

# CUBA: In Transition?

## Pathways to Renewal, Long-Term Development and Global Reintegration

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**Part I**  
**Prospects for**  
**Economic Evolution**



# *Cuba's Economic Reorientation*

*Archibald R. M. Ritter*

Cuba's strategy for its economic development is in the process of reformulation.<sup>1</sup> The "grand design" that predominated since the ending of the special relationship with the former Soviet Union has essentially been terminated. The basic features of a new strategy are now becoming apparent, though a definitive delineation is not possible yet. There has been no official statement announcing an explicit new "grand design" for Cuba's economic development. In this essay, an attempt is made to sketch a broad outline of the strategy on the basis of incomplete information; essentially "connecting the dots" to try to envision the "big picture." The nature of this strategy is analyzed, following a brief discussion of its roots. Some of the major challenges and problems that will shape the success of the new strategy are explored as well.

There are three formative influences on new "grand design" for economic development. First, while it did not emerge full-blown from the mind of President Castro, his vision for the future of Cuba is important in shaping most public policies in Cuba and has been central to the reformulation of the current development strategy. Second, the new strategy is also a response to Cuba's new position in a changing international geo-political environment. Third, it is also based on the economic recovery that has occurred since the depths of the economic contraction of 1990-1993 together.

The central feature of the "grand design" is a new basis for the generation of foreign exchange earnings now emphasizing nickel, medical and educational services, and, in time, perhaps petroleum. It emphasizes Cuba as a "knowledge economy and society" producing high value services for Latin America and the world. The older economic foundation—remittances, tour-

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1. I am very grateful to Dr. Jorge Mario Sanchez of the *Centro de Estudios sobre Los Estados Unidos, Universidad de La Habana*, who noted the switch to a new development strategy in a personal conversation on February 23 2006. The interpretations and analyses in this essay are solely those of the author.

ism and lesser merchandise exports—will of course continue, but are being given less emphasis. The new economic master-plan also includes a stronger centralized control of the economy as well as “socialist purification” and a shoring up of the basic infrastructure necessary for sustained economic expansion and prosperity, so far emphasizing the energy sector.

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### *The New Development Strategy*

#### **President Castro’s Vision**

As he enters the ninth decade of his life, President Castro must be concerned about his “legacy.” Even as early as 1953, the last sentence of his self defense in court (and the title of the book that was a write-up of that speech) was “History will absolve me.” But will History absolve Fidel Castro? Historians and others will debate this for many years. While Castro does not seem to be prone to self doubt, it is likely that he would be happy to be remembered well in future by historians and by the Cuban people. In his view History may be less likely to absolve him if Cuba is left in a shambles and if his visions are quickly abandoned after his demise. Perhaps for these reasons, Castro now seems to be trying to put the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban people back “on track,” from his perspective, of course. His legacy seems to be to “lock in” his priorities and his vision for Cuba’s future and to create a strong and sustainable economic foundation for his version of socialism.

What is Castro’s vision for the future? There seems to be no single speech or writing in which President Castro has explicitly presented this vision. But, while he has not articulated a vision in a comprehensive and coherent manner, he has expressed his views in a piecemeal and stream-of-consciousness manner on numerous occasions. Especially significant in this respect was his speech of the 17th of November 2005 to 405 students in the Aula Magna of the University of Havana.

An analysis of some of the central ideas from various speeches as well as actual policy changes allows one to piece together some of the main elements of Castro’s grand design for Cuba’s future. The main elements of his vision would likely include the following:

Personal and national leadership in a renewed Latin American and perhaps developing country campaign against “neo-liberal globalization,” the United States, and capitalist imperialism, all three being considered to be tightly interconnected;

Irrevocable “Socialism” for Cuba; together with continuity under the leadership of the Communist Party and true to Castro’s own ideology and vision for Cuba;

Re-ordering of Cuba’s place in the international system;

Socio-economic purification of the negative types of behavior of Cuban citizens, such as economic illegalities, corruption, private economic activities;  
A return to economic prosperity and improved levels of economic well-being of citizens;  
Building on Cuba's past successes in health and education to strengthen a "knowledge economy" that will serve as the new source of Cuba's international competitive advantage.

This vision provides some of the broad parameters for the development strategy that has emerged in the period 2002 to 2006.

### **The New Geopolitical Context**

The international geo-political environment has changed with surprising rapidity in the new Millennium. This has created part of the context in which Castro's vision has evolved and Cuba's development strategy has been reformulated.

Specifically, in Latin America, the basic geo-political reality has shifted and now provides an opening for Cuba. President Chavez of Venezuela favors Castro's international political aspirations and views and provides economic support and subsidization for Cuba through low-cost oil exports, credits, and foreign exchange earnings for Cuban exports of medical services. Evo Morales of Bolivia seems to share Castro's views of the world. After assuming the Presidency, Cuba was the first country he visited. He signed a major accord with Cuba and Venezuela calling for co-operation and collaboration in a wide variety of areas (Agreement, April 29, 2006.) Were Ollanta Humala to win the Presidency of Peru, he would provide a fourth like-minded partner. The Governments of Argentina and Uruguay are of a somewhat similar stripe, though both are likely to keep their distance. Mexico, with a possible presidential victory by Lopez-Obrador would fit into the Castro/Chavez/Morales circle, though constrained by the close ties with the United States. The center-left social democratic regimes of Chile, Brazil and the English-speaking Caribbean will likely continue to go their own ways, though with varying degrees of sympathy for the Cub/Venezuela/Bolivia axis. Together with all of this is a swing of the pendulum in Latin America against the perceived failures of the "neo-liberal" experience of the 1990s, and against the United States as a leading purveyor of that approach.

An important component of Cuba's new place in Latin America is the "Agreement for the Application of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of our America and the Peoples' Trade Agreements" signed by Presidents Castro, Chavez and Morales on April 29, 2006. This agreement calls for co-operation and integration between the three countries in health, trade, techno-

logical transfer, joint ventures of various sorts, energy, culture and sports among other things. The elements of the agreement could be beneficial to all parties but especially to Bolivia. If this process works as envisaged, it may be attractive to other nations in the region, such as Peru and Ecuador.

Cuba's development assistance activities have been instrumental in winning support from a variety of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Pakistan and some countries in Africa. Medical attention provided by Cuban medical personnel in the Caribbean and medical education for Caribbean students, have been valuable for these countries and their citizens. This has contributed substantially to a warming and an intensification of relations between Cuba on the one hand and Haiti and the English language countries on the other, despite relatively little increase in trade or other types of interaction. (Maingot, 2006)

A new actor of relevance for Cuba is China, which has provided credits for the purchase of trains and busses and which has become a major trading partner. China may invest up to US\$500 million in nickel extraction and refining for importation into China as well. (Grogg, 2006) Cuba is, in effect, hitched to the Chinese economic locomotive. A possibility that is attractive for Cuba is to become an assembly and manufacturing centre and a trade hub or depot for China in the broader Caribbean and perhaps Atlantic areas of Latin America. China's political regime is much like that of Cuba, though without the larger-than-life presence of the "founder" of current political system. China has a like-minded approach to human rights issues and is not likely to challenge Cuba in these areas the way Canada and the European countries have done.

Finally, the United States is in trouble, internationally and domestically. The problems of the United States are satisfying for President Castro. In the international arena, the US is bogged down in the war in Iraq that is of dubious usefulness, expensive, and unpopular at home and abroad. The war has caused a major loss of reputation and moral authority in much of the world, and has absorbed the attention and resources that could have gone for other purposes. Financially, the US is incapacitated due to the immense public deficits and debt, and to the continuing external trade and current account deficits. It is now clear that the end of the Cold War has given small countries greater freedom to go their own way against the wishes of the United States, as such independence no longer implies befriendng its enemy (Castaneda, 2006.)

In summary, Cuba's new geo-political situation presents it with some major advantages, namely expanded exports of health and education services, security of energy supplies at a subsidized price and on credit, and Chinese investment, credits and trade. All of these support an economic recovery for

Cuba. The age-old ambition to strengthen economic and political ties with Latin America appears to be coming to fruition in a surprising but productive way for Cuba. Cuba is now part of a group of like-minded countries, following over a decade of orphanage after the demise of the Soviet Union and being “out of synch” with much of the world from about 1992 to 2000.

### **Economic Recuperation.**

A further reason why a new development strategy has emerged is the significant economic recovery that has occurred. By the end of 2006, and accepting Cuba's official growth rate of 11.8 percent for 2005 and President Castro's estimate of 12.5 percent for 2006, Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDP pc) would have surpassed the pre-crisis level of 1989 by almost 14 percent. (These GDP numbers are exaggerated however, and have not been accepted by the UN CEPAL as accurate.) A more realistic estimate for 2005 and prediction for 2006 are those of *The Economist*, placed at 5.2 percent and 4.5 percent respectively. GDP pc would have almost reached the 1989 level, falling short by 0.04 percent. In any case, it is clear that Cuba's growth rate is on a positive trajectory. (These calculations are based on data from UN CEPAL 2004, UN CEPAL, 1997 Cuadro A.1. and *The Economist*, p. 41.) As well, both exports and imports have recovered dramatically vis-à-vis the worst year, 1993, though not to the levels prior to the end of the special relationship with the USSR.

The economic recovery makes it increasingly easier for President Castro to contain and reverse the decentralizing reforms of 1992 to 1994. As early as April 4, 1997, Castro expressed his displeasure with the basic reforms and implied that they would be transitory, so that it has been a matter of time before a process of reform reversal got underway. (Castro, 1997)

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## *The New Development Strategy*

### **A New Export Foundation for the Economy**

A central constraint on Cuba's economic well-being since 1950 has been its weakness in earning foreign exchange from the export of goods and services. This has been painfully clear in the 1961 to 1970 period and again from 1990 to the present, though the special relationship with the Soviet Union reduced its immediacy from about 1970 to 1990. For a small country, foreign exchange earnings constitute the economic foundation for continuing economic and social improvement. It is imperative that Cuba develop such export activities.

From 1990 to 2005, Cuba sought to increase foreign exchange earnings principally from an expansion of tourism, remittances from former Cubans

living abroad and growing nickel exports. Sugar, rum, tobacco products, biotechnological exports and a few smaller exports also made a contribution. This was supplemented with direct investment within joint venture arrangements and five export processing zones. Cuba also successfully reduced the need to import petroleum through increases in the domestic extraction of petroleum and natural gas.

By 2006, Cuba had re-oriented its drive to earn and conserve foreign exchange. The foreign exchange locomotives for the economy are or will be medical services, petroleum processing and exportation and possible future petroleum extraction, with some possible increases in nickel, biotechnological products and tourism. The drive to increase foreign investment has waned, though new inflows are still being promoted in petroleum, nickel, and now, the sugar sector. The export processing zones have not been successful and are being de-emphasized.

Nickel continues to be a key prospect, with increased extraction and processing likely to occur as a result of investments of US\$450 from Sherritt of Canada for an expansion of the Moa refinery and US\$500 million from China. However, nickel prices are unlikely to remain as high as they were in 2006, because nickel supplies will increase in the near future. (Four major new projects are slated to come on stream in the next few years, the Cuban expansion projects will likely go ahead, and there are some 13 projects with development plans likely to bring them on-stream by 2012. (Sturk, 2006) For this reason, nickel will be a major export earner, but perhaps less than one might imagine in the high price era of 2005-06.

Sugar exports will continue, mainly for the Chinese market. Starting from the low level of around 500,000 tons in 2005 and 2006, they will probably recover slightly in the next few years to 1.5 or 2.5 million tons. Tobacco, rum, and shellfish exports also should continue, but at low levels. Remittances can be expected to continue, but perhaps at a declining rate unless there are new surges of emigration from the island or unless the economy goes into a downward trend. Tourism should remain buoyant with a new emphasis on Venezuelan and Chinese tourists, but with reduced relative reliance placed upon it in future. The renewal of state trading within the Venezuela-Cuba-Bolivia Trade Agreement of 2006 may lead to some diversification and expansion of exports. However, a significant diversification of merchandise exports is unlikely to occur until the exchange rate regime is repaired and rationalized.

A major new export prospect is the exportation of medical services. Cuba has turned its large surplus of doctors<sup>2</sup> into a foreign exchange earning resource, sending medical personnel to Venezuela and elsewhere and with Venezuelan and other foreign nationals obtaining medical attention in Cuba.



A portion of such services are provided as development assistance to recipient countries and individuals in both the Caribbean and some parts of Latin America and Africa as well as to the earthquake regions of Pakistan. To handle increasing numbers of “medical tourists,” Cuba has converted secondary schools and residences in the countryside that are no longer used due to the reduced numbers of young people requiring education, reflecting the declining fertility rate of the last 20 years, to medical centres. This is an effective and low cost means of expanding medical and residential facilities. Such “medical tourism” may be significant for some years or even a decade, but perhaps does not have a long term future as Latin American countries build their own medical capabilities. However, Cuba may have a future role as the educator of foreign doctors, specialists and other medical personnel for those countries, principally in Africa, that have underdeveloped health systems and personnel shortages. Linked to the provision of such medical services is access to Cuban-made medicines. Provision of medical services abroad, as assistance or commercially, may help develop markets for Cuban pharmaceuticals.

An additional component for Cuba's export sector will be petroleum processing and perhaps in time, oil exports. Cuba and Venezuela have reached an agreement to invest US\$800 to US\$1,000 million to refurbish and complete the old Soviet era petroleum refinery in Cienfuegos. (FOCAL, April, 2006) It will refine Venezuelan crude oil into derivatives for sale in the Caribbean region. If the subsidization of petroleum that Venezuela is offering the Caribbean countries continues, the prospects for market expansion in the region may be good, (though with negative consequences for Trinidad and Tobago, currently a supplier to the region).

Recent petroleum discoveries in deep waters off the Cuban north-west coast provide indications of substantial reserves. Some 16 sub-areas are currently being explored in detail by Canadian and Chinese firms, with Spanish, Norwegian and Indian firms also planning exploration. Whether sufficient reserves are “proved up” so that development takes place is not clear. If oil prices remain high, extraction may be viable despite the high costs of deep water extraction. It is conceivable that Cuba may become a net oil exporter, though its current petroleum security with Venezuela makes self-sufficiency and exportation less imperative.

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2. In the late 1990s, small hotels such as the Colina and the Deauville had their own doctor and nurse, and nursery schools had their own doctors. Cuba has by far the most doctors per capita of any country in the world, at 591 physicians per 100,000 persons in comparison with 209 for Canada, 356 for Norway and 549 for the U.S.A. (UNDP, 2005, p. 236.)

### **A Knowledge Economy and Society**

In keeping with President Castro's intensifying enthusiasm for higher education, Cuba has expanded the educational system at the post-secondary level. The objective is to upgrade the quality of human resources to the highest levels as quickly as possible, in order to re-orient Cuba's trajectory into that of a knowledge-based economy rather than a resource, agriculture, or tourism based economy. This will permit Cuba to expand its medical service exports further, to provide medical education for ever larger numbers as students from Latin America and elsewhere, and to move into educational service exports more generally.

The recent expansion of the post-secondary educational system has been rapid. According to President Castro, there are 958 university "campuses" in Cuba, and an intention to develop "...1000 plus and the 2000 plus that we shall quickly have," with about 500,000 students and 122,000 professors. (Castro, November 17, 2005, and May 1, 2006) The campuses include the established universities, 169 municipal campuses of the universities, 169 public health campuses in each municipality, 240 sports campuses under the national sports federation INDER, 130 campuses in a so-called Alvaro Reinoso grouping, including 84 in sugar mill towns and 18 in prisons. Castro also stated that "...in a few short years there will be 100,000 doctors. When those are not enough there will be 150,000." (Castro, November 17, 2005, and May 1, 2006)

"Many who were part of the bureaucracy in the sugar mills and in other areas are today teaching courses as associate professors, thus the number of professors at the higher level has grown." (Castro, November 17, 2005, and May 1, 2006) The expansion of the post-secondary educational system is impressive in quantitative terms. However, much of this alleged expansion results from the re-labeling of sports and medical training facilities. Presumably and hopefully, some of the campuses are more like "community colleges" and small training centers rather than universities, especially those in the former sugar mill towns and prisons, teaching trades and practical skills. Quality levels have likely suffered in this expansion process. The caliber of teaching must have declined at least for a transitional period, as new less qualified people were incorporated into the professoriate. For example, in Castro's words, in some established universities such as the University of Havana, recent graduates with a bachelor's degree are kept on to work as university teachers.

Unfortunately, this heroic post-secondary expansion may be an indicator of Castro's old command economy fixation with quantitative targetry. It also appears that Castro may lack an appreciation for the "law of diminishing returns." University graduates can be over-produced like anything else or any

other factor of production, so that their average value to society declines. For example, if there are 958 post-secondary campuses with an intention to have some 2000 in future, this amounts to about one campus for every 11,5000 people in the country moving to one for every 5,500 people. Is this reasonable? Many of the “campuses” at polyclinics or sports centers for example, are campuses in name only. Similarly, the professor-student ratio would appear to be 500,000 to 122,000 or 4.1 to 1, with many of the students being part-time so that the ratio of full-time equivalent students per professor would be a less. (Castro, May 1, 2006, and January 17, 2006) This appears to be an extravagant use of trained personnel and their productivity would appear to be low by international standards. In Canada in 2005, the student/faculty ratio for full-time equivalent students was 21.9 to 1. (CAUT, 2006)

A further development in post-secondary education is the establishment of a new University of Computational Science (*Universidad de Ciencias de Computacion*) established in September 2002 at the former Lourdes military base of the Soviet Union outside Havana. By January 2003 it had 2000 students. One of its initial focuses is on educational programming for literacy and other training aimed at export markets.

### **Institutional Strategy**

The new development strategy also includes some institutional dimensions, such as a return to a more intense level of administrative centralization in the economy, intensifying containment of self-employment, intensified patriarchal distribution of goods in the economy, and the *Trabajadores Sociale*.

Micro-enterprise has been subject to refusals to grant licenses to potential entrepreneurs. Tightening regulations have shut many self-employed operations down. Punitive taxation makes survival difficult and impossible for some.

Various measures to recentralize the economic administration have been enacted, reducing the role of market forces and replacing them with bureaucratic control. Control of foreign exchange has been removed from state enterprises and centralized under the Central Bank. Control of foreign trade was removed from state enterprises and turned over to the Ministry of Trade. The number of joint ventures with foreign enterprises has been reduced. It can be convincingly argued that the underlying reason for these centralization moves is to re-establish political control of the economy.

The distribution of a proportion of goods and services in Cuba has long been characterized by political patronage. The allocation of housing and cars, for example, has been based on political criteria. In work places as well, when various types of durable products became available, the right to purchase them was determined by one's work record, voluntary work, political

reliability as well as need. In this way, the party could try to strengthen its control of the citizenry. A reason why the government dislikes private enterprise in a market economy is that the individuals involved break their dependence on the Party, as they earn their own incomes and are no longer subject to control or influence by their needs for material goods and services.

A somewhat different type of distribution process has been emphasized in the latter part of 2005 and 2006. This system could be labeled a “patriarchal” distribution of goods and services. In this system, the state, following the announcements of President Castro, determines what people ostensibly need and should have. It then physically removes the things it deems they should not have and makes available the new products at subsidized prices. As part of *La Revolución Energetica*, President Castro announced that all households would have a pressure cooker and an electric rice cooker, provided at subsidized prices (the pressure cooker cost 150 pesos, a good deal but for many, a major proportion of the average monthly income. The *trabajadores sociales* then visited homes in Pinar del Rio and Havana Provinces to remove old light bulbs and replace them with (weaker) fluorescent bulbs, and to remove energy inefficient refrigerators, air conditioners and fans. Energy efficient fans and refrigerators were then made available at low prices and on credit. The distribution of these products was announced by President Castro as if the products were gifts from the state if not from him. This is an interesting command economy type of measure. However, this approach assumes that citizens can not make intelligent choices for themselves and that the state must do this for them. Similar, though perhaps slower results could have been obtained by raising the energy prices, as was done, making energy-efficient products available, and letting people make their own decisions. The patriarchal distribution approach appears to “infantilize” Cuban citizens, considering them as being too irresponsible and unreliable to make their own choices and decisions.

A further institutional innovation of interest is the creation of the corps of *trabajadores sociales* or social workers. Some 28,000 young high school graduates, 72 percent female and mainly from Eastern Cuba, have been given special training and are used to combat illegalities of various sorts, such as the theft of gasoline and to undertake the household energy monitoring visits. The “social workers” are housed in special facilities, with special transport arrangements, dining arrangements etc. and special status. This is an interesting type of work creation process and some of the work that they do may be useful. This represents a quasi military mode of labor mobilization, with a corps that is available to undertake diverse tasks for the state. Whether this mode of labor mobilization is useful and effective method in the longer term remains to be seen.<sup>3</sup>

In summary, the Cuban institutional re-orientation has been characterized by a more highly centralized and more tightly controlled economic system, in terms of self-employment, the functioning of state enterprises, the distribution of goods and services, labor force mobilization and state control of citizens.

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### *Rebuilding Basic Infrastructure: La Revolución Energética*

The deterioration of Cuba's basic infrastructure is well known and obvious to many casual observers. This includes housing, public buildings, schools, waterworks, sewage systems, side-walks, streets, highways, public transportation (road and rail), and the electrical system. There are two main reasons for this. First, maintenance has always been a problem in centrally planned economies that place emphasis on new production and typically allocate insufficient resources to maintenance. Second, in the difficult years from 1988 to 2000, maintenance and re-investment was postponed to release resources for urgent new investments in tourism, for example. The result is that almost all basic infrastructure is in bad shape. While maintenance and reinvestment can be postponed, insufficient maintenance can also lead to the premature demise of infrastructure of all types. The result in many parts of Cuba is an electrical crisis, a housing crisis, a transportation crisis, a water crisis, a sewage crisis, etc.

For electricity, the crisis was severe, as perennial break-downs and black-outs had become widespread and frequent. Maintenance and reinvestment could no longer be postponed. The Year 2006 was then proclaimed as the Year of the Energy Revolution." On January 17, 2006, President Castro presented the main elements of his energy master-plan to the nation, stating: "Pinar del Rio will no longer suffer black-outs. Who could have possibly imagined that?" A few days later a black-out plunged Western Cuba into darkness, Havana for a day and Pinar del Rio Province for about two weeks. This was not an auspicious way to inaugurate *La Revolución Energética*.

Cuba has launched a major restructuring and reinvestment program in the energy and especially electricity sector, long overdue. Castro's design for the sector is ambitious and innovative, and contains some valuable components. However, there are questionable elements that are more in the tradition of Castro's flamboyant economic disasters, such as the instant industrialization strategy of 1961-6 and the 10 million-ton sugar production strategy of 1964-70.

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3. Using the *trabajadores sociales* to pump gasoline to replace the *pisteros* or station attendants who were fired for pilferage of gasoline does not appear to be a long term productive employment.

The major symptom of Cuba's energy crisis has been the innumerable black-outs, some resulting from hurricanes but many from equipment failures and still more from supply rationing when demand exceeds generation capacity. Regardless of the causes, the results include shut-downs of economic activity, the loss of food in people's refrigerators, and discomfort in the heat of summer.

The roots of the energy problem lay in recent economic history. From 1962-1992, Cuba's energy came mainly from petroleum imported from the Soviet Union at heavily subsidized prices after 1973. Low prices produced a culture of wasteful consumption in residential, transportation and industrial usage. The 75-percent reduction of foreign exchange earnings when the Soviet Union stopped subsidizing the Cuban economy then led to an approximate 50 percent cut in oil imports and to further contraction of reinvestment and maintenance. Unfortunately the US\$2 to US\$3 billion investment in the Cienfuegos thermo-nuclear electrical plant in the 1980s was a total waste of resources, as it will probably never be completed. It is 80 percent complete and the estimated cost of completion was US\$700 million in 2001 (UN ECLAC, 2001: 332.)

The availability of primary energy from sugar production was also reduced by 69 percent from 1990 to 2004, resulting from the reductions of sugar production, the dismantling of some half of the sugar mills and the moth-balling of another 30 in 2003. (ONE, 2006) While much of this primary energy was used in the sugar sector itself, its reduced supply led to reductions in electricity contributed to the national electrical grid. Perhaps worst of all, the sector was not allocated the foreign exchange it needed to purchase the imports required for reinvestment and maintenance in generation and transmission capacity.

President Castro approached the energy situation with a micro-managed and quasi-military campaign. The advantage of this approach is that of the command economy, namely rapid though simple actions. However, the weaknesses are also those of the command economy: over-riding of people's decision-making based on their own perceived best interests, aborted gradualist learning-by-doing, and to an amplification of error.

The basic policy measures of the master-plan for the energy sector are as follows:

- a) Conservation: replacement of energy-inefficient light bulbs, fans, refrigerators etc. in peoples homes; Provision of lower-cost pressure-cookers and electric rice cookers, ultimately, for every home; Price increases for electrical use.
- b) Increased Investment in Repair and Maintenance;
- c) New Generating Capacity: Replacement of older thermal electric generating plants with hundreds of small generators spread around the Island and

increased gas-fired generating capacity; Installation of 4,900 emergency generators at polyclinics, hospitals, schools, tourist centres, food storage depots, etc.; A break-up of the national electrical grid into provincial components; Research in alternate energy sources: wind, solar and tides.

d) Exclusions from the Master-Plan: Cienfuegos nuclear generating plant: no completion considered; out of sunch with Castro's new "small is beautiful" phases; No co-ordination of the sugar and energy sectors.

Some of the components of the program, such as the gas-fired electrical generation and reduction of leakages from the electrical grid make sense. The household conservation measures may be reasonable despite their mass imposition.

The most questionable feature of the plan is the replacement of large-scale thermal-electric plants with numerous small generators dispersed around the Island. The rationale for this approach is to accelerate capacity increases rather than wait for the six years required for a large plant. But the use of the small-scale generators is also questionable, and may constitute a colossal error for the following reasons:

- the economies of large scale electricity generation will be lost;
- expensive diesel fuel will be used rather than heavy oil;
- diesel fuel will have to be transported to the generators around the island at substantial cost;
- significant investments for the storage and protection of diesel fuel in numerous supply depots will be necessary;
- problems of pilferage of diesel fuel will be significant;
- problems and costs of maintaining the numerous dispersed generators, especially the seldom used emergency back-up generators, will be high;
- synchronizing the supply of electricity generated from numerous locations to meet the minute-by-minute changes in electricity demand will be complicated;
- logistical control and management costs will escalate as the national grid is replaced with regional systems.

No other country in the world has adopted this method of generating electricity, suggesting that it does not make sense economically.

The energy master-plan ignores a role of the sugar sector in producing ethanol and contributing to energy supplies. The experience of Brazil indicates that at higher petroleum prices, ethanol from sugar cane becomes economically viable. The shut-down of some 70 out of 156 Cuba's sugar mills in 2003, the moth-balling of another 40 and the contraction of the whole sugar agro-industrial-service cluster is a major loss for electricity generation.

In summary, it is unclear whether La Revolución Energética will be a positive or negative element of Castro's legacy to Cuba. Cuba now awaits similar campaigns or grand designs to deal with housing, water, sewerage, public buildings, etc.

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### *Renewed Sucrophilia?*

Cuba has alternated from "sucro-phobia" to "sucro-philia" in its development strategies a number of times since 1961. In the first strategy for economic development in 1961 to 1963, sugar was de-emphasized completely and an attempt was made to industrialize instantaneously. When this course of action proved disastrous, Cuba shifted to "sugar as the engine of growth" strategy for the 1964, 1970 period. Castro staked the "honour and prestige of the Revolution" on producing 10 million tons by 1970. When this proved disastrous, a more balanced approach was followed for the next two decades, but with the sugar sector as a "cash-cow" slowly being pushed into the ground.

In the 1992-2003 period, sugar continued as a "cash cow," gradually being milked to death, as foreign exchange earning was squeezed out of it with little re-investment back into the sector, and with an exchange rate regime that starved it of resources.<sup>4</sup> A downward tendency for international sugar prices from a high of US\$0.13 cents per pound in 1990 to US\$0.06 in 2003 did not help the sector, but prices were declining mainly because of increased production and export market shares in higher-productivity countries such as Brazil, Australia, India and Thailand.

In 2003, a decision was reached to shut down much of the sector: 71 of the 156 sugar mills were closed for dismantling, and only about 30 of the remainder were actually in operation. The result has been a collapse of sugar production to 1.3 million tons in 2005 and probably 1.2 in 2006, with destruction of the economic base of the sugar mill towns,<sup>5</sup> and major impacts on regional development, employment and unemployment patterns, and the viability of the whole cluster of economic activities surrounding the sugar sector.

The shut-down of the sugar sector appears to be an economic calamity for Cuba, currently obscured by the profitable relationship with Venezuela and the good news in some other areas of the economy. Billions of dollars in export earnings have been lost as sugar production levels plummeted while prices rose. Sugar prices will likely remain high as consumption in China,

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4. Basically, \$US1.00 sugar exported earned Cu Peso 1.00 for the sector, so that the sector always appeared to be inefficient and a drain on the national economy. In fact, if the exchange rate had been even half that prevailing for Cuban citizens, i.e. around 26 pesos per US dollar, the sector would have been highly profitable.

5. See J. Steinecke (2006) for a description of the impact of the closing of the sugar mill on Hershey, a mill town between Havana and Matanzas.



India and other developing countries increases, as ethanol fuel from sugar becomes competitive with higher petroleum prices, and as European producers try to wean themselves off their highly subsidization of sugar production.

Will this last round of “sucro-phobia” give way to a renewed “sucro-philia” if prices can be expected to remain higher for the above-mentioned reasons? Should the sugar sector be integrated into the energy sector, with ethanol and bio-diesel products and renewed electricity generation from bagasse? Could the sugar sector recuperate even partially to an annual production level of 3.5 million tons, i.e. about half the level of the 1970s and 1980s? These are questions that pre-occupied Cuban policy makers in 2006. (Marin, 2006) Indeed, the desire to revive the sector has intensified to the degree that the Cuban government is for the first time seeking direct foreign investment in sugar cultivation and milling, and in the production of ethanol, alcohol, energy and other derivatives—not an endorsement of 47 years of socialist management of the sector. (Frank, 2006) It is probable that Cuba will in fact revive the sector at least to a reasonable capacity, perhaps around 3.5 million tons per year, with 40 to 60 mills in operation. The fundamental economic potential for the sector given Cuba’s resource endowments is simply too positive to ignore.

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### *Socialist Purification: Combating Economic Illegalities and Corruption*

Cuba is awash with economic illegalities. Here are a few that I have observed:  
Security guards at cigar factory sell cigars to passersby;

Security guard at dollar store pilfers an item to sell to a client at 20 percent of the official price;

An official uses a public car and chauffeur as a private vehicle for continuous personal purposes;

A public official uses a public vehicle and its chauffeur as private property;

A legal bicycle repairman illegally sells replacement parts;

A taxi driver provides a ride with the meter off and for a fixed fee;

A foreign organization pays a salary supplement in Convertible Pesos to its Cuban employees;

A citizen buys a birthday cake from an unlicensed baker;

A citizen sets up a satellite dish, receives foreign programming and provides 24 hour cable service to neighbors

These types of illegalities are pervasive and occur throughout the economy. Cuban citizens assert that everyone is involved. It is often stated that

everything imaginable is available on the black market, via pilferage from the state sector. An interesting example was mentioned by President Castro:

I recall, we were building an important biotechnological center in Bejucal. There was a little cemetery close by. I was making my rounds, and one day I passed by the cemetery. There I saw a colossal market where the construction crew, both the foreman and many of the workers, had put up a market selling cement, steel rods, wood, paint, you name it, all kinds of construction materials. (Castro, 2005)

More recently the scale of gasoline theft became apparent when the gasoline attendants were replaced by the “social workers” leading to a doubling of revenues from gasoline sales, according to Castro. (Castro, 2005)

Illegalities of these sorts have colonial roots in contraband trade with the French, British and later the United States as well as with pirates and the evasion of various edicts and regulations from Spain.<sup>6</sup> A large informal economy existed in the 1950s attracting the attention of the 1951 IBRD (Truslow) Mission to Cuba. The central planning system itself fostered ubiquitous illegalities.<sup>7</sup> There is also a “Common Property Resource Phenomenon” regarding illegalities: state property is perceived as belonging to no one and to everyone so that if one person does not help himself to it, someone else will. Arbitrage between the old peso economy and the convertible peso economy is an additional factor. And the limitations on legal micro-enterprise—restrictive licensing, excruciating regulations and heavy taxation—forcing otherwise legitimate enterprises into the underground economy. But most important is economic necessity: illegal economic actions are necessary to survive. Why? The central reason is that people earn *Moneda Nacional* or “old pesos” but their earnings are insufficient to purchase the basic foodstuffs. People must find additional income in “old pesos” or convertible pesos and resort to illegal actions to do so.

The consequences of these illegalities are complex and mixed. Truly criminal activities such as the sale of jobs that earn good incomes and major theft are socially and economically noxious. Low-level pilferage from the enterprises and institutions is also noxious though necessary for people’s survival, and as a measure self defense in a dysfunctional economic system.<sup>8</sup>

6. The motto of the period was “*Obedezco pero no cumplo*,” or, “I obey but do not comply.”

7. The rationing system encouraged many people to become became mini-capitalist, selling those products they did not want and buying those they did, all on flourishing “black markets.” Enterprise managers also found it necessary to resolve problems via the illegal acquisition of necessary inputs, and indeed their prowess as managers was determined by their capabilities to do so.

8. This is a point made to me in a personal communication by Adrian Denis, University of California, Los Angeles, March 6, 2006

Other types of illegalities such as payment of income supplements in cash or in kind are largely benign, permitting people to be paid a reasonable income for tasks rendered. Unlicensed (and thence officially illegal) self-employment has positive consequences, and indeed generates major benefits for the economy in terms of job creation, income generation, production of needed goods and services, high levels of domestic value-added, generation of entrepreneurship, foreign exchange earnings for art and handicraft activities. To deal with these illegalities, a campaign was launched in October 2005. As of May 2006, it has included:

October 17, 2005: some 15,000 “Social Workers” take over the gas stations to prevent pilfering of gasoline;

October 17: Military intervention in the management of the Port of Havana;

October: fulminations about the “new rich” from *cuenta propismo* and corrupt practices;

November 7-9: raids on *mercados agropecuarios* (aimed at sales by farmers prior to fulfilling their state quotas);

November 17-18: Castro's 5-6 hour speech, aimed at legal micro-enterprise and alluding to deficient ministers and officials;

Late November: *Operación Arana* against illegal satellite TV access;

November 29: Operation against un-licensed bicycle taxis in Havana;

March 22: establishment of the *Ejercito Nacional de Vigilancia*, within the *Comités por la Defensa de la Revolución*.

To deal with the illegalities, basic economic reforms focusing on the underlying causes are required, such as legalizing micro-enterprise and eliminating the dual economy. Preaching, policing, punishment and proscription are unlikely to work effectively for long if the fundamental causes are not addressed.<sup>9</sup>

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### *Central Problems*

There are a variety of continuing problems faced by the Cuban economy and its management. This section summarizes two of the foremost problems and challenges.

#### **President Castro**

The first problem for the Cuban economy is its high degree of centralization under President Castro, who continues his proclivity to micro-manage almost everything of any importance. This was seen long ago in his conduct of the campaign to produce 10 million tons of sugar in 1970. It was also apparent in

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9. For an analysis of economic illegalities and public policy, see Ritter, 2006.

the design, announcement and implementation of *La Revolución Energética* in 2006. There can be no doubting Castro's intelligence and talents. However, it is not feasible for him to become and expert in everything. Unfortunately, economics has never been his strong suit. An example of his disdain and lack of comprehension of what economics is all about was illustrated in his November 17 2005 speech at the University of Havana where he stated:

The price of oil nowadays is not in keeping with any supply and demand rule; it's not a price that is in keeping with economic rules either... The reason behind it is the shortage of this product together with the increasing and extraordinary demand for it.

Indeed, Cuba would have been immensely better off over the last 47 years if Castro had taken and understood Economics 101. Moreover, Castro's central role in Cuban society means his personal political imperatives continue to dominate Cuban society and the political system. His personal prejudices and idiosyncratic views become state objectives or public policies. The result is occasional massive error and pervasive micro-irrationalities. In a moment of personal self-analysis, after the calamitous attempt to produce 10 million tons of sugar in 1970, Castro stated, "We have cost the people too much in our process of learning... The learning process of revolutionaries in the field of economic construction is more difficult than we had imagined."

In spite of his insight, this continues to be Castro's and Cuba's reality.

This problem awaits a solution induced by Mother Nature and Father Time. There may be some inducements for President Castro's successors to follow in his domineering, micro-managing footsteps. Formal institutions are also likely to play a larger role after his departure, so that the high degree of personalistic centralization characterizing the Castro era will not likely be continued. But the Castro era may last another decade.

### **Openness, Transparency, Accountability, Democracy**

A central problem for Cuba's economy is the lack of open discussion and debate. Democratic countries have free presses and open debate on the issues of the day. Opposition political parties, academics, interest groups and NGOs, and journalists continuously analyze and critique public policy issues and proposals and the functioning of private and public enterprises and institutions. Indeed, there is major competition among economic and business journalists to be the most perspicacious analysts of public policy. Open analysis and criticism in a context of open diffusion of information, rather than official secrecy provide a mechanism for self-correction, exposing flawed policies and errors leading to improved policy design and implementation. Free analysis and criticism is also vital in order to bring illicit actions to light

and to correct errors on the part of all institutions and enterprises in a society. Unfortunately all of this is lacking in Cuba. The press, academia, interest groups, and of course politicians, perform the role of cheerleaders, unless issues have been opened up for discussion by the President and the party. For example, there was little public discussion or debate concerning the shut-down of most of the sugar sector in 2003, of the continuing attacks on self-employment, or the elements of the current *Revolución Energética*. This means that public policies get announced full-blown without critical input into their formulation, and without criticism and early correction.

The absence of checks and balances on the priorities and the micro-management by President Castro also contribute to obscuring or over-riding society's real priorities and to prolonging and amplifying error. The cost for Cuba of this situation over the years has been enormous. It is unfortunate that Cuba lacks the concept and reality of a "Loyal Opposition" within the electoral system and in civil society. These are vital for economic efficiency, not to mention, of course, for authentic participatory democracy.

Furthermore, when major policy blunders occur, there are no consequences for the highest leadership. Lower level ministers and officials can be fired and demoted. However, even when catastrophic policy mistakes are made, there are no consequences and thence no meaningful accountability on the part of the micro-managing president or for the first vice-president.

Another major economic problem for Cuba is the lack of transparency and absence of critical and serious self analysis. Other developing countries are becoming increasingly transparent in their presentation of detailed information on which policy analysis must be based, and increasingly present such information on the Internet.<sup>10</sup> In Cuba's case, however, the basic methodologies for the measurement of fundamental economic data such as labor force, employment and unemployment, consumer price index and national accounts are not public. As a result, there can be little confidence that this basic information and analyses based on it are meaningful. Certain areas of the economy appear to be essentially off limits to careful analysis and scrutiny, notably the bio-technological industry and the conglomerate enterprises that straddle the peso and the convertible peso economies. Finally, the political decision-making process within the highest levels of the Government is a "black box," the workings of which we can only speculate about, as there are no Departments of Political Science in Cuban Universities that make it their business to analyze this aspect of the political process.

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10. Chile and Tanzania are examples of countries that now present make detailed economic information generally available, with household survey information presented on the web by Tanzania (2006) and detailed income distribution surveys made public by Chile (2005)

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## *Conclusion*

Cuba is in the process of formulating a new development strategy. The basic reasons for this are the economic recovery and the ending of the extreme crisis that Cuba endured in the first half of the 1990s, Castro's vision and his priorities for Cuba together with a concern for his legacy. The international environment has also led to an opening for Cuba in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially with Castro's relationships with the Presidents of Venezuela and Bolivia, but with empathy and support from other countries as well.

Cuba is not "in transition" towards a decentralized market economy or to a pluralistic participatory political democracy with freedom of expression and assembly. On the other hand, Cuba has re-oriented its economic development strategy significantly. It also has regressed to some extent and moved towards greater centralization and de-marketization in economic organization.

The new development strategy places emphasis on medical services, petroleum derivatives, and nickel as key sources of foreign exchange for the future. Established sources of foreign exchange will continue, including tourism, tobacco, rum, sugar, bio-technology products, and citric fruit as well as remittances from Cubans abroad. Of special interest is the drive to build a "knowledge economy" with large investments in higher education and informatics. Cuba has recognized the urgent need for rebuilding basic infrastructure following decades of neglect and disinvestment. President Castro's energy program is an attempt to resuscitate the sector, with a multi billion dollar investment program. The energy master-plan has some weak as well as positive elements that create a risk of high cost and ineffectiveness.

There are a number of uncertainties concerning the possible future success of the new development strategy. There is no certainty that the new export sectors—medical services, petroleum derivatives, and nickel—will prove to be winners in the longer term, and other merchandise exports may not thrive as well. Some risks are of course unavoidable—future nickel price volatility for example. The knowledge economy objective may pay dividends in the long term but there also is a danger of over-producing excessive numbers of graduates in areas that society does not need. Finally, there are two specific problems that will impede future economic success. The first of these is economic over-centralization together with the over-bearing micro-management of the President. Second, the absence of a free press and of freedom of assembly, the absence of transparency, the blockage of free information flows leading to the amplification and prolonging of policy blunders—such as the severe restrictions on micro-entrepreneurship and possibly some

elements of the energy master-plan and of the drive towards a “knowledge economy.”

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# *Prospects for Sustainable Energy*

*Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado<sup>1</sup>*

“Energy services are essential for sustainable development. The way in which these services are produced, distributed and used affects the social, economic and environmental dimensions of any development achieved. Although energy itself is not a basic human need, it is critical for the fulfillment of all needs. Lack of access to diverse and affordable energy services means that the basic needs of many people are not being met.” — A Framework for Action on Energy, World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg 2002

In the summer of 2005, Hurricane Dennis had a devastating impact on the Cuba’s energy infrastructure. A vast majority of the damage occurred in the eastern part of the island, a region that had been generally spared extensive damage from the spate of hurricane activity in the Caribbean over the course of the past few years. But this is ironic because by the end of 2005, Cuba had suffered 16 direct hits from hurricanes in a 15 year period. Dennis, like some of its predecessors, had essentially cut the national electrical grid in half. There are two main network links traversing the island east-to-west. The lines nearest the south-central coast bore the brunt of the hurricane’s force and areas in the vicinity of Cienfuegos went nearly two weeks without electricity after the storm. All provisions and potable water had to be trucked in almost daily to offset the already arduous tasks of cleaning up the mess. For some observers this compounded an already difficult situation related to energy production on the island. (Curbelo Alonso, 2005)

After remarkable gains in first stabilizing and then increasing energy production after the Special Period, the recent past had been disappointing.

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1. The author wishes to thank the Cuban Ministry of Basic Industry, CUPET - Cuba Petroleo S.A., Union Electrica de Cuba, Sherritt Inc., Alamar Associates, The World Security Institute and in particular the following individuals for granting me access and valuable information for conducting this research: Kirby Jones, Vice Minister Raul Perez de Prado, Eloy Leon Gomez, Bruce Blair and Glen Baker.

While Cuba has been able to relieve its external dependency on oil imports by increasing its domestic production capacity, this has not allowed Cuba to address a more pressing issue of an ageing energy production infrastructure. 1996 was the last year that any major renovations were undertaken and almost all other production facilities date back to the 1970s and early 1980s, and are of varying design and varying states of maintenance (or the lack of it) and disrepair.

The energy efficiencies gained in the Energas/Sherritt Oil joint venture of re-capturing gas and using it for energy generation was limited to three sites of limited generation capacity only. Moreover, the poor quality of Cuban oil (heavy and sulfurous), while representative of a larger share of energy production (over 95 percent in 2004 and 2005) has taken a toll on existing thermo-electric generation facilities that were already plagued by questionable maintenance regimes and a lack of spare parts and prone to being chronically offline.<sup>2</sup>

By 2004, an increasing demand for electricity on the island required energy officials to run the island's energy production at levels above the 90 percent of capacity. It was simply a matter of time until the precarious balance of poor quality oil, old and failing thermo-electric generation facilities, and transmission and delivery system was upset. By early 2005, the results were dramatic. After having reversed the trend of *apagones* (blackouts) so prevalent during the early stages of the "Special Period," they appeared once again and this time the lack of oil was not to blame.<sup>3</sup> Plant breakdowns caused the productive capacity of electricity to be reduced to less than 80 percent prompting energy officials to reluctantly ration electricity in the Havana metropolitan area. It was reported that this prompted much in-fighting within the Cuban government resulting in the dismissal of Marcos Portal as the Minister of Basic Industry. (Erickson, 2005; Reuters News Service, 2004)

Yet, that itself did little to stem the growing public dissatisfaction over energy matters. In Marianao and Habana Vieja spontaneous demonstrations broke out in May and June 2005 over chronic blackout conditions.<sup>4</sup> After promises of increased productive capacity online by July 2005, the impact of Hurricane Dennis essentially rendered them empty. Another factor mitigating the integrity of the electrical grid is the associated losses in the transmission

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2. Although Cuban energy officials admit that the Antonio Guiteras 330MW thermo-electric generation facility in Matanzas has been taken offline there has been little in the way of explanation other than to state it was plagued with significant breakdown and repair issues.

3. To emphasize the gravity of this situation FOCAL, the Candian Foundation on the Americas dedicated an entire section of its *2005 Cuba/Energy Chronology* to the "Electricity Crisis" citing no less than 26 events that were reported in the international media. ([www.cubasource.org/index.asp](http://www.cubasource.org/index.asp))

4. Loss of water is one of the major service disruptions caused during blackout periods owing to the fact that water pumping stations are usually run off the electrical system.

and delivery system. The most recent figures place these losses at 15 to 20 percent, and over 30 percent across the entire system. (de la O, 2006) The end result of these recent developments has been powerful as Cuba has been forced to contend with the following factors:

The rapid decline of energy productive capacity that must be addressed post-haste;

The nagging decrepitness of the national transmission and delivery system also demanding immediate attention;

*Apogones*, if they are an inevitable by-product of the energy problem, will increase public dissatisfaction with the regime.

From this we can only surmise that the government's reaction to these outpourings will be less than benevolent; and, developments under the growth of international cooperation in energy (renovating refineries, increased investment in oil and gas exploration) will do little to address these critical short term problems.

Added to this domestic element of the energy problem is the growing presence of new actors on the Cuban scene. Over the course of the past three years, both Venezuela and China have made significant inroads in Cuba's energy sector. Venezuela by virtue of the massive imports from that oil rich country (75,000 to 85,000 barrels of oil per day) and China by its investment in the energy sector, both of which will generate new and much needed capital inflows that will increase economic capacity and improve infrastructure in the energy sector. But assuming that there are no changes in the Cuban government or any significant changes in the U.S. policy towards Cuba, these new players on the Cuban stage present a threat to the U.S. interests. This is ironic, inasmuch as the U.S. has no formal economic or diplomatic relations with Cuba, and yet considers it a strategic interest while simultaneously seeking to isolate and cut-off Cuba from the rest of the world.

Because of the less than favorable relations between the governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba over the past 45 years the free flow of accurate information has become and continues to be a somewhat rare commodity. This owes in large part to inaccurate reporting, less than reliable sources and politically motivated disinformation emanating from both sides of the Straits of Florida. In some areas of inquiry, this has been the case for much more than just ideological reasons, especially so in areas critical to the material well-being and the survival en lo actual of the Cuban state.

Without a doubt, energy has been one of those areas. This paper seeks to fill that gap by presenting an analysis that definitively and comprehensively speaks to the issue of energy development and the challenges facing the Cuban state in both the short and long term. More importantly, this requires

us to frame this inquiry within an additional context that addresses more than just the existing and possible base of resources and constraints facing Cuban energy policy makers, that context being sustainability.

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### *A Criterion for Energy Policy Sustainability*

While being aware of, and sensitive to the nature of the various narratives that animate efforts to design and implement sustainable energy policy, states (for better or worse) are served by standing organizations (governmental agencies and bureaucracies) that, while not diametrically opposed to, are often ignorant of such principles in decision-making. Moreover, the in-state capacity (or lack of capacity) requires these states to seek external assistance to carry out the development of energy policy. Detailed below is one such effort. The *Organizacion Latino Americano de Energia* or OLADE, has devised a general criteria for what they term “sustainable energy development.” As such, it serves as an arena for the reflection upon and formulation of energy policies that can legitimately be termed “sustainable.”<sup>5</sup> While by no means are these principles comprehensive, they do provide a template or heuristic orientation to the design, implementation and evaluation of a sustainable energy development policy that is consistent with the notion of generating and supporting a social adaptive capacity within a particular setting. Detailed below are the OLADE principles.

#### **Energy Security**

States under development must constantly guard against disruptions in the source of energy supply, production and distribution. This is a paramount concern owing to the often tenuous nature of developing economies and the generally high level of dependency upon imports of oil and petroleum related products. In essence, these states cannot account for, neither to sufficiently inure themselves from the vagaries in world market prices for oil, nor are they situated to deflect the externalities of disruptions in trade due to war, natural disasters, and the like. Energy security is contingent on the state’s ability to develop a sound energy infrastructure that can account for temporary losses of energy supply. The key objective is to diversify and augment the domestic sources of energy in general, thereby diminishing dependence on any one source of supply and perhaps reducing the dependence on imported energy sources. While it is beyond the capacity of most developing states, some possess storage and refinement capacity that when coupled with domestic production provides the state with a modicum of additional secu-

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5. Energy use can also be evaluated using indicators for sustainable energy development (ISED) developed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). An example of the application of ISED can be found in David Perez, I Lopez, and I Berdellans, “Evaluating Energy Policy in Cuba using ISED,” *Natural Resources Forum* 29 (2005) 298-307.

ity. Beyond the scope of a sole reliance on oil, some states have sought to increase energy production by developing hydro and nuclear power capabilities. Few if any developing states have the requisite financial and technical resources for such an undertaking and often encounter additional challenges in the pursuit. (Benjamin-Alvarado, 2000)

### **Improving Energy Efficiency**

States under development often face resource constraints that limit the full and integral application of advanced technologies. Sustainable development requires the development of domestic technical capabilities that contribute to the effective management of these types of systems. Major infrastructural development requires an on-going regime of preventative maintenance and replacement of hardware to ensure the efficient operation of such systems. The failure to maintain the regime often results in poor performance, reduced productivity and a significant loss of return on investment. Moreover, if states are plagued by losses from theft and diversion this further erodes the return on investment, raises the costs of transmission and delivery of electricity.

The state must also work to improve energy conservation and limit waste in the commercial, industrial and residential sectors of the economy. This often requires aggressive public information campaigns, the replacement of high energy use appliances and machinery, and the inculcation of values and norms consistent with energy saving and conservation.

The failure to address any of these concerns will almost certainly result in the erosion and limits the ability of state's to effectively design and implement a meaningful program of energy efficiency, either in the short term or the long term.

### **Greater Use of Renewable Energy**

The diversification of energy supply is a must for developing economies. The reliance and dependence upon imported oil and petroleum over-exposes developing states to the vagaries of world market prices and supply. Most developing states do not have sufficient storage and refining capabilities in the case of extended loss of, or major disruptions in supply of oil exports. Those states possessing a relative comparative advantage in natural resources in terms of solar-, wind- and hydro – power should assiduously pursue their long-term development. Considering the high costs of initial development, these renewable energy sources provide developing states with an additional buffer in energy and economic security over the long term.

### **Making Markets Function**

The principle driving forces behind this reform movement in the development community, include the following: (a) the poor performance of the state-run electricity sector in terms of high costs, inadequate expansion of access to electricity service for the general population, and/or unreliable supply; (b) the inability of the state sector to finance the needed expenditures on new investment and/or maintenance; (c) the need to remove subsidies to the sector in order to release resources to other pressing public expenditure needs; and (d) the desire to raise immediate revenue for the government through the sale of assets from the sector. Sector problems in energy are most likely to be felt in terms of non-delivery of the product. Power blackouts and brownouts (*apagones*) are the most dramatic instance of this, with their very high costs of alternative supply for those who have come to count on the public supply of electricity. Quality of service, which takes many forms, also can deteriorate and impact users adversely. The failure of supply may be partly associated with very low operating efficiency caused by lack of maintenance, theft, etc., and partly associated with lack of investment caused by financial restrictions. The inability of a state enterprise (and eventually government) to finance new and needed investment is often compounded by poor public sector price or tariff setting, which does not allow the state to recoup all of its costs, as well as by inefficiency in collecting all revenue due it. Hence, a strong hypotheses is that policy reform is more likely where there are obvious problems of shortage of supply, such as blackouts, and less likely where there is excess capacity, making financing investment less likely.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Proper Role of Technology and Research**

There is a large and growing technological gulf between the major industrial and developing states. Any state energy development program should have as one of its primary objectives the development of individuals possessing core scientific competencies. This enables states to access new and advanced technologies capable of providing the developing state the ability to effectively and efficiently exploit them as a part the overall development project. The investment in human capital then ensures the ability of the state to evaluate the best means for achieving sustainable development. Unfortunately, for most states this is not a task that can be taken in isolation. The international community must understand the implications of this “technological divide.” Not only is the technological potential for development squandered, the failure to more widely disseminate technological innovations and methodologies

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6. This is especially important in when state electricity firms engage in energy development through turn-key projects. States lacking the personnel trained in all aspects of operational safety, management, repair and maintenance quickly realize lost value and efficiency in their investment.

has profound implications for planning, evaluation research and public administration when such large infrastructural projects are put into place.

### **Increasing Access to Energy**

At the beginning to the 21st century, the access to electricity in the Americas varies greatly from 35 percent coverage in Haiti to 98 percent coverage in Barbados. Resources for the transmission and delivery of electricity (and the lack of them) and geography also play large role in development of national electrical grids. Moreover, in the face of such constraints, policy-makers may favor interests whose linkages to, and demands upon, state power are meaningful. In some settings this contributes to what can be termed the “Bel-India” syndrome. That is, the wildly uneven development resulting in pockets of development, on one hand, that rival the posh urban settings in a developed state like Belgium, and on the other hand, the squalor and misery associated with the most egregious forms of abject poverty and penury like that found in parts of India. In reference to the opening quotation of this chapter, energy, while not a basic need, is indeed critical to the fulfillment of those needs. The access to energy is at the core of our understanding of equity, justice and the quest for material well-being in the modern world.

### **Sustainable Transportation**

The major urban centers of the world are increasingly mired in gridlocked traffic and choking in dangerous levels of air pollution. The principle of sustainable transportation calls upon all states to begin addressing these challenges by looking to increased the capacity of infrastructure to deal more effectively with the movement of populations in and out of major urban centers. This also implies: (a) the more efficient consumption of petroleum products for public, private and state transportation; (b) the promotion of for efficient fuel consumption standards; and (c) the promotion and development of efficient mass transit systems.<sup>7</sup>

### **Environmental, Health and Safety Concerns**

This criterion is the most obvious and perhaps the most easily evaluated because it relies on formal responses by states to address these concerns. The extent to which states: (a) provide adequate regulation and legislation for public and environmental concerns; (b) creates responsive bureaucracies (both administrative and technical) that place into force these regulations; (c) provides a legal framework for the adjudication of violations, and (d) provides sufficient resources to the responsible government agencies, determines

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7. This is especially important in when state electricity firms engage in energy development through turn-key projects. States lacking the personnel trained in all aspects of operational safety, management, repair and maintenance quickly realize lost value and efficiency in their investment.

the effectiveness of state responses to this critical component of sustainability.

