomas. *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971): 758.

50. Alemán purchased the *finca* America, formerly the domain of ex president José Miguel Gómez (1909-1913)—another distinguished figure in the annals of Cuban political corruption. Gómez, affectionately known as *el tiburón* (the shark), was a general in the war of independence and dominated the island's Liberal party until his death in 1921. He entered the presidency with little money and exited a millionaire, albeit one who takes care of his friends. This gave rise to a refrain that played on his nickname, "El tiburón se baña pero salpica." (The shark bathes but splashes).

51. Alemán's rise within the party was nothing short of meteoric. Having joined the *Auténticos* only after Grau's victory in 1944, he had become the party's president in Havana by December of 1947 and won a senate seat in 1948. In the sort of irony that abounds in Cuban politics, Chibás occupied this seat two years later after Alemán's death from Hodgkin's disease.

served minister of education Anselmo Alliegro—helping him pillage *inciso K* from its inception. Under Grau, who loathed Batista for toppling his government of the “100 days” in 1934, Alemán radically changed course. References to Batista's civic-military schools were scrapped. He demolished the Cangrejas military barracks on the western edge of Havana and replaced it with a polytechnic school named for Paulina Alsina, Grau's widowed sister in law, who was Cuba's “First Lady.” Alemán also encouraged Grau's re-election hopes. This endeared him to the austere ex physiology professor who eschewed cigarettes, alcohol and even snacks between meals but possessed a sharp predilection for flattery. Alemán consolidated his position in the party by taking indirect control of the armed action group known as *Movimiento Revolucionario Socialista* (MSR). This outfit was one of numerous self-styled *grupos de acción* with ties to the Autenticos. After Grau won the presidency, these violent organizations sought government positions and pursued deadly rivalries among themselves. They also engaged in lucrative rackets, such as monopolizing the sale of textbooks at the University of Havana.⁵² Alemán utilized the MSR as a private army to bully detractors⁵³ and forcibly shut down schools, especially out of the way rural institutions. In this manner, he increased the available resources for his own purposes.

On April 8, 1947, the senate voted to interpellate Alemán and Casas. Chibás had prepared for this eventuality by asking listeners to send examples of government corruption. One letter, signed by 31 parents and neighbors of two nearby rural schools in Las Villas province, declaimed their children's lack paper, pencils, books, desks and blackboards. As

52. Thomas, 743. The University of Havana was an ideal place for the action groups as it was off limits to the police. On the other hand, Cuba's various police and security forces were themselves often run by members of action groups during Grau's presidency, so they flourished outside the university as well. For example, the chief of Cuba's *Servicio de Investigaciones* was Mario Salabarría, a friend of Grau and member of MSR. Havana's police chief, Fabio Ruiz, belonged to MSR's bitter rival, *Acción Revolucionaria Guiteras* (ARG). Ruiz was made police chief in exchange for ARG support in the 1944 elections.

53. On November 20, 1946, Senator Emilio Ochoa of the *grupo ortodoxo* submitted a motion to investigate irregularities at the polytechnic school of Holguín, his hometown. Alemán responded by sending “employees” of the education ministry to the Capitolio building armed with pistols and machine guns. By a strange coincidence, the senate lacked a quorum on that day.

“one of the purest men of our republic,” the authors begged Chibás to tell the education minister to “SPEND MONEY ON SCHOOL MATERIALS” because local children “HUNGER FOR TEACHING.”⁵⁴ Rolando Roque of Guara in Havana province claimed the right to an education in his town was a “sarcasm” given the absence of textbooks, seats, desks and water filters in the school.⁵⁵ Manuel Barruecos of Bayamo informed Chibás that the education minister was closing the Rural Normal School in order to rob the money designated for its upkeep. In addition, he described the recent visit of a group of MSR gangsters “pantomiming” the role of school inspectors.⁵⁶ In Calabazar de la Habana, the locale of Alemán’s recently acquired *finca*, residents noticed that instead of finishing construction on a nearby school, workers and supplies were now being transported to the education minister’s property. The author of this letter closed by urging Chibás to “fall with zeal upon the thieves.”⁵⁷

César Casas, the minister of commerce, was a less sinister figure than Alemán but his toleration of Cuba’s black market profoundly angered many citizens. The intermittent scarcity of goods such as rice, lard, flour, meat and milk had originally begun in 1942, when the United States entered World War II. Now, more than a year after the fight had ended, Cubans continued to endure shortages and black market prices. Responding to complaints, ministry officials denied the existence of a black market and, rather indelicately, grumbled that Cubans were “eating too much.”⁵⁸ Casas qualified these assertions, saying no “organized” black market was in force.⁵⁹ Everyday Cubans knew otherwise and eagerly detailed their experiences for Chibás. One letter described how a treasury ministry employee bought 350 sacks of cement at the officially controlled price of 98 centavos and subsequently sold them for three pesos each on the black market.⁶⁰ The man, named Andrés Plumas, was a recent hire and

54. Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás. Legajo 35, Expediente 1097: 58.

55. *Ibid.*, 56.

56. *Ibid.*, 37.

57. *Ibid.*, 26.

58. Jacinto Torras. “¿Terminarán en 1947 la crisis de abastecimiento y la bolsa negra?” *Bohemia*, January 26, 1947: 29.

59. José Pardo Llada. “La bolsa negra.” *Bohemia*, January 19, 1947: 42.

confessed to a friend that his longer serving colleagues were entitled to far more than that. Esther Pérez, a fervid Chibás supporter from Carlos Rojas in Matanzas province, lamented the lack of rice in his⁶¹ town because of a common trick employed by wholesalers. This involved billing shopkeepers for one quantity while delivering a much smaller amount. As a result, local stores faced with a dilemma: break the law and sell items at higher than the official price so as not to lose money or avoid vending them altogether. For good measure, Pérez added that the town's children did not receive their school breakfasts nor did they have sufficient educational materials.⁶² Another missive reported that the chief of Santa Clara's office of commerce and his second in command controlled supplies of the city's basic items and sold them for exorbitant rates on the black market. As a result, both rice and soap were unavailable at official prices. Noting that the Grau administration had "turned out worse than we thought," the author deems himself a "Chibás *Auténtico*" and praised the *grupo ortodoxo*.⁶³

Worst of all, the sordidness of Cuba's black market underbelly, teeming as it was with dodgy functionaries and wholesalers, was only half the story. The government's official policy of price controls for foodstuffs such as rice, lard and flour, all of which were largely imported, amounted to subsidies for foreign producers. Rather than assisting overseas farmers, a wiser tactic would have been to stimulate domestic markets—particularly for rice, a Cuban staple suitable to the island's terrain. This was especially imperative now, while sugar prices were high, so that Cuba would have other options when profits inevitably dropped. After all, sugar growing rivals such as the Philippines, whose capacity had been largely destroyed during World War II, would not stay down indefinitely. Many of these points were outlined in a memo drawn up for Chibás on April 12;

60. Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás. Legajo 35, Expediente 1097: 72-73.

61. This is not a typographical error. Esther Pérez, who regularly corresponded with Chibás, reminded him in a postscript not to forget that he was a "señor," particularly as previous responses had been addressed to Señorita Esther Pérez.

62. Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás. Legajo 35, Expediente 1097: 12-13.

63. *Ibid*, 81.

four days after the interpellations were approved. The document also censured Alemán for sporadic distribution of school breakfasts and the building of showcase schools next to Cuba's *Carretera Central* (Central Highway) while rural inhabitants languished in want. Taking into account the gravity of these offenses and the vast resources at Alemán's disposal, it warned that the senate's obligation to examine and analyze the education ministry was "not to be delegated."⁶⁴ Chibás had no intention of shirking this responsibility, nor did many of his fellow legislators, especially those from other parties who were placed at a disadvantage by Alemán's campaign contributions.

At the same time, both ministers were determined to resist appearing before the senate. Prior to the vote, Alemán and Casas informed the president they suffered from stage fright. Upon learning of the motion's approval, Grau refused to honor it but seemed far less concerned with protecting his ministers than ridding himself of congress altogether. Notified by senate president Miguelito Suárez Fernández that the upper chamber was exercising a constitutionally sanctioned prerogative, Grau, wearing his characteristic smile, responded with the following anecdote:

Truly *amigos*, the constitution is charging me for more than the amount on the bill. At this moment, I'm remembering something very suggestive. A short while after assuming the presidency of the republic, I passed through Luyanó (a working class Havana neighborhood) on the way to Varadero (a beach resort 85 miles east of the capital) and noted a horrible smell emanating from a tallow factory. The next day, I called the minister of health and asked him to close it but he told me he couldn't do that because the factory was functioning in accordance with the constitution and the laws. A short time afterward, I again passed through Luyanó and the horrible odor still bothered me. This time, I called Lieutenant Colonel Hernández Nardo and instructed him to take some men along and close the factory immediately without any further explanation. Acting with great efficiency, he shut down the factory and said only that he was acting on orders from above. Right now, the congress is bothering me a great deal because it too smells horribly. It's a center of foul smells...⁶⁵

64. Ibid, 50. Entitled "Memorandum para el Sr. Chibás," this document contains minor editorial changes in Chibás' handwriting, suggesting that he read it carefully.

65. en Cuba, "Crisis: Un Foco Pestilente," *Bohemia*, April 20, 1947: 45.

The following Sunday, Chibás repeated this story on his radio show, spreading the “tallow factory of Luyanó” to an even wider audience than those who read about it in *Bohemia*. The island’s cartoonists happily joined the fray as well. For example, a sketch by Juan David portrayed Grau and the Republican senator Guillermo Alonso Pujol speaking to each other behind gas masks.⁶⁶

Tensions were exacerbated on April 21, when MSR gunmen loyal to Alemán fired shots into the *Capitolio* during an evening senate session dedicated to resolving the crisis with Grau. Two days later, as the senate awaited him, Casas sent word that he would not attend his interpellation. In response, Chibás submitted a motion of no confidence against Grau's entire cabinet, which was duly approved, as the only way to defend the senate's “legislative sovereignty.”⁶⁷ Even as this was humiliating, Grau was favored by a provision in the constitution excusing his new cabinet from interpellation for one year. Once again flouting the constitution he helped create, Grau elevated deputies in each ministry and made no secret of his intention to restore the original cabinet when the senate recessed. On May 2, when the no confidence vote became official, Prime Minister Carlos Prío Socarrás termed Casas’ refusal to appear before the senate as “legal and legitimate.”⁶⁸ For Prío, a lawyer, senator and former delegate to the constituent assembly that created Cuba's constitution, this statement was understandable only in the context of his own presidential aspirations. Even as Grau had relinquished his re-election campaign, it was clear he (and not the party assembly) would choose the next Auténtico presidential nominee. Thus, the prospect of Chibás rescuing the party from the likes of Grau and Alemán seemed increasingly remote.

On the other hand, the president's high-handedness was unpopular. As Chibás had attempted to collect signatures for his no confidence motion, Eduardo Suárez Rivas, a Liberal senator, exclaimed that those who refused would “look like idiots” before the public.⁶⁹ Grau, who once averred that his government represented “the combat of virtue against

66. Ibid, 48. The following week, David produced a cartoon entitled “Precaution” in which Grau sported a clothespin instead.

67. en Cuba, “Crisis: Casas no asiste al Senado,” *Bohemia*, April 27, 1947: 45.

68. “Senadores Auténticos estiman que tiene caracter transitorio el Gabinete recién designado,” *Diario de la Marina*, May 3, 1947: 2.

vice,⁷⁰ now preferred to defy the constitution rather than rendering two widely disliked and corrupt ministers.⁷¹ Two days after this crisis had been resolved, essentially by sidestepping the legislative branch, Havana's mayor shot himself in the heart. Supervielle, who had been derided in the press and on the streets up to moment of his demise, instantly became a martyr. During his broadcast that evening, Chibás characterized the mayor's death as a "desperate scream of alert in the midst of political confusion."⁷² He also reminded listeners of the Auténtico congressman (and unconditional Grau supporter) Segundo Curti's attempt to pass a law that would place the aqueduct under central government control because the mayor was a "failed, inept and incapable public servant."⁷³ The next day a crowd of 4000 composed of all social classes squeezed into Havana's Colón cemetery to attend his burial. A reporter from *Diario de la Marina* called the ceremony, "one of the most well attended in recent memory."⁷⁴ The "en Cuba" section of *Bohemia* noted that Supervielle's suicide was "taken by the people in general as an act of protest in favor of honest politics against the habit, too frequent among elected figures, of scorning the needs and necessities of the community."⁷⁵ This was an obvious jab at Alemán and Casas, both of whom treated the "community" with disdain, stole with impunity and enjoyed the president's favor. Although Grau delivered a glowing eulogy, Supervielle lacked the president's full support even in death. The national government, unlike that of the city, did not declare an official day of mourning nor were the flags of the presidential palace, the primer minister's office⁷⁶ or the foreign ministry flown at half-

69. en Cuba, "Política: Vamos a Firmar Para Complacer al Presidente," *Bohemia*, May 4, 1947: 43.

70. Miguel de Marcos, "¡Se cansa uno!" *Bohemia*, January 5, 1947: 52.

71. The depth of anger against Casas in particular cannot be overestimated, particularly as shortages and exorbitant prices affected all Cubans. On January 21, 1947, an anti black market demonstration took place in front of the presidential palace. Grau, who addressed the crowd, was met with whistles, catcalls and insults when he referred to the government's policy of supplying basic goods.

72. Conte Agüero, 503.

73. *Ibid.*

74. "Fue Imponente Manifestación de Duelo el Entierro del Alcalde Habanero Dr. Manuel Fernández Supervielle," *Diario de la Marina*, May 6, 1947: 1.

75. "Duelo: Un hombre de honor," 43.

mast. The administration's most pressing concern was to keep the multitude's palpable anger from bubbling over. As such, a police cordon restricted access to the mausoleum and the cemetery was lined with uniformed and plain-clothes officers. The government also cancelled eulogies slated to be given by figures representing the mayor's family and Havana's city hall, alleging a shortage of time. However, this decision smacked of nervousness and fear.

Chibás, who had zealously campaigned for Supervielle in 1946 and dubbed him "Super-votes," was ideally placed to understand the frayed relationship between mayor and president. After all, Chibás had once coveted the mayoralty for himself but yielded to Grau's preference for Supervielle. The president purportedly chose Supervielle because the post required an administrator rather than a politician. Most likely, Supervielle's middling popularity caught Grau's eye more than his efficiency or managerial skill as treasury minister. In terms of power, the Havana mayoralty paled only before the presidency and Grau, who cherished the idea of re-election, desired a weak candidate. Supervielle, who had twice run unsuccessfully for a congressional seat, was ideal. Even so, the prospect of bringing water to Havana aroused such passion that Supervielle became a sensation. He defeated his two opponents in a landslide and immediately set to work on the promised aqueduct. Supervielle also began mentioning himself as a presidential candidate. If he succeeded in supplying the water *habaneros* so desperately yearned for, his popularity would have skyrocketed, making him a formidable force and natural contender for Cuba's highest office. Hence, Grau effectively squashed the financing for Supervielle's aqueduct in late January 1947, a decision he refused to reverse even after the mayor publicly supported the president's re-election campaign the next month. Nor was this the first time Grau had played politics with the city's water supply. In August 1944, as president

76. Shortly after Supervielle's suicide, Chibás received a letter from someone who had been present at the house of the new mayor, Nicolás Castellanos. According to this account, one of the guests suggested that celebratory drinks were in order. However, Castellanos responded that, "this is a time of pain rather than one of joy." Moments later, Carlos Prío, the prime minister appeared shouting and applauding. He allegedly yelled, "There is no reason for sadness!" and addressing the new mayor's wife he cried, "Bring some champagne to celebrate as this is a great day for us!" See: Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Fondo Eduardo R. Chibás. Legajo 35, Expediente 1097: 95.

elect, he rejected a scheme by then Mayor Raúl García Menocal because the proposed aqueduct called for the use of foreign capital.⁷⁷ Suervielle was also not the first Auténtico to have his career derailed for becoming too popular. Grau's first education minister, Luis Pérez Espinós, was forced to resign in 1945 because his success in adding new classrooms and expanding the school breakfast program was considered threatening.⁷⁸

When Chibás took to the microphones on Sunday evening of May 11, he was ready to cast off what his friend Luis Conte Agüero called “the psychological conflict.”⁷⁹ He began his address by revisiting Supervielle's death. The mayor's suicide note, he mused, was reminiscent of a “patrician from the legendary age of Roman greatness.”⁸⁰ He contrasted this document, which avoided accusation or recrimination, with the “sordid meanness” of those responsible for his demise.⁸¹ Chibás also reminded his audience that the flag adorning the presidential palace fluttered at the top of its mast, “challenging public opinion” and smirking at the man whose poignant fate “destroyed thousands and thousands of hearts.”⁸² Following this prelude, Chibás devoted the remainder of his 25-minute show to yet another unfolding tragedy. The same underhanded characters, led by Grau, who had driven Supervielle to end his life had also irreparably harmed the Auténtico party. This damage could not be reversed because the party's national, provincial and municipal assemblies, which represented rank and file delegates, no longer possessed any influence over the current government. Chibás pointed out that the national assembly had not been convoked a single time since Grau had taken office in October of 1944. Declaring that, “The crisis of the government produces a crisis in

77. Chibás, who was Grau's chief propagandist at the time, framed opposition to Mayor Menocal's aqueduct in fiercely patriotic terms. During his broadcast of August 27, 1944, Chibás asserted that, “Cubans must rid themselves of their colonial mentality, shake themselves free of defeatism, feel proud of their country and march forward with their foreheads raised, toward the conquest of Cuba's economic independence.” See Conte Agüero, 322.

78. Charles D. Ameringer. *The Cuban Democratic Experience: The Auténtico Years, 1944-1952*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000): 33.

79. Conte Agüero, 505

80. Ibid, 504.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid, 504.

the party, which in turn gives rise to a crisis in the Cuban revolution,” Chibás signaled his readiness to found a new party based on the original Auténtico ideals of economic independence, political liberty and social justice.⁸³

The following Thursday, *grupo ortodoxo* members and their sympathizers met in the Auténtico Youth headquarters on the corner of *Neptuno* and *Amistad* in the *Centro Habana* district. They represented an impressive display of Cuba’s political elite, including six of the nation’s 54 senators, nine of its 127 congressmen, the governor of Matanzas province and the mayors of Bayamo, Holguín and Victoria de las Tunas. Younger notables in attendance included 19-year-old Natasha Mella,⁸⁴ daughter of Julio Antonio Mella, the magnetic student leader and founder of Cuba’s communist party. His assassination in 1929 converted him into one of the revolution’s first martyrs. Also present was 20-year-old Fidel Castro, then a law student at the University of Havana. Chibás opened the proceedings with a speech in which he said, “We can’t rebuild the party from within but don’t want to be accused of being impulsive or acting out of personal ambitions.”⁸⁵ He thus proposed that Grau be given 72 hours to convene the Auténtico national assembly, in front of which the *grupo ortodoxo* would accuse him of betraying the party’s founding principles. This proposal was approved unanimously. Later on, Senator Emilio Ochoa submitted a motion, also approved unanimously, to name a committee charged with establishing a “new political force.”⁸⁶ On May 18, two hours after the deadline for a response from Grau had passed, Chibás ascended his radio pulpit and launched the organization. He described this entity, so freshly born it lacked a name, as a refuge for Cuba’s honorable politicians. “In a party,” Chibás proclaimed, “fundamental ideas are very important but also essential are the men charged with putting them into

83. Ibid, 506.

84. Far from being a bystander, Natasha Mella was named to the 10-member committee charged with officially forming the new party. She was the youngest member of the group (although three others were in their 20s) and the only woman. However, her surname was among the most recognizable in Cuba and possessed undeniable power. She was also extraordinarily beautiful, a trait inherited from her father—whose handsomeness was immortalized in the photos of Italian photographer Tina Modotti.

85. Conte Agüero, 508.

86. Ibid.

practice. The world's most beautiful program, backed by empty speakers or a group of delinquents will never be able to win over public opinion or the people's enthusiastic support."⁸⁷

Asked by a reporter for his opinion, Grau dismissed the new party as *ortofónicos* or noisemakers. However, there was no denying this represented yet another black eye for the man viewed as a messiah less than three years earlier. By all appearances, a new savior was already laying the groundwork to supplant him.

87. Ibid, 510.

CHAPTER 27

La Biblioteca Nacional, Culture and Politics

Carlos Riobó

Abstract: This paper is based on my visit to the Cuban National Library, La Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (BNJM) and La Biblioteca Provincial Elvira Cape, in Santiago de Cuba, to learn about the system of satellite libraries the BNJM had implemented in the Cuban provinces.¹ These satellite or provincial libraries were meant to facilitate the literacy campaign, especially in rural areas, but also to allow cultural idioms the provinces felt represented their own culture to be collected and shared with the National Library and with city dwellers as part of a new collective national consciousness promoted by the Castro regime. I was initially intrigued by the idea that the provinces could authentically represent their mostly rural culture to people in Havana as something other than archetype or myth, and to a national institution once known for high-brow culture – the BNJM. I wanted to know what criteria and methodologies were used by the provincial, or satellite, libraries to choose and collect their cultural artifacts. This paper traces the history of both the Cuban National Library in Havana and the Cuban public libraries (also known as satellite or provincial libraries) while asking a more universal question: how do the culturally marginal learn to reify and to exhibit their provincial culture? And, in so doing, do they either gain or lose political agency, or do they contaminate, denature, or even lose their own culture?

The Cuban National Library, today's *Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* (BNJM), was founded in 1901, during the historical moment of Cuba's independence from Spain. It is no coincidence and no surprise that an institution such as a national repository of culture should have arisen dur-

1. The Cuban satellite libraries are also known as public libraries and provincial libraries. They are not to be confused with the controversial independent libraries started in 1998 to establish surreptitiously private collections for semi-clandestine public use in the homes [of private individuals] (Salazar 2). These latter libraries are not officially sanctioned by the Cuban state, but often ignored. Some of them contain books banned by the government. Some scholars have argued that it is not these libraries' books that are banned, but the libraries themselves.

ing a period as traumatic, memorable, and explorational as a country's autonomization. At such a moment, the new country was in the process of creating an official history that both rescued its colonial heritage selectively and forged a new cultural itinerary and destiny. The transformation of the country's colonial patrimony to a republican one required a corpus of works from which to fabricate a new national mythology, as well as a national warehouse within which to frame and unify these works.

La Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (BNJM), was founded only a few months before the founding of the Republic on May 20, 1902, and during a period of United States intervention on the Island. The United States's military government's occupation had been officially established in Cuba on January 1st, 1899. In 1901, the island's governor, Leonard Wood, issued military order #234 in *la Gaceta de La Habana*, establishing the National Library and naming Domingo Figarola Caneda as its director. The National Library has no foundational document. The only extant official prose is the military order referring to 1901 as the origin of the Institution and designating Figarola's salary as well as the location of the library.

It is important to underscore that the origins of the Cuban National Library are tied to U.S. intervention on the island. As Tomás Fernández Robaina suggests,

Es posible que la fundación de la Biblioteca Nacional haya sido vista por el gobierno interventor ... como uno de los factores necesarios a largoplazo dentro de la política de modernización o de americanización, ...que se llevaba a cabo en Cuba para preparar su evolución acorde a los planes inmediatos de penetración económica e ideológica. (11)

Other Cuban writers such as Juan Pérez de la Riva and Emilio Setién have suggested similar ideas. In part, the lack of a founding document and the focus on salary and location in the military order seem to suggest that the earliest, official, preoccupations were not with a grand plan and future for a "national" library. To the contrary, the order points to a paltry salary for the library's first director and inadequate space for its first building.

From its inception in 1901 until 1958, the Biblioteca Nacional had no ties to Cuba's pre-existing public libraries. There had been a handful of provincial libraries since the early nineteenth-century in Cuba, which were more akin to what we might think of as museums or archives today.

These housed private collections of various types of treasures, as well as books, belonging to a few wealthy, private individuals. By 1940, the constitution of the same year had foreseen the establishment of “una biblioteca en cada municipio” (Ministerio de cultura 116) but the project never entirely came to fruition.

The victors of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 saw in the National Library an opportunity to disseminate Revolutionary ideals as well as a symbolic institution that could be made accessible to the masses at large. By the end of 1959, the Library had already begun to be used to collect and to organize studies and documents having to do with history, literature, music, and science. The National Library endeavored to collect what it considered to represent Cuban culture and to designate it as Cuba's patrimony to be shared by all, even if that meant first educating the “grandes mayorías” of people as to how to study their own culture. This latter endeavor was accomplished, as is well known, mostly through “la exitosa y trascendental campaña de alfabetización sobre casi un millón de analfabetos y la creación de la Imprenta Nacional” (García-Carranza, “Contribución de la BNJM” 22); in part, it was also done through the Library's vast bibliographic projects, especially since the end of 1961 when it published “un primer intento bibliográfico de carácter nacional, un catálogo titulado *Movimiento editorial en Cuba 1959-60*, con motivo de una exposición de libros, folletos y revistas que mostraba la producción de las editoras cubanas,..., con lo que se iniciaba la revaloración de la cultura cubana”(García-Carranza, “Contribución de la BNJM” 23). The library's *revaloración* approved works through its list and tacitly disavowed those not on it. It would become a symbol of a revalorization of cultural works and an institution that could be used by a plurality of people.

One of the early challenges to the Cuban Revolution after 1959 was to create a consciousness among the rural and provincial peoples of having a direct, participatory role in recording their own history on a national scale; that is, of fitting within a historical continuum, within a linear and causal narrative, to which they had had little if any access previously. As the BNJM's National Reading Program states, Leer es un ejercicio que expresa y sostiene la cultura de una nación, su fuerza espiritual y sus valores, su capacidad de resistencia y *desarrollo*. “Leer, aunque parezca una experiencia solitaria, es *participar*,” emphasis mine (*Cuanto antes mejor I*). To do so, however, meant that these rural peoples needed to have cul-

tural capital or artifacts with which to enter such a narrative as subject and not just object of study. The Cuban cultural revolution needed to provide literacy, since literature (or writing) was one of the mediums through which people could both learn and create, and thereby enter recorded history. The Cubans wanted a planned culture after 1959 as an activity directed to the formation of the “new man” in the new society. This new individual “se producirá por el cambio de las condiciones sociales y las nuevas posibilidades de elevación del nivel cultural de la sociedad,” according to Sarah Escobar Carballal—professor of library science in Havana (Escobar 2), and, as Fidel Castro stated in his Speech to the Intellectuals (*Palabras a los intelectuales*) in 1961 that a “Revolución económica y social tiene que producir inevitablemente también una Revolución cultural.” This was one of Castro’s early attempts to define revolutionary Cuba’s cultural politics and the BNJM would be at the center of this culture war. A series of social changes had to be made before the public library system would be in a position to develop as an agent of cultural change. The most significant of these social changes was spearheaded by the aforementioned literacy campaign.

The first phase of Cuba’s famed literacy campaign ended in 1961. In 1959, the population of Cuba was 6 million and 24.3% were illiterate (according to the Cuban Libraries Support Group, out of the United Kingdom). In 1999 the population was 11 million, and 4.3% was illiterate. According to UNESCO, as cited by the Cuban Libraries Support Group, by 1998, Cuban educational standards were the highest in Latin America, “The campaign also began to break down barriers between urban and rural areas, blacks and whites, and between manual and white collar workers who spread across the countryside to aid in the campaign.”

In 1964 (five years after the revolution), Cuba had thirty two public libraries, which developed, partly in a response to the surge in literacy, and partly as a means of sustaining it. Between 1963 and 1970, Cuba’s economic considerations curtailed the development of public libraries, but in the 1970’s and 80’s libraries jumped from 108 in 1974 to 196 in 1980. By 1987, there were 328 public libraries in every part of Cuba. Currently, there are 413 libraries according to the website of the BNJM’s own Sistema Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas, or SNBP.

Until 1959, the National Library had had no link to the country’s few existing public libraries. It had not established an official national system

for the country's libraries. The initial step that would establish the web of provincial libraries was taken in 1962 by the *Consejo Nacional de Cultura* headed by María Teresa Freyre de Andrade. At this time, Freyre de Andrade also established the *Escuela de Capacitación Bibliotecaria* under which the National Library began operating as the methodological center and laboratory for the web of national public libraries it hoped to create. From 1961 to 1967, the reference department of the BNJM “fue piloto, pues a él llegaba personal desde las bibliotecas públicas de provincias y municipios para su entrenamiento” (Iglesias Tauler 77). From 1969 to 1975, there were national conferences to develop the central role of the National Library within the evolving system of provincial libraries even further. Until 1976, the National Library functioned as advisor or consultant to Cuba's several public libraries, giving them technical pamphlets, manuals, and other documents (Carranza y Jiménez López 124). The immediate goals of the Library's directorship foreshadowing the web of satellite libraries in 1959 were:

- 1) estudiar y revalorizar nuestra tradición cultural y muy especialmente la del siglo XIX.

We might reflect here for a moment to remember that this was Cuba's turbulent period of slavery and rebellion against colonial abuses. Obviously, this abusive earlier period would have resonated with the claims of the new Cuban regime of 1959 leveled against the former Cuban government and the U.S. interventionist government. This study of the nineteenth century would have reflected useful parallels for the new Cuban regime.

- 2) estudiar e investigar nuestras raíces culturales.
- 3) trabajar porque se reconociera sin reservas, el talento y la capacidad del cubano, y se valoriza adecuadamente a sus creadores.
- 4) dar a la ciencia el lugar que le correspondía en la actividad cultural.

We might pause here again to point out that by the early to middle 1980's, the BNJM was promoting the study of the humanities in provincial libraries as an approach to the technical sciences. As Genshaft observed, “[las] principales tareas de las bibliotecas públicas [son las de] contribuir al progreso científico técnico” (15).

- 5) propiciar la superación cultural de las grandes mayorías, desarrollando intensamente actividades encaminadas a interesarles en *el buen arte y la lectura*.

6) hacer desaparecer el gran desnivel cultural existente entre la vida cultural de la capital y el resto de la Isla.

As we read this list, we must, however, ask ourselves: aren't these notions of so-called high culture? Clearly, "buen arte," and reading are designations and activities that mark these directives with a very particular bias toward cultural variants already privileged in Havana.

y 7) desarrollar las posibilidades de intercambio cultural con todos los países. (García-Carranza, "Las características tipológicas," emphasis mine)

Subsequent to this period, the provincial public libraries developed sufficiently on their own so that the National Library no longer had to continue in this centralized role. The National Library was restructured after the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1976. This latter political body set up the *Dirección de Bibliotecas* as the provincial public libraries' new governing body. In 1989, however, the National Library resumed its control of the country's public libraries. A State Board was created for the library with 4 sub-departments. The one most directly important to this talk is the *Subdirección Metodológica y Desarrollo del Sistema de Bibliotecas*, which included a methodological group and cultural programs that developed and tested new methodological focuses, prior to being implemented in the web of public libraries.²

Provincial Libraries began collecting rare and valuable manuscripts pertinent to their regions since their founding (some were founded in the early to middle nineteenth-century). This was seen as preserving the province's history, which equaled the nation's history. After the revolution, there was a "rescate y custodia de todos los documentos 'donde aparece la fundación de cada una de nuestras ciudades o villas, y aquellos correspondientes a las distintas etapas de su crecimiento, esplendor, decaimiento y recuperación de la vida en esa región....'" (Vega García 4). These provincial Libraries were now, after 1959, supposed to be responsible for providing the Main Library with an account of their own history, and not the

2. Dr. Eduardo Torres Cuevas is the current director of the BNJM. It now has over 3 million volumes, including 26,000 maps, over 200,000 photographs, and over 11,000 political posters used during and immediately after the Revolution.

other way around. One of the larger questions that can be asked is if the cultural material that the provinces were collecting and referring to the BNJM was a negotiated or compromised variant since it was gathered and organized according to systems valued and taught by the BNJM in Havana. The BNJM started collecting its current bibliography in 1961, the same year Castro publicly defined the tenets of the Cuban Revolution. The BNJM did not start a bibliographical collection of materials prior to 1958 until years later. And it wasn't until 1979 that the *Dirección de Bibliotecas* at the BNJM decided officially to promote an exchange with provincial libraries of bibliographic materials collected and produced in and by the provinces. The BNJM therefore did not start receiving copies of the Provincial Libraries' collections in a systematic way until 1979. Since 1989, when the BNJM became the guiding methodological center for the whole network of public libraries in the country, the National Library directed all the other libraries as far as what rare and valuable materials to collect. Shortly after 1989, BNJM visited the provinces to teach methodology, and provincial library workers were sent to visit BNJM to be trained.

In 1990, BNJM hosted a second seminar in the Eastern provincial region of Las Tunas to update the criteria for collecting and organizing rare and valuable materials according to the kind of impact these materials had on the whole Nation. Also, technical terminology was introduced, through which to categorize and define these works. Now, BNJM was providing a "national" frame. After, 1990, however, the provincial library Elvira Cape, in Santiago de Cuba (Cuba's second largest city after Havana) began serving as a second national repository, after BNJM, compiling current and retrospective national bibliographies, as a backup to BNJM. As recently as 2001, a third seminar took place that primarily focused on the use of the internet in Cuban libraries as well as to update methodology.

In 1990, the second seminar set out the following criteria for what was to be collected by provincial libraries:

Todos los libros impresos de la provincia y los cubanos que contuvieron información sobre ella (de forma total o parcial), los de autores naturales de la provincia, o los que tuvieron información sobre éstos; se contemplaron también por su alto valor los impresos en la isla en los siglos

XVIII y XIX, muchos de los cuales resultan escasos en el Mercado y hasta únicos. (Vega García 7)

With respect to the 20th century's National bibliography, however, they were directed to continue to work in tandem with BNJM since "la determinación de la rareza bibliográfica en un impreso moderno es más compleja que en uno antiguo," 'the determination of bibliographic uniqueness in modern printed matter is more complicated than that in old printed matter.' Also, this was the century with most at stake politically (Vega García 7). The *ley de depósito legal* (law of legal deposit) was enacted only in 1999 to ensure that everything published in the region was collected by that region. In theory, the law required all publishers in Cuba to give five copies of each title they published to the National Library. The National Library added a copy to their collection, sent some copies to provincial libraries, and used some copies for exchange with its extensive list of international partners. The law could not always be enforced, however, because of lack of money/resources especially during the *periodo especial*. As far as foreign printed matter is concerned, the provincial libraries were to collect that which, because of its age or special characteristics regarding the province itself or its nature, was valuable. Collecting and preserving rare and valuable materials "est[aba] sujeto a un perfeccionamiento y a una complementación práctica"—was done with both perfectionism and practicality in mind (Vega García, 1996, 8).

During the so-called "periodo especial," the BNJM suffered several setbacks, not the least of which was budgetary. It is during this period of involuntary, relaxed oversight that the provincial libraries experienced their greatest degree of freedom with regard to collections, classifications, and exhibitions. As Tomás Fernández Robaina remembers it, "la falta de financiamiento para sufragar los gastos de estancias y viajes fue el elemento fundamental que interrumpió el asesoramiento y las visitas metodológicas a las bibliotecas públicas de las provincias, y por lo tanto todo lo que se había avanzado en cuanto a la uniformidad de los procesos, a la aplicación de las normas establecidas se vio afectado" (103). Despite this greater degree of autonomy in the 1990's, services in both the BNJM and the provinces were scaled back dramatically. The readership and special programs diminished accordingly. Although this would seem like an opportune moment for provincial libraries to leave their mark on their own collections, by now, they had spent, on again and off again, about 30

years adopting the BNJM's methodologies and rationales. It was clearly too late, at this point, to move forward with significant initiatives that were not already marked by the values of the BNJM. In any case, the severe lack of funds during the *periodo especial* would have hindered any such initiatives.

The network of public libraries in the country today continues to fall under the jurisdiction of one of the National Library's divisions and has been further divided into thirteen provincial libraries, and below, municipal and branch libraries employing over 3,600 people. The network's recent improvements include air conditioning, internet service, electronic filing systems, and better coordination between the BNJM and the provinces. There are, of course, those scholars who decry the entire system of provincial libraries as nominally functional. Evidence adduced to support this point of view usually has to do with the size of the provincial library buildings and with the lack of regular users. While it is true that some provincial libraries do adhere to this classification, there are clearly many others that do not. In any case, it is not the object of this study to question the definition of a viable library environment, but to question the power relationship between the urban, literate world and that of the rural, oral sector.

This paper followed the trajectory of the Cuban revolution's library project and asked the larger question of whether a nation's culture could be defined and organized by its previously disenfranchised members without their transformation or co-optation. *How successful was the revolution's library project? What type of negotiation of identity, if any, did the provincial cultures have to undergo?* We looked at attempts to bridge the gap between theory and praxis. Ultimately, it is difficult to speak of successes of such a project because the definition of success is relative and contingent. In the end, the BNJM was successful at creating an extensive web of satellite libraries, which aided greatly in the Cuban literacy campaign. It also achieved a wide representation of provincial interests and culture within its own holdings and, by extension, within the consciousness of Havana's dwellers. The real question I would like to answer, however, is one of kind and not of degree. Ultimately, what provincial libraries were collecting and what people were reading were materials sanctioned by the BNJM in Havana.

The thesis with which I will leave you is that the cultural systems of Havana and of a typical province of the Island were distinct and fairly closed. The simple act of becoming literate already changed a rural culture, when that culture was oral and generationally transmitted in some cases. The methodological values that emanated from Havana influenced the provincial culture in question such that perhaps the results of the satellite system of libraries reflect more what BNJM thought of provincial culture than what provincial culture thought of itself.

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CHAPTER 28

Independent Medical Juntas in Colonial Cuba, 1820-1843

Marianne Samayoa

Abstract: While the newly independent countries of Latin America struggled to establish civil and political structures in the early nineteenth-century, Cuba also re-defined some of the long-standing institutional organizations. Many recent studies of the early national period have shown that the collapse of the Spanish monarchy in America created openings for previously excluded groups to participate in political mobilizations and press claims for citizenship rights. My larger project will examine the importance of independence movements on medical structures in Mexico, Guatemala, and Cuba. Case studies of Mexico and Guatemala provide two different models of modernization that occurred with opportunities at the time of independence. However, even without independence, Cuban medical institutions underwent dramatic modernizations with autonomous local boards. In this paper, I will examine the politicalization of medicine as these local juntas carved out an independent space—and then lost it when they were dissolved.

How did political struggles ensuing from independence shape the health care systems in the emerging Spanish American nations? Popular needs influenced health care and public health policy in periods of nation building in the emerging nations of Mexico and Guatemala. Many recent studies of the early national period have shown that the collapse of the Spanish monarchy in America created openings for previously excluded groups to participate in political mobilizations and press claims for citizenship rights. However, even without independence, Cuban medical institutions underwent dramatic modernizations with autonomous local boards. In this paper, I will examine the politicalization of medicine as these local juntas carved out an independent space—and then lost it when they were dissolved.

For almost four hundred years, the Spanish crown controlled medical care in Spain and then its American colonies with the medical governing institution, the Royal Protomedicato. *Protomedicato* is the name of the Spanish government institution that controlled medical and health care. It

is also the name used to identify the regional medical administrations. Its functions changed over time and included medical education, licensing of professionals, and administration of medical institutions. With its central administration and regional protomedicatos, the Royal Protomedicato regulated all medical services: doctors, midwives, *curanderos* (healers), hospitals, apothecaries and apothecary shops, botanical expeditions, medical experimentation, and judicial functions that included testifying before other courts, establishing approved practices, and punishing illegal medical practitioners. In the eighteenth century, as part of the general Bourbon Reforms, the protomedicato had begun to modernize education and crack down on unlicensed practitioners and popular methods of healing. Spain abolished the protomedicato for the first time in 1799; it would be reinstated and abolished three times before its final elimination in 1822, when regional medical committees took over the many functions of the protomedicato. As other Spanish-American colonies achieved independence, Cuba and its regional medical boards remained under Spanish control.

Despite the founding and suspension of the protomedicato over the years, it is important to understand that historically, and in the perception of the doctors and professors of medicine, the protomedicato was the source of authority. The doctor in charge of the protomedicato was called the protomédico. For example, in Guatemala, where there was no official regional protomedicato until the late eighteenth-century, there was a doctor calling himself the protomédico by the early seventeenth-century. This tacit title was derived from the link between the title of protomedico and a specific teaching post. The person who held the title of professor of primo de medicina would assume the title of protomédico. This, of course, did not mean that there were no problems with this practice. The term protomedicato or the title of protomédico would appear occasionally through the mid-nineteenth century. When documents were organized for collection in the Archivo General de Indias, colonial and post-colonial documents with letterheads that included Ministerio de Sanidad, Junta de Sanidad, and similar letterheads that identify medical governing boards, were bundled under the label protomedicato.¹ I present the situation to underscore the problematic nature of the definition of the protomedicato.

1. AGI, Santo Domingo 1607.

Medicine is a general term that encompasses fractured groups, with a basic problem of authorization. By this, I am referring to the overlap of authority. Doctors, surgeons, barbers, blood-letters, pharmacists (both *farmaceuticos* and *boticarios*), and midwives each composed separate categories in terms of training, licensing and status in the medical system. All medical care of military personnel fell into a separate category, not usually under the control of the *protomedicato*, with separate administration and authorization requirements.

One of the difficulties in tracing the various *juntas*, or boards, is that they frequently overlapped in both name and function. The *Juntas de Sanidad*, or Sanitary Boards, were created in Spain and America to support the activities of the *protomedicato* in periods of crisis. The term *Junta de Sanidad* was also used to name the port authority in charge of collecting fees and inspecting ships. A *Junta de Sanidad* might be regional, it might be municipal, it might be parochial, it might be the administrative body for a specific hospital, or it might be established officially without entering in practice.

start here Importantly, a *junta* may be so underfunded that it could not carry out its designated obligations.

Another problem in identifying the *juntas* is that there were Superior *Juntas*. The easiest to identify were the two *Juntas Superiores* created in Cuba in 1833: Medicine and Surgery, and Pharmacy. However, the nineteenth century *Junta de Sanidad* created a greater overlap of civil and military medical authorities, involving authorization of medical practitioners, control of ports, ship inspections, and quarantines. In the first half of the eighteenth century, documents carried letterheads from the *Junta de Sanidad*, provincial, regional, and institutional *juntas*, and later *negociado de sanidad*. It is easy to understand how the documents of the many boards did not survive to become part of the large body of documents available in archives. However, when two bundles of these documents reached the National Archive in Madrid, they were labeled *protomedicato*.

The problem of authority over medical licensing is almost as old as Cuba. Without a *protomedicato*, the municipal governments, *cabildos*, authorized doctors, dentists, phlebotomists, and pharmacists.² The *cabildo* of La Habana authorized the first medical practitioner in 1552. He was not a doctor, but a barber and surgeon; he did not hold a medical degree,

but was determined by the municipal board to have enough experience to enjoy exclusive rights to practice medicine. The first doctor, licenciado Gamarra, arrived in 1569. He was doctor, surgeon, and pharmacist. The municipal government authorized Gamarra's practice exclusively, offering punishment to any other practitioner. Gamarra enjoyed the monopoly until he left for greater wealth in the New World.³ Sixteenth-century Cuban medical care was administered by persons without a university medical degree and two poorly supplied pharmacies. Despite the conditions of medical monopoly, the municipal government could not attract any licensed doctors due to poor pay and worse living conditions. The population of Cuba was small and, in general, served more as a stop-over to other places than as a final destination. In 1611 the first municipal doctor started working in Havana. It wasn't until the early eighteenth-century that the protomedicato occupied itself with La Habana. The first protomédico of Habana arrived in 1711 and in 1738 the university was established.⁴ This overview is pertinent to understanding the problematic situation created by the nineteenth-century juntas. The multiple juntas each traced their roots to the protomedicato, despite the vastly different goals that separated them.

My interest in Cuba stems from my interest in the modernization that occurred in Spanish America after Spain lost its mainland colonies. I selected Mexico and Guatemala as my comparative cases as a unique view of state formation and the influences of groups and individuals in shaping the services that were provided in the nineteenth century and that established foundations for today's health care systems. I am comparing three scenarios: Mexico which had a long-standing protomedicato dating from 1534; Guatemala, with a protomedicato founded only a few decades before independence; and Cuba, which remained under the control of the Spanish medical system even after medical juntas (committees) replaced the protomedicato in 1822. These variations of effective control by the same institution in the colonial period influenced methods of adaptation

2. Cesar A. Mena, *Historia de la medicina en Cuba, II, Ejercicios y enseñanza de las ciencias médicas en la época colonial* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1993), 338-341.

3. Roig, 19-22. Roig gives the year 1522, under the government of Pérez Angulo. Other sources have the 1552. Pérez Angulo was appointed governor in 1550.

4. Roig, 22-24.

as health care providers, patients and the state renegotiated their relationship to each other and rebuilt the medical infrastructure with new economic limitations and opportunities. Those negotiations centered on efforts to legislate medical care, administer hospitals and other institutions, and confront specific epidemics faced by the regional populations. The resulting legislation demonstrates the competing goals, resistance, and deviance in the system.

At the moment of independence in Mexico, a new protomédico had just been appointed, but he died within two years. Eight years later, political change forced the restructuring of governing bodies, including the distribution of medical care and the end of the protomedicato in 1831. Between the two major groups, the members of the protomedicato and later the boards that re-structured the medical education, there was a sufficient break that allowed a new set of participants to take charge and embrace the changes. In addition, in the discussions around creating a constitutional government, medical administration was included both at state and federal level.

For Guatemala, there is limited research for the medical world of the colonial period and the later nineteenth-century. Although several doctors went by the title protomédico during the colonial period, the protomedicato was officially established only in 1793. Before there was a protomedicato in Guatemala, its functions were unsystematically shared by the Mexican protomedicato, the Guatemalan judicial offices, and the university professor who acted as protomédico because he held the position of professor of *primo de medicina*. At the time of independence, the long-standing protomédico had recently died and had not been replaced by the Spanish crown. The new government did not appoint a new protomédico immediately, nor did the government support the ambitious smallpox vaccination campaign or fund the modernization of the medical school initiated in the late colonial period. Ten years later, medical students were still petitioning the government for the reestablishment of medical institutions, from schools to hospitals. Guatemalan public health policies incorporated two shifts in one process: independence from Spain and the total separation of a system that had interacted with the Mexican medical world. In the context of medical administration, there was an opening for modernization. The new protomedico, Cirilo Flores, presented a break with the past in unique ways, including a break with the traditional

requirement of legitimate birth. As a foundling, he was able to bypass the scrutiny of family history that had characterized the appointment of the colonial protomedicos.

The demise of the protomedicato illustrates the difficulty in considering it a uniform entity. The protomedicato was eliminated for many reasons. Among them, one of the most important was its overlapping jurisdictions. In some regions, the protomedicato authorized medical practitioners; in others, this function was in the hands of the Captain General. In Spain, the protomedicato was abolished for the first time in 1799; it would be reinstated and abolished three times before its final elimination in 1822, when regional medical committees took over the many functions of the protomedicato. Each effort to eliminate the protomedicato brought protest from those in charge. With so few authorized doctors and surgeons, every re-organization would have to draw from the same pool of participants.

The original goal of my research was to examine Cuba as the case for continuity. Examining two countries that achieved independence and one region that remained under Spanish control would provide an opportunity to focus on the impact of independence. However, although Cuba did not achieve independence from Spain, the early nineteenth-century was period of change. This included the demise of the protomedicato and continuous efforts to modernize medical care, as well as the continued problem of alleviating epidemic disease. In the early nineteenth-century, Cuba would have a medical junta, *Junta de Sanidad*, controlled by Spain. In the 1820s, the many juntas that I mentioned previously shared the problem of limited funds and irregular intervention. In 1824, Lorenzo Hernandez, Protomedico of Cuba, complained that he could not fulfill the obligations that were repeatedly ordered.⁵ The problem faced by Dr. Hernandez, regarding visiting prisoners to determine the condition of their health, is that he lacks help. However, it is also curious that he is addressed by the title 'protomedico,' when the protomedicato had supposedly been dissolved.