TABLE 2-1. Criteria for Sustainable Energy Development

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**Criteria**

Energy security

Improving energy efficiency

Greater use of renewable energy

Making markets function

The proper role of technology and research

Sustainable transportation

Environmental health and safety concerns

Source: OLADE, 2004

All told, these principles are not efforts easily undertaken or financed by developing states. But they do reflect the guiding heuristic that states must assume if they are to successfully address the need for and implementation of sustainable energy policy. Obviously, this is not done in isolation as it reflects a posture that must be assumed if such endeavors are to be even remotely successful. It is not to cast aspersions or doubts at developing states or emerging markets, rather it is a reflection of the need for the redoubling of efforts by both the developing states and the international development community to guard against the failures of the past. Rather than being viewed as a repudiation of the prevailing neo-liberal models of economic development, sustainable energy development is the product of the integration of a wider set of imperatives that seek to expand development beyond the purely instrumental indicators of capital cost and return on investment toward a heterogeneous model that serves multiple interests in a sustaining fashion.

These ideas are critically important for three reasons: First, the extent to which energy policy initiatives can be deemed sustainable will be highly determinate of the ability of policy measures to meet both the existing and future energy demands on the island under any scenario; Second, the sustainability of Cuban energy initiatives must necessarily take into consideration the external political and economic environment including U.S.–Cuban relations and global energy markets; and third, the sustainability must include the extent to which energy policy is adaptable to the evolving natural resource environment, inasmuch as all states' must take into consideration the impact of diminishing global stocks of fossil fuels, changing weather systems, etc. (Kunstler, 2006)<sup>8</sup>



It suffices to say that in the post-Cold War era that energy has been and remains the Achilles heel of the Cuban economy although to a much lesser extent than it was in 1992. The loss of Soviet subsidies and the resulting energy catastrophe of the early 1990s, the effort to develop a nuclear energy capability, and the recurring crisis due to an ageing energy complex highlight the tenuous nature of Cuban energy. The recent discovery of oil reserves off the north coast of the island provides yet another arena of inquiry that perhaps offers Cuban energy policy-makers with a buffer against the vagaries of world oil markets, but of that there is no guarantee. Cuba is confronted with a mounting bill for the modernization of the energy complex and a legitimate question that arises is, who will ultimately bear that cost, as it may total into the hundreds of billions of dollars?

This analysis is based on field work conducted in Havana over the course of the past three years and a series of primary interviews and discussions of these matters with Cuban senior government officials, and representatives of national and foreign firms presently engaged in any number of energy related activities on the island. Especially critical to the analysis is the presentation of information recently collected at the U.S.–Cuba Energy Summit in February, 2006, in Mexico City that included discussions with American oil industry representatives, and extended interviews with Cuban President Fidel Castro and high level Cuban energy policy makers in February and March 2006.<sup>9</sup> This includes discussions related to the following issue areas: oil exploration and production in Cuba; the status of Cuba's energy infrastructure; international cooperation in Cuba's energy sector; the development of alternative energy projects; and the plausibility of various future energy scenarios in Cuba. As such this discussion will serve as the basis of the evaluation of the sustainability Cuban energy policy objectives.

The analysis concludes with an argument that Cuba's energy future will largely be determined by the extent to which American resources are open and accessible to Cuba in its effort to renovate and restore the integrity of the island's energy infrastructure. It will also offer a series of policy recommendations for both Cuban energy officials and American policy makers and businesses that could possibly serve as a template for ensuring that the results of bilateral, regional and international cooperation produces a lasting and sustainable future for energy development for Cuba. This includes recom-

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8. Kuntsler argues that as we have already begun to experience a "long emergency" in terms of a changing energy reality, states' should radically change consumption patterns rather than proceed with a "business-as-usual" mentality toward the manner in which we organize of collective lives in terms of energy consumption patterns.

9. The author was part of an American delegation that visited Cuba from March 2-5, 2006 to discuss collective energy security issues. Included in that visit were meetings, site visits and interviews with officials from: Cupet, the Cuban state oil enterprise; Union Electrica, the Cuban state electrical utility enterprise; the Cuban Ministry of Basic Industry; and members of the Cuban Council of State including President Fidel Castro.

mendations for substantive political, economic and environmental considerations as they pertain to energy development prospects.

The analysis frames the discussion of the abovementioned issues area within the context of pathways to renewal of Cuba's energy sector, long-term energy development, and reintegration of Cuban energy prospects within the context of regional energy security interests.

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### *The Context for Renewal and Revolution in Cuba's Energy Sector*

A brief history of the Cuban energy sector in period since the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the loss of economic subsidies to the Cuban state can be marked by the devastation, recovery, renewal and revolution within the energy sector. One can hardly imagine the toll that losing more than half of the nation's oil imports would have on the American economy but this is indeed what transpired in Cuba in the period between 1991 and 1993. The well-documented collapse of the Cuban economy compelled the Castro regime to put into place strict measures aimed at easing the collapse of the Cuban society. In part this is the success of the "Special Period in A Time of Peace." Because Cuba had lost its preferential trade relations the Soviet Union, whereas Cuba would receive 13 million tons of oil annually at below world oil prices and the Soviet Bloc nations would agree to purchase Cuban sugar at above world market prices. Cuban annual demand was between 11 and 11.5 millions tons of oil, and it was free to sell the excess on the open market in order to earn much needed hard currency. (Benjamin-Alvarado and Belkin, 1994)

The impact of the loss of Soviet oil was crushing. As a result, Cuba's economy collapsed by over 35 percent in a two year period, and its industrial capacity reduced by over half. All aspects of Cuban life were impacted by the devastation to the energy sector from the almost complete disappearance of gasoline for public and private use, significant periods of blackouts and brownouts. These were literally the "dark days" of the Special Period where economic and social lives were brought to a standstill and the prospects of recovery were indeed grim. At the same time, Cuba was trying to keep its nuclear energy development program alive. Beginning in 1982, Cuba and the Soviet Union had been working together to construct two 440 mw VVER model, light-water reactors at Juragua in Cienfuegos province. Completing the project would have certainly solved the energy dilemma and the idea was originally hatched in the 1970s as a means of addressing Cuba's dependency on oil imports. Over the course of the next decade, the Chernobyl accident, the Soviet Union's lack of experience in building a plant in the tropics, con-

struction delays and project re-designs, and the collapsing capacity of the Soviet Union had brought the entire venture to a halt by 1992 when it was only partially constructed and in need of perhaps US\$1 billion dollars to complete. Cuba would spend the next few years attempting to secure the funding to complete the reactors. This issue was compounded by growing concerns over the safety of the reactors should they become operational. By the end of the decade, Cuba would officially abandon the project, but quietly it had looked in another direction to address its long-term energy concerns. (Benjamin-Alvarado, 1998)

### **Recovery through Domestic Means – Increasing Oil Production**

Cuba had long been aware of the existence of oil reserves in the Matanzas-Varadero region on the north coast of the island. Indeed most of Cuba's oil industry was concentrated in the region. But they were also aware that the quality of the oil was heavy and contained high levels of sulfur. The quality of the oil was such that it had little potential for being refined into gasoline or any other high quality petroleum by-product. But the Cubans found that it could be used in the nation's network of thermoelectric power generation plants to produce electricity. Over the course of the next 10 years Cuba increased the production of its crudo nacional and dedicated almost all of it to the production of electricity by burning it in the national network of thermoelectric generation facilities. Cuba now produces in excess of 95 percent of all of its electricity using Cuban oil. This has allowed Cuba concentrate its search for external sources to be focused on refined petroleum products for industrial, commercial and domestic uses. Under that scenario Cuba still must import nearly 50 percent the oil that it consumes on an annual basis and this would necessitate that Cuba dedicate nearly half of its export earnings annually to meet that demand for oil imports. But since 2000 Cuba has had the benefit of receiving significant oil imports from Venezuela (nearly 85,000 barrels per day) in an exchange reminiscent to the preferential arrangements that it enjoyed during the Cold War with the former Soviet Union. Cuba has exported (as it were) nearly 30,000 medical personnel to the Chavez regime in Venezuela to provide basic preventive medical care to the poor of that oil rich country in exchange for oil imports. This may explain why the Cuban economic indicators have remained relatively robust in a time of downturns in tourism since the 9/11 disaster (4.2 percent increase in GDP in 2005 with a projected growth of 4.3 percent in 2006) (Morris, 2005) and why it has been able to expand the social welfare safety net on the island, by increasing salaries and distributing household appliances across the entire island as a part of its energy conservation program. These efforts have prompted significant "chatter" on the Cuban street that Cuba will soon be an oil rich country due to

the oil discoveries and the rising number of joint venture projects with a growing number of international oil exploration and production firms.

TABLE 2-2. Energy and Electricity Use

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2002
Final energy use, Mtoe	10.30	9.96	11.51	11.78	13.89	7.51	8.25	8.16
Share of sectors, %								
Industry	76	66.8	66.6	67.2	70.9	73.3	66.7	64.1
Transport	6.6	9.1	10.3	11.3	9	8.8	8.4	9.3
Services	10.2	14.7	13.4	10.5	11.2	7.4	13.7	14
Household	7.2	9.4	9.7	11	8.9	10.6	11.2	12.6
Electricity use, GWh	3.983	5.517	8.574	9.924	11.950	9.133	9.794	10.482
Generation matrix, %								
Fossil	80.13	87.57	89.48	90.28	89.75	93.87	92.52	93.34
Renewable	19.87	12.43	10.52	9.72	10.25	6.13	7.48	6.66

Sources: CEE (1986, 1990); ONE (1998-2003)

Table 2 reveals that while Cuba increased its total GW/h of electricity production by over 14 percent in the period from 1995 until 2002, the amount of electricity generated using fossil fuels remained constant at around 93 percent annually. (Perez, et al, 2005) Hidden in those figures is the amount of Cuban oil that is used for the production of electricity. This amount has increased steadily from 10 percent in 1990 to the 95 percent figure consistently presented by Cuban energy officials.<sup>10</sup> Cuba presently produces around 75,000 barrels per day of a total daily demand of 170,000 barrels. (Piñon Cervera, 2006)

### **Cuba's Joint Venture Success – Energas, Sherritt and the Environment**

In 1997, Cuba launched an ambitious Energas joint venture project with the Canadian energy and mining firm Sherritt Ltd. to convert flared gas from its Matanzas-Varadero oil fields into fuel through a combined cycle process. (Benjamin-Alvarado, 2000: 97-98) The project would allow Cuba to make use of the gas for low yield generation facilities in Boca de Jaruco and Varadero on 15MW and 30MW respectively. The project was financed by an initial public offering (IPO) in Canada by Sherritt and construction was completed

10. This is information presented by Cuban energy officials at professional conferences and private meetings in February and March 2006 in Mexico City and Havana.



ners? Sherritt Oil is a medium sized firm with medium sized aspirations that simultaneously seeks to produce a reasonable return on investment for its ventures in Cuba while operating a humanistic commercial enterprise that is working within a country in dire need of reliable energy sources that operates under the strictures of a command economy. (Hatt, 2005)

This perhaps explains why Sherritt has been successful where others failed. The terms of “doing business” in Cuba are often too severe for conventional profit-seeking firms, but in this case, Sherritt appears to have altered its basis for success to coordinate its objectives with those available under the prevailing Cuban joint venture model. The Spanish oil firm, Repsol spent \$53 million in oil and gas exploration in 2004 and came up with nothing and yet has contracted to continue exploration of 8 offshore tracts on the northwest coast of Cuba.<sup>11</sup>

It is also interesting that all, of the firms operating in Cuba at the present time are operating with dated technology and must be able to service all of its own exploration operations. This owes in part to the fact that American oil engineering represents the leading edge of oil exploration technology and explicit in all of its foreign sales are export control stipulations that none of that technology can be sold or transferred to a short but well known list of countries: Iraq; North Korea; until recently Libya; and of course, Cuba. This prescription adds up to 30 percent to the operating costs that what is still for Sherritt, and other joint venture partners, a profit making venture. Sherritt must also account for being largely responsible for providing all engineering support services as Cuba provides few of these services owing to the technology denial on the part of the U.S.

On this point, the U.S. embargo has been successful in relegating Cuba’s energy development schemes to a less than world class status. Moreover, it appears to have had a residual effect – as not to appear to be suffering from a technology gap, Cuba pursues upstream investment, such as the purchase of three drilling rigs from the Chinese for symbolic as well as practical reasons.<sup>12</sup> Legitimately, given the existing resources on the island and interest from oil and gas exploration firms from Europe, Latin America and Canada, and especially because of Cuba’s cozy relationship with oil-rich Venezuela it

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11. One could argue that like many oil exploration firms, Repsol subjected itself to “gambler’s ruin” by placing all of its chips on a single bet -making the enormous oil find in Cuba. From all estimates, there is oil in Cuba but not readily present and of the scope necessary for firms like Respol, Petrobras, Total SA or ExxonMobil for that matter to justify in the already risky business of oil and gas exploration. For an excellent review of the joint venture project, see Eloise Linger, “Joint Ventures: New Developments in Cuban Mining and Oil Exploration,” paper presented at the National Summit on Cuba, June 10, 2005, Mobile, Alabama.

12. Cuba Petroleo (CUPET) signed a \$40 million dollar contract for drilling rigs with China’s SINOPEC Group – a state-run oil firm to conduct drilling operations in Santa Cruz de Norte, some 33 miles east of Havana. EFE, Prensa Latina, 1/31/05 and Reuters, 6/4/05).

is perhaps a questionable investment. American oil industry experts suggest that a small country like Cuba could derive a greater benefit from investment in oil infrastructure such as pipelines, terminals, batteries, etc. These are the types of services essential to oil production and serve as revenue generating sources long after the reverie of an oil find. In an inherently risk driven industry it makes better sense for a small, relatively resource-constrained state to pursue this course of energy investment.

FIGURE 2-2. North Cuban Heavy Oil Belt



Source: CUPET, 2006

Another example of the Cuban effort to address *la problemática energética* is the creation of remote diesel fueled generation sub-stations in Pinar del Rio province. (Perez de Prado, 2006; de la O, 2006) In the past 16 years, Cuba has suffered direct hits from hurricanes in the Caribbean. While there has been almost no loss of human lives from these natural disasters, the impact on the national electrical grid of the country has been devastating. This owes to the fact that the electrical grid extends the length of the island, traversing it east to west. Almost all of the hurricanes pass over the island in a south-north direction essentially slicing the island in half, destroying everything in its path, and in this case, the towers support the high-tension electrical wires of the national grid.

After the storms' passing, these towers often resemble the set of monster movie where the path of the beast has rendered a swath of flattened and

twisted metal in its wake. This was most critically evident in 2004 in the path of Hurricane Charley. The path of Charley cut across the island over Pinar del Rio province on August 12th (Fidel Castro's birthday) with winds in excess of 145 mph, cutting the national electrical grid in half and leaving the entire province of nearly a quarter of a million inhabitants without electricity for the next 14 days. The Cuban electrical utility, Union Electrica and the Cuban Ministry of Basic Industry subsequently designed and implemented a project that would address the nature of energy supply disruptions to the grid from natural disasters and allow for additional electricity to be generated during peak demand periods.

Most importantly, this would enable the officials of Union Electrica to deal with an increase in the number of, and the strength of hurricanes and tropical storms in the region.

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### *Buscando Oro Negro: The Reality of a Cuban Oil Bonanza*

In December 2004, the Cuban regime of Fidel Castro announced that it had discovered a significant oil reserve off the northwest coast of the island. More importantly, the potential of the oil finds could dramatically decrease the island's dependence on imported oil and could serve as boon to the Cuban economy. There has been much conjecture of the size and scope of oil reserves in the 59 offshore tracts in Cuban exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The working estimates are that there is the potential for 120 thousand barrels of oil per day, perhaps more, but the sea floor is over a mile deep and the oil reserves perhaps an additional 3,000 feet beneath the sea floor. This lies within the capacity of the existing oil drilling technology, but as previously explained, the task of extracting the oil will have to be undertaken using second- or third-generation technology because of U.S. export control regulations against trading with Cuba. The challenge for Cuban oil development policy makers is to simultaneously pursue frontier exploration in the Gulf of Mexico, while continuing to produce from the existing mature oil reserves with higher levels of efficiency and environmental integrity. Add to this challenge the additional question of securing the appropriate technology for the task.

The shaded blocks in Figure 3 indicate the 16 blocks under contract with various oil companies. Six blocks are under contract to Repsol-YSP from Spain,<sup>13</sup> four blocks with Sherritt from Canada, six blocks are presently under negotiation, and the remaining 43 are presently open. According to Cuban energy officials, the objectives for 2006 are to increase the drilling of wells by over 50 percent, to carry out a seismic campaign to collect more data for



the available tracts, to increase the domestic production of oil and gas (presently 85,000 barrels/day, and to put more drilling rigs into operation.

FIGURE 2-3. Cuba's Exclusive Economic Zone for Oil Exploration



Source: CUPET, 2006

Since the announcement of the discovery of oil reserves off the northwest coast, discussions with American oil industry representatives strongly suggest that there is credibility to the claims being made.

### *The Long-term Energy Development Prospects and the New “Cuban Energy Revolution”*

Cuba's present electricity market has 3.18 million customers. Its annual generation is 11.30 million giga-watt/hours (GW/h) with an average peak hourly demand of 2,199 megawatts. The structure of electricity consumption is 45 percent residential, and 55 percent non-residential (commercial, service and state enterprises). Rather than concentrating the focus on energy development on increasing oil production and hence the production of electricity, Cuban

13. Spanish oil-prospecting company Repsol YPF resumed subsurface sounding in Cuban waters, following a failed attempt last year. With a new joint-venture deal that entitles it to 40 percent of all revenues and puts it at the helm of the drilling rig, the company is planning to pick up where it left off. Other shareholders in the joint-venture will be Chinese state-owned CNOOC, with a 30 percent stake, and Norwegian Norsk Hydro, with the remaining 30 percent. (*Notimex*, 3/6/05)

energy officials have decided to take a revolutionary course towards addressing its energy demands—that is to eliminate waste in the production, transmission and delivery of electricity, while simultaneously improving conservation and reducing waste on the consumption end. Unlike open societies where consumers are free to consume to their hearts content and producers are free to pass the costs of waste onto consumers, the Cuban energy revolution seeks to minimize and hopefully eliminate these losses and concentrate on the energy savings as a source of the production of what have been termed “nega-watts.” Nega-watts are the idea that energy savings can be viewed as the production of new sources of energy through conservation measures, including the introduction of high energy efficiency household appliances, the application of a graduated fee/fine structure in the domestic sector, the rehabilitation of the national transmission and delivery system, and a concerted effort to minimize losses at the production inputs of energy generation.

The essential aim of the “Cuban Energy Revolution” is to create a new energy saving culture in the Cuban society.<sup>14</sup> This effort is coordinated through the Programa de Ahorros de Energia Cubana (PAEC), a program first implemented in 1997 to promote the following measures:

The promotion of energy efficiency in the commercial, industrial and residential sectors through an aggressive program of public information through all instruments of the state media, schools and community organizations;

The distribution of efficient household appliances, this has commenced in Pinar del Rio province and will extend across the entire island;

Increase efficiency in the production, transmission and delivery of electricity, including the process of rehabilitation of networks has begun in order to reduce loss in distribution and low voltage levels the production of distribution transformers will be triplicated, and new brigades of linesmen are being formed in the whole country. (de la O, 2006)

In addition, in recent years Cuba has developed an increasing capacity to extract significant quantities of gas that are generated with the petroleum production. The associated gas equivalence used has been about one MM tons/year. Cuban energy officials are seeking to continue this practice and potentially increase the usage of associated gas in energy generation. They plan on installing two new gas turbines and with a second combined cycle facility developed by ENERGAS, an additional 90 MW will be available in the near future. The thermo-electrical plant in Boca de Jaruco (east of Havana) is ready for simultaneous burning of associated gas and crude oil. Cuban energy officials will augment the national electrical generation capacity with the

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14. This policy objective was formally unveiled during Fidel Castro's speech commemorating the Moncada Barracks attack on July 26, 2005. It has been an important part of most policy speeches related to energy in the time since, and it is now referred to as the “Energy Revolution.”

installation of batteries for energy generation plants, synchronized to the National Electric System (SEN), for generation in rural sub-stations, and the installation of independent energy generation plants in key places of economy and services. (Leon Gomez, 2006; de la O, 2006)

FIGURE 2-4. Cuba's Proven Oil Reserves



Source: CUPET, 2006

The development of new and renovated thermo-electric generation capacity is being conducted in alternative energy resources domestically and in conjunction with projects with foreign universities, governments and inter-governmental organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which is presently coordinating a project on the Isla de la Juventud with Cuba's *Centro de la Gerencia de Proyectos Priorizados* of the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment (CITMA) to develop a pilot project employing wind, solar and biomass produced energy in isolated island settings. Cuba's role is significant in the design and implementation and may provide for small-scale alternative energy production in similarly isolated locations across the island. (Curbelo Alonso, 2005)

One should also bear in mind that Cuba still possesses a large and well-articulated capacity in nuclear technology owing to its 15-year effort to develop a nuclear energy capability at the end of the Soviet era. There are large number of nuclear scientists and technicians who were dedicated to the effort and it allowed Cuba to design and develop and significant educational capacity from pre-university through post-graduate programs of study in nuclear engineering, physics and medicine. In the coming decades and as petroleum stocks diminish, Cuba may re-visit the nuclear option for energy production and could utilize this option as a means of addressing energy demands. Cuba continues to cooperate with international and regional enti-

ties on matters related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and perhaps could emerge as a Latin American leader in global nonproliferation efforts.

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### *Reintegration of the Cuban Energy Sector and Development Prospects*

#### **The Sheraton Mexico City Debacle**

The convening of the U.S.–Cuba Energy Summit in Mexico City in February, 2006 marked a watershed of sorts for the Cuban energy sector. Dating back to the early 1990s and echoing back to before the Cuban revolution, the most logical choice for Cuban energy production partners has been American firms. Consistently, through the Special Period, in discussions related to rescuing the nuclear option and now in the wake of the oil finds off the northwest coast, Cuban officials have stated that because *la tecnología de pico* (cutting edge technology) can be found in the United States, and because of proximity and cost efficiencies, it makes the most sense for Cubans to seek American partnerships in meeting its energy development objectives. So for observers of the *campo energetico* the extent to which American oil company representatives would find Cuba's presentation of its oil and gas development plans credible would go along way to achieving that particular objective. The fact that a number of major American firms were represented and came away stating that there is significant interest in discussing options for investment created a sense of excitement of what might transpire in the near term. The decision of the Sheraton Maria Isabel to expel the Cuban delegation from the hotel, notwithstanding, did not dampen the enthusiasm for what to most appeared to be a logical and mutually beneficial relationship for the two nations. What the Mexico City meeting revealed is that the Cuban and American oil and gas interests are aligned to pursue a path where technology transfer, investment and production projects and cooperation can become a reality. The fact that no less than 20 firms from eight countries are already an indication that the Cuban energy sector is already "reintegrated" into the global market, and that the United States is not already a partner perhaps spells an exclusion from the process of revitalization that merely slows the progress already being made in this critical sector.

#### **The American solution**

Regardless of the American foreign policy vis-à-vis the Castro regime, the United States will play an important role in the sustainability of Cuban energy policy imperatives well into the 21st century for three critical reasons. First, the United States, and its business community will bear most of the cost for investment and development in Cuba after transition. Because the U.S.

presently holds the outstanding claims against the Cuban government for expropriated properties, the resolution of these claims assume a priority in the process of normalization of diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries. It should also be noted that because of the influential role and owing to the contributions the U.S. makes to multilateral lending institutions the brunt of the financing for the renovation of Cuba's aged energy infrastructure will fall these agencies, U.S. government agencies through grants and assistance, and through direct foreign investment by U.S. firms. That fact alone requires that it is incumbent upon the U.S. at this time to calculate a "best-guess" estimate of what the bill for this project will cost. One can easily surmise that the cost of this effort will total in the billions of dollars, but it is important to note that the more that the work is put-off or delayed, insinuates a higher cost of renovation down the road. Second, because of proximity and affinity, the Cubans have always expressed a preference for utilizing leading-edge American technology and working with Americans. Virtually all of Cuba's engineering and scientific community speaks, reads and write English owing to the fact that all technical and scientific journals and textbooks are almost exclusively in English. Moreover, in the few instances where Cubans and Americans have had the opportunity to interact and discuss the possibility of cooperation and collaboration, Americans have left impressed and given serious thought to what types of projects and joint ventures might develop if the diplomatic relations between the two countries were normal. It is taken as an article of faith by most Cuba observers, that every major corporation in the United States has in its files a "Cuba" folder waiting for the day when they will be allowed to conduct business on the island. Finally, there have been interesting proposals that see Cuba as a potential entrepot for American petroleum interests. (Myers Jaffe and Soligo, 2006) This includes the development of oil storage and refining facilities to offset the concentration of this type of facility in the Gulf Coast of the Southern United States, as a hedge against what appears to be a long-term shift in Caribbean weather patterns, promising a spike in the number of tropical storms and hurricanes for the near future. Ironically, in the wake of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina there is a call to increase the number and to diversify the location of American oil refineries away from the Gulf Coast region insofar that 25 percent of the refining capacity for the United States is still offline nearly a year later at the beginning of the new hurricane season. This could alter the strategic view of Cuba for American policy makers, but under the present set of circumstances and with the prevailing policy prerogatives of the Bush Administration, Cuba for all of the well-documented reasons will remain isolated and beyond the reach of U.S. business interests.

### The Cuban solution

*“We are not going to spend our nights dreaming about offshore oil”* — Fidel Castro, March 4, 2006

All indications from the series of interviews and site visits in Cuba indicate that Cuba fully intends to seek the means of developing oil and gas resources wherever they exist on the island and with whoever chooses to partner with the Cuban government. That much is very clear. But the statement by President Castro also insinuates that the present and existing energy resources and issues will guide Cuba’s responses to energy development issues. Those responses include a vigorous program of energy conservation from the power plant to the kitchen seeking to extract energy savings and economies of scale that credibly meet policy objectives, while simultaneously boosting domestic oil production and increasing efficiency in the production, transmission and delivery of electricity across the island.

Moreover, the efforts on the island to enhance energy efficiency along the entire chain of production to consumption compliments the possible gains derived from increasing Cuba’s domestic production capacity through oil exploration in the deep water tracks off the northwest coast of the island. That Cuba can still import its shortfall in domestic production of refined petroleum products through its favorable trade arrangements with Venezuela gives Cuba the type of energy security cushion it enjoyed during the latter Soviet period. And similar to that period Cuba has chosen to aggressively pursue energy independence by virtue of its recent offshore discoveries and by promoting a revolution in the end uses of energy in all sectors of the Cuban economy.

Events in the past few months within the Cuban energy policy arena indicate that the possibility of increasing the island’s energy productive capacity is well within reach of the Castro regime. What is perhaps most evident is the growing presence of international partners that will be instrumental in assisting Cuba to push the effort forward. Canada, China and Venezuela are all playing critical roles in the drive to increase domestic productive capacity as well as assisting the Cuban effort to put into place remarkably creative and important technological developments to meet the many challenges facing Cuban policy makers. Moreover, it is also abundantly evident that the “Cuban energy revolution” as a policy development, while not entirely new, places Cuba at the forefront of implementing a concerted energy conservation program that is unique among developing states and responds to the challenges that all states are now facing in the wake of rising oil prices.

But an equally significant energy challenge is going unmet at this particular time in Cuba, that of an effort to address a complete modernization of the

energy infrastructure on the island, an infrastructure that ranges in age from 30 to 80 years and is in dire need of repair, maintenance and replacement. Cuba has announced that it is investing in the rehabilitation of transmission and delivery systems in an attempt to curb the significant losses of electricity generated and one can be relatively certain that the effort corresponds to a task to which Cuban policy makers are determined to complete. But it suffices to say that the cost of such an all-encompassing task perhaps lies beyond the financial capacity of the Cuban government, and the negative influence of the American economic sanctions against the island chills the investment environment in the country's energy sector. It is not that progress isn't being made. And by almost any measure, the Cuban joint venture approach to energy development has been successful but not at the level that meets the totality of the challenge. We can only estimate that the cost of modernizing the energy sector on the island totals into the billions of dollars, and the millions now being dedicated to the task only partially addresses the myriad projects that could be undertaken. For now the piecemeal approach will address the most critical needs facing the Cuban energy sector but all said it only scratches the surface. Perhaps, if and when the offshore production promise becomes a reality, Cuban policy makers may once and for all be able to address this grand undertaking inasmuch as it will be the grandest and most important infrastructural project of the century.

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### *Conclusion*

In closing, the overview of the Cuban energy developments clearly and unambiguously reveals that the Castro regime has every intention of continuing to promote, design and implement energy development policies that will benefit Cuba for generations to come. Cuba is sparing no effort by instituting bottom-up and top-down policy initiatives to meet this challenge. It has significantly increased its international cooperation in the energy sector and continues to enhance its efforts to ensure energy security in these most uncertain of times. But it stands to reason that no matter how successful these efforts are, they will come up short. Two factors may alter this present situation. First, Cuba may indeed realize a bonanza from the offshore tracts that will allow it to possibly address its many energy challenges, from increasing oil production and refining capacity, to improving the nation's energy infrastructure, ensuring a stable energy future. Second, and no less significant, is the possibility of normalization of trade relations with the United States. This is important not only because it will allow direct foreign investment, technology transfer and information sharing between these neighboring states but it possibly enhances the energy security of both states, and hence, the region, realized through a division of labor and dispersion of resources that serve as a

hedge against natural disaster and market disruptions. Moreover, all states could derive benefit from the public information campaigns to promote energy efficiency and conservation presently being promoted in Cuba in the face of diminishing energy stocks and uncertain global markets. Ultimately, and only after normalization, the task still falls to the Cuban government, but the cost will necessarily be spread through a number of sources that are predominately American because of strategic interests, proximity and affinity. It suffices to say that the requisite investment and assistance will have a distinct American tinge to it, inasmuch as American corporations, U.S. government agencies, and international financial institutions, to which the U.S. is a major contributor, will play important roles in the funding of the effort to revitalize the Cuban energy sector. Cuban officials are not averse and perhaps would prefer that the U.S. be its major partner in this effort owing to the fact that most if not all of the cutting-edge technology in energy, oil and gas comes from the United States. It is remarkable that the Cuban energy sector is as vibrant as it presently is, absent the type of infrastructural investment that is available to most developing states, in large part because of the American economic embargo.

Finally, the cost is significant and it stands to reason that the longer one waits to address the challenge at hand the higher the cost of modernizing the energy sector. For this reason alone, the American role in assisting Cuba in this effort will be significant and every day that the task is put off, it increases the cost of the effort. This should serve as an obvious point of entry into cooperation with the Cuban government and perhaps can serve as a catalyst for promoting confidence, trust and cooperation in this critical issues area across the region.

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## *Reorientation in Agriculture*

*Jajji Anna Bas*

The breakdown of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe which began in 1989 led many to believe that the collapse of Castro's Cuba would follow closely behind. Instead, Cuban policy-makers demonstrated remarkable ingenuity, carving a new path for socialist Cuba and surviving a crisis "few developing nations could have endured...without falling into chaos" (Azicri, 2000: 69). In August of 1990 Cuban leadership declared the beginning of the Special Period in Peacetime, employing austerity measures designed for war conditions to brace the nation for the deep economic crisis which ensued. Both statistically and anecdotally, the crisis was at its worst in 1993 when the average Cuban adult lost 20 pounds due to food shortages (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 10) and there was an eruption of 51,000 cases of optic neuropathy—a degenerative illness caused by nutrient deficiencies (Azicri, 2000: 84). The early 1990's thus marked a particularly difficult and volatile time for the Cuban revolution. It was a time where "days were frequently filled with unrelieved hardship and adversity in the pursuit of even the most minimum needs of everyday life, day after day" (Pérez, 1995: 387). It was also a time when, bit by bit, the government made substantial and unforeseen changes in its approach to everything from economic policy to agriculture. This paper thus establishes the basis of the need for change by considering contributing factors of the Special Period and looking at the depth of the crisis in both agriculture and food security. The paper then moves on to explore the radical redirection of Cuban agriculture, looking at the Basic Units of Cooperative Production, Farmers' Markets, Urban Agriculture, and Low Input Sustainable Agriculture.

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*Contributing Factors*

Literature regarding the economic crisis which precipitated the Special Period in Cuba consistently cites the collapse of the Soviet Union in conjunction with the tightening of the U.S. embargo as the cause. It is certain both that the demise of the Soviet socialist bloc was the event which set the course for Cuba's economic crisis and that the reinforcement of the U. S. blockade ensured that the path would be difficult. Yet to exclude the actions and policies of the Cuban government from the equation is to reduce Cuba to the role of pawn in its own historical process.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the recognition of the role of the actions of the Cuban state in the contributing factors of the crisis is recognition of Cuban agency. Cuban social scientist Espinoza Martínez (1995), in his analysis of the economic crisis of the early 1990's, argues that it was the demise of the Soviet Union and the tightening of the U.S. embargo, combined with vulnerabilities of the Cuban economy, which led to near collapse. Espinoza's analysis is echoed in Álvarez' discussion of "Antecedents of the Agricultural Policies of the 1990's" in which he argues that "the inefficiency of the state agricultural sector" was the third factor which led to the severity of the crisis in the early 1990s. (Álvarez, 2004: 52, 69) The notion that a third factor—vulnerability of the Cuban economy and the inefficiency of the state sector of agriculture—contributed to the crisis is both central to an advanced understanding of the Cuban economy and Cuban agriculture, respectively, and was essential for recognition of the agency of the Cuban state. If Cuba is to play (or has played) a role in its own historical process, then it is, by necessity, an actor. To deny the role of the Cuban state in the successes or the failures of the revolution is to disempower Cuba and Cubans. This paper thus argues that there are three factors contributing to the economic crisis of the early 1990's: the collapse of the Soviet Union, the tightening of the U.S. blockade, and a dependent and inefficient state sector.

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*Depth of the Crisis*

The experience of the early 1990's, especially 1993, has left an indelible mark on the consciousness of the Cuban people. Living in a survival economy, life during the Special Period "came to resemble life under war conditions" (Azicri, 2000: 75), as access to food, medicine, transportation and even electricity became uncertain. Indeed, average daily caloric intake dropped by more than 500 calories per person (FAO, 2004: 1) and many women left their jobs to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of now-scarce basic necessities full

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1. In both the so-called Spanish-American War in 1898 and in the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Americans and the Spanish and the Americans and the Soviets, respectively, excluded Cubans from the resolution of crises and, thereby denied them agency.

time. The situation got so bad that “street demonstrations and anti-government protests erupted in Cojímar and Regla in 1993 and in Havana in 1994.” (Pérez, 1995: 396) This section looks at the agricultural conditions and the consequent state of food security during this extraordinarily difficult time.

### **Agriculture**

Cuba’s dominant state sector had developed an input-dependent agriculture which relied heavily on their trading relationship with the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe. When the socialist bloc crumbled and the United States tightened its embargo against Cuba, the precariousness of the chemical-intensive mono-crop, monoculture model of agriculture revealed itself and, by 1994, agricultural production levels had dropped to 55 percent of 1990 levels. (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 10) At the same time, world prices for sugar (which had typically been one-fifth of what the Soviets had paid for Cuban sugar) fell from 13.6 U.S. cents per pound in 1989-1990 to 9.1 cents per pound in 1990-1991. (Azicri, 2000: 132) The effect was devastating and a new, extensive rationing system was instituted to ensure equitable distribution of scarce resources. (Murphy, 1999: 8) As a result, there were “sharp reductions in the availability of food products in the rationed market.” (Álvarez, 2004: 140) Lack of replacement parts and fuel meant that farm machinery sat idle in the fields and as much as a third of harvests rotted in the fields. (Burchardt, 2000: 2) Thus, the government re-instituted the use of draught animals in the fields. (Pérez, 1995: 386) In 1991, Fidel called upon Cubans for a large scale mobilization of voluntary agricultural work (Pérez, 1995: 388; Rosset and Benjamin, 1994: 66-69; Frank, 1993: 153) as the decades of the Classical Model had precipitated urban migration. The agricultural development model pursued during the revolutionary era produced a dependent food economy which, when the Soviet Union began to disintegrate, devastated Cuba.<sup>2</sup>

### **Food security**

Though Cuba “has always ranked as a food deficit country” (Nieto and Delgado, 2001: 47), “it should be noted that during the period preceding the economic crisis, food production levels showed sustained growth for almost every commodity” (Martin, 2001: 58) under the *Programa Alimentario Nacional* or PAN.<sup>3</sup> The implementation of the PAN, however, was interrupted by the onset of the crisis which reversed Cuba’s remarkable achievements in

2. When considering Cuba’s agricultural redirection as a possible model for food security, it is worth noting that most countries in the world are currently engaged in deeply dependant food economies.

3. The PAN, introduced as part of the process of Rectification of Errors and Negative Tendencies, consisted of 36 programs designed to meet the goals of agricultural diversification and food self-sufficiency which had been abandoned in the early years of the revolution.

food security (Rosset and Benjamin, 1994: 24). By 1993, “the daily intake of the average Cuban citizen had descended to 1863 calories” (Koont, 2004: 1-2), well below the FAO recommended minima for Cuba of 2,400 calories (Álvarez, 2004b: 6), and a far cry from the 2,898 calorie diet of the late 1980’s (Perfecto, 1994: 99). Cuba’s food security crisis was unique in that, whereas in other countries crises consistently affect the poor disproportionately, Cuba’s food programs for vulnerable populations and the ration system ensured that the weight of the problem was shared. (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 10) Thus, during the economic crisis of the early 1990’s, food security threatened to be the destabilizing factor in Cuban politics, but through fair and effective distribution—even of insufficient resources—the Cuban leadership was able to weather the storm.

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### *Radical Redirection of Agriculture*

By 1991, Fidel Castro had declared food the number one national priority. (Chaplowe, 1996: 1) Indeed, as evidenced by the anti-government protests in 1994, lack of food security had demonstrated itself to be the most critical dimension of the crisis because it threatened national security. (Carranza and Valdés, 2004: 5) Something had to be done. Thus, since the magnitude of the problem required alternative solutions (Díaz, 1997: 19), the government embarked on the so-called third agrarian reform in 1993-1994. (Díaz, 1997: 15). State farms were converted into *Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa* (UBPCs or Basic Units of Cooperative Production), farmers’ markets called *agropecuarios* were opened, Urban Agriculture (UA) was facilitated by the government, the nation switched from Classical Model agriculture to alternative Low Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA), and in addition a number of existing strategies were re-emphasized.

Aspects of this third agrarian reform represented a drastic shift in ideology. For the formation of the UBPCs, the traditional preference for state-controlled agriculture was dropped; for the opening of the *agropecuarios* the strong government opposition to free markets was overruled; while the switch to LISA agriculture ran contrary to paradigm of an entire generation of Soviet-influenced agriculturists and scientists. Even the drive for increased UA stood in contrast to the expectations of Cubans who had become accustomed to the paternalism of the state. Indeed, the redirection of agriculture initially promised an empowering new model in place of tightly controlled, centralized agriculture. Simultaneously, major changes were taking place in all sectors of the economy. There was a renewed emphasis on tourism (Azicri, 2000: 157), foreign trade was restructured to favor Latin America, Canada, Europe and Asia (Nieto and Delgado, 2001: 41), and the U.S. dollar was

legalized. (Azicri, 2000: 74) In fact, it is fair to say that the radical redirection of agriculture took place as part of an overall liberalization of the economy.

The major changes in both agriculture and the economy in general were a rapid and direct response to the enormous depths of the crisis in an attempt to secure the gains made in the revolutionary era. Broadly speaking, the measures have proven successful. This has been possible because of the government's overwhelming determination to achieve the most equitable distribution possible. The government placed all available products under a regimen of rationing,<sup>4</sup> subsidized central industries, and maintained the priority of health care, education, and social security. (Carranza and Valdés, 2004: 4) Nevertheless, some measures, like the opening of the *agropecuarios*, the legalization of the dollar and the promotion of tourism, also generated a renewed situation of differential access. In fact, "Fidel himself recognized the increment of inequality and called for the revolutionaries to be understanding" (Azicri, 2000: 140)—a tall order for a population raised for two generations on the ideology of absolute social equity. Thus, while the policies enacted in the depth of the crisis were designed to safeguard social equity, they simultaneously re-established an economy of differential access.

Measures which engendered renewed differential access were those measures which both sought to bring about increased production through material incentives (as with the *agropecuarios*) and to facilitate capital accumulation for the purchase of foreign foodstuffs and goods (as with the legalization of the U.S. dollar and the new emphasis on tourism). Both increases in production and capital accumulation were required to address the severe food insecurity (largely brought about by the loss of trading partners and the U.S. embargo) because of the ongoing inefficiency of the agricultural sector (which had already been a problem prior to the onset of the crisis). It is worth reiterating that Cuba has always ranked as a food deficit country. While this is, in part, due to the island's colonial and neocolonial history as a sugar producer for Spain and the United States, respectively, it is important to bear in mind that early in the revolution the new government elected to continue on this path with the Soviet Union, thereby reproducing the dependent mono-crop, mono-export economy. Both the inefficiency and the ongoing mono-crop character of the agricultural sector played key roles in the devastating food crisis of the early 1990's. In the search for solutions to the food crisis, initially the government emphasized productive efficacy while sugar continued to dominate the agricultural sector.

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4. Though the system of rationing first implemented in 1962 has been widely criticized—both for its extraordinary duration and, since the inception of the Special Period, for being insufficient—the government's recent commitment to eliminate the ration system is disconcerting because Cuba's ration system has long been the structure which guarantees a base level of food security to all citizens.

*Unidades Basicas de Produccion Cooperativos*

Seeking a more efficient model, the Cuban government looked to its own agricultural landscape. In the spring of 1993, farmland in Cuba was distributed as follows: 80 percent belonged to state farms, 15 percent to cooperatives, and 5 percent to individual private farmers. (Levins, 1993: 55) Yet, with only 20 percent of the agricultural land, the non-state sector “contributed 35 percent of national production, using less than 20 percent of the resources invested in agriculture.” (Nova, 1994, cited in Martin, 2001: 58) The comparatively autonomous sector proved notably more efficient than the state sector. Thus on September 10, 1993, a bill was passed by the Communist party approving the creation of UBPCs (Díaz, 1999: 111), and on September 20, 1993, Law-Decree No. 142 formally established the UBPCs (Álvarez, 2004: 75) based on the model of the successful non-state agricultural production cooperatives or CPAs. (Nova González, 1998: 1) The transition occurred rapidly and by late 1994 there were 2,879 UBPCs which held 46.5 percent of all agricultural lands (Azicri, 2000: 145), approximately 50 percent of state agricultural land. The idea was that by following both the economic framework and the means of remuneration used by the CPAs (Álvarez, 2004: 80) the state could facilitate more efficient and sustainable agriculture on its land. (Messina, 2000: 435) Thus began Cuba’s so-called third agrarian reform.

The formation of UBPCs took place as state lands were granted to former state farm employees in the form of permanent usufruct. (Díaz, 1997: 15)<sup>5</sup> Now the predominant farm structure in Cuba (Martin, 2001: 62), UBPCs are, on average, 10 percent of the size of previous state farms (Messina, 2000: 435). The smaller size is designed not only to promote productive efficiency, but also to facilitate the democratization of the agricultural sector through decentralized decision-making. The shift from centralized planning to locally centered, empowered decision-making (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 19) represents a radical ideological shift. At the same time, however, fuller steps clearly remain to be taken. Indeed, while Cuban social scientist Beatriz Díaz describes the creation of the UBPCs as “part of a larger political and economic process of decentralization in Cuba aimed at diversifying civil society and creating bases for greater democratization by increasing the direct participation of the workers in decision-making,” (Díaz, 1999: 18), she elsewhere cites the lack of autonomy and absence of a sense of ownership as reasons for the poor performance of the UBPCs. (Díaz, 1997: 16) In fact, the state retains ownership of the land, reserves the right to “dissolve any UBPC... according to economic or social interests determined by the government,” (Gaceta offi-

5. The International Development Research Centre of Canada defines usufruct as “the rights to farm a piece of land and profit from the produce but not to ownership” (IDRC, 2005: 3).



cial 1993 cited in Burchardt, 2000: 3) determines which crops are to be planted, sets production quotas, and determines the location of sale of 80 percent of produce (Álvarez, 2004: 78). Thus the cooperatives' autonomy was effectively restricted to 20 percent of their production (above state established quotas) which, in their first year they could not legally sell. Despite the stated objective to expand the cooperative sector in agriculture, at least in terms of the UBPCs, structural rigidities inhibited real decentralized decision-making and undermined possibilities for an empowered agricultural sector.

The initial results were very disappointing. Indeed, in his study on agricultural reform in Cuba, William Messina Jr. finds that agricultural reforms have been insufficient in so far as structural rigidities remain in place and have impeded the drive towards efficiency. (Messina, 2000: 437, 441) While it is true that even the partial achievements of the UBPCs are notable given the profound economic crisis (Burchardt, 2000: 5), it is significant that for the period 1994–2001 more than 50 percent of Cuba's UBPCs were operating at a deficit. (Álvarez, 2004b: 5) In fact, after a series of provincial meetings on the status of UBPCs in 2002, even Communist party officials concluded that most UBPCs were bankrupt. Indeed, as early as 1995 a study conducted by the *Polo Científico de Humanidades* at the University of Havana identified key problems with the UBPCs—lack of autonomy, inexperienced leadership, reluctant adoption of organic agricultural techniques, unstable labor force, lack of familiarity with notions of ownership, and lack of suitable housing—problems which persisted for nearly a decade. (Álvarez, 2004: 84–86) Yet Armando Nova of the University of Havana's *Centro de Estudio de la Economía Cubana* (Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy) stresses that UBPCs, in fact, experienced slow growth until 2001 when drought led to a slight decline in production for 2002 and 2003. (Nova, 2004: 11)<sup>6</sup> Indeed, statistics from the *Dirección de Producción de Caña* (Sugar Production Centre) indicate that changes made<sup>7</sup> have been successful—production per hectare has increased from 31.9 tons per hectare in 1993–1994 to 35.3 tons per hectare in 2003–2004. (Dirección de Producción de Caña, 2004: 6) Thus, though it appears that the initial failure of UBPCs to produce efficiently was a function of a paternalistic state unwilling to relinquish control in a meaningful way, in recent years there has been some increase in productivity. Because these increases in productivity are recent and have been impacted by environmental factors (i.e. drought and hurricanes), they require further monitoring. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that UBPCs are increasingly successful.

6. Best results in the last five years, for UBPCs, have been seen in the areas of rice production, citrus fruit, and pork (Nova, 2004: 11).

7. In 2002, the least productive cane fields and their mills, representing nearly 50 percent of Cuban land dedicated to sugar, were shut down in an effort to increase efficiency.

### ***Agropecuarios, or Farmers' Markets***

On September 23, 1994 the government reintroduced free market farmers' markets, this time called *agropecuarios*, with governmental decree No. 191/94 (Enríguez, 2000: 12), thereby granting a legal market for surplus production for both the UBPCs and the non-state sector. This move, in conjunction with the UPBCs, formed the basis of the third agrarian reform and has been credited with the alleviation of the food crisis. The internally contentious move to liberalize the prices of foodstuffs sold outside the ration channel (Koont, 2004: 5) had two primary objectives: to increase production through material incentives and to provide an alternative to (and competition for) the black market which had mushroomed out of control. Because the government had historically set prices very low (in order to keep food costs down and thereby facilitate massive food security) farmers, obligated to sell to the state, had felt little incentive to produce to capacity. (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 31) Once the *agropecuarios* were opened, both non-state sector farmers and state sector cooperatives were free to sell their excess produce to earn extra income. (Enríguez, 2000: 14) As we shall see below, this increased the level of control, effectively spurred production and has thereby provided more food for the population (Álvarez, 2001: 82). Indeed, in my own work in Cuba I have been to many cooperatives at which the average income is upwards of 800 pesos a month, nearly four times the national average peso income, thanks to sales at *agropecuarios*. Because prices at the *agropecuarios* were much lower than those on the black market,<sup>8</sup> the *agropecuarios* both severely undercut black market sales and increased general access to food, thereby positively impacting food security.

While *agropecuarios* do not directly address the food needs of some of the most vulnerable sectors, there are some indirect benefits to the general population through taxation and the depreciation of the U.S. dollar vis á vis the Cuban peso. Though a preferential taxation policy has been instituted to stimulate food production and availability, especially in the hard-hit Havana area (Koont, 2004: 5), vendors' taxes are applied to reduce the government's budget deficit (Enríguez, 2001: 15), incurred through the provision of a vast array of social services. Also, once the *agropecuarios* were opened, both the value and the purchasing power of the peso improved. In 1994, as the black market skyrocketed, the exchange rate ranged from 80 to 140 pesos to the U.S. dollar. By 1995, however, it had fallen to 35 pesos to the dollar (Azicri, 2000: 143), by 1999 it dropped to 20 pesos to the dollar (Nieto and Delgado, 2001: 43), and since 2001 it has rested at between 26 and 27 pesos to the dollar (Álvarez, 2004: 102). Thus, despite high costs and differential access,

8. Pork, for example, sold for 25 pesos per pound at the *agropecuario* and 75 pesos per pound on the black market (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 28).

*agropecuarios* have managed to both alleviate the food security crisis for some and ameliorate the overall economic conditions on the island. Though the *agropecuarios* positively impacted food security, they were (and remain) contentious in Cuba, especially amongst staunch revolutionaries. An earlier experiment with farmers' markets in the mid-1980's, the *Mercados Libres Campesinos*, or the MLCs, had been terminated in 1986 because these markets were seen to promote inequality by providing extraordinary salaries for food producers and, especially, middlemen. Indeed, as recently as 1990 most policy-makers in Cuba viewed the MLCs in a wholly negative light. (Enríquez, 2000: 15) Yet the rafter emigration crisis of 1994 (Álvarez, 2004: 98), and the protests of 1994, prompted the government to reluctantly embrace this change as a means of remedying Cuba's desperate food crisis. (Enríquez, 2000: 15) The problem is that this remedy is still of limited access to much of the general population due to high costs. (Nieto and Delgado, 2001: 49) A pound of onions can run from 12 to 15 pesos, approximately 5 to 6 percent of the average monthly salary of 250 pesos. This would be tantamount to paying US\$48 for a pound of onions on a US\$800-a-month salary. Though the ration book does provide some basic foodstuff, monthly rations often last no more than 10 to 14 days. (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 28) The *agropecuarios* are therefore contentious because while they do offer food to Cubans with disposable income, they also engender differential access to foodstuffs in the marketplace.

Indeed, the *agropecuarios* have been hugely successful since their inception at increasing food access for some, though they have also contributed to the social cleavage effect. Within the first year, sales at the *agropecuarios* had reached over 20,000 tons of agricultural and meat products, representing 25 to 30 percent of total production sold to the population (Álvarez, 2004: 103), within their first year these markets began to supply between a quarter and a third of the Cuban population's total caloric intake. By 1999 the sales volume had tripled and the markets were generating more than 5 million pesos in taxes annually. (Peters 2000: 5) Clearly, these markets did much to increase food access for some. However, it is widely recognized that the prices of these markets are so high that they preclude the participation of many Cubans. (Álvarez, 2004: 101; Koont, 2005: 6; Messina, 2000: 441; Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 28) Unfortunately, while this differential access runs contrary to the Cuban revolution's objective of equality, it is precisely the high cost of goods at the *agropecuarios* which engendered the material incentives that in turn spurred production. Indeed, Lucy Martin argues just this, explaining that "the ability to get higher prices and raise incomes by surpassing contracted production quotas has led to a more active and efficient management of productive resources, with one outcome being

the greater availability of food for the population.” (Martin, 2001: 65) In an effort to drive down the prices at the *agropecuarios*, the government opened agricultural markets with fixed maximum prices in 1999. While the quality, variety and consistency of the goods sold at these fixed price markets is relatively poor (Álvarez, 2004: 145-146), they do provide an alternative for those who cannot afford the *agropecuarios*. Unfortunately, because of the poor quality of the produce, they have not effectively generated competition and price reduction. It thus emerges that the *agropecuarios*, on the one hand, increased both production and availability of foodstuffs and, on the other hand, generated differential access under the revolutionary government for the first time.<sup>9</sup>

### Urban Agriculture (UA)

Prior to the advent of the *agropecuarios*, citizens faced with the profound food crisis began to develop their own response to the severe shortages. As Catherine Murphy, a specialist in UA in Cuba, writes, “urban gardens sprang up all over Havana...on balconies, patios, and rooftops.” (Murphy, 1999: 12) Indeed, what had previously been both prohibited by the government and seen as a sign of poverty and underdevelopment (Henn, 2001: 15), now flourished into a widespread movement which both alleviated food insecurity and garnered the government much international praise. In 1993 the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) restructured urban land use rights allow for urban agricultural gardens<sup>10</sup> and in 1994 MINAGRI created an agricultural department for the city of Havana which, in turn, developed an Urban Agriculture Department (Murphy, 1999: 12-13). The goal of this movement is to maximize produce production “from every patch of previously unused urban land” (Companioni et al., 2001: 220) by granting land access to would-be gardeners through usufruct—the land remains under the control of the gardener as long as the land remains under cultivation. (Bourque and Cañizares, 2000: 3) Urban Agriculture emerged as a uniquely grassroots movement and flourished as a result of government support.

Once government support was in place to secure land rights for urban gardeners, UA developed along three branches: small urban plots, organization specific plots, and peri-urban farms. Small urban plots produce in *huertos populares* (popular gardens), *organopónicos*, and *huertos intensivos*; the organization specific plots or *autoconsumos* are discussed below; and peri-

9. This system, however, may be on the brink of transformation. In late 2005, as part of the battle against corruption, the government began to restrict the movement of illegal middlemen who (like the transporters in the *Mercados Libres Campesinos* of the early 1980's) would transport foodstuffs from farm to market, substantially marking up prices. The initial impact was a reduction of goods available at the *agropecuarios* for several days. Though availability of foodstuffs at *agropecuarios* does appear to have returned to normal levels, the long-term consequences of this move are not yet known.

10. Previously only ornamentals were permitted in visible urban settings (Murphy, 1999:

urban farms are comparatively large, covering 2 to 15 hectares (Companiononi et al., 2001: 227), forming a greenbelt around metropolitan Havana. (Murphy, 1999: 21) The small urban plots in Cuba's UA are of particular interest in so far as it is with this type of agriculture that Cuban cities, especially Havana, have managed to transform every imaginable type of idle land into fruitful land, literally. The term *huertos populares* refers to the above-mentioned patio, balcony and rooftop gardens that began to appear at the very onset of the crisis. *Huertos populares* have become so common that they now make significant contributions to urban food security (Companiononi et al., 2001: 227-228). Both *organopónicos* and *huertos intensivos* are urban gardening techniques which are designed to augment the poor soil quality found in the converted vacant lots. *Organopónicos* use raised container beds filled with a high compost to soil ratio for the intensive planting of fresh vegetables. (Murphy, 1999: 19) This method is particularly useful in areas with extremely poor soil quality and can even be built on artificial surfaces. (Companiononi et al., 2001: 226) Similarly, *huertos intensivos* use raised beds for intensive gardening of fresh produce (Koont, 2004: 3), though this method is used where soil quality is higher. The essential component of both methods is their intercropping for intensive use of small areas so as to maximize production.