Despite the juntas being governed by local constitutions, the Captain General of Cuba authorized appointments and intervened as he saw fit,

5. ARNAC, legajo 705, exp. 44549.

although often based on the recommendations of the doctors themselves.⁶ In 1832, the regulation of the sanitation committee listed its obligations. These included control the causes that directly or indirectly affect the spread of contagious diseases, protect public health by proposing sanitation measures, offer the committee's opinion regarding hospitals, prisons, markets, or factories. In 1833, these local juntas were replaced by two

6. ARNAC Inst. Pub. leg 705, n. 44544.

Transcription:

No habiendo en el partido de Bahia-Honda Fiscal que represente á este RI Tribunal del Protomedicato y hallandose avecindado alli el Profesor de Zirujia Dr Ambrosio Moreno, persona en quien concurren todas las circunstancias necesarias para tal encrago, lo proponemos a VE para que siendo de su agrado se sirva mandar se le despache el correspondiente tittulo.

Dios que guarde VE m.s a.s Habana y Setiembre 1or de 1824.

D Lorenzo h

Hernandez

Dr Juan Perez Delgado

Exmo sor Pres. gob y Cap Gen

next letter:

Hab y feb 24 de 1824

Exmo Sor

No pudiendo el Visitador General de Boticas de esta Isla Dr Dn Rafael Saavedra de Espinosa practicar por si las que en esta pendiente de la que corresponde a la buelta de abajo, por haberse impedido de varios achaques, y otras circunstancias, que ha justificado en este tribunal del Ptotomedicato, hemos deliberado con anuencion del mismo Visitador general proponer a VE para dicho encargo al Pharmaceutico D [etavino] Hernandez sugeto en quien concurren todas la qualidades necesarias a su desempeño para que siendo de su agrado se sirva despacharle el titulo. Dios guarde a vE m.s a.s feb 24 de 1824

esmo sor

D Lorenzo Hernandez

Sor Pres.te Gob.dor y Cap Gen

By the 1860s, military control of medical doctors would increase.

Fondo: Reales decretos y Ordenes/ Legajo 215 / numero 75

6 mayo 1860

Ministerio de Guerra y de Ultramar

Ministerio de Guerra--

Relacion de los oficiales de Sanidad Militar que deben ocupar los treinta y cuatro plazas de primeros medicos en la Isla de Cuba segun lo dispuesto por resolucion de esta fecha

Cuban juntas—one for medicine and surgery and another for pharmacy. Dissolving the juntas and establishing the two primary juntas began as early as 1826, with a *Real Cédula* that established the need for more direct control of medicine in order to have great opportunities to protect public health.⁷ Another order was issued in 1830. Even after the two medical juntas were established, their authority was not clear and the practice of the governor naming persons to the positions on the boards and to local committees continued.⁸ Throughout the end of the decade, efforts continued to formalize the juntas: statutes were discussed, salaries were determined and protested, appointments were made at all levels. In 1842, the Juntas of Medicine and Surgery and the Juntas of Pharmacy were dissolved and their properties inventoried and turned over the university. Sadly, the inventory is more a list of furnishings than anything else.

In general, medical doctors were in short supply and did not enjoy great prestige unless they participated in broader civic circles. The doctors of eighteenth and nineteenth century Cuba did not limit their activities to the practice of medicine. Dr. Tomás Romay y Chacón (1764-1839) is an example of the range of activities of a medical doctor. He was Cuban born and educated. He was a member of the *Amigos del País*, the *Sociedad Económica*, and Royal Academy of Medicine in Madrid, he wrote for the Habana newspaper, he developed plans for the medical clinic, helped establish the scientific academy, and taught at the university in Habana. He worked in the military hospital, the teaching hospital, the naval hospital, the convalescents' hospital, the house for the demented, the general hospital and others. Romay was the founding secretary of the Junta de Vacuna, which is credited with two hundred thousand vaccinations in La Habana and three hundred eleven thousand in all of the island between 1804 and 1835.⁹

7. ARNAC, Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, leg 74, n. 6.

8. ARNAC

Transcription: Mzo 28 de 1841

Ultramar

N. 8

El Gobernador Da curso a la propuesta que aquella Junta de Farmacia hace para Vocales propietarios y un suplente.

9. Roig, 55-59.

During the tenure of Romay, another doctor arrived in Cuba. Now well-known through literary plays and fictionalized accounts, Dr. Faber arrived in Cuba in 1819 with a French medical degree. Following the common practice of the period, the medical examiners reviewed Faber's degrees, conducted the required and exhaustive oral examination of medical knowledge and authorized Faber to practice medicine in Cuba. The protomedicato of Havana authorized Faber to practice medicine in all of Cuba and Faber was named *Fiscal* of the protomedicato of Baracoa (a *fiscal* was a member of a regional protomedicato). In 1833 a criminal process began against Faber, not for illegal medical practices, but because Enrique Faber was really Henrietta Faber. The minute details of how she claimed to obtain medical degrees are available in the Cuba archives and through fictionalized accounts that fill in missing parts of the story¹⁰. The story of Faber is particularly interesting, because of the scandalous and romantic tale of deceit, but also because it exhibits some of the bureaucratic conflicts of the medical administration. Faber was prosecuted in 1833 not for medical practices, but because she had married Juana de León in 1819. Of course, her authorization to practice medicine was revoked and she was sentenced to four years of service in a hospital in Habana, then exiled to Louisiana. In her defense, she argued for the rights of women to provide for themselves by means other than prostitution. However, the services she provided to humanity to relieve medical ailments could not overcome the sin of marrying a woman.

In defense of those who authorized the practice of Faber, it is worth noting that the period of independence on mainland Spanish America was a period of emigration from the colonies in rebellion to Cuba and other strong Spanish holdings and doctors from other countries who entered Cuba. In 1821, the French doctor Carlos Eduardo Belot opened his private clinic in Cuba. By 1829, the French dentist Teodor Siolin was living in La Habana. In the emigration process, any doctor who arrived would have to undergo an examination of credentials. This should have been done by the protomedicato, but with the unstable character of the protomedicato and the intervention of the Captain General, this examination process was far from standardized. In 1824, the order was issued that

10. ANC, Fondo Asuntos Políticos, legajo 20 expediente 2, y Fondo Misceláneas de Expedientes, legajo 3483 expediente B 1.

those who did not have authorization to practice medicine should not be allowed to enter towns and villas in Cuba:

We, the doctors Lorenzo Hernandez, honorary consulting doctor and Regent protomedico of the Royal Protomedicato of this always loyal city of Habana of the always loyal city island of Cuba, and Dr Juan Perez Delgado, who is the second [protomedico], members of the Royal Patriotic Society of this said city, examining judges, visitors (examiners) and Alcaldes mayors of all of the doctors, surgeons, oculists, distillers, midwives, lepers all that comprehends the medical faculties by SM and of his Royal Armies:

In as much as the laws of these kingdoms it is our faculty to name fiscals who watch, supervise and in no way permit that in the cities, villas, and places of all of the jurisdiction, subjects are introduced who without legitimate title and examen practice the faculties of medicine, surgery, or pharmacy. [etc]

The stated goal of this reminder is to protect public health from unauthorized healers. More importantly, it illuminates the problem of overlapping jurisdictions that I discuss above. By 1879, the university professors would complain of the “plaga de curanderos”—evidence that earlier attempts to enforce exclusive practice by authorized doctors had failed.¹¹ Despite the long-term negative effects, it is worth noting that the protomedicato continued, at least in the perception of medical practitioners. It also continued to foment overlapping jurisdiction. Ultimately, the protomedicos are stating that they reserve the authority to license medical practitioners. As an intermediate phase, they recognize that local municipal bodies also authorize the doctors of each region.

Another well-documented situation that illustrates the complicated system of authorizing medical doctors is the case of the famous Chinese doctor who arrived in Cuba in the mid-1800s. As part of the solution to overcome labor shortages, Chinese workers were imported. As part of the conditions of importing the workers, a Chinese doctor was brought to Cuba to minister to them.¹² After the workers were established, the doctor was declared to be nothing more than a curandero (healer). The Lieuten-

11. ARNAC, Fondo Sanidad, legajo 4, n. 4

ant Governor received testimony from the doctor's patients, a group that had expanded past the original Chinese workers. Despite the glowing reports by members of all sectors of the community regarding the doctor's cures, he was not authorized to practice medicine. Interestingly, the governor refers to the authority of the Junta of Doctors and Surgeons, demanding that the Chinese doctor either meet the requirements of a recognized medical diploma or stop practicing medicine.

A less-studied aspect of medical authorization that flourished unnoticed in Cuba involved advertisements in the Havana newspapers. It was not uncommon to find advertisements for slaves for sale or hire. It was also not uncommon to note the abilities or qualities of the slave. Both male and female slaves were offered for sale with the specific advertise-

12. ARNAC, Inst. Pub. leg. 57, n. 37

Transcription:

Ab 12 /848: El teniente Gobernador de Puerto Principe manifiesta que se presentó en aquella ciudad un Chino con[insulas] de curandero danos principio por recetar a varias personas, que ya por desauiciadas por los medicos o por sus enfermedades cronicas o la novedad acudan a él, cuya cura le prohibió a peticion del Subdelgado por carecer de los correspondientes títulos, habiendo dado lugar la providencia a muchas reclamaciones de algunos vecinos cuyas solicitudes acompaña en las que piden se permita al Chino asistir los en sus enfermedades, sobre cuyo particular se servirá VE resolver, en concepto de que continua la prohibicion en observancia del Reglamento de Medicina.

Nota: Por el artículo 15 del Reglamento de medicina y cirujia tiene el chino la pena de 100\$ de multa por la primera vez, 200 por la 2a, 300 por la 3ra y en su defecto un mes, dos y tres de prision sin perjuicio de formarse causa si huviere mal resultado por sus tratamientos.

[ojo: en su vita se dignará resolver lo que fuere de su superior agrado]

Several testimonials follow.

The other document that is here is probably related to the same medico chino. Dated Habana 2o de Julio de 1847, signed by Pedro Cañedo, it states:

‘con objeto de que se prohibiese ejercer la medicina en esta isla al sujeto contratado para curar a los colonos Asiáticos en su travesia, mientras presente sus títulos si los tubiere, y se incorpore en la Universidad como la verifican los demas profesores extranjeros; y entrada la Inspeccion de dicho informe y los oficios sobre el mismo particular dirigieron el Subdelegado de Medicina y Cirujia de esta ciudad y el del [Flor?] con y el Cerro acordó de conformidad con lo puesto por la mencionada Seccion [?] que se suplifique á VE se sirve disponer que el comisarion de Barrio en que vive el referido Asiático prebenga á este que se abstenga de curar hasta tanto que presente sus títulos si los tubiere y se incorpore en la Universidad advirtiendole que en el Caso contrario quedará sugeto á las penas dispuestas por los Reglamentos vigentes á los que sin título egercen algun ramo de la Ciencia de Curar [etc, and closing lines, signed by Pedro C. Cañedo

ment that they were good at healing or at taking care of persons who were ill. When you add this to the limited number of graduated doctors and the difficulties that immigrants faced in transferring credentials, the general health-needs of the population, and the irregularity of medical administrations, the growth of the *plaga de curanderos* is not surprising.

My original intention in comparing the medical systems of Guatemala, Mexico, and Cuba was to demonstrate how the continuity as a Spanish colony through the nineteenth century created greater stability for the medical systems in Cuba. However, the opposite was true. Independence in Mexico and Guatemala provided greater flexibility. In Mexico, the long tradition of medical bureaucracy led to incorporating medical legislation in the constitutions. In Guatemala, a dramatic break with the past created first a vacuum of power and then an opening for new systems. Cuba, however, labored under the worst of both worlds. On one hand, long traditions of overlapping jurisdictions and irregular practices, on the other, a series of modifications that occurred so rapidly and so frequently that patterns were allowed to settle before they were disrupted again, lead to greater instability, less efficient control, less modernization, and as I cited above, a plague of curanderos. It would be the end of the century before Cuba could establish the strong systems that modernized its medical world of Cuba. This, of course, is out of the scope of my paper on the medical juntas of 1820-1840.

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Part V
Literature, Cinema
and Arts

CHAPTER 29

Globalization in the Contemporary Cuban Art World

Natania Remba

Abstract: As the Cuban revolution approaches its fiftieth anniversary, Cuba has become a more consumer-oriented society. The island country stands at the crossroads of several systems, each associated with alternative models of political economy and cultural policy. One of these models involves the pursuit of socialism at any fiscal or social cost; another entails the implementation of policies conducive to monetary reform and marketization as developed in Eastern Europe; a third might be the pathway of market socialism as in China. Along with the various sectors of trade and industry, the nation's art market is also in the process of change and transformation. It is within this multiplicity of economic systems and cultural models that this study is contextualized. This paper examines the work of four Cuban artists of the nineties generation, whose images often illustrate the ways in which they debate and engage in today's evolving globalized art world. Specifically, it considers how the artists' work integrates commentary of consumerism into their visual discourse, by including topics related to a dual art-market economy, multiplicity of value systems, artistic production and reception for multiple markets, commodification of art, consumer work-habits, the impact of media and advertising in the utilization of visual signs, and the artists' role in an open market economy.

In an article by sociologist Susan Eckstein, she recounts a conversation with a disheartened Cuban cab driver regarding the influence consumerism is having in his socialist country. The taxi driver cites the film *Paradise Under the Stars*, to illustrate his point. An immigrant has returned to Cuba from Spain for a funeral, bringing gifts for his family and friends. The cab driver laments over the uncustomary behavior of the Cubans, who were, evidently, so enthralled with the gifts, they forgot about the funeral.¹ He wonders how such a fascination with consumerism could overtake the moral values of the Revolution with such ease. Despite the principles of Marxist philosophy, Cuba is increasingly becoming a consumer society.

As with all other sectors of society, the future of the Cuban art world is also undergoing myriad transformations. In this paper, I will discuss how Cuban artists debate and engage in today's evolving globalized economy. More specifically, I will examine how these artists have integrated commentary on consumerism into their visual discourse.

Today, Cuba stands at the crossroads of several systems, each associated with alternative models of political economy and cultural policy. One of these models involves the pursuit of socialism at any fiscal or social cost; another entails the implementation of policies conducive to monetary reform and marketization, similar to those developed in Eastern Europe; a third might be the pathway of market socialism, as seen in China. I purposely selected images that illustrate the ways in which Cuban artists deliberate over this economic and cultural movement, although the artworks are in no way representative of the Cuban iconography, which thrives on diversity and cannot be placed into one overarching category.

The four post-utopian artists included in this presentation—Sandra Ramos, Abel Barroso, José Ángel Toirac, and Carlos Garaicoa—were born in the late sixties and attended the prestigious Cuban Graduate Institute of Art, known by its acronym, ISA. All four artists started their professional careers during the 1990s, when the lack of Soviet subsidies, coupled with the U.S.-imposed embargo, drove Cuba into a deep economic depression. The government implemented a reform, which gave way to the “Special Period,” during which forced domestic restrictions and belt-tightening measures resulted in a scarcity of consumer goods and, ultimately, a decreased quality of life for most citizens.

Recognized as *La mala hierba*, which means “the Bad Weeds,”² because of their capacity to prosper in tragic situations, these nineties-generation artists managed to survive economically and artistically, in part, by decoding the laws of the international art market and by participating in the markets' rituals. And, according to Eckstein, the government

1. Susan Eckstein, “Transnational Networks and Norms, Remittances, and the Transformation of Cuba,” *The Cuban Economy at the Start of the Twenty-First Century*, Jorge I. Domínguez, Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva, Lorena Barbería, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 343.

2. This term was coined by curator, art critic and essayist Gerardo Mosquera.

had reached a point where it could no longer afford the “luxury” of enforcing its moral and ideological principles.³ Many Cuban artists became aware of the government’s inferred policies of consumerism. With time, they were able to develop an acceptable market identity while, at the same time, maintaining their artistic integrity. They strived towards international exposure, not a commercial aesthetic. As a means of promotion, they often prepared catalogues and DVDs of their work to distribute to potential buyers. Then, through the experience of exhibiting overseas, they learned to negotiate with national art institutions from a stronger position and soon had the weight and wealth of the international art market behind them. Accordingly, they started to produce artwork with social commentary that was not based on a new “economy,” but on a new “mentality”—that of the consumer.

The art market in Cuba, however, was not thriving merely because Cuban artists had a need to survive economically, but also because international consumers had a need to develop private businesses. It was the international collectors or dealers who played a significant role in the newly produced behavior of Cuban artists in their practices . . . behavior that resulted in the moving of these artists from a “local” system of cultural production to a “global” system of capitalist consumption. During the Special Period, works of art became a significant export in Cuba’s economy, which benefited both the State and the artist.

One of the main causes of this new open market economy, and the consequent class distinctions that occurred, was the introduction of the dollar. Eckstein believes that “Dollars earned informally and at times illegally through tourism [and] black marketeering . . . also contributed to the cultural transformation.”⁴ Sandra Ramos’ work comments extensively on Cuba’s socio-economic changes. In the engraving *Los problemas del peso* (*Weight [Money] Problems*) (1996) (Fig. 1), she examines monetary dualities. On what appears to be a one-dollar bill, she uses a blindfolded statue of justice as a scale attempting to balance two diverse influences. Perched in the pan on one side of the scale is George Washington, representing the American dollar. Occupying the other pan is a Cuban peasant set lower,

3. Eckstein, 335.

4. Eckstein, 333.

symbolizing the heavier weight of the Cuban peso. The pun intended is clear: the Spanish word “peso” also means “weight,⁵” which, ironically and in purely monetary terms, is not the case.

Similarly, in *The CUC of the Colossus* (1996) (Fig. 2), where the letters CUC stand for the convertible Cuban tourist’s “peso,” Ramos depicts the struggle required to keep the Cuban peso afloat in the face of globalization and an open market economy.

By the late 1990s, the economic and political situation in Cuba eased. The legal export of artistic patrimony, the establishment of limited private enterprise, and the increase in tourism to the island allowed artists to negotiate as free players in the art market. They were permitted to be self-employed, to earn in dollars, to maintain the copyright of their work, and to circulate their work overseas. At the same time, visits from foreign gallery owners and museum curators increased, which provided Cuban artists with international exposure and the opportunity to adopt Western models for art sales.

In *Perhaps I Should Split in Two* (1993) (Fig. 3), Ramos inserts herself into a nineteenth-century engraving of Alice in Wonderland—a recurring character in her work—and she becomes the protagonist of ordinary dreams and the utopia of everyday life in Cuba. The adolescent Ramos is literally divided into two parts. To her left are images of Cuba, represented by the palm tree, a glimpse of the sea, and a childhood street-game on the sidewalk. To the right, the girl is facing the West, represented by the leaning tower of Pisa. The girl’s eyes shoot a flame superimposed with an oversized question mark, and her temptation to flee the island is clearly discernible. In this self-referential piece of Ramos, the splitting of herself into two persons resonates with the pressures that come with being a Cuban artist and dealing with the dual context of artistic production.

From this juxtaposition, one could extrapolate the tensions that come with producing art by the forces of globalization and creating products within two distinct value systems: “exchange value” for foreign institutions and private consumers and “exhibition value” for local art institu-

5. Louis Jacobson, “De aquí y de allá,” *Washington City Paper* (September 2003).
<http://www.thefrasergallery.com/reviews/SandraRamos-WCP.html>.

tions and state-run galleries. Ramos also alludes to the dichotomy many artists face, that of cultivating overseas contacts as assets, while preserving local relationships as endorsers and legitimizers of art.

Gerardo Mosquera, Cuba-born curator and art critic, reiterates this divisiveness. He has said that “the potential of visual art works to become luxury and prestige objects, a highly profitable currency, and a means for laundering money has so inflated the market that the whole system of visual arts (education, production, circulation and reception) has become market-centric. This means, there are too many and too powerful interests making it difficult for art to pursue a major cultural or social function.”⁶

Abel Barroso is an artist who shares Mosquera’s market-centric notion of contemporary societies. His work parodies consumerism and wealth mainly through his production of traditional woodblock master plates. In *No One Can Assemble This!* (1999) (Fig. 4), Barroso employs a visual language that lampoons the challenges facing artists today—challenges that include a desire to attain economic stability while still being trapped in the hard economic realities of the present. He carved this particular woodcut to portray Cuba as the embodiment of a sensual woman born of the Revolution, but who is now acting in her new role of attracting business and investors. The Cuban Republic is enclosed in an ambivalent value system, one defined by nature and desire, and another defined by culture and enterprise. Barroso conveys these mixed feelings through the image of a bikini-clad woman reclining on a boardroom table, while being surrounded by globe-headed business men in their usual capitalist attire as a clever metaphor for the exploitation that often occurs internationally in big business, whether of women, poor tropical nations, or any other object of desire that is turned into a commodity by the global marketplace.⁷

The Republic and Foreign Capital (1994) (Fig. 5) alludes to the fact that the State has somewhat reluctantly become a party to Cuba’s newfound materialism. This work comments on how the government tacitly

6. Gerardo Mosquera, “Some Problems in Transcultural Curating,” *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, Jean Fisher, ed. (London: Kala Press, 1994), 134.

7. Leah Ollman, “Cubans Create Disparate Work With the Same Lively Spirit,” *Los Angeles Times* (April 2000).

encourages consumerism, through reforms designed to capture and profit from dollars Cubans informally acquired and from increasing consumer opportunities.⁸

Barroso's work is satirical. It speaks of the difficulties of a local consumer, whose personal expenditure is very limited. Barroso has crafted wooden, wall-mounted sculptures of cellphones or televisions with movable parts (Fig. 6, 7), which speak to the remarkable conspicuousness of consumption and affluence established by the multiplication of objects, services, and material goods in capitalist societies.⁹ Ironically, not even these inexpensively created artworks are accessible to the wider populations for purchase. They, instead, become limited editions and art commodities, typical for western markets, and are usually displayed in museums and art galleries.

With his resourceful technological inventions, Barroso examines the interchangeability between low-tech and high-tech value (Fig. 8). With a hand-turned crank, the consumer can scroll through a paper catalogue attached to a wood-framed screen; if it should happen to break, Barroso says it is "cheap to repair."¹⁰

For the 2000 Havana Biennial, Barroso worked on an art installation entitled *Third World Internet Café* (2000) (Fig. 9), where he transformed a popular tourist restaurant into Cuba's first Internet café. Out of wood and cardboard, he crafted a series of 3-D computers, laptops, and cash registers into objects of art. He presented his audience with real objects in real time, simulating virtual objects in virtual time, embedded within a social space where the consumer could play with the symbols of purchases and sales. With this installation, Barroso bridged the domestic with the foreign, by importing Western models of art performance.

Barroso believes that "the current international rage of technologically advanced video art is not possible to create in Cuba."¹¹ He explains it

8. In "Transnational Networks and Norms, Remittances, and the Transformation of Cuba," Eckstein discusses extensively Cuba's new consumer-oriented government, 334.

9. Jean Baudrillard, "Consumer Society," *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Mark Poster, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 32.

10. Abel Barroso, Interview with Natania Remba, Havana, 2 January 2005.

this way: “I was born twelve years after the revolution, and I don’t know, practically, what is a TV commercial. Suddenly, I see myself expressing new words: WSP, Benetton, Mitsubishi Motors, Hyundai...”¹² His comments are not surprising, because, by early 2000, the “Cuban awareness of U.S. brand-names had become among the highest in any non-English speaking country.”¹³ That is the reason why branding is relevant for Barroso’s virtual clientele. For the *Internet Café* (Fig. 10), he has branded his products “Mango Tech,” which is a double pun. “Mango,” in Spanish, is the mechanical term for “handle,” but it also refers to the tropical fruit; hence, the screen image becomes a south-of-the-border reference to the Apple corporation.

José Angel Toirac is another artist who raises questions about the main organs of control in society and the signs produced by two hegemonic systems of production: politics and advertising. In the piece *Obsession* (1996) (Fig. 11), Toirac appropriates political and cultural iconography of Cuba through the use of photographs and text taken from the press and then translates them into oil paintings. Toirac’s images raise the question as to whether the consumer is truly at liberty to make choices or whether choices are the very ideology of the industrial system, which entices consumers to expend.

In *Marlboro* (1996) (Fig. 12), canonical icons of Castro, as well as commercial photographs of the Marlboro man, are merely signs among signs. Castro—the anti-capitalist, anti-American leader—becomes the archetypal strong, independent American cowboy. This rendition, therefore, is ironic in that the Marlboro man—while formerly a brave image—has recently been maligned in the United States as a symbol of the unhealthy excesses of the tobacco industry. Toirac’s juxtaposition of political and commercial signs creates a paradoxical remark about the advertising of unhealthy behavior and politics. While Castro—himself a famous cigar smoker—is proud of Cuba’s system of socialized medicine

11. Ibid.

12. Carina Pino-Santos, “La Impostergable Disolución de los Márgenes,” *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 3 (May-June 1996), 39.

13. Cited in Eckstein (*New York Times* Section 3 May 26, 2002:4), 333

and advanced health care, he is portrayed by Toirac as a champion of the tobacco industry.

Today, in Cuba, one of the most renowned photographs of Ché Guevara, *Guerrillero Heróico* (1960) (Fig. 13)—taken by artist Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez (who is known as Korda)—sells in massive numbers in souvenir stores. This commercialized photograph, which circulated around the world in the 1960s and was reproduced in myriad media outlets, has raised Ché to a divine status. It could be argued that the Cuban State has used Ché's popularity through this image to strengthen its revolutionary mission. Toirac, however, uses this same image to critically demonstrate the machinery of advertising and centers of power. Writer and curator Euridice Arratia states that “the consolidation of power [goes] hand in hand with the consolidation of heroic iconography.”¹⁴

Toirac's appropriation of official imagery and rhetoric can be viewed as an attempt to market ideology. In *Apple* part of *A Brief History of Cuba as Told by Other Events* (2001) (Fig. 14), Toirac sells ideology by juxtaposing key moments of Cuban history with global corporate symbols. Korda's photograph of Ché, for instance, is coupled with the Apple computer logo and slogan THINK DIFFERENT. Toirac appropriates Korda's photograph as image and counter-image, thus inverting the position of the sign, simultaneously altering the sequential perspective of the spectator.

The comments of art historian and critic Benjamin Buchloh, regarding art appropriation, are applicable to Toirac's work. Buchloh states that “each act of appropriation ... inevitably constructs a simulacrum of a double position.... By becoming the property of the ‘cultural,’ it prevents the ‘political’ from becoming ‘real.’ Politically committed producers become singularized and classified as ‘political’ artists....”¹⁵

Toirac's objective is to strive towards a “depoliticized consumption,”¹⁶ but he seems trapped in an outsider's market-imposed labeling

14. Euridice Arratia, *Think Different*, exh. cat. (New York: Art in General, April-May 2002), 2.

15. Benjamin H. Buchloh, “Parody and Appropriation in Francis Picabia, Pop, and Sigmar Polke,” *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 350.

16. Buchloh, 348.

that could easily be considered propagandistic. He defends his position by saying: “When we see a representation of... Napoleon, or the kings by Goya, we are capable of analyzing them as art detached from political passion. It is my hope that people will dispassionately analyze my work “separate” from partisan politics.”¹⁷

Contrary to Toirac’s objectives, Carlos Garaicoa is a Cuban artist who intentionally engages in political discourse by drawing parallels between a consumerist past and a consumerist present. Garaicoa’s large-scale black-and-white photographs focus on the commercial glories of the past, where “images of retail shops and restaurants depicted in their present decay are transformed into social and political puzzles.”¹⁸ Garaicoa has transformed these Old Havana buildings—constructed primarily before the Revolution—into parodies through an intervention of the existing signage text. He has overlaid the photographs with commentary written in colored thread. His words float over the photographs on precisely placed pins and recode the name of the store—*La Internacional* (2005) (Fig. 15)—as “The International, up, down, without place, the poor of the world.”

In Garaicoa’s work, the words “marketing,” “purchasing,” “sales,” and “commodities” constitute a language in which an entire society communicates.¹⁹ These works resonate, once again, with Mosquera’s market-centric perspective; but Garaicoa sets a dual criticism—that of a capitalist consumption coupled with that of a socialist consumption, thus selling a new Cuban reality.

In *La Republica* (2005) (Fig. 16), the spectator is engaged in decoding Garaicoa’s double pre- and post-revolutionary cryptogram. *Locería La Republica* is a store that sells expensive “loza” or ceramics, and its name honors the Cuban Republic. The “new” code reads “Grocería,” meaning “coarse words,” such as: the Republic, Vulgarity, Independence,

17. José Angel Toirac, Interview with Natania Remba, Havana, 5 January 2005.

18. Lombard-Freid Projects, *Carlos Garaicoa: The drawing, the writing, the abstraction* (New York: Lombard-Freid Projects, October–November 2006).

19. This language is based upon that of Jean Baudrillard’s “Consumer Society,” *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Mark Poster, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 48.

Cynicism, Liberty. Garaicoa frames a discourse that bridges the symbolic with the social order.

In *La Gran Vía* (2005) (Fig. 17), Garaicoa clearly speaks to a select Spanish-speaking clientele who are proficient in interpreting contemporary Cuban semiotics. In this artwork, the store, located on the grand boulevard, used to sell blouses, but, now, the signage advertises the establishment as a “Carnicería” (a meat store), not as a “Camisería” (a blouse store); the “Carnicería” exclusively and notoriously sells human fragments only to special clients.

Today’s Cuban artists are proficient in decoding the laws of the international art market, but they remain “virtual consumers.” They are trapped in a simulated game and a post-utopian field of signification and exchange of cultural signs. In the photograph *The Epoch* (2005) (Fig. 18), Garaicoa actually plays with the “absence” of utopia. On the front of the department store, *La Época*, he writes, “Misery is equal to this.” Conceivably, he has been unable to escape the crisis of the nineties and believes that misery continues into this new century.

Mosquera writes that “globalisation, despite its limitations and controls, has undoubtedly improved communication and has facilitated a more pluralistic consciousness. It has, however, introduced the ‘illusion’ of a trans-territorial world of multicultural dialogue with currents that flow in all directions.”²⁰

Because globalization is from and for the “centers,” and not from and for the “peripheries,” Cuba is clearly not a part of the hegemonic culture. According to Mosquera, “We are still far from a globalised art scene.”²¹

As we have seen through this presentation, Ramos, Barroso, Toirac and Garaicoa are hardworking laborers of the forces of globalization, but, at the same time, they have been affected by the collapse of a dream. Although they have successfully decoded the rules of a free-market economy and actively engaged in the marketplace, while maintaining a connection with their own “cubanidad,” they have experienced “inverted consumerism,”²² a condition where countries with greater wealth purchase

20. Mosquera, 133.

21. Mosquera, 135.

Images: Paintings, Photographs, and Prints

art from less prosperous countries, but rarely the other way around. Because there is no economic organization to ground a domestic art market, the international consumer appears to be in charge of appraising, circulating, and, frequently, legitimizing Cuban art, leaving Cuban artists to believe they are not equal participants in the consumer culture.

Images: Paintings, Photographs, and Prints

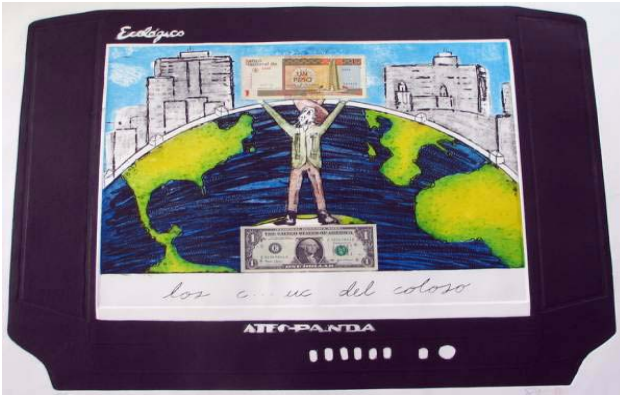
FIGURE 29-1. Los problemas del peso (Weight [Money] Problems), 1996.
Sandra Ramos



Calcography, courtesy of the artist.

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22. In “Some Problems in Transcultural Curating,” Mosquera discusses the concept of “inverted curating.” To better describe the phenomenon as it occurs in the art market, I use the expression “inverted consumerism.” Reference: “Some Problems in Transcultural Curating,” *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, Jean Fisher, ed. (London: Kala Press, 1994), 135.
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FIGURE 29-2. Los cuc del coloso (The CUC from the Colossus), 1996.
Sandra Ramos



Calcography, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-3. Quizás hasta deba partirme en dos (Perhaps I Should Split in Two), 1993. *Sandra Ramos*



Calcography, courtesy of the artist.

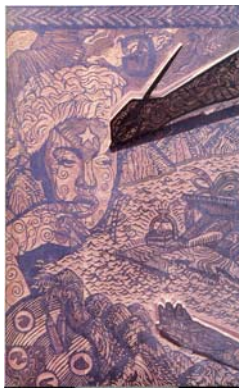
Images: Paintings, Photographs, and Prints

FIGURE 29-4. ¡Esto no hay quien lo arme! (No One Can Assemble This!), 1999. Abel Barroso



Woodblock Master Plate, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-5. La República y el capital extranjero (The Republic and Foreign Capital), 1994. Abel Barroso



Woodblock Master Plate, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-6. Celular-cuchilla multipropósito (Multipurposehandy), 2000.
Abel Barroso



Woodblock Master Plate, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-7. Sin título 3 (Untitled 3), 2000.
Abel Barroso



Mechanized Woodblock Master Plate, courtesy of the artist.

Images: Paintings, Photographs, and Prints

FIGURE 29-8. Sin título 4 (Untitled 4), 2000.
Abel Barroso



Mechanized Woodblock Master Plate, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-9. Café Internet Tercer Mundo (Third World Internet Café), 2000.
Abel Barroso



Mechanized Woodblock Master Plate, courtesy of the artist.

**FIGURE 29-10. Café Internet Tercer Mundo (Third World Internet Café),
2000. Abel Barroso**



Mechanized Woodblock Master Plate, courtesy of the artist.

Images: Paintings, Photographs, and Prints

FIGURE 29-11. Obsession, from the series Tiempos Nuevos (New Times), 1996. José Angel Toirac



Oil on Canvas, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-12. Marlboro, from the series Tiempos Nuevos (New Times), 1996. José Angel Toirac



Oil on Canvas, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-13. Guerrillero Heroico (Heroic Guerrilla), 1960.
Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez (Korda)



Black-and-white photograph, Copyright Diana Diaz, Korda Estate.

FIGURE 29-14. Apple part of A Brief History of Cuba as Told by Other Events, 2001. Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez (Korda)



Oil on Canvas, courtesy of the artist and Art in General.

Images: Paintings, Photographs, and Prints

FIGURE 29-15. *Sin título (La Internacional)*, [Untitled (The International)], 2005. *Carlos Garaicoa*



Black-and-white photograph, thread, pins, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-16. *Sin título (La República)*, [Untitled (The Republic)], 2005. *Carlos Garaicoa*



Black-and-white photograph, thread, pins, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-17. Sin título (La gran Vía), [Untitled (The Grand Boulevard)], 2005. Carlos Garaicoa



Black-and-white photograph, thread, pins, courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE 29-18. Sin título (La Época), [Untitled (The Epoch)], 2005. Carlos Garaicoa



Black-and-white photograph, thread, pins, courtesy of the artist.

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CHAPTER 30

Cuba's Globalized Art World and Evolving Art Market

Darrel Couturier

Abstract: The contemporary Cuban art market was vibrant and thriving between 1997 the year of the V Bienal de La Habana through 2003, with 2000, the year of the Septima Bienal de La Habana, being the peak year. The American market, at that time probably the largest buyers of Cuban art, was greatly responsible for the enormous quantity of works sold. The number of museum and gallery exhibitions given the young talent of the '90s as well as the increasing number of Americans traveling to the island in those six years exposed Cuban artists to numerous collectors and curators. Ironically, the increase in demand by this time had an inverse effect in the overall quality and development of a lot of work which may have had an equally inverse effect on sales. The calamitous events of 9/11 also set in motion a reversal of the growing economic art boom resulting in diminished sales and American exhibitions with the nadir coming when the U.S. government virtually eliminated all cultural and education licenses to travel to Cuba. As well, the change in the official currency in Cuba, from U.S. dollars to the Peso Convertible created a sudden increase in the prices of works of art as artists began charging for their works in the official national currency. What ensued was a beginning hesitation on the part of some buyers who felt prices were becoming too dear.

This lecture addresses the issue of the contemporary Cuban Art Market. The art market is here defined to include sales of art, both private and public (auction), as well as exhibitions in galleries and museums as it is these last two that drive the sales.

The height of the contemporary Cuban art market as iterated in the abstract was between the years 2000 and 2003. There was a precipitous decline in both number of exhibitions and sales subsequently due to a variety of factors which will be discussed in no particular order of importance as there was overlapping of events and circumstances (recalling the old dilemma of what came first, the chicken or the egg).

The escalating sales during the late 1990s and very early 2000s affected the artists and their production. As demand increased, artists began to “supply” more rapidly to make more sales. What you witnessed was a diminuendo in the quality of the work being produced as it had to be done more quickly to meet demand. Others (artists) began riding on the coattails of the more successful artists pushing virtually anything and everything they could. Collectors began to note this shift in quality causing a greater scrutinization of quality and “worth.” Obviously, the talent was still there, undiminished, but great work takes great time.

The seemingly “unfettered” access Americans had to Cuba diminished greatly by 2003 when the then-administration (the terrorists in the White House) severely enforced laws restricting travel to Cuba which saw far fewer Americans, then the biggest collectors and supporters of Cuban art, followed by less interest in Cubanismo and thus a reduced focus on Cuban art.

When the White House administration put Cuba on the list of terrorist countries in 2004 it virtually prohibited the artists in Cuba from entering the U.S. by denying them entry visas. This resulted in the cancellation (“postponement” was the word being used) of many planned exhibitions in museums and galleries here in the U.S. since it was becoming impossible to get the artworks here, let alone think about their return after a show. Artists also began refusing to exhibit as they wanted to be present for their shows and knowing they could not come they opted to “wait.” Many are still “waiting.”

Yet another contributing factor to the shift in the contemporary Cuban art market occurred also in 2004 with the change of the Cuban currency from the U.S. dollar to the CUC or Peso Convertible. Because of the exchange rate, the prices of the artists' works first increased by 10%, virtually overnight, and then just a few short months later with yet another exchange rate hike the increase in prices became almost 20%! There is nothing worse for an artist's market than to bring enormous changes (upwards) in price. As the dollar weakened, and the Euro began to be accepted in Cuba, many artists started charging in Euros which, in a number of cases, has caused an even steeper rise in prices.

For the well-established younger artists, particularly the artists of the ‘90s, their markets are still relatively strong with prices for their work

remaining stable, however, there has been a very noticeable drop in their overall income, none more so than the past three years, compared to the “art-rush” days of 2000. Sure, there are a handful of contemporary artists doing brilliantly well, selling strongly, but in sheer numbers they represent a tiny percentage. As well, one does not see large numbers of the young emerging artists of today in exhibitions outside of Cuba as one did in the late 90s and early 2000s.

Curiously, the auction houses, such as Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Phillips, etcetera, still do not sell the work of many contemporary Cuban artists. Going back through auction catalogs of each for the past eight years there are perhaps three or four names that show up fairly consistently and that’s about it.

The state of health of Cuban art is actually just fine! The artists haven’t lost their talent, the pool of young talent growing up and coming out of the brilliant art schools hasn’t diminished. It has just been a difficult period for obvious political reasons, and only political. There is finally a very healthy contemporary Cuban art scene in Miami which for several years now has been showing more work by artists still living on the island, a decided shift from the 1990s. This has been and is a healthy sign.

Two shows which opened in the past two months, one at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts titled “Cuba: Art and History From 1868 to Today” and another at the Boston University Art Gallery titled “Surrounded By Water” (curated by one of today’s lecturers sitting here, Natania Remba) are reminders that the state of Cuban art is indeed healthy and has not gone wandering. The noticeable decline in overall sales of work being produced by artists still living on the island is temporary. The very near future bodes very well for a resurgence when access to Cuba and to the United States resumes.

CHAPTER 31

Reinaldo Arenas: The Sexual Politics of a Queer Activist

Rafael Ocasio

*Abstract: Reinaldo Arenas became one of the most vocal figures among the political activists opposed to the Castro regime shortly after his arrival in the United States by means of the Mariel boatlift. His clashes (ideological and personal), many of them recorded in the public media, earned him the reputation of a strong-willed, rather callous and aggressive individual. The biggest controversies about Arenas arise from his posthumously-published autobiography, *Antes que anochezca* (1992); [*Before Night Falls* (1993)]. In it Arenas explored his own life as an outlaw engaged in sexual activities that were anathema to the Revolution, and as a queer activist who transformed his life into a case study. In his literary production he had portrayed a strong image as a sexual outlaw, a role that he linked with his political agenda. The autobiography is clearly a text produced with the intention to shock his reader with graphic disclosures of unorthodox or taboo sexual practices. "AIDS and the Sexual Politics of a Queer Activist" focuses on the role of AIDS as an agent that may have precipitated Arenas's decision to memorialize his life as that of a sexual outlaw. Seeking a controversial angle, he wrote both as a gay man afflicted with AIDS and as a queer willing to speak out about his rather intimate sexual preferences. This is his most important contribution to an AIDS-inspired political discourse; however, as I argue, Arenas shied away from disclosing much about his own AIDS condition. He preferred to be remembered as an outlandish pícaro, a queer activist who transformed his life into a case study, and not as a sick man who ended his own life.*

Upon his arrival in the United States on May 5, 1980, by means of the Mariel boatlift, Reinaldo Arenas started an active anti-Castro campaign. The open, out-of-the-closet angle of his political activism was, during the eighties, unique among gay writers from a Latin American country, including Cuba. It created for him a rather negative reputation. Arenas was often labeled an aggressive activist, an untiring political contender with a flair for tantrums that often led to his insensitive and crude insults against his opponents. Specifically, he took it upon himself to publicize the cases of writers who had been marginalized by Cuban cultural or judicial authorities, unable to publish or placed under arrest. His own legal

case against the Cuban system of justice remained barely discussed, however.

In spite of possible damage to his literary career, Arenas became involved in numerous public debates that were often documented in the print media in the United States and abroad. His self-promoted image was that of a “desterrado;” a man without a land, a term that he repeatedly used in *Before Night Falls*, his posthumously published autobiography. Also in his autobiography, he described extensively his dilemma while in the United States, during an exile of ten years, prior to his decision to commit suicide in 1990. His characterization of his exile is defined in rather depressing terms. Suffering is at the core of his exile (and by extension) in the heart of all Cubans in exile: “Suffering has marked us forever, and only with people who have gone through a similar experience can we find some level of understanding” (trans. 308).¹

This paper focuses on Arenas’s political and gay activism in the last three years of his life. He was writing as a gay man and as an AIDS patient who took a public stand on the question of homophobia within the Cuban revolution and, by extension, in Cuban society at large. AIDS may have precipitated Arenas’s decision to memorialize his life as a sexual outlaw. Seeking a controversial angle for his autobiography, he wrote both as a gay man afflicted with AIDS and as a queer willing to speak out in an intimate tone about his sexual preferences, particularly his fondness for engaging in sexual acts in public, preferably at beaches in the outskirts of Havana. He considered those activities part of his political activism against homophobic revolutionary judicial practices in Cuba.

After diagnosis of his AIDS condition in 1987, Arenas continued to be involved in counterrevolutionary political campaigns. Up to the moment of his death in 1990 that strong political activism clearly influenced his later literary work.² He also rushed to conclude his pentagonía project with the novel, *El color del verano* (1991), *The Color of the Summer* (2000) which would be his most vociferous attack (in fiction) against the Castro regime. He concluded his autobiography, *Antes que anochezca*

1. Quotations from *Before Night Falls* are from the published English translation. The Spanish original is available in the footnotes. “...el sufrimiento nos marcó para siempre y sólo con las personas que han padecido lo mismo, tal vez podamos encontrar cierta comunicación” (330).

(1992); *Before Night Falls* (1993), in which Arenas symbolically and concretely held Fidel Castro responsible for his decision to commit suicide. *El color*, the fictionalized accounts of a sexual outlaw, which Arenas described in a 1990 letter as “my best novel,”³ makes use of shocking sexual incidents similar to those used in his sexually graphic autobiography. He also wrote in a 1990 letter that *El color* “was going to cause a great stir.”⁴ Both works are Arenas’s last testimonial declarations against the Castro regime and his final act of vengeance against his enemies.

The focus of *Before Night Falls* is Arenas’s desire to shock his reader with open references to a gay underground world in Cuba, in a “tell-it-all” testimonial. In it he recorded his many daring sexual escapades and those of his friends and of his enemies, as they attempted to bypass the police’s vigilant efforts to stop homosexual activities in public areas. In a 1989 letter he wrote that the autobiography would be “a scandal,” a text in which “I tell all the horrors that I have committed in my life,” and that it was to be published posthumously.⁵

Arenas shied away from disclosing much about his own AIDS condition, however. He preferred to be remembered as an outlandish pícaro, a queer activist who transformed his life into a case study, and not as a sick man who ended his own life. This absence is particularly evident in *Before Night Falls*, an irreverent text presented as a narration by an unrepented elderly pícaro who, unlike the traditional pícaro, at the moment of his death refused to conform to societal expectations of “proper” sexual

2. A recent tribute to Arenas’s political activism is the publication of his never before published article, “Elogio a Fidel Castro,” Praise of Fidel Castro, by the well-known Spanish newspaper “El País.” The byline of the article stresses Arenas’s committed political activism until the moment of his death: “Artículo inédito de un escritor perseguido. El escritor Reinaldo Arenas escribió su ‘Elogio a Fidel Castro’ en 1990, poco antes de morir en Nueva York;” “Unpublished article by a persecuted writer. The writer Reinaldo Arenas wrote his ‘Praise of Fidel Castro’ in 1990, shortly before his death in New York.” “El País” (August 7, 2006): 10

3. All undocumented quotations from letters to and from Reinaldo Arenas are from the Reinaldo Arenas Collection (CO 232) in the Princeton University Library. Passages I have translated from the unedited letters are identified by endnotes, including box and folder numbers.

4. Box 27, folder 8.

5. Box 23; folder 7.

behavior. In its place, Arenas revealed his most outrageous opinions on the impact of sex (from the vantage point of a patient of AIDS) on his life and, controversially, extended his prickly opinions to gays in general.

Although Arenas made few references to AIDS in *Before Night Falls*, the presence of that terrible disease permeates the text. Like other AIDS-affected individuals Arenas had a long battle against various illnesses related to his HIV condition. In the autobiography's introduction he remarked in passing that his condition interrupted the normal pace of his proposed projects. In fact, at the time of his diagnosis in 1987, Arenas had prepared to die. He had just finished writing *Viaje a La Habana* (1990), a collection of three long short stories. His pentagonía was incomplete, with two pieces, *El color del verano* and *El asalto* (1990); *The Assault* (1994), still to be revised from original texts that he had smuggled out of Cuba.⁶ He set aside these two manuscripts in order to take a trip to Miami. Although he had decided to die close to the sea, his close friend Lázaro Gómez Carriles brought him back to New York. He was hospitalized without health insurance, thanks to the efforts of a doctor who was a friend of Margarita Camacho, one of Arenas's closest friends and wife of exiled Cuban painter Jorge Camacho.⁷

According to the autobiography, at the hospital Arenas decided to dictate rather than to write his memoirs and he managed to start working on *El color*. After his release he began reviewing the manuscript of *El asalto*, which he described as "a manuscript [...] written in Cuba in great haste so it could be smuggled out of the country" (trans. xiii).⁸ *El asalto* and *El color* were to become the last pieces of his life-long pentagonia project, a series of five novels with strong autobiographical content, corresponding to the life of a Cuban gay peasant from his childhood through his adulthood. In letters from 1989 and throughout 1990 Arenas started to refer to his life as "an agony," and he often wished that "it might end at any moment."⁹

6. A first draft of *El color del verano* is dated by the Arenas Collection at the Princeton Library, as Cuba, 1977, and of *El asalto*, as La Habana, 1974.