Because most of those involved in UA had no previous agricultural experience and nearly all had no experience in low-input agriculture, horticultural groups were formed throughout the island. These groups initially emerged at a grassroots level for members to pool resources and share information. (Chaplowe, 1996: 3) As the UA movement took hold, extension workers from the newly formed Urban Agriculture Division began running educational workshops to facilitate organic agriculture. (Murphy, 1999: 17) Today there are over 70 *tiendas de consultorio agrícola* or seed houses all over Havana which offer information guides, tools, seeds and advice to urban agriculturists. (Koont, 2004: 6) Using intercropping, household compost and vermiculture, "garden productivity has been achieved with minimal external inputs, applying principles of organic agriculture that are low cost, readily available, and environmentally sustainable." (Chaplowe, 1996: 2) As one of the few truly grassroots movements in contemporary Cuba, UA has made a significant impact on urban food security without depending on scarce agricultural inputs or transportation. Indeed, this empowered, sustainable, ecological, grassroots movement is renowned amongst food security theorists the world over.

Though it is undeniable that Cuban UA has been successful, production statistics vary. Catherine Murphy reports that in 1997 over 160,000 tons of food were produced in UA (Murphy, 1999: 24), and Nieto and Delgado

report that by 1999 the figure had increased to 800,000 tons of food produced in the urban sector alone. (Nieto and Delgado, 2001: 45) By 2000, reports indicate that UA was providing nearly 30 percent of caloric intake in urban areas. (Bourque and Cañizares, 2000: 6; and Offenheiser, 2000: 5) While early reports are consistent and show steady growth, reports in the last few years begin to show inconsistencies. For 2001 Sinclair and Thompson describe UA as providing 50 percent of the produce consumed in Cuba (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 24), while Egidio Paez, then-president of the Association of Agricultural and Forestry Professionals (ACTAF), claimed in a personal communication that 90 percent of all produce consumed in Havana is produced within the city limits. (Companiononi et al., 2001: 235) The latter figure is reflected in Jon Lamb's report that by 2002 UA produced 3.4 million tons of produce nationally, providing 90 percent of all produce consumed in Havana. (Lamb, 2005: 2) Most recent reports note that 4 million tons of produce were produced in the urban sector in 2004 and that figures for 2005 are expected to exceed that amount by 100,000 tons. (Bosch, 2005: 1) Despite some inconsistencies, statistics for urban agriculture reflect steady growth and a significant contribution to urban food security.

Urban Agriculture has contributed to increased access to organically produced produce. In part, UA is guaranteed to increase access to a variety of sectors of the population through direct participation in production and through contributions to local schools and hospitals. While contributions to hospitals and schools are technically voluntary, it is in effect required by local governments as a form of social rent in return for granting free access to land (Koont, 2005: 6). Furthermore, because the city of Havana passed a law prohibiting the use of chemical pesticides within the city limits, Havana's UA has become the most completely organic sector in Cuban agriculture (Murphy, 1999: 27). Cuba's UA program has effectively increased food security while expanding ecological approaches to agriculture.

### **Low Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA)**

Cuba has also won a great deal of international support for the national conversion to LISA which took place as a direct response to the unavailability of inputs at the onset of the Special Period. Indeed, Cuba's conversion to sustainable agriculture has been enthusiastically referred to as "a unique event, both on the world scene and in the history of socialism" (Levins, 1993: 52) "because this was the first case in the world where a whole country turned to low-input agriculture." (Perfecto, 1994: 98) It is fair to say that this is the "largest scale conversion from conventional agriculture to organic or semi-organic farming in history." (Rosset and Benjamin, 1994: 34) Moreover, it "has been easier for Cuban farmers than in other countries because of the security bestowed by the Cuban government" such as land rights, secure mar-

kets, health care and education. (Álvarez, M.D., 2001: 85) In other words, the first ever national conversion to LISA has been possible due to Cuba's unique social and political context—the government has been both willing and able to facilitate this conversion.

While an organic or LISA movement had existed in Cuba long before the crisis hit,<sup>11</sup> these farmers and scientists were generally marginalized by the established scientists who believed strongly in the chemically intensive pesticide model (Rosset and Benjamin, 1994: 28). Nevertheless, once the government elected to make low input agriculture national policy, they quickly took the reins of the movement. This was in the wake of the foundation of the formative group of the Cuban Organic Farming Association (ACAO), a group of independent farmers, agriculturists, scientists and proponents from abroad which formed in 1992 to promote and support the dissemination of low input farming approaches (Funes et al, 2001: 11). Of course, as this autonomous group gained national support and began to win international awards, it was subsumed as a section of the Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forestry Professionals (ACTAF) and renamed the Organic Farming Group (GAO) in April of 1999 (Funes et al, 2001: 14-15). While this is generally presented rather innocuously, it is an example of the tight control of the Cuban state.<sup>12</sup> Thus with the move from marginalization to official policy, the Cuban sustainable agriculture movement traded autonomy for state control.

In trading autonomy for state control, Cuba's LISA movement has had the opportunity to become the largest organic experiment in the hemisphere. (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 25) Indeed, "Cuba has pioneered the use and propagation of generalist ants to control insect pests in annual and semi-perennial crops" (Perfecto, 1994: 99), has developed massive vermiculture composting networks, and has reverted to animal traction. (Perfecto, 1994: 102) Because with only 2 percent of the population of Latin America, Cuba has approximately 11 percent of the scientists (Rosset and Benjamin 1994, 28), Cuban scientists, backed by the Cuban government, are able to generate new ecological technology at a rapid rate. (Perfecto, 1994: 103) Cuba's alternative agricultural model favors diversity over monoculture, biofertilizers over chemical ones, biopesticides over chemical ones, animal traction over mechanization, and rainfall over irrigation. (Rosset and Benjamin, 1994: 29) Cuba is indeed uniquely poised for such a transition, both because of the security bestowed by the government and because of the government's absolute control over planning.

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11. Proponents cite dates ranging from the 1970's when some scientists began to be interested (Funes, 2001: 11), to 1982 when policy began to favor local technology (Rosset and Benjamin, 1994:, 27), to the late 1980's when policy implementation began (Levins, 1993: 58).

12. Indeed, many of my Cuban colleagues continue to refer to this as a prime example of the disempowering effect of the Cuban government's paternalism.

Cuba is renowned for its low input approach to agriculture in both urban and rural zones. Indeed, proponents are right to call this project “startlingly successful” (Barclay, 2003: 1), given that statistics for 2003 reveal that Cuba was using only 50 percent of the fuel, less than 10 percent of the chemical fertilizers, and a mere 7 percent of the synthetic insecticides it had used in 1989. (Lamb, 2005: 2) This drastic shift has been possible both because of full government support and a high concentration of scientists. Three elements of the organic agriculture program have proven particularly successful—the approach to biological control agents, production of compost, and use of animal traction. Beginning with a few centers in 1988, by 1992 the government had opened 218 Centers for the Production of Entomophages and Entomopathogens (CREEs). These on-site centers supply the pest control needs of entire cooperatives or farming communities, essentially producing modern biotechnology on a local scale. (Rosset and Benjamin, 1994: 41; and Koont, 2005: 4) Compost production in Cuba ranges from organic amendments and biofertilizers to green manures and worm hummus, and all statistics indicate impressive growth. (Sinclair and Thompson, 2001: 26-27) In fact, in one year, 2001 to 2002, output increased seven-fold, and by 2003, 15 million tons of compost were produced. (Koont, 2005: 4) Finally, the use of animal traction has both cut down on soil erosion and been overwhelmingly successful in reducing the reliance on fuel for agriculture.

Proponents of Cuba’s agricultural conversion often point out that “Cuba is ideally situated to demonstrate the full possibilities of organic farming and to truly achieve sustainable agricultural systems” (Funes, 2001: 22) because of Cuba’s social and political landscape. Indeed, Cuba’s Organic Agriculture Group (GAO) was awarded the Right Livelihood Award in 1999 (Mittal, 1999: 1)<sup>13</sup> for facilitating the national conversion to low input agriculture. Cuba’s conversion to LISA has certainly been tremendously successful and has given proponents of organic agriculture around the world a real world example. Yet the pursuit of sustainable farming practices was a pragmatic response to a food crisis, not an end in itself. In fact, many saw sustainable practices as a transitory ill of the Special Period and even in the depths of the crisis, from 1990 to 1996, Cuba was investing approximately US\$50 million in biotechnology annually. (Lehmann, 2000: 2) Significantly, the ideal is not organic agriculture but rather national food security—and public interest in organic agriculture or concern about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is negligible (Lehmann, 2000: 5-6). Thus, while Cuba has effectively employed LISA on a national scale for over a decade, it is important to view this practice in context and to bear the pragmatism of the Cuban government

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13. The Right Livelihood Award is usually referred to as the Alternative Nobel Prize, is widely recognized, and is quite an honor.



in mind. Indeed it is important to note the government's selective emphasis of facets of the program, depending on the interests of the audience.<sup>14</sup>

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### *Conclusion*

The collapse of the socialist bloc,<sup>15</sup> the tightening of the U.S. embargo, and inefficiencies in the Cuban system all coalesced to produce the crisis of the early 1990s, and every aspect of every Cuban's life was affected. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European Socialism was, indeed the spark that instigated the crisis—those former partners had represented nearly all of Cuba's trade. The tightening of the U.S. blockade was designed to set in motion the downfall of the Castro government. While it failed to achieve its objective, it was widely condemned by important U.S. trading partners and it also had devastating consequences on the lives of ordinary Cuban citizens. Yet it is the role of the Cuban government, often overlooked, which provides the space for empowered action. A critique of Cuba's dependent and inefficient state sector is essential not because it lays blame on the Cuban government, but rather because it is an internal factor which Cuba has the power to change. It is therefore critical to recognize that there were three factors, not two, which contributed to the crisis of the early 1990s—the demise of Soviet socialism, the strengthening of the U.S. blockade, and a largely dependent and inefficient state sector.

When the effects of these three factors were felt in Cuba, agriculture came to a halt, food security eroded. By 1994 agricultural production levels had fallen to 55 percent of their 1990 levels and, for lack of transport, much of what was produced rotted before it reached the ration stores. Fortunately, the government's absolute dedication to equal access meant that extant resources were shared with remarkable equity. Nevertheless, there were severe health consequences and the average adult lost 20 pounds. In this time of extreme scarcity, there were those who capitalized on the situation fueling the black market and forcing inflation rates to skyrocket up to 1000 percent. The depths of the crisis are almost unimaginable and have left an indelible mark on the consciousness of all Cubans and on Cuban society.

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14. During my time as an intern with ACTAF, I worked at the main office and demonstration site of ACTAF Havana. We frequently received visitors in tour groups or individually—groups such as Global Exchange, Food First's Peter Rosset, and then-Agriculture Minister of South Africa, Thuko Didiza. Assisting with translation, my colleague and I became quickly aware that the emphasis of the presentation—either organic agriculture or biotechnology—shifted in response to the ideological preference of the audience. Therefore, the relatively sparse literature on Cuban biotechnology can be understood, essentially, in terms of the interests of Cuba scholars.

15. Recall that in 1989, 85 percent of Cuba's international trade was with the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc (HIA, 1998: 206).

The government was drastic in its response and quickly amended the constitution to allow for a degree of liberalization and a total restructuring of the agricultural sector. Based on the relative success of Cuban agricultural production cooperatives or CPAs, the predominant and inefficient state sector was rapidly broken down into basic units of cooperative production or UBPCs. In addition, the private sale of surplus foodstuffs was legalized both as an incentive for production and to counter the black market. The government also tapped into a grassroots surge in urban gardening, providing free access to land through usufruct rights and facilitating an extensive network of urban agriculture or UA. Furthermore, out of pure necessity, the government turned to its own organic farming movement to lead Cuba in the world's first ever national experiment in Low Input Sustainable Agriculture or LISA. The state was quick to respond and radically redirected agriculture with the formation of the UBPCs, the re-opening of contentious farmers' markets or *agropecuarios*, support for a burgeoning urban agriculture movement, a massive transition to LISA, and new emphasis on existing strategies for efficiency.

Cuba was powerless to change the fact that they had lost their trading partners or that the strangle-hold of the embargo was nearly suffocating, yet the island was able to make changes within its own borders and did so with radical fervor. Nevertheless, state paternalism remains present in this transformed agricultural landscape and, despite a relatively high level of decentralization (by Cuban standards), a prohibitively high level of centralization has impeded the productivity of the UBPCs. It appears that the Cuban government is radical, within a particular framework.

Though the Special Period is not officially over, Cuba has doubtlessly emerged from the depths of the crisis felt in 1993. But the Cuba that emerges is quite different from the Cuba of the revolutionary era and, while social indicators remain high, it is precisely the measures which have carried the island through the crisis that have reintroduced social differentiation. Indeed, the impacts of the radical redirection in agriculture were most notable in the case of the *agropecuarios* where the high cost of goods (which generated differential access to foodstuffs) actually provided the material incentive for increased production. Ultimately, the undeniable success of Cuba's UA and the Cuban government's pragmatic conversion to Low Input Sustainable Agriculture speak to the importance of a government's will to prioritize food security. These two strategies are effective, inexpensive, community-based initiatives which require little more than the protection of their local government, though UA does enjoy massive support from NGOs and aid agencies around the world. Perhaps the most important action of the Cuban govern-

ment was the decision to prioritize food security above all else (Azicri, 2000: 144) in a time of severe economic crisis.

The crisis of the early 1990's rocked the nation and, by some accounts, came close to bringing about the downfall of the revolution. Ever pragmatic, the Cuban government took great steps to guarantee food security, protect social gains and restructure both state and society. While the state of Cuban food security over the last decade and a half is not without severe problems, the government's dedication to guaranteeing the human right to food is both unique and impressive, and has justifiably garnered support within the island and around the world.

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## *Worker Control in the 1990s*

*Sean Herlihy*

The revolution stumbled, and yet workers won more power in the workplace. During the retreat of the revolutionary government in Cuba in the 1990s, a moment of elites offsetting one another allowed working people to gain significant measures of workers' control. This article presents a strategic explanation of observations in Cuba, over some eight months of dissertation fieldwork in the 1990s. Its model helps to explain other self-management movements such as, the factory committees of the Russian Revolution, privatizations to the workers in Nicaragua in the 1990s, enterprise seizures of 2001 *Argentinazo*, land invasions in Zimbabwe, and even a briefly democratic cigarette factory in U.S.-occupied Iraq. In all of these situations, workers and peasants took advantage of counter-balanced or weakened elites to win greater control of production.

This model has four explanatory advantages over state-oriented versions of Marxism and over mainstream democratization and privatization theories. First, it challenges the idea of the state as relatively exclusive strategic vantage point. Liberal critiques of "totalitarianism" tend to overemphasize the state. At the same time Marxist, and particularly Leninist and social democratic theory, while seeing control of the means of production as important theoretically, tend to direct their strategic attention to the state. Second, it assigns more agency to the popular classes as maneuvering between capitalist and statist forces, sometimes taking advantage of them and at other times trapped between them. The popular classes intervene in the transformation of the means of production. Third, it embraces a popular and socialist, rather than middle class, capitalist construction of civil society in contrast with most democratization theories. It also allows that the state is not completely monolithic, with many loci of authority that can help create civil society, by providing education, club organization, neighborhood political representation,

unions, cooperative management committees, and workplace assemblies. Fourth, these movements offer a grassroots strategy to resist the social service cuts, impoverishment, joblessness, and inequality of the ruthless types of marketization in a post-Soviet world. The strategies of squatting and building cooperative enterprises were applied to a privatizing state socialist system in Cuba, but they could as well apply to privatizing enterprises of corporatist-type Latin American states, and to collapsing capitalist enterprises, as has occurred in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.

This model explains a movement of working people taking control of production in Cuba, based on the accounts of journalists, scholars and representatives of three clusters of social forces. These are: high officials, economists, and social theorists who have advocated cooperativization within the socialist framework; Communist Party officials and enterprise administrators, who have been skeptical about cooperativization and marketization; and working people. The number of production centers researched—25—is not large in absolute terms, and the observations are subjective, yet the sample considers seven significant variables: one. The two different countries: two. Types of production including: industrial, service, retail or agricultural, 3. Proximity to the capital: four. Regions of the country: five. Whether urban or rural: six. Form of ownership: seven. Whether successful or unsuccessful: eight. and pro- or anti-regime.

### **Methodology**

I was able to visit Cuba in 1993, when tensions between it and the US were relaxed enough to conduct a long series of interviews about workers' control in a metallurgical factory. When I returned in 1996 Raul Castro, Fidel's brother and heir apparent, had launched an ideological offensive against the research center that had provided the main contacts for this study, making it much harder to get official approval to do in-depth interviews with ordinary workers. Therefore most of the interviews in 1996 were conducted in a kind of limbo status, where there was no official policy against doing interviews, but there was no official policy permitting them either. Although it was harder to do interviews, dozens of academics and trade union leaders did grant interviews and the farm workers union arranged for me to see a cooperative assembly, to interview the co-op leadership and to speak with some of its workers.

Interviews and observations were conducted in work places covering key permutations of seven variables: 1. Industrial, service or agricultural; 2. Proximity to the capital; 3. Region of the country; 4. Urban or rural; 5. Ownership: state, cooperative, capitalist, squatter or mixed; 6. Successful, unsuccessful; 7. Pro- or anti-revolutionary; 8. The respondents included male



and female, young and old, black, white, *ladino*, and indigenous, educated and uneducated, and Protestant, Catholic, atheist and *Santero*.

This methodology has certain advantages. It is a contemporary version of the political-anthropological method used by Alexis De'Tocqueville. Traveling alone people were more willing to approach, and to be approached by, the researcher than with a group or a guide. In Cuba, interviews were conducted in Havana, the nearby Playas del Este, a little inland to Guines, across the island's spine to The Bay of Pigs, along the Southern side through Sancti Espiritu and Trinidad, east to Cienfuegos, Las Tunas, and north east to Holguin, then south east again through rural co-ops on the way to Santiago de Cuba and Pico Turquino. Riding the same of cheap, heavy, Chinese bicycle that Cubans use gives one closer access to the people and the work sites than traveling by car, makes one less intimidating and lets them see that one is experiencing a little of what they were living through.

TABLE 4-1. Worksites Observed

Name	Type	City	Region	Urban or Rural	Ownership	Success/Failure	Pro/Anti-regime
1. State, urban (industrial or service)							
Cubana de Acero	Industrial/metalurgical	Havana	North coast	Urban	State	Success, but very slow	Mostly pro
"forklift" warehouse	Industrial	Havana	North coast	Urban	State	Successful	Mostly pro but broke rules
Hotel La Colina	Service	Havana	North coast	Urban	State	Successful	Could not tell
De Lido Hotel	Service	Havana	North coast	Urban	State	Successful	Could not tell
cigar & black market	Industrial	Havana	North coast	Urban	State	Rather successful	Some-what anti
2. Joint venture							
"East-side" Hotel	Service	Cienfuegos	East end of island	Town	Joint venture	Very successful	Very pro
3. Service, retail and artisan "co-ops"							
Paladar "Terpsichore"	Service	Havana	North coast	Urban	Co-op	Successful	Pro, cadre in family
"Gujira's" Paladar	Service	Havana	North coast	Urban	Co-op	Successful	Seem "fed up" with regime
4. Capitalist: Did not visit any purely capitalist ventures							

TABLE 4-1. Worksites Observed

Name	Type	City	Region	Urban or Rural	Ownership	Success/Failure	Pro/Anti-regime
5. Small Private Business							
Sandwich Shop Vender	Retailer	Playas del Este	North coast	Town	Private	Very Successful	Seemed anti-regime
“Parade” bed/breakfast	Service	Guaimaro	South	Urban	Private	Supplemented income	Moderately pro
“Spelunker” bed/breakfast	Service	Santiago de Cuba	East coast	Urban	Private	Supplemented income	Moderately pro
“Señora” bed/breakfast	Service	Havana	North coast	Urban	Private	Very successful	Mix of pro and anti
Tire repair shops	Service	Havana, highways	All regions	Urban, roads	Private	Minimally successful	Some anti
6. Black market							
Carpenter/driver	Construction	Havana	North coast	Urban	Private	NA	Somewhat anti
Jinoterás	Service	Santiago de Cuba/Havana	All regions	More urban	Private	Rather successful	Evenly pro and anti
Cock-fights	Service	Playa Larga/Bay of Pigs	South coast	Town	Private	Very Successful	Somewhat pro
Apartments	Construction/service	Havana	North coast	Urban	Private	Very successful	Could not tell
7. State farms							
Farm of the Diver	Farming	Jicotéa	East end of island	Rural	State	Surviving at a loss	Pro
8. Agricultural co-ops—UBPCs							
Food UBPC	Farming	Near Havana	North inland	Rural	Co-op	Surviving	Acted pro
Cane UBPC	Farming	Maja	East end of island	Rural	Co-op	Losing money	Mostly anti
Dairy UBPC	Farming	Jimón-guaya	Central	Rural	Co-op	Poor but surviving	Could not tell
Cattle UBPC	Farming	Jicotéa	Central	Rural	Co-op	Moderately poor	Could not tell
9. Small private farms							

TABLE 4-1. Worksites Observed

Name	Type	City	Region	Urban or Rural	Ownership	Success/Failure	Pro/Anti-regime
"Por que nosotros"	Farming	Near the Bay of Pigs	South coast	Rural	Private	Poor	Seemed somewhat anti
Tobacco	Farming	Cumanyagua	Central Cuba	Rural	Private	Successful	Anti
Pre-carista, semi-squatter	Farming	Jardin Botanica	Central Cuba	Rural	Informal land use	Just started	Resigned to regime's existence

Quotation marks signify a pseudonym.

### *Shaken elites in Cuba*

In Cuba the bureaucracy faced a collapse of self-confidence and popular support in 1991-1993. The Cuban elite did not confront an internal capitalist class as the Sandinistas did, but an external one, principally from U.S. corporate and government interests, and from wealthy, influential, Cuban refugees. Cuba's principle strategic allies that had provided protection, trade, membership in an international community, and triumphal confidence, had crumbled. With the fall of the Soviet system, Cuba's exports declined 70 percent and imports 75 percent from 1989 to 1993. The GDP dropped by more than one third (Blackburn, 2000). Although Washington's hostility to Castroist Cuba has been long standing, it tried to take advantage of the island's economic crisis, and the expectation that the government could soon collapse. In 1992 presidential candidate Bill Clinton tried to win over the Cuban American vote, by chiding President George H. W. Bush for not signing the Cuban Democracy Act and missing a chance to "put the hammer down on Fidel Castro." (Blackburn, 2000) Bush then made up for this by signing the Act, and in 1994, President Clinton signed the Helms Burton Act, further tightening sanctions. At the Cuban government's weakest moment, it made concessions, giving peasants and workers more control over production, cooperativizing state farms, allowing farmers' markets, and setting up small "cooperative" businesses. As Laura Enriquez states, "Cuba's agricultural transformation is being carried out by a socialist regime whose objective is to fortify its economy and government in the face of serious threats to its existence." (Enriquez, 2000)

The official state farms, and later the cooperatives, lacked sufficient resources to cultivate all the land available to them, so in October 1991 Fidel Castro gave a speech at the Communist Party Congress saying that the food

crisis would be the highest priority, and there should be not one inch of idle land in Cuba while it lasted. (Deere, et al., 1994: 211-212; Whitefield, 1993) Rural working people took this as a green light to occupy and farm the uncultivated land. Apparently most people obtained unofficial nods from local administrators, but, Cuban scholar Niurka Perez tells me personally that some peasants informally started cultivating idle land without seeking permission, and Perez along with Diana Deere and Ernel Gonzales wrote that some peasants had actually seized land leading managers to lend, or authorize peasants to cultivate, parcels of the state farms from the beginning of 1992 (Deere et al., 1994). There were food riots in Havana as well. It seems, then, that there was agency from above and from below. This unacknowledged squatter movement went on for two years until the government gave notice, on September 15, 1993 that it would form the new farm cooperatives - Basic Units of Cooperative Production, (UBPC)—and establish regular channels for individual citizens, mainly retired, to cultivate unused land. (Whitefield, 1993). A Ministry of Agriculture administrator said that MINAGRI received about 5,000 formal requests to cultivate little plots of land within a month after the September 1993 laws were passed (Enriquez, 2000; Deere, et al., 1994). As of April 1998, 45,804 people managed to get parcels of land from government amounting to 10,943 hectares (Enriquez, 2000) or about 27,000 acres.

I encountered three men just off the road from the Bay of Pigs to Santa Clara, on the Southern side of the island between Torriente and Playa Larga at a *Jardín Botánica*—Botanical Garden—that cultivates exotic, but useful flora and fauna. Wearing yellow straw hats and rubber boots, their ages appeared to run from almost 40 to about 60. One had a machete and two had Chinese bicycles, like mine. One said they had received permission from a local official to farm the land but, “We are precarios.” That is, they are squatters on the land or using it at sufferance of the official. The field was grassy, but invaded by *marabú*—a rough, thorny, bush, so difficult to remove that the financially strapped government could not be bothered with it.

Cubans in the 1990s set up *conucos*—little gardens on land not legally their own to raise vegetables or a few chickens where the responsible officials would not notice or care. The word *conuco* is thought to derive from the indigenous Arawak or Taino languages and from colonial times when slaves would cultivate small individual plots of land during unsupervised moments. In the 1990s, the government established a formal policy to set up areas of *autoconsumo*—self-consumption—on all farms and coops and in any cultivatable spaces within urban areas, even including the front lawn of the Ministry of Agriculture. One dissident cooperative farmer within Cuba claims that officials complain that workers spend half of their time on their *conucos* so

that they are the main obstacle to productivity in the cooperatives. (Alonso, 2000) The *precarios* such as those in the Botanical Garden applied a kind of influence, sometimes forceful and other times very gentle.

Social forces were most determining in the shift toward more workers' control, but institutional, economic, and cultural/political forces had impact as well. Working people had exerted pressure on the system since the 1970s, although not in an organized, and often, perhaps, not even in a conscious way, by withholding labor. When the lack of worker motivation led to the failure of the 1970 sugar cane harvest, Fidel Castro began to encourage revitalization of the trade unions and certain forms of worker participation. (Fuller, 1992). In the early 1990s the economic crisis, the food riots in Havana, the country people's land hunger, and the regime's doubts about its own survival, all gave these working people the opportunity to acquire direct control of the means of production. The sense of elite weakness, and the opportunity that this gave to country people, were the major impulses for the regime to offer land and for people to take it. The decisions of key persons in governing institutions, especially Castro's green light and the policy of cooperativization, were also critical. The economic crisis was the proximate cause for country folk to take the land and city dwellers to riot. The political culture was important as well, with Cuban ideology favoring workers, and the poor. Government officials were acculturated to believe their role was to help working people, so they were not prepared to repress vast numbers of them to maintain control.

In Cuba, although the conflict between the Cuban elite as a whole and international capital was important, the conflict within the bureaucratic elite affected workers' control even more. Arturo Villar describes elite conflict underway in Cuba as an "internal war. The battlefield is the economy...And the combatants are foreign investors, bureaucrats and managers of state-operated enterprises." (Villar, 1999) Villar favors management methods in the joint ventures including ability to "fire workers at will." Cuban workers have been free to goof off, and worker decision-making bodies have formally blocked management sanctions and, informally, driven out unwanted managers. Villar thinks that some bureaucrats see capitalism as "the wave of the future," while others "constantly place stumbling blocks in the way." A state economic planner says, "Resurrection of capitalism in Cuba is inevitable...we are simply looking for ways to do it while keeping the social costs down." He says the Cuban managers support Fidel Castro "circling the wagons while we learn the tricks of the trade to face the Yankee invasion and the soldiers from Miami," which indicates that even though the managerial elite in Cuba may hope to become more market oriented, it remains at odds with the Miami Cuban business elite. He says, "Among the managerial class, it

seems only hard-line revolutionaries and incompetents are against foreign investment.” An ex-vice minister says “We are fighting our own war here...the managers [struggle] with the help of the foreign investors.” (Villar, 1999) So Villar and his sources clearly believe, from a counterrevolutionary perspective, that there was a serious conflict, apparently between more entrepreneurial managers and investors, on the one hand and those politically committed to socialism on the other.

Enterprise managers (such as the one I interviewed at Cubana de Acero) see certain regulations as constraining productivity, so they hope a more market-oriented system would eliminate these constraints. In the late 1990’s Cuba began the *perfeccionamiento empresarial* program to introduce more independent capitalist-style management. Phillip Peters, a far-right, Reagan-Bush, State Department official, quotes Lázaro González, a Cuban manager, who says his authority at a rubber enterprise had been, “very limited practically all our problems were resolved at higher levels...I couldn’t structure my payroll or designate who works with me.” (Peters, 2001)

In Cuba, as in the former Soviet system, managers who hoped to do well became the pro-capitalist lobby within the bureaucracy. The managers might consider being careful what they wish for, however. In transitions of most of the former Soviet bloc and in Nicaragua, new constraints emerged, and the central planning mechanisms collapsed before market mechanisms could replace them, so although speculators profited, most real producers did not. In Cuba and China the complete collapse did not take place as the government never released its grip on the economy and the agricultural administrators never released control over the new cooperative units.

I talked with Cuban metallurgical workers and managers who perceive managers as representing the enterprise and its workers in negotiating with the government ministries. Executives seeking allies for enterprise autonomy looked naturally to their employees, offering greater participation—although not real workers’ control. Gonzalez, the rubber executive, describes drafting a proposal to the ministry for greater enterprise autonomy and managerial authority. He says, “Without the participation of workers in each step the process doesn’t work.” The managers would offer rosy business forecasts telling their workers if you let us be more independent of the government—to have more freedom to make enterprise decisions, to seek investors, lenders—we will all make more money and we will give you more power in the factory. Peters writes that González says, “he was concerned about worker support for the process...[and he] moved quickly to heed worker concerns about conditions and benefits.” Peters describes a construction materials plant CEO, Alejandro Gutiérrez, who stated that “his first step was to eliminate fear of layoffs,” telling workers that if any jobs were eliminated, the Foreign Trade

Ministry would have positions for them. The firm did increase worker remuneration, but had 15-percent fewer personnel, suggesting that layoffs may well have occurred. Peters quotes an unidentified observer of the *perfeccionamiento empresarial* who claims, “This is the first time workers’ opinions are truly being taken into account.” (Peters, 2001) However, even though managers may seek worker support in the short run, their desire for the power to “fire workers at will” would reduce workplace democracy in long run.

The Cuban government made a similar case to win support for the new UBPC cooperatives. The workers do not seem to have bought the pitch or received the touted benefits in the sugar cane coops, but the idea seems to have gotten some ‘traction’ in the food coops, as evidenced by the fact that cane has continued to lose money, while food coops have improved, so that they are nearly breaking even. So in both the enterprises and the cooperatives, pro-market managers offered what might be considered a short term democratization of the workplace in order to win over the workers.

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### *The Pattern*

Haroldo Dilla, a Cuban former Communist party member, and critical supporter of the Revolution from the left, offers his analysis of this process. He describes a “technocratic-entrepreneurial bloc” with access to global markets that emerged in Cuba along with the arrival of some 260 international investors and 800 foreign firms. He says this “techno-managerial sector” of “probably no more than a few thousand” began to appear just prior to the 1991 CCP Congress. “For several months, Cuba experienced the most democratic public debate in its history.” He says, however, that the “techno-managerial elite’s” goal is not empowerment of the people, but a “sugar-coated Chinese model,” that is economic marketization plus political authoritarianism. He notes that when the Spanish Melia investors established their first hotel in Cuba in this period, they tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent the union from operating. Concerned that the enterprising elite may foreshadow a “Cuban thermidor” or a “tropical mafia,” Dilla proposes an alliance between the “popular classes” and “the political elite that emerged from the revolution” to check this technocratic-entrepreneurial tendency. He advocates, among other things, a “renewal of popular forces,” more efficient “participatory municipal institutions,” and “decentralized, pluralist, local democratic planning” (Dilla, 2000)

A recognizable pattern emerges. First pro-capitalist bureaucrats and then actual capitalists try to ally with working people. The main social actor trying to bring about workers’ control will be the workers and peasants themselves.

They hope to save jobs and earnings through their own private ownership or collective control over the enterprise, or failing those alternatives, to get behind a strong captain to navigate a frail ship in the stormy seas of globalization. After the capitalist reorganization and economic crash, workers get laid off (thrown overboard), pensions shrivel up and citizens lose social services. Ordinary people are hammered by marketization, so they resist it through old or reformed workplace organizations. Working peoples' allies then become the former orthodox supporters of the socialist system, who by now are usually less orthodox and offer them a measure of workers' control.

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### *Conclusion*

First, workers and peasants used the stalemate of elites to assert control over farms and enterprises in Cuba. These were the moments of division in the Cuban political/managerial class after the fall of the Soviet system. Second, the elites never intended to give the workers as much workers' control as they took for themselves. The Cuban government had tried for three decades to set up a centralized agricultural system and had actually recentralized that system in the Rectification of Errors campaign of the late 1980s, but working people pressured the government to allow informal parcelization of idle land, cooperativization of the state farms, and self-owned micro-businesses.

Third, although the Cuban mass organizations have virtually no independence from the government, party and state cadres retain a sense of themselves as tough, but enlightened, servants of the people. Although they engage in repression, they have been unwilling to resort to mass terror, or to let people starve as have, for example, the Stalinist, Romanian, or North Korean regimes. In order for working people to use the pervasive, low-key, rule breaking of squatter tactics, and black market small enterprise, the Cuban officials had to have been willing to play the game.

Fourth, among the elites, the weaker party usually becomes the best ally of working people, who tend to be weakest of all the major players. Working people, as the weakest actor, usually have to join with the second-place player of the moment to balance against the strongest. Marketization creates conflicts among elites. Some expect to be winners and others expect to be losers. Just before, the pro-capitalist elite tends to be working people's best ally. Just after, the hard line socialists tend to be best. Elites have to hustle to find friends, so they look to working people for support, and one thing they can offer is a degree of workplace democracy.



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## *The Future of Health in Cuba*

*Traci Potterf*

While the term “Cuban health care” conjures visions of a state-run health delivery infrastructure, the struggle for health and well-being in Cuba extends beyond both biomedicine and government planning. The complex lived reality of Cuban health seeking may only be understood in the context of everyday actors’ struggles and creativity. The phrase *invento Cubano* (Cuban invention) is used daily to refer to the endless creative strategies people devise to overcome the obstacles that impede their most routine endeavors. They may fill sausage casings with flour and pork fat where meat is too expensive, or use ashes to wash dishes where there is no detergent. Tin cans are commonly transformed into light fixture or bath water heating elements. Similarly, healthcare professionals and average citizens alike consider the ability to creatively resolve health concerns essential for overall well-being. In many cases it saves lives.

People are increasingly combining free access to state sponsored biomedicine, internationally recognized forms of “alternative” medicine, a variety of popular healing modalities and eclectic forms of self medication. Cuba’s citizens have experienced a tumultuous history of political economic upheaval and fluctuating degrees of social control alongside the benefits of progressive social reforms, including free health care. The effects of these dynamics have been felt in people’s day-to-day lives, impacting their health and influencing the availability and appeal of diverse health strategies.

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### *Background*

The 1959 Revolutionary government nationalized health care and succeeded in extending medical services into the most remote populations. (Rojas, 1986; Araújo and Figueroa, 1985; Danielson, 1979; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1965) As public health statistics approached those of “first world”

countries, Cuba's public health program received international fame. MacDonald, 1999; Bravo, 1993; Feinsilver, 1989; Díaz-Briquets, 1983; Danielson, 1979) With the support of the Soviet Union, the government focused economic production on cash crops, and most Cubans could survive on their meager salaries. These achievements were accomplished in spite of continuing U.S. economic sanctions that increased food and health care costs as well as denied Cubans access to U.S. patented medications and manufactured products, such as parts necessary to repair and maintain hospital equipment and water treatment facilities. (MacDonald 1999; Rosendahl 1997; American Association for World Health, 1997; Nayeri 1995)

The fall of the Soviet Union resulted in a severe economic crisis, coined by Castro as the "Special Period," that left Cuba without enough food, fuel or medical supplies. Hospital equipment and water treatment facilities fell into disrepair. This resulted in malnutrition, diminished the quality of health care and compromised water sanitation among many other significant hardships with direct health implications. While the Special Period is frequently referred to in the past tense, most people I spoke to still feel its effects today.

Improvements have been due, for the most part, to tourism, biotech, the legalization of the dollar, limited privatization of the economy and agricultural reform. (Enriquez, 2000 and 1994) Furthermore, Cuba's alliance with Venezuela has not only provided a political ally but also served as a primary source of affordable petroleum. Cubans fear that political upheaval surrounding Hugo Chavez's government might lead to severe fuel shortages, resulting in a return to conditions not unlike those suffered during the height of the Special Period. During that time oil shortages paralyzed farm equipment and transportation of people, food and supplies, as well as left homes, factories, hospitals and water treatment plants with precious little electrical power.

With the onset of the Special Period, Cubans could no longer live off of their salaries. They responded with a shift to a dominant, albeit submerged, black market economy which persists today. Cubans' survival has come to depend on the black market, which is built on networking, cooperation, creativity and calculated risk. However, the government has consistently responded to external political pressure and internal economic crisis with a system of strict social control to identify and eradicate anti-government activity, black market business and any other behavior considered "anti-revolutionary" or "anti-social."

When the need to survive on the black market is combined with ensuing policies of strict government control, the result is increased paranoia and interpersonal conflict, which, according to Baracoeses, increased the prevalence of *envidia* (envy), *nervios* (nerves) and even accusations of witchcraft. The outcome is a distrustful, forced interdependence in the struggle to put

food on the table—a stressful combination that is in itself a cause of illness. In fact, *nervios*, a term predominantly used by both doctors and patients to describe stress, depression and anxiety, has become one of the most common health complaints in Cuba. (Potterf 2006)<sup>1</sup> Most of the individuals I interviewed had in the past or were currently taking sedatives for their “nerves,” most commonly diazepam, meprobamate, chlordiazepoxide and chloral hydrate.

In addition to psychological stress, many other illnesses can be linked to political and economic factors. For example, during the Special Period neuropathy nearly became an epidemic as a result of malnutrition and is still common today. (Claudio 1999; American Association for World Health, 1997; Nayeri 1995) Although agricultural reform is gradually diversifying food production, dietary culture is slow to change. (Enriquez, 2000 and 1994) According to observations and interviews with health care workers, obesity is on the rise, largely due to diets high in sugar, starch, refined carbohydrates and animal fat. These foods are popular, not only due to historical limitation of options, but because in times of poverty, popular emphasis has been to fatten oneself up (*engordarse*). Ironically, as a result, many overweight people still suffer malnutrition due to vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Diabetes is also very widespread, which is largely attributable to diet. Nearly every person I interviewed complained of blood pressure problems, which they linked to diet, climate and stress. Kidney problems as well as dermatological and intestinal parasites are rampant, arising from poor hygiene and bad water quality.

While tourist facilities, including tourist hospitals are run with new, well-maintained equipment, including up-to-date back-up generators, most of Cuba does not enjoy this luxury. Just as pharmacies lack important medications, hospitals are often without the most basic necessities, such as sterilization chemicals, suturing thread and anesthesia. Laboratory test specimens often become contaminated and must be repeated. Hospital bathrooms are, more often than not, on par with those in bars for locals, while tourist facilities are always impeccable. Not surprisingly, staphylococcus infections are quite common among Cubans, particularly following hospitalizations. Luckily, antibiotics are generally available.

Dr. Javier Muñoz, a surgeon I knew in Baracoa, nearly decided to give up medicine when, during a blackout, a generator failed, causing the deaths of patients on artificial respiration. He was both devastated and angry. Why, he demanded to know, should his country’s poverty, exacerbated by the U.S.

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1. For more on *nervios* in the contexts of poverty and socio-political repression, see Green 1994, Rebhun 1993, Scheper-Hughes 1987, 1992.

embargo, be the cause of these people's deaths? In the game of politics, what fault did they have?

Hospital equipment often predates the Revolution. Many units were made in the U.S. which, due to both the embargo and the fact that most are no longer manufactured, precludes the possibility of acquiring replacement parts. Others may be obsolete Soviet models whose parts are also nearly impossible to obtain. Not only can the government not afford to replace all of the equipment, but small towns, such as Baracoa, are lower on the priority list than facilities in cities serving larger populations. It is also important to understand that Cuba's electricity is petroleum derived. Therefore, petroleum shortages translate into regular, sometimes daily, planned and unplanned electrical outages. The failure of a hospital's back-up generator during a blackout is certain to prove life-threatening.

### **Overcoming Illness**

Fieldwork in Baracoa revealed how national and international political economic pressures not only constitute root causes of health concerns, but also shape coping mechanisms. Cubans have responded to health crises much as they respond to any other need—with cooperation, networking, stop gap solutions, creative inventions and black market strategies. A long history of natural and traditional healing, access to modern medical technology, the influences of foreign visitors and international trends in alternative medicine have led both state-administered and popular sectors to adopt increasingly pluralistic medical practices.

### **State Sponsored Health Care**

As previously discussed, while the Cuban government is world-renowned for its free health delivery, the system often does not work the way it was originally designed. This is not due to lack of competent and dedicated practitioners, but due to the effects of scarcity, such as electrical outages, outdated equipment, contaminated water and supply shortages. Many supplies “disappear” into the black market and mysteriously reappear in time for state inspections. Not only do many health professionals earn more money selling socks or renting rooms to tourists, but there are also individuals who make use of their access to medical supplies to augment their income.

Nevertheless, scientists and public health employees are constantly adapting to their circumstances and coming up with new ways to overcome these problems. On a day-to-day basis, doctors must turn to stop gap solutions, such as substituting sewing thread for suturing thread or prescribing Benadryl instead of Valium. Meanwhile, public health officials search for more long-term approaches.

Whereas at the outset of the 1959 Revolution, “popular” and “traditional” medicine was strongly discouraged, if not prohibited, the state now utilizes a wide range of approaches, such as homeopathy, acupuncture, apitherapy (medicinal use of bees and bee products) and phytotherapy (medicinal use of plants) in conjunction with conventional allopathy as part of their *Medicina Tradicional y Natural* (Traditional and Natural Medicine) agenda. Doctors I interviewed report that Cubans are highly receptive to natural and traditional therapies, which is not surprising given Cuba’s long tradition of curing with an eclectic blend of plant, animal, mineral and spiritual modalities. (Cabrera, 1984 and 1954; Seoane 1984 and 1962) Nevertheless, while natural and traditional remedies are lower in cost than many conventional therapies, limited access to supplies and information is still a hindrance, particularly in facilities outside of Santiago de Cuba and Havana.

### **Popular Healing and Self Medication**

Fieldwork revealed that, although the Cuban health system has won people’s trust in treating a wide array of illnesses, shortages of medical resources are not its only limitation. There are underlying causes of illnesses that the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) does not sufficiently address, such as dietary deficiencies, environmental contamination, political repression and pay so disproportionately low that it often covers less than 10 percent of that which is needed for basic subsistence. Patients are often hesitant to openly discuss the effects of these issues on their health for fear that their sentiments will be associated with an “anti-revolutionary” attitude.

What is now termed “natural and traditional medicine” by the government is generally reduced to “alternative medicine” and secular elements of popular healing. While Cuba has its share of Atheists, a great many Cubans—doctors and scientists included—observe direct relationships among their social reality, the roots of illness and the spiritual realm. As is the case in most biomedical systems, state care is not designed to deal with social and spiritual elements considered intrinsic to many health concerns. Via informal strategies within the popular sector, Cubans often find ways to treat social and spiritual aspects of illnesses that state care does not officially address. They may also turn to these alternatives due to pharmaceutical shortages, to avoid long waits or simply because they believe that “natural” or “spiritual” remedies are better at curing certain ailments. In fact, doctors and scientists commonly seek popular healers for their own concerns and informally refer patients to *santeros*, *spiritists* and *herbalists*.

One common type of popular healer is the *botánico*, or botanical doctor, who in addition to utilizing plants employs animal and mineral remedies indigenous to the region. They may either harvest materials themselves to prepare medicines or direct their patients to prepare more common remedies

at home. While some Botánicos have no formal scientific background, many others are trained scientists who combine both traditional and scientific concepts in their practices and whose knowledge is actively sought out by state-employed doctors and scientists.

Religion and spirituality play an important role in healing for a great many Cubans. (Orozco and Bolívar, 1998) God, spirits and saints, often synchronized with Afro-Cuban deities, are seen as possessing powers far mightier than the government or science and often provide a “way out” or around seemingly formidable circumstance. (Fernández, 2002) Medico-religious healers include spiritists and practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions, such as Santería and Palo Monte. (Córdova Martínez and Barzaga Sablón, 2000; Larduet Luaces, 2000; Barnet, 1997; Bolívar, 1997; Sandoval, 1975; Ortiz, 1973; Bascom, 1950) Practitioners may attribute disease, disturbing life events and bad luck to factors such as a person’s *envidia* (envy), *mal de ojo* (evil eye), or, in rare cases, *hechicería* (witchcraft). Health concerns might also stem from a displeased *orixa*, saint or *muerto* (deceased person) who must be appeased with rituals, offerings and prayer. For many, Catholic and Protestant church attendance provides community support in times of illness, a venue to seek the help of God or saints and, in many cases, an opportunity for a faith healing experience. Cubans also consult with people they simply refer to as *gente que sabe* (people who know), usually elders that have a *don* (gift from God) or who have passed along knowledge from one generation to the next.

Cuba follows the Caribbean pattern of predominantly female-headed households. (Holgado Fernández, 2000; Trouillot, 1992) Despite the undeniable presence of machismo in Cuba, women play a very important role in health management. My study revealed that, in addition to their active participation in the official health care sector, the predominance of women’s roles as household heads, breadwinners, caregivers and sources of vast arrays of both traditional and scientific knowledge are crucial in overcoming scarcity to maximize health for the population as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Women and men were highly communicative and openly share health issues with each other. More often than not, men deferred to female household members in making decisions about their health.

Another crucial aspect of health management in Cuba is self-medication. In addition to consultations with state health practitioners and popular healers, Cubans commonly self-medicate for a wide array of conditions, from parasites, cystitis and *nervios* (nerves) to *envidia* [envy] and *mal de ojo* [evil eye]. The household is a focal point for health negotiation as well as for the storage and preparation of “natural,” “traditional” and conventional reme-

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2. For more on women’s roles in Cuba, see Holgado Fernández, 2000 and Rosendahl, 1997.



dies. While many people's medications are prescribed by a doctor, others obtain pharmaceuticals through social networking and the black market. Most households have a dozen or so medications on hand at all times, including state-prepared "natural and traditional" remedies, such as plant-based syrups and creams. In addition to prescription medicines, people will often grow medicinal plants in the patios of their homes, maintain altars and prepare do-it-yourself rituals.

People are heavily reliant on tourists and relatives living abroad, not only for financial support, but also to supply them with information and medications that are otherwise unobtainable. Though few Cubans who are not health care practitioners or researchers have access to the internet, those who do are able to obtain and share health knowledge with their communities. Citizens are also increasingly motivated by both public health propaganda and international health and fitness trends to exercise and watch their diet, despite limited access to equipment and a popular dietary culture that encourages high-caloric intake and significant animal fat consumption.

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### *Pluralisms and Crossovers*

It is important to note that the hybrid and inventive nature of medicine *a lo Cubano* is not a new phenomenon. The island has seen a protracted history of blending both medico-religious and nonreligious concepts. Cuban medical practices, as eclectic as Cubans themselves, have long mingled African, Spanish, French, North American and indigenous derived traditions with science and knowledge of local flora, fauna and minerals. (Cabrera, 1984 and 1954; Roig y Mesa, 1945) However, prior to the revolution, access to conventional allopathy generally correlated with social class and racial divides. Poor people, particularly rural populations and blacks, had little choice than to rely on popular medicine. That is not to say that those who were given the choice did not combine conventional medical remedies with both secular and religious forms of popular medicine.

The Revolution's approach to traditional medicine was, at first, one of disallowance. There was an effort to replace "popular" healing with "community" support of state sponsored biomedicine. (Iatridis, 1990; Rojas, 1986; Ministerio de Salud Pública, 1977) Even so, people continued to utilize medico-religious and natural remedies behind closed doors. The resource shortages sparked by the Special Period combined with acceptance of "alternative" medicine in international scientific circles opened dialogue. Individuals began to utilize traditional medicine more openly and health officials reconsidered their initial position. Not only has the state officially embraced "Traditional and Natural Medicine," but the general population has

acquired an astounding level of health literacy, incorporating biomedical and “alternative” concepts into both popular expert healing and self medication practices. The result has been increasingly dynamic exchanges among biomedicine, international trends in “natural” medicine and Cuban health traditions, as scientists biomedicalize traditional Cuban remedies and Cubans popularize scientifically validated remedies.

The government has developed native medicinal plants into medications, such as *oreganón* (a large-leaf species of oregano) and *copal* for respiratory problems and the bark of the *mango macho* tree for inflammation and a variety of dermatological conditions, including cancer, wrinkles and burns. State and scientific validation of these remedies has dramatically increased their popularity. Now, people vie for the limited production of plant-based syrups and strip *mango macho* trees of their bark to prepare as a tisane.

Doctors in Baracoa encourage patients to do *inhalaciones* (inhalations) to clear lung congestion as has been done for generations, by boiling bitter orange leaves and inhaling the vapors, though nowadays many people add menthol from the pharmacy. Similarly, doctors might formally or informally recommend any number of indigenous plant-based tisanes or the water of the young coconut to remedy kidney problems, which are common due to the local water’s high mineral and microbial content.

Similarly, in response to its world reknown, the Cuban government has begun manufacturing placenta shampoo. I knew women in Baracoa with access to dollars who would buy human placentas from doctors and fry them in coconut oil, which people would then apply to their hair to prevent breakage and promote growth. Doctors and scientists I interviewed laughingly point to this as an example of an *invento Cubano* (Cuban invention)—a creative strategy that they explain, in this case, is not effective because the heat from the frying destroys the beneficial properties of the placenta. The international popularity of *noni*—a fruit which grows in eastern Cuba and was previously considered useless—has taken off in Cuba as a sort of panacea thought to cure over 100 illnesses. The government now cultivates and packages noni for foreign markets, tourist hospitals and use in public health where, due to financial constraints, it is reserved for serious conditions, such as cancer. *Noni* trees may be easily found in and around Baracoa. As MINSAP touted the curative properties of this fruit via publications, television, and notices in the local hospital, Baracoeses began selling it in markets and attempting to prepare it in home remedies.

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*Concluding Remarks: Cuba's Health Care Trajectory*

This study revealed how particular events, policies and practices, on both domestic and international scales, impact everyday Cubans' health and well-being. The black market, stop-gap solutions and medical pluralism constitute adaptive strategies that enable people to deal with a wide range of illnesses in times of severe economic and social hardship. In fact, one of the most significant findings revealed in my research is that these ever-evolving "informal" strategies compose one of the most vital aspects of overall health-seeking in both state and popular sectors. While current academic literature on health in Cuba is generally limited to "formal" aspects of state sponsored biomedicine, this project confirms the importance of examining the health care struggle from a much broader perspective to reflect health dynamics as they are lived and experienced.

Though prior to the 1959 Revolution, Cuba was ahead of most of Latin America in terms of health statistics, healthcare was largely unavailable to the majority of Cubans, particularly rural, poor and black citizens. Since that time, Cubans have come to see unlimited access to state health care as an inalienable right that has proven essential for their well-being in times of extreme hardship. In fact, in a country divided by political views, health care as a human right seems to be one of the few points of agreement among Revolutionary supporters and dissenters alike. The people I interviewed expressed a profound fear that, should U.S. and radical Miami Cubans' agendas prevail upon Castro's passing, Cubans will have to endure the prohibitive healthcare costs and abject inequity suffered in the U.S. and the rest of Latin America.

It is also crucial to recognize that biomedicine composes only one component of health seeking. The case of health care in Cuba reveals an eclectic blend of science, tradition, technology and nature, enmeshed in a complex political economic and social reality. Findings suggest a popular preference for the continued development of a state-sponsored, medically pluralistic health care model. People also expressed a desire for the conservation of popular spiritual and healing practices.

Health care efforts currently underway are riddled with obstacles and pitfalls that fall only in part under the jurisdiction of MINSAP. The future health care options that will be available to Cubans, both during and following Castro's regime, depend in large part on the very same factors that have shaped health care up until now: Cuba's economic policies, wealth equity, social policies (including those of MINSAP), world events and foreign relations. The impacts of U.S. policies as well as the influence of predominantly Miami-based dissident groups will undeniably play important roles that may facilitate some aspects of Cuban people's sovereignty while, as a great many fear,

undermining others, such as their desire for continued social programs, including state-sponsored health care and education. Communication, information and bio technologies will continue to make their mark as will global health trends, tourism and Cubans living abroad.

As necessity is the mother of invention, crisis and hardship have bred a movement toward progressive, integrative health care practices that are, nevertheless, still greatly limited by economic constraints and political rigidity. Optimistically, one would hope that despite present shortcomings Cubans would continue on this path through prosperity and regime change. Even with economic improvement, Cubans will need the continued support of their government to improve sanitary conditions as well as to prioritize equitable access to health services. Cubans will, in all likelihood continue the use of natural and traditional remedies, including those of a spiritual nature, regardless of economic conditions, as these modalities have been integral to Cubans' well-being from the country's inception.

Material, political and social dynamics will shape, but not entirely determine, the diversity and availability of tool boxes with which Cubans will mend their health. Individual Cubans will play a great role in determining the future of health in Cuba. After all, they are the ones who are caught in the middle of Cuba's internal and external political economic tug-of-wars and who will live the consequences through their bodies.

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## *The Island's Healthcare Legacy*

*Robert Huish*

There is a little-known anecdote from Goiania City, Brazil, in 1987 that fittingly depicts Cuban medical internationalism. While Chernobyl burned itself into a global consciousness, another nuclear disaster was ignored and forgotten by most of the world. Two scavengers were searching through Goiania's abandoned private cancer clinic, when they discovered a canister containing Cesium-137. Unable to understand the word "radioactive," they opened the tube to find a blue stone, that "made everything it touch glow in the night." (Galeano, 2000) In their favela the blue stone was passed around. Children and adults alike rubbed pieces of the stone on their bodies and they began to illuminate. (Reuters, 2005) The radiation spread through the favela contaminating 244 persons. For a week the health authorities figured it as nothing more than food poisoning. Next to Chernobyl, Goiania City was the worst nuclear disaster in history, and is possibly the most forgotten. And yet alongside the victims of Chernobyl receiving treatment in Havana, were the children of Goiania City to whom Cuba provided free healthcare. While little attention is given to Goiania City, Cuba selflessly provided care to those in need.

This is a beseeming example of how Cuban medical internationalism treats health as a human right, especially in places loaded with too much inequality and too little understanding. Beyond a mere political stunt, this epistemology has endured through the Soviet years, during the special period, and continues today. Cuba routinely offers healthcare for Latin America's poor, and has benevolently forgotten to send on a bill.

To cynics, the goal of Cuba's medical internationalism must come down to political pork-barreling. But, did Cuba offer aid to victims of Chernobyl, or attempt to offer victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans medical attention, just to get on the six o'clock news and receive laurels from ambas-

sadors? Belittling the Cuban human security approach to a publicity stunt is a disparaging and inane criticism. Cuban doctors, teachers and nurses routinely journey to attend to the most impoverished and forgotten regions of the South. They go to places where electricity and sanitation dare not tread, let alone television cameras; from Brazil's forgotten villages to Haiti's menacing countryside. Built on traditions of community-based care, person-to-person contact, and proven methods of primary care, Cuba's medical internationalism is first and foremost dedicated to saving lives. The success of this policy is in saving lives and empowering communities, before strategizing any sort of global political scheme. A commitment to save lives is what drives the doctors into the jungles. And yet, according to experts of political science, the ends of this extraordinary human security endeavor must be about gaining political allies, before the ability to save lives. Certainly the role of healthcare provision in Cuba's foreign policy will have some political capital. Is there any country today that crafts foreign policy in order to not gain some economic or political gain? But, to follow a cynic's logic, assuming that medical internationalism is a mere stunt, it's safe to assume that this policy would be abandoned with political change. But from the perspective of the actors in this production, the doctors, medical students and patients, is it really about political strategy? For the doctors who can check for broken bones without an x-ray and who deliver babies with little more than hot water and heaps of effort, how do they politically strategize? For the students who came to the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) without shoes on their feet, and left with white coats on their backs, where did they find time to formulate political grand strategy amid studying medicine in a six-year window that would take a North American student ten years to get through? And to the parents of newly born children who were not the one in 10 to die before their first birthday, where do their political allegiances lie (UNICEF, 2003: 110)?

I argue that in the Cuban context health and healthcare have been enabling expressions of self determination; bringing human security and empowerment to people who otherwise would go without. Instead of rationalizing Cuba's medical internationalism into broader political discourses, we can couch notions of transition, democratization and self determination into the health context. Perhaps it is time to consider good health as a means of self determination, before political gain rather than the other way around.

Social institutions and community health methodologies brought Cuba into the epidemiological transition, which is certainly one of the most successful social transitions in the history of the Americas. Current Cuban innovation in healthcare capacity building and accessibility may very well bring new health transitions at the community level in the South. Looking at pro-



grams like ELAM and Mission Miracle, it may be more fitting to ask what is Cuba's role in creating transitions rather than being in transition.

The epidemiological transition, and the institutions that made it possible, reveals that the nature of the programs, rather than assumed societal equality, plays a leading role in not only improving the quality of life, but empowering communities as well. While some critiques argue that inequalities in access to expensive pharmaceuticals, equipment, and other healthcare products, shows a failure of the Cuban model, they overlook that this is an endemic problem with all healthcare models. (Marchildon, 2006) What makes the Cuban approach unique is that consumption inequality poses little threat to the community focused primary care principles. Community care is not uniquely Cuban, but the fact that it costs next to nothing to create and even less to use is unique indeed. Accessibility to healthcare at the community level is not directly impacted by discrepancies in pharmaceutical distribution. Rather, human resource based healthcare, accessibility, and capacity building all remain unscathed by growing market influences. Indeed, the Cuban health legacy has already made tremendous social transitions through this human resource focused model, even in times of economic anarchy. It continues to do so as capacity-building programs expand into more dynamic dimensions and show little sign of collapse or retraction regardless of economic and political uncertainty. Perhaps the real crisis from inequality lies in a broader deficit of ideas of how the Cuban health paradox may continue to be a driver in social and community transitions throughout the Americas.

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### *Imperialism, Self-determination and the Idea of Transition*

I would like to discuss political philosophy and geographies of health, as I think it is necessary to understand how limited dialogue is in linking health, along with human security in general, to self determination in the Cuban case. To date, discussions of national health and national self determination remain strangers. Some studies acknowledge that national health is meant to provide well being to all those in the nation state, but they often fall far short in doing so. (Lightner, 2004) Hence the assumption that healthcare can be an enabling factor for an entire society is rarely considered. Perhaps as an unconscious consequence most chatter on self determination remains in high-political discourses of democratizing processes and political frameworks, which really have more to do with determination of an imagined nation state and not that of individuals and communities. (Anderson, 1991) Likewise, good health is seen as good thing, but is rarely acknowledged in political and legal frameworks as being a means of self determination beyond symbolic

capital. (Feinsilver, 1993) Still, Cuba's healthcare legacy has quite a lot to do with self determination by empowering individuals and communities alike. Overlooking the epidemiological experience in discussions of "Cuba in transition" omits important elements of autonomy gained through good health, and inherently constructs dialogues that bear narrow imperialist visions. In respect to the theme of this book, I would like to discuss some points made by James Tully on imperialist language and how it dominates the "Cuba in transition" question all the while omitting the other important social transitions.

If Cuba is only in transition now, then what was it before? Defining a Cuban transition on its relation into, or away from, the global system is a question that satisfies a hegemonic normative framework. Especially when considering that Cuba is a very active player in the U.N. and other global networks. Normative frameworks of democratization, reintegration and self determination have more to do with the country's so-called expected place in a system that is ridden with imperial traditions and hegemonic discourses; no less intrusive than in early twentieth-century Havana when school teachers thought it best to conduct lessons in English because of practical inevitability.

It is possible to consider discussions of national self determination to be a hegemonic language. For Tully, imperialist language flows through Kantian, and neo-Kantian understandings of the global order, but it remains, he argues, in the language of advocates of self determination. (Tully, 2005: 23-24) Tully uses Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* to show that the so-called just and universal "post-colonial world of free and independent states under international law, [is] bound together by free trade, governed by a league of advanced states, [and is] the particular historical product of European colonial imperialism." (Tully, 2005: 25) Kant, among his many pearls of wisdom including his declaration that "Indians were incapable of civilization," (Galeano, 2000: 46) affirmed that the correct ordering of humanity is done through the establishment of European republican or constitutional states that are "formally equal and sovereign" and engage in their duty of free trade. (Kant, 1992: Tully, 2005: 25) Among other things, Kant believed that this league of nations has the right, if not obligation, to intervene into a society that was in any way different from the European norm. (Tully, 2005: 25)

The Kantian approach does not justify the use of imperialism to establish good constitutional states; it is taken as necessary and righteous. That said, participants of this system cannot recognize any other narratives, traditions or civilizations as equal yet different, as the European model state is the obligatory narrative. (Tully, 2005: 30) In the post-colonial world, the colonies dressed as nation states may be formally equal, but informally inequitable economic and historical exploitation doesn't skip a beat. The result is an

exemplary example of imperial relations through so-called non-imperial normative frameworks. (Tully, 2005).

For the Kantian and neo-Kantian perspectives, imperialism is an unavoidable necessary. Yet some argue that “the language and practice of political self determination of peoples and furthering of democracy offer a genuinely non-imperial and anti-imperial alternative.” (Tully, 2005: 34) The idea is that political self-determination from within, regardless if the leadership has been directly or indirectly influenced by foreign actors, will be a form of non-imperialism. Unfortunately this doesn't hold up. Democratic collectivisation does little to break imperial traditions, and it is unequipped to ward off intrusion from so-called “non-imperial actors” like multinational corporations, development agencies and such. Moreover the generally assumed form of democratic freedom is that of which Isaiah Berlin titled “negative freedom.” (Berlin, 1958) Being negatively free may remove repressive governors, but it makes no guarantee for working civic-democratic relations whereby the ruled and rulers are able to have open dialogue and speak frankly with each other. (Tully, 2003) All too often democratizing nations, especially those which have been aided into the process from Western powers, often with bombs and then ballots, experience the burden of the governed being too distraught to effectively communicate with their rulers, and governors being under equipped to meet the needs of the entire population. For Tully, this process is “not so much an alternative to contemporary imperialism but a move within the strategic-tactical logic of informal imperialism.” (Tully, 2005: 48) Kant's framework shows how the roots of imperialism transcend into modern dialogue between nation states, but it fails to handle informal imperialism. Tully argues that “changes in international law, the rise of powerful multinational corporations, and the role of soft-norm creation by non-governmental organizations” all play a role in redirecting power and control. (Tully, 2005: 32) These multi-dimensional sources of power and control are often presented as non-imperial, which, as Tully suggests, is as if to say that a centralized world empire is the only form of imperialism. (Tully, 2005)

If political self determination is more to do with imperial transformation of groups and nation states, then perhaps we should scale down the idea of self determination to the level of the individual? From the point of view of doctors who administer free vaccines, and newly born children who would not make it otherwise, health is a first step in self determination. What health and human security mean on the ground falls through the gaping holes of most political dialogues and with it tumble public imagination and awareness. Some say that “we have no alternative but to adapt to reality” of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism. (Galeano, 2000) But what if that reality is about improving health at the community level, about training doctors who

heal instead of doctors who bill, and about educating mothers and children about the environmental and social determinants of health so that they can experience far more birthdays and far less funerals together? From this perspective can we consider political achievements to be subsequent to human achievements? We may in fact be able to entertain more sensitive and appreciative understandings of how health as a human right, an inkling that Hippocrates mentioned but modern society forgot to write down, can bring on self determination and transition.

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*Domestic Success with health and healthcare, showcase or spark?*

Healthcare provision during the Revolution has hardly been a static operation. Developments and successes have been matched by just as many perils and failures. Nevertheless, the ministry of health never wavered from two goals. The first was to ensure that every single Cuban had access to necessary medical services, and the second was to emphasize person-to-person care before investment in infrastructure and technology. Radical or reasonable? Tommy Douglas, a prairie farmer turned politician in Canada, came up with a similar idea during the 1960s. In the initial stages of the revolution the health issues were not difficult, and they did not necessarily require advanced medical science. Cubans mostly suffered from poverty-stricken parasitical diseases, and as such, the doctors of the revolution were mostly monitors and mentors of basic health. Doctors often administered basic antibiotics and promoted clean water usage, which relieved most juvenile intestinal disorders. (Danielson, 1985) Educating doctors in complex obstetrics as well as providing clean facilities for birth and neonatal care greatly reduced the infant mortality rate. By 1979, only 19 of every 1,000 live births died before the age of five, and by 1983, the figure dropped to 16 for each 1,000 (Feinsilver, 1993: 95). Today the figure is seven per thousand, a figure equal to the United States. (UNICEF, 2003: 110) Infant mortality was generally decreasing worldwide between 1960 and 1985, but compared to the 1979 Latin American average of 92 deaths per thousand live births, or neighboring Haiti of 127 per thousand, Cuba was far ahead. (Collins & Benjamin, 1985) As Collins and Benjamin point out, in 1982 the infant mortality rate of 18.1 per thousand for the black population in the United States was higher than Cuba. (Collins & Benjamin, 1985: 64)

By the 1980s, Cuba succeeded in removing diarrhea and tuberculosis from the top 10 causes of death, along with infectious and parasitic disease causing 13.3 percent of deaths in 1962 to only 2 percent in 1980. The life expectancy rate increased by nearly 20 years from 57 years in 1958 74 years

in 1980. (Collins & Benjamin, 1985) A slow process no doubt, but Cuba kept its promise to deliver effective health services that virtually eliminated the country's Third World health problems. The success came not in just creating health services, but through ensuring that the citizenry had access to them. In 1959, 1,800,000 medical visits were recorded, compared to 13,818,000 in 1979. (Danielson, 1985) The polyclinic was the entry point for most persons into the health system. (Feinsilver, 1993) These facilities provided health services for populations up to 25,000 persons. Teams of doctors operated in the clinics, with at least one obstetrician/gynecologist for every 3,000 women, and one pediatrician for every 3,000 children. (Gilpin & Rodríguez-Trias, 1979) At the polyclinic itself, doctors and nurses commonly held information sessions about hygiene and preventable activities while patients waited for their appointments. As Feinsilver notes, the polyclinic practiced "medicine in the community," not "community medicine." (Feinsilver, 1993)

Even today, the ministry of health continues to receive praise from the WHO and the PAHO for excellent monitoring systems, encouraging preventive treatments thorough data collection, and epidemiological tracking of major health issues. (Spiegel & Yassi, 2004) Critics of thorough record keeping in public health may employ Bashford's thesis to see it as more of a means of social control, and an instrument to reorder society. (Bashford, 2004) The most fatuous critiques have charged Cuba with micro-managing medical statistics in order to produce attractive health indicators for the WHO and the United Nations. Indeed, more appreciative studies done by Cooper and Spiegel and Yassi, clearly showed epidemiological tracking and data collection are integral parts of the Cuban health approach, as they act to take action on developing public health crisis, and monitor pattern changes in chronic and degenerative diseases within the society. (Spiegel & Yassi, 2004; Cooper, 2006) Indeed the sort of bio-medical imperialism that Bashford's case study deals with is non-existent in Cuba because the practice of health-care in Cuba actually improves the health and quality of life for those whom receive it.

Despite the epidemiological transition, Cuba doesn't give up the ghost on first world diseases. Prevention and education are employed as much as surgery in warding off cardiovascular disease and other such calamities. Cooper et al. claim that the data resources in Cuba allow for comprehensive descriptions and trends of advanced conditions like cardiovascular disease. Good knowledge of indicators and outbreaks allows for prevention in the community and preservation of the individual. (Cooper et al., 2006). Cuba's data collection and public health response mechanisms are well beyond the normalcy of the third world, and in some cases well past the first world. Cooper et al. show that diseases of the heart and suicide are just as common in other Carib-

bean countries, but accountable record keeping practices are not, and hence it is always Cuba that gets charged with having high heart disease and suicides when in fact it is such data that allows for not only taking account but taking action as well.

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### *El pensamiento de salud para todos en Nuestra América*

Dissatisfied with the short-term relief projects that are congruous with disaster management, the ministry of health's post-Mitch plan moved towards long-term capacity building strategy to empower locals to become active participants in their own health outcomes. The result was ELAM. Established in a former naval academy just to the west of Havana, the school accepted, at no charge, students who were from rural or under-serviced areas of Central America and South America. In 1999 ELAM accepted just fewer than 2,000 students from these regions, but since 2000 the school has welcomed students from Africa, the United States and even Europe. Students are selected on basis of merit, and special consideration is given to those from marginalized communities. During the six-year program, students are provided with free tuition, accommodation, books, sustenance, and are given a small monthly allowance to spend as they choose. Disease and poor health, despite homeland security's best efforts, do not stop at borders and neither does the Cuban approach. Building on a long-standing tradition of medical of offering medical aid, Cuba sent 1,300 doctors to Central American in 1998, to help cope with the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. Despite cool diplomatic relations with Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, and considering the domestic economic chaos of the Special Period, Cuba generously offered its services. (Cole, 1998; Kirk, 2000) Indeed the medical brigade's presence offered some immediate relief to the destitute, but it was shadowed by a sense of hopelessness, as these pillaged rural areas had skeletal healthcare infrastructure and almost no intersectoral support as a result of a decade of neo-liberal restructuring support. (Ugalde & Homedes, 2005a; 2005b) These two elements were vital for the success in the Cuban epidemiological transition, and indeed they are necessary for any resource strapped society to adapt in order to improve health at the local level. Frustrated by offering triage within a health framework that was as hollow as a gourd, Cuba revisited their post-Mitch strategy to put a great emphasis on capacity building and creating human resources for health, rather than continually sending their own doctors in to do patchwork healthcare within a crumbling system. (Sebastian et al., 2005) In order to cope with the cavernous void left from neo-liberal restructuring in the healthcare sector, the energy would have to turn towards capacity building and prevention within communities at the local level.

While most medical schools in the world are becoming more economically and socially exclusive, ELAM seeks those who would not have the fortune of attending medical schools in their home countries. (Jolly, 2005) Moreover, in order to be accepted into the program, the students agree to return to their home countries to offer their services where they are most needed. There is no written contract to enforce this pledge, and Cuba would be powerless to stop a graduate from practicing in the for-profit sector; it is simply a moral commitment for the graduates to do what they can for the forgotten ones who need it the most.

The life of a student is by no means a cakewalk. It is a challenging curriculum, covering in six-years what most North American medical students complete in eight to 10 years of training. Courses range from anatomy and molecular biology to physical education, and acupuncture and even disaster medicine. Working-level English is also taught so students may keep up with recent developments in medical literature, which is almost entirely published in English. In the early years of the program the challenges of this rigorous curriculum were compounded with a lack of up-to-date textbooks and adequate lab equipment. Students must also endure the challenges of Havana's erratic municipal services, which can leave students studying by candlelight for hours during a blackout. Nevertheless, such challenges will likely pale in comparison to those to be found on the ground when graduates return to their homes to practice in their over-burdened and under-serviced homes.

So far the program has received thousands of students from 29 countries in the Americas and Africa. Over 10,000 students were enrolled in the ELAM program in 2005. (Frank & Reed, 2005) Only about 4,000 of these students study at the school, while the remaining 6,000 study alongside Cuban students at medical schools throughout the country. The numbers are quite impressive indeed. By sheer volume alone, these graduating students, roughly 2,000 per year, will inevitably make a considerable impact on Latin America's anemic human resources for health landscape. While only a small percentage of students have dropped out of the program, others may be a flight risk to the United States or at least to the private sectors of their home countries. These young, bilingual and eager physicians could be seen as highly valued commodities in the healthcare marketplace. Indeed the demand for family physicians in the north, coupled with lucrative offers for foreign doctors to work in North America, may prove as the ultimate test for the moral commitment of ELAM graduates, and to the value-driven basis of Cuban medical internationalism.

While ELAM is a case in point of Cuba's approach to medical internationalism through long-term capacity building, other more short-term and collaborative medical initiatives are being undertaken. Mission Miracle is a

joint-venture project with Venezuela designed to restore sight at no cost to poor Latin Americans. The program offers free eye surgery (mainly on cataracts) to the poor and marginalized in Latin America and the Caribbean. To date over 122,000 patients from two dozen countries have been treated, although the vast majority are from Venezuela, which is offering the capital for the project. Cuba hopes to provide 1.5 million eye operations a year, and it plans to conduct 10.5 million procedures through this initiative. Cataract surgery is relatively cheap and quick to perform.

The gift of sight, the chance to learn, the ability to heal, is it a mere political move? Or is it unabashed human compassion? I am hard pressed to categorize life-saving practices as being one in the same as political payola. They are extensions of a sound ontology that provides care at the community level in addition to converting military and corporate edifices into hospitals and schools. (Spiegel & Yassi, 2004) Such projects directly aim to provide security, human security as defined by Axworthy, and well-being at the individual level, to empower individuals. (Axworthy, 2001) Indeed the success and uniqueness of these programs creates political capital on the world stage. Is there a country today that does not aim to gain some form of self-benefit from their foreign policy? Indeed Cuba is not out of line any more than any other nation-state in this regard, however, their approach is one that has just as many benefits for empowering people on the ground as it does in forums of high-level policy.

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## *Conclusions*

To conclude, the question of Cuba in transition should pay special attention to role of health and healthcare. Not only has Cuba made outstanding progress in the past, but it actively continues to do so in programs that are structured on sound knowledge of community health, social determinants of health, investment in human resources for health, and, above all, experience. Ensuring access to community-based primary care and attempting to extend this beyond its borders may indeed generate symbolic capital, but it ultimately empowers individuals and saves lives.

What better tool than good health do people need for self determination? Considering that so many of the south's functioning democracies, from Liberia to Bolivia, do not guarantee personal security and freedom from illness and want, we should ask how Cuba's approach to human security can better enable individuals to make choices at personal, community and national levels. As Ignatieff argues, an individual's priority is first to personal security, and then to the nation state. (Ignatieff, 1993) Cuba's human security is an integral part of a functioning civic nation state and it is certainly



entrenched into foreign policy that provides personal security first and national loyalty second. Understanding this experience as self determination, at the individual level, brings us into a dialogue that focuses less on imperialistic forecasts and more on seeking understanding to overcome inequalities. Perhaps its time to remove the painful burdens of misunderstanding and non-imagination and instead reflect not so much on how Cuba copes with political transition, but how its approach to good health enables transition and how it could enable us.

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## ‘*Cuentapropismo*’ in a *Socialist State*<sup>1</sup>

Emma Phillips

“Maybe tomorrow I’ll turn capitalist,” Alejandro jokingly tells me, “today I’m staying home!”<sup>2</sup> Alejandro is one of a small number of licensed self-employed workers in Cuba, or “*trabajadores por cuenta propia*” (workers for own account). Although legal in Cuba since 1993, *trabajo por cuenta propia* remains a controversial sector in the Cuban economy. As the first Cubans to shift from the centralized state sector to self-employment in the private sector, *cuentapropistas* challenge the state socialist monopoly on labor and production. For a country whose Constitution states that it is a nation “composed of workers, peasants, and other manual and intellectual laborers” (Constitución de la República de Cuba 1992), the legalization of independent workers motivated by private gain is particularly contentious. Of course, *trabajo por cuenta propia* is not a unique change in the Cuban labor market, and the creation of joint-venture and “market-oriented” state enterprises, as well as an active black market, pose equally strong challenges to the socialist labor regime. Yet *cuentapropistas* are one of the most potent symbols of Cuba’s changing economic, political and ideological character—in part because of the significance that outside observers have attached to their existence. Indeed, the group has frequently been portrayed as a kind of capitalist van-

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1. For an extended exploration of the material covered in this article, focusing on the relationship between legal regulation and the formation of identity, see my article “Maybe Tomorrow I’ll Turn Capitalist: *Cuentapropismo* in a Workers’ State,” forthcoming in *Law and Society Review*. The germ of this paper originated in an undergraduate thesis in Anthropology entitled “Transforming Identities: An Ethnography of Change in a Cuban Market” (2000) at Harvard University, in which the ethnographic material is more fully presented. I wish to express my gratitude to the Anthropology Department and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies for the funding to undertake this research, and to Brian Palmer and William Fisher for their comments and encouragement. The project evolved further with the financial assistance of the Centre for Criminology at the University of Toronto and under the intellectual guidance of Ron Levi and Mariana Valverde, to whom I would also like to express my thanks.

2. All of the names in this article have been changed.

guard by North American commentators, the shepherds of Cuba's transition from socialism to a free-market democracy.

In examining the tension surrounding *cuentapropismo*, this article argues that an anthropological, "on-the-ground" approach can help to expose the overly-rigid assumptions which have frequently informed analyses of Cuba's limited opening of self-employment. Cuba-observers have tended to view Cuba's "transition" to a free-market economy as all but inevitable, with *cuentapropistas* as its personal agents. Viewed from the inside, however, the picture looks significantly different. As Alejandro's comment illustrates, *cuentapropistas* themselves are ambivalent about claiming a larger group identity, on the one hand taking pride in their unique position outside of the state-controlled centralized economy, and on the other hand disclaiming any kind of capitalist mentality or work culture. Rather than asking whether *cuentapropistas* are "capitalist" or "socialist"—rubrics which are closely bound up in Cold War ideology and hard-line rhetoric in Cuba and the United States—a more productive line of investigation might focus on the ways in which identity is constructed around particular kinds of economic and social activity, and the longer term impact this may have for models of citizenship and governance. Such an approach can therefore help to complicate ideological interpretations of transition by highlighting how changes in the regulation of labor put pressure on traditional socialist models of state and citizen, and the way in which this renegotiation of the citizen-state relationship may itself become constitutive of fundamental social change in a way that is not easily captured by the binary of communism/capitalism.

One of the complexities of employing the term "transition" is the difficulty of distinguishing a period of "transition" from the less sharply marked fluctuations of social evolution. While Cuba's direction remains unknown, it is almost certainly a country undergoing a period of profound transformation. The pace and scale of economic change since 1990, including the "dollarization" of the economy, the growth of foreign investment and the explosion of foreign tourism, have created a fundamental shift in Cuba's socialist framework which will be difficult to reverse, despite the government's recent announcement that Cuba is in a phase of "deepening socialism."<sup>3</sup> Thus while this article specifically rejects a teleological, "evolutionist" conception of transition, it does suggest that the contemporary moment in Cuba is one of profound and radical change. As a close examination of *cuentapropismo* illustrates, the legalization of self-employment has important consequences for the renegotiation of individual-state relations and the construction of citi-

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3. Announcement of National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón, EFE News Service, December 1, 2005.

zanship. This renegotiation may itself help to contribute to the creation, shape and character of a transitional period.

### **Methodology**

This paper builds on fieldwork conducted in Havana, Cuba, over a period of seven years, from 1998 to 2005, with *cuentapropista* craftsmen. Interview questions focussed on the individual's education and work prior to becoming a *cuentapropista*, reasons for entering into self-employment, perceived advantages and disadvantages of the shift in work practices and income, attempts to balance family and work time, plans for the future, and aspirations for their children. The ability to return to Havana over a period of seven years added an important dimension to the research, allowing me to compare points of variance or constancy over time, to recognize that a phenomenon first seen in a moment of apparent stability was in fact in a state of flux, or that something which seemed short-lived was able to endure. As such, my return visits did not so much constitute ethnographic "updates" as opportunities for a re-theorization of self-employment and the relationship between work, identity and the state. (Burrawoy, 2003)

The focus on artisans inevitably gives this paper a particular perspective on *trabajo por cuenta propia*. In some ways craftsmanship is one of the least controversial activities authorized for self-employment. Where private taxis, restaurants, or *casas particulares* (room rentals in private homes) are perceived as competing with their state counterparts for tourist revenue, the government is less likely to attempt to nationalize craftsmanship since the very fact that an object is hand-made by an individual artisan is what gives it value. Moreover, tourists flock to craft markets precisely for the sensation of buying "authentic" local goods. Craftsmen are also able to draw on the image of the "artist"—a significant advantage for craftsmen given the government's changing attitude towards artistic activity. (Hernández-Reguant, 2004)

The focus on artisans, however, does not limit the relevancy of the analysis to other types of *cuentapropismo*. While the less precarious position of artisans may allow them to speak more freely with a foreign researcher, the fundamental changes they have experienced in the regulation of their daily work—the freedom to set their own schedule and negotiate their own prices, the difficulty of dealing with government licenses and inspectors, the exclusion from state welfare programs—is shared by all *cuentapropistas*. Furthermore, I was able to put my observations and interviews into context through discussions with Cuban scholars at the *Centre Psicológico y Sociológico*, who have conducted extensive sociological studies of the Cuban labor market, as well as through daily interactions with a variety of *cuentapropistas*.

Of course, this study cannot claim to represent all cuentapropistas and remains limited by its geographical focus and small empirical base. The challenges and advantages of cuentapropismo may vary significantly in smaller communities or in regions less affected by tourism. Cuentapropistas whose work focuses on providing services to Cubans rather than to tourists may also experience the regulation of their daily work differently, and a more comprehensive study would benefit from a comparison of self-employment in the tourist industry with self-employment in the “domestic” sector. Nor can a few craftsmen be said to speak for a single “cuentapropista work culture.” Indeed, a key finding of the study is that cuentapropistas themselves reject adopting a cohesive group identity, and therefore any attempt at generalization must be treated with caution. While these limitations are significant, they do not, however, undermine the broader conclusion of this study—that cuentapropistas are neither capitalist nor socialist, but are helping to redefine what it means to be a productive worker, and therefore a citizen, in Cuba.

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### *“Mal necesario” or Harbinger of Capitalism?*

The deep ambivalence surrounding self-employment can only be understood in relation to the powerful symbolic role of the worker in the Cuban Revolution, typified most clearly in Che Guevara’s conceptualization of the “New Socialist Man” (*el hombre nuevo*)—a figure which denoted more than a productive worker or an individual dedicated to revolutionary ideals, but the forging of a new morality and consciousness. (Pérez, 1998: 340) It is hardly surprising, then, that a figure as antithetical to the social ideal of worker as the *trabajador por cuenta propia* has been received as a “*mal necesario*” (necessary evil) by the Cuban government. Yet perhaps an even more significant factor shaping the government’s reception of cuentapropismo has been the keen interest that American commentators have shown in the growth of self-employment. As Arnaldo Pérez García, a Cuban psychologist who has written about recent changes in the Cuban labor market, explains, “You have to remember that the disagreement between Cuba and the United States penetrates every single decision made in Cuba. You cannot understand cuentapropismo outside of this context.” (Personal communication, Havana, February 2005) Drawing a circle on a piece of paper, he explained that the circle represents “the system,” and that, from the Cuban government’s point of view, anything that falls outside of the system is vulnerable to manipulation by American interests and is therefore a threat. A 1997 statement by Raúl Valdés Vivo, the Communist Party’s Academy Director, supports Pérez García’s comments. Writing in the state newspaper, *Granma Internacional*, Valdés Vivó effectively announced the government’s intention to limit *cuentapropismo*, stating: “The creation of the seeds of a local bourgeoisie would

bring in a social force which sooner or later would serve the counterrevolution.”

American media and academics have added to this perception. For example, one analysis of self-employed workers in Cuba, presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy in Miami in 1998, suggested that the “highly visible success” achieved by *cuentapropistas*,

...is what makes the self-employed phenomenon so interesting and important for the near term future of the country; when a transition toward a true free market economy occurs in Cuba, the self-employed will be an important minority of Cubans who have small enterprise experience, who are familiar with risk taking, investment and profits, taxes and regulation. They will be uniquely equipped to thrive in a capitalist setting. They will continue to sell goods and services to the domestic population and cater to tourists, but they will be able to expand their businesses, hire other people, and generate real wealth. (Smith, 1998:58)

Secure in the assumption that Cuba will transform itself into a free-market economy, the author concludes: “To the extent that the self-employed can create employment and demonstrate the tangible benefits of hard work for average Cubans, they will do much to smooth the transition to a market economy in Cuba.” (Smith 1998: 59) *Cuentapropistas*, in this account, serve a symbolic function in promoting popular support for reform by demonstrating that widely-held fears about capitalism are unfounded, and that hard work will result in material gain.

The specific position that *cuentapropistas* occupy within Cuba’s economic and political infrastructure is therefore as significant as the kind of economic, “capitalist” activity they engage in. While representing only a very small percentage of the Cuban labor force—minuscule in comparison with the number of Cubans who participate in the black market—*cuentapropistas* pose a powerful symbolic challenge to the socialist regime. In particular, *cuentapropistas* embody an increasing tension between Cuba’s socialist past and uncertain future. In this period of “late socialism,” many Cubans express both a deep attachment and pride in the successes of the Revolution, and an increasing certainty that socialism is no longer economically or politically viable. Yet, many Cubans are equally reluctant to embrace a “capitalist” future, which they worry will breed avarice, income inequality and a lack of compassion. This ambivalence is further heightened by deep strains of nationalism, which lead some Cubans to rejoice at being one of the only countries to withstand the political interference of the United States, even as they decry the socialist Revolution that helped to protect Cuban sovereignty. The figure of the *cuentapropista*, in its ambiguous position between social-

ism and capitalism, captures this tension in a particularly explicit way, making the *cuentapropista* both a powerful and a vulnerable actor in the Cuban landscape.

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### *The Legalization of an Anomaly*

As noted, *cuentapropismo* has been an uncomfortable development for the Cuban government since its inception. In the midst of the “special period”—a series of austerity measures and radical economic reforms adopted in the face of Cuba’s dramatic economic decline—National Assembly members vigorously debated the wisdom of expanding the private sector.<sup>4</sup> Those who argued in favor of *cuenta propia* maintained that it would create jobs for the unemployed, provide goods and services which the state could not satisfy, increase control of illegal activities, boost tax revenues, and satisfy a popular demand. Among the opposing arguments were concerns that self-employment encourages profiteering, that it would compete with state enterprises for labor, or that it is too small-scale to be efficient—possibly creating deformities in the system (Jatar-Hausmann, 1999: 93-94). Even those in favour of the economic reforms were constrained to maintain that the economic pragmatism motivating the limited opening of self-employment was not indicative of changed ideological orientation.

While self-employment was ultimately authorized, political and ideological ambivalence informs its very existence, and the attempt to harmonize economic pragmatism with ideological purity has been imperfect and contradictory. This ambivalence is evident in the strict legal regime which governs self-employment. Under law decree no. 141, 162 occupations<sup>5</sup> are eligible for self-employment, including food vendor, taxi driver, carpenter, bicycle and car repairperson, artisan, hairdresser, shoe repairperson, and manicurist. University graduates are not allowed to carry out self-employed activity in their own profession (for example, doctors cannot establish private clinics), nor can state or foreign enterprises contract the services of self-employed workers. (Evenson, 2003: 265)

Even more importantly, government regulations are carefully designed to prevent the exploitation of labor and the development of significant income inequalities within the population. (Núñez Moreno, 1998: 44) Self-employed

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4. While self-employment was never completely banned after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, it all but disappeared and was mostly limited to peasant-farmers who did not join the agricultural cooperatives.

5. This number has fluctuated somewhat since the inception of self-employment. In 1993, 110 activities were authorized for self-employment. Five activities were struck off the list in 1994, apparently in reaction to the growing popularity of *cuentapropismo*. In 1995, 19 new occupations were added to the list and in 1996 the government authorized another 40 activities. However, in 2004, 40 occupations were again removed from the list.



workers cannot employ others, prices may be standardized by the government if there is any evidence of abuse, and the government can adopt measures to “forestall the excessive proliferation of vendors and to prohibit the emergence of middlemen.”<sup>6</sup> Heavy licensing fees and an annual progressive income tax make it difficult for many *cuentapropistas* to continue their trade, or at least to accumulate a net profit. Artisans in Havana, for example, pay around US\$150 a month, while those who rent rooms to tourists commonly pay US\$250 per room, regardless of whether the rooms are occupied. The combined effect of such strict, sometimes irrational, regulations has been a marked decrease in the number of licensed *cuentapropistas*. At its peak in 1997, about 200,000 *cuentapropistas* were licensed; this number is now closer to 140,000. (Ritter, 2006)

*Cuentapropismo* is, therefore, a strictly regulated work sector. Yet what makes *cuentapropistas* distinct is their position outside of the normal legal regulation of labor. In choosing to leave state employment, *cuentapropistas* not only relinquish the social benefits distributed through state employment—everything from pensions to the use of a beach house in the summer—but they also remove themselves from a system of state incorporation and control. Under socialist ideology, according to Cuban sociologists José Luis Martín Romero and Armando Capote González (1998: 80), “The individual existed more as a member of a group—of the neighborhood, of the work centre...the ‘we’ was privileged over the ‘I,’ the interests of the collective over the interests of individuals.” *Cuentapropismo*, by contrast, depends on the decentralization of the organization of work, allowing for increased autonomy not simply in the distribution of labor and resources, but also in the realm of decision-making.

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### A “New Breed” of Workers

The partial abstraction of *cuentapropistas* from the centralized state labor system represents a fundamental challenge to the collectivist social pact underlying Cuban socialism. Arguably, it is this relational shift that, more than economic status or capitalist mentality, distinguishes *trabajadores por cuenta propia* from the rest of the populace and provides some sense of group identity. This restructuring of worker-state relations may also be at the heart of the Cuban government’s anxiety about *trabajo por cuenta propia*. As Mari-bel, a 37-year old *cuentapropista* who sells leather goods in a market in Havana, commented to me:

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

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6. Resolution No. 10/95.

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*....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)

Similarly, economist Ana Julia Jatar-Hausmann (1999:107) writes in describing a *cuentapropista* shoemaker she interviewed, "Jorge likes to work at odd hours, he likes to raise the prices of his shoes, to lower them, to give them away...to speak out about and defend the need to develop the miniscule private sector open to Cubans. He is part of a new social breed who does not rely on the government to earn a decent living; and he is enjoying it with a vengeance."

This "new breed" of workers is characterized by an unprecedented autonomy within the Cuban labor market. Vendors at a tourist market on the Malecón frequently cite their newfound independence as one of the greatest advantages of the shift to self-employment from the state sector. The ability to set their own schedule and to see the fruits of their labor are frequently recurring themes. "We're our own masters," Maribel comments:

Despite the regulations we have, we're our own masters because you can get up at the hour that you want...I come if I want, take vacation when I want...I don't have to wait for my colleagues to take vacation—when I want to take them, I take them, I go where I want. You understand? And we really obtain the fruits of our own effort. If we push ourselves more, we gain more. If we push ourselves less, we gain less. The difference is that the rest of the workers [in the state sector] don't have this [incentive]. Push yourself more or less, you almost always get the same. You have to establish goals in life, depending on what you want to obtain. (Personal communication, Malecón Market, February 2005)

It is important to note, however, that not all *cuentapropistas* express the same sense of freedom as the Malecón craftsmen. Barbara, for example, was an economist in the sugar industry before obtaining a *cuentapropista* license, first to sell pizzas, and then to rent out an apartment in her home to tourists. Commenting that she feels tied down because she must constantly take care of clients, watch out for inspectors, and obtain food—frequently from black market vendors selling door to door—Barbara sometimes longs for her old profession. "If you could live from [state] work," she comments, "it would be better because you have your work for eight hours a day, or your studies or whatever. But all this with the house is difficult. You have to be paying attention 24 hours a day." (Personal communication, Barbara's home, Havana, February 2005) *Cuentapropistas* are therefore able to step outside of the state controlled economy and to challenge

existing social and legal norms. It is for this reason that Lilia Núñez Moreno, a Cuban sociologist (1998:41) refers to the creation of *cuentapropistas* as the "change with the greatest capacity to dissolve Cuban socialism." Under the mantle of legal legitimacy, *cuentapropistas* are not only breaking down traditional institutions and avenues of power, but they are also helping to create new social norms characterized by increased individualism and autonomy. (Ewick and Silbey, 2003: 1332-33) The result is the development of a "culturally demarcated" group whose authorized experimentation with new forms of property and market relations is leading to the formation of "a new work culture" and "a new kind of worker." (Martin Romero and Capote González, 1998:79)

Rachel, Alejandro's wife, similarly expresses a sense of being trapped inside her home as a result of self-employment. Rachel is not a licensed *cuentapropista*, but helps Alejandro to produce, in contravention of the regulations, the papier maché objects that he sells. In recent years Rachel has begun to long for her old job as a teacher. As she puts it, "It's not easy. Here you're like a slave. If you work for the state you have a fixed schedule. You have your weekends free, or you spend them doing something else like reading. But I'm always here working, working, working. I know that I have to do it, but really, I'm exhausted with this." (Personal communication, Rachel's home, Havana, February 2005) Significantly, however, it is likely that even if Rachel were working in the state sector in the current economy, she would spend all her available free time engaging in some kind of illegal or informal work in order to gain extra income, and would have even less leisure time than she currently has.

Rachel and Barbara's comments indicate not only that the degree of independence enjoyed by self-employed workers may vary by activity, but also that there is an important gender dimension to the benefits of *cuentapropismo*. While certain self-employed activities may enjoy greater autonomy and mobility, such as vending to tourists or driving a taxi, these activities tend to be dominated by men. By contrast, anecdotal evidence suggests that *cuentapropista* businesses that occur within the home, such as renting a room to tourists, selling snacks from a 'cafeteria,' or running a hairdressing salon, are overwhelmingly run by women. Women *cuentapropistas* may therefore be much less likely to enjoy the freedom and flexibility their male counterparts do.<sup>7</sup>

These differences in daily schedule, however, do not obviate the fact that *cuentapropistas*, both men and women, enjoy an independence of decision-making that is rarely seen in the state sector. Once removed from the centralized state system, furthermore, *cuentapropistas* are rapidly developing their own networks of social and economic relations outside of state-controlled

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7. One exception to this might be family-run restaurants, or *paladares*, which usually involve the whole family working from the home.

venues. Alejandro and his family, for example, sometimes rent a beach house in the summer since they no longer have access to state-subsidized holidays. The woman they rent the house from is also a licensed *cuentapropista* and the transportation they use are licensed taxi drivers. What is therefore becoming increasingly evident is that *cuentapropistas* are developing “a whole range of flexible options permitting each individual to structure his or her own [life-]strategies.” (Martin Romero and Capote González, 1998:80) As a result, *cuentapropistas* are consciously experimenting with new models not only of private economic activity, but of private social activity as well.

Of course, *cuentapropistas* are not the only Cubans to engage in private work, and a far greater number of Cubans are involved in informal or black market activities. Yet ironically, the state’s authorization of self-employment may create a situation of even greater ambivalence for *cuentapropistas* than for those who engage in illegal work. While black marketeers can claim that their illegal wheeling and dealing is more a matter of survival than of ideology, *cuentapropistas* have greater difficulty reconciling their official, “legitimate” activity with membership in a socialist state. Recognizing the liminality of *cuentapropistas*’ structural position—one which is ideologically threatening in part because it is legally authorized—helps to illuminate why they are regarded with suspicion by the Cuban government. As legally authorized private, for-profit workers, *cuentapropistas* throw into confusion the ideologically clear-cut categories of “socialism” and “capitalism.”

The legalization of self-employment thus creates the paradoxical question of whether *cuentapropistas* can claim to be “socialist citizens.” Alejandro suggests that the answer lies in *cuentapropistas*’ contributions to the everyday functioning of their country:

We’re bringing in a lot of money to the country, to the government. Plus services that the government can’t provide. If the *agropecuario* closes, where will people find things to eat? And if they stop the taxi drivers, how will people move around Havana? Or if they stop the shoe repairmen, who will repair the shoes? The *trabajador por cuenta propia* resolves many problems for the population that the government just can’t provide for the moment. (Personal communication, Alejandro’s home, Havana, August, 1999)

Alejandro thus emphasizes not only the financial benefit that *cuentapropistas* bring, but also their key role in facilitating the day-to-day functioning of the country. This is an imperfect answer, however, since it is through private, profit-making activity antithetical to the socialist paradigm that *cuentapropistas* are able to make this contribution. Yet it illustrates both the strength and the vulnerability of *cuentapropistas* as they straddle the socialist past and an uncertain future.

*Safety in Numbers? The Shift to State Unionism*

Given the value that *cuentapropistas* attach to their independence, it is perhaps surprising that the vendors in the Malecón tourist market voted to join a national union in 2004.<sup>8</sup> State workers in Cuba are organized into sector-wide national unions. Although Cuban unions have, historically, played a role in protecting individual workers at disciplinary hearings or in conflicts with management, critics have argued that they are, fundamentally, adjuncts of the state and function to subjugate workers' rights to the interests of the state (Leiva, 2000:481). Yet it is, arguably, precisely the unions' close relationship to the state that makes them attractive to *cuentapropistas*. While self-employed workers are proud of their position outside of the state, they are also keenly aware of the threat this independence poses to the government, and thus of the vulnerability of their work sector. As Maribel explains,

It's completely uncertain... We imagine... that we're a stable sector, because we don't cost anything [to the state] and we bring a lot—in dollars and in national pesos. But at the same time, we're a privileged sector because we've obtained independence with our work... and that brings advantages and disadvantages. Because when we've become too privileged relative to the rest of the population, we could disappear any minute. (Personal communication, Malecón market, Havana, February 2005)

Similarly, Majela, who taught technical drawing in a faculty of engineering before obtaining a license to sell leather goods in the Malecón market in 1996, is keenly aware that in the eyes of the government, self-employment is a "necessary evil:"

This is like anything else—today we're here and tomorrow self-employment is over, and we have to find a place for ourselves [in the state sector.] This work isn't secure, we're not secure. [Self-employment] arose because of the special period, the lack of employment... We've brought benefits—we contribute a lot to the state. But just as quickly as this appeared, it could disappear. It appeared at a specific moment and because of a specific set of conditions in the country. If this situation ends, well, I assume we could also disappear. (Personal communication, Malecón market, Havana, February 2005)

Because *cuentapropismo* originated in the economic crisis, Majela worries that the government may decide to close the sector down as soon as the economy recuperates. Majela and Maribel's comments illustrate not only the deep uncertainty that underlies self-employment, but also their profound awareness that they are living through a particular historical phase that has demanded radical—and quite possibly temporary—measures.

8. Specifically, they joined the *Sindicato de Industria Ligera*, or Union of Light Industry.

While *cuentapropistas* may value the independence they enjoy in determining their work conditions they are also clearly aware that this independence is self-defeating if it means that the government will continue to view them with hostility. Unionization may help to mitigate the threat posed by *cuentapropismo* by reincorporating self-employed workers back into the state through labor regulation. As Maribel explains,

At a minimum [unionization] incorporates us into the rest of society. Now we're no longer an isolated society... We're incorporated, regardless of whether we work in the private sector and we have private earnings... We want to be independent workers, but not independent in spirit. (Personal communication, Malecón Market, Havana, February 2005)

In addition to helping vendors make small but concrete improvements to their workplace conditions, unionization may also, therefore, provide *cuentapropistas* with an important mantle of legitimacy, and thus with an added degree of security. As members of a union, *cuentapropistas* demonstrate their social citizenship through the frequent collections that the union takes up for charitable and Revolutionary causes, such as the children's ward at a local cancer hospital or for uniforms for the *Movimiento de Tropas Teritoriales*.<sup>9</sup> It also provides *cuentapropistas* with valuable symbolic capital. As members of the union, *cuentapropistas* are no longer outliers in the system, but can instead claim full membership in the Cuban state—without giving up their autonomy and material benefits. In this sense, the distinction that Maribel makes between being independent workers and being independent “in spirit” is a significant one because it indicates a desire to be viewed as part of the same “spirit,” or social fabric, as the rest of Cuban society, even if their work habits differ from those of state workers.

The Cuban government appears to have come to a similar conclusion; through unionization the government can retain the economic benefits of self-employment,<sup>10</sup> while reasserting some control over self-employed workers. At a recent conference, the *Congreso de Trabajadores Cubano* (National Congress of Workers, or CTC), which coordinates the national unions and represents workers' interests to the national government, recognized that *cuentapropistas* are now a “substantial entity,”<sup>11</sup> and announced a campaign to invite self-employed workers to join the national unions. Magalys, an older *cuentapropista* in the Malecón market and the main representative of the

9. A local peoples' militia which played an important role in the Revolution.

10. Smith (1998: 58) notes that in 1997 *cuentapropistas* brought in an estimated US\$130 million in tax revenue. The government does not release data on tax revenues from self-employed workers.

11. Interview with the *secretaría general* of the Malecón market to the Union of Light Industry. This is an interested comment, given the steep decrease in the number of self-employed workers over the last five years.

Malecón vendors to the union<sup>12</sup> suggests that the government may be waiting until the private sector is organized—ie. unionized—before it permits new licenses:

What happened was that to allow us to organize ourselves they stopped allowing new licenses. Right now they aren't giving out new licenses in order to say to people: "Stop. Let's get organized." And after everything's organized, it will open up again...So that when new people enter [the sector], they enter into something organized. (Personal communication, Malecón market, Havana, February 2005)

While it is unclear whether *cuentapropismo* will be allowed to grow again after unionization is complete, Magalys' comments affirm the idea that the government is seeking to integrate *cuentapropistas* into the state sector. *Cuentapropistas* are being invited to join either the union most related to their work activity or physically closest to their home. Noticeably, no suggestion has been made of creating a "*cuentapropista* union," which would allow self-employed workers to pool economic power and to develop—or solidify—a sense of common identity and purpose. Indeed, *cuentapropistas* are strictly prohibited from forming cooperatives or associations. It is unclear how many *cuentapropistas* have decided to take-up the invitation to join a union, although Barbara reports that the idea was discussed and rejected at a recent meeting of *cuentapropistas* who are licensed to rent rooms.

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### *Conclusion: Cuentapropistas in the Cuban Transition*

As the comments of Alejandro, Maribel, Barbara and others make clear, *cuentapropistas* cannot easily be cast in an ideological mold. While *cuentapropistas* themselves argue that their existence provides crucial support to the continuation of the socialist state, it is clear that their activities also amount to an expansion of spheres of individual autonomy and alternate social and economic networks that circumvent official state avenues. In so doing, *cuentapropistas* are developing new conceptions of what it means to be a productive worker in Cuban society and what kind of relationship workers will have with the state. The rise of market relations, in particular, requires workers in the new labor paradigm to assess a variety of state, informal, illegal and private work options, to develop strategies for economic survival, deal with new forms of property, and make independent decisions unnecessary under the socialist system. Such new levels of individual autonomy, risk-taking, and

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12. There are 12 *cuentapropistas* in the market who serve as union representatives and Magalys is the *secretaría general*, or general secretary. She is also a member of the National Committee of the Union of Light Industry to the Cuban Labor Congress.

decision-making have consequences far beyond the workplace, extending to other realms of social and family life.

As the focus on *cuentalpropismo* illustrates, workplaces are a particularly significant site of governance and identity formation. The bond between individual and workplace, Martin Romero and Capote González (1998:81), observe,

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 construct a form of existence which converts employment into a social condition necessary for self-realization....

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, 1999:157). In socialist societies, 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, and in a "workers' state" workers are presumed to share in state policies encouraging productivity and efficiency. The state, moreover, has direct control over worksites to ensure the implementation of these policies. The authoritarianism of socialist states, as well as their ideological formation, thus reinforces the importance of worksites as a "governable space" (Rose, 1999:31) for the dissemination of state power and the construction of citizenship. As Martin Romero and Capote González (1998:82) observe, "In the Cuban case, more than any other, inclusion in the program of employment...is a form of incorporating [individuals] into the sociopolitical project and of fostering proactive participation in the creation of the base and the socio-political system."

The central role of work in the construction of citizenship makes work a particularly important factor in periods of transition. In post-socialist transitions in particular, new forms of property and modes of economic activity frequently come into existence which are completely antithetical to the outgoing regime. With the diversification of employment and forms of property typical of post-socialist economies, the individual no longer exists purely as a member of the collective and must begin to explore new spheres of individual decision-making and self-reliance.

In transitional societies, work—both in official discourse and in day-to-day practice—thus becomes a battleground for the development of new governmental powers. Significantly, the contest to define what will constitute



“work” and who will be a legitimate “worker” within the new socio-economic model is itself constitutive of the transitional period. As Cuban psychologist Arnaldo Pérez García (2004:148) observes, “Work, as the backbone of society, is not only impacted [by external factors], it also produces them, converting itself, together with the crisis and the reforms, into a cause of the transformations occurring in the social structure.” 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.

The renegotiation of work thus has implications far beyond the day-to-day lives of *cuentapropistas* themselves, and poses a significant challenge to socialist orthodoxy. This insight into the relationship between work and identity during transitional periods helps to complicate the conventional “transition paradigm,” in which transition is framed in unidirectional and unidimensional terms, rather than as a product of contestation and negotiation among individuals, officials, and state institutions. Taking a “close-up” look at *cuentapropismo* can therefore help us to create not only a more nuanced understanding of the significance of self-employment in Cuba, but also a more complex and multi-faceted picture of Cuba’s current transformations.

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## *Opportunities and Implications*

*Eloise Linger*

The title “Opportunities and Implications” implies there are new economic opportunities. However, to understand the significance of the new opportunities, it would be helpful to review exactly how far Cuba’s economy fell during the “Special Period in times of peace,” declared to have begun in late September 1990. The research seeks to answer the question of whether the country has surpassed the crisis, to examine the new sources of income and growth, the new relations of political forces in the hemisphere that seem to be sources for hope for the material improvement and well-being of the people of Cuba.

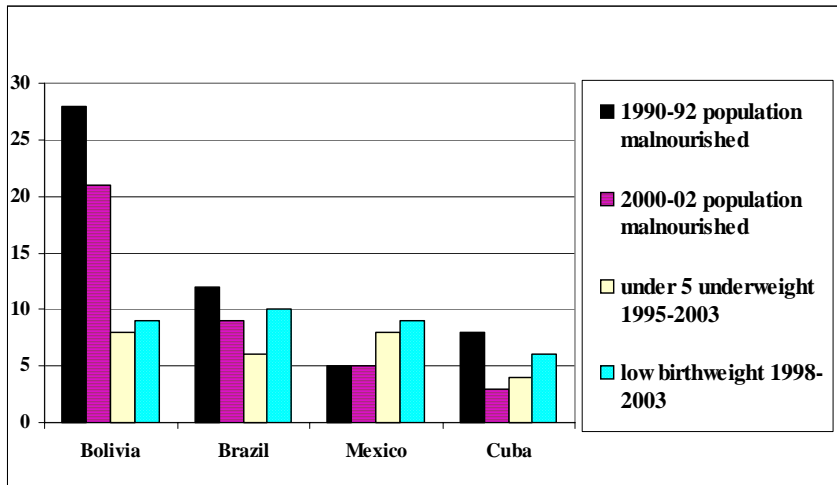
How severe was the crisis?

After the implosion of the Soviet bloc countries, in a very short time, Cuba lost 86 percent of its foreign trade, which included large quantities of Eastern European foods. One would expect wheat to be imported to a semi-tropical island, but even potatoes and poultry from abroad had replaced Cuban agricultural products. Massive investment in the growth and automation of the harvesting of sugar, a remarkable trend over the 1970s and 1980s, had led the island into an almost traditional mono-crop (sugar) dependency. Those economic decisions backfired as the buyers, who had paid more than the world market price for sugar, disappeared. World sugar prices continued plummeting and, even worse, many antiquated mills simply could not compete in the global marketplace.

Add to these factors a sharp drop in Soviet petroleum deliveries. Most workers found it impossible to get to work on time, if at all. “By the end of 1992, nearly 40 percent of national bus service and train schedules had been suspended. Lack of spare parts exacerbated Cuban transportation woes.” (Perez, 1995) The lack of transportation also lowered internal commerce, and led to a massive food crisis as trucks could not get the fuel to bring food to

the cities, and the population lost truly vital food supplies—viandas, vegetables and fruits from the Cuban countryside. The years 1990-1994 were, indeed, grave for social conditions, as Figure 1 shows. Aside from the long-held conviction that Cubans were far better off than many of the peoples of Bolivia and Brazil, where widespread hunger and disease had been around a long time, two other facts emerge from the graph.

FIGURE 8-1. Malnourishment in Four Countries.



Source: UNDP: Human Development Report, 2005

First, in the years 1990-1992, a very health-conscious, educated country experienced malnourishment. Second, with the cumulative effects of undernourishment in adolescent girls, eight to 10 years later, despite heroic efforts of medical providers to attend to pregnant women, more than 5 percent of babies were born with low birth weight in the years 1998-2003.<sup>1</sup> At the personal level, on several mornings, families left for school and work with nothing more than a breakfast of sugar water, hoping there would be something solid to eat, if a lunchtime meal were offered at the place of work or study. They could, however, always expect the daily allotment of one large roll per person that should have been available in the morning to be available later in the day. The percentage of Cuba's population that was malnourished far surpassed the percentage in Mexico in the years 1990-1992, the beginning of the "Special Period." Food supplies would become even more scarce for two more years, until late 1994. It is no joke, nor exaggeration, that in the years

1. It will take more years before the impact shows up in long-term trends for life expectancy.

1992, 1993 and 1994 there were no pets to be seen in the streets of Havana, in the context of hunger and the great need for protein.<sup>2</sup>

What about other sources of nutrition? “Domestic production of meat, milk, and eggs was hampered by the lack of imported animal feed.” (Perez, 1995) Cubans abroad sought to send aid to their families; dollar stores emerged to earn foreign currency, which alleviated severe needs for those lucky enough to have dollars after the U.S. currency was legalized in 1993. Only the state-organized mobilization of military youth, with some fast-growing potatoes and traditional viandas saved parts of the country from starvation. Soy was not very popular with Cubans, but it is a safe wager to say that soy helped save lives. The government also launched a major concentration on poultry production to return the very vital egg to Cuban kitchens.

The other result of declining petroleum imports was a 38-percent drop in the GDP in the early 1990s, officially 35 percent cumulative for the years 1989 through 1993 (Campbell, who cites both Bohemia, May 1995, and the *Economist Intelligence Unit*, 1996). Using 1989 as base year of 100 percent, Cuban non-sugar production had fallen by 1993 to only 10 percent to 15 percent of the 1989 level (Campbell, 2000, based on Hiram Marquetti Nodarse, CEEC [Center for Study of the Cuban Economy, 1996].