7. The Camachos had been key figures in persuading friends who traveled as tourists to Havana to smuggle Arenas's manuscripts in various degrees of completion.

8. "En realidad se trataba de un manuscrito escrito en Cuba atropelladamente para poder sacarlo del país" (13).

Arenas's depression increased with his decline in homosexual activity. Of particular biographical interest today is Arenas's correspondence with the Camachos in which he revealed intimate details about his sexual life during the last three years of his life. He had decided to refrain from engaging in any kind of sexual activity. In an August 29, 1989 letter, Arenas said that he had given up anonymous sex, in spite of having been propositioned while riding a bicycle in Central Park: "I had an 'unchaste' proposition from a huge black man, which unfortunately I cannot accept. I have already become accustomed to my monkish life, and that has helped me to work a lot."¹⁰

Arenas's "monkish life" goes against his frequent statements in his autobiography about his need for sex while he was engaged in writing: "I could never work in pure abstinence; the body needs to feel satisfied to give free rein to the spirit" (trans. 101).¹¹ It was not, however, the first time that he had imposed chastity upon himself. Between 1974 through 1976, in a Cuban jail, during his incarceration under accusations of corruption of male minors, he had decided against engaging in sexual adventures. His explanation for this decision goes to the core of his view of sex: "I had no sexual relations while in prison, not only as a precaution but because it made no sense; love has to be free, and prison is a monstrosity where love turns into bestiality" (trans. 187).¹² Another example of his connection of unorthodox sexual acts and the actual process of writing is his involvement with male minors, an activity that in his autobiography he characterized as indispensable: "In the afternoons I would lock myself in my little room in Miramar, and sometimes write until late into the night. But during the day I roamed all the beaches, barefoot, and enjoyed unusual adventures with wonderful guys in the bushes, with ten, eleven, twelve of them sometimes, at times with only one, who would be so extraordinary he would satisfy me as much as twelve" (trans. 101-102).¹³

9. Box 23, folder 7.

10. Box 23, folder 7.

11. "Nunca he podido trabajar en plena abstinencia, porque el cuerpo necesita sentirse satisfecho para dar rienda suelta a su espíritu"(127).

12. "Yo no tuve relaciones sexuales en la prisión; no solamente por provocación, sino porque no tenía sentido; el amor es algo libre y la prisión es algo monstruoso, donde el amor se convierte en algo bestial" (212).

The above quotations are just a handful of examples of Arenas's most intimate revelations concerning his sexual practices. His open treatment of gay sexuality, particularly evident in his autobiography and in the novel *El color...*, violates self-imposed moral restrictions among Latin American writers in dealing with such taboo subjects. Arenas went a step further, however, by offering personal comments on issues of interest to all gays, such as his doubting the possibility of a gay monogamous commitment: "The ideal in any sexual relationship is finding one's opposite, and, therefore, the homosexual world is now something sinister and desolate; we almost never get what we most desire" (trans. 108).¹⁴ This latter statement is certainly a point of considerable contention; in fact, it appears as his indirect explanation of his controversial statement about his overactive sexual activity. As he was about to die alone and by his own hand, the absence of a lover at his side is particularly pathetic. This was drastic for a man who had known, in shocking testimony according to his "complicated mathematical calculations," numerous sexual partners, some 5,000 by the time he was 25 years old (119; trans. 93). It is within the context of a physical and spiritual solitude that he proclaimed categorically, "The gay world is not monogamous. Almost by instinct, the tendency is to spread out to multiple relationships, quite often to promiscuity" (trans. 64-65).¹⁵ He had been deeply involved in understanding gay relationships prior to this statement in his autobiography, as he indicated in a 1987 interview with Nedda G. de Anhalt. In that conversation he had labeled promiscuity an "endless search." He stated, "One of the characteristics of the homosexual world is that one seeks his own likeness. That nonexistent friend is the companion that one would want, and one pursues oneself in that endless search" (152).¹⁶

13. "En mi pequeño cuarto de Miramar me encerraba por las tardes y a veces escribía hasta las altas horas de la noche. Pero por el día yo había recorrido descalzo todas aquellas playas y había tenido aventuras con bellísimos adolescentes entre los matorrales; diez, once, doce a veces y, en ocasiones, uno solo, pero extraordinario, para que me rindiese por una docena" (127-128).

14. "Lo ideal en toda relación sexual es la búsqueda de lo opuesto y por eso el mundo homosexual actual es algo siniestro y desolado; porque casi nunca se encuentra lo deseado" (133).

15. "El mundo homosexual no es monogámico; casi por naturaleza, por instinto, se tiende a la dispersión, a los amores múltiples, a la promiscuidad muchas veces" (90).

With detailed references in his autobiography to his sexual drive, which he described as “a huge sexual appetite” (trans. 18),¹⁷ Arenas was also writing as an “outlaw” since some of the episodes in which he had become involved fell within violation of sexual laws in Cuba. His literary mentor could have been the French novelist and playwright Jean G net, an author in whom Arenas expressed interest after Arenas’s arrival in the United States in 1980 (Olivares, Montenegro 53).¹⁸ This emphasis on the marginalized social outlaw was strong in Arenas’s mind since his first drafts of the autobiography, made while he was a fugitive from justice in 1974, prior to his incarceration in El Morro Prison.

In *Before Night Falls* Arenas also purposely sought controversy, a fact concretely evident in his divulging rather graphic details about his sexual involvement with underage males. The encounters were consensual, and they were related to a strong underground community in Havana where minors often sought engagement with adult males without expecting remuneration. The many encounters with those minors, whom he described with flattering labels, such as “bell simos adolescentes;” “most beautiful adolescents,” explain the only time that Arenas fell into a police entrapment. As was his custom, already well documented both in his autobiography and in fiction, Arenas had gone to a public beach, where he obtained consensually the sexual favors of two “j venes;” youths. After engaging in sexual relations, the j venes robbed Arenas and a friend and denounced them to the police as sexual aggressors. The blow to Arenas’s p caro pride is two-fold. One, he had not realized that this was a police entrapment and two, at the trial his accusers, although the size of a grown man, “over six feet tall” (234; trans. 209), had pretended to be minors.¹⁹

After his diagnosis with AIDS Arenas continued to view his life as a political case. Arenas’s vigorous political activism in *Before Night Falls* made him a vocal opponent of the homophobic record of the Cuban revo-

16. “Una de las caracter sticas del mundo homosexual es que uno se busca a uno mismo.

Ese amigo inexistente es el compa ero que uno quisiera, y lo persigue en uno mismo a trav s de esa b squeda incesante.”

17. “...una gran voracidad sexual” (39).

18. The impact of G net on Arenas is a subject for further research. Arenas, who had advanced knowledge of French, could have read G net in French, or he could have read G net in Cuba in translations by the Cuban playwright Ant n Arrufat.

lution, as he challenged the macho image of the perfect revolutionary as expressed in Ernesto Che Guevara's "hombre nuevo," new man. Arenas did not observe the self-censorship of many gay artists who, as critics have pointed out, often "translate their need for a sense of pride into a desire for respectability, and so expect lesbian and gay history to provide them with a 'cleaned up' version of the past" (Duggan 152). Before the publication of his autobiography Arenas often commented on the role of gay erotic activism as an agent of social and political change. For example, in 1983, in his interview with Charles Greenfield, Arenas explained oppressive actions against homosexuality by the Cuban government: "Sex is an authentic manifestation of communication, therefore, it must be repressed" (42). Some journals seemed to have censored his frequent comments on homosexual issues, a fact revealed in his 1981 conversation with the critic Ana Roca, who in 1980 had one of the first interviews after Arenas's arrival in the United States. Thanks to Dra. Roca I have had access to the original interview, in which Arenas spoke at length about the underground homosexual life in Cuba as a reaction to the extreme, officially sanctioned homophobia by revolutionary institutions.

In hindsight, it is understandable that in 1980 an American publisher might have been reluctant to deal openly with Arenas's charges of Cuban

19. Arenas later made of this arrest a case of political persecution due to his publications abroad without proper permission from Cuban cultural institutions of his novels *El mundo alucinante* (France, 1968 and Mexico, 1969) and to the French translations of his novels *Celestino antes del alba*, published in France in 1973 and *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas*, also published in France in 1975. He set forth his case in a "Comunicado a la Cruz Roja, a la ONU y a la UNESCO;" a Comunique to the Red Cross, to the United Nations and to UNESCO, which he wrote while a fugitive from justice on November 15, 1974 (Arenas in *Necesidad...*, 150-152). According to his autobiography, the Comunique appeared in France in the newspaper "Le Figaro," and also in Mexico. In *Necesidad de libertad*, published in 1986, Arenas reproduced the text of the Comunique as he had drafted it and smuggled it into France to his friends Jorge and Margarita Camacho. In a footnote Arenas wrote, however, that the Camachos had decided not to make this document public: "Aunque llevaba órdenes expresas de que el mismo se publicara inmediatamente, conjuntamente con mis manuscritos inéditos, los depositarios determinaron no hacerlo, temiendo las consecuencias que pudiera acarrearle, ya que a los pocos días de su expedición fui nuevamente arrestado" (152); "Although it carried expressed instructions for its immediate publication, together with my unedited manuscripts, the recipients decided not to do so, fearing the consequences that it might have had for me, since a few days after sending it I was again arrested."

revolutionary homophobia, with his charges of violations of their human rights and many times of their deaths. Even more so, when Arenas left some of his most serious accusations unsubstantiated, or, in instances when he had named victims of these violations, a publisher would probably have hesitated to support the charges or even to reveal the identity of people still living in Cuba. Publishers might have been cautious about revealing names of victims living in the United States, at that time recovering from right wing, anti-homosexual religious campaigns, such as that of Anita Bryant in Florida in 1977.

The severe censorship of Arenas's interviews regarding gay life in revolutionary Cuba may have inspired his desire to explore this subject freely in his last works. This is a goal of his unpublished essay, "Prólogo al misterio del miedo;" "Prologue to the Mystery of Fear."²⁰ Written in New York City and dated 1987, this article appears to be a preamble to Arenas's daring works to come:

One of the most ancient and persistent feelings suffered by man is fear. Before smiling, man screamed. Leaving the mother's womb (that warm, safe place) fills us with panic. We come into the world screaming. The subsequent path through life is an adventure through fear's intricate passages, and all this culminates in death, the greatest fear, since death represents absolute destruction or absolute mystery. Fear is, then, that obscure, impending threat that we cannot control. In contemporary times one not only dies or suffers death throes through fear, but one lives headed toward (or under) fear. Now terror is a scientific method used, in one way or another, by the mechanisms of power to control humanity.²¹

20. Box 19, folder 25.

21. "Una de las sensaciones más antiguas y constantes padecidas por el hombre es el miedo. Antes de sonreír el hombre gritó. La salida del vientre materno (aquel lugar tibio y seguro) nos llena de pánico. Entramos al mundo gritando. Luego, el tránsito por la vida es una aventura por los intrincados pasadizos del miedo, y todo esto culmina con la muerte, el miedo mayor, pues representa la destrucción absoluta o el absoluto misterio. El miedo es pues esa amenaza oscura e inminente que no podemos controlar. En los tiempos contemporáneos no solamente se muere o se agoniza a través del miedo, sino que se vive para (o bajo) el miedo. El terror es ya un método científico que de una forma u otra manera los mecanismos del poder utilizan para controlar a la humanidad." (Box 19, folder 25.)

He was, however, willing to fight that oppressive feeling: “We live not in the splendor of a culture, much less of a knowledge, but in the splendor of terror. Man, who seemed to be the quintessential rebel, has turned into (or was he always so?) a slave to fear. And the most terrible thing is that in many cases we don't even recognize the moment when that horror has permeated us, the moment when we are no longer authentic beings and therefore free and self-confident, but instruments or victims of panic.”²² Further proof that Arenas intended to begin a campaign of shocking statements appears in another unpublished and undated article, “Tiempos modernos;” “Modern Times.” Unlike in the “Prologue to the Mystery of Fear,” in “Modern Times”²³ Arenas indicated what his goal for the future might have been in order to fight these modern times that he labeled “a time of the ‘holy family’ and of solitary masturbations:” “But remember, above all, clandestinely and underground, life doesn't have to stop. And it will not stop because always there will be somebody ready to die for it. Anyway, while new hells draw near and drag me into whirlwinds, I would like to leave here my brief testament: *I shall not surrender.*”²⁴

Whether “Modern Times” was written prior to his diagnosis of AIDS is not evident, but in that article Arenas reflected his current depressed state of mind, which in the autobiography is closely linked to his AIDS-related diseases. In his last recorded statement to his friend the Latino novelist Jaime Manrique, Arenas linked AIDS to his dissatisfaction with his life in New York: ““All these years, I've felt Manhattan was just another island-jail. A bigger jail with more distractions but a jail nonetheless. It just goes to show that there are more than two hells. I left one kind

22. “Vivimos no en el esplendor de una cultura, mucho menos de una sabiduría, sino el esplendor del terror. El hombre que parecía ser la criatura rebelde por excelencia se ha vuelto (¿O lo ha sido siempre?) un esclavo del miedo. Y lo más terrible es que en muchos casos ni siquiera advertimos hasta que punto ese horror nos ha permeado, hasta que punto ya no somos seres auténticos y por lo tanto desenfadados y libres sino instrumentos o víctimas del pánico.” (Box 19, folder 25.)

23. Box 19, folder 34.

24. “Pero recuérdelo, por encima de todo, clandestina y subterráneamente, la vida no se habrá de detener. Y no se detendrá porque siempre habrá quien esté dispuesto a morir por ella. De todos modos, mientras nuevos infiernos se aproximan y en su torbellino me arrastran, quisiera dejar aquí mi breve testamento: *No capitularé*” (emphasis in the original).

of hell behind and fell into another kind. I never thought I would live to see us plunge again into the dark ages. This plague-AIDS-is but a symptom of the sickness of our age” (68). Arenas’s reference to the “sickness of our age” seems to stem from religious or governmental restrictions to homosexuality. The following is his statement in an unpublished document, “Carta de los Estados Unidos;” “Letter from the United States,” in which Arenas wrote about the reasons for homophobic restrictions in his usual crude language: “The male moralist has such a high regard for masculinity that his greatest pleasure would be for another man to screw him. From that exhibitionism repressive laws arise and Christian or bourgeois Communist morality.”²⁵ He often referred to his current time as “o reactionary and prudish,” as he wrote in 1990 to Jorge Camacho, that his darling *El color del verano* might not find a suitable publisher.

Arenas’s personal experiences with moral censorship in Cuba, his physical suffering in disciplinarian institutions (rehabilitation and detention centers), and his condition as a gay Marielito involved in political controversies in the United States provided the bases for his progressively strong gay aesthetics. *Before Night Falls*, in particular, is an outstanding text in Cuban and in Latin American literature that promotes new subjects into autobiographical writing, especially Arenas’s open exploration of his erotic practices. It can be argued that his imminent death from AIDS forced Areas into a graphic sexual “self-outing,” which included his ultimate revelation of his attraction to engage in consensual sexual relations with male minors, in clear violation of the moral codes of the so-called revolutionary new man. Clearly, he meant his memoirs to shock his readers with bold descriptions of gay sex. This is an intricate part of his gay activism: a ground-breaking analysis of gay sex in descriptive, erotic language that becomes for Arenas the ultimate sign of gay identity.

25. “El hombre moralista tiene un concepto tan elevado de la masculinidad que su mayor placer sería que otro hombre le diese por el culo. De esa exhibición surgen las leyes represivas y la moral cristiana o burguesa comunistas.” (Box 19, folder 34.)

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CHAPTER 32

El cine cubano sale de viaje

Alfredo A. Fernandez

Resumen: El cine cubano de la revolución no estuvo ajeno al cambio drástico que se produjo en la economía y en la sociedad cubana durante la última década del siglo XX con la desaparición del financiamiento de la Unión Soviética y el inicio de una política radical de reajuste de los gastos e inversiones denominada Período Especial. Algunos de los temas derivados de la actualidad nacional (falta de viviendas, abastecimientos y transporte; mercado negro, corrupción y éxodo migratorio), se vieron reflejados en las pantallas de los cines cubanos -mas no de la TV nacional- con muy poca o nula tolerancia hacia ellos por parte de la censura política e ideológica del estado. Los filmes Guantánamera (1995) y Lista de espera (2000) de los cineastas cubanos Tomás Gutiérrez Alea y Juan Carlos Tabío, coinciden en el tratamiento crítico por la vía del absurdo y el humor negro, del grave problema del transporte público en Cuba. Ambos filmes, prolongan en la década de 1990's el tratamiento crítico de la vida cotidiana en Cuba que ya se observaba en la década de 1980's en filmes como Se permuta y Plaff, de Juan Carlos Tabío; Los pájaros tirándole a la escopeta, de Rolando Díaz y Hasta cierto punto, de Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.

La tendencia a tratar críticamente en el cine los temas derivados de la vida cotidiana en Cuba se hizo más evidente en los años finales del siglo XX.

Las décadas de los 80's y los 90's, se mostraban propicias al cambio de la temática dominante en la cinematografía cubana de los 70's: filmes que (re) interpretaban la historia de Cuba y América Latina desde un punto de vista marxista y tercermundista.

Algunos de los mejores ejemplos, los encontramos en los filmes "*La última cena*" (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea), "*El otro Francisco*", (Sergio Giral) y "*Un hombre de éxito*" (Humberto Solás).

En alguna medida, el III y IV congresos del partido comunista de Cuba, con sus llamados a establecer una política de rectificación de errores, crearon el marco apropiado para que las "tendencias negativas del

socialismo cubano", afloraran en las discusiones de los comités de barrio, en las asambleas sindicales y en los medios artísticos.

En los 80's y en los 90's, el alejamiento de la historia, trajo por momentos a las pantallas un aire renovador que venía de "lo popular", y a veces también, del "populismo".

Filmes como "*Hasta cierto punto*" (1983), de Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, "*Los pájaros tirándole a la escopeta*" (1984), de Rolando Díaz, "*Techo de vidrio*" (1988), de Sergio Giral, "*Adorables mentiras*" (1991), de Gerardo Chijona, y "*Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas*" (1991), de Daniel Díaz Torres, reemplazaron en los cines, pero no en la televisión, una docena de filmes históricos y "tercermundistas" de las décadas anteriores.

En la aproximación crítica de la realidad cubana contemporánea, enfocada hacia la falta de transporte público adecuado, los filmes "*Guan-tanamera*" (1996), de Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, y "*Lista de espera*" (2000), de Juan Carlos Tabío, se valen estéticamente de elementos codificados en los "road movies" y en las "dark/black comedies" del cine norteamericano.

No es Cuba el único país del mundo que adolece de problemas en el transporte público.

De Bangla Desh a New York, los ciudadanos podrían emitir quejas en cuanto a la calidad de los sistemas de transporte urbano.

Pero la singularidad de Cuba siempre radicaría en la variedad de nacionalidades del transporte urbano en cincuenta años de revolución: buses norteamericanos, ingleses, franceses, españoles, soviéticos, checos, polacos, húngaros, búlgaros y chinos, hasta llegar al gran invento cubano: "el camello", un monstruo rodante mezcla de tanque de guerra ruso y "troca-trailer" de contrabandistas (coyotes) de la frontera mexico-americana que rueda por las calles de La Habana.

En nuestro análisis, cuando hablamos de "road movies", nos estaremos refiriendo a un género cinematográfico en el cual la acción ocurre durante una jornada de camino, a pie o en vehículo, como en los filmes norteamericanos, "*Easy rider*" y "*Thelma and Louise*".

Y cuando hablamos de dark/black comedies, nos estaremos refiriendo a filmes en los cuales, temas serios como la guerra, el suicidio, la locura y las drogas se revierten en en la forma y son tratados de forma satírica.

"Guantanamera" (1996), fue el último filme realizado por Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (1928-1996), el más conocido y controvertido cineasta cubano de la revolución.

Y al parecer, en él quiso rendir tributo a uno de los temas (el de la muerte) que más interés y éxito de público le trajo en su carrera artística en filmes como *"La muerte de un burócrata"* (1966) y *"Los sobrevivientes"* (1974).

También, muy probablemente, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, quiso rendir tributo, aprovechando que la locación de una parte del filme era la ciudad de Guantánamo, al trovador cubano Joseíto Fernández, que en las décadas de los 40'y los 50's, popularizó la canción "Guantanamera" que servía de fondo musical en la radio a la narración de diferentes delitos perpetrados en campos y ciudades de Cuba.

"Guantanamera" obtuvo en rápida sucesión el Segundo Premio Coral en el XVII Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano de La Habana (1995), el Premio del Jurado del XVII Festival de Viña del Mar, Chile (1996), el Premio especial del Jurado Catalina de Oro, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia (1996) y el del Festival Internacional del Cine Latinoamericano, Chicago (1997).

El filme comienza en Guantánamo, lugar de origen de Yoyita, la cantante, que regresa de La Habana en busca de un viejo amor después de cincuenta años de ausencia.

En Guantánamo, se encuentra con Cándido, el músico, que la recibe en sus brazos, y en ellos Yoyita muere de un ataque al corazón.

Este incidente permite la entrada en pantalla del burócrata Adolfo, el ex esposo de la ex profesora universitaria Georgina, la sobrina de Yoyita.

Adolfo ha caído en desgracia políticamente. Para rehabilitarse como funcionario de la revolución, pone en práctica la idea de ahorrar gasolina cambiando el féretro de una carroza funébre a otra en cada provincia, y así cumple con el mandato de Yoyita, que en el testamento dispuso que si moría en Guantánamo debían enterrarla en La Habana.

El único problema de este "movido" entierro, es que entre Guantánamo y La Habana, median mil kilómetros, y el momento del velorio y posterior entierro ocurre después que el mapa de Cuba cambió de seis a

catorce provincias, en mil novecientos setenta y seis, con la nueva constitución socialista.

La muerta Yoyita, acompañada por el dolido Cándido, la sobrina Georgina, y su esposo Adolfo, emprenden un viaje por la Carretera Central de Cuba, en una combinación de géneros filmicos ("road movies" y "dark/black comedy") en la cual, en los diferentes episodios del recorrido por carretera, se atan y desatan nudos dramáticos como fórmula viable de mantener el interés del público.

Tan pronto como el cortejo fúnebre llega a la carretera, se encuentran con dos camioneros: el amoroso ingeniero, de nombre Mariano, y su compañero de ruta, el santero Ramón. Mariano y Ramón son un par de pícaros que a lo largo del camino visitan a sus respectivas amantes, viajan en una moderna rastra española Pegaso en la que dan cabida a pasajeros ocasionales, animales y vegetales salidos del mercado negro y a los mensajes amorosos que intercambian los pobladores de las distintas provincias.

Ambos grupos (el que rodea a la muerta Yoyita, y el que forman "los vivos Mariano y Ramón"), se han de encontrar más de una vez en "el largo viaje" de más de mil kilómetros rumbo a La Habana, dando lugar a que de nuevo surja el amor no declarado entre Georgina y Mariano durante la época universitaria.

Al primer funeral, durante la travesía, se agregará otro, el de un negro de 104 años cuya última voluntad es que lo entierren en Cárdenas -noroeste de Cuba.

En el camino, los féretros se confunden, a la muerta de La Habana (Yoyita), la entierran en Cárdenas, y al muerto de Cárdenas, (el negro), lo entierran en La Habana.

En medio de la confusión de cadáveres -hábilmente manipulada por el burócrata Adolfo-, muere también Cándido.

De esta forma, y para mayor enredo de ultratumba entre amorosos cadáveres, Yoyita, es decir, el negro, es enterrada junto a su amado Cándido, en el cementerio Colón de La Habana.

En resumen: a través del viaje alucinante que empieza en Guantánamo con la muerte, y finaliza en La Habana con más muertos, se observa la deplorable situación económica y social de Cuba en los años 90's, durante

el "período especial" que siguió al fin del millonario subsidio soviético que, durante décadas, alimentó a la economía cubana.