Many economists and observers of life in Cuba have discussed the crisis of the 1990s, and enough has been said to conclude that it was, indeed, very serious for the well being of the people on the island. The cotidiana (everyday life) is still no bed of roses in 2006, but food supplies and medicines and transportation have certainly improved for many in Cuba. Rising urban pollution attests to more cars and trucks on the streets, many of them old and spewing smoke that sets off asthma attacks and respiratory problems. But at least most people have more to eat, which is physically observable in the bodies of young and old as they walk in the streets.

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### *Climbing out of the deep hole*

When and how Cuba began to climb out of the depths of deprivation in 1994 is a somewhat contentious issue, because despite overall healthy economic indicators, some sectors of the population, those without foreign currency and those on fixed income, are still living in relatively dire straits. Nevertheless, several economic strategies enable us to say that what began as uncertain innovations and restructuring of Cuba’s economy now are showing positive results.

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2. These observations are personal for several neighborhoods in the City of Havana, and based on anecdotal reports by acquaintances living in other cities and towns in Cuba at the time.

### Nickel, the reliable natural resource

Throughout the decades of U.S. embargo, and the close economic relationship with the Soviet bloc, Cuba had a long-time investment partner in Sherritt International that mined Cuba's nickel. In 2004, Cuban nickel sales brought in more than US\$1 billion due to exceptionally high commodity prices for nickel. Sherritt's Canadian coal was used to help produce Cuban nickel, cobalt and electricity. Sherritt's worth was also enhanced by its discovery of oil in Cuban waters. Luckily for both Cuba and Sherritt, high nickel prices continued through 2005.

TABLE 8-1. Nickel Production (1993-2004 with projections through 2008)

Year	Nickel Production (metric tons)
1993	26,900
1997	67,700
2001	76,530
2003	71,700
2004	76,500
2006, projected+16k	92,500
2008, projected	100,000

Source: Sherritt.com/Sherritt reports 2004 earnings

Sherritt's net income has increased almost six-fold over the years 2002-2004, as Table X.2 shows.

TABLE 8-2. Sherritt Income From Nickel (in U.S.\$)

	12/31/04	12/31/03	12/31/02
Net Income	133,332,800	61,959,480	23,654,494

Source: Deloitte & Touche LLP, C.A., Toronto, Ontario, Canada. June 2, 2005

With its profits from Cuban nickel and its rapidly expanding energy sales, Sherritt's Dec 31, 2005 earnings are listed as US\$164.7 million (or US\$155.2 million excluding certain items). Nickel plus cobalt reserves in the northeastern part of the island are among the world's largest, and Cuba is the world's sixth-largest producer of nickel. So we should expect, logically, that Sherritt International is not the only force seeking to develop Cuban nickel mining and production.

China's rapid industrialization makes it hungry for resources and its state-owned Minmetals signed an agreement to invest in a new unit to produce



22.5 million tons/year at the ferronickel extraction unit at the mothballed Las Camariocas plant, also located near Moa Bay. If the figure was correctly stated, China will extract 250 times the amount of ferro-nickel that Sherritt is planning—and a Chinese company may spend up to US\$600 million to allow reactivation of the old mothballed plant. In trilateral agreements, Venezuela and China will be working with Cuba to develop new ferro-nickel processing facilities.

### **The tourism and foreign investment gamble**

In the late 1990s, Cuba's investment in tourism finally yielded dramatic earnings. By opening the economy to relatively large-scale foreign investment, new tourist facilities arose rapidly on almost every natural beach, and by 1993 Cuba welcomed over half a million tourists. By 1996 the number reached one million. By 1997, income from tourism rose sharply as more tourists came and they spent on average a lot more dollars on the island (Campbell, 2000: 178). By 2000, Cuba was ready and came close to receiving two million tourists.

Additionally, "Health tourism" for mineral baths and for surgery in the specializations of cardiology, neurology, ophthalmology, nephrology and orthopedics, in addition to cancer treatments and other specialized treatments, boosted Cuba's struggling healthcare system. This specialized Cuban "niche" of tourism for healthcare brought badly needed hard currency into the hospital systems and specialized clinics of the island. (Oswald and Henthorne, 2000) Although the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack almost ruined tourism throughout the Caribbean and elsewhere, in recent years the tourists, including those coming for treatments, have started arriving in large numbers for Caribbean sun, song, and sand.

Between 1990 and 1997, gross revenue increased almost tenfold from the joint ventures in tourism. Before large-scale foreign investment in biotechnology, manufacturing, and expanded mining and oil explorations, as early as 1995, over 100,000 Cubans were working in the joint venture tourist industry (Campbell, 2000: 179).

There has been much discussion elsewhere (and lots of Cuban jokes) about the tragic fact that neurosurgeons, full professors, and medical personnel have left their posts for higher-paying jobs as taxi drivers and hotel employees who receive hard currency tips. Many other devastating results of the tourist influx have challenged (and at the same time, paradoxically, enhanced economic conditions for) Cuban family life. Sociologically speaking, tourism has been both a blessing and a curse, but economically, in the late 1990s and again after the 2001 travel jitters receded, Cuba's tourist

industry, including its ugly side, has brought a restructuring of the Cuban economy and a great deal of badly needed hard currency.

One must add, however, that to sustain tourists with the comforts they expect—from hotel sheets to luxury foods, to taxis and toilet paper—Cuba's foreign debt would have to increase. Balance-of-trade deficits widened through the 1990s. On the brighter side, foreign debt as a percentage of goods and services began falling in 1993, and the rate or proportion was down by more than one third between 1993 and 1996. (Carranza, 2000) Imports kept rising both for the tourist industry and for internal consumption.

Yet, by late 2005, “export earnings and strong growth in services exports were sufficient to keep the current-account balance positive, with a surplus officially estimated to be around US\$300 million.” This surplus, in turn, will boost Cuba's ability to obtain better interest rates for its external financing (*Economist Intelligence Unit* [EIU], 2006). In another acrobatic twist for the island's economy, tourism, a service export, had surpassed sugar, a goods export, and the tourism export earnings would intensify through 2005, while sugar accounted for only 10 percent of Cuba's 2005 export earnings.

### **Humbling King Sugar**

The 2005 figure of sugar earnings below US\$200 million reflects a gradual phasing out of many out-dated sugar mills and the displacement of tens of thousands of sugar workers. The social problem of a vast unemployed layer of the workforce was acknowledged as early as the 1990s when it became obvious that many of the Cuban mills could not produce at competitive levels. Given the continuing fall in demand and prices, the painful decision was made to rely less on Cuba's longtime top export earner and somehow retrain and find gainful employment for many thousands of its workers.

Besides hard currency from tourism, Cuba's major goods exports, nickel and ferro-nickel remained high, in part due to continuing high prices for nickel in 2004 and 2005. Of total earnings from goods exports, almost 50 percent was accounted for by nickel in 2005. Although output of the mineral was disappointing (a fact attributed to the heavy rains in the second half of the year that hindered operations in the open-cast mines), strong global nickel prices ensured an increase in income. (EIU, 2006) After nickel and ferro-nickel, tobacco products are the third largest export goods earner, and pharmaceuticals, medicines, and biotechnological innovations may soon rise above the level of tobacco, especially if tobacco consumption continues to fall.

### **Biotechnology built up from the 1980s**

A personal friend recounted the skepticism among party circles when Fidel Castro presented the idea to build a new industry, something big and bold that

could help end disease and suffering. It should be cutting-edge, set an example, and help meet the needs of Cuba's population and of others in the world. Before the fall of the Soviet system, a huge complex was built on the outskirts of Havana, and an entire scientific research community settled into new, nearby apartment complexes. Once the country began offering joint venture investment, the logical next step was to turn Cuba's well-educated corps of biochemists, physicists, and medical research doctors into a productive force, then find companies that could invest and work with Cuban scientists to produce and market medicines, several of which were the first of their kind to be introduced to the world.

Herber Biotech, a major joint venture investor, now exports from Cuba to more than 50 countries products obtained from genetic engineering, chemical synthesis, derivatives of the human placenta, and genetic medicines, recombinant vaccines against Hepatitis B, the combined vaccine against Haemophilus Influenzae Type B and a tetravalent against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and Hepatitis B. The company also produces five generic anti-retroviral medicines for AIDS treatment, the anti-viral recombinant interferon Alfa 2b, and a transference factor used to increase the immune response. (EIU, 2006)

Cuba also has 271 companies with quality management systems meeting international ISO standards that guarantee the quality of products, total quality management, and stability over time of the product's quality. (EIU, 2006) The growth in pharmaceutical exports would help Cuba become less susceptible to the many unforeseen variables in the volatile business of tourism.

Pharmaceutical goods increased greatly the income from export goods, which now account for only 30 percent, down from 90 percent of export earnings in 1990, before the economy began its crisis and structural transformation. (EIU, 2006) In the opinion of some Cubans, their industries are turning out terrific, proven vaccines and innovative medicines, but they are not being packaged and marketed in a way to compete on the world market. If that were to change and medical exports were to expand, then the goods-to-services ratio of export earnings could put the Cuban economy on more solid footing.

### **“Human capital” for health, education and multilateral politics**

Until recently, the large growth in services earnings since 1990 came primarily from international tourism, but in 2005 another kind of service export accounted for a significant percentage of service export earnings. The so-called “Doctors-for-oil” arrangement between Cuba and Venezuela in 2005 made up nearly half the services exports. Whether the amount is literally a barter that would increase proportionally the amount Venezuela pays for

Cuban health services as oil prices go up, is not known. If so, the ratio could vary greatly for Cuba, depending on fluctuating oil prices. Although not yet officially confirmed, public speeches have suggested that the amount in 2005 may have exceeded US\$500 million in the Venezuela-Cuba trade. (EIU, 2006)

If the figure of 20,000 Cuban medical doctors in Venezuela is also correct (Spadoni, 2005), then Cuba should not have to worry too much about its oil needs, and could use its income on badly needed infrastructural needs, especially electricity and transportation that affect directly the well-being of people's lives. Venezuela is a crucial ally for Cuba and at the moment it seems that Cuban expertise is vital for Venezuela's previously ignored majority, and a positive factor for maintaining the popularity of Hugo Chávez in the more humble neighborhoods of cities and countryside.

Besides health care workers in Venezuela, Cuba developed and signed more than 100 agreements with Brazilian universities, in the context of advancing integration in the region and for the project of the Latin American universities. How many agreements came under the Cardoso government, and how many after the election of Lula is not so important as the main point: the agreements with Brazil allow highly trained Cubans to help with the socio-economic development of Brazil, a badly needed answer to old practices of corruption and inefficiency.

Recent talks between Bolivia's new president, Evo Morales, and Fidel Castro suggest even more agreements for one of the continent's most needy populations. As more progressive candidates continue winning elections in other countries, the question arises: How many doctors and nurses does Cuba have, and could these bilateral agreements put a strain on the number of healthcare providers remaining in Cuba? In response, one must acknowledge that the opportunities for education and healthcare in remote areas and poor urban neighborhoods throughout the continent will create immeasurable goodwill for Cuba in global circles. Furthermore, each graduating class from Cuba's new international School of Medicine means more healthcare and goodwill, and more doctors to slow down disease and death of the poor.

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### *Does Cuban economic growth = the end of the Special Period?*

In Table X.3, the *Economist Intelligence Unit's* "Real GDP" calculations for the years 2000-2005 are somewhat less glowing than Cuba's own "sustain-

able social” measure<sup>3</sup> (EIU, 2006). Nevertheless both sets of calculations show the economy climbing “out of the hole.”

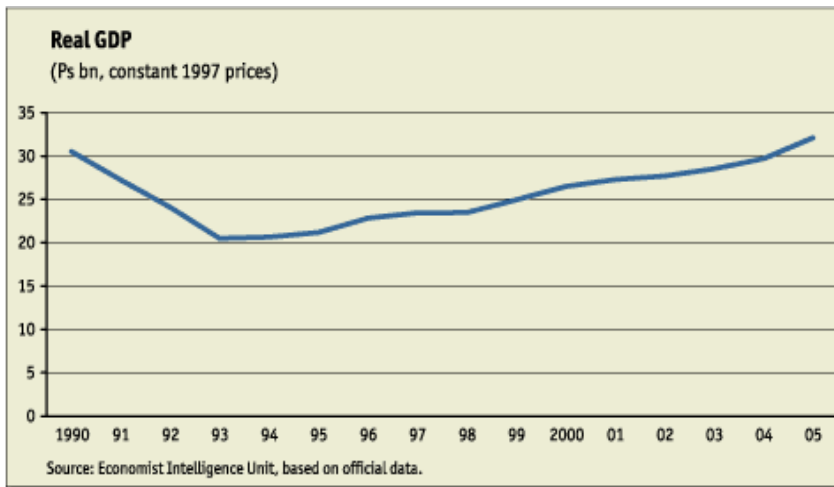
TABLE 8-3. Real GDP vs. Cuba’s ‘Sustainable Social’ Measure

	Real GDP	Sustainable Social Measure
2000	26,482	30,531
2001	27,268	31,447
2002	27,686	32,013
2003	28,502	33,229
2004	29,706	35,024
2005	32,082	39,172

Source: Oficina Nacional Estadísticas, reprinted from EIU, February 1, 2006

Regardless of those details, whether we consider the “sustainable social” or the traditional calculations represented in the 2000-2005 table, the conclusion is clear: Cuba’s economy is finally growing significantly. Furthermore, from the more conservative EIU calculation of “Real GDP” (Figure X.2) it seems that the most harrowing sacrifices may soon be alleviated by a more prosperous economy.

FIGURE 8-2. Cuba’s Real GDP



3. Cuba’s calculations seek to quantify the intangible production that is estimated in pesos and time for service work in schools, offices, social agencies, and medical facilities, possibly household care of the elderly and the young, i.e., work that is performed for infrastructure and not for directly marketable goods.

Thus, recent global economic and political factors have given cause for Cubans to smile. It seems that in the socio-economic sphere some positive changes are on the way for the Cuban people—although they may have to endure a few more years of power outages and (relative) food shortages.

### **Newer opportunities imply better conditions of life**

Next to food, Cuba's greatest need has been for petroleum to keep its electricity and its economy moving. Money from sales of nickel and its services exports (especially tourism but also the medical and teaching services to other countries) all contribute to Cuba's ability to climb out and stay out of the deep hole of economic crisis. Cuba has oil, but not enough thus far to meet its own domestic needs. Cuban oil development more than tripled in the first dozen years after the loss of Soviet oil shipments in 1990 and 1991. Domestic barrels per day quadrupled from 1990 to 75,000 barrels per day in 2004—no small achievement, but most of it was not the right kind of oil and additional technology is required to use it to meet Cuba's domestic needs.

New offshore explorations for oil and minerals, and many joint venture plans, are no longer of the small company variety, but, rather, involve large-scale metals manufacturing and major oil companies. Oil explorations continue and Cuba, as in the past, is not giving out much information about the results. One reason is probably the false raising of expectations for rapid improvement, when in fact it takes about seven years to prepare a region with known reserves for deep, underwater drilling.

Offshore, deep-water discoveries have been made by Montreal-based Pebercan, Toronto-based Sherritt International, the Spanish company Respol, and possibly a Chinese exploration company. Sherritt found one field with 100 million barrels of oil reserves in December 2004. China's Sinopec, has announced an agreement with the Cuban state oil company, Cupet, to produce oil from a coastal oil field with known reserves in the northwestern part of Cuba. In light of other Chinese investment in Cuba, Sinopec, China's second largest oil company, stated in 2005 the goal of helping boost oil production to meet 60 percent of Cuba's domestic oil needs by 2006. SINOPEC, Petro China and CINOOC—China National Offshore Corporation—are all involved in a large agreement, probably already underway, for more coastal and deep-water explorations.

The list is long, but a short list provides some idea of the scope of explorations and global eagerness to get at the virtually virgin fields of oil that surround much of Cuba's long coastlines. New Delhi's Videsh Ltd. will invest in seven oil and gas blocks it acquired in Cuba, blocks known to hold more than four billion barrels of oil reserves. Videsh also entered into an agreement with Repsol-YPF of Spain to acquire 30-percent participating interest in the

deepwater exploration in Cuba. (*Economic Times, India*, 2005) Brazil's state oil giant Petrobras began in 2005 to increase its energy co-operation in Cuba, and after an initial hesitancy, is now planning (or carrying out) deep-water offshore prospecting.

After securing his political stature and legitimacy, President Hugo Chavez led Venezuela to become Cuba's top trade partner in 2004.<sup>4</sup> PDVSA of Venezuela also will search for oil and plans to help Cuba in refining and marketing. A new CUPET/ PDVSA lubricants plant, and a facility for storing 600,000 barrels a day of residual petrochemicals will be built in Matanzas. PDVSA also will help reopen the oil refinery and terminal in Cienfuegos, a facility built with Soviet technology in 1990 but which ground to a halt almost immediately due to its high energy consumption. (*Agence France Presse*, 2005) In late 2005, South Africa's state-owned oil firm, PetroSA and South African mining and energy sectors also signed a general co-operation agreement with Cuba. Strengthening relations between Cuba, Venezuela and China have resulted in trilateral agreements for building manufacturing plants for stainless steel (made with Cuban ferro-nickel), updating infrastructure with freight trains and buses, lots of new buses, that will be built in Cuba for local use and for export. New freight and new passenger trains will also help Cuba's population to once again have a more dependable means of transportation. China, in fact, has become Cuba's second most important trading partner after Venezuela.

### **Food supplies from the U.S.**

Years of draught and severe hurricane damage, made food imports a dire necessity and for the first time in decades U.S. farmers and agro-business began selling to Cuba. Under the pressure of U.S. agricultural producers and humanitarian groups, the U.S. government allowed agricultural producers and pharmaceutical manufacturers to sell to Cuba, with certain restrictions. Food imports from the US climbed steadily from 2001 to 2004, and seem to have peaked at around US\$400 million in 2004.<sup>5</sup>

The U.S. International Trade Commission showed "only" US\$361.4 million in 2005, a decline, but still a sizable amount for Cuba, which by law must pay in cash for U.S. goods. ([http://dataweb.ustic.gov/scripts/cy\\_m3\\_run.asp](http://dataweb.ustic.gov/scripts/cy_m3_run.asp)) The numbers are not yet available for early 2006. It is likely that the new Bush administration restrictions of 2004 that require not only

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4. Venezuela exported goods worth around US\$1.4 billion (US\$1.1 billion for oil and around \$300 million for food and other products), accounting for 22 percent of Cuba's total trade in 2005. Based on trade talks between heads of state, Castro and Chávez, Cuba is expected to buy US\$2 billion from Venezuela in 2006.

5. In 2004, the Bush administration placed greater restrictions on sales, cut family visits by 2/3, ended short academic exchanges, and ended much educational travel to Cuba. The Bush White House, however, is hurting the U.S. farmers more than Cuban consumers.

cash payments, but now cash payments in advance of a shipment's leaving a U.S. port, will lead Cuba to turn away from its "natural trading partner" to import more from Brazil, Canada and Vietnam.

Canada is now seeking to increase food exports to Cuba. The Netherlands and other Europeans supply food (especially cheeses, snack foods, and chocolates for increasing numbers of tourists). Vietnam and Brazil are supplying rice and other foods, much to the consternation of U.S. rice producers.

The most important point for our inquiry, however, is that Cubans are able to import more, and there is more food available, although the prices may be very high for Cuban salary earners, even those at the high end of the salary scale. While not all U.S. sales in the graph above were food supplies, most were. Cuba was finally able to buy food from the most logical "natural" supplier, since shipping down the major rivers and across the Gulf of Mexico from Mobile, New Orleans, Galveston, or Baton Rouge, is far less costly than long ocean voyages.

What does all this mean for the ordinary Cuban family? The farmers' markets (that had been closed since 1986) re-opened in October 1994, and most families found a better supply of food for their dinner tables, even good, fresh (and costly) meats at several outdoor markets. Russian oil began flowing in larger amounts back into Cuban ports, which permitted a larger deployment of volunteers into various phases of agriculture and, by 1995, egg production was up to 45 percent and poultry was up to 46 percent of 1991 levels. By 2006, Cuban agriculture seemed to be closer to its earlier levels, but we will have to wait for the statistics.<sup>6</sup>

At the family level, clothing, food, medicine, and transportation remain highly serious challenges for all. Although the food supply has increased, the "special period" is continuing on some levels. Certain imported medicines are still available only for dollars. In a step away from total education subsidies, students have had to start buying their books and pencils. At the community level, there are some signs of pothole repairs and work on buildings, but schools, roads and other infrastructure continue to deteriorate, and most people are still lacking several basic consumer needs a few years into the new millennium.

Cuba's trade expansion with China involves sugar exports to China, and, just as in the U.S., Cubans are also buying cheaper Chinese consumer goods such as clothing, shoes, and small appliances. We can predict that if the political trends continue and more Latin American populations elect left-leaning governments, and if China's connections with Latin America continue to grow, Cuba will be in an even better position in the global political and eco-

6. Fuller bellies and refrigerators were observable in early January 2006, in the City of Havana. This might have represented the availability of extra foods around the holidays, or there might be a real upward trend of ongoing food production and distribution.



nomic spheres. I now return to other social implications of rapid growth for the quality of life in Cuba.

What about family-owned businesses or the *cuenta propistas* which support families? After a long period of a weakened state, of growing gaps in income and access to goods and services, inequalities in access to food, the Cuban state is now re-centralizing, and seeking to establish an economy that is accountable, that can show accurately the performance of both state and private enterprises. The Cuban state is focusing on reducing the high degree of theft from state enterprises. In fact, many of the youth who ended up in the highly promoted social worker program did so as a way of avoiding jail for delinquent actions. A most interesting point, which says a lot about internal Cuban politics today, is that many, in fact “thousands,” of these new social workers are reported to have been turned into tax collectors. Revenue collection and stopping theft (which is usually of state goods or parts that are used by the *cuenta propistas*, skilled workers who privately sell their services as mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, and so on) has become a state priority.

The leadership of the state apparently believes that by collecting more taxes on income, and thwarting some of the massive theft of state goods, they can slow the widening social gap between those becoming rich and those remaining poor. Whether the growing economy and its international ties will enable or hinder these re-centralizing and leveling moves by the state remains to be seen.

Can we conclude with optimism about food, housing, education, and healthcare? For ordinary folks, the expanding economy is good news. Gas exports are up and oil production is increasing. Whether U.S. agricultural imports will climb back to the 2004 levels is almost irrelevant, if Cubans have enough food imports from other countries like Brazil, Canada, Vietnam and the European Union. More imports mean that simple antibiotics, anti-inflammatory pills, spices, sanitary products for women, shampoos and other goods, which once were very scarce for those without dollars, will again become affordable.

More foreign investment should mean more jobs. Everyone will benefit from the expansion of businesses, for example the Centro de Inmunología Molecular that now employs about 400 workers. The Center’s research, production and quality control of medications, ranging from anti-rejection drugs for transplant patients, to genetic research for treatment of everything from anemia to tumors to cancer, will pay salaries that support many hundreds of family members. Cuba also benefits politically from the development of new drugs, by its treatment of patients at Cuban clinics, and by humanitarian acts such as sending doctors to Pakistan, where the Minister of Health credited Cubans with examining between 70 percent and 80 percent of the earthquake

victims in a mountainous region. Such acts of kindness are not forgotten and, in the future, will help Cuba's long-term economic trade and political partnerships.

Finally, now that emergency food supplies have been secured, we can end with the biggest problem facing both the population and the economic functioning of the island as a whole. Electricity, whatever the source, is the energy on which all else depends. Can Venezuelan and Chinese projects (and low-cost loans) enable the repair or replacement of the crumbling infrastructure for electrical power? In early 2005, Castro in his explanation to the population of the long "apagones" or power outages, stated that the country could not meet even 50 percent of the demand by the population and its economic production. Some entire areas or grids have to be shut down in order to make repairs on others. In October 2004, 118 factories had to close and schools and workplaces closed one-half hour early for several months due to grid repairs.<sup>7</sup> Vivian Bustamante reported in *Trabajadores* that 400 new trucks were being purchased for electrical workers to provide for the most rapid repair schedules possible, which, of course, also depends on supplies of gasoline, which seems likely with Venezuela's large oil shipments.

Salaries were raised significantly in late 2005, but in January 2006, several Cubans were complaining that their raises were all going to pay the increases in the cost of electricity, a move aimed to curb consumption and bring in revenue to help upgrade the entire system.

The promise of upgrading of schools and school equipment, and the renovation of thousands of older housing units, while also building new housing and new schools for the needs of a larger population, has led to the December 2005 decision to allot 70 percent of the national budget to social programs in education, health, culture and art, science and technology, sports, and social security and work. In 2006, plans were announced and housing construction begun for hundreds of thousands of new housing units. Furthermore, plans were unveiled to construct new schools, a complete replacement of all schools, presumably ecologically sound, schools.<sup>8</sup>

To summarize, it looks as if Cubans, who have suffered so long under the cruel twist of world events, may be seeing the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. If their electrical infrastructure were completely revamped, life would be easier. If more trains and buses were available, they could go see their families more often—and maybe take a long-awaited vacation trip.

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7. Besides major grid repairs and energy supply, Cuba needs to replace 10,563 miles of power lines and replace 44,000 power line poles to modernize the country's electricity distribution system (*Granma*, May, 2005).

8. Many people in Cuba wonder why the well-constructed older schools in the neighborhoods cannot be renovated, in order to spend money on other, more badly needed construction.

Finally, if the Latin American political context creates more friendly governments, and if Cuba's human capital can help overcome some of the worst problems of ignorance, malnutrition and disease, then many others' higher standard of living would become something even bigger to report.

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**Part II**  
**Cuba In**  
**Comparative Perspective**



## *Economic Reform in Cuba and China*

*Adrian Hearn*

Despite significant differences in economic and demographic scale,<sup>1</sup> the governments of Cuba and China have confronted a comparable “dual” challenge as they open their economies to foreign investment. (UNCTAD, 2005; United Nations Population Information Network, 2005) The first part of this challenge has been to promote greater interdependence and collaboration between foreign multinationals and local enterprise; the second part has been to build stronger links between state and non-state actors to promote civic participation and social stability. The governments of both countries have confronted this challenge not by replacing the state apparatus with market forces but by encouraging their coexistence. (Hearn, 2004; Foster, 2002; March Poquet, 2000; Dilla Alfonso et al, 1999; Goldstein, 1995; The goal has been to harness local creativity, initiative, and social capital within the framework of nationally integrated, state-guided commercial initiatives that both facilitate economic growth and consolidate political support. Economic reforms were introduced in China long before—and have advanced well beyond—those adopted in Cuba, though the recent decentralization of economic governance in Havana’s historical zone, by far the most progressive economic plan in contemporary Cuba, has proven itself to be a viable model for other urban centers.<sup>2</sup>

Comparing political and economic decentralization in Cuba and China reveals how societies in transition from centralized governance can derive a range of advantages from their social and political legacy. Socialism in both countries brought about strong popular nationalism, but the scarcity of

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1. By 2003 China had accumulated inward FDI stocks of US \$571,471 million compared to US \$79.9 million in Cuba; China’s population currently exceeds 1,315,844,000 compared to Cuba’s 11,269,000.

2. The success of Old Havana’s economic decentralisation program has prompted similar initiatives in the cities of Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, and Trinidad.

resources and consumer goods also produced resilient networks of informal commerce and black market exchange. One of the most intriguing developments in recent years has been the evolution of these circles of unofficial cooperation into semi-official networks capable of open engagement (and in some cases integration) with state and commercial institutions. In Cuba this has occurred mainly at the grassroots level, where unregistered neighborhood groups and associations that were previously not recognized in the official scheme of the Revolution have begun to work in legally sanctioned partnerships with state urban development institutions. By comparison, in China networks of informal cooperation and professional solidarity (or *guanxi*) have assumed an increasingly open and predominant role in the growth and development of the Chinese investment and manufacturing sectors since the mid 1980s.

During the mid-to-late 20th century informal exchange networks in both countries were shaped largely by the attempted socio-economic omnipresence of the state. Although economic governance has been significantly decentralized and liberalized since then, informal practices continue to be shaped by the ongoing authority of state institutions particularly in the areas of commercial coordination, community development, and market research. Indeed, state participation in the economy has been a critical feature of Cuban and Chinese development strategies, yielding outcomes in social and economic programs that cannot be easily dismissed. As Jean Oi notes, in an era of global privatization and state downsizing, the productive capacities of public-private collaboration are often overlooked:

There has been a rush to get government out of the economy, but a minimalist state is not necessarily the answer. The goal should be more effective government. Instead of thinking that there must be either state or market, one should instead look at the interaction of state and market and the adjustment of state actions. As a number of observers have pointed out, even in the classic statements of laissez faire economics, there is a crucial role for states to play...Not all state intervention is Leninist...China's experience suggests that one should disaggregate the "state" into its component parts to distinguish between levels of government and the incentives for different levels to perform. There is a need for strong state capacity, but this capacity should exist at both the local and the central levels. (Oi, 1995: 1146-47)

Like China, Cuba since the early 1990s has experimented with the decentralization of administrative authority to provincial and municipal governments to more effectively address emerging local needs and support diversifying productive capacities as foreign direct investment (FDI) accrues in specific, often relatively isolated, industrial sectors.<sup>3</sup> A key challenge has been to implement locally integrated programs capable of stemming social



fragmentation and inequality at the grassroots before they evolve into political discontent. Strategies for accomplishing this have focused on building commercially viable, socially inclusive, schemes linking local industry to the foreign business sector. There is a strong social dimension to this economic strategy arising from the extension of opportunities for economic development to the neighborhood level, thereby encouraging popular participation and consolidating political support at the grassroots.

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### *FDI Regulation and National Stability*

Until the late 1970s, most developing countries sought to leverage domestic benefits from foreign trade through ownership controls and import tariffs. These strategies have become less viable because of the increasingly stringent structural adjustment conditions of international financial institutions, the membership requirements of the World Trade Organization, and proliferating Free and Preferential Trade Agreements. (Lee, 2004; Kyaw, 2003; Collier and Dollar, 2002) Although the global economic landscape has transformed in fundamental ways, the design and implementation of appropriate regulatory frameworks that harness the power of market forces remains perhaps the most salient economic challenge for developing countries.

The renewed interest of investors in the East Asian region in the wake of the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s has brought important opportunities for economic growth, but as Leonora Angeles has argued, East Asian governments have an important role to play in managing these opportunities:

The crisis may prove a blessing if exporting firms respond to the crisis by substituting local materials for imported products. Such a move could be aided by national development plans aimed at reducing the import-dependence of export firms by providing incentives to integrate their operations with domestic enterprises, by procuring their supplies from local sources, by helping upgrade the quality of local products, and by improving local technological capabilities and human resources. (Angeles, 2003: 211)

Such legislation could create local jobs and, importantly, enable domestic exporters to respond to overseas demand free from dependency on imports. Consequently, reforms of this sort carry growing relevance for developing countries as “harder” national protection strategies, such as ownership controls and trade tariffs, are progressively dismantled. Efforts to integrate and “embed” foreign capital into domestic economies through structures of insti-

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3. Phases of economic decentralisation and opening in Cuba have typically been followed by periods of re-centralisation and reassertion of state authority. This pattern roughly coincides with the electoral cycle of provincial (2.5-year) and municipal (5-year) governments, which have tended to demonstrate their legal weight early in their tenure by reigning in the more progressive initiatives of their predecessors.

tutional management and state authority in some ways resemble the import substitution methods adopted in the 1960 and 1970s by governments throughout Latin America and East Asia. Import substitution industrialization and state economic planning were relatively successful in consolidating national economies in Latin America and East Asia in the 1960s and 1970s, but by the mid 1980s the best prospects for further growth appeared to lie in privatized production and distribution, a diminished state, and competitive international integration. (Lowenthal, 2000) Consequent economic liberalization programs generally boosted GDP figures, but also exacerbated social inequalities and popular disaffection, prompting a cautious suspicion of unregulated trade in both regions. This suspicion persists, driven by what Evelyn Hu-Dehart identifies as a core tension between economic growth and responsible economic management:

What responsibilities do governments and especially the international organizations and policy-setting bodies that facilitate globalization, such as the WTO and IMF, have to ensure minimum wage and workplace standards, including environmental and health regulations? And if these organizations do not address these issues, then who will do so for them? (Hu-Dehart, 2003: 251)

Commentators ranging from social activists to government officials openly recognize that while the global free market has produced GDP growth figures around the world, growth has not been distributed uniformly. The point was highlighted by former Clinton Labor Secretary Robert Reich, who remarked that “the challenge for those of us who believe that free trade and global capital are essentially good things if managed correctly is to avoid the backlash by developing progressive strategies to overcome the widening inequalities and the environmental depredations.” (Hu-Dehart, 2003: 255) Globalization’s backlash, manifested in intensifying street protests such as those that now routinely accompany economic summits from Seattle to Sydney, can indeed pose a political menace for today’s image-conscious governments (and their labor secretaries in particular). But the political implications of mass protest are far more menacing in one-party systems where governments stake their very legitimacy on their claim to represent and protect popular interests. As Cuban and Chinese authorities adapt socialist principles to the requirements of global business, they therefore harbor a fundamental interest in linking foreign capital to local growth and popular participation.

The existence of collaborative links between state institutions and informal popular associations in Cuba and China has until recently been minimal amidst official concerns about the potential emergence of robust, autonomous, civil society groups that could feasibly undermine state authority. Since 1989 however, economic reforms have prompted a more flexible atti-

tude toward independent social networks and associations insofar as these facilitate economic growth and social welfare. (Goodman, 2002; Fernández Soriano, 1999) More effective cooperation between state and non-state actors has become crucial to the political stability not only of Cuba and China, but of developing countries more broadly as the effects of economic globalization intensify. This is evident in instances of violent insurgency and terrorism in Latin America and East Asia over the past 20 years, which have been fuelled largely by the conviction of marginalized social sectors that their governments are not doing enough to include them in national economic initiatives. Noting a pervasive and widening income gap across Latin America, Abraham Lowenthal identifies the link between economic inequality and social instability:

The social and political ramifications of this economic record are alarming. Unemployment and underemployment are up and real wages are falling. Labor conflicts and social protests are expanding. Street crime, kidnapping for profit, and the sale of children are rising. Rejection of established authorities and institutions is growing...if unaddressed, this polarization could become social and political dynamite, especially where resentment about gross inequalities is heightened by rampant corruption, crime, and personal insecurity. Programs to alleviate extreme poverty, improve tax collection, facilitate credit for micro-enterprises, and provide broader access to social services are thus all crucial for Latin America's future. (Lowenthal, 2000: 43, 54)

It is into volatile, chronically stratified scenarios such as these that popular protest movements (both legal and illegal) have emerged in Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba, and Bolivia, demanding broader economic inclusion as a political priority. In the East Asian region, popular demands for economic reform and land redistribution have also intensified, in many cases evolving into armed insurgencies, as in contemporary Irian Jaya (West Papua), the Philippines, Southern Thailand, Myanmar, and Indonesia's Aceh province. (Pritchard and Hearn, 2005; Dewitt and Hernandez, 2003; Dupont, 2001; Tan, 2000) Well aware of the destabilizing potential of popular disaffection, the Cuban and Chinese governments have made serious attempts, as they open to foreign investment, to engage economically and socially with previously unregistered groups to pre-empt the emergence of political opposition.

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### *Cuba*

Economic linkage schemes in contemporary Cuba revolve around the country's expanding tourism industry, which relies heavily on European venture capital. One of the island's principal tourist destinations is the municipality of

Old Havana, which houses approximately 102,831 residents in 4.4 square kilometers, making it one of the city's most densely populated zones. (ONUSP) In 1994 the Cuban government created the tourist agency Habaguanex, administrated by the Office of the Historian of Havana, to reinvest profits from Old Havana tourism into the municipality's neglected infrastructure. The Office of the Historian has successfully brokered commercial partnerships between local producers and multinational enterprises, and achieved generally high levels of local enthusiasm for neighborhood development programs.

The director of the Office of the Historian since 1967 is Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler, who now functions as Old Havana's equivalent of mayor. A writer of poetry and researcher of Latin American history, Dr. Leal argues that tourism has been an important characteristic of the city for centuries. While the Office's rapid construction of hotels, entertainment venues, and shops that operate exclusively in Cuban Convertible pesos (or CUCs) is resented by many locals who get paid in Cuban national pesos, he views these developments as:

...a recuperation of the capacities the city has historically enjoyed. I calculate that for every Cuban employed in tourism, 10 people live. The point is to use tourism as a mechanism for development...It's very hard to create ways for foreigners and Cubans to mix in clean, healthy environments. Most Cubans really do want genuine cultural interchange, and we're looking for ways to promote this...We're trying to preserve schools and houses, create jobs, and encourage true participation, for which we've created dynamic fiscal structures that allow reinvestment of profits in the historic center. (Leal Spengler, 2002)

Following the collapse of a dilapidated Old Havana convent in 1993, Dr. Leal exercised extraordinary diplomatic skill in arranging the implementation of these fiscal structures through Decree Law 143, which made the Office of the Historian the first state institution in Cuba able to control spending, profits, and general economic management at the municipal scale. Autonomous financial management liberates the Office of the Historian from the orthodox economic model that requires other municipalities to surrender their incomes to centrally governed ministries, which budget according to national, rather than municipal, priorities. It is a move toward decentralized administration of resources that many progressive Cuban politicians and social commentators would like to see applied to their own municipalities, notwithstanding the diversification of living standards—Old Havana is a case in point—that this implies.

Tourism in Havana generates profits that the Office of the Historian redistributes to under-resourced sectors such as Internet development and urban community agriculture programs, but tourism has also played a role in stimu-

lating domestic commercial activity. While Old Havana hotels sell Coca-Cola and Western brand designer clothes (Adidas and Benetton among the most popular), they also sell nationally produced items, such as coffee, cigars, rum and a range of artisan products. The commercial marketing of domestic products is possible because foreign investment laws in Cuba require 51-percent state ownership in joint venture initiatives, which then actively establish commercial links with domestic producers. Government-sponsored neighborhood development projects have also sought to market locally produced pottery, clothing, and folkloric musical theatre to the tourism sector. While these projects have not done away with racial discrimination in the CUC (previously U.S. dollar) economy, in which employers have typically favored Cubans with lighter skin (De La Fuente, 2001; Hammond, 1999), strategic state regulation and industrial linkage has effectively pre-empted the expansion of enclave, segregated industrial sectors, which have characterized the tourism industry in the rest of the Caribbean. (McDavid and Ramajeessingh, 2003) The Office of the Historian's work in Old Havana, which has been recognized by UNESCO, reflects the Castro government's determination to collaborate with foreign investors on its own terms, an attempt that has so far confuted the apocalyptic predictions of most international analysts since the early 1990s.

While the exile, suppression, and containment of dissidents has figured into Cuban domestic policy, in recent years there has been a shift of focus toward greater state engagement with vulnerable sectors of the population, particularly if these exhibit high levels of social solidarity. State-administered initiatives have increasingly sought to stimulate economic growth through the marketing of local products to foreign tourists by building cooperative, economically viable links with community groups whose local allegiances and social capital might otherwise pose a threat to state authority.

This dual social and economic strategy is evident in decentralized initiatives that have begun to collaborate openly with Afro-Cuban religious kinship networks, which are strongly rooted in the urban centers of Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and other Cuban cities. Official concerns about the capacity of Afro-Cuban religions to mobilize popular political opposition, which date back to colonial fears of slave insurrection (such as Haiti's in the late 1790s), manifest today in the scrupulous policing—and occasional prohibition—of large scale Afro-Cuban ceremonial gatherings.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, state organizations like the Group for the Integrated Development of the Capital (GDIC) and the Office of the Historian of Havana have explicitly attempted to build cooperative relations with Afro-Cuban religious leaders to introduce health and education resources (such as anti-drug pamphlets, literacy tuition workbooks, etc.) into pre-existing networks of mutual aid and exchange.

Their objective has been to incorporate unofficial circles social solidarity into official structures of governance, or as the GDIC puts it, to “formalize the informal.” (Coyula, et al, 2001) The economic thrust of these programs is to introduce community-produced theatre and dance performances to the tourism market, which despite raising local concerns about cultural appropriation, has generally succeeded in strengthening state relations with previously unrecognized non-state actors. (Hearn, 2004)

In 2003 the Office of the Historian expanded its administrative reach into the suburb of *Barrio Chino* (Chinatown), in the municipality of Central Havana. Like its projects in Old Havana, the Office’s work in Barrio Chino has relied on a combination of local economic participation and foreign financing. Local ethnic Chinese, most of whom are now third generation Cubans and beyond, have been granted the right to set up restaurants and small catering outlets in the hope that this might stimulate the local economy and draw tourism into the neighborhood. To further promote tourism in the neighborhood the Office of the Historian has assumed responsibility for restoring sites of cultural relevance, such as the Pacifico restaurant and the Continental cinema, which screened Chinese films up until its closure soon after the onset of the economic crisis in 1993.

Revenue for these projects has been generated increasingly from joint ventures with Chinese firms, some which have taken a close interest in Cuba as a manufacturing platform, particularly in the IT and pharmaceutical industries, for the Latin American market. Over 10 years ago Dr. Leal presented his vision for Barrio Chino at a conference entitled “Tourism and its Importance for the Understanding History and the Culture of the People”:

In less than just a few years Barrio Chino will reappear; there will reappear Chinese people from one side to the other. They will start to cook at home and start to bring the traditional restaurants back to life...I know very well that it’s not a matter changing it [the neighborhood] or adorning it; it’s a matter of making it

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4. Many practitioners of the Afro-Cuban religion *Santería* view the public promotion of the state-affiliated Yoruba Cultural Association of Cuba as an attempt to bring ceremonial occasions, such as the reading of the socially influential *letra del año* (letter of the year), into an officially controlled environment. Another interesting example of a politically sensitive ceremonial activity is the yearly street procession for the *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* near Santiago de Cuba, which brings together believers in Christian and Afro-Cuban religions. John Kirk writes that the 1961 march to El Cobre “was intended by many as a show of force in political as well as religious terms” that escalated into an anti-revolution protest and the subsequent expulsion of 130 Christian priests from the island. See Kirk, John M., *Between God and the Party*, Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1989, p.102. In the politically turbulent year of 1990, the specter of popular religious unity once again triggered official concerns that the procession to El Cobre might become an organized anti-government protest, resulting in its suspension. See Eckstein, Susan E., *Back From the Future: Cuba Under Castro*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994, p.122. On the road to El Cobre in 2001 I observed an abundance of police officers, many equipped with video cameras, indicating that to some extent the same fear persists.

live, and life always comes from the inside out. (Chiu Wong and Salgado, 1993: 7)

Coupled with emerging interest from China in economic collaboration with Cuba, the Office of the Historian's recent assumption of economic administration and tourism promotion in *Barrio Chino* will likely bring Dr. Leal's vision one step closer to reality.

The growth of Cuba's tourism industry has been the basis for industrial linkage schemes throughout the island, but it has also been the basis for concern in Caribbean countries that have until recently dominated the market. The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) calculates that Cuba attracted 1,774,541 visitors in 2001, or 11 percent of total visitors to the Caribbean, and 1,850,410 visitors in 2004. (CTO, 2001; and CTO, 2005) The growth potential for Cuban tourism is enormous, particularly considering the number of North Americans who are expected to visit the island when U.S. government travel restrictions are one day lifted. Acutely aware of this potential, Caribbean nations have begun to show unprecedented interest in developing economic relations with Cuba, which some view as a potential buyer of consumer products and tourism investment, and others as a key partner in strengthening the region's strategic position vis-à-vis the U.S. and Europe. (González Nuñez and Verba, 1997) For its part, Cuba seems to have adopted a similarly rational approach to Caribbean relations, viewing its regional neighbors less as political allies in the conflict with the U.S. and increasingly as potential commercial partners.

Two and a half decades of intensive U.S. trade with the Caribbean (consolidated largely through Ronald Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative) have confirmed FDI as a driving force behind lower labor costs, fiscal incentives, and tax concessions. But economic restructuring in line with foreign capital has also generated social inequalities and economic fragmentation in the region. (González Nuñez and Verba, 1997) Regional rapprochement with Cuba, as articulated by the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), would facilitate economic protection at a time when other economic blocs like NAFTA, the EU, and ASEAN are consolidating their strength by drawing investment capital inward to their respective common markets. Dealing with foreign business through an integrated multilateral framework has clearly become a CARICOM goal, and Cuba's recent admission into the Association of Caribbean States reflects regional confidence in its economic potential. That Caribbean cooperation with Cuba is progressing against the wishes of the U.S. government may also reflect growing regional self-confidence. The ultimate test of this confidence and cohesion will be whether the region can formulate a common policy for economic cooperation

and industrial linkage, implement it vis-à-vis foreign (particularly U.S.) investors, and openly acknowledge the level of state regulation this would require.

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### *China*

The comparative scenario in China exhibits a dramatically grander scale, but a similar concern with linking FDI to local participation through a regime of decentralized economic governance. The “Open Door” policy to foreign investment pursued by China since the early 1980s has profoundly affected both rural and urban communities. Rural village enterprises, which were central to China’s economic reform program in the 1980s, demonstrate some of the productive potentials of shifting managerial responsibilities previously held by the state into the hands of local actors. The state encouraged investors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other offshore Chinese communities to actively develop small and medium size companies in this sector. Although the resulting projects often recruited external professional managers and government officials, they were also strongly integrated into local kinship networks, resulting in growth initiatives that extended beyond specific companies or individuals into the wider population. (Whyte, 1995)

While Confucian family values may have played a role in this process, the institutional and legal reforms that allowed family structures to play a more active economic role should not be underestimated. From the late 1970s the government of Deng Xiaoping laid the foundations for economic growth through the gradual reorientation of state support away from the former industrial giant enterprises toward small and medium scale (often family-owned) initiatives, whose competitive edge was officially recognized in a global economy favoring rapid response to market conditions and internal cohesion within firms. It is easy to overlook the contribution of provincial governments in managing local industries, which Oi argues have never been privately owned, or even hybrid, but rather represent new forms of state enterprise subject to the managerial decisions of Party officials, many of whom have been in office during the Mao period. (Oi, 1995)

Tying the state to the success and failure of local industry, in part through government ownership and in part through taxation measures, has effectively provided incentive for local governments to see that money is made in their jurisdictions. Chinese local governments are no longer service-providers so much as economic actors that benefit from good business decisions and suffer the consequences of bad ones. As Oi writes:

Unlike the USSR, which undertook political reform before beginning the task of economic restructuring, and unlike the weak authoritarian states of Africa and



Latin America, China maintained its ability to rein in economic activity after reforms began. Not only is the political strength of a regime on the eve of reform crucial to determining its capacity to structure economic change, but a regime must also ensure that it retains sufficient capacity to control the course of reform. Unlike the former Soviet Union, China has tenaciously held on to its political power to decide the content and speed of reform. (Oi, 1995: 1147)

China's strong bureaucratic position cannot be wholly attributed to a legacy of political centralism. As Francis Fukuyama writes, the mandarinat at the core of Imperial China's administrative system "evolved over 3,000 years with distinctive rituals, exams, training, and meritocracy, so it is perhaps not surprising that contemporary Chinese societies know something about how to build a good bureaucracy." (Fukuyama and Marwah, 2000: 87) The cultural foundations of Chinese political organization, combined with the robust bureaucratic legacy of the Maoist system, left the central and local governments with impressive policy instruments and capacities that have proven much more effective than, for example, those of the Soviet system, which never decentralized authority to local governments or committed itself to building popular participation.

While the state has maintained a high level of industrial authority across a range of sectors (agriculture, transport, construction, IT, finance, etc.), the development of these industries from the early years of economic reform up to the present day has been strongly influenced by networks of professional solidarity, or *guanxi*. (Smart, 1993; Bian, 1997) *Guanxi* relations in China revealed their strength in the early 1980s as the state opened the country's economic infrastructure to private investment. Thomas Gold argues that the building and maintenance of cooperative, often ethnically-based, professional relationships was always important to the shortage economy of Communist China, but that institutional instability and uncertainty—resulting partly from the Cultural Revolution and partly from rapid economic liberalization in the early 1980s—opened *guanxi* networks to unprecedented public scrutiny. (Gold, Guthrie and Wank, 2002)

Circles of cooperation based in ethnic, professional, and other social connections continue to influence the trajectory of the Chinese economy, for example, in the paths they trace out for investment capital from overseas Chinese communities into mainland cities. As Alan and Josephine Smart have shown, the ability of business executives to establish connections with state officials is crucial when it comes to avoiding bureaucratic red tape, prompting the formation of new corporate partnerships between multinational investors, professional intermediaries in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and state officials on the mainland. (Smart and Hsu, 2004; Smart, 1997; Smart and Smart, 1991) These connections are, of course, mutually beneficial since they

set up what David Wank has called “symbiotic clientelism” structures that serve the economic interests of business executives through access to licenses and permits, and the political interests of state officials whose legitimacy depends on the economic performance of their territories. (Wank, 1998)

As regional officials compete to advance territorial interests, the nation’s political leadership in Beijing is left with the task of defending its own legitimacy by maintaining national cohesion and a degree of provincial equity. (Ding, 1994)<sup>5</sup> Popular dissatisfaction about growing inequalities between Eastern and Western provinces since the 1980s and the widening of this inequality with intensifying FDI in Shanghai and other urban centers has on several occasions threatened to escalate into ethnic and political conflict. To minimize this possibility the Chinese government’s current campaign to “Open Up the West” has taken significant steps toward integrating foreign investment into underdeveloped, ethnically distinct rural provinces under the decentralized supervision of local governments. (Goodman, 2004) Beyond the inevitable consolidation of *guanxi* relations around these developments, the integration of marginalized, potentially volatile, social sectors into legally sanctioned initiatives is a key strategic goal. A recent article in *The Economist* notes that the past few years have seen an upsurge in the number of protests triggered by emerging economic disparities, prompting President Hu Jintao to stress his concern for the disadvantaged—and to placate political hardliners—through tighter regulation of foreign investment (particularly in media) and by naming Cuba as a good model for blending social principles with political control. (*The Economist*, 2005) While the governments of both countries struggle to balance the requirements of global capital with domestic political agendas, both have recognized the potential benefits of incorporating the social capital of previously unofficial networks into officially administered development and commercial initiatives.

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## Conclusion

Like Britain in the 19th century, the East Asian newly industrialized countries in the mid 20th century, and the Southeast Asian “tiger” economies at the century’s end, Cuba and China have sought to balance state and market though specifically ascribed roles, rather than replacing the prior with the latter. The evidence from both countries suggests that effective state participation in economic affairs requires a level of decentralization able to accommodate active collaboration with local non-state actors. With the aim

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5. According to Xueliang Ding, the notion of legitimacy in China is based more on popular opinion and moral support (*ren xin*) for the political order than is generally true in Western countries, where more emphasis is placed on legal procedures and structures of public accountability.

of promoting local creativity and entrepreneurship, this kind of decentralization is precisely what both governments have endeavored to accomplish. As a result, rather than empowering independent civil society and the private sector to gradually assume the responsibilities the state, Cuban and Chinese development strategies have sought to assimilate local interest groups and networks of popular solidarity into structures of official authority.

The models of decentralized governance taking shape in Cuba and China may represent a qualitatively new variety of state economic planning with potential international appeal. Even the typically conservative *Newsweek* magazine reports that in indicators from oil consumption to housing policy, Chinese regulatory approaches may offer an attractive alternative to free market strategies:

The sense is that China is making the right moves. Contrast, for example, China's apparently effective effort to reduce oil demand to the Bush administration's newly passed energy policy, which has done nothing to reduce U.S. demand. Consider, too, the contrasting approach to housing bubbles, which continue to loom in the United States as Washington watches from the *laissez-faire* sidelines, but are already shrinking in China, as Beijing slaps on rules to restrain lending and speculation. It's conceivable that if these trends end badly for the United States but well for China, other nations will begin looking more closely to Beijing-style states controls as a model. (Lu, 2005: 40-41)

While China and Cuba differ in economic and demographic scale, the nation-building efforts of both have relied on similar attempts to stimulate economic growth by incorporating the creative capacities and social capital of informal associations and networks into state-led initiatives. Produced in part by the dynamics of centrally governed shortage economies, informal circles of exchange and solidarity are tentatively beginning to show their productive potential in the formal sphere. By attempting to harness informal initiative, whether based in professional networks, popular religion, or community associations, both governments have acted to address the dual challenge of linking foreign investment to local industry while building stronger links between state and non-state actors.

It remains to be seen to what degree the economic reforms that are currently unfolding will conserve the political regimes of Cuba and China or incite their further transformation. The administrative expansion of the economic model pioneered in Old Havana by the Office of the Historian into other Cuban cities and municipalities, such as *Barrio Chino* (Chinatown), indicates official confidence in decentralized management and local participation. Indeed, *Barrio Chino* deserves close ongoing scrutiny not only because of the high level of local ethnic entrepreneurship that has been permitted to take hold there, but because of its unique position as a point of entry

for Chinese investment into the country. A crucial strategic issue will be whether Cuban and Chinese economic collaboration, founded on the common challenge of adapting centralized models of governance to the requirements of foreign investment capital, may serve as a platform for both countries to deepen their relationships not only with each other but also with Latin America more broadly.

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# *Economic Transition in Comparison<sup>1</sup>*

*Enrique S. Pumar*

One of the foremost concerns in the mind of policy-makers, pundits, and academics in recent years is the prospect for liberal reforms in developing nations after experiencing social revolutions. The rate and extent of reforms implemented by these regimes frames their domestic and international identity. In the former context, the capacity to legislate liberalizing reforms can appease any potential opposition as well as the skeptics of the regime. It also pleases more moderate members of the revolutionary ruling coalition who identify with revolutionary efforts to undo the corruption and illegitimacy of the deposed regime but might not be prepared to concede other more radical positions to fellow coalition members. Reforms can also keep the spirit of the revolution alive among younger generations over time. For those who did not experience the policies and structural effects that gave way to revolutionary process, reforms have a conversion effect. Simply put, the more reforms the regime undertakes, the more the younger generations are likely to support revolutionary policies, mobilization strategies and rhetoric.

Externally, the situation is no much different. It is often the case that the international community judges the success of revolutions in great part by its capacity to reform as well. Reformist revolutionary leaders are perceived as sensible, pragmatic, astute heroes who sacrificed all for their country. Often, international policy accords are formulated to reward revolutionary governments willing to commit to change. Reforms also spur a sense of bilateral trust in what otherwise could be an anarchical society. By contrast, revolutionary antidotes like Pol Pot or Kim Jong Il hardly inspire much confidence at all and are usually bemired as international outcasts. Finally, increasingly

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1. The argument presented in this paper benefited from my early collaboration with Erin Ennis and presentations at the Research Circle Colloquium sponsored by the Department of Sociology at William Paterson University of New Jersey I would like to acknowledge the comments and suggestions from Kathleen Korgen, Maboud Ansari, Gabe Wang, Jorge Sanguinety, and, especially, Erin Ennis none of whom bares the blame for my argument.

scholars and policy-makers are subscribing to the notion that reform minded regimes hardly ever fight each other.<sup>2</sup>

This paper asks some very straight forward questions about the prospects for reforms in single party revolutions throughout the developing world. First, if there are so many domestic and international incentives for revolutionary elites to undertake reforms, why we do not see more liberalization on the part of these regimes? What factors lead to more reformist policies in one post-revolutionary regime but less so in others? Why do not Caesarian revolutionary leaders like the likes of Castro, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, or more recently those who govern Iran concentrate so much effort on stalling reforms rather than promoting them?