No es "*Guantanamera*" un filme de grandes pretensiones estéticas.

La cámara se limita a seguir las peripecias que ocurren en el camino, destacándose al fondo el paisaje del campo cubano a medida que el cortejo fúnebre avanza de oriente a occidente.

El director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, en una entrevista realizada cuando se estrenó el filme, declaró que para él, "*Guantanamera*", más que un filme de ficción, poseía un innegable carácter documental del cual se sentía orgulloso.

Por su parte, "*Lista de espera*" (2000), de Juan Carlos Tabío, aunque posterior cronológicamente, se puede ver como un prólogo, o preámbulo, a "*Guantanamera*".

Y también aquí, más que a la innovación estética, el interés del director se dirige al contenido de crítica social del filme.

En "*Guantanamera*", estamos todo el tiempo "en el camino", (como en la novela "*On the road*", de Jack Kerouac); en "*Lista de espera*", por el contrario, estamos todo el tiempo a la espera de algo que no acaba de suceder, pero que no es ni vida ni muerte sino espera existencial sin término.

Los personajes de "*Lista de espera*" debaten sus vidas entre la realidad tosca y absurda de un país pobre y mal administrado y el sueño de escapar transformando el entorno, o someterse a la frustración y el absurdo de una precaria, cuando no terrible, existencia carente de futuro.

No es casual que abunden las referencias en "*Lista de espera*" al filme de Luis Buñuel "*El ángel exterminador*".

En uno como en otro filme, un grupo de personas, quedan atrapadas dentro de una especie de círculo mágico: la iglesia, en "*El ángel exterminador*", y la terminal interprovincial de ómnibus, en "*Lista de espera*".

Pero, en "el ángel", los atrapados sin salida, son aristócratas que visten ropa de seda, comen en restaurantes de lujo, ruedan en limusinas, y viajan a París y New York mientras que en "Lista", los que no pueden salir son gente de pueblo, sin dinero y con hambre, y que nunca han puesto un pie fuera de la isla de Cuba.

"Lista de espera", en resumen, es la narración filmica imaginativa de un grupo de cubanos atrapados en el noveno círculo del infierno de la falta de medios de transportes adecuados en Cuba.

A la estación de buses de la provincia central (microcosmos), no llega ni sale ningún transporte que cubra la ruta que va a lo largo de Cuba (macrocosmos).

Como la isla de Cuba sin financiamiento soviético, la estación se ha estancado en el tiempo: la genta yace echada en los bancos de madera soñando con el pasado, o imaginando el futuro, pero igual de inmóviles.

No obstante la inmovilidad generalizada, ("todo sigue igual") algunos cambios comienzan a efectuarse.

Pero, como todos se la pasan soñando, no se sabe a ciencia cierta, si los cambios pertenecen al dominio de la realidad, o al de la imaginación.

Del abigarrado grupo de personajes de *"Lista de espera"*, podría decirse lo mismo que Calderón afirmó de sus personajes en *"La vida es sueño"*: "todos sueñan lo que son, aunque ninguno lo entiende".

Hay de todo en este grupo en espera interminable de la llegada de un ómnibus que "rompa el hechizo" y los "saque de allí".

Como el "milagro" no acaba de ocurrir, las pasiones comienzan a fluctuar: una joven que esperaba casarse con un español para que la saque de Cuba, termina por enamorarse de un joven estudiante que, una vez finalizados los estudios, opta por regresar al campo a trabajar la tierra de la familia; el burócrata que desoía las súplicas de los pasajeros para que reparara un omnibus pinta las paredes y la fachada del edificio de la terminal de ómnibus; un maleante que vive del contrabando y de las ventas del mercado negro, organiza una biblioteca pública; dos jóvenes taciturnos juntan sus manos y se juran amor homoerótico; y el más transcendental de los cambios, un ciego pícaro, que se había ganado el primer puesto en la lista de espera para viajar a La Habana con sus comentarios mordaces contra el sistema ("aquí la culpa de todo la tiene el bloqueo yanqui"), revela que no es ciego y pide perdón antes de iniciar una nueva vida con una nueva moral.

¿Forman parte los cambios de la realidad, o de nuevo se trata del juego de la imaginación de los pasajeros para entretener la espera sin término de un ómnibus que los conduzca a otra estación, a otra espera sin

término, a otro ómnibus, a otra estación, a otra espera, y así hasta el infinito de la lista de espera?

De la génesis del filme, su director, Juan Carlos Tabío, viejo asociado con Tomás Gutiérrez Alea en la realización de filmes críticos de la realidad cubana, ha dicho que la idea surgió cuando paseaba por Marina Hemingway, en las afueras de La Habana, y vio una casita medio en ruinas, con pintura descolorida y paredes desconchadas, que antes había sido un casino de juego propiedad de un coronel del ejército de Batista.

De inmediato, asegura Tabío, pensó: "este será el escenario de mi estación de guaguas, donde la gente decide quedarse, y luchar por transformar el lugar, que no es otro, en metáfora, que el de la sociedad cubana, abastecida deficientemente, y en la que encontrar un bombillo o un tornillo, reviste caracteres de heroísmo".

Pese a cualquier pronóstico desfavorable, el filme fue tolerado por la censura, y durante su estreno en La Habana, según Tabío, "el sonido no se oía, porque quedaba cubierto por las carcajadas de la gente".

¿Ocurrió de igual forma con el estreno de "*Guantanamera*"?

Pese haber alcanzado un Segundo Premio Coral en el Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano (1995), el filme tuvo un corto tiempo de exhibición que coincidió con la agonía y muerte de su director, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.

Un par de años después de su premiere, en marzo de 1998, en un largo discurso en el que abordó problemas económicos del país, Fidel Castro se refirió en términos críticos a "*Guantanamera*", y a partir de entonces, el filme pasó a ser un fantasma que recorría las salas de cine en búsqueda de una segunda oportunidad de exhibición.

¿Cuáles fueron los aspectos controvertidos del filme que llamaron la atención de la dirección política del país?

No hay una especificación clara al respecto. Pero tal vez podríamos aventurar algunos índices de desobediencia ideológica: (1) la presencia al inicio del filme de una niña de cabellos rubios vestida de negro delante de un letrero de SOCIALISMO O MUERTE (2) la pregunta, retórica a fuerza de repetirse cada vez que el cortejo fúnebre se detiene en las cafeterías del camino: ¿qué hay de comer?, y la respuesta: café y cigarillos (3) Mariano, el amoroso camionero, que argumenta con su compadre, el

santero Ramón: primero fue el comunismo científico el que fracasó, después el socialismo científico también fracasó, ¿qué viene ahora, el capitalismo científico? (4) la referencia a que la hija de Georgina, la profesora universitaria, y Adolfo, el ingenioso burócrata, se dejó embaucar por "los cantos de sirena" de la perestroika y se fue a Miami.

Repito: no parece haber existido una especificación clara en la crítica, ni en la censura. Pero, puede que hayan sido los puntos antes mencionados, las causas que motivaron el ostracismo del filme "*Guantanamera*", tan elusivo como real, en sus imágenes de una Cuba "venida a menos" después de la caída del Muro de Berlín y el fin de la ayuda económica soviética.

Pero, también podríamos indicar otro motivo que aparece en el filme de forma inusualmente poética: la voz en off de un narrador cuenta el mito afrocubano de Olofi, el dios que no baja a la tierra y que en la santería es el equivalente de la paloma mensajera del Espíritu Santo.

En la interpretación que de este mito de la religión afrocubana Yoruba en el filme "*Guantanamera*" brinda la profesora Aleida A. Rodríguez (Howard University), Olofi, que reina en el cielo, se ha cansado de los viejos que nunca mueren y decide mandar a la tierra a Ikú, su mensajero, con la misión de que se lleve a los viejos al cementerio y que el mundo comience en un lugar donde el hombre nazca, crezca y muera.

Para que ello ocurra, debe llover treinta días en todas partes, desde el oriente (Guantánamo) hasta el occidente de Cuba (La Habana) y se limpien los caminos de todo mal. Si la (re) interpretación del mito de Olofi de la profesora Rodríguez, se trasladara a la realidad política de Cuba, llamaría la atención el hecho de que las cinco principales figuras del gobierno totalizan trescientos noventa y dos años para un promedio de setenta y ocho punto cuatro años de edad per capita.

En reciprocidad al filme "*Guantanamera*", y a la (re) interpretación del mito afrocubano de Olofi que en él aparece, "los viejos gobernantes" podrían repetir, alegando sabiduría, el viejo refrán hispano: más sabe el Diablo por viejo, que por Diablo.

En el momento de la exhibición de "*Guantanamera*" (1996), Fidel Castro llegaba a los setenta años, y Adolfo, el burócrata responsable del viaje mortuario a través de la isla, al final del filme, aparece encaramado

sobre un pedestal, bajo la lluvia, mientras recita una falsa oración fúnebre sobre un cadáver igual de falso, el del negro de ciento cuatro años enterado junto a Cándido, como si se tratara de su amada Yoyita.

Doce años han transcurrido desde la primera exhibición del filme, las palabras de Fidel Castro, y el ostracismo posterior de la exhibición de "*Guantanamera*". Ahora, en el presente, es Fidel Castro, el crítico del filme, quien pasa de los ochenta años en medio de especulaciones sobre su estado de salud después de sufrir varias operaciones y desaparecer del escenario político durante los últimos veinte meses, limitándose su actividad a esporádicas apariciones, y a una prolífica escritura de reflexiones sobre los más variados temas en la prensa.

Vale la pena (re) lanzar algunas de las posibles interpretaciones con las que finaliza "*Guantanamera*", y la (re) interpretación del popular mito afrocubano Yoruba que, sobre él, antes y ahora, puede realizarse.

La vejez del líder político... la falsedad de algunos de sus epígonos ... Ikú que viene a la tierra a cumplir el legado de Olofi... la lluvia, interminable, que "limpia" los caminos de gente vieja y de falsas actitudes...

CHAPTER 33

“Porno para Ricardo: Rock, Analchy and Transition”

Laura García Freyre

Abstract: This article does an analysis of punk-rock group Porno Para Ricardo, analyzing their musical proposal and doing a contextualization of their performance, in a transition process to a post-totalitarian regime. According to the main theorists of political regimes, in the post-totalitarianism exists, along with the official culture, a complex underground culture that could result in a resistance movement to the system. Porno Para Ricardo is conceptualized in what James Scott names the "infrapolítica of helpless" because they express their opposition to the Cuban regime through their proposal and musical performance. When we refer to speech infrapolítica of PPR, we are talking about those elements that the group used to express their anger: the reappropriation and mockery of national symbols and those associated to the ideology of the Cuban regime and the leaders of the Revolution.

The contemporary Cuban society has taken on new codes and a post-revolutionary identity in which the ideological discourse is a thing of the past, as has been the need to take on new values associated with the free market to survive, in most of the cases, illegal in an economy that is sustained on the basis of supply and demand. Over the past decade, it was common for people to express their discontent through what James Scott called “disguised forms of resistance:” gossip, rumor, whisper, anonymity and gestures.¹ While such practices persisted strongly, recently observed a large number of social subjects that move and develop outside the State, assuming a more critical towards the Cuban regime.

In music there is a change in the discourse of the resistance that goes to the metaphor of open confrontation. In the nineties appeared in the Cuban music scene songs that, for all metaphorical resources containing,

1. Scout, James, *El arte de la resistencia*, México, Era, 2000, chapter VI

and even novelty were marked an era. We all knew who was concerned when he sang Pedro Luis Ferrer “Mi grandfather (Paco) built this house with great sacrifice, to move a birdseed, you have to ask for permission” “Mi abuelo (Paco) hizo esta casa con enormes sacrificios, para mover un alpiste hay que pedirle permiso”. Similarly, when Carlos Varela sang “Guillermo Tell your son is grown up, he wants to throw the arrow. It’s his turn to show his courage...” Thousands of young people identified with the small Tell and were represented their disgruntled and experiences in songs like “Todos se roban” y “Memorias.”

In 1998 Gorki Aguila founded in Havana la banda punk-rock Porno For Ricardo, with Ciro Diaz on bass, David Luis Gonzalez on drums and Oscar Pita on guitar. The first songs were a reflection of what we were interested to express and share with the public: sex, irreverence and mockery. In the self-production “E’ pol tu culpa” (2001) one of the most popular songs was “Marlen y Tatiana,” which talks about the lesbian love relationship between the protagonists who, innocent and ignorant, taking pills become not pregnant. In the volumen *Rock para las masas carnicas* main topics are blow jobs and sexual pleasure of Ricardo (who actually in a plastic artists 36 years and is a very close friend of Gorky):

...Soy un hombre sencillo, amante de damas con bastante fondillo,
Señoras gordas no se me acomplejen si paso por su lado y me les
arrodillo... Y dejo de pajearme, salgo a la calle en busca de barrigas, eso
es lo que sobra, mujeres gordas, pero falta la pornografía. Paco señor
que estas en los cielos, mándame una gorda ahora mismo que me
muero...²

Another of the recurring themes in the performance of Porno For Ricardo is the former Soviet Union, whether it’s based on appropriating the symbol of communism, or the “russian cubanism” of the song of the animated series for children, *Musicians of Bremen*, Mocks the group, while rejecting the imposition of Soviet culture that lived in Cuba, especially in the seventies. Hence, in the concerts it was common for Gorki Aguila broke Russian guitars, as a way to break with the past. The theme “International,” resumed the music of the Socialist International to march

2. Porno Para Ricardo, “Ricardo para Porno”, *Rock para las masas... (cárnicas)*, La Habana, Producido por Abel González Rodríguez, 2002.

to the square by individuals who are rarely acknowledged their existence in socialist societies: drug addicts, homosexuals, mentally ill, hungry, with their faces indecent are greeted by the prime minister and the human slate, while a woman with breast outside, carrying the flag...³

The sexually explicit messages, the vulgarity in the lyrics, the provocative name of the group, as well as its logo (a vaginal penetration, made on the basis of the symbol of the hammer and sickle), it caused serious problems to Gorki Aguila, who refused to follow the lines morally and politically correct or even suggested, at the insistence of the authorities, which could rename the group and call Porno Para Rodrigo or Porno Para Roberto, so as not prove as provocative, although the authorities did not understand the irony of Gorki.⁴

In April 2003 during the Festival Pinar Rock, Gorky was arrested and taken to Destacamento Cinco, Provincial Prison in Pinar del Rio, where he was convicted of drug trafficking (and shared cell with real drug dealers retail), a trial in which the prosecution failed to provide evidence against the musician and, according to a press release issued in September 2003, the police only was based on the complaint of an assistant to the concert, whom he accused of having sold Gorki a pill. Gorky's lawyer had only ten minutes to deliver his statement and to date, the only evidence against Gorki are two tablets of methamphetamine and three Cuban pesos. According Gorki, who shared the cell with drug dealers to retail, he put them to police the situation on a silver platter, because at that time had not become aware of their situation and the repercussions that the group could suffer to make a speech morally and politically wrong.⁵

To date, se cree que was a cause for armed lift Gorki of the music scene, make you lose credibility and weaken it as a person and as a musician. Nevertheless, in 2004 Gorki was nominated for the award annual "Index of Censorship" in London, England, in the musical category, the prize was eventually awarded to pianist Daniel Barenboim.

3. Porno Para Ricardo, "La Internacional", *Rock para las masas... (cárnicas)*, La Habana, Producido por Abel González Rodríguez y La Paja Records, 2002

4. Gorki Aguila interviewed by this autor, La Havana, September, 2007

5. Gorki Aguila, interviewed by this autor, La Havana, september, 2007

“Porno para Ricardo: Rock, Analchy and Transition”

On March 16, 2005 Gorki was released on a conditional, in appalling health conditions. Meanwhile, Ciro Diaz, guitarist and creator of the concept of the group along with Gorky, was unable to enroll in the Graduate in Mathematics at the University of Havana, not only for his musical activity in Porno Para Ricardo, but by critics who exercised against the university authorities in his division trova music.

Since the release of Gorki, the group recomposes Gonzalez with Hebert Gonzalez on bass and Renay Kairus on drums and Ciro Diaz, formerly bassist, takes up the guitar. In the summer of 2006 brought to light the diptych *A mí no me gusta la política, pero yo le gusto a ella compañeros* y *Soy Porno, soy Popular*⁶ most of the 43 tracks are a reflection of circumstances that Porno Para Ricardo has had to face, once it has assumed an irreverent speech, that certainly was not in the group's founding objectives, as expressed in the song “La Política:”

cuando hice el piquete de Porno Para Ricardo siempre me dije no ser contestatario, con el tema del sexo es bastante, no hace falta ser un militante. Pero a los putos policías les picaba el fundillo por ponerme otro apellido. Me dijeron eres un farsante, ya lo tuyo es bastante...⁷

The change in the lyrics is because, as pointing Gorki Aguila, “it is time to call a spade a spade,” as already tired of the insinuations with poetic lyrics: “What interests us more say in our letters is that we live in hell has a name and surname: Fidel Castro Ruz. I do not need any resources poetic to say.”⁸

The first songs of Porno Para Ricardo, faithful to the essence of punk-rock, looking across the irreverence, lead to good conscience, morality and good taste; their obscene lyrics, and the continued eschatological referente, use of drugs, and rejection can cause discomfort for those who are not familiar with the punk philosophy, as this, while expression of transgression, looking for “free itself from the aesthetic corsets and oppres-

6. Both produced un Havana, by La Paja Records, 2006

7. Porno Para Ricardo, “La Política”, *A mí no me gusta la política, pero yo le gusto a ella compañeros*, La Habana, La Paja Records, 2006

8. Porno Para Ricardo, interview with Petr Placak, Encuentro en la Red, www.cubaencuentro.com, August 29, 2006

sion; the authority and disagree with the conventional society, as well as the social stigma.”⁹

The punk movement, to be critical of their society and those who govern, the majority of cases assumes political and ideological positions, which can range from anarchism to socialism. In the case of Porno Para Ricardo, to make a critical social and the political system more explicit, in which the revolution and its leaders are the focus of mockery, his speech assumes political position, which rejects the dogma, as well as the ideology imposed by power. This exercise of criticism and rejection is expressed through the mockery to the institutions and their leaders at all levels; undoubtedly the most popular song is “El Coma-andante” for his irreverent and as a regular target Fidel Castro, to express the fatigue which has its presence;

El Comandante quiere que yo trabaje, pagándome un salario miserable.
El Comandante quiere que yo lo aplauda, después de hablar su mierda delirante. No Comandante, no coma uste’ esa pinga Comandante. El Comandante, hace unas elecciones, que las inventó el pa’ perpetuarse.
El Comandante quiere que vaya y vote para seguir jodiéndome bastante... Si quiere que yo vote, ponga un barco pa’ pirarme. No Comandante, no coma tanta pinga Comandante.¹⁰

At the same time they make fun of his condition ostracism ("the Asociación Hermanos Saiz has asked us that we affiliation;" "We have not given concerts on the island because we are in an international tour," "Today has not concert, tomorrow it"), focused its mockery in the former president of Asociación Hermanos Saiz, Alpidio Alonso, who put in ridiculous in the song “Comunista Chivatón” where they questioned the intellectual capacity and skills poet Alonso, as well as minimizing their role as official culture “(Alpidio Alonso) *escribe unos versos que nadie quiere oírlos porque son muy malos, le va mejor el rol de chivatón ...El singa’o comunista chivatón, si algún día fue poeta yo ese día fui escultor...*”¹¹

On another topic, Porno Para Ricardo wondered how not laughing at Asociación Hermanos Saiz, for membership because it is not necessary

9. Punk philosophy, www.wikipedia.org

10. “El Coma-andante,” *A mí no me gusta la política, pero yo le gusto a ella compañeros.*

intelligence, but simply repeat the speech *Del papa cucaracha* and benefited así leave:

Pero mi vida, pero mi cielo, pero yo quiero viajar al extranjero. ¿Cómo no me voy a reír de la Asociación Hermanos Saíz? Hay una cosa muy fea que pasa en las cloacas de todo el sistema. Hay ratas rojas y verdes, serpientes con barba que se dan la lengua. Unas llegan a presidente, las otras las pobres, se van a la cazuela... ¿Cómo no me voy a reír de la Asociación Hermanos Saíz?¹²

The seizure of power by Raúl Castro and speculation about the alleged reforms to be undertaken, are matters of the latest issue of the band, since the September 2007, and spoke of the succession process would occur in February this year:

Al fin el general se hizo comandante, al fin el general ya está en primer lugar... A su hermano se le cae la barba y los dientes, dicen que tiene cáncer, dicen que ya ni siente.. Raúl, Raúl tira los tanques, para que el pueblo se levante. Raúl, Raúl, es un farsante, a ti no hay quien te aguante. El es un mentiroso, él es un buscapleitos, él no sabe dar discursos, a él le dieron ese puesto. La gente se pregunta que es lo que va a pasar, pero con Raúl al frente la mierda sigue igual.¹³

Porno doesn't like politics but...once they made public the cd's *A mí no me gusta la política, pero yo le gusto a ella compañeros* y *Soy Porno, soy Popular* the discourse of “Porno Para Ricardo” suffers from two substantial changes: public discourse is made of rejection and opposition to the political system, which was kept in the privacy of home and family or within the circle of friends; discourse is radicalized as the main theme the songs are not only sex, drugs and libido, but the political authorities and agencies. The speech was made public by hiding the condition of not having nothing to lose and, above all, for having lost their fear, as expressed

11. “Comunista chivatón,” *A mí no me gusta la política...* Alpidio Alonso Grau, engineer aged 45, was national president of the Asociación Hermanos Saiz, from 2001 to 2006; he has published four books of poetry. Is currently vice president of the Instituto Cubano del Libro.

12. “Preste a rata,” *A mí no me gusta la política...*

13. “El General,” *Porno Para Ricardo*, home video made by this autor, La Havana, September, 2007

Gorki Aguila, “Yo ya perdi el miedo, yo ya caí preso y de eso solo me quedan unos cuantos huesos.”¹⁴ As reads the same philosophy of punk: “The punk is the constant struggle against fear of social repercussions.”¹⁵

The radicalization of Porno Para Ricardo has resulted who has been prohibited from playing in public, which are not invited to play in the various rock festivals that there are throughout the country, which are not included in the radio and music programming that regularly receive subpoenas, where Gorky, principally, has been subjected to lengthy and tedious interrogations aimed at chasing him and exhausted. This prohibition and seeking the annulment by authoritarian decree, Porno For Ricardo refuses to follow the trend of the group Change, one of which enjoy greater promotion by the authorities, thus giving an image of greater tolerance towards rock, a genre Since the seventies has been a source of persecution in Cuba, associated to “diversionismo ideológico” and American ideological penetration, so that, even when in Havana since a few years ago there is a statue of John Lennon, thirty years ago was forbidden to listen to the Beatles

When Porno Para Ricardo made public his speech intolerance and repression, the Asociación Hermanos Saiz, at that time headed by Alpidio Alonso, decided to close all the spaces to the group, for precisely that speech can not be heard, shared, and probably imitated . Therefore, one of the major impacts suffered Porno For Ricardo is in relation to space, public space and space radio, as it is in the public space where the discourse has the option to multiply and create bonds of solidarity.

In Havana there is a gap in options for youth have expressed places. Park G, or Avenue of the Presidents, located in the Vedado, has been in the last ten years or so, a reunion centre at weekends, for hundreds of young people who spend the night drinking and, at best cases, with guitars and singing. G a public space was first conquered by the frikis, but now, as a reflection of the very few options available to young people for fun, has been taken over by young people regardless of their musical identity.