To formulate a proposition that would attempt to answer these questions, I propose to compare recent Cuban revolutionary policy initiatives with those of Vietnam and China.<sup>3</sup> These three nations share many similar experiences as developing nations that underwent a revolutionary process to rig themselves from illegitimate autocratic governments. Moreover, the three have toyed with their own ideological version of Marxism-Leninism. Notwithstanding different epochs and distinct political cultures, they all incorporated elements of a nationalist vision which oddly enough supported an internationalist foreign policy. Yet each of these revolutionary processes has instituted different paths and degrees of liberalizing reforms. The evidence I examine suggests that it is probably fair to conclude that with respects to economic, social and even political reforms, China is ahead of the pack by a small margin followed by Vietnam and Cuba. Another question that immediately comes to mind is what determines this order and how can one explain it? In short, why are the two Asian autocracies ahead of Cuba?

One motivation for researching these questions is that in many ways it defies logic. Smaller dependent markets like Cuba and Vietnam should reform first to offset the limitations of restricted market demand structures. A country like Cuba, whose political culture was not touched by Confucianism and which underwent a short but nonetheless competitive democratic experi-

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2. For a critical discussion on the idea of democratic peace, see the exchange between Sebastian Rosato, Michael W. Doyle, Michael Kinsella, Branislav L. Slantchev, Anna Alexandrova, and Erik Gartzke in the *American Political Science Review*, 99, 3, (August 2005) 467-472.

3. As I write the first draft of this paper in March 2006, the Cuban daily *Granma* reports in its online edition that the Department of Economics at the University of Uruguay is hosting a symposium on economic reforms and development in Cuba and Vietnam. The conference was attended by Alfonso Casanova, Vice Minister of Economic and Planning, and Rogelio Martinez, Vice Minister of Finance, on the Cuban side and by Nguyen Ngoc Dien, the Vietnamese Ambassador to Argentina, Le Anh Son, Vice President of the Development Strategy Institute in Hanoi, and Thia Dian Tun Director General of the Department of Commerce and Services in the Ministry of Planning and Investment. The high level delegations on both sides attending this meeting may indicate that there is some interest in Cuba to at least study the Vietnamese model of reforms. See *Granma*, March 20, 2006.



ence not long before the revolution, should be in the forefront of political openness and yet it is not. Ideologically, the Chinese seem to have been much more successful articulating their own brand of Marxism and yet they are also ahead in terms of embracing capitalism. In short, logical explanations defy the evidence from this paradoxical comparison as well. In fact, when one considers these cases all together, one thing is for certain: they seem to invite further research on the subject.

In this paper I propose a framework to analyze the extent of liberalizing reforms in post-communist developing societies. I argue that perhaps one of the most significant impediments for reforms in these countries is whether or not the leaders who carried the revolutionary insurgency are still in power. For some, this inverse dichotomy can largely be explained by accounting for the personality and psychological aberrations of political leaders. This explanation, however popular, fails to account the origins and steadfast disdain for reforms by these types of leaders and how their persuasion is sustained over time despite changing domestic and international political interests. By comparing Cuba with China and Vietnam, I find that the longer the core revolutionary elite stays in power, the slower the pace of reforms and the more pronounced the tendencies towards dictatorial authoritarianism. Thereafter, as new generations of leaders who did not participated or experienced the revolutionary insurgency first hand takes control, we will witness more political and economic reforms as is the cases in China today and to a lesser extent in Vietnam, but not in Cuba where Castro's revolutionary cadres still effectively control much of the political power in the island. As I will argue later, this obvious but not so divulged assertion explains this quandary better than other perspectives usually proposed to explain the intransigence of revolutionary elites. As Ortega y Gasset keenly observed close to a century earlier:

A generation lasts about thirty years. But its activity divides into two stages and takes two forms: during approximately one half, the new generation carries out the propaganda of its ideas, preferences, and tastes, which finally arrive at power and are dominant in the second half or its course. But the generation educated under its sway is already bringing forward other ideas, preferences and tastes which it begins to diffuse in the general atmosphere. When the ideas, preferences, and tastes of the ruling generation are extremists, and therefore revolutionary, those of the new generation are anti-extremists and anti-revolutionary....." (Ortega y Gasset, 1957: 93)

Shortly put, a comparative case study of Cuba, China and Vietnam reveals several reasons, besides the natural outcome of generational progression assumed in Ortega's work, why the revolutionary generation does not give

way to reforms easily. First, revolutionary leaders have a tremendous personal stake on the implementation of revolutionary policies. Second, these leaders usually see reality in terms of a furious battle between them and their opponents. Third, any lingering legitimacy after the institutionalization of the revolutionary process is rooted in an inflated nationalistic rhetoric which is anti-reformist in tone and substance. Finally, revolutionary leaders often adopt a messianic operational code concerning their own role in managing the state. All and all, a study of the pace of reforms in Cuba, China and Vietnam supports the axiom that the longer revolutionary leaders are away from holding power positions, the more dramatic opening the country will experience. This fatalistic conclusion has far reaching implications for US foreign policy, the political economy of national development, and for exiles whose ambition is to steer power away from revolutionary adversaries. My conclusion suggests that the option for a prudent policy of support for domestic reforms rather than containment or destabilization represents a political virtue in these cases.

Before I proceed to elaborate the reasoning behind my conclusion, I shall discuss how the term reform is utilized in the paper and then I will proceed to review some prominent positions associated with the literature on policy formulation and dictatorial politics.

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### *Liberalizing Reforms and Change in Single Party Autocratic Regimes*

The fact that autocratic single party regimes like Cuba, Vietnam and China do not embark in liberalizing reforms when revolutionary elites continue to hold the reigns of power does not mean that the character and policy initiatives of these regimes remain unaltered over the years. In fact, if one examines the legislative history of these regimes it is quite copious. In this paper, I refer to these unsustainable and cosmetic legislative swings as policy adjustments.<sup>4</sup> In the case of China, for instance, one has to simply recall the transformation that gave way to the Cultural Revolution and beyond. In Cuba, the government position regarding reforms has been less than consistent often shifting back and forth between short periods of relative openness only to resort back to hard line rectification campaigns shortly after. The government in Hanoi, on the other hand, did not deviate much from Ho Chi Minh's political doctrine, which served as guiding principles for policies during the aftermath of the revolution, until 1986 when Vietnamese leaders spearheaded a

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4. In the original version of this paper, I named unstructured policy changes cosmetic reforms. I thank Jorge Sanguinety for pointing out to me the advantages for using the term adjustment.

major economic program aimed at decentralizing the economy and gradually instituting market reforms.

It is usually the case that revolutionary leaders shift policies and the appointments of apparatchiks in an effort to portray a public image of reform-minded changes and keep the state bureaucracy in line. At the end, these government adjustments have the intended effect of reasserting political allegiance to the authority of the autocratic dictator rather than creating opportunities for change. This is the case because revolutionary leaders often change course unilaterally after consulting with their closest confidants who usually shared the experience of fighting the insurgency together. Moreover, personal and governmental changes are usually taken in the name of lofty revolutionary ideals which are always executed according to the discretion of the revolutionary leader. This environment of intimidation and political cynicism is not conducive to bold liberalizing reforms. On the contrary, it serves to support the steadfast conviction of the regime to follow a narrow authoritarian policy course of action.

In this paper, the terms liberalizing reforms and revolutionary leaders are used to depict two key features of the political development of revolutionary regimes. Liberalizing reforms, like the Vietnamese *doi moi* or renovation, refer to a comprehensive program or set of sustainable policy initiatives that are designed to modify the Communist roots of these three regimes. Reforms often take place in any realm of public policy and administration but the argument of this paper singles out the political and economic spheres since they are the more controversial and contentious. Revolutionary leaders, on the other hand, are the generation of cadres who shared the experience of fighting an insurgency together and later clique to steer the institutionalization of the revolutionary process. This political circle also experiences other similar generational events and quite often socializes over a period of time to the point that they form a closed web of personal contacts. Although some in this group may be more hard line than others, they all defend publicly the role and policies of the revolutionary leader and never air discords or cleavages which would undermine the ideals for which they fought. In the words of social network perspective, revolutionary leaders and this group form a tightly bounded knit of dense solidarity. (Dixon, et al, 2004)

No where is the intransigence of revolutionary leaders more evident than in today's Iran. Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a member of one of the revolutionary student groups who helped depose the Shah in 1979, is currently spearheading a domestic campaign of repression against dissidents while re-aligning himself ideologically with the most conservative factions of the Islamic Republic. Abroad, Mr. Ahmadinejad has followed a more confrontational foreign policy than any of his predecessors, insisting on Iran's

right to enrich uranium at home. (*International Herald Review*, 2006a) Iran is also building an internationalist foreign policy much like previous revolutionary regimes before it. For instance, in a recent report in the *International Herald Review*, Tehran was said to be collaborating with the Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah to fill the power vacuum in Lebanon after the Syrian withdrawal. (*International Herald Review*, 2006b)

Among social scientists, the controversy surrounding the prospects for reform in post-revolutionary regimes has not subsided since the outbreak of the Chinese revolution. One popular argument, especially among exiles from Communist regimes, is the proposition that revolutionary leaders betrayed moderate supporters by radicalizing the revolutionary process after they firmly control the reigns of power. This behaviorist position insinuates that many who support armed insurgencies in developing nations do so because they believe the lofty goals and proclamations articulated by revolutionary leaders with regards to nationalism and development. Over time, proponents of this position argue, revolutionary leaders hide their true radical sentiments to secure wide broad backing and accumulate gains in their stock of political capital. Once in power, these leaders simply uncover policies they privately held all along. Hence, the tendency or disinclination from the part of revolutionary leaders towards substantial policy reforms once in power is a reflection of a hidden ideology and interests, the argument goes.

One of the major shortcomings of this interpretation is that it overemphasizes subjective intentions that are very difficult to support with verifiable evidence. There are certainly plentiful reasons for the revolutionary leaders not to present their more benign side publicly when they are trying to gather widespread support for their cause. Yet, who is to say there are not other possible reasons for these leaders radicalization besides a calculated strategy of deception? For instance, it is certainly possible that often during the insurgency process revolutionary leaders themselves become radicalized as they confront indiscriminate state repression and they count among the fatalities close collaborators and friends. When revolutionary leaders forgo opportunities for reforms, the argument goes, it is because these leaders are responding to deep-seated crises or unexpected conditions. As is often the case, after assuming power revolutionary leaders get to realize the extent of the social deterioration and economic mismanagement that reigns in their country. More importantly, by underlying unsupported arguments about intensions, proponents of the betrayal position often underemphasize how structural opportunities shape state policy and actions.

On the other end of the spectrum, structuralists often assert that the orthodoxy of revolutionary leaders is rooted in the imminent threat they perceive from international state and non-state actors. As this reasoning goes, former

allies of the incumbent regime often mobilize neighboring countries and transnational advocacy groups to escalate any discords into potential adversarial crises in an attempt to destabilize or curtail revolutionary legislative initiatives and policies. When this occurs, revolutionaries adopt a more autocratic position to safeguard their own legitimacy at home and quail the expectations of domestic political supporters. This response promotes further international provocations which then spiral downward ultimately ending in confrontation. Following the structuralist reasoning, orthodoxy is a natural response to menacing foreign policies designed to corner revolutionary leaders.

Almost anything said regarding the behavioralist argument can be said to contradict the structuralists' position. If the former was too voluntaristic, the latter is too deterministic. Structuralists undermine any assertion that attempts to demonstrate the inter-subjective capacity of decision-makers to resolve differences and find common interests. In addition, they put too much weight on the actions of disenfranchised groups and their ability to mobilize international public opinion against revolutionary leaders. Finally, it seems that the possibility of any discord between revolutionaries and their external adversaries is conditioned by the structural configuration of the world politics—an argument many structuralists underestimate. As many international relations scholars have pointed out, during periods of tensions in a bipolar world, radical changes caused more of a stir among allies and former allies than under any other structural conditions. (Waltz, 2000) Hence to make the general assertion that revolutionary leaders are “pushed” by others besides themselves to adopt authoritarian convictions could be a mistake unless one takes into account the effects of the specific structural configurations in the international environment.

Even international structural conditions alone should be considered with caution in any attempt to explain the domestic policy swings. In many cases, the structuralist argument forecasts overly optimistic predictions about the level of commitment and durability of new policy predicaments. In fact, as the case of Vietnam and China clearly indicate, the end of the Cold War was not perceived by the leader of either nation as an immediate opportunity for reforms. Political cultural arguments, on the other hand, fail to capture the dynamic density that determines the pace of liberalizing reforms in the three nations I compared in this paper.

Social scientists have been more persuasive when they interpret the regime hard line or propensity to reform by reverting to the nexus between internal regime dynamics and structural conditions. For example, in a meticulous study of how intellectuals depict Chinese and Vietnamese reforms, Alexander Woodside illustrates how despite sharing a mandarin vision, intel-

lectuals in these two nations remarkably do not study each other's reforms giving path to different pace of development. (Woodside, 1998) In the case of Cuba, reference to Fidel and his inner circle's inclination for gamesmanship has also been noted as another consideration why this group turned to Marxism-Leninism to legitimize their control over the state and the direction of the revolutionary process. Proponents in the middle range position often site such factors as the style and substance of political leadership, the size of the market, the recurrent deepening economic crises, the structure of the state, or the clouds periling over social ills in developing nations to explain the hard line often subscribed to by revolutionary leaders.

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### *Policy Reforms and Adjustments in Cuba, China and Vietnam*

In this section, I discuss some key development indicators to document the extent of reforms in Cuba, China and Vietnam with emphasis on the first. My purpose is to illustrate the recent political and economic reform unfolding in these three countries and to compare their recent development performance. This discussion is relevant because as I argue at the conclusion of the section, development performance indicators help us explain, at least partially, how a country like Cuba which has only undertaken tentative policy adjustments at best has been able to endure without submerging to the recent wave of market and political liberalization.

TABLE 10-1. The Extent of Political Reforms

Issues	Cuba	China	Vietnam
Economic Policies*	Rolled back limited reforms from the 1990s	More market reforms with private ownership	Reforms since 1968. Liberalization and export led since 2001
Annual Growth Rate 1990-2003**	3.5%	8.5%	5.9%
2006 Index of Economic Freedom***	4.10 (150)	3.89 (142)	3.34 (111)
2006 Political Freedom Ranking****	7%	6.5%	6.5%
Elections*	President elected by unanimous vote. No rotation of top leaders.	CPV control. No opposing representation	Top leaders elected with some opposition and abstention

TABLE 10-1. The Extent of Political Reforms

Issues	Cuba	China	Vietnam
Political Participation*	Control by PCC. No opposing representation	CCP in control with 8 small parties registered	CPV control. No opposing representation

\*Indicators for Economic Policies, Political Elections and Political Participation derived from *The World Fact Book*, 2006 Edition.

\*\*Annual Growth Rate from the 2005 *Human Development Report*

\*\*\*Index of Economic Freedom was compiled by The Heritage Foundation. (4-5=repressed economy)

\*\*\*\*The Political Freedom Ranking is a composite score of Political Rights and Civil Liberties (1=Most Free and 7=Least Free). 2006 *Freedom in the World*, published by Freedom House.

The data in table 1 supports the assertion I put forth earlier in the paper stating that revolutionary single party states tend to embark on political and economic reforms when considerable time has passed after the demise of the revolutionary leadership. China and Vietnam are far along the path of liberalization than Cuba and these two nations are also the ones where the revolutionary leadership is more removed from the reigns of power. Later in the paper I will offer some tentative conclusions to back this apparent anomaly. For now, I will limit my discussion to comparing the extent of reforms in these nations.

The table also shows that China and Vietnam continue to incrementally affirm their own interpretations of a socialist oriented market political economy. As China became the world's third largest trading nation in 2005, the country completed another leadership transition, trimmed its average tariff rates by half, and changed its FDI (foreign direct investment) regime to open the retail and distribution sector to foreign-owned companies while other direct investments are still subjected to state control. The Chinese government recently loosened restrictions to permit foreign insurers and banks to operate throughout the country.

Vietnam followed the Chinese path but with more modest economic decentralization reforms. Since 2001, Vietnamese leaders also lowered trading barriers by roughly 4 percent and simultaneously signed bilateral trading pacts with the United States, China, Australia, Japan and South Korea. In the area of FDI, the country is well behind China with multiple restrictions and state controls still in effect as is the case in the area of employment. In the last Party Congress that ended in April, the party proposed an export-led development strategy as the centerpiece to promote growth. In April, the International Herald Tribune quoted Adam Sitikoff, the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce, saying that Vietnam is seeking to move into a second wave of investment by exporting a higher level of manufactured goods, including electronics, rather than to remain "the world's best

maker of socks and towels.” (Mydans, 2006) In the same article, Jonathan Pinkus, the country representative for the UN Development Program said “you’ll find tremendous enthusiasm among the foreign community for Vietnam as the next rising star.” (Mydans, 2006)

By all accounts, Cuba, on the other hand, seems to be moving in the opposite direction. While the first two nominally Communist nations experiment with their own brand of market socialism, Havana is centralizing and regulating its economy, in effect rolling back the meager adjustments it implemented to generate employment during the *Periodo Especial* in the 1990s. This trend was recently authenticated by Carmelo Mesa-Lago in his latest annual overview of the Cuban economy where he concluded that “Castro launched a process of recentralization of decision making in 2004-2005 that has reversed most advances made by the modest market oriented reforms implemented in 1993-1996.” (Mesa Lago, 2005: 13) Some of the noteworthy policy measures Mesa Lago identifies as being more centralized since 2005 involve: (1) banning state enterprise from conducting transactions and from providing some services in hard currency; (2) tighter controls on currency deposits and transactions by foreign owned businesses and joint ventures; (3) imposing tight controls on all tourist personnel; (4) a value added tax on currency imports; (5) a ban on the dollar transaction and new exchange fees on currency conversions; and, (6) halting permits for about 40 self-employment activities. (Mesa Lago, 2005: 13)

Politically, Cuba also lags behind its counterparts. Perhaps one of the most significant electoral changes in recent years was the decision by the Fourth Party Congress to pick municipal delegates through direct elections by their constituents. However, electoral campaigns and debates are still banned. There were also some changes in the statutes of the Party (PCC) to make it more inclusive nationwide. Yet, the legislative bodies continue to lack real power and there is still no direct election or rotation among top leaders.<sup>5</sup> In the area of individual liberties, Cuba continues to systematically repress any voices of dissent as was most recently demonstrated with the incarceration and sentencing to long prison terms of 75 prominent opposition leaders and activists.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the island does not afford any public space to any organized political opposition. When the Varela Project presented the government a plebiscite, with the required number of signatures, demanding a referendum as is guaranteed constitutionally, officials simply responded

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5. For a recent overview of electoral politics in Cuba, see William M. LeoGrande, *The Cuban Communist Party and Electoral Politics: Adaptation, Succession, and Transition*, Cuba Transition Project, Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, University of Miami, 2002.

6. In May 2006, four youngsters were arrested and, later intimidated, by security forces simply because they were thought to be responsible for displaying an anti-governmental sign in a public park in the city of Bayamo. Cubannet, on line, May 15, 2006.



with a plebiscite of their own in support of the regime. The difference with regards to freedom of expression between Cuba, China, and Vietnam may be one of degrees but nonetheless it is important because this fluctuation add more evidence to support the assertion that countries still ruled by revolutionary leaders are less willing to entertain any notion of reforms.<sup>7</sup>

This quick overview of some recent political and economic developments in these nations provide evidence to support my contention that in China and Vietnam, despite disputable policy depth, reforms are further along than in Cuba. This is not to say that the former are free or an ideal state to emulate. In fact, both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch continue to list China and Vietnam among the world most repressive regimes—Cuba also appears prominently in the list.<sup>8</sup> The point is that the distance between newly elected leaders and the revolutionary leadership in the two Asian nations seems to give way to more a comprehensive process of reforms, however meager, than in Cuba. And this trend is very likely to continue that at least into the near future since the revolutionary leadership in the Havana is not likely to reverse the ongoing recentralization process given the regional support they now enjoy from newly elected left-of-center governments in Latin American, especially in the case of Venezuela which is willing to subsidize the Cuban economy with very favorable energy trade arrangements.

When one compares the data from tables 1 and 2, a logical question is how does Cuba fair so much better in terms of social safety net indicators than both China and Vietnam? Considering this question is relevant to this paper I will argue that the answer lies in the fact that Cuba defends its social gains publicly to legitimize its lack of desire for structural reforms. The Cuban regime often frames these health and educational gains in terms of unparalleled achievements of the revolution, as achievements no other nation can emulate, or as benefits the Cuban people could easily lose if the course of the revolution is derailed, overturned, or halted. For example, in a May 11, 2006, front-page article on the online version of the *Gramma International*,

7. In another evidence of the degree of freedom between these countries, the *New York Times* reported about China's order to remove some avant-garde paintings from galleries during the Dashanzi International Art Festival, but stated that collectors and gallery owners expressed surprise about the government actions and said they did not expect a broader crackdown. See, "China Orders Galleries to Remove Art," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2006, B16.

8. In the case of Cuba, the 2006 Human Rights Watch country report summarizes the current state for freedom in the island in the following terms: "Cuba remains a Latin American anomaly: an undemocratic government that represses nearly all forms of political dissent. President Fidel Castro, now in his forty-seventh year in power, shows no willingness to consider even minor reforms. Instead, his government continues to enforce political conformity using criminal prosecutions, long- and short-term detentions, mob harassment, police warnings, surveillance, house arrests, travel restrictions, and politically-motivated dismissals from employment. The end result is that Cubans are systematically denied basic rights to free expression, association, assembly, privacy, movement, and due process of law." Human Rights Watch, online edition, 2004.

the official organ of the Party announced that Cuba has the largest number of children receiving electronic hearing implants in the world and reminds its readers that this is an unprecedented revolutionary achievement. (*Granma International*, 2006) The same newspaper, in its April 7 edition, flatly declared that before the revolution “poliomyelitis was the cause of quite a few deaths, and paralyzed an average of 300 children per year. Cuba was the first country in the Americas to eradicate polio in 1962.” (*Granma Interna-*

TABLE 10-2. Basic Human Development Indicators

Issues	Cuba	China	Vietnam
HDI Ranking	52	85	108
Life Expectancy	77.3	71.6	70.5
Literacy Rate	96.9	90.9	90.3
Education Index	0.87	0.78	0.82
GDP Index	0.67	0.65	0.54
GDP Per Capita (2005 est.)	US\$3,300	US\$6,300	US\$3,000

Note: All indicators are from 2003 as reported by the UN *Human Development Report* with the exception of GDP per capita which comes from the *World Fact Book*

*tional*, 2006)

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### *Authoritarian Intransigence. Why?*

Thus far, I have argued that the social distance between the new generation of leaders and the experience of the revolutionary insurgency seems to explain, at least partially, the predisposition for reform among leaders in China and Vietnam as opposed to Cuba. In this final section of the paper, I present some plausible reasons in support of this assertion. I shall discuss five such reasons.

First, evidence gathered from quite a few case-studies reveals a striking conclusion. Revolutionary leaders can not resist the impulse to publicly carve a personal affinity between their role as leaders and the revolutionary process. The social origins of these aberrations are very complex. On the one hand, the mysticism surrounding the identity of these leaders as saviors who rescued the nation from the excesses of previous regimes is often a necessary condition to rally support to consolidate the revolutionary process. Revolutions are highly contested political processes and it is often the case that the charismatic authority of revolutionary leaders serves as a rallying point to mobilize popular support for radical measures.

Since many of these leaders have a lot of personal capital invested in the revolutionary process and since tensions between political factions in the rev-

olutionary coalition are likely to erupt over time, revolutionary leaders develop a sense of indispensability and personal affinity with the goals of the revolutionary process which leads them to believe that they are the personal reincarnation of the nation and the polity. This personal stake is reinforced by subordinates who are either expected to demonstrate alliance or are coerced to adulate the personality of these leaders. In these autocratic situations, more often than not, it is the case that attempts to implement reforms by any other than the leader's inner circle or the leaders themselves is perceived as a threat to the leader. The revolution, the nation, and the leader become in the eyes of the beholder one and the same. The omnipotent view of authority is not new, in fact it has been well thought through by observers of several European upheavals since the French Revolution. Bonald's theory of authority, for instance, draws attention to how socializing effects on political authority led leaders to exclude intermediate association after the French Revolution. (Nisbet, 1978)

Second, one of the most frequent communication tactics crafted by revolutionary leaders to mobilize and control is to frame policy along confrontational views—"us against them." This perspective has multiple functions to consolidate autocratic authority. It reduces the complex reality of political alternatives to an unambiguous choice between supporters and detractors, hence imposing limited political options on the population and cutting down alternative oppositional discourses. In addition, since the common enemy is usually depicted as an outsider, the implicit connotation is that only the actions of the revolution are legitimate. (Becker, 1963) Furthermore, revolutionary leaders veil their confrontational view in nationalistic rhetoric and tactics. The language supporting political activities, including policy discourses, is full of militaristic overtones and insinuations in revolutionary regimes. This strategy of articulation has the effect of reminding citizens of a state of belligerence where the revolution is almost always victimized. In addition, it attempts to forge an organic collective identity where citizens and leaders are united for the public good and against a common enemy. Various illustrations of this rhetorical strategy can be seen in Ho Chi Min's declaration of Vietnam's right to independence in 1945, in many of Castro's revolutionary proclamations, or in Mao's Great Leap Forward, among others. Authority is an essential capital to execute political discretion in the policy realm. As Carl J. Friedrich argued persuasively some time ago, "discretion without authority will appear arbitrary and generate resistance; this is likely to be destructive of organizations and create chaos..." (Friedrich, 1972: 74)

Notwithstanding the effects of political rhetoric, another basis for the autocracy of revolutionary leaders is the idiosyncrasies of their own operational code. Social psychologists point that the code comprises the vision,

values and norms that sustain political action. (George, 1969) In the case of revolutionary leaders like Mao and Castro, they view the modernization of the nation as a constant struggle to perfect socialism. They assume that the revolution can manage to modernize society and has the capacity to perform this function more just and effectively than any other capitalist development path. For this reason, Castro justifies his recurrent “rectification campaigns” in the name of combating corruption and other ills he perceives embedded in liberal reforms and follows a Rousseauian reasoning favoring the purity of the revolution against the threat of extraneous forces. Mao also justified his cultural revolution in much the same terms. The findings from a very original research conducted by Erin Ennis empirically supports Ortega y Gasset’s assertion that the operational code of authoritarian leaders moderates as the social distance between the cliques of revolutionaries and new generations of authoritarian leaders who succeed them widen (Ennis, 2002); hence, the tendency to attempt to foster modernity with liberal market reforms by current Chinese and Vietnamese leaders but less so by Cubans.

Finally, the process of institutionalization of revolutionary regimes in developing societies tends to devise powerless political institutions which mainly present a facade of pluralistic democracy. Meaningless institutional arrangements leave autocratic leaders unchallenged. These leaders arbitrarily retain control over high level political appointments and have a tendency to conceal real political power among trusted old cadres resulting in masking real political leverage in the informal networks of friendship and comrades they cultivate and far away from the public figures they appoint. Since these associates have no real incentives for change, they often discourage or block any attempts to implement sustainable reforms that depart from their own intrinsic interests. (Diamond, et al., 1999)<sup>9</sup>

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## *Conclusions*

If the findings derived from my observations of Cuban, Chinese, and Vietnamese post-revolutionary developments are correct, it seems that the best hope for political and market reforms after revolutions among developing nations comes after a leadership change precipitates the demise of the revolutionary leadership. When a new generation of leaders who did not experience the tragic contention leading to revolutions comes onto the political scene, new opportunities for reforms arise. This is the case, because an anti-extremist generation has less vested in the personal experiences and social meanings associated with any struggle for change. With social distance

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9. As Diamond, Hartlyn and Linz assert: “the style of political leaders is quite crucial. A flexible, accommodative, consensual leadership style is more successful in developing and maintaining democracy than a militant, uncompromising, confrontational one.”

comes a more rational consideration for political and economic choices and alternatives.

This conclusion has profound implications for the policy-making community. Policy-makers might want to consider inducing reforms from revolutionary leaders through complex negotiations even if these relations yield minor but significant outcomes over time. These negotiations may not work right away but at least they would have the effect of building confidence and engaging reluctant, highly ideological leaders in some form of reciprocity. Frank negotiations also have a positive demonstration effects for up-and-coming leaders—witness the effects of Nixon’s visit to China. Pressures, containment and embargos do not seem to have worked with revolutionary leaders in Hanoi, Beijing, or Havana. On the contrary, they dared revolutionaries to continue to hide their own intransigence behind confrontational perception of reality. In the final analysis, the most effective strategy in these situations seems to be serenity and fortitude.

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## *Globalization in Havana and Moscow*

*Mervyn J. Bain*

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 did not just end the bipolar nature of global politics but also heralded the appearance of a New World Order. The globalisation process was an important part of this New World Order and would have massive repercussions for politics and transnational economics. Moreover, it would also be highly significant in the relationship between Havana and Moscow.

In the 1990s Russia struggled to adapt to this situation, exacerbated by its move to a free market economy, which had a profound effect on its citizens, reflected in Russia's falling Gross Domestic Product (GDP). (Tikhomirov, 2000: 209) The implosion of the Soviet Union had also simultaneously ended Soviet-Cuban relations, resulting in the island's economy going into freefall with the loss of its most important economic partner. In an attempt to offset this colossal setback the Cuban economy also underwent dramatic change throughout the 1990s. However, from the mid-1990s the relationship between Havana and Moscow slowly began to improve.

This article will focus on this relationship between Havana and Moscow in the period since 1992. Firstly, the deterioration and subsequent improvement in the relationship in the 1990s will be examined and in relation to this the significance of the globalisation process will be analysed. The final consideration of this paper will be to consider the question of whether, due to their close economic ties for over 30 years, could Cuba follow a similar economic transition to that of the Russian Federation, once reforms commence on the island?

### **Havana and Moscow in the 1990s**

Cuban-Soviet relations may not have always been completely harmonious but they lasted for over 30 years and it was only with the disintegration of the Soviet Union that they were terminated. This had massive ramifications, both political and economic, for the Caribbean island, and it was bilateral trade that quickly illustrated the downturn in relations, as in 1992 trade fell by over 90 percent compared to that of the Soviet era. (Trade Yearbook, 173; Mesa-Lago, 1993: 140-143). In addition, in 1992 both the joint collaboration project to build a nuclear power station at Juragua was mothballed, and for the first time ever, Russia voted against Cuba at the United Nations (UN) Conventions on Human Rights held in Geneva. Moscow repeated this in both 1993 and 1994. (Granma, 1992: 3-6; Izvestia, 1992: 7; Izvestia, 1993)

The relationship may have deteriorated but it never completely disintegrated. A number of Russians remained on the island through marriage but of even more importance was Moscow's decision to keep the listening post at Lourdes open, as it was "...necessary in order to maintain stable communications with our embassies in Latin America." (Izvestia, 1992: 5)

However, from the mid-1990s the relationship began to improve illustrated by both Moscow again voting with Cuba at the UN Human Rights Convention, and by the return of visits by the two countries elites, which, since 1992, had been conspicuous by their absence. The first took place in June 1996 when the Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov travelled to Cuba and during this, Castro commented, "Recently, relations have been improving little by little. There have been good moments, there have been critical moments and now there's an upswing." (Granma International, 1996: 3)

A number of different reasons underpinned this improvement but a return to Marxist-Leninism was not one of them. Instead economic links have been a driving force; Cuban sugar was important but so also are the island's nickel and biotechnological industries. Cuba has also benefited not only from Russian investment, but also its position as a source of much needed spare parts for Soviet era machinery. Globalization has also been very significant and will be analysed in a later section. Moreover, a change in Russian foreign policy further aided this improvement, as since the mid-1990s, Moscow has attempted to reassert its influence in international relations. (Bain, 2006: 221-223)

The legacy from the Soviet era of the Cuban debt was also very important for the improvement in the relationship and in 2005 Russia announced that it had deferred its payment. (Bain, 2006: 222) This is a first for Moscow, but significantly the debt was not simply cancelled. This illustrates that Moscow



does not just continue to hope that the debt will be paid, but also the importance both of it and that of the Cuban-Russian relationship itself.

The new foundations of Cuban-Russian relations were questioned in the year 2000 with Vladimir Putin's ascension to the presidency of Russia. Due to his KGB past and his December 2000 trip to Havana, made in the infancy of his presidency, it was thought that Marxist-Leninism might have again been increasing in importance. The agreements signed while he was in Havana disproved this and showed that it was the Cuban economy and not ideology that most interested Putin. In the years since, economic links have continued to expand and diversify with trade exchanges in 2004 being 23 percent higher than in 2003, and in 2005 the Cuban purchase of a Russian made IL-96-300 airliner, which was partly funded by loans from Russian banks. (bbc.co.uk, 2006)

In the period from 1992 to 1995 relations between Havana and Moscow deteriorated but they never completely disintegrated. However, from the mid-1990s they have improved and, significantly, this was based on practical economic reasons and not a return to Marxist-Leninism.

### **Globalisation and its Effects**

The end of the Soviet Union and Soviet-Cuban relations coincided with the increase in the globalization process, which was partly due to a lack of an alternative to the international capitalist system with the disappearance of the socialist economic model. Globalization has, in the last decade, attracted a massive amount of scholarly attention, which has not just focused on the process in general, but debates have appeared over a definitive definition of it and whether it is even a new process or not. (Robertson, 2003; Gilpin, 2001; Castells, 2000; Gwayne & Kay, 1999) In relation to this, investment in Latin America, in general, and Cuba before 1959, from outside the region was not new but in the 1990s it was on a truly global scale and not predominantly from the United States, as had previously been the case.

Globalization has, however, impacted on many parts of society including politics, increased the power of multinational companies and transnational enterprise and has led some to even question its effects on states' sovereignty. Although this is the case, the effects of globalisation on countries, even within the same region, has not been universal. However, this article will focus on the pre-eminence of international capitalism, illustrated by the growth of transnational investment, which has resulted in an increase in interdependence between various world economies. This would be vital for not just the Cuban Revolution but also Cuban-Russian relations.

This may seem a peculiar statement, due to the continued restricted nature of Cuban society and importance of the central government in both people's everyday lives and the national economy. However, the loss of the island's economic lifeline since 1992 has caused this situation to begin to change. In the late 1980s in an attempt to offset the adverse repercussions of the Soviet reform processes Havana attempted to encourage tourism to the island and in May 1990 this came to fruition when Castro was present at the opening of a new hotel on Varadero Beach, which had been financed by foreign money. (Granma International, 1990: 3) After 1992 various legislation was passed to encourage even more foreign investment. This included both the right to be self-employed and to possess U.S. dollars, the right for joint ventures with foreign capital to be created in both oil and mineral exploration and production, and in September 1995 a new foreign investment law was passed which not only allowed foreign companies to move their entire profits abroad, but also very significantly allowed 100-percent foreign ownership of investments in Cuba. With nationalism having such a prominent place in the Cuban revolution, this law was truly historic. In 1997 free trade zones were created in a further attempt to improve the island's dire economic situation. (Ley de Inversion Extranjera; Perez-Lopez, 1997)

As these changes coincided with the acceleration of the globalisation process the likelihood of more foreign investment increased. The results have been dramatic, the socialist-trading bloc's position within the Cuban economy has been usurped, as Cuba now trades on a truly global scale with companies from over 100 countries. In 1993 Venezuela, in no small part to its oil reserves, supplied Cuba with 20 percent of its imports. Western European countries, but particularly Spain, and also Canada had conducted trade with Cuba throughout the revolutionary period but in the 1990s their importance increased. In 1995 Canada was the Caribbean island's main export partner and Spain held the same position with regards to Cuba's imports with each holding 15 percent of their respective markets. (CIA Yearbook)

By 1995, 212 joint ventures had come to fruition with over nine different countries from around the world, and in the period from 1998 to 2001 a further 190 joint enterprises, in conjunction with 28 countries, were created. In comparison, in 1991 the number of joint enterprises was 11, excluding socialist bloc countries. The island's nickel industry and telecommunications links have attracted investment from Canadian and Mexican companies respectively, while European companies have concentrated primarily on the tourist, tobacco and alcohol industries. Some of the most high profile deals are: in 1992 the French Company Pernod Ricard bought an interest in and global distribution rights for Havana Club rum. In the same manner, in the year 2000 the French-Spanish company Altadis bought 50 percent of Habanos, the

international distributor of Cuban cigars. (Ospina, 2002: 77; Amberg, 2000; Perez-Lopez, 1997: 33-34)

The success of this policy can be seen as the Cuban economy has recovered from its nadir in 1993 when total trade crashed to just US\$3.2 billion. Its problems have not, however, completely disappeared and trade has not returned to levels enjoyed in the Soviet era, but it has grown to US\$5.6 billion in 1996 and US\$7.3 billion in 2004. (CIA Yearbook) This is despite, in 1996, the United States government passing the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, or Helms-Burton Act, that attempted to prevent companies from third party countries trading with Cuba. Moreover, this economic upturn has been achieved without access to money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank.

The United States embargo has conversely made Cuba a more appealing investment opportunity for non-U.S. companies. While the embargo remains in place these companies do not have to face competition from U.S. companies, and have been able to gain a foothold in the Cuban economy. The importance of this will be seen when the embargo ends as an influx of U.S. dollars is expected to take place, with both U.S. citizens travelling to the island and U.S. companies investing in it. This has been borne out by a recent survey conducted in Florida, which stated that 65 percent of the 417 executives polled would be "likely to do business in a post-Castro Cuba." (www.herald.com, 2005)

As stated, Russia has lost its pre-eminent position in the Cuban economy but the realisation quickly formed in Moscow that it was missing out on the investment potential that the Cuban economy offered. Moreover, due to links from the Soviet era it would also be easier for Russian companies to cultivate links with Cuban companies. In the period from 1995 to 1997, 260 joint projects were opened with Cuban and foreign money but only two of these were with Russia money. (Nezavisimaya gazeta, 1997: 2) Simply, Russia wanted a "piece of the action." In addition, the colossal investment from the Soviet era was also simply being wasted. The Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, in September 1999, and Putin, in December 2000, both commented on this. Ivanov said, "It's evident that our taking into account the wealth accumulated in the many years of relations between both nations, it's logical that the ties between Cuba and Russia continue to develop." (Newman, 1999) Putin commented, "We lost a lot of positions which were a top priority for both countries, and our Russian companies in Cuba have been replaced by Western competitors." (Newamn, 1999) In May 2005 Russian interest in the Cuban economy was shown when 132 Russian companies from the Moscow area attended a Cuban trade fair held in the Russian capitol. (Prensa Latina)

Unsurprisingly, Cuba's burgeoning tourist industry has attracted attention from Russia. In 1996 the "Latina" travel agency opened in Moscow that specialised in travel to Latin America and the Russian travel agencies Atlantic Travel Agency, Druzhina and Atlas have all opened offices in Havana. The upshot was that in 1999 12,000 Russians travelled to Cuba for vacations. This constitutes a very small percentage of Cuba's near 1 million European visitors per year but travel to Cuba from Russia was aided not just by the appearance of more wealthy Russians, but also in August 1999 the airline companies KLM and Air France began flying routes from Russia to Havana with stopovers in Amsterdam and Paris respectively. Moreover, in December 1999 Aeroflot and Cubana began their own joint service between Russia and Cuba. (ctp.iccas.miami.edu, 2005; Caribbean Update, 1999)

Russian interest has not just been in Cuba's tourist industry, as Putin's December 2000 trip illustrated. During it a number of agreements were signed. The Norilsk Nickel Company agreed to invest US\$300m in the nickel-ore processing plant at Las Camariocas in Holguin province and a joint agreement to build diesel equipment for the Cuban sugar industry was also signed. The importance of nickel to the 'new' relationship has increased further as the significance of sugar has fallen and was illustrated in an interview in March 2005 with the Cuban ambassador to Russia, Jorge Marti Martinez. In this he said, "Cuba comes second in the world in nickel reserves and fifth among nickel exporter...the world is showing a great interest in this branch of the Cuban economy and we are keen on cooperation with Russia." (ITAR-TASS, 2005) In addition to this, Cuba's much vaunted biotechnological industry was also part of an exchange deal for 2001 to 2005 signed during Putin's trip. Cuban sugar, rum, medicines and medical equipment were to be exchanged for Russian oil, machinery and chemicals. (www.cnn.com, 2000)

As outlined, the Helms-Burton Act has not affected foreign investment in Cuba, and Russia is no different. Not only did Russia vote against its implementation in the UN but it also indicated that it was simply going to ignore it, as a Russian Foreign Ministry Declaration illustrated. It stated, "We confirm our intention to develop and broaden beneficial co-operation with Cuba as well as sectors of mutual interest, particularly in the commercial and economic sphere." (Granma International, 1996: 13) Trade between the two countries also showed this, as levels of trade have remained at a higher level than in the early 1990s, and although at a much reduced level than during the Soviet era, Russia remains one of Cuba's most important trading partners. (CIA Yearbook)

The foundations of Soviet-Cuban relations may have been socialist principles but Cuban-Russian relations post-1991 have conversely been aided by neoliberal economic policies. As the Cuban economy was reformed and the

effects of globalization were felt the realisation formed in Moscow that companies from other countries had usurped its pre-eminent position. A desire to address this was vital in the improvement in relations between Cuba and Russia. It may not have returned to levels enjoyed in the Soviet era but economic links between the two countries have improved.

### **1990s Russia: the blueprint for Cuba?**

As transition processes have taken place in various countries a number of comparisons and suggestions have been made as to which route a post-Castro Cuba is likely to follow, or resemble the closest. The countries suggested have included Romania, China and Spain after Franco's death. (Ratliff, 2004; Cruz, 2003; Radu, 2003; Montaner, 2002) It could be concluded that once Cuba enters its own transition process it may be similar to the Russian one due to similarities particularly in their respective economic models during the Soviet era and Cuba, like Russia has a large army, and will also have to undergo the transition process while saddled with a large foreign debt. (Hernandez-Cata, 1993; Hernandez-Cata, 1999) Differences do exist and these include the Caribbean island not having to withstand a "near abroad" demanding independence or possessing a large military industrial complex. Despite these differences this section will examine the question of whether the Russian experience will provide the blueprint for Cuba once Fidel Castro has departed the political scene.

In the 1980s a number of reforms and legal changes were implemented in an attempt to kick-start the ailing Soviet economy. (White, 2000: 117-122) However, after 1992 the move towards a market economy accelerated greatly as it was decided the transition was to be carried out as quickly as possible and "shock therapy" was to be applied to the Russian economy. This would not just reform the economy but would simultaneously help cement democracy in Russia, due to the creation of many company owners, with the aim being "millions of owners, not hundreds of millionaires" and, it was hoped, this would prevent a return to communism. (White, 2000: 125) In addition, these reforms would also make the Russian economy an attractive proposition for foreign investment.

The reality of the Russian situation was, however, somewhat different to these hopes. The voucher scheme introduced to aid privatisation was widely abused and inflation quickly ran out of control. In 1995, in an attempt to deal with this, a "loans for shares" project was introduced. This scheme allowed the government to quickly borrow money from private banks in return for shares in large state owned companies. However, when the government was unable to re-pay these loans the companies became the possession of the

banks, or in reality, the bank owners. It was in this way, and the voucher scheme, that oil companies such as Yukos and Sibneft were privatised at a fraction of their real cost. When these newly privatised companies were given their true valuation it resulted in the new owners, people such as Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Roman Abramovich, becoming not just millionaires but billionaires. This heralded the appearance in Russia of both oligarchs and “new Russians.”<sup>1</sup> (White, 2000; 123-129, Satter, 2003: 51; Tikhomirov, 2000: 207, 236)

The Russian economy may have recently been showing signs of recovery but in the mid to late 1990s the situation was very different. Both GDP and the population’s standard of living regularly decreased. Despite the improvement, even today, almost 20 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Moreover, male life expectancy has fallen to just 60 years. This is something that has not gone unnoticed in Havana, with Castro, on various occasions in the 1990s, commenting upon this situation. In addition, at a conference on globalisation held in early 1999 in Havana, Cuban officials repeatedly stated that the transitions undertaken in other countries had been unsuccessful. (World Bank, 2005; Hernandez-Cata, 1999; CIA Yearbook) Foreign investment has been attracted to the Russian economy but not in the hoped for levels. Moreover, much of this has centred in the regions bordering Moscow and St. Petersburg and the foreign investment that has not focused on these areas has instead tended to be in the energy industry and oil in particular. This has occurred at the expense of the industrial sector, when it could have been thought that due to low Russian labour costs it would have been attractive to foreign investment. The results have been the appearance of “a market economy with Russian characteristics:” over reliance on oil, unequal development and massively skewed income distribution. (Ellman, 2000: 1,420; Watson, 1996; 429-455)

The motive for Castro’s comments may be to imply that the same fate would await Cuban citizens if the island’s government collapsed, but this will, however, be important in the transition process in a post-Castro Cuba. Although it is likely that Cuba will also move quickly to a market economy it would appear unlikely that similar mistakes would be made due to the knowledge that the population have of events in the Russian Federation in the early to mid-1990s. This will certainly be the case in relation to state-owned companies, or the parts of companies that remain in the hands of the state, being sold for below their market value. There will undoubtedly be winners and losers in this process but because companies will be sold for their true worth it is unlikely that Cuban versions of “new Russians” or oligarchs will appear.

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1. Oligarchs were interested in achieving political influence whereas “New Russians” were not.

What is also very important is that as a result of economic reforms and the globalisation process in general there is more foreign investment in the Cuban economy than in the Soviet one of the late 1980s. This will be important, as it is not beyond reason to assume that once the opportunity arrives, these foreign companies may increase their shareholdings in their Cuban investments. This will, again, prevent the appearance of Cuban versions of “new Russians” or oligarchs. The result is that due to this foreign investment, it is likely that the Cuban path to the market economy will again be different from the Russian experience.

Cuba may hold a strategic place within the Caribbean, and be the largest island in the region, but it does not possess the enormous natural resources that the Russian Federation does. This is simply the result of Cuba being many times smaller than Russia. The island does however, have nickel reserves, and this has attracted foreign investment, but its other main exports today remain primary goods. This lack of natural resources means that a similar ‘sale,’ to that in Russia, of state owned companies with massive resources of natural wealth cannot take place, as they simply do not exist. This is not to say that Cuba’s nickel resources will not be much sought after but again the outcome will be very different from the Russian one.

The condition of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), although no longer the force they were during the Cold War, is much better than the Soviet army of the early 1990s. Discipline and moral are still higher in the FAR, partly as it has never had to regroup from the moral sapping effects of an Afghan-style war. In addition, it has played an important part in the economic reforms of the 1990s. (Hernandez-Cata, 1994) Therefore once the transition begins in Cuba it is very likely that the FAR will act to safeguard their relatively privileged position within Cuban society and this will provide some form of stability in a post-Castro Cuba and avoid many of the pitfalls that befell the Russian Federation.

The influence, power and wealth of the Cuban exile community in the United States will also prove to be of vital importance. It has been estimated that their net worth is between US\$40-US\$50 billion. Moreover, they have not only acquired great economic wherewithal but also technical expertise, with both being significant in a post-Castro Cuba. It is expected that these people will invest in their homeland when the opportunity arises and the United States government certainly believe this to be the case, as the foreword for the report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba in May 2004 written by Colin Powell illustrates. (Powell, 2004; Diaz-Briquets & Perez-Lopez, 2003: 14-17) The existence of an exile community is not exclusive to Cuba but what does make it different is not just its power and wealth but the fact that it is ideally placed, a mere 90 miles from Cuba, to be, at the

very least, able to quickly invest in a post-Castro Cuba. Again this is very different from the Russia experience.

However, the existence and geographical proximity of the exiles will also complicate the transition process. The Cuban government has never paid compensation for expropriated land and property, and once change commences it can be expected that a number of cases will be brought to court where the ownership of property is questioned. This will be on a much larger scale than in Russia, will undoubtedly be complicated but, will again, make the Cuban transition very different from the Russia one. (Garibaldi & Kirby, 2003)

A variety of other reasons will also make the geographical proximity of the United States very important when change begins in Cuba. Not only is it likely that U.S. tourists will travel to Cuba, but the island's proximity to the largest economy in the world will also benefit the transition of the Cuban economy and help the Caribbean island become more quickly and smoothly integrated into the global economy. This is something that none of the other countries that have undergone economic transitions have benefited from. Moreover, it will be in Washington's interests for the Cuban transition process to be different from the Russian one because if it did the result would be the appearance of a large number of economic casualties, many of whom may leave the island in search of an improved economic situation in the United States. This is a scenario that Washington would rather avoid and it can be assumed would intervene to prevent from taking place. In addition, as stated, it can be expected many U.S. companies will once again invest in the island. The afore mentioned 2005 survey of company executives in South Florida interested in investing in a post-Castro Cuba illustrates this. ([www.herald.com](http://www.herald.com), 2005) This influx of money will further reduce the likelihood of both a similar route to a market economy as in Russia being followed, and the need of the new Cuban government to instigate its own "loans for shares" scheme.

Moreover, the Cuban transition when it does take place will differ from the Russian one simply because it will occur at a different time. In 2005 levels of international investment are much higher than even 10 years ago when Russia went through its own changes, with companies being more likely to have an international investment portfolio. This increases the chances of further foreign investment in Cuba. Conversely, the globalisation process has recently attracted an increasing number of critics, not least in the Western Hemisphere, and this may result in the transition process being conducted in a different manner than in Russia, as people no longer see the market as the solution to the continent's woes.



As has been stated many people expected the same fate to await the Castro regime as that which befell the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. However, the Cuban government has adapted to the new situation it found itself in and continues to disprove this theory. As it was able to dumbfound Cuban watchers in the early 1990s, who is to say that it could not do so again in a post-Castro situation? The reforms that the government in Havana have already implemented have reduced the chance that it will follow a similar 'Russian path' to the market economy and more reforms could impact on the transition process again, further reducing this possibility.

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### *Conclusions*

The disintegration of the Soviet Union did not just simultaneously end Soviet-Cuban relations but it also had grave repercussions for the Cuban economy. In the years 1992 to 1994 the relationship between Havana and Moscow deteriorated but it was never completely severed, with Lourdes remaining open being the highest-profile symbol of this. However, from the mid-1990s relations began to improve due to both a change in Russian foreign policy, and crucially, for practical economic reasons. In addition, Cuba's debt was also important, because if relations were severed, the remote chance that Russia may be paid would have completely disappeared.

However, globalization was also crucial. The Cuban economy was reformed to take advantage of this process and to provide much needed foreign investment but Russian companies realised that they were missing out on the investment potential that the island offered, as they witnessed the loss of both their pre-eminent place in it and the massive investment in the Cuban economy from the Soviet era. Simply, Russian companies wanted a 'piece of the action,' made more appealing due to the lack of competition from U.S. companies as a result of the continuing embargo. Marxist-Leninism may have been a cornerstone of Soviet-Cuban relations but, ironically, globalisation was highly important in the 'new' relationship that evolved in the 1990s between Havana and Moscow.

Despite similarities in their economic models, it is unlikely that the Cuban transition will resemble the Russian one. The mistakes made in the Russian transition are unlikely to be repeated in Cuba since the island's population have had the opportunity to learn from the Russian experience. In addition to this, a similar 'sale' of state companies is further reduced as the Caribbean island's economy already has considerable foreign investment in it. Moreover, a Cuban version of "loans for shares" is unlikely, as Cuban state companies simply do not have the massive natural resources that the Russian ones

had. This in conjunction with FAR acting to protect their privileged position will result in the Cuban transition being very different from the Russian one.

The existence, proximity and wealth of the Cuban exile community would also suggest this, as they are highly likely to invest in a post-Castro Cuba. Moreover, Cuba's proximity to the world's largest economy will aid the island's return to the world economy. This is an advantage that no other country undergoing an economic transition has ever had, and certainly not Russia. Cuban exiles will undoubtedly aid Cuba's transition but the question of compensation for expropriated property will mean that it will not be without problems.

In addition, the Cuban transition will not be similar, as it will take place in a different time from the Russian one. Moreover, the Cuban Revolution has dumbfounded many experts in the manner it has adapted to the post 1992 situation and it may well do this again once change begins in Cuba. What is apparent is that it is highly unlikely that Russia will provide the blueprint for the Cuban transition.

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## *Caribbean Influence on Cuban Transition*

*Jorge Luis Romeu*

When Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, Cubans of both sides of the political divide committed a costly political error: they allowed the Cuban internal struggle to become a football in the politics of the Cold War. Castro sided with the Soviet Union, at a time when a nuclear war could destroy everything. The Cuban opposition sided with the United States, who sought to prevent the establishment of a Soviet foothold, 90 miles away from its shores. As a result, we lost the control of our nation's destiny. For, Cubans have never learned the old American political dictum that "politics ends at the water's edge;" nor the Mexican lesson of the French intervention of 1863, brought upon by the conservatives, after loosing their civil war against Juarez' forces, while trying to defeat his secularization reforms.

In 1960, the United States launched its economic embargo, which Castro adroitly used to firmly unite the country around him in the face of a foreign enemy, and to play little David in the foreign relation's arena, both very old strategies in such circumstances. The opposition abroad distanced itself from Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean, because this region supported the Castro government for calculated political, economic, strategic and demagogic reasons. This was yet another mistake that alienated Castro's opposition from its natural milieu. We failed to see the real causes behind the behavior of the Ibero-American countries and, hence, to finesse the situation efficiently.

For, the Spanish Caribbean countries took advantage of the Cuban situation in at least three ways. First, as all produce similar goods (sugar cane, tobacco, fruits, seafood, etc.) they were able obtain the Cuban quotas in the American markets. In addition, they also inherited Cuba's tourism industry and foreign investment. Historically, this is no different from Cuba's economic policy after 1795, when the African slaves revolted in Haiti, destroy-

ing their slave-based economy. Cuba, then under Spanish governor Luis de las Casas and economist Francisco de Arango y Parreno, seized the opportunity to launch its sugar and coffee industries that, until then, had languished while thriving and enriching the neighboring French colony.

Secondly, as the attention of the United States now focused on Castro's Cuba, it eased on the other Spanish Caribbean countries first, by giving them a greater political latitude (and less intervention in their internal affairs); then providing them with badly needed economic aid (e.g. *Alianza para el Progreso*). Their governments thence, had an interest in maintaining an international situation where they gained both, economically as well as politically.

Finally, several of Cuba's sister republics were far from democratic, and could not provide a better life for their citizens. Hence, they found it convenient to nominally support the government in Havana (while internally continuing their support to local oligarchies) as such political posturing was appealing to their poverty-stricken masses, shifting their attention from their own lack of civil liberties, goods and services. Some people refer to such procedures as demagoguery.

Summarizing, there are three main conditions that have helped sustain the present Cuban regime for the past 47 years. They are (1) President Castro's political shrewdness and ability to survive, (2) the Cold War and the US policy toward Cuba, and (3) the national interests and foreign policies of many Ibero-American and European countries, vis-à-vis the current Cuban regime.

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### *A Cuban Transition*

In the past few years, significant changes directly related to the above mentioned three conditions have occurred, opening a window of opportunity that facilitates a real transition to a pluralistic system in Cuba. These changes include the following:

President Castro, close to 80 years now, is nearing the end of his natural life. His brother and official heir has a slim chance of becoming his successor (Cuba, and in particular the Communist Party, is full of very capable leaders who have not had a "chance at bat" in the past 47 years). The deteriorated and explosive socioeconomic and political conditions inside Cuba support the possibility for negotiations between Castro's successors and Cuba's internal and external opposition.

The end of the Cold War occurred more than a decade ago, leaving the US as the only superpower. The disappearance of the danger of a US-Soviet nuclear confrontation creates the possibility of implementing a change in the 45-year-old American policy toward Cuba, without the U.S. losing face or endangering its citizens.

Finally, Ibero-America has improved and changed much, in the last half century, and its interests are now broader. This allows the Cuban opposition to seek their support in effecting a transition in Cuba, as occurred in Spain, Brazil, Chile and Argentina.

This paper proposes that the model for a political transition in Cuba is Ibero-American, and not borrowed from Eastern Europe. Castro remains more a *caudillo* than a pragmatic communist. But for this, the Cuban opposition needs to deal with the real or apparent perception, existing in many Ibero-American countries, that they are part of the US foreign policy toward Cuba.

For Cubans in the island, transition to a pluralistic political and economic system would bring political and economic freedom and more prosperity. For Cubans in the Diaspora, who have been away for too long, a transition would bring closure and the possibility to return home to die, or to spend prolonged periods in their retirement. For the current (younger) Cuban leaders, it would provide a real opportunity to access power (presently firmly controlled by Castro's aging inner circle) and the insurance of political and economic safety, after Castro's death. Finally, for the U.S., a Transition would eliminate the presence of an enemy next door.

But, if such a transition is so evidently needed and so beneficial to all, why then hasn't it occurred? Some immediately blame Castro or the U.S. But the fact is that the necessary and objective conditions for it to happen, are not yet in place.

A peaceful transition in Cuba—or anywhere else—requires of a negotiation process (and not a capitulation) with those at the helm in Cuba. Such negotiations require a mutually acceptable arbiter, which could well come from Ibero-America, as occurred, for example, with the *Contadora* process—that helped end the bloody civil wars in Central America in the mid 1980s.

An arbiter is absolutely necessary because all parties strongly mistrust each other (with plenty of reason). Cuban leaders want insurance that, once a transition process is started, they won't be obliterated as they were following Brazilian, Chilean, Argentinean and Spanish transition processes. The U.S. (and the Cuban opposition both internal and abroad) also want insurances that such a transition is legitimate and not another fraud.

A neutral arbiter, acceptable to all sides, would help bring about badly needed and real economic growth, and an orderly process of economic and political reform. Cubans would at last, leave behind the painful past, face a brighter future and regain control of our nation's destiny again, just as in post-transition Chile, Spain and Brazil.

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate how the Spanish Caribbean, to which Cuba belongs both geographically and culturally, and which is its

natural habitat, can play a major role in such a transition. We support the hypothesis that the Spanish Caribbean is homogeneous, with specific characteristics in each country but with a common identity. By cultivating such a natural association, the Cuban opposition inside the island and abroad, can find some of the necessary arbiters required for a transition to pluralism, in the minimum time and with the minimum cost.

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### *The Spanish Caribbean*

To start, we need to define what we mean by the Spanish Caribbean. It is the socioeconomic and cultural collection of islands and coastal areas of the Caribbean Basin proper, as well as selected coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico, which were colonized and held by Spain, throughout the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Therefore, we do not include in such Spanish Caribbean, the islands colonized by the French, English or other Europeans, or the Caribbean coast of Central America, populated by the Black Carib or Garifuna. The Spanish Caribbean, therefore, includes Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, plus the Caribbean coasts of Venezuela, Colombia and Panama, and the Gulf coast of the Mexican states of Veracruz, Yucatan and Campeche.

Their common characteristics are visible and evident, even to the casual tourist. They include a common language, like religious practices, similar musical roots, commonalities in cuisine and shared colonial histories, including suffering the same Spanish colonial neglect. The proof is that the people of the Spanish Caribbean give their rhythms (*son, merengue, cumbia*); roots (*yautia, yucca*), fruits (*lechosa, papaya, platano, banano*), fish (*pargo, guachinango, chillo*) different names, but they remain basically the same.

The region's main colonial cities and towns—San Juan, Santo Domingo, La Habana, Santiago, Porto Belo, Santa Marta, Cartagena, Barranquilla, Maracaibo, Veracruz, Campeche, Merida, etc.—were founded in the same epoch and look very much alike. Their traditional old sections are so similar, that often movies about one country are made in another. The people wear the same *guayaberas*, use similar straw hats, smoke similar cigars and play equally romantic *boleros* on Spanish guitars. But most important, they share a huge water mass, with its beautiful beaches, that equally separates and unites.

The peoples of the Spanish Caribbean are homogeneous because they were formed through a slow process that took 300 years. Spanish colonialism formed the region's souls, giving it its laws, political traditions, good and bad customs, and creating the Creole and the mestizo. Similar military authorities, corrupt and incompetent administrators and absentee landowners gov-



erned the region, and similar independent Creoles practiced extensive and illicit commerce with the buccaneers, lived side by side with Africans, both slaves and free, thus creating an admixture of European and African that is has become the Spanish Caribbean culture.

Many segmentations of the Cuban population have been made, in order to study them: by race, by gender, by socio-economic strata, by age, etc. This paper proposes that a new category be added: that of “old” versus “new” Cubans, based on their. For, “old” Cubans tend to have stronger links with the country (broader family ties, memories, ancestors who fought for our independence) as well as a higher possibility of being of mixed race, at least culturally. This new category may well shed interesting light in the current political process.

One can establish a parallel between the current Spanish Caribbean, and the subsequent fate of the Roman provinces in the Mediterranean, after the fall of the Roman Empire. These were invaded by the barbarians, which established weak and unstable kingdoms that brought 1,000 years of backwardness and chaos, known in European history as the Dark or Middle Ages, and created today’s Spain, France, Italy and the other Mediterranean countries. It was not until the organization of the European Union, that these Mediterranean countries have finally obtained some affluence and clout. The same can be said of the Spanish Caribbean, its present and what will become of its future.

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### *The Arbiters*

This brings us back to our main topic: how can the Spanish Caribbean contribute to a possible transition in Cuba and to the start of negotiations between the government in Havana, and the opposition (internal and abroad). Such an assertion begs several important and hard questions. For example, what can the opposition offer Havana, in such negotiation? How can promises be guaranteed? Who can mediate and arbitrate in these conversations?

Cuba is economically exhausted and politically paralyzed. The opposition can offer the government, in exchange for a transition to political and economic pluralism, much needed economic aid, technical know-how, international business connections and internal stability. All this would help increase the wealth of the nation, as well as the socioeconomic level of the population.

To guarantee these promises, as well as the safety and integrity of the current government officials in Havana, arbiters from groups other than the Cuban internal and external opposition, or from the United States are needed. For, as interested parties in these negotiations, neither the U.S. nor the Cuban opposition will be trusted by the Cuban officials, or vice-versa. Such trusted

arbiters can reasonably come from Ibero-America and Western Europe, and especially from among the Spanish Caribbean nations, for they have a strong interest in the stability, both economic and political, of the region to which Cuba essentially belongs.

All parties to this negotiation are today in a better position to work toward a transition. The U.S., sole remaining superpower, no longer needs to control a region so strategically situated near its border. The Spanish Caribbean nations have raised their educational and economic standards, and many of them today enjoy democratic forms of government. They no longer need to take business away from Cuba to survive. The conditions leading to the U.S. economic embargo have disappeared, or have changed considerably. Hence, an American change of policy in Cuba and its acceptance by a Castro succession can be now implemented without anyone "loosing face." And after Castro's natural disappearance, the Cuban government will be in the same conditions in the sense of being able to change its policy without "loosing face," either.

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### *Conclusions*

Castro's natural disappearance, and a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba, can provide the initial "face saving" conditions for both the U.S. and Castro's successors to participate in negotiations leading to a peaceful Transition to pluralism. The key is finding a working procedure so all participants feel safe about their fate.

This is not much different to what occurred in Brazil, Argentina and Chile, after the military returned the governments to the civilians during the 1980s. But such conditions do not exist yet in Cuba. Hence, we must work to put them in place, so that a transition to pluralism can successfully occur. For, transitions do not occur by "spontaneous generation."

The current window of opportunity is open, but will not remain so indefinitely. AIf not taken advantage of, it will close again, returning Cubans to the quagmire in which they have remained for the past half century.

**Part III**  
**Changing Institutions**



## *International Networks and Change*

*Cristina C. Lopez-Gottardi*

In November 1999 the heads of state of Latin America, Spain and Portugal gathered in Havana for the annual Ibero-American Summit. Despite Castro's attempt to utilize the occasion to garner international condemnation for the U.S. economic embargo and to position Cuba as a strategic regional actor, the event scored an important victory for the internal opposition. Some leaders boycotted the summit in protest of Cuba's human rights record, and others including the leaders of Spain and Portugal used the occasion to hold meetings with prominent members of the island's dissident community.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the meeting came to be known as the "Summit of the Dissidents."

This event symbolizes the beginning of important developments that began to unfold in Cuba in the late 1990s, and identifies the potential role that transnational linkages can play in facilitating the empowerment of opposition. Past research has established the growth of Cuba's opposition movement in the last decade. (Lopez-Gottardi 2005; Espinosa 2001, 2003; Pumar 1999; Encinosa, 1994) This article explores the extent to which opposition growth can be attained by stronger ties with the international community. Given the nature of repression and social control exerted against opposition and other autonomous organizations in Cuba, as well as the experience of comparative opposition movements who have benefited from international support, this article demonstrates that these agents can contribute to opposition development in Cuba.

International support networks are not new to Cuba, although in the past they were largely restricted to Cuban exile groups and larger international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. In the last decade, however, we witness a sudden growth in the num-

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1. Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador were among those to boycott the event citing Cuba's human rights record.

ber, diversification and activity level of international linkages. This was the result of a number of events that began to unfold in the last several years beginning with the 1994 sinking of the *13 de marzo* tugboat, malecon demonstration and rafter crisis of the same year. These events were followed by the crackdown against *Concilio Cubano* and the shutdown of two Brothers to the Rescue planes in 1996 and the 1998 Papal Visit which together increased international attention on Cuba's human rights record. Finally, the 1999 Ibero-American Summit, which came to be known as the Summit of the Dissidents, "officially: marks the beginning of greater support and recognition for Cuba's opposition movement. The March 2003 crackdown served as the final catalyst for the expansion of more networks. The proliferation of international linkages was also facilitated by a number of factors, including: the sudden growth and maturity of opposition groups in the 1990s, and a greater ability to communicate due to strides in communication and the growth of independent journalism in Cuba which together helped to increase the flow of information between the island and abroad.

Several cases demonstrate that international factors can empower opposition movements. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Angell, 1996; Pridham, 1991) Due to the fact that Cuba's internal opposition has no formal or institutionalized channels of representation, and their ability to effect change from within remains grim, they have been forced to look outside of the island for a voice and to establish their own legitimacy. Unlike the Polish Solidarity Labor Union, civil society and opposition organizations in Cuba are not officially recognized by the state. (Quiroz, 2003) They have no legal status and therefore little legitimacy within society. As a result, they have recognized the need to seek external assistance in both the exile and international communities which have led to the creation of international support networks. These networks can act as new agents of change by: (i) serving as a voice or forum for the opposition to express their views and garner support, (ii) procure critical resources including material and organizational capacity, (iii) provide a "safe" space or cover where the opposition can gather, (iv) and in effect creating a channel of communication and pressure between the state and civil society that did not previously exist. Therefore, while domestic actors will be the "principal protagonists" in a future transition, international networks through their assistance to and support of the opposition, may also be helpful in driving change. (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997)

International networks can serve the opposition as critical support structures, which may help to facilitate their growth and development and therefore enhance the possibility for a transition. This argument is fundamentally based on theory advanced by Keck and Sikkink (1998) who argue that networks of activists referred to as, "transnational advocacy networks," or

TANs, may assist the opposition in three critical ways: (i) information gathering and dissemination; (ii) multiplying the channels of access; and ultimately (iii) exerting external pressure upon the regime. These networks create a forced channel of communication between the state and civil society referred to as the boomerang pattern of influence. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-13) In order to, “gain influence these networks seek leverage over more powerful actors. By leveraging more powerful institutions weak groups gain influence far beyond their ability to influence state practices directly.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 23) Thus the strength of these networks comes from their transnational structure and their ability to affect policies from the outside. Tarrow (1996) makes a similar argument regarding social movements stating that, “the power of social movements are a mix of internal and external resources. If movement organizers succeed in mobilizing the bases of their movement, this depends not on formal organizations, but on the social networks in which supporters are found, and on the mobilizing structures that link them with one another.” (Tarrow, 1996: 153) Thus this form of assistance lowers the transaction costs and increases a movement’s ability to sustain over time.

TANs are forms of voluntary, reciprocal organizations that plead the cause of others, and in the case of Cuba ultimately aim to change state behavior. They exchange information, training, financial resources and support, and are characterized by (i) the centrality of values or principled ideas; (ii) the belief that individuals can make a difference;<sup>2</sup> (iii) the creative use of information; and (iv) the employment by nongovernmental actors of sophisticated political strategies in targeting their campaigns. TANs tend to be most common in issue areas that have high value content and informational uncertainty. Information exchange is central to the relationship. They are significant in creating norm implementation by pressuring actors to adopt new policies and by monitoring compliance of these policies with international standards. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 2-3)

In the last several years the Cuban opposition has benefited from this form of assistance. Most notably, international response to the March 2003 crackdown against independent journalists and Varela Project organizers was unprecedented in terms of the number of responses, the severity of criticism directed at the regime and the actors involved. Roy (2003) noted, “the measures generated an unprecedented world wide protest not limited to the usual conservative sectors in the United States and the Cuban exile community. Traditionally tamed European governments in Europe made explicit protests, while important backers of the Cuban regime abandoned their endorsement, changing it for straight denunciation.” In addition, collaboration between

2. This is similar to Lopez’s (2002) notion of political efficacy, although his focus relates specifically to the connection between political efficacy and its ability to initiate mass protests.

internal opposition groups and international human rights and exile organizations has also increased dramatically leading to the creation of TANs and thus allowing for the facilitation of information, the distribution of supplies and funding, moral support, increased visibility and legitimacy. The growth of the opposition in the 1990s and these recent repressive measures have also led to an increase in the number of foreign based organizations interested in human rights conditions on the island. Further, these organizations are no longer restricted to Cuban exile groups, nor larger human rights organizations (although they continue to remain very active), rather there has been an increase in and diffusion of international interest, particularly from European based organizations to monitor and pressure for change. Some examples include Reporters Without Borders (France), People in Need Foundation (Czech Republic), Fundación Hispano Cubana (Spain), Adveniat (Germany), Asociación Españoles por la Libertad (Spain), International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (Czech Republic), Committee to Protect Journalists (internationally focused, based in New York), Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany), Helsinki Human Rights Foundation (Finland), Center for the Rights of Man (Romania), among others.

This diversification has also resulted in greater legitimacy and strength for the movement. This article explores the nature and extent of Cuba's transnational networks, and establishes conditions for their ability to assist the opposition in affecting real change. Regardless of the means by which a transition eventually transpires, these international linkages will serve an important supportive role that will be critical to emerging democratic forces.

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### *International Support Networks*

There is a general consensus in the literature that international factors play a secondary role in the transition process (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Whitehead, 1996; Huntington, 1991; Schmitter, 1986). Nevertheless several cases demonstrate that they can be helpful in encouraging or initiating a transition and in supporting consolidation. (Hyde-Price, 1994; Niklason, 1994) The proximity of transitions in South America and Europe during the third wave for example, in terms of both time and space, illustrate the power of demonstration effects, or what is also referred to as contagion produced by external events. Whitehead describes this as "the diffusion of experience through neutral, i.e. non-coercive and often unintentional channels from one country to another." (Whitehead 1996: 30) This was particularly evident in Eastern Europe as a result of the changes taking place in the former Soviet Union under Gorbachev's leadership. International influence can also be achieved with pressure applied through a country's foreign policies. The U.S. embargo which conditions its relations with Cuba with economic sanctions,



and the 1996 EU Common Position which outlines specific human rights requirements, are examples of this strategy.

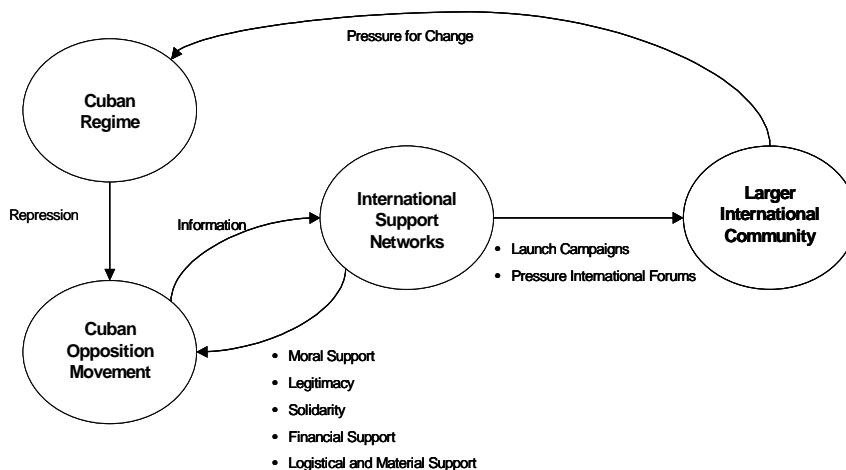
According to Sikkink (1996), another manner in which international pressure can influence the transition process is “by entering into the decision making calculus of key political actors at critical turning points.” (Sikkink, 1996: 75) She references O’Donnell and Schmitter’s (1986) assertion that transitions are the result of divisions within the regime itself. Sikkink argues that it is precisely at this phase “when civil society is still relatively repressed and not yet able to mobilize actively, that international human rights efforts may help to shift the calculations of actors inside the regime, giving weight to arguments of softliners in favor of liberalization.” (Sikkink, 1996: 75)

TANs provide yet another international factor that may be relevant in contributing to opposition growth and precipitating a transition. TANs have become increasingly salient in contemporary politics as the lines between national and international arenas have blurred. This theory draws from Keohane and Nye (1977) who argued that contemporary politics are not a seamless web, but rather “a tapestry of diverse relationships.” TANs have particular significance in repressive environments where these networks are often the only forum available to civil society and opposition groups. They are significant domestically as well as transnationally because, “by building new links among actors in civil societies, states and international organizations, they multiply the channels of access to the international system...they also make international resources available to new actors in domestic political and social struggles. Thus by blurring the boundaries between a state’s relations with its own nationals and the recourse both citizens and states have to the international system, advocacy networks are helping to transform the practice of national sovereignty.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 1) Thus TANs can also be viewed as political spaces. In countries such as Cuba where there is little space for political action, TANs create new channels of communication and access, and are areas where advocacy can occur with less fear of reprisals.

TANs are most effective in cases where: (i) the channels of communication and interaction between domestic organizations and/or individuals and their governments are blocked; (ii) activists, in this case opposition members, believe that networking will be effective in furthering their cause; and (iii) international contacts serve as a forum for strengthening networks. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12) The key is that, “where channels of participation are blocked the international arena may be the only means that domestic activists have to gain attention to their issues. Boomerang strategies are most common in campaigns where the target is a state’s domestic policies or behavior.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-13). This Boomerang Effect is the very key to

the operational effectiveness of these networks. As depicted in Figure 1 they may work when domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-13)

FIGURE 13-1. TANs in CUBA



(Adapted from Keck and Sikkink, 1998)

TANs utilize four primary tactics to generate change: (i) information politics which involve making information accessible and strategically useful. Radio Marti and the growth of independent journalism are examples;<sup>3</sup> (ii) symbolic politics are used to heighten awareness by framing issues around highly symbolic events, dates or accolades. Oswaldo Paya Sardinias’ nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in both 2003 and 2004, and Raul Rivero’s 2004 win of the UNESCO humanitarian award are examples of symbolic politics due to their international visibility and ability to increase awareness of Cuba’s human rights and political conditions (*See Table 1*); (iii) leverage politics are aimed at attaining policy changes from specific actors, and attempt to find a negotiating platform. Examples include Cuba’s expulsion from the OAS in 1962, the U.S. economic embargo, the EU Common Position, and the FTAA Democracy Clause adopted at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec in April 2001 which established that any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order in a state of the hemisphere constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to that state’s participation in the Summit of the

3. *Cubanet* and *Nueva Prensa* have facilitated these efforts.

Americas Process. This clause is now incorporated as Article 19 of the Charter; and (iv) accountability politics which seek to hold actors accountable to international laws and pronouncements, by threatening their noncompliance to the international community. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 80) More recently, however, accountability politics have proven relatively ineffective in the case of Cuba.

TABLE 13-1. Awards Given to Opposition Movement Members (A partial list)

<b>Award</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Year</b>
Honorary doctorate, Columbia University	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2006
Shakarov Prize for Freedom of Thought, European Parliament	Damas en Blanco	Damas en Blanco	2005
UNESCO Humanitarian Award	Raul Rivero	Cuba Press	2004
Shakarov Prize for Freedom of Thought, European Parliament	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2003
Nomination, Nobel Peace Prize	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2002, 2003
New York Academy of Science, Heinze R. Pagel Award	Martha Beatrice Roque	Asamblea Para Promover la Sociedad Civil	2002
Civil Courage Prize	Vladimiro Roca Antunez	Todos Unidos	2002
Democratic National Institute, W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2002
Liberty Prize Pedro L. Boitel	Angel Moya Acosta	Movimiento Opción Alternativa; Movimiento Libertad y Democracia	2002
Folkpartiet Liberalerna "Lars Leijonborg" Democracy Prize	Berta Mexidor and Gisela Delgado Sablon	Proyecto de la Bibliotecas Independientes de Cuba	2002
Liberty Prize Pedro L. Boitel	Juan Carlos Leiva	Fundación Cubana de Derechos Humanos	2001
People in Need Foundation Homo Homini Human Rights Award	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	1999

Success of each of these strategies is measured on the basis of their ability to influence the position of relevant international actors, issue and agenda creation, policy changes of target actors and ultimately their ability to influence state behavior. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 25) In Cuba, the goal is to attain a voice for opposition and dissident groups, which may require a regime change. Keck and Sikkink (1998) have found that "transforming state policies has come about from linking principled ideas to material goals: mili-

tary aid, economic aid, and trade benefits.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 118) Further, these pressures are most effective “against states that have internalized the norms of the human rights regime and resist being characterized as pariahs.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 118)

Cuba’s response to this strategy presents an interesting scenario. Cuba’s foreign relations began a profound transformation beginning in the late 1980s that have affected the utility of this tactic. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and with the initiation of the Special Period, Cuba was forced to seek international support in order to replace the sudden loss of Soviet subsidies and to position itself as a relevant international player. During this time, accountability or leverage politics proved effective strategies due to Cuba’s vulnerability in the international system. More recently, however, the regime has had to consider alternative tactics to ensure its immediate survival, thereby demonstrating less concern regarding international norms and pressures. The March 2003 crackdown is evidence of this change in policy. As a result, it appears that regime survival has evolved into a simple cost calculation for the time being. Once allies, tensions with the European Union in 2003, particularly against Spain and Italy, as well as Mexico and Peru are evidence of this change. In June of the same year the European Commission ruled to scale back diplomatic and cultural contacts to the island. The EU Presidency led by Greece, “issued an unprecedented blistering declaration on Cuba’s deplorable actions in violating fundamental freedoms, demanding the immediate release of all political prisoners, and calling on EU member states to limit high-level government visits to Cuba, to reduce the profile of participation in cultural events, and to invite dissident to national day celebrations.” (Roy 2003: 2) This decision was made just after the European Commission opened its first diplomatic office in Havana. The Castro regime responded by suspending the Spanish Cultural Center in Havana and organizing state-sponsored demonstrations on June 12, 2003, outside both the Spanish and Italian ministries. (Roy, 2003)

These developments also have important economic ramifications given that “Europe as a whole has become Cuba’s most important trade and investment course, replacing the Soviet Union as Havana’s main commercial partner.” (Roy 2003: 3) In particular, Cuba enjoys strong foreign investment from a number of EU countries led by Spain and Italy. In addition, the EU provides Cuba with the highest amount of development aid. Although EU relations with Cuba remain defined by the 1996 Common Position which conditions full economic relations on human rights reforms, since early 2005 most EU countries, with the exception of the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have resumed diplomatic contact with Cuba. Thus given these recent developments, particularly the suspension of the EU’s diplo-

matic standoff, as well as changes in the political makeup of Latin America, it remains to be seen whether this surge in international support networks are particular to the period described or whether it will benefit from a longer trajectory. This is currently difficult to predict and will have to be closely monitored.

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### *Comparative Cases*

International support received by the Chilean exile community during the Pinochet era was critical in fostering the development of a strong opposition that organized to defeat Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite. Similar forms of assistance were extended to Eastern European dissident organizations from the West. These cases are presented to provide comparative insight and share significant parallels with the Cuban Diaspora which remains fervently active in its campaign against Castro despite over four decades of exile.

Angell (1996) has written extensively on this subject and found that, “the international dimension of Chilean politics, and not least the effect of exile, was of greater importance [in Chile] than in other contemporary military dictatorships of Latin America” (Angell 1996). In particular, he cites the benefit of: (i) financial support;<sup>4</sup> (ii) the experience attained by exiles who returned influenced by ideas and attitudes of where they had been (principally Europe, the United States, and elsewhere in Latin America); (iii) ties developed with sympathetic governments, NGOs and parties who later mobilized to support and exert pressure for the 1988 plebiscite.<sup>5</sup> (Angell 1996: 175) Like Cuba, Angell notes that, “it is hardly surprising that opposition parties turned to external support simply to survive.” (Angell 1996: 179) Political parties which were so strong in Chilean history, remained active and formed in exile. Because the Pinochet regime was so widely condemned, “the opposition was widely supported.” Exile might have contributed to the short term consolidation of the Pinochet regime in so far as it removed opposition politicians from Chile, but the long term effects were adverse for the government. Exiled politicians became adept in mobilizing international support for their opposition to the Pinochet government, and the very fact of exile on such a dramatic scale dramatically underlined the abuse of human rights committed by the Pinochet regime.” (Angell 1996: 184) International support in Chile was first directed towards humanitarian needs and was later channeled for political purposes through a variety of research institutions, and in support of opposition press and media.

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4. Angell (1996) reports that the majority of the funding was provided by Catholic organizations in the U.S. and Europe and also by the U.S. and West Germany.

5. Angell cites that the number of exiles ranged between 30,000 and 163,686 (Angell 1996: 176).

Bugajaski and Pollack (1989) also describe significant international support links between opposition groups in Eastern Europe and the West. In the case of Poland, international labor unions became “natural” allies in the Polish push for democracy. Kubik and Ekiert (2000) found that, “dissident organizations developed networks of contacts and communications across the Soviet bloc and in the 1980s a transnational dissident movement of sorts emerged in Eastern Europe.” They report that following the Helsinki agreements in 1975, human rights groups such as Amnesty International established links to dissident organizations. Eventually these Western organizations became protective umbrellas, publicizing the arrests of opposition leaders and the condition of dissidents under communism. (Kubik and Ekiert 2000: 6) Funding levels indicate that the Workers Defense Committee, KOR, was the most successful in attaining material assistance. This assistance increased following the de-legalization of Solidarity in 1981. Similar to current USAID support to Cuban opposition groups (channeled through exile organizations), assistance to Polish groups was initially channeled through intermediary organizations such as Committee in Support of Solidarity in New York, now the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe. (Kubik and Ekiert 2000: 6-7)

In the former Czechoslovakia, dissidents fostered contacts with international human rights organizations who helped to launch campaigns for the release of political prisoners. Contacts between opposition groups and exiles abroad were also common. Additional sources of international assistance to Eastern European countries came from the National Endowment for Democracy, Jan Hus organizations, and the Central and East European Publishing Project which was created in 1986 by a number of major U.S. foundations including the John D. and Catherine T. McArthur, Ford Foundation, George Soro’s Open Society Institute, and the Rockefeller Foundation to fund samizdat literature. (Kubik and Ekiert 2000: 7)<sup>6</sup> These linkages created political lobbying groups, served as a source of material and financial support (to fund research, conferences, purchase equipment, humanitarian aid, among other initiatives), and as a “point of contact with dissidents allowing for information about opposition initiatives to flow out of Czechoslovakia and words of support and solidarity to come in.” (Bugajaski and Pollack 1989: 100-107)

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6. See Lopez (2002) for further details on international material assistance to civil society in Eastern Europe, including particular funding amounts and their intended purpose (by relevant organizations and countries). See also related annual reports of the National Endowment for Democracy.

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### *Actors and Forms of International Support to Cuba*

International support networks to Cuban opposition organizations has taken several forms including: (i) financial funding (primarily to the families of political prisoners); (ii) logistical, technical or strategic assistance; (iii) moral support and solidarity; (iv) sanctions, official declarations and other foreign policy measures; (v) awards or other accolades which increase awareness and legitimacy; (vi) and generally providing an international platform from which the opposition can voice their grievances. These different forms of assistance are provided by a variety of actors, including: (i) foreign governments; (ii) international NGOs such as Reporters Without Borders, People In Need Foundation, among others that are profiled below; (iii) intellectuals or other relevant individuals not necessarily officially representing any group or nation; and (iv) exile-based groups.<sup>7</sup>

The following section profiles a selection of different actor types, the forms of support they have provided, and demonstrates the manner in which they have fostered Cuba's opposition movement. The goal is to attain an understanding of the impact of international support networks from a variety of actors.

#### **Case Studies**

The Czechoslovakian People in Need Foundation (PINF) is a privately funded NGO created in 1992 to assist in relief programs and missions, provide humanitarian aid, promote the protection of human rights and democratic freedoms throughout the world. In the last several years PINF has been actively involved with Cuba's internal opposition providing financial funding, moral and political support, technical assistance, medical supplies, and disseminating information on Cuba to the international community. They work with a network of organizations including select UN agencies, NGOs, private foundations, and a variety of government representatives and entities. Each year PINF delegates visit the island to collaborate with families of political prisoners, independent journalists and other dissident initiatives. They have also campaigned for increased international condemnation of the country's human rights practices. Most recently they lobbied support for Oswaldo Paya Sardinias' nomination for the 2003 and 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, an example of symbolic politics. Through articles, documentary films and photo exhibitions, PINF tries to spread the word on conditions in Cuba.

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7. Due to the complex nature of exile politics these groups are considered outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless they form the most significant basis of support. Many exile groups were originally opposed to direct contact or assistance to opposition members because in their view this represented some form of legitimization of the regime. Today, however, the majority of exile groups encourage direct assistance to opposition organizations.

Most recently they produced a film titled, *La Primavera en Cuba*, which presents a series of interviews with the island's most prominent dissidents and families of the victims of the March 2003 crackdown. It was filmed clandestinely in 2003 and has been widely distributed internationally. PINF also recently produced an online photo exhibition of the *Damas en Blanco*.<sup>8</sup>

PINF has been instrumental in garnering the backing of numerous European and Latin American officials, including former Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel. Following the March 2003 crackdown, PINF organized a fundraising campaign known as SOS KUBA to support the families of jailed dissidents. These funds are personally delivered by PINF representative to the victim's families in Cuba.

PINF has also hosted visits from a few notable activists including Elizardo Sanchez Santa-Cruz of the *Comite Cubano de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional* in 1999, Paya of the Varela Project in 2003 and poet Raul Rivero in 2005. PINF is currently working on "Transformation Project" which is a handbook of lessons learned from the Czech transition to be distributed to Cuban dissidents on the island.

Reporters Without Borders (RWB) is another example of an international organization that has created strong international linkages with Cuba's internal opposition. A French based organization, RWB, is dedicated to monitoring freedom of press and censorship throughout the world. They defend the rights of journalists and have created a network of correspondents who monitor international developments. Since the March 2003 crackdown in Cuba, RWB has initiated a targeted campaign on behalf of Cuba's independent journalists, and seeking increased international condemnation. Towards this end, they declared 2003 the Year of the Cuban Opposition and launched an aggressive publicity campaign to educate the world on social and political conditions in Cuba. In March 2004, on the one year anniversary of the crackdown, RWB organized numerous exile and internationally based opposition groups, including the exile based Mothers and Women Against Repression (MAR), to appear before the European Parliament to lobby for continued sanctions against the Cuban government. In November 2004 on the occasion of the Ibero-American Summit RWB appealed to President Castro urging the release of the 26 journalists imprisoned in the 2003 crackdown. This came upon the release of RWB's annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index in which Cuba ranked second to last (166th place) just ahead of North Korea. (Reporters Without Borders, 2004) They have also organized an "adoption program" of political prisoners which is another attempt to raise awareness on an inter-

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8. The "Damas en Blanco" or "Women in White" are the wives and mothers of political prisoners. Since the March 2003 crackdown they quietly protest each Sunday outside of a Havana church.



national level, and also serves as a message of support and solidarity to the prisoners themselves.

Another interesting organization that formed in the aftermath of the March 2003 crackdown is the Association for a Third Cuban Republic (ATREC). ATREC is a group of Miami and French based activists fighting for a democratic Cuba. ATREC's principal activity includes weekly demonstrations held in front of the Cuban embassy in Paris. More recently they have collaborated with the *Asociación Europea Cuba Libre* and the *Comité Pour les Droits de l'Homme* to form the *Comité Solidarité Cuba Libre* in order to establish an adoption program of Cuban political prisoners. Currently all victims of the March 2003 crackdown are sponsored by members of the French Parliament.

*Pax Christi* is a Catholic, not-for-profit European based NGO with offices in over 30 countries throughout the world devoted to monitoring peace, justice, human rights, security, environmental sustainability and economic justice. *Pax Christi* first became active in Latin America in the 1970s in response to human rights abuses that were taking place in the region. *Pax Christi* Netherland's work in Cuba, however, is more recent and currently focuses around support for the *Movimiento Cristiano Liberación's* Varela Project, and Vitral magazine produced by the diocese of Pinar del Rio. In addition, *Pax Christi* lobbies to pressure EU trade policy to ensure that it contains a human rights component and that investment laws are also conditional upon social concerns. *Pax Christi* works with a network of activists and contacts in the region to "advocate the rights of victims" through lobbying to international organizations, capacity training, supporting local peace initiatives such as the Varela Project and encouraging dialogue.

Numerous prevalent individuals are also working to broaden international ties with the Cuban opposition, including intellectuals, activists, and former government officials. For example Vaclav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic, Lech Walsea former President of Poland and Arpad Goncz, former President of Hungary together released a letter in September 2003 titled, Time for Action, in which they condemned the March crackdown and called on Europe and other member of the international community to defend the rights of Cuban citizens:

Today, it is the responsibility of the democratic world to support representatives of the Cuban opposition, irrespective of how long the Cuban Stalinists manage to cling to power. The Cuban opposition must enjoy the same international support as political dissidents did in divided Europe...Europe ought to make it unambiguously clear that Castro is a dictator, and that for democratic countries a dictatorship cannot become a partner until it commences a process of political liberalization. (The Daily Telegraph, 2003)

Havel also joined with other international and exile figures including former U.S. Secretary of State under the Clinton Administration, Madeline Albright, former Prime Minister of Estonia, Mart Laar, Polish journalist Adam Michnik and other international and exile activists to create an international commission.<sup>9</sup> In a letter published on December 10, 2002, in the *Financial Times* to commemorate International Human Rights Day, the commission expressed their solidarity with Cuba's opposition movement, condemned the crackdown and pushed for change on the island.

With these plain and indeed self-evident truths in mind, we, both Cubans and non-Cubans living in the democratic world, would like to express our solidarity with all brave men and women of Cuba still struggling for their inalienable rights and human dignity under the difficult conditions of an oppressive, totalitarian regime.

... We call on all democratic governments of the world to express their strongest possible condemnation of these inexcusable acts of repression, blatantly violating obligations of Cuba and urge them to ask the Cuban government for their immediate release.

The ICDC organized its first major conference in Madrid in July 2003 titled "Towards Democracy in Cuba," held under the auspices of the Czech Foreign Ministry and organized by the People in Need Foundation. Participants included NGOs, diplomats, former Chilean President Patricio Aylwin Azocar, and the former Prime Ministers of Bulgaria and Latvia, among others. Havel stressed its significance stating, "...the international recognition that a conference affords is the lifeblood of resistance to totalitarianism...I remember vividly what the support of the democratic world did for me when I was persecuted and imprisoned in [communist] Czechoslovakia. I feel obliged to repay this debt to those who are in a similar situation now." (Spritzer, 2004) Members of this group have more recently joined Havel to create the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC). The ICDC is headquartered in Prague and holds a secretariat with the People in Need Foundation. It seeks the following objectives: (i) to promote Cuban prisoners of conscience and their families; (ii) support of the Varela Project, independent libraries, independent journalists, labor activists and other civil society groups; (iii) to continue to pressure the Cuban regime for the release of political prisoners and promote the initiation of dialogue; (iv) to create a

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9. Other signatories include: Harriet Babbit, former U.S. Ambassador; Elena Bonner, Russian human right leader; Marek Edelman, leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in Poland; Jan Figel, MP Slovakia; Bronislaw Geremek, former Foreign Minister of Poland; Adam Michnik, journalist, Poland; Tomas Pojar, People in Need Foundation, Czech Republic; Jeane Kirkpatrick, former U.S. Ambassador; Carlos Alberto Montaner, Union Liberal Cubana; Martin Palous, former dissident, Czech Republic; Ricardo Bofill, Cuban Committee on Human Rights; among many others.

“European Fund for Democracy;” (vi) to lobby for Oswaldo Paya Sardinias’ nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. In addition, the ICDC aims to (i) conduct research and sponsor events related to Cuba and to disseminate these internationally; (ii) to create a committee for a transition<sup>10</sup> in Cuba composed of experts from Central and Eastern Europe; (iii) channel funds and information to activists internally; (iv) organize visits by government officials and journalists to meet with members of the Cuban opposition; (v) produce a Cuban radio newscast to be transmitted via shortwave radio through official networks (such as Radio Exterior in Spain, Radio Prague, and Radio Netherlands); (vi) organize seminars that address the Cuban situation, particularly related to issues of trade, tourism, and investment; (vii) increase “sensitization of the European and Latin American public opinion on the topic of Cuba;” (viii) create an award which will be given to either the individual or organization “that best contributes to Cuban freedom.”

A second conference was held in Prague in September 2004 which produced the Prague Memorandum<sup>11</sup> in which the ICDC committed to the following:

Our goal is to help create the conditions so that the Cuban people can bring about democracy through a non-violent transition. Our priority is to strengthen the civil society and civic movement that are bringing about that democracy. In order to accomplish this, we seek to set out common objectives for a general plan of support for democracy in Cuba that can be implemented in a coordinated manner at different levels and from different parts of the world. The task of general coordination and support for this plan will correspond to the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba.

This summit marks the beginning of a concerted international effort to aid Cuba in becoming a full member of the world democratic community. We are convinced that through their own efforts and with international solidarity, Cubans will one day enjoy the true peace that only freedom brings. It is to this worthy goal that we fully commit our efforts.

The government of the Czech Republic has been active in assisting Cuban dissidents since 1993, and in 1999 they took the lead in condemning Cuba at the annual UN Commission on Human Rights. More recently the Czech Foreign Ministry has established a Transition Promotion Unit focused on transition studies and promotion in Cuba, Belarus, Ukraine and Myanmar. (Spritzer, 2004)<sup>12</sup> In 2001 the Cuban government responded to these Czech

10. A comprehensive list of the ICDC’s goals can be viewed at the ICDC’s website, <http://www.pinf.cz/english/humanitarnipomoc/cuba.php>.

11. A full copy of the Prague Memorandum is available <http://www.icdcprague.org>.

12. Further information on the ICDC can be obtained from the organization’s website, <http://www.pinf.cz/english/humanitarnipomoc/cuba.php>.

initiatives by jailing Ivan Philip, former Freedom Union MP, and Jan Bubenek, former parliamentarian, on a trip to Cuba. (Spritzer, 2004)

The Joint Commission of European and Latin American Parliamentarians in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba is another international initiative launched in May 2003 in the Mexican congress by a group of approximately 50 Latin American and European government representatives and lawmakers. This organization has also created an adoption program for political prisoners, and is monitoring human rights conditions on the island. Organizers include, Francisco Landero, a Mexican federal congressman from the National Action Party; Anna Maria Stame Cervone, an activist in Italy's Christian Democratic party; and Alvaro Dubon, a Guatemalan member of the Central American Parliament. (Ottey, 2004)

Together these organizations and international initiatives are having an important impact upon the development of opposition in Cuba. While this impact cannot be readily measured in quantitative terms due to their diffuse nature, we can note the following trends: (i) greater facilitation and diffusion of information on current conditions in Cuba to the international community which would not otherwise be possible; (ii) increased lobbying for change in a variety of international arenas and forums which the opposition would otherwise not have access to; (iii) more moral support and solidarity through adoption and letter writing programs; and (iv) more financial assistance and solidarity to the victims of repression and the families of political prisoners. Financial support is critical due to the fact that the majority of these individuals are denied employment opportunities by the state which makes eligibility based on one's allegiance to the revolution. This factor is frequently cited as a significant obstacle to the recruitment of opposition members and therefore directly affects the further growth of the movement. It is a topic Lopez (2002) discusses at length.

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### *Conclusions*

Given the nature of repression and social control placed on opposition groups in Cuba, they have recognized the need to seek international assistance. This article demonstrates that "external linkages" to other actors are critical in repressive environments where avenues regularly available to civil society are closed. The assistance received by the Polish and Chilean opposition from these sources has been very encouraging. International linkages with the Chilean opposition under Pinochet were significant in fostering financial aid, active exile participation and the significant networks they fostered. In particular, the strength of Chile's political parties and Poland's labor unions also facilitated support from international sources—although these have not

been relevant in the Cuban case. Poland and Czechoslovakia also benefited from Western assistance for the production of samizdat and human rights monitoring. In the last several years the Cuban opposition has made important inroads in some of these areas which have contributed to the movement's growth and development although both require greater attention and resources.

International linkages are not entirely new to Cuba, however this article has argued that the sudden growth in the number and distribution of networks is a new phenomenon which began to develop in the last decade. These networks became particularly active at the 1999 Ibero-American Summit, and in the aftermath of the March 2003 crackdown. These events mark important turning points that have had a significant impact on the proliferation of opposition, and on the degree of international pressure concerning Cuba's human rights record. While it is difficult to ascertain the specific impact of such networks due to their diffuse nature, we can note substantial increases in financial and material assistance, as well as greater moral support and legitimacy though symbolic and information politics.

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## *Analysis of Cuban Social Capital*

*Jorge A. Sanguinety*

Nothing of significance is done, nor is any significant source of data available in Cuba without the express approval of Fidel Castro. Any research that is marginally adverse to the official line of thinking is not allowed. The main objective of this paper is to study how evolutionary forces in Cuban society continue to influence some changes despite the many constraints imposed by a highly centralized government. Some observers see or want to see in the recent evolution of Cuban society a form of transition towards another type of society, perhaps something closer to the socialist system once promised by its maker Fidel Castro. First of all, it is important to point out the extreme difficulties that any independent investigator encounters in the study of most topics in Cuba. The main cause of this condition is the fact that Cuba is a nation with a high degree of centralization. There is no separation of powers or any distribution or institutionalization of the system of government that allows one to say that there are other important sources of decision making outside of Fidel Castro's circle. This is not a political statement; it is one of fact. It becomes a political statement by those who refuse to acknowledge it as a result of their own political or ideological biases or sheer ignorance.

After 47 years of Castro's rule, there are strong indications that the country has experienced a chronic physical decapitalization process that still continues. The most visible evidence of the decay of physical capital is in the stock of housing in the entire country. Other cases of severe decapitalization are reported in the sugar industry, permanent plantations, infrastructure and livestock. The country has also lost an unknown but presumably significant portion of its human capital due to the massive exodus of Cubans at different stages after 1959, but especially those who emigrated during the first three and a half years of the revolution. A certain proportion of the human capital lost was replaced with new graduates in specific fields (i.e., medical doctors),

but most entrepreneurs, managers, engineers, and high level experts in most fields were lost forever. Cuba also lost its leaders in all walks of life and the revolutionary government, given its absolutist nature, never had any incentives to replace or develop this special form of human capital.

But the wealth of a society is not limited to its stocks of human and non-human capital. It is also necessary to include as part of a society's wealth some of its less tangible, even visible, assets that are of great value to its citizens. I am referring to such factors as the network of relationships among its citizens, enterprises and organizations in general; the institutional and productive memory of the country; the institutions that participate in the production of public goods; the aggregate of traditions and preferences among consumers; etc. The objective of this paper is to describe the evolution of Cuba's intangible wealth in the form of what is now called social capital, how social capital is essential in economic and social evolutionary processes and its implications for the country's economy and its future possibilities of recovery.

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### *Defining Social Capital*

Many years before social capital became a frequently used concept in economic and social research, many authors had recognized the importance of associations between various agents of any society. Toqueville (1969), for instance, observed the vitality of the society in the United States and its capacity to develop all kinds of associations. On the other extreme, Banfield focused his research on the town of Montegrano in the Italian Mezzogiorno, where the author concluded that the "[i]nability [of its inhabitants] to create and maintain organization is clearly of the greatest importance in retarding economic development in the region." (Banfield, 1958: 87)

Yet Sobel (2002) indicates that while the concept of social capital is not new, it is not until recently that it has been attracting a great deal of attention by sociologists and economists. Such attention is greatly due to the work of the sociologist James S. Coleman who contributed the concept in a seminal article of the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1988, as follows:

It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure. (Coleman, 2000)

Coleman did not offer a rigorous definition of social capital but presented several examples of relationships among members of various societies, while gradually introducing the notion that the concept consists of a series of com-

ponents that serve as an element of cohesion in the relationships among the members of a given society.

On the other hand, Putnam (2000) applies the concept of social capital to the evolution of relationships among Americans throughout the twentieth century starting with a definition contributed by L. J. Hanifan in 1916 to explain the importance of community participation in the success of their schools. According to Putnam, Hanifan refers to social capital as:

[T]hose tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make the social unit...The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself...If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors. (Putnam, 2000: 19)

For Putnam, as well as for Hanifan, social capital consists of a network of contacts that develop among the individuals or the groups of individuals and without which societies could neither organize themselves nor function.

Though Arrow (2000) objects to the use of the term “social capital” and even recommends it to be abandoned and replaced with some other, he recognizes that networks and other social connections can develop for economic reasons. Much earlier Arrow acknowledged the importance of interpersonal trust in the economic development of societies, in what appeared to be a reference to the research done by Banfield cited before. But while recognizing the importance of the debate about the role of trust as a component of social capital in the promotion of economic development, Arrow indicates that social interactions may have positive and negative aspects in the societies. The negative aspects of social capital can be many—for instance, the networks necessary for organized crime to operate, the organization of terrorist groups, or the relationships among corrupt officials and other individuals. These observations show that the level of complexity of the phenomena involved in social capital is very high, but we will continue applying it in this paper despite the objections for purely practical reasons.

Something similar might be applicable to Solow (2000) who equally objects to the use of the term “social capital” and the mode it is used, but warns that his critique should not be construed as a failure to acknowledge the importance of the underlying ideas or the relevance for economic behavior. Solow’s most emphatic objection to the use of the concept of capital as applied to social capital is based on the fact that social capital is not suscepti-

ble of accumulation as a stock. Nevertheless, even though social capital does not seem to conform to a scalar magnitude, it is in fact a factor that develops as a network and therefore does experience some form of accumulation, but more in a vectorial or multidimensional sense and also in an institutional one. Some aspects of social capital—trust for instance—can be quantified or measured in principle.

Stiglitz acknowledged the value of the concept in his study of the ways societies get organized and their interaction with the development of its economies. He identifies four different aspects of social capital. “First, social capital is tacit knowledge; it is partly the social glue that produces cohesion but also a set of cognitive aptitudes and predispositions.” (Stiglitz, 2000) This conception, however, could be understood as an aggregate of the stock of human capital existing at a given point in time in any society and will not be applied in this paper.

Stiglitz’s second conception is consistent with the definitions proposed by other authors and consists of “a collection of networks, what sociologists used to call ‘social group’ into which one is socialized or aspires to be socialized.” His third aspect is also congruent with that of other authors and is based on “an aggregation of reputations and a way to sort out reputations. Individuals invest in reputation (an implicit form of capital) because it reduces transaction costs and it helps break barricades to entry in a variety of production and exchange relations.” Stiglitz’s fourth aspect of social capital “includes the organizational capital that managers have developed through their styles of administration, incentives and command, their labor practices, hiring decisions, systems of dispute resolution, style of marketing, and so on.” Implicitly, Stiglitz introduced the concept of social capital as a form of public good which is useful to our purposes in this paper.

One of the aspects of social capital discussed by other investigators is as “interpersonal trust” and in this regard Bacharach and Gambetta offer the most rigorous definition: “we shall say that a person ‘trusts someone to do X’ if she acts on the expectation that he will do X when both know that two conditions obtain: if he fails to do X she would have done better to have acted otherwise, and her acting in the way she does gives him a selfish reason not to do X.” (Bacharach and Gambetta, 2001) These authors recognize interpersonal trust as one form of social capital and develop this view further by describing this type of interaction as non-cooperative game that allows the analysis of successive interactions by applying the Prisoner’s Dilemma games.

Fukuyama (1995) also focuses his definition of social capital on trust and relates it with the economic development capabilities of societies, while Seligman (1995) defines trust as “confidence in the fulfillment of role expect-

tations and the various forms of social control and sanctioning mechanisms that ensure such performance.” (Seligman, 1995) Rose, on the other hand, defines social capital “as the stock of formal and informal social networks that individuals use to produce or allocate goods and services.” (Rose, 2000) He includes social networks as a component of social capital where the variable trust is also included. For Rose, the existence of the networks determines the social capital and he applies this concept to the recent evolution of post-Soviet Russia, making it especially pertinent to this paper. Also, Rose’s differentiation between official and non-official, or private networks, and how the latter survived the collapse of the Soviet Union is of particular interest in the analysis of the Cuban economy. Such conception is consistent with Arrow’s distinction between the positive and the negative aspects of the social capital. Notice that formal as well as non-formal networks can be of both signs. For instance, networks that serve to protect certain sectors from free market competition can be considered negative, while networks (non-formal) that develop among citizens of a totalitarian society for their survival through black market transactions could be considered positive.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that social capital also includes a society’s capacity to develop networks, associations and organizations of various groups of individuals, and is not limited to their existence at one point in time. In his research into the logic of collective action Olson (1965) assumes strict rational behavior and takes for granted other cultural variables that affect organizational behavior differently in other societies. Toqueville (1969) pointed out that U.S. citizens had an extraordinary capacity to organize many different forms of associations, something that could be determined by underlying capabilities carried by the citizens, among which we could include interpersonal trust. An opposite case was already given by Banfield cited above.

In the analysis that follows we will apply a wide or eclectic conception of social capital, emphasizing interpersonal trust but also inclusive of those elements lacking in the study of Montegrano. Some of these are: the cognitive capabilities of individuals to identify the advantages of exchange and association; the individuals’ capacity to face uncertainty and manage risk; and the cognitive capability of individuals to communicate effectively and reach agreements. I will also include as components of social capital the quantity and quality of the information and knowledge that each individual has about other individuals in the same society to allow each one to evaluate benefits, costs and risks of association. Some types of this information can be observed and measured in personal directories, address books, etc.

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1. In this instance the sign depends on a value judgment about the kind of contribution social capital makes to the society at large.

As defined before, social capital can represent the cohesive force that keeps the structural components of a society together while contributing to its stability. The components of social capital appear to be similar to the four forces that sustain the atomic structure of matter. Such components allow the self-organization of societies through evolutionary processes and advance towards more complex forms of development and institutionalization. Such considerations are consistent with those of Markose and others of what is known as novelty-producing Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), typical examples of which are “evolutionary biology, immune systems, and innovation-based structure changing growth of capitalist systems.” (Markose, 2005) The development and growth of social capital networks is at the center of the evolution and self-organized complexity of societies which includes its economic systems. Therefore, when we observe the many different ways social capital evolves we are observing the results of individual actions taken as a result of the degrees of freedom individuals have in different societies.

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### *Social Capital In Cuba*

The ensuing economic system is one of extreme centralization where the economy is virtually dominated by one decision maker. The revolution is essentially a process of radical reduction of the organizational complexity of the inherited system which included the systematic destruction of most of the existing social capital of the country. The revolutionary process that started in Cuba in January 1959 did not encounter a sufficiently strong opposition capable of stopping, influencing or delaying it. Such weak opposition seems to have been a result of the Cuban society’s inability to self-organize to defend the interests of its citizens such as property rights and civil liberties. Therefore it is safe to assume that the level of development of social capital in Cuba in 1959 was relatively low.<sup>2</sup> The revolutionary process, on the other hand, was organized along relatively simple lines, highly centralized but with a strong popular support encouraged by the generalized conviction that the country required a profound transformation as prerequisite for growth and social justice. It became apparent years later that the actual agenda of the movement had as its top priority the maximization of internal control over the population as a first step towards maximization of the leader’s international influence and standing as a world figure.<sup>3</sup> The ensuing economic sys-

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2. Developed societies seem to have systems of defense against external and internal threats similar to immunological systems. Equally to such systems, defense mechanisms of societies develop when they reach a relatively high level of organizational complexity to respond effectively to destabilizing forces.

3. In essence, the Cuban revolution can be seen as an informal and extreme privatization process where the bulk of the country’s resources are virtually owned and managed by Fidel Castro in absolute secrecy and no accountability whatsoever.

tem is one of extreme centralization where the economy is virtually dominated by one decision maker. The revolution is essentially a process or radical reduction of the organizational complexity of the inherited system which included the systematic destruction of most of the existing social capital of the country.

The first, and perhaps the most significant, losses of social capital in Cuba were a result of the massive exodus of Cubans and other citizens that took place between 1959 and the second half of 1962, when most of the managers, business owners, engineers, bankers, attorneys, industry leaders, judges, politicians, journalists, university professors, and other key players of the economy fled the country taking with them an enormous wealth of knowledge and information about the workings of the economy, and about their interpersonal relations. Each economic actor is a point of contact in the network of economic, social, and political relationships. The exodus of hundreds of thousands of key economic and business players represented a major disruption of Cuba's productive capacities which were reflected very quickly in a reduction of goods available for consumption and investment purposes.

When a business manager abandoned his enterprise, he was replaced by an individual trusted by the official authorities, but not necessarily by a competent administrator. Many enterprises suffered losses of executives and technicians at all levels of their organizational structure. Their replacements were not usually capable of keeping the network of business relationships that existed before the revolution. Thus, the relationships with domestic and foreign suppliers, clients, and service providers; government agencies; sources of credit; etc., were severely disrupted. But even when an enterprise did not lose its key personnel, its relationships could still be disrupted by the disappearance of other business or even entire sectors. The banking system was practically eliminated as the institution of credit ceased to exist, jointly with all forms of financial intermediation. Something similar happened with accounting, auditing, and legal services which were closed together with advertising, free press, all private radio and TV stations, etc. The process of reduction of the organizational complexity of the Cuban economy took place as a result of the combined effects of the exodus, the elimination of private property rights for most enterprises, and the elimination of entire sectors of economic activity.