14. “Comunistas de las gran escena,” *A mi no me gusta la política...*”

15. Philosophy of punk, www.wikipedia.org

One of the most emblematic for the Cuban rock was the “Patio de Maria.” Maria Gattorno, graduated in art history from fifty-eight years, is a pioneer of the movement rocker on the island, as well as the first debates and exhibitions of tattoos. “El Patio de Maria” (officially known as Community House) was located in the streets of 37 and Paseo, in Vedado, hosted cultural events as precursors “TatuArte” and “Rock vs. Side,” both held in 1996. From 1987 until 2003, the courtyard was the preferred forum for the rock concerts and a meeting place for young frikies as well as an option alternates to the State, (even though it came from, the dynamics of the place was creation of Mary Gattorno, so that gradually the Patio acquired its own identity) where they could present live rock bands and also the post was charged in local currency. However, was closed by the authorities, who claimed that the place was conducive to corrupt youth drug use by some of those who attended. Mary Gattorno was removed from the leadership of Patio and advises allocated in the Provincial Directorate of Culture. The closure of “Patio de Maria” contextualizes within the “Plan Coraza.” in which it appears that rockers were part of the objectives of the authorities to carry it out, not only because Gorki was taken to prison, but also were expelled youth Park G, raids by police at the scene.

For a rock band can access places to rehearse and concerts should be belong to the Asociación Hermanos Saíz (AHS), the agency responsible for promoting, both inside and outside Cuba, cultural expressions of youth under 35 years. In music, AHS promotes more impetus rap, trova and rock, but this Association, which describes itself as non-governmental, economically dependent of the Union of Jovenes Comunistas, (UJC), and therefore it is the one that dictates the political guidelines - ideological, and even moral, to be followed so that artists can be supported, and with it access to some material resources, in the Cuban case, only the state can provide, as is the sound equipment belonging to the AHS, which has a capacity of 15000 watts.

For this reason, many groups have decided to make a speech complacent with the authorities or do covers of hits by groups in North America and also sing in English, as in the case of Hypnosis. It is not our intention to do a critique on the music group trend, but we must point out that the leader of the gang, Kiko, is the provincial chairman of the AHS in the

province of Pinar del Rio, where they are responsible for the realization Pinar Rock Festival (started in 1996) and King Metal (2001).

Faced with the rise of rock in Cuba, the AHS formed the Agencia Cubana de Rock (ACR) in July 2007 (directed by Maxyuri Avila, former manager of Hypnosis), which is responsible for promoting, disseminating and marketing to groups are in their catalog, as Trend, Hypnosis, Zeus, Agonizer, Chlover, Mágnum and Escape. To become part of the catalog of the Agency Cuban Rock groups have to do an audition, only we do not know the members that are part of the commission, and we do not know if they are rock musicians or party cadre.

Belonging to the AHS and the Agencia Cubana de Rock is a great advantage because it organizes the last Thursday of Rock in the Rose Garden of the Tropical Beach in the neighborhood and on weekends organizes concerts at Club Atelier, in the Vedado. They organized the concert that took place on December 28, 2007 in the same park G, which touched Zeus, Hypnosis and Trend. Therefore, if one group does not belong to the AHS or ACR, it has to find their own spaces, which will be underground or alternative locations. Tribuna Antimperialista Jose Marti (located in Malecon and Linea, in Vedado, a side of the Interests of the United States Office) has also served as a stage for presentations rock groups, and in fact the ACR was officially inaugurated with a concert in the Tribune, where touched Hypnosis, Chlover and Zeus.

Porno Para Ricardo prefer not to have concerts to be free from political and ideological standards of organizations dealing, as they say in his song:

Porno pa' Ricardo no toca en la Tribuna cuando la mentira de la dictadura. Porno pa' Ricardo no saluda a la bandera de los comunistas de la gran escena. No sigo la tendencia del grupo Tendencia, me hace vomitar tanta reverencia. No tengo nada que ganar, nada que perder, siempre lucho así, contra el poder.¹⁶

In the case of Porno Para Ricardo, organizing their own concert "Fiesta Antibloqueo," December 8, 2007, in a semi-abandoned cinema

16. Porno Para Ricardo, "Comunistas de la gran escena", *A mí no me gusta la política, pero yo le gusto a ella compañeros*, La Habana, Producciones La Paja Records, 2006.

Beach neighborhood. This was his first live concert since he took Gorki prisoner. The concert was performed with the group's own resources, and was promoted a few hours before under strict security measures. One night earlier, Gorki distributed some leaflets in the Park G, which announced the concert under the listing “Coming without masturbating.” Despite the inability to perform in public spaces, Porno Para Ricardo was able to show, at no cost, for two hours in front of an audience of about 50 people. The group’s objective was to demonstrate that you can do things outside the State, without authorities through. They prepared the old movie, with a few tables that did dais, with his own sound equipment and posters, made by the same Gorky, which read: “The only cuban rock movement I Know is when I am fucking and I listen to rock and roll” y también “Porno Para Ricardo, first non gobermental rock band”¹⁷

This group of punk-rock has no goals to speak freely and to concerts where their convenience, although his cause can be identified with the aspirations of millions of Cubans, Porno For Ricardo is not intended anything else ...

...ratificar nuestro juramento inquebrantable de lucha por la causa que nos de la gana. Juramos no serle fiel a ningún partido, a no ser el propio, el individual. No somos de izquierda, ni de derecha, ni de en medio. No queremos marchar, mas bien reposar, sentir placer; que la política del presente sea el placer... Por eso no queremos ser eternos, ni asociarnos a ninguna asociación, no valga la redundancia...Lema: Un mundo mejor es imposible, con tanta tiranía, tanta hambre y sin pornografía.¹⁸

Tag Porno Para Ricardo as dissidents or opponents in somewhat risky because they did not directly propose ways politicians, do not identify with an organization for social or political, nor his artistic work can be associated with a cause of what is euphemistically in Cuba is called civil society. Thus, we propose that, in an attempt to conceptualize Porno Para

17. Porno Para Ricardo interviewed by this autor, La Havana, december, 2007. Check also, “Concierto y desafío”, Encuentro en la Red, www.cubaencuentro.com, january 15, 2008.

18. Porno Para Ricardo, “Comunicado Manifiesto”, *A mí no me gusta la política, pero yo le gusto a ella compañeros*, La Habana, Producciones La Paja Records, 2006. El lema de Porno Para Ricardo es una versión burlesca del lema de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas: “Un mundo mejor es posible”.

Ricardo as a cultural project, it is wiser to talk in terms of social resistance, which gradually so the actors involved are stripping of the costumes that accompany any political culture, to make public a hidden speech, the discourse of resistance. Porno Para Ricardo is part of what James Scott calls the “infrapolítica” of the helpless,¹⁹ to refer to the struggle that deaf subordinated groups waging a daily basis beyond the visible spectrum, from social movements and large demonstrations. The performance of Porno Para Ricardo is precisely “infrapolítica” which uses music, costumes and bombings against symbols of the dominant players, to develop a form of resistance declared public.

19. Scout, James, *op. cit.*

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CHAPTER 34

Staging the Revolution: Cuba's Theatrical Perspectives

Dr. Yael Prizant

Abstract: This paper explores the ways in which two Cuban plays, Carlotta Corday by Nara Mansur and Charenton, by Raquel Carrió and Flora Lauten, examine recent and ongoing transformations on the island. The investigation is grounded in a discussion of the changing meaning(s) of "revolution", as a historical, social and political concept contemplated by contemporary theater practitioners and others. The plays expose how vestiges of revolutionary spectacle continue to inform key relationships in Cuba as the playwrights resituate revolution as a global struggle against power, rather than for possession of it.

What precisely does a revolution entail? Is it political? Social? Both? A single event or ongoing? Are the changes it causes destructive as well as constructive? Is the term "revolución" still applied as it was in 1959? In 1975? In 1990? Nearly half a century after the defeat of Cuba's previous government, is Cuba still "revolutionary?" What do recent changes mean for Cubans and non-Cubans, especially since Fidel Castro resigned in February? Many Cuban theater practitioners contemplate the vast implications of the "concept" of revolution in general, as well as specifically within Cuba. The Special Period has rendered these self-assessments imperative, significantly molding the identities portrayed on stage. This paper investigates how two recent Cuban plays reflect these transformations. Artists Nara Mansur, Flora Lauten and Raquel Carrió question how vestiges of revolutionary spectacle continue to affect key contemporary problems on the island. Their plays pointedly refocus the discourse of revolution by situating it as a worldwide struggle "against" power, rather than for possession of it. After investigating the meaning(s) of revolution, I will explore how two theatrical pieces, entitled *Carlotta Corday* and *Charenton*, engage these ideas.

The Webster's Dictionary of the English Language defines "revolution" as: "1. a complete and forcible overthrow of an established government or political system, 2. a radical and pervasive change in society and the social structure, esp. one made suddenly and often accompanied by violence, 3. a rotation with a return to a point of origin. The Diccionario de la lengua española (Dictionary of the Spanish Language) defines "revolución" as an "abrupt or violent change in the social or political structure of a state" or as "a total and radical change." In general, modern uses of the term "revolution" share three basic elements: they are intended to signal a new era in history, they imply violence/disorder/disruption that leads to (or is part of) upheaval, and they often have greater than national relevance.

The use of the term revolution to describe widespread changes in economic and social developments, such as an industrial, scientific or technological revolutions, extend the word's meaning even further. Scientific historian Thomas Kuhn observes that both political and scientific revolutions are generated by a growing sense that existing frameworks no longer sufficiently engage contemporary problems. He points out that it is these failures that lead to crises. The scientific revolution began with ideas from earlier leaders (just as Castro has always cited José Martí) and it indicated a modern outlook because it "incorporated," rather than disregarded, ideas from the past. Hence, Kuhn defines a scientific revolution as:

...a consequent shift in the problems available for scientific scrutiny and in the standards by which the profession determine[s] what should count as an admissible problem or as a legitimate problem-solution.(6)

This emphasis on history and re-vision illustrates science's desire to understand the historical integrity of its own advances. Yet once a scientific theory has become paradigmatic, Kuhn insists it can only be discarded when a viable alternative is available to replace it. "To reject one paradigm without simultaneously substituting another is to reject science itself," (79) he claims. Is this also true for social and political movements? Does rejecting one system automatically mean "accepting" another? Is any shift in paradigm automatically progressive? A new paradigm can resolve a recognized problem in a way no other option can, yet it is also expected to preserve, challenge, or further the achievements of its predecessors.

Kuhn suggests that even a seemingly localized incongruity can evoke profound change far beyond the local or national level. The global assimilation of international circumstances or ideas can create crises outside of the community that directly experiences the changes. In other words, revolutions have reach. “The Cuban Revolution has had a profound and enduring influence upon world politics,” writes historian Geraldine Lievesley, “an influence which belies its status as a small, poor Third World country” (9). Just as envisioning the world as round instead of flat altered all possibilities, the Cuban Revolution illustrated that a modern, successful revolution with minimal bloodshed was feasible in Latin America. This was a major shift in paradigm. A paradigm shift does not merely add to the scope and precision of a field, but “reshapes what is possible,” thus modifying (often essentially) a world view.

In the last fifteen years, the economic deterioration of Cuba and communism’s global retreat have often eclipsed the Cuban Revolution and its accomplishments. The decline on the island has proven to some that Cuba never really achieved sovereignty by escaping U.S. dominance, but rather exchanged one master (America) for another (the Soviet Union). How might Cubans answer Lievesley’s contention that, “The question... during the Special Period was whether the socialist character of [Cuba’s] political and social system would be subsumed by its insertion into the world economy”(162)? While foreign capital has been the means of the island’s sustenance for nearly two decades, its long-term effects on the country’s ideology remain unclear. The most important issues facing Cubans today involve their future—their economic survival, as well as their ideological and political status beyond the Castro brothers. How long can Cuba’s situation still be considered a “revolution” and does this designation matter, currently or historically? How will the paradigm shift if, half a century after its revolution, Cuba undergoes a political transformation?

Plays by Cuban playwrights have represented more than 75% of the country’s theatrical repertoire over the last decade. Despite logistical challenges, Cuba’s national stages remain important sites of critical and ideological debate in Cuban society and among its foreign audiences. Plays like *Carlotta Corday* by Mansur and *Charenton* by Lauten and Carrió incisively trace the contradictions and complications of revolution in myriad intricate and paradoxical ways. Both plays use the French Revolu-

tion as a metaphor. They offer revisions of Cuba's own revolutionary history as viewed in hindsight, from the current state of contemporary Cuba. These postmodern, transitory, hyper-imaginative theater pieces reveal how recent obstacles, like power outages, have engendered thoughtful ingenuities and unique dramatic ironies on stages in Havana. *Carlotta Corday* and *Charenton* fashion new worlds before the eyes of audiences, new worlds that incorporate an ongoing dialogue between revolutionary reality and history, between spectacle and lived experience.

In Nara Mansur's recent "dramatic poem or monologue" entitled *Carlotta Corday*, the playwright uses Charlotte Corday's French Revolutionary history to comment on the myths of revolution and their effects on contemporary Cuban life. It's important to note that the historical Corday was not a counter-revolutionary, but a committed Girondist who didn't like what the French Revolution had become. Soon after 1789, the radical Jacobin party initiated mass atrocities and beheadings known as the Reign of Terror. When dozens of loyal Girondists were guillotined, Corday began plotting to kill Marat. Cuban playwright Mansur asserts that by killing Marat, Corday paradoxically turned him into a martyr and gave his supporters an excuse to execute even more dissenters.

Like Marat's insurrection, the Cuban Revolution has often changed course and has been highly contested for doing so. Continually citing Peter Weiss' ground-breaking play *Marat/Sade* and the French Revolution itself, Nara Mansur constructs a complex pastiche of art and history that uses Charlotte Corday to critique revolution while presenting her in a way that is revolutionary itself. Mansur creates the modern "character" (there are no delineated "roles" in her dramatic poem) who can be understood as a present-day Corday or possibly the poet Mansur herself. The play makes it clear that, as Sidney Parnum writes, "The similarity of the actual histories is less important than the similarity of the ways in which they are perceived." Theater scholar Una Chaudhuri explains that in *Marat/Sade*, "a 'there and then' is rendered as a 'here and now'.... Everything occurs in the present tense, before our eyes." The opening of *Carlotta Corday* is set in 1990, with a girl attending her grandfather's funeral. Mansur grounds the play in contemporary times, but immediately refers to the Revolution and her grandfather's participation in its national literacy campaign in the 1960s. Both eras become the backdrop for Mansur's

views. The archetypal conflict between history and myth emerges as the revolutionary past is blended with the theatrical present.

Carlotta Corday reiterates the rupture found in Weiss' play-within-a-play; it therefore incorporates not only our historical knowledge but also our theatrical knowledge of France's heroine and revolution. Chaudhuri suggests, "...Multiplicity is not merely a fact of [*Marat/Sade's*] stage history... or even of its textual history; rather it is a property of the play's meaning, structured into its text in the form of a complex system of historical and psychological layering." I would argue that by subsuming Weiss' work into her own, Mansur manipulates this multiplicity and adds another intriguing layer to it. Because a reader produces a play as much as the play itself operates on the reader, a Cuban audience reading *Carlotta Corday* must question boundaries when playwright/poet Mansur, an educated female within a revolutionary system, writes about an educated female who murders a revolutionary in an attempt to better her beloved country. France is hardly the society evoked when this character poignantly tells the public, "we are the inventors of the revolution but we still don't know how to use it" and advocates "the revolution of the revolution of the revolution." Furthermore, troubled subjectivity is reflected in *Carlotta Corday* when the character remarks:

I'm an assassin
But this is not an identity
As if something were an identity
In reality, I was born in Latin America
I ate a lot of magic beans since I was a girl (8)

Unfixed subjectivity is precisely why this character must emerge before the audiences' eyes, in the present. She, like the Revolution, can never be completed, but instead develops an identity throughout time. This text's dynamic relationship to *Marat/Sade* and to Cuba's particular revolutionary history make it essential to read *Carlotta Corday* for its slippages in meaning.

In September of 2005, at the International Theatre Festival in Havana, I saw Teatro Buendia's production of *Charenton*, an adaptation of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* by Flora Lauten and Raquel Carrió. The piece begins with actors sitting all over the playing area at dressing tables, partially visible in vanity mirrors. The year "1793" and the setting, an asylum full

of inmates, are announced while the cast remarks that “great revolutions change the world” and that “history repeats itself.” Is the Cuban Revolution repeating itself? Is it repeatable? Or is repetition somehow inspiring change? Jean-Paul Marat is then introduced and the inmates decorate his body with yellow paint, depicting the cheese-like affect of his skin disease. Much like the myth of Fidel Castro, the people create Marat, even paint on his skin color. The inmates complain to Marat about the injustices in their city, like the ridiculously long bread lines, conditions all too familiar to contemporary Cubans. They claim that the revolution should’ve brought them “food” and not “bread,” should’ve nourished them rather than merely fed them. They argue that the rich have “goods” while they have “illusions,” a common theme on the island where dollar stores abound for tourists, but Cuban pesos buy less and less.

The Marquis de Sade quickly enters the fray, snidely insisting that a real revolution inspires the liberation of individuals, not the proletariat. He eagerly describes the deaths occurring in the city as the inmates create images of heads being separated from bodies. This separation illustrates the enormous divide between ideas about revolution and their tangible, bodily consequences: ideology and implementation are portrayed as being at odds with one another. De Sade mockingly insists that he himself is “the revolution,” that personal desires, not what is best for the whole population, will prevail. The ongoing conflict between individualism and socialism that anchors the production echoes the struggle of post-Soviet Cuba.

The question of when a revolution is completed is invoked by the narrator, who implores Marat, “And after?” Marat’s simple response is that there is no “after.” If Fidel is the Cuban Revolution and the Revolution is Fidel, what might come after him? Can his revolution continue without him? Soon a blindfolded Marat defeatedly laments that “the revolution was possible.” Was? A newspaper seller enters, calling out a headline that reads, “We saved the revolution.” Is “we” the people of Cuba? Could the remark be sarcastic? The inmates now scream their demands at Marat, complaining, like Cubans, about “inflation” and access to “food.” The crowd grows hostile, accusing Marat of changing the discourse, an accusation often levied at Fidel Castro. The inmates undress Charlotte, who finally asphyxiates Marat only when she has been stripped of everything she has.

Yet it is after this violent act that the play takes its greatest risk. As Charlotte tries to take a knife from De Sade to finish Marat off, the narrator intercepts the weapon and offers it to the audience, suggesting we participate in this murder. Then he calmly places the knife downstage. It is as if he is waiting for the public to act, waiting for the people to get involved and violently remove their leader. The knife hauntingly remains center stage throughout the rest of the piece. The nervous narrator soon shuns responsibility by insisting that the play is only a representation, explaining that the inmates are actors, not politicians.

The play then transforms its own theater. The curtains covering the back wall of the stage open, revealing the exterior service door of the stage itself. The narrator boisterously throws the huge rear doors open and exits the asylum (or does he?) out into the Havana street, repeating Marat's speech about unifying the people. Everything is transformed - the world outside is now visible and the theatrical space has been extended into Havana and into oblivion. The play, and its challenges, spill over into the city.

The characters in both *Carlotta Corday* and *Charenton* are profoundly manipulated by the myths, assurances and realities of revolution. Historical and actual violence (metaphoric, physical and emotional) permeate their experiences, and change, or continual revolution, is virtually guaranteed. Both pieces warn against the institutionalization of revolution and question formulations of the nation state; Mansur even suggests the end of nationalism itself. These artists indicate that it is now the *revolutionary* framework that no longer sufficiently engages contemporary problems. Their works are dialectical and have a profound largess precisely because they span decades, continents, theories and characters. Do these plays, like one basic definition of revolution, signal a new era? Solicit one? Demand one? Because Cuba's revolutionary society has persisted for nearly fifty years, its ideals have often been reconfigured or reconstructed—they revolve and evolve, unhinging definitions. The Revolution floats, yet is fixed; it repeats (as Benitez-Rojo noted) and adjusts. It engages the world while retreating from it, participates while isolating itself, and somehow engenders hope without proposing a specific future. Has the Cuban Revolution made a “revolution” and come full circle? These perceptive, innovative plays artfully evoke these complications and

contradictions, refracting them back to audiences for intense consideration.

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CHAPTER 35

‘Los Novísimos’ and Cultural Institutions

Lauren E. Shaw

Abstract: The nueva trova, which began in the 1960s, owes much of its recognition nationally and throughout Latin America to cultural institutions of Cuba from the past. The youngest (and third) generation is currently supported by cultural institutions such as La Asociación Hermanos Saíz, Casa del Joven Creador and El Centro Cultural Pablo de la Torriente Brau. This paper, however, focuses on the level of involvement of cultural institutions with the second generation referred to as los novísimos, and highlights the career of Gerardo Alfonso as compared to his contemporaries. Official support or lack thereof affects the dissemination of these artists' work on and off the island. Even within the novísimos, some artists have had more support than others. I argue that whatever support has come from cultural institutions, the novísimos have had substantial success at finding ways to subvert institutional control while taking advantage of the support that is offered.

Los novísimos, Cuban singer-songwriters, or troubadours, from the second generation of the *nueva trova*, offer a unique perspective on the theme of this panel on history, institutions and legacy. Concurrent with the protest song movement developing in many parts of the Americas and Europe, *nueva trova* is an artistic expression that emerged at the end of the sixties in Cuba. A movement or perhaps simply an attitude, *nueva trova* has always taken an intellectual stance against the socio-political injustices of the day. Its founders were Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés, Vicente Feliú and Noel Nicola, all of whom continue to sing *nueva trova* with the exception of Noel, who died in 2005. Two more generations follow *los novísimos*: the third generation, most of whom now live in Madrid and the youngest generation receiving substantial support from Cuban cultural institutions such as Hermanos Saiz, *La Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas*, and *El Centro Pablo de la Torriente Brau*, for example.

Linked to the Chilean protest song during the period before and after Allende's brief presidency and continuing as an underground movement

during the Pinochet regime, the *nueva trova* was born of a political context that ostensibly ministered to the social needs of its people. Cuban troubadours have never been tortured and killed for their songs, as was Victor Jara, for example. In fact, though the early *nueva trova* did find issues to protest in Cuba and other parts of the world, it also praised the new programs of its society such as voluntary work, the Committees for Revolutionary Defense, and the New School.¹

The *nueva trova* emerged from the Cuban revolution in combination with the international scene of the second half of the twentieth century. It also linked itself to another key moment in Cuban history, the struggle for independence during the preceding century, in claiming a musical and ethical affiliation with traditional troubadours such as Pepe Sánchez and his protegé Sindo Garay. In addition, the *nueva trova* participated in the struggles for social justice throughout Latin America, thereby contributing to the formation of Latin America's history. The two *trovas*, new and traditional, found a thematic and artistic nexus in the figure of the troubadour, the poet who plays the guitar and sings his own compositions.

With this basic background about the *nueva trova*, we can consider the following questions:

1. How can the *trova*, which was born out of a specific historical moment, continue to exist in a time where the social and political realities are so different from the context of its inception?
2. What institutional support has been granted these troubadours? What are the limits that accompany institutional support and what impact does support have on contemporary troubadours?
3. Does the troubadour possess, from the legacy of his precursors, some device in order to deal with the widening gap between revolutionary rhetoric and current reality?
4. What possibilities for cultural agency does the contemporary troubadour have in facing current global and domestic forces?

My work focuses on *los novísimos*, the singer-songwriters who entered the movement in the late seventies and early eighties. Twenty years after the triumph of the revolution, this group emerged as the fruit of

1. Lauren Shaw, "La nueva trova cubana: una poética y política menor," diss., City University of New York, 2002. 378.

those who fought for it. *Los novísimos* comment on the conditions in which Cubans are living, without, however, directly making reference to Cuban politics. And with the advent of the Special Period where the distance between rhetoric and reality grows further, they sing of the social misfortunes created by the economic crisis, such as, for example, the resurgence of prostitution on the island. These troubadours also point out injustices that the revolution has preferred to ignore: racial discrimination and homophobia. Therefore, these musicians, now in their forties, maintain the original attitude of protest from the early stages of the *nueva trova* and direct their attention to social inequality without, however, blaming the revolution.

What does this group of troubadours do in the first decade of the twenty first century? What do they confront politically, socially and economically? And how do they respond as artists faced with the forces of the global market? As an example of *los novísimos*, I will examine the work of Gerardo Alfonso and compare him to various other troubadours of his generation in order to illustrate the multiple possibilities in Cuba today with respect to artistic creativity. We can see that the level of institutional support influences the artistic orientation of these troubadours. Or is it the reverse, that the orientation of the troubadour influences the level of institutional support? Perhaps the relationship is symbiotic.

In the first interview that I conducted with Gerardo Alfonso, he speaks of his origins as a troubadour:

Fui con una guitarra a una evaluación para la inscripción a la nueva trova. Canté canciones que yo había hecho Entonces -- ¿qué hubo?-- que todavía no estaba preparado, que quedaba como candidato hasta el año que viene. E ingresé de nuevo. Ese día me creí que era un trovador. Porque era un chiquito que tenía una guitarra y cantaba canciones con cierta poesía y con ciertos patrones de la nueva trova. Desde ese día yo creía que era trovador.²

At the beginning of the 80s Gerardo was criticized by Sara González y Alexis Triana (*nueva trova* members of the first generation who directed evaluations and determined the fate of younger troubadours). Gerardo

2. Lauren Shaw, "La nueva trova cubana: una poética y política menor," Diss., City University of New York, 2002. 388.

was experimenting with musical forms (specifically the genre of the *ochanga*) that privileged rhythm over “serious” lyrics. About his 1984 song featuring rhyme such as *ochanga* with *malanga y pachanga*, Gerardo says:

...esas cosas fueron fatales para la época mía. Después me plegué a la incidencia de la canción de autor. Teniendo como referente a Serrat, a Eduardo Aute, a Silvio. Era muy fuerte que un tipo como yo así como cualquiera apareciera en el medio con otra onda completamente. [Pero] los temas que yo hice dentro de los patrones de la trova tampoco obedecen a la medida...Hice cosas distintas dentro de lo mismo pero más dóciles. Ahora, sí soy cimarrón y hago lo que me dé las ganas...porque ya no me importa. Además nadie me dice nada ahora.³

Another moment in the first interview, Gerardo continues to speak about the *ochanga*:

...es muy asimétrica. Que nada más hice dos canciones y fueron bastante criticadas porque eran ligeras del punto de vista de contenido, y como era tan complicado seguirla de punta de vista rítmica, no tuve éxito... Yo fui de los que asumía algunas cosas de las corrientes que pasaban. Estoy hablando de esto musicalmente. En la poesía, fue lo que te dije al principio, hubo una época de total acuerdo, un entendimiento entre las instituciones.⁴

What is of interest here is not just Gerardo's emphasis on new forms, but also the resistance with which the cultural institution of the *nueva trova* movement met his innovative efforts. Of the other genre that Gerardo has created, the *guayasón*, he states:

...uno de los ritmos que yo hice en el '83. Guayasón es una mezcla de la música campesina con la música afrocubana. El compás, seis por dos, seis por cuatro. El género pegó mucho en la gente. Cuando hice “Son los sueños todavía,” un himno esa canción, ...nadie sabe cómo se toca la guitarra. El rayado en la mano es una cosa propia como es difícil tocar el son, para quien no sabe.⁵

3. Gerardo Alfonso, personal interview, May 2005.

4. Shaw 382-3.

5. Gerardo Alfonso, personal interview, May 2005.

Ironically, this well-known composition within Cuba, praises the figure of *el Che* while simultaneously criticizing the slow progress of the revolution at converting ideas into action. The security with which Gerardo declares his freedom of artistic expression now is owed as much to the level of fame this troubadour has achieved in Cuba as it does with the institutional support that he has found; a natural result of Gerardo's integration into the official cultural system.

2005 marks the 25th anniversary of Gerardo as a troubadour. He celebrated his anniversary not only with a series of concerts in Havana but also with a national tour funded by the *Instituto Cubano de la Música, la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC)* y *La Organización de Pioneros José Martí (OPJM)*. In Havana Gerardo began to celebrate in April 2005 at *el Teatro del Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* and later he appeared at *El Centro Pablo* and *Casa de las Américas* with two concerts featuring his compositions accompanied by the acoustic guitar. That summer he gave two concerts with different bands in *la Plaza de San Francisco de Asís* in *la Habana Vieja* featuring jazz, pop, and Afro-Cuban music.⁶ An October concert with guest musicians performing at *la Sala Avellaneda del Teatro Nacional* concluded the series of events in Havana.

The national tour was organized under a completely different concept and it lasted the entire year. Gerardo visited the different provinces of Cuba with two suites by the Italian composer Walter Sivilotti based on songs written by the troubadour. "Sábanas blancas," which had its world debut in 2003 is based on seven songs by Gerardo, the most famous bearing the title of the suite. Sivilotti has also made suites with songs of other troubadours such as Teresita Fernández, Sara González, and Silvio Rodríguez. However, Gerardo sings his own songs in "Sábanas blancas." "Las leyendas camgüeyanas" is a collection of eight songs written by Gerardo in his new genre, *el guayasón*, based on the legends that originate in the city of Camagüey, some of which belong to Cuba's literary canon for being collected and written down by the poet/novelist Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. In the provinces that have symphonies, such as Holguín, Matanzas y Santiago de Cuba, symphonic concerts were presented, and in the provinces that lack symphonies, their local bands per-

6. María Fernández Ferrer. "Gerardo Alfonso: trayectos y esencias." *La Jiribilla*. 16-22 Apr. 2005 <http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2005/n206_04.html>.

formed the works. All told the year-long celebration shows the multiplicity of creative talent of this troubadour not only as a musician but also as an artist with the awareness and means to promote himself utilizing the cultural structures of his country.

Gerardo proposed the idea of celebrating his anniversary to the various centers in which he presented his concerts, with the arrangement that the institutions would earn the profits of the productions and that they would help him with promotion. Gerardo states with respect to the economics of concert making: *no son nada lucrativos*.⁷ He explains that he is able to live with such economic restrictions because he has the privilege of playing in other, more commercial, venues inside and outside of Cuba. He supports himself with this income as well as from copyright royalties and the salary he earns from the *empresa* (cultural agency of the state) to which he belongs. All musicians in Cuba belong to one of the various *empresas*, depending on the type of music and the musicians' professional level. They collect a fixed salary for having completed a set of requirements, which in Gerardo's case constitute six concerts per month throughout the whole country. He says: *Hago actividades políticas, recitales, etc y de esa manera se justifica el salario mío. Es el concepto del artista subvencionado. Pero ese salario no es suficiente, de eso [solo] no vivo*. He adds that he tours abroad and performs in certain venues in Cuba such as in hotels, nightclubs, and bars where he is paid in dollars, all of this having been made possible by the tourist industry.⁸

There are other examples of institutional support that Gerardo receives. He is included in recordings for the series called *A guitarra limpia* produced by *el Centro Pablo*: the *Antología de la nueva trova* recorded in 2002 and his solo concerts taking place in the patio of *el Centro Pablo* are two examples. In 2002 he was invited to be featured at the closing event for *Longina*, the annual festival of *trova* named in honor of the traditional troubadour, Manuel Corona, and his composition of the same name. In a more administrative capacity, Gerardo directs *Almendares Vivo*, a cultural-ecological project that promotes public awareness about the environment, situated next to the Almendares River in Havana's

7. Gerardo Alfonso, personal interview, 2005.

8. Gerardo Alfonso, personal interview, 2005.

Parque Metropolitano. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays activities take place there with the idea of creating bridges between Havana and Cuba's provinces, between Cuba and other countries, and between culture and ecological issues. It is interesting that the project also includes the promotion of Cuban rap. Gerardo, an Afro-Cuban troubadour speaks about the importance of rap music in forcing the debate in Cuba about the issue of racism. While his own music may not have forced any debates about racism, he has taken part indirectly in this debate by using his cultural agency to support a musical form different from his own but that highlights a topic that he considers fundamental to the progress of his country. *Hubo una explosión de Hip Hop y los muchachos hablan sin piedad del tema [del racismo]. Y eso consiguió polémica, debate. Y se ha asumido institucionalmente el tema, se discute. Hay una dinámica.*⁹

It is important to comment here that the mere creation of "Las leyendas Camagüeyanas" and the subsequent concerts in coordination with Cuban orchestras throughout the island exemplify the access that Gerardo has to the cultural structures of his country. Also his song, "Sábanas blancas," plays as the theme song to the television program "Andar La Habana," showing the level of cultural authorization and popularity that he possesses.

In addition we must consider the list of prizes that Gerardo has received, which indicate not only his talent but also the support he receives to realize his ideas.¹⁰ The careers of the other *novísimos* have forged very different paths. His contemporary Frank Delgado remains more on the margins of institutions, through he does belong to a musical *empresa*, from which he cannot survive economically either. He promotes himself by his own means on and off the island and produces his CDs without the support of a Cuban record label. In the last few years he has become involved with the writer and filmmaker Eduardo del Llano in the

9. Gerardo Alfonso, personal interview, 2005.

10. He has received the Medalla 23 de agosto granted by the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, the Distinción por la Cultura Nacional, La Giraldilla de la Habana given by the Gobierno de la Ciudad de la Habana, the Réplica del Machete de Antonio Maceo from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Cuba, the Orden Alejo Carpentier from the Consejo de Estado de Cuba, the Premio Abril from the Asociación Hermanos Saiz, and the Reconocimiento al Mérito Artístico from the Instituto Superior de Arte de Cuba. <http://trovacub.com/piermail/boletin_trovacub.com/2007-January/0002510html>.

production of a series of short very satirical films. The songs of Frank appear in these films and their lyrics underscore their critical messages with his usual brand of humor.

Carlos Varela, another *novísimo*, seems to represent the youths' critical voice sanctioned by the state. His music is produced on Cuban labels such as BisMusic. He plays to sold-out audiences in huge theaters in Havana. He also has managed to work successfully in the global market. His song "Una palabra" plays at the close of the 2004 Hollywood film *Man on Fire*, starring Denzel Washington. The same song appears in the more socio-politically conscious film by the Mexican filmmaker, Alejandro González Iñárritu, *Powder Keg*, 2001. It was first recorded for his CD *Nubes* produced by BisMusic in 2000.

Another *novísimo*, Polito Ibáñez, has more or less left *trova* for pop music with a more *pan-latino* sound. He now performs in commercial venues where young professionals in possession of dollars attend, listening to his music as they sip rum at prices beyond the revolutionary reach. An example of Polito's more current style can be heard on the CD *Axilas*, from 2003 produced on the label *Unicornio* (a branch of *Abdala*, the record company owned by Silvio Rodríguez).

In my 2005 interview with Gerardo, he comments:

Yo renuncié a esperar a que me vengan a buscar una disquera multinacional. Estuve años esperando por ellos y ya no creo más nada en eso. Creo en la obra y lo mejor posible para ella. Pero no por ninguna regla del mercado, de la industria. Logré llevar a cabo una idea que tenía cuando renuncié a la industria multinacional de las discográficas. Me liberé del espíritu cuando yo me negué todo eso. La industria musical norteamericana tiene su lógica, su propósito es vender. Pero que te obliguen ciertas cosas para vender, me niego contra eso.

Fruit of this liberation is "Las leyendas camagüeyanas" produced in collaboration with Walter Sivilotti. Gerardo concludes his description of the piece saying that even though he has maintained copyrights for the suite, he has given up publishing rights as his donation to the city of Camaguëy, thus making the piece more accessible to more orchestras.¹¹

11. Gerardo Alfonso, personal interview, 2005.

Gerardo has persisted with the *guayasón* though he was once criticized for composing genres that privileged form over serious lyrics, which forced him at one point in time to conform more to the accepted sound of the *nueva trova*. His CD *Raza*, recorded in 2003, is an eclectic selection containing three *guayasones* and two *ochangas*, among other genres. “Las leyendas camagüeyanas” is pure *guayasón*. Gerardo has covered great spans of musical territory in developing this genre of his. With “Las leyendas,” we see him combine Cuban local culture with his concerns about Cuban musical form thus eclipsing contemporary socio-political concerns as he highlights the cultural in place of the revolutionary.

I conclude that one of the most important legacies of Gerardo Alfonso could well be the genres that he has developed throughout the past 25 some years of his career. Despite the difficulties the creation of these genres caused him at the beginning of his profession, once other musicians began to adopt the *guayasón* for example, we see that his genre has established itself. Since it takes the participation of the musical community for a new genre to take hold, with “Las leyendas” he leaves a very Cuban legacy to a more global musical community.

Perhaps the artistic life of Gerardo Alfonso has followed and will follow the same trajectory of his government confronted with the forces of globalization, which Cuba has felt more profoundly since the Special Period caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The shift from identifying the nation through politics (the socialist cause) to culture (*cubanía*) certainly describes the focus of Gerardo’s latest developments. Ironically, Gerardo has managed to impose his creativity on the multinational music scene despite having renounced the terms of recording companies that represent the global market.

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Appendix

The Conference

It took the Cuba Project and the Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies two years to promote and organize the international symposium, “A Changing Cuba in a Changing World,” one of the largest conferences about Cuba held in the United States. The Symposium took place in March, 2008 at the CUNY Graduate Center in Manhattan. It gathered hundreds of participants from the US and abroad on several plenaries and dozens of panels and presentations.

We are currently waiting for the reports and synthesis of the complete conference proceedings, which we hope to post shortly. In the interim, below is a sample of the plenaries and panels presented at the symposium.

Plenaries

The opening plenary featured distinguished professor Jorge Domínguez, former U.S. representative to Cuba Vicki Huddleston, and noted Canadian economist Archibald Ritter—who introduced the theme of current dynamics and changing perspectives in today's Cuba and in its relationship to a changing world.

The special plenary “Cuba and the US Media: Getting In and Getting It Right” brought together several distinguished journalists to discuss recent developments in Cuba. The list included Anthony DePalma (New York Times), Soledad O'Brien (CNN), Emily Morris (The Economist Intelligence Unit), and Francis Robles (Miami Herald). Organized by Professor Ted Henken (Baruch College), this panel illuminated the challenges for US journalists of gaining access to Cuba and accurately

understanding and reporting the complex, changing, and often contradictory Cuban reality.

Panels

The panels represented and often combined perspectives from the social sciences and economics, the arts and the humanities, and the world of policymakers, providing in-depth treatment of a wide range of topics such as U.S.-Cuba relations, Cubans in the U.S., non-U.S. points of view, Cuban healthcare, the history and legacy of the Cuban revolution, Cuban cinema, literature, cultural institutions, the visual and performing arts, religion, the role of intellectuals, Afro-Cuban cultural movements, women, race and ethnicity, and Cuban music.

US-Cuba Relations (Reported by Margaret E. Crahan)

The US-Cuba Relations panel was organized and moderated by Margaret E. Crahan, distinguished professor and director of the Kozmetsky Center of Excellence in Global Finance at St. Edward's University.

This session was organized to provide a highly analytical overview of US-Cuban relations by three experts, all of whom had returned within the previous 10 days from Cuba, together with a discussant who had served as Chief of the US Interest Section in Havana. As a consequence, there were no formal papers, but rather informed analysis based on the panelists' repeated visits to Cuba over many years. This provided the panelists with a depth of knowledge that was reflected in a combination of hard data and wideranging analysis. In addition, it encouraged dialogue among the panelists who included:

Philip Brenner, Professor, School of International Service, American University who focused on "US Policy towards Cuba: Waiting for Raul to Die." In his presentation, Professor Brenner analyzed the expectations raised by the new president of Cuba Raul Castro's remarks concerning the need for reform, particularly in the agricultural sector. In addition, he reviewed what might be likely outcomes in terms of reforms more generally.

Dan Erikson, Senior Associate, Caribbean Program, Inter-American Dialogue, in his presentation "US-Cuban Relations: Still on the Brink"

Panels

analyzed current relations between Washington and Havana and the near and medium term likelihood of change. He reviewed the stances of the US presidential candidates and then assessed the likelihood of modifications of the 2004 US restrictions on Cuba.

William LeoGrande, Dean, School of Public Affairs, American University, explored in his presentation "The Future of US-Cuban Relations: Obstacles and Opportunities" the context of US-Cuban negotiations and the prospects for future conversations given internal politics in both countries. Among the conclusions was that there was an increasing inclination in Congress to relax restrictions on trade, as well as academic and cultural exchanges with Cuba.

The Discussant was Ambassador Vicky Huddleston, Foreign Policy Fellow, Brookings Institute and former Chief, US Interest Section in Havana. Ambassador Huddleston agreed with the basics of the panelists presentations and added her own understanding of US-Cuban relations based on her service on the island.

The presentations were limited to 7 minutes each in order to allow ample time for the standing room only audience to pose questions. The panel was inundated with questions which allowed for a deepening of the discussion. It was the most heavily attended session of the conference.

Arts (Reported by Ana María Hernández)

The conference featured three art panels exploring the changing awareness and recognition of the visual arts in Cuba since the Special Period.

The first panel included a discussion of the changing role of the artist in Cuban society as artists were allowed to participate in the international art market in the years just before the Special Period and increasingly so thereafter. Similarly, a discussion of successful legal challenges to the embargo as it pertained to the sale of Cuban art in the United States helped support a booming interest in Cuban art in this country, as evinced by recent and current shows in Los Angeles, Boston, and New York. Special consideration was given as well to the role of the 10 Havana Biennials over the past twenty years, and how these initially modest events have grown to the stature of international spectacles, drawing a significant amount of "art tourism." The second panel proceeded to trace the increasing interest in Cuban art as reflected in the growing collection of

the Museum of Modern Art, as well as the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the efforts of institutions such as Art in General, based in New York, to disseminate knowledge and understanding of changing trends in Cuban art over the past 20 years. The second and third panels focused on the historic and unprecedented exhibit at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, “Cuba! Art and History from 1868 to the Present,” which gathered Cuban art from the Museo de Bellas Artes and Fototeca in Havana, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and private collections from the United States and abroad. This exhibit, the first of its kind anywhere, presents a history of Cuban art within the context of the social and historical forces that shaped the concept of “cubanidad.” The discussion of the section covering art from the Special Period was particularly enlightening.

History (Reported by Alfonso Quiroz)

The panel “History and civil society in Cuba” counted with five panelists that presented papers on several subjects of Cuban civil society, associations, and the medical profession in the the nineteenth and early twentieth century. After the presentation a lively period of questions and answers ensued. The development of civil society in Cuba on the basis of associations, black clubs, and professional societies was discussed by considering the legal and political framework of the time, including liberal Spanish legislation and struggles for slave emancipation and full equality. Civil society in Cuba from a historical perspective allows a better understanding about the efforts at rebuilding non-governmental associations in present-day Cuba.

Literature (Reported by Araceli Tinajero)

There were five literature panels which included new readings of *Espejo de paciencia*, an epic poem written by Silvestre de Balboa in 1608, readings by contemporary Cuban writers, Cuban literature from 1990 to the present (two panels), and women and the Cuban literary perspective.

The first panel, “*Espejo de paciencia* (1608-2008): proyecciones literarias e históricas” was organized by Raquel Chang-Rodríguez and focused on new social and historical revisions of Balboa's epic poem. Carmen Lamas offered a close reading of “Soneto criollo de la tierra” taking into account *Espejo de paciencia*'s historical and economic context. Raúl Marrero Fente's talk focused on the poem's context and offered new

historical findings gathered from Cuban and Spanish archives. The participants agreed that the polemics of the authenticity of *Espejo de paciencia* continues even nowadays, four hundred years after its publication, but the issue of its originality has to do with the place this epic poem occupies in the Cuban literary canon.

The second panel, “Cuban Writers Read their Work” was also organized by Raquel Chang-Rodríguez. The first presenter was José Manuel Prieto—accompanied by his translator, Esther Allen—who read from his latest novel *Rex*. There were several questions and answers about the content of the novel and on the intricacies and challenges presented to the translator during the translation process of this rather complex text. Poet Orlando Rossardi read from his recent poetry collection, *Libro de las pérdidas* and Aristides Falcón, another poet, read from his *Tantra Tanka* a collection of poems written in the style of Japanese *tanka*. Falcón announced the recent publication of this book in translation in Japan. All readings were welcomed with great enthusiasm from the audience.

The third panel, “Cuban Literature from 1990 to the Present, Part I” was organized by Araceli Tinajero. In “Un arte del pastiche: literatura cubana de los años noventa” Anke Birkenmaier focused on Cuban writer José Manuel Prieto's latest novel, *Rex* and talked about the complexities and sophistication of its structure and diverse narrators, which make this text a 21st century first rate novel. In “Benjamin no llegó a La Habana: La literatura postsoviética en Cuba,” Rafael Rojas discussed the importance of postsovietic literature in Cuba and emphasized why and how the Cuban intelligentsia received Walter Benjamin's writings. In “Cuba's Special Period and the Diasporic Subject: Self-Invention and Self-Representation in Daína Chaviano's *El hombre, la hembra y el hambre*,” Raúl Rosales-Herrera discussed how this novel is a paradigm of a well written novel which exemplifies Cuba's internal economic problems through a text that shows the complexities of a diasporic, self-invented and self-represented subject.

The fourth panel, “Cuban Literature from 1990 to the Present, Part II,” was also organized by Araceli Tinajero but Uva de Aragón was the moderator. In “El jineterismo en la literatura del período especial” Patricia Catoira focused on how prostitution is portrayed in Cuban fiction since 1990. Catoira underlined that they are two main currents: the exhibitionist, which promotes sexual tourism; and the introspective, which is more

realistic about the social crisis and the emotional disturbance created as a result of the Special Period. In “The Function of Evoking Soviet-Cubans in Global Cuba,” Jacqueline Loss provided several examples of the presence of the ex-Soviet Union in Cuban culture. Loss mentioned that marriages between ex-Soviet Union women and Cubans were a paradigm of transculturation in a global age where sexual, social and racial issues intersect at different levels never seen before. In “Reinaldo Arenas: AIDS and the Sexual Politics of a Queer Activist,” Rafael Ocasio focused on the political and sexual activism of Arenas towards the end of his life. Ocasio emphasized that Arenas' last texts openly dismantled his homosexual eroticism as a way to criticize and attack—through his writings—Cuban politics because the author had been the victim of homophobic abuse. In “Distancia no quiere decir olvido, viajes a la semilla,” Uva de Aragón talked about Cuban literature that focuses on the nostalgia and need to return to Cuba. Aragón underlined that writing in exile is not an easy task; however, literature based on the emptiness and the pain left behind by those who left Cuba has not been written yet.

The fifth panel, “Women and the Cuban Literary Perspective” was moderated by Esther Allen. In “La poesía de Juana Rosa Pita,” Ada María Teja talked about this prolific Cuban poet. Teja emphasized that even though Pita began publishing in 1976 (*Pan de sol*), her most current poetry, i.e. *Transfiguración de la armonía* and *Tela de concierto* is evocative and original. In “La hija de Cuba: Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda y la novela del siglo XXI,” María Albin focused on María Elena Cruz Varela's recent historical and detective novel, *La hija de Cuba* (2006). Albin suggested that Varela's use of intertexts in her novel helps the contemporary reader to have a deeper understanding of the life of Gómez de Avellaneda—the nineteenth century Cuban writer on who the novel is based. In “Geographies of Memory: Contemporary Cuban Women Rewrite Space and Place,” Myrna García-Calderón discussed the diverse uses of space and place (and displacement) evoked in recent Cuban writers and lastly, in “Animated Photographs: G. Cabrera Infante and Ana Menéndez,” Isabel Alvarez Borland presented the “animated” and symbolic dialogue between these two writers.

Concert

Cubans in the US: Generational Differences among Cubans (Reported by Yolanda Prieto)

While in recent years sociologists have become sensitive to issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality, substantially less attention has been given to generations. In this panel, the researchers focus on generations among Cubans in the island, as well as immigrants and their children, to try to understand their varying experiences and contrasting political attitudes. The panel was organized by Yolanda Prieto and Silvia Pedraza, who also served as panelists along with Lisandro Pérez, María Cristina García, and Catherine Krull.

Concert

In addition, this gathering included the special musical program “The Cuba-New York Latin Jazz Ensemble,” directed by pianist and composer Oriente Lopez. For some this was the highlight of the symposium, many of the attendees could not resist the orchestra’s catchy Cuban rhythm, and jumped on stage to dance as the music went on. With everyone cheering encore! encore! the conference organizers had no choice but to add a second concert at the end of the Symposium.

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