As state ownership was established around the country and was soon followed by rationing of consumer goods across the board and the introduction of central planning, almost all forms of competition were also eliminated. Even many types of information necessary for orthodox central planning were lost in the apparent chaos of expropriations and managerial replacements, reducing the productive efficiency of the country and its

general level of productivity. For instance, the consolidated domestic shoe factories (state monopolies created after expropriations) lack basic data about the distribution of sizes. At the same time, they lost track of retail stores (now consolidated too) and distribution patterns while losing simultaneously their sources of supply of raw materials, in many cases foreign.

Under these circumstances, the Cuban government assumed that the Central Planning Board and the planning offices of the ministries in charge of all the consolidated monopolies of the country would keep or reinvent the relevant segments of the network of relationships created over so many years of economic development. But as production capabilities fell, the government soon encountered another type of crisis in its ability to maintain the productive capacity of the economy. The disruption of the productive capacity was brought about by the upheaval in business relationships, knowledge and distribution systems for supplies and deliveries, but now it would be affected by a new wave of disruptions, this time related to the inability to provide adequate and timely maintenance to the installed capacities. Some industries were able to improvise maintenance better than others, depending on whether some parts could be produced domestically or had to be imported. It also depended on the ability of the new managers to create networks of contacts with parties capable of solving some of the problems. Nevertheless, these forms of social capital were generally precarious as they did not take place through market or any strong incentive mechanism. Instead, such transactions took place in terms of barters or a virtual market for favors in an economy and social system where all sorts of scarcities were dominating the daily life of all citizens. Such new forms of social capital among individuals working in the productive sector of the economy were never sufficient to replace the lost social capital developed before 1959. It must be emphasized that social capital was almost exclusively based on personal relationships of opportunity. Once the individual was removed from his position in the enterprise, the lack of liberty and mobility in the Cuban society considerably constrained the ability of persons to transport his portion of social capital elsewhere in the economy.

A similar process of social capital loss affected consumers, workers and other members of the society, not simply those involved in the government enterprises. The profound reforms brought about by the revolution reduced significantly the choice set of practically all consumers in several ways. On the one hand, rationing was so severe that the number of items available in the ration book was a very small proportion of the goods available in previous years. Besides the extreme reduction in the number of items there were, with few exceptions (cigarettes, sodas, and beer for example) no brand differentiation among the items available. Many items, such as durables, com-



pletely disappeared from the market. Private building of new houses was impossible due to lack of construction materials for non-government activities. The extent of the shortages was such that whatever became available at one point in time was almost immediately purchased by the consumers and, as a consequence, grocery and other stores remained empty most of the times. On top of this, consumers were registered in one and only one store for regular groceries, one butcher shop, and one produce shop.

Under these circumstances consumers' old networks and knowledge of where to buy, at what prices, with what quality, became obsolete. This form of social capital directly linked to consumer welfare was obliterated by the new order. But new forms of social capital developed as a way to cope with the new conditions and rules of the game. This is what Rose called unofficial networks in his research on social capital in Russia. Illegal black market transactions flourished in Cuba despite the severity of the sanctions imposed by the government on those involved, especially as suppliers. Consumers and sellers all needed to develop networks to carry out such transactions at minimum risk. Such networks included government officials who were willing to steal goods from the state enterprises where they labored. Knowing your neighbor and your trading partners was essential to develop the required trust for protection against official repression. Getting caught by the authorities in a black market transaction could be very costly for those involved, who could be punished with stiff jail terms, confiscation of property, loss of jobs, and other measures without right to appeal to an independent judiciary.

It is interesting to note how the principles that determine the workings of CAS apply to the evolution of black markets as individuals still use the few degrees of freedom left to them to create the social capital necessary to reduce the hardships created by severe rationing, economic repression, lack of freedom and limited and/or unwarranted individual rights. It is also interesting to note that a government, holding totalitarian or absolute powers, endeavors to constrain the development of social capital which can also be used for political or subversive purposes. One way to constrain social capital growth is by implicitly rationing "leisure" time, which is a necessary factor for investing in social capital. Relationships and interpersonal trust do not develop quickly without relatively long periods of gestation. The rationing of time, on the other hand, is implemented in many different ways such as forcing consumers and workers to stand in line for many activities, by frequent participation in political rallies, and by not having easy access to transportation, making them to wait long hours to get to work and back, etc. In other words, the government decreases the size of citizens' choice sets by reducing the availability of time-saving goods and services while increasing the availability of time-intensive activities. Sanguinety (1992) has done work in this

regard based on the theory of allocation of time by Becker (1965). The Cuban government designs and manages its policies as if it were aware of Schelling's proposed "theme of many writers on complexity: local, short-term interactions can create large-scale structure." (Krugman, 1996: 17) The government knows that "structure" in the form of social capital is what Cuban citizens need, and probably want, to organize a movement to change the status quo as a necessary condition to improve their quality of life. But individual freedom is necessary for that purpose.

The government, however, can constrain citizen's degrees of freedom up to a certain point. But in order to avoid excessive use of force by applying brutal repression, they cleverly use their absolute powers to increase the price of leisure time to its citizens, so they are further constrained in the use of the degrees of freedom left to them. Besides, time is even scarcer as Cubans have less access to communications and transportation, critical ingredients in the development of social capital. Recent international comparative data show that Cuban citizens are among those with the least access to cellular phones, computers and Internet connections. The total number of telephones has remained at almost the same level as in 1959.

Until that year, workers' social capital in Cuba mainly consisted of their network of contacts in their specific labor markets. Nevertheless, labor markets were traditionally rigid. Many jobs were obtained as a result of personal acquaintances, a condition that encouraged the development of friendships and family-based connections to obtain a job. In the government labor market the network of connections developed as an intrinsic part of electoral politics. Many individuals supported several candidates for different public offices on the expectation of being rewarded with a government position in case one of the chosen candidates was elected. All this disappeared with the revolution and instead a system of extreme labor immobility was developed, a condition that seriously affected productive efficiency in every single industry and enterprise. Traditional, not new, labor unions were allowed to exist but became appendices of the government political and mass mobilization apparatus. The unions were no longer allowed to defend the interests of the rank and file, neither the labor leaders enjoyed the political influence of the past. The old form of social capital was replaced by a new one consisting of relationships that could best be characterized as cronyism with the purpose of obtaining some upward mobility through the enterprise, bureaucracy or political systems.

The typical citizen, besides losing her traditional forms of social capital as a consumer and a worker, let alone as a capitalist or an entrepreneur, also loses her relationships with other citizens as family, social acquaintances, friends, colleagues, neighbors, or members of a church. Cubans relationships

with foreign citizens or organizations virtually vanished. Even relationships with family members that emigrated out of Cuba were restricted in many ways and even forbidden to members of the government. All social clubs across the country were practically dismantled as many of their members left the country and the government took over their facilities. The exodus of Catholic priests was especially dramatic, creating a shortage of religious services in many parishes, which at the same time were losing many of their members. All those leaving the country lost many of their contacts, some of which they try to recover once settled in foreign lands. All those staying in Cuba equally lose much of their social capital through emigration of personal contacts, and by the transformation of the all structures of the Cuban society. Yet the loss of social capital was most abrupt and radical for those individuals who were sent to jail or even executed for their suspected opposition to the government. Much of the government repression can be interpreted as a series of activities aimed at the reduction of such forms of social capital that imply relationships not necessary to the new social, political and economic order. All forms of associations were to be dismantled, a top priority of the citizen surveillance system. In this regard, the repressive policies were also preventive, not simply reactive.

By eliminating social capital the government got closer to the optimum or ideal repressive system: one that does not require violent actions against or jail potential opponents because people repress themselves as interpersonal trust is minimized, collective actions are limited to short-lived black market operations of low complexity, and no one dares to express their views against the government for fear of reprisals. At the same time the political police and repressive policies in general generate a perverse form of trust on the effectiveness of repression. Almost all citizens develop an expectation that they will be caught and punished by the government if they dare to deviate from the official form of behavior. By mobilizing followers of official policy, and even moving them into the dwellings of those who abandoned the country, many citizens suddenly have neighbors of unknown origin, with whom they will only relate superficially and will unlikely develop a relation of confidence. Citizens loyal to Castro were mobilized by the government and selectively mixed with the rest of the population to impede the development of relations of trust that could facilitate political forms of collective action detrimental to the government stability. The more comprehensive the destruction of social capital, the more isolated and impotent any citizen will feel, without any other source of protection against the whims of the government. In the extreme case, the ideal citizen for a totalitarian government such as Cuba's is one whose relationships with other citizens are minimal, insignificant, superficial, and totally compatible with official policy. In this case, social capital

reaches a minimum expression. The residual vestiges of social capital, as pointed out earlier, mainly survive for black market purposes.

It is practically impossible to find a segment of the Cuban society not touched by the overwhelming force of the revolution. The upheaval is so profound that it invites one to speculate about the quality of the former social capital of the Cuban society and its ability to defend itself against such the threat of massive national dismemberment. Following the concept of CAS as applied to immune systems, this phenomenon also invites one to wonder whether some societies seem to develop their organizational structures or social capital networks to defend themselves against external and internal threats, while others, like Cuba before 1959, seem to suffer from what we could call a socio-immunological deficiency that make them highly vulnerable to destabilizing shocks like this revolution.

The Castro government's systematic destruction of virtually all institutions and organizations created before 1959 involved the disappearance of true "markets" of all kinds of exchanges of personal interrelations. Cuban society, in particular its economy, lost almost all of the organizations where friendships developed, where individuals were able to know about the nature and character of other citizens, and develop different forms of trust and confidence about the perceived distribution of cognitive and non-cognitive attributes of the other members of the society. The list of such organizations in any modern society includes tens or hundreds of thousands of entities, among them professional associations, chambers of commerce and industry, free labor unions, charitable organizations, private enterprises, cultural institutions, foreign entities, religious congregations, student associations, political parties, news agencies and media enterprises. The union of all these organizations, freely developed by different groups of individuals with many diverse interests is what constitutes the civil society and what allows a nation to evolve in higher levels of progress and civilization. Its importance is underlined by the remarkable recovery of the many individuals that carried segments of the Cuban social capital network as they settled in certain geographical areas and reconstructed old contacts based on diverse forms of interpersonal trust. The growth of the city of Miami, Fla., is a case in point, as two Cuban exile bankers started providing loans to business people they knew from Cuba as citizens to be trusted enabling them to develop new enterprises apparently from scratch. This was only possible because of the intangible but solid relationships created years earlier as social capital networks that survived the exodus and the dramatic change from one society to another.

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*Conclusion*

Arrow (1974) determined that the set of attributes that we are calling social capital is more than a by-product of the collective actions of a society and represents a necessary condition to expand the efficiency frontier and rationality of individual and collective behavior. He also acknowledged the need of some forms of collective action to reach a form of Pareto optimality among the members of a society. In this sense, social capital is a public good generated privately by the multiple and simultaneous actions of some members of a society to develop relationships with other members of the society and derive advantages from those relationships. Social capital is developed and carried by individuals and is a form of private property, but the aspect of public good arises from the aggregate of forms of social capital that at least some individuals carry. Thus the volume of social capital can vary as a function of the number of individuals in a society as well as a function of the extent of the social capital that each individual develops.

One of the main implications of this paper has to do with the reconstruction of the Cuban economy (and society) once the country can rid itself of the many constraints that impede its development. One of the future challenges will be how to rebuild, or better, facilitate the rebuilding of the social capital required by any modern economy. The most elementary and least complex forms of social capital that different economic agents require can be reconstructed in a relatively short period of time, as individuals are predisposed to develop relationships with others to their mutual advantage once they have the freedom to do so. The most obvious advantages of exchange and other forms of cooperation generate the incentives for social capital formation as a result of the evolutionary forces in a free society. Cuban citizens and politicians in a transition economy must understand that freedom of enterprise and individual freedoms in general are essential for a full economic recovery.

Nevertheless, the most complex forms of social capital, those that depend on citizens confidence in institutions such as credit, contractual guarantees, minimum political stability, the rule of law, the adequacy of macroeconomic policies, public security, and expectations about the future of the country and its institutions and governments will take longer to be achieved. This means that enterprises that require less social capital to develop will be the first ones to develop and operate efficiently, and they will also be the ones to contribute first to the development of the country. This group of enterprises will probably be the smallest in size. As larger enterprises require more social capital to be established in the country, they might have to depend on foreign capital or credits that depend on forms of social capital that exist overseas but not yet in Cuba, since they take longer to develop. Mid size enterprises of domestic owners might take longer to develop.

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## *Examining Cuban Civil Society*

*Bea Reaud*

The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework for examining Cuban civil society in order to understand the degree to which civil society organizations can act as agents of influence. This paper adopts a Gramscian definition of civil society and posits that there are three sectors of Cuban civil society: national sector, international sector, and hybrid sector. Although studying agents of influence naturally precedes a discussion on how agents influence and what types of change might occur as a result, this paper tries to remain focused in constructing an epistemological model that provides a way to view Cuban civil society comprehensively so that questions about change outside the scope of this paper can separately be addressed.

This paper will provide a current snapshot of the Cuban government, then proceed to review various definitions of civil society, and define the model for broadly examining Cuban civil society that, in some instances, can apply pressures through “boomerang effects,” followed by application of this model and then a conclusion based on the discussion.

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### *Background on the State of the Cuban Government and Economy*

With a population of 11.2 million, Cuba is the largest country in the Caribbean. The country has been governed by the Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) since the Batista government was overthrown by Fidel Castro in 1959. Under the auspices of political groups forming the *Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas* (ORI), Castro led the socialization of property and commercial enterprises throughout the island, expropriating US\$1 billion in 1961, belonging to U.S. businesses. Deteriorating relations with the United States completely broke down after an unsuccessful CIA-led attempt to invade

Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Cuba turned to the Soviet Union for protection and trade, becoming a member of the Council for Mutual Economy Assistance (CMEA) in 1972, which underscored a Cuban monoculture based sugar and loans to finance current account deficits.

In the late 1980s, while the Soviet Union was embracing *perestroika*, Cuba clung to its socialist roots and rejected liberalization. The accompanying collapse of the Soviet Union devastated the Cuban economy, because it accounted for 80 percent of all Cuban trade which was followed by “Special Period.” (Gray, Alexander I., 2005) The Special Period (1990-1995) was a time in which the Cuban government sought to preserve the gains from the revolution in areas such as education and health care which included an opening of social space to Cuban NGOs for the provision of social services through foreign aid. In order to shore up the economy, the Cuban government shifted its focus to services and away from manufacturing which was favored by now-defunct CMEA. The population continues to be among the most educated in Latin America, as evidenced by student performance in school. Studies have shown that Cuban third grade language achievement test results are the highest among 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries studied. (Gasperini, 2000: 6) Education spending increased from 6.3 percent of GDP in 1998 to 11 percent of GDP in 2004. (*Economist Intelligence Unit*, 2005: 17) Health indicators are comparable to OECD countries which include the best infant-mortality rate in the region (6.3 per 1,000 live births). Furthermore, Cuba has the highest ratio of doctors to the population in the world.<sup>1</sup>

### **Economy:**

The country remains economically segregated. Although it has fixed its exchange rate at 1:1 with U.S. dollar, the floating domestic rate is closer to 26:1. Foreign commercial interests and tourists have generally been required to use the convertible peso in hard-currency outlets. In practice, this system underscores the dualistic nature of the domestic economy: state-set prices versus free-market prices and official versus unofficial “exchange rates” which encourage black markets.

Although the state remains the largest employer, accounting for 73.2 percent of employment in 2003, this figure represents a decline in state employment from 95 percent in 1989. Public employment is primarily in health and education sectors whereas non-state sector employment is primarily in agricultural cooperatives and smallholdings (50 acres or less). Despite the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and a consequent contraction of the Cuban economy by 33 percent in terms of GDP in the first half of the 1990s, unemployment rose only to 8 percent.<sup>2</sup> Pressures from the withdrawal of Soviet

1. 596 doctors per 100,000 in 2005 compared to 279 doctors in the U.S. and 164 doctors in the UK.



subsidies in the early 1990s caused the Cuban government to increase tax rates and prices on non-essential goods and also undertake limited market liberalization efforts which included creation of Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Co-operation, an important development for Cuban NGOs, the eventual establishment of consumer credit in 1999 and interest-bearing savings accounts in 2000.

**Trade:**

Although the European Union's policy has been "constructive engagement" which had included possible membership in the Cotonou Agreement, it did not come to fruition in part because of the March 2003 crackdown on Cuban dissidents. However, Cuba has strong trade relations in the Americas with Canada, Mexico and Venezuela. The 1998 election of President Hugo Chavez has provided a boon to Cuba-Venezuelan relationships which has been mutually beneficial in that Cuba is assured access to Venezuelan oil and Cuba has provided the medical expertise of delegations of Cuban doctors to Venezuela.<sup>3</sup> Cuba has also been engaging China on both military and tourist initiatives.

**US relations:**

The United States and Cuba have had an uneasy relationship since the Spanish American War when the U.S. gained ownership of land on which Guantanamo Bay Base currently sits. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, American interests in Cuba have shifted from countering a Cold War military threat to promoting regime change. Substantial political lobbies such as the Cuban American National Foundation and the Cuban Liberty Council have guided U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba.

Recent relations with Cuba have ebbed and flowed. The 1996 Cuban shooting down of Brothers to the Rescue planes dropping leaflets over the island, provided an impetus for the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996, known as Helms-Burton Law, which prevents U.S. investment in Cuba. However, by 2000, medicine and food sales were permitted to Cuba, the first in the past forty years. In October 2003, the Commission for the Assistance of a Free Cuba was established. The Commission report increased restrictions on travel and remittances. The CIA's National Intelligence Council has recently placed Cuba on a watchlist of 25 countries, such as Nepal, Sudan, and Haiti, whose instability may require U.S. intervention. The U.S. embargo of Cuba has been the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy.

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2. Other estimates go as high as 40 percent.

3. One-third of Cuba's national oil needs are supplied through Petroleos de Venezuela on preferential financing terms.

This approach is over four decades old and has not achieved the democratic transition some had hoped.

For 14 years, the United Nations has consistently approved a resolution that condemns the U.S. embargo against Cuba. In 2006 the vote was 182-4, with the four opposing countries being the United States, Israel, Palau, and the Marshall Islands.

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### *Framework for Examining Cuban Civil Society*

I proffer that Cuban civil society is actually composed of three sectors: the international sector, the national sector, and the hybrid sector. All three groups work at various levels as agents of influence in Cuban society which overlap in their spheres of influence. The international sector is composed of groups primarily based outside of Cuba whose chief role is to collect and disseminate information about conditions in Cuba in order to foster a “boomerang effect.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Freedom House are all examples of agents of influence within the international sector. Their sphere of influence is primarily other foreign governments and international organizations which may, in turn, apply pressure for change to the Cuban government. The national sector is comprised primarily of groups based exclusively within Cuba who are officially acknowledged by the Cuban government resulting in social space in which to operate under the state. Their primary role is as agents of influence in perpetuating Cuban socialism but they do provide opportunities for civic participation and engagement. Their sphere of influence as independent organizations is virtually non-existent but they have the social infrastructure and access to the Cuban people. Mass organizations and Cuban NGOs are examples of agents of influence within the national sector. Lastly, the hybrid sector is comprised primarily of groups that are work within Cuba but are externally supported. They are groups that challenge the current government and ones that are likely to be the short-term catalyst for a post-Communist transition. Opposition and dissident groups are examples of agents of influence within the hybrid sector.

#### **Definition of Civil Society**

This section will review the various definitions of civil society as they relate to Cuba and then argue for a more inclusive view of aspects of Cuban civil society. The modern concept of “civil society” evolved in reaction to developments between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries; specifically, the evolution of the modern state, the contraction of religion as the result of the Enlightenment, and increased focus on the individual.<sup>4</sup> In this context,

civil society has typically been thought of as separate and distinct from the state and an agent of change. Dilla and Oxhorn define civil society as:

the social fabric formed by a multiplicity of self-constituted territorially- and functionally-based units which peacefully coexist and collectively resist subordination to the state, at the same time that they demand inclusion into national political structures. (Dilla and Oxhorn, 2002: 11)

Consequently, civil society vies for space that is held by the state. Furthermore, Dilla and Oxhorn proffer that civil society is “a multiplicity of territorially-based units.”

Civil society has been associated with the promotion of the private market, in part, because of these roots. Otero and Bryan argue for a broader view of civil society as a civil sphere which includes Cuban black market activity. (Otero and O’Bryan, 2002) The early 1990s in Cuba during the Special Period provide an example of how the Cuban state, because of the withdrawal of Soviet subsidies, ceded space for the development of private agriculture and self-employment. (Chanan, 2001: 404) However, too much of a focus on market development erodes what Dilla and Oxhorn call the “associative principle” that undergirds civil society. (Dilla and Oxhorn, 2002: 12)

Civil society development is also linked to democracy development because liberal democracy fosters a plurality of perspectives and a distribution of decision-making conducive to the development of multiple non-state civil society organizations. Lopez argues that the bellweather of democratization efforts in Cuba is the development of “groups that emerge and are maintained independently of the state.” (Lopez, 2002: 30) However, liberal democracies, as Dilla and Oxhorn point out, emphasize the individual over the collective, which can be problematic when trying to apply this definition of civil society to Cuba. Gray provides an interesting nuance in terms of how Cuban civil society might perceive itself in the form of the relationship between Cuban and European Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) during the Special Period. He draws the distinction between solidarity and cooperation. He argues that, because Cuban socialism is based on working towards the same common goals, Cuban NGOs see their relationships with European NGOs as one of solidarity whereas European NGOs see their relationship as one of cooperation (Gray, 2005). This is an important distinction in that it does not assume a plurality of positions assumed in a liberal democ-

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4. See Craig Calhoun, “The Idea of Civil Society,” *Social Forces* 73, no. 3 (1995): 1118; and Michael Chanan, “Cuba and Civil Society, or Why Cuban Intellectuals Are Taking About Gramsci,” *Nepantla: Views from the South* 2.2 (Duke University Press, 2001). Alexis D’Toqueville partially ascribed the predominance of equality among the American people to the effects of civil society. Adam Smith also wrote about how the growth of capitalism and private wealth, “introduced order and good governance” (See Chapter IV in *Wealth of Nations*, New York: Bantam Dell, 2003).

racy and the civil society that develops it and is more rooted in associative rather than individualistic principles.

Can civil society exist separate from the state in a Cuban context? Janos Kornai argues that the relationship is blurred, at best. In a classical communist system, power is centralized in the state through the party. He elaborates on the concept of “democratic centralism” in which party participation is (nominally) voluntary, and highly centralized through branches, regional structures, up to the Central Committee, Poliburo and general secretary, or President in Cuba’s case. Because there is no competition in a classical communist society, mass organizations sanctioned by the state have a monopoly of access over certain groups of people. This is why mass organizations in this type of system are “transmission belt” organizations because they transmit Party ideology to groups of people, which in Cuba’s case would be the Federation of Cuban Women or the Union of Young Communists, for example. (Kornai, 1992: 40) As a result, the state’s influence extends to “every sphere of life...Under other systems there...are ‘private’ spheres in which the state cannot or will not intervene. This distinction between the state and ‘civil society,’ ... becomes entirely blurred.” (Kornai, 1992: 46)

In all these instances, civil society is regarded as either separate from the state and an agent of change or an extension of the state. As a result, the view of how civil society does and could function in Cuba is somewhat limited. I posit that civil society in the Cuban context is not only separate from the state but part of it and that they are not just “territorially-bound” but occupy international as well as national space. Consequently, each sector’s component members act as agents of influence over a sphere of influence which includes the Cuban people, the Cuban government, and international players. I turn to Chanan’s interpretation of Gramsci to provide clarity to explain this concept. There are at least two Gramscian notions of civil society. The first, and often the one most referenced, is that civil society and the state are the same; specifically he represents this mathematically as “State=political society+civil society.” (Gramsci, 1971: 263) Here, civil society is an extension of the State in exercising “hegemony under the armor of coercion.” (Gramsci, 1971) This interpretation allows for no space or separation between civil society and the state. However, Chanan points out the second conception of civil society as a “realm...in which power, authority, and the social elite (not only) seek to organize consent and hegemony, *but also where consent and hegemony may be contested by the sectors they dominate. In this sense, civil society may indeed be counterposed to the political order.*” (Chanan, 2001: 392; emphasis added) In this sense, although the state maintains the monopoly of violence and does use civil society to maintain hegemony, the space in which coercion occurs under the state can also be space in which this coercion is contested.

Chanan views the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, not just as extensions of state security, but also to campaign for vaccinations and shop for sick neighbors. Although I do not argue that these groups can produce a level of revolutionary change, they may be able to implement it, as they did after 1959, and should therefore be considered when examining Cuban civil society in its totality for both short-term and long-term change. Furthermore, the concept of civil society and civic participation is ingrained because of mass organizations. So, although their role as agents of influence is limited from the perspective of a post-Communist transition as the domestic sphere for social action is still largely state-controlled, their access to the community of Cubans and reification of civic participation is worthy of consideration in the broader context of Cuban civil society.

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### *International Sector of Cuban Civil Society*

In *Activists Beyond Borders*, Keck and Sikkink examine how transnational advocacy networks provide pressure among more powerful actors to bring about social change. The power these networks have is in information exchange. By retrieving information from activists about conditions in a particular country, Keck and Sikkink posit that transnational organizations can initiate a “boomerang effect” in which the repressive state is pressured from the outside as a result of the activist’s work within the transnational advocacy network. The tactics used by these networks include information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, mobilization of shame, accountability politics, issue framing and testimonials. I will focus on how three international organizations have worked to disseminate human rights standards and report on the status of human rights in Cuba.

Agents of influence in this sector are standard setting international organizations which monitor developments on human rights and political freedoms. They are non-governmental organizations which put pressure on governments by applying and tracking an international standard by which human rights and political freedoms are judged. Although their effects may not be directly felt, their work gives voice to human rights violations on an international stage which would otherwise go unheard and are acknowledged to be essential to the work of promoting a more open society in places such as Cuba.<sup>5</sup>

Human Rights Watch (HRW), arguably one of the most influential non-governmental organizations to lobby for human rights on an international stage, publishes annual reports on the status of human rights throughout the

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5. Cuban Democratic Directorate and Center for the Study of a National Option, “Steps to Freedom 200: A Comparative Analysis of Civic Resistance Actions in Cuba from February 2003 to January 2004,” Steps-31, 2003: 29 international organizations acknowledged.

world. The 2006 report highlights the deficiencies in the Cuban Criminal Code which permit the detention and imprisonment of individuals who have committed no illegal act but are penalized for “dangerousness” by being given an “official warning” which can and does include detainment, intimidation, and incarceration into prisons with deplorable conditions.<sup>6</sup>

Because the Cuban government does not recognize the existence and activities of human rights organizations in Cuba, HRW plays the role of publishing and disseminating on an international stage the activities these organizations and the status of human rights in Cuba. For example, HRW 2006 report highlights the work of a local Cuban human rights group, the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation, which published a list of 306 political prisoners in July 2005. Of the 75 dissidents arrested in the March 2003 crackdown, 61 remain in prison. HRW also reported on a mass protest of 200 individuals on May 20, 2005.<sup>7</sup>

Amnesty International, another prominent international human rights organization, also provides public reports of human rights abuses throughout the world. Amnesty, based in London, focuses on promoting the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and has not taken a political position on Cuba. Both Amnesty International and HRW are not officially permitted to visit Cuba. In a 2005 report, Amnesty focused on the March 2003 crackdown on dissidents, by providing profiles of each and how the Cuban government is violating UN principles on detainment of prisoners.

These organizations maintain a focus on human rights development in Cuba and alert the international community regarding some of their most egregious violations. Amnesty’s report, for example, includes profiles of imprisoned dissidents. However, because these organizations analyze world trends, reports are contextualized and, as a result, are subject to shame tactics referenced by Keck and Sikkink. For example, HRW reported recently that an amendment to create a new UN Human Rights Council was opposed by both Cuba and the United States. (Moss, 2005) As agents of influence, these

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6. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2006: Events of 2005* (New York and Washington, D.C.: Human Rights Watch and Seven Stories Press, 2006): 187. Amnesty International’s 3/18/2005 report provides a more detailed background on Article 91 of the Penal Code and Law 88, both of which were used in sentencing the dissidents to excessive prison sentences up to 28 years in length for political protest activities (1). See “Cuba: Prisoners of conscience: 71 longing for freedom,” *Amnesty International*, accessed 3/14/06 at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR250022005?open&of=ENG-CUB>.

7. The protest, which was reportedly one of the largest in recent memory, sparked debate among prominent dissidents. The Varela Project’s Oswaldo Paya was quoted as calling the meeting “a fraud” and another peaceful protest group, “Ladies in White”, also did not participate for fear of being “provocative.” A CNN report indicated Polish EU observers were denied entrance into the country and Czech senator and German deputy who were in-country were directed to leave the country. Lucia Newman, “Cuban Dissidents Rally in Havana,” *CNN*, accessed 3/14: <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/americas/05/20/cuba.rally/>

organizations rely on pressure tactics; however, alone they cannot change circumstances. Lastly, Freedom House is another example of an international monitor that provides research which raises human rights abuses to the international stage. Freedom House has been tracking political rights and civil liberties developments for over 30 years through its seven-point system, in which it annually assesses and scores over 190 countries. Its ranking standards are also based on the UNHCR and their scores are used in selecting and funding the U.S. government's new development organization, the Millennium Challenge Corporation. In its 2005 Country Report, Freedom House not only highlights the March 2003 crackdown but also contextualizes these events within a scoring scheme that compares country records throughout the world. Since 1972, Cuba has scored a seven (7), putting it at the most repressive end of the range for both political rights and civil liberties.

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### *National Sector of Cuban Civil Society*

#### **Mass Organizations**

Today's Cuban civil society broadly defined has its roots in pre-revolutionary forces. The *Partido Socialista*, which included Castro's *Movimiento 26 Julio* and an anti-Batista student group, *Directoria Revolucionario* were consolidated in 1965 into the PCC. The PCC's youth wing, the *Union de Jovenes Comunistas* (UJC) has special constitutional status. The two together constitute one in six of the Cuban population aged between 15 and 65 years. The Party is linked to economic well-being in that recommendations for party membership typically occur through the work place and opposition activists are typically punished by being denied employment or advancement. Additional state organizations include:

- *Central de Trabajadores de Cuba* (CTC) which represents 13 official labor unions with a combined total of 3.3 million and 80,000 workplace branches. The CTC was founded in 1939 and is one of the oldest unions in the Americas.
- *Comites de Defensa de la Revolucion* (CDRs) constitute the largest Cuban mass organization with cells in every neighborhood. Although CDRs are a critical component of state security and surveillance, they have increasingly become more active in providing social services, such as street cleaning and vaccinations. Of all the organizations, membership here is the greatest at 85 percent of the population over 14.
- *Asociacion Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños* (ANAP) has a membership of about 150,000 small farmers who own 50 acres or less. Since the mid-1990s, they constitute a market of producers which sell produce at local farmer's markets.
- *Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas* (FMC) has a membership of 80 percent of women over 14 years of age.

- *Federacion de Estudiantes Universitarios* (FEU), whose founding in 1923 pre-dated the Cuban revolution, maintains a membership of 200,000.
- *Federacion de Estudiantes de Enseñanza Media* (FEEM) and *Pioneros* have a combined membership of 1.5 million primary and secondary school students.

These organizations were established to increase mobilization and, at the inception of the Cuban revolution, represented an emergent civil society. (Dilla and Oxhorn, 2002: 16) Although these organizations are not independent from the state, and are agents of influence in perpetuating the current Party ideology, their extensive social infrastructure requires that they be considered in any post-Communist transition. Furthermore, the existence of this infrastructure among a highly educated public perpetuates solidarity and associational values that are critical components of civil society.

### **Cuban NGOs:**

Unlike the mass organizations, Cuban NGOs, although briefly state sanctioned, crept into the space created in the Special Period, because of their ability to attract foreign aid.<sup>8</sup> The Cuban government required that Cuban NGOs register, have a sponsoring state institution, and subject themselves to dissolution by the Ministry of Justice at any point. (Gunn, 1995) By 1995, the Ministry of Justice had registered 2,154 civil associations.<sup>9</sup> (Dilla and Oxhorn, 2002: 17) Castro himself first used the term “civil society” in a 1994 Ibero-American Summit. This spurred a discussion around what this term means as it had been regarded as a neoliberal extension of the United States. According to one government official, civil society outside of the government was problematic in that “Cuba already has a civil-society-a revolutionary civil society made up of organizations such as the Committees to Defend the Revolution (CDRs).” (Gunn, 1995: 8) This perspective reflects the concept of a Cuban socialist civil society, which is most connected to the first definition of Gramscian civil society in that it civil society is an extension of the state. However, the Cuban government needed these organizations even though they were encroaching on the state’s territory in the provision of social services. For example, Oxfam America supported a small housing project through the National Association of Small Producers (ANAP), a mass organization. By 1993, an international donor conference took place in Cuba to showcase Cuban NGOs. In the three year period of 1993-1996, NGOs

8. Jorge Luis Acanda Gonzalez discusses this period in his article, “Cuban Civil Society: I. Reinterpreting the Debate,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 39, no. 4 (2006): 32-36. Specifically he addresses the space the state vacated in terms of its ability to provide social services, a central tenet and responsibility of Cuban Communism. As a result, the Cuban government, “was compelled to open up significant space for foreign investment” which included allowing “other actors to take on certain functions heretofore under its exclusive purview” (36).

9. Since 1997, civil society registry been frozen.



raised \$42 million and numbered from 20 to 50 organizations. There were even six priority areas designated for NGO grants: alternative energy, community development, environment, popular education, promotion of women and institution building. However, a 1996 contraction of this space by the state froze NGO registration.

Clearly, both mass organizations and Cuban NGOs operate in the space carved out by the state. Mass organizations are constitutionally part of the Cuban government and as a result, have a specific function and space. Although they have access to the Cuban population and foster civic participation making them agents of influence, their ability to affect a transformation in the short-term is minimal. Cuban NGOs were provided some latitude by the government and its interaction with foreign donors gave it a degree of independence in which to operate for a brief period of time. Both types of national organizations have and can play a limited role in implementing transition but are unlikely to initiate change.

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### *Hybrid Sector of Cuban Civil Society:*

#### **Dissident and Opposition Groups:**

Organized opposition to the Cuban government is estimated at 100 small human-rights groups and opposition parties. Political prisoners range anywhere between 100 to 1,000 individuals. (*Economic Intelligence Unit*, 2005: 10) These groups work within Cuba and their members are primarily Cubans, although they operate with the support and assistance of internationally-based organizations. Groups include independent journalists, like the Society of Journalists Manuel Marquez Sterling; civic protest groups, like the Ladies in White modeled after Argentina's *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*; and the Cuban Democratic Directorate. As agents of influence, their primary audience is not only the Cuban government but also the Cuban people and an international audience in seeking leverage for change. Because they operate within Cuba and with international assistance, they exert a "boomerang effect" in the way international NGOs do in influencing the international community to pressure the Cuban government. There is a debate around organizations linked to Cuban émigrés typically residing in the U.S. and/or funded through USAID between those that consider the organizations as infiltrated by U.S. foreign interests and those that see the agencies as legitimate and credible by virtue of this funding.<sup>10</sup>

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10. Juan. L. Lopez addresses this debate in *Democracy Delayed: The Case of Castro's Cuba* in Chapter 3; specifically, he cites the responses from a Center for the Study of a National Option, which interviewed nine civil society groups in Cuba and 1,023 exiles. The Castro government openly uses the threat of a US invasion to elicit the Cuban people's support.

Opposition and dissident groups pay a price in terms of their access to the Cuban public and ability to influence the Cuban government. The March 2003 crackdown in which 75 people were arrested, quickly tried, and imprisoned was attributed to U.S. aid to dissidents. Although recent reports indicate that civil resistance activities have increased from 44 civic actions in 1997 to 1,805 actions in 2004, the Castro government continues to block opposition movements by arresting, detaining, and imprisoning prominent activists.<sup>11</sup>

The Society of Journalists Manuel Marquez Sterling is an example of a society of independent journalists supported through Paris-based Reporteros Sin Fronteras. They support the publication of *Revista De Cuba*, a collection of over 250 articles originally published in 2002. Articles report on the activities of Project Varela, racism and poverty in Cuba, in addition to the March 2003 crackdown. In fact, Alfonso, the director of the society, was arrested and continued to report from jail.

The Hialeah, Florida-based Cuban Democratic Directorate, has been publishing reports since 1997 on resistance and repression activities in Cuba in an effort to track the development of an independent civil society. They are supported by the International Republican Institute, funded by USAID, and National Endowment for Democracy.<sup>12</sup> They rely on their communications with local opposition groups in order to track and report island-wide activities. Until 2003, at least one-quarter of the civic protest activity was based in Havana. The 2004 report indicates that Havana resistance activities shrunk to 18.5 percent of the overall total, meaning that, although overall civil resistance activities increased in 2004, proportionally more activities were occurring outside the capital province in places like Pinar del Rio, Matanzas and Villa Clara than in previous years.

The Leonor Perez Committee Mothers which began in 2002 as a prayer group of the wives of political prisoners and the wives of the 75 activists who were arrested in March 2003 came together as the Ladies in White. They have met in churches throughout Havana and proceed, dressed in white, down to the Quinta Avenida. They have appealed to the government for the release their husbands and an end to punishment meted out as a result of individual expression.

All three groups are examples of agents of influence working within Cuba, as well as outside, whose goal is to affect change. They are not sanctioned by the Cuban government and, as a result, as subject to retaliation. Because they are effectively not permitted access to the Cuban population by being restricted in their activities, their influence is limited. However,

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11. See *Steps to Freedom*, 2003, 13; and *Steps to Freedom*, 2004, 10

12. <http://www.iri.org/countries.asp?id=8539017010>

through support from foreign groups, they are able to continue to vie for societal space currently occupied by the Cuban government.

### **Cuban Catholic Church:**

The Cuban Catholic Church's role has also largely been subject to the Cuban government. Since the Fourth Communist Party Congress held in 1991 adopted a more flexible position on religion in general, the Catholic Church has been able to participate more actively in Cuban society. During the Special Period, Church charities, like Caritas, received humanitarian assistance from abroad. The 1998 visit of Pope John Paul II was also favorably received, in part because of his condemnation of the US embargo. However, the Catholic Church's position on free market democracy which fosters individual rights still clashes frequently with the policies and practices of the Cuban government. Catholic schools and constructions of new churches are prohibited. Only five of the 120 churches taken by the government have been returned to the church.

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### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this paper was to proffer a model of Cuban civil society which provided examples of organizations as agents of influence in potentially producing change. The hybrid and international sectors hold the most promise for short-term change in Cuba because their sphere of influence is not fully controlled by the Cuban government. These organizations can pry open the space needed for short-term change by leveraging outside resources through modes of communication and pressure. However, long-term implementation of change could rely on the social infrastructure laid by the mass organization. A good deal of this type of change relies on the type of transition which could occur in Cuba, whether to a liberal democratic or social democratic model, which is outside the scope of this paper.

Juan L. Lopez argues that resources for mass communication are necessary on the island in order to make people aware of opposition movements and foster a feeling of solidarity to undertake the type of mass protests which overthrew oppressive governments in Eastern Europe. Access to the population is still largely controlled by the Cuban government through the national sector. Perhaps the continued pressure applied by both hybrid and international sectors can produce enough of a tipping point as to convert the national sector from an agent of influence to an agent of change.

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## *Ideology in Cuban Journalism*

*Juan Orlando Pérez González*

“I wonder what’s going on my mind when I decided to study journalism in Cuba,” L. said. “It was absurd.” Every year, some 2,000 young men and women have the same strange idea and apply for a place in the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana. Around 50 of them succeed. Most finish their degree and get a job as reporters in national or regional media. But how long they will remain in the job is another matter.

I conducted in-depth interviews with 47 young Cuban journalists who graduated from the University of Havana between 1991 and 2000. Some 25 of them still work for Cuban national media in Havana, and eight work in the city of Santa Clara, 300 kilometers east of the capital. The rest I found working in media in Spain, the Dominican Republic and the United States.

I wanted to describe the professional ideology of those young journalists, to register their values, ideals, models and prejudices. But it was difficult to find them. This generation of Cuban journalists is widely dispersed across the world. By my count, less than half of the graduates of the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana in the 1990s stay in Cuba and many of them have quit journalism. It is a terrible waste of talent. They had, of course, great expectations of their careers as journalists that now have turned into a feeling of unfulfilled potential.

“Do you mean which qualities they let me show,” asked M. when I inquired about best qualities of a journalist. “There are excellent professional journalists here,” R. said. “You would see how excellent they are if they were allowed to work.” All my interviewees seemed to believe that they deserve better, according to their talent and efforts. Those who remain in Cuban media have seen some of their classmates prosper in public relations or advertising, or abroad, while they endure all the difficulties of living in Cuba

and working for the State media. They admitted that the most likely reason to abandon journalism was material needs.

“The economy is a problem; you cannot do anything against the economy...And if you have to go, you have to go,” said M. But surely there are many other reasons, including a great deal of dissatisfaction with their professional performance. Since I conducted my research, two of my interviewees have left Cuba, and another two moved out of the profession. Graduates of more recent years have already begun to leave. The exodus is unstoppable.

Still, the commitment my interviewees declared to journalism is remarkable. In some, at least, that might be a defensive attitude: otherwise, remaining in Cuban journalism so many years after graduation might be judged as a personal and professional failure. Some insisted that they had had “opportunities,” “offers,” that could be real, or plain fiction. Others have achieved, I think, quite a lot, and it is natural that they want to remain in journalism: they live reasonably well, by Cuban standards, and have gained some public recognition, which is the highest reward for a journalist in the island. In my interviews, they overemphasised the importance of the public recognition and appreciation of their work. I noticed how some talked about mythical readers who send them “millions” of letters or call the newspaper “everyday.” Many told me anecdotes of common people identifying and greeting them. These are in sharp contrast with the sad experience, confessed by some, of being called “liars.” The young journalists working in Cuban media need to believe that the public recognises them, appreciates their work and differentiates them from the general “mediocrity” (their words) of the island’s journalists. Those who have gained some recognition are less likely to leave their job than those who remained practically unknown.

Of course, leaving the job or the country depends also on personal circumstances, like having fathered or mothered a family. Only 12 out of my 47 interviewees have children, though most of them are older than 30 years. This is a likely sign of personal and professional instability. Those who remain single and childless have a greater professional mobility and are most likely to shift jobs. Those who have created their own families depend more on the relative advantages of the job: the remote possibility of being allocated a house, the occasional trip abroad, a good salary (once again, by Cuban standards). But above all I want to remark that most of my interviewees still consider journalism a good job, for the same reasons they chose it in the first place. “I enjoy journalism”, said M. Yet others said that they did not know anything else to do.

The way these journalists relate to the public of the countries in which they are working now seems to be different of the way journalists working in



the island relate to the Cuban public. Some of the journalists working abroad sounded nostalgic. "After knowing the Dominican public, I appreciate Cuba more," said L. The journalists working in Cuba showed mixed feelings. They disagreed on the Cuban public's capacity to understand intellectually complex subjects and to accept diversity of opinions. But references to "the people" were constant throughout the interviews. "The people" is a fundamental notion of this journalists' professional ideology, as it is of the ideology of the Cuban Revolution. But "the people," who the people are, who are part of "the people" and who are not, and what "the people want," is very much a disputed discursive territory. The legitimacy of the Revolution itself depends on the answers to those questions. During the trial for the attacks to the Moncada Barracks, in 1953, Fidel Castro decisively defined "the people" as the exploited, the underpaid and the unemployed. Later, he made an ideological operation to equate the Revolution "of the poor, and for the poor" with the Fatherland, and ultimately, with Socialism.

"The Revolution includes the interests of the people, the Revolution means the interests of the whole Nation," said Castro (Castro, 1961: 11-12)

For my interviewees, these concepts are hardly synonymous. Socialism emerged when I asked about the advantages and disadvantages of working either in Cuba or in capitalist countries. But socialism is no longer a word designating a community of nations. Because China, Vietnam and Korea are such remote references, by socialism my interviewees meant Cuba. Socialism is still an unfinished, imprecise concept in political theory, not to mention for my interviewees. P., for instance, talked about the many blanks in the theory of socialism, like the role of the press. The exhaustion of the propaganda about the superiority of socialism was visible when so many interviewees said that journalism was very much the same everywhere regardless the political system.

The "Revolution," is another slippery concept. In 1961 Castro said that the interests of the Revolution were above the newspapers,' (Castro, 1961b: 6) and only a few weeks later he infamously proclaimed, "Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing." (Castro, 1961a: 11-12) But what the Revolution was, and what its legitimate interests were, remains obscure. I suspect that "the people" is overemphasised in the imagination and the discourse of my interviewees, precisely as a reaction against the conceptual dispersion, or emptiness, of words like Fatherland, Revolution and Socialism. "The people" seems to be real, the blood-and-flesh men and women my interviewees said they know well, those characters I called the Uneducated but Smart Typical Member of the Audience and the Man in the Street Who Appreciates the Journalist's Work. "The newsman believes that he knows what the public desires and thinks," Schlesinger says. (Schlesinger,

1992: 109-110) But “the people” or “the public” are mythical constructions, a projection of the journalists’ ideals and experiences, a rather arbitrary and reductive symbolic representation, not a material object. My interviewees elaborated a narrative in which “the people” or “the public” played a fundamental part opposite to “them,” that vague third person of the plural that emerged once and again throughout the conversation. Some interviewees made clear this opposition. “Media are supposed to belong to the people, but that is not true, because I do not work for the people, but for the Party,” said D.

“A politician will never understand the real problems of the people, of everyday life,” M. said, caustically. “I have never seen a politician having a beer in a bar with the people, and I am sure I am not going to see one... Politicians do drink a lot of beers, but at their homes, alone.” “They” (the politicians, the leaders, the Party) are often seen as antagonists of “the people.” In M.’s words is visible the physical and political distance between those two poles, at least in these journalists’ imagination.

My interviewees, without exception, took the side of “the people.” That was not a surprise. The novelty here was that by standing with “the people,” most of my interviewees took distance from the Party of which they are, supposedly, “ideological soldiers.” This was never clearer than when F., asked what he would do to make Cuban journalism better, replied that he would cut the telephone line between his newspaper and the Central Committee of the Party, as if the line were an umbilical cord between the power and the civil society. “Aligning with the public is a stance that journalists invoke strategically to deal with certain occupational hazards that arise when confronting prestigious public figures in the glare of media spotlight,” Clayman says. “At such moments, it can be extremely useful to present oneself as a tribune of the people.” (Clayman, 2002: 213) “The people” might not exist, but they were repeatedly invoked by my interviewees to support their demand of authority over their work: they, the journalists, not the politicians, know what the people are, and what they want.

My interviewees often emphasized their modest origin or living conditions. They remarked that they live among the people: “I can see the people, what is happening in the street, because I ride a bicycle, I do not drive a car, I am not distant from people,” D. explained to me. Because of both their social origin and professional disposition to the public service, they identify themselves with an entity that they do not really know, as the controversy on the public’s qualities showed. However, that controversy showed the decomposition of the revolutionary myth of “the people.” My interviewees might be on the side of “the people” against the politicians, but they were sceptical, sometimes derisive, of the people’s merits. They were educated in an atmosphere

of exaltation of the common man, bravery, intelligence and generosity. But they are not common men, but part of the intelligentsia, and often expressed high-brow disdain. "They do not think a lot. And I say they do not think, because they do not do take any action", said A. In their everyday work, my interviewees adopt one of two attitudes described by Clayman (Clayman, 2002: 212): "the populist," when the journalist uses "the language of the people's wants, desires and concerns far more than their needs, requirements, or obligations as citizens;" or "the professional," never better defined than when D. talked about his Utopian reader, "someone who is searching for his very own truths, someone who is expecting me to give him views of reality that could complement, enrich or negate his." D. added: "I am interested in a reader who can understand that reality can be transformed." He was obviously talking about himself.

These young journalists are colonising a symbolic space between the public and the state (the Party, the revolutionary leadership), in a hypothetical public sphere that does not exist in Cuba but in the imagination. This is a fundamental ideological change that leaves them close to the ideology of liberal journalism. But because such a public sphere does not exist, and they are employees of state media, my interviewees are visibly confused about the role they must play in this situation. "If I am loyal to the Revolution, I cannot be loyal to my profession, and if I am loyal to my profession, I cannot be loyal to the Revolution. I do not know how to make the two of them compatible," said M. They all agreed that bringing accurate information to the public is the primordial duty of all journalists. That is exactly what the Code of Ethics of the Union of Cuban Journalists reads: "The journalist has the duty to inform and express his opinions with accuracy, agility and precision" and "the journalist has the right to obtain any information of public interest and to do any action necessary for that aim." (Union of Cuban Journalists, 1999: 4) Journalists of 14 countries included in David Weaver's *The Global Journalist* said the same. (Weaver, 1998: 466) But my interviewees said that only after I rephrased my original question about the roles and responsibilities of journalists. First, many were hesitant and incoherent. They often talked about the "truth," as in, "People want the journalists to tell the truth", said Y., which is, of course, a central notion of the liberal philosophy. They believe journalists are responsible for "the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth," as John Stuart Mill put it. (Mill, 1989: 20) But truth is nowhere as elusive as in Cuba. "We have the truth, life has demonstrated that we have the truth; our Party has the truth, our people has the truth, our work has the truth," said Carlos Aldana, chief ideologue of the Party, only months before being sacked for corruption. (Aldana, 1992: 5)

My interviewees belong to a generation that has seen the trust broken and the truth compromised. Truth has been overstretched, manipulated, negated and hidden by both sides in the Cuban political wars. Both sides are widely discredited now. "Truth does not exist, there is not truth, nobody has the truth," said D. A., who lives in Miami, said that the worst defect of Cuban media was "to hide the truth, to bury opinion," while Miami's was "the demonization of Cuba and the idealisation of the exile." Propaganda has substitute truth (or indeed, information) in the absence of alternative, really independent sources. Truth can only be revealed en el momento adecuado, at the right time, when the journalists receive *la orientación*, the command, to do so. *El momento adecuado y la orientación* are rhetorical tricks of the Party bureaucracy to justify the rigid administration of information and prevent spontaneous, non-controlled, potentially damaging, even subversive discourses. There are vast zones of the social reality in which the hegemonic discourse have collapsed, its authority and prestige practically annulled by widespread disbelief. "There is a public that...because of the way they live...we do not have anything to tell them," said F. "We do not have anything to say to that people because they live in other world and have other ways to get information."

The space left by the retreating discourses of the politicians or the media is colonised by unverified, unverifiable information: leaks, gossip, rumours, prejudices and myths. The Cuban government has successfully prevented the emergence of internal independent media, but not the relative influence of the radio stations of South Florida, and other foreign media. But these media are not the norm of objectivity, either. T. told me of his father in law, who listened to both Radio Martí and the Cuban Television, and found both of them "lying." Objectivity, in a symbolic universe of thick opaqueness, seems an attractive ideal to most of my interviewees. But it is an ideal my interviewees know is impossible to achieve. In 1974, Armando Hart, then member of the Politburo, called on the Cuban press to be "objective as the so-called 'objective' press of the imperialism has never been." (Hart, 1974: 34) "Objectivity in journalism is a fiction," said N. thirty years later. My interviewees are not innocent or ingenuous with regard to journalistic objectivity. They recognised the distance between ideal and reality. A journalist must "inform without lying and without omitting anything, as far as you can," said M., in Spain. "In an as objective and transparent way as possible," said N. "As honestly as possible," said A. "As objectively as possible and from the various sides of the news," said I. The hegemonic discourse no longer functions as the norm of objectivity, but my interviewees seem to be looking for a new norm, which many of them allegedly find in their direct experience of social reality, in Radio Bemba, as D. put it, in the voice of the street, not in *Granma*. Y said

that a journalist “must be a very humble person to listen to different points of view, a very receptive person...and although not impartial, he must try to be objective...as objective as possible...”

Many of my interviewees said that the people’s appreciation was the greatest reward of the job. “The main reward in Cuba was to know that the public listened to you, and recognised your voice, and sometimes you hit target with your work,” said K, who is now in Madrid. “Hit target” means basically finding that new norm of objectivity which has moved away from the discourse of the politicians. Objectivity, or the appearance of it, works as a symbolic circle separating the journalist from a culture polluted by propaganda. “What saves me is that I tried to do my things with the greatest possible dignity...,” said P. “And I do not do everything, I have established limits.” “It appears the word ‘objectivity’ is used defensively as a strategic ritual,” wrote Gaye Tuchman. (Tuchman, 1972: 678) My interviewees provided evidence of their little feats of insubordination against the tyranny of media bosses and Party officials. They were probably exaggerated, but they made for the frequent occasions in which these journalists have had to take the most undignified assignments. I remember P. telling me, “You should not jump before the train everyday because someday the train will crush you and afterwards no one will remember you. ‘Oh, yes, him, he was such a nice fellow!’ That’s crap, the train already crushed you.” “People need to eat, and they know what a bad political record means,” said D. They all need to believe that they are not part of the mechanism of propaganda, but rather serious journalists who take every opportunity to do their job in the most dignified way. But the answers to my question about ethics revealed in many a guilty conscience. Their ethical ambivalence was never better expressed than by A. “My work is not 100 percent ethical...,” he started, and then stopped. “Well, you are either ethical or not, there is not such thing as half ethical...My work is not ethical. It is not ethical because I cannot satisfy my reader’s demands. It is not ethical because I cannot give my reader what I would like to give him, or what he demands from me. It is not ethical because I have to hide information from him. It is not ethical because many times I have to keep silence. It is not ethical because it is not full. Because my work is not full, it cannot be ethical.”

“That is demoralising,” added F.

When I asked my interviewees to compare media in socialist Cuba with media in capitalism, the former always lost. They strove to find advantages in Cuban media, but most of them only returned with hypotheses. The Cuban media “do not try to make money, they try to educate people, and give them a voice...,” said S. “But I tell you, there is a contradiction, because that is a purpose, not an achievement.” D. said that “looking down on the problem

from very high, from the stratosphere, I think that there can be freedom of the press in socialism, and even that the freedom of the press could be more effective in socialism than in capitalism.” I have proved the huge gap between my interviewees’ professional ideology and the practices in Cuban media. Previously, Segura, Barreda and Nápoles (1991) and Estrada (1994) had shown the difference between the Cuban journalists’ preferred subjects and those the island’s media favor. But I can show that between the young Cuban journalists’ professional ideologies and the island’s media practices there is more than disadjustment: rather a vast and already insurmountable opposition. This proves how autonomous and dynamic professional ideologies are, and how they can move away from work practices and advance the possibility of a change in these latter long before any transformation actually happens. In the socialist states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the ideological change anticipated the structural transformation of the media system. “There was more conformism than deep-seated conviction...in journalists’ attitudes and definitions of their occupational role,” comments Jakubowicz (Jukubowicz, 1992: 67) My interviewees did not attempt to defend whatsoever the model of public communication running in Cuba. The lists of defects in Cuban journalism, in my interviewees’ words, seemed endless: intellectual mediocrity, cowardice, self-censorship, laziness, indifference and opportunism. Media, particularly the national newspapers, *Radio Rebelde*, the Cuban Television and the agency *Prensa Latina*, are apparently plagued with conflicts between journalists competing for privileges (either a trip abroad or complete control over a story). Those media were often compared with the jungle: “many predators and very few harmless animals.” My interviewees often remarked their detachment from their colleagues. Once again, the ideological separation had a physical expression. T. told me that she spent no more than 15 minutes a night in the newsroom, and talked only to the cameraman and the image editor. Another T. said that he had some kind of odor that kept away his colleagues. My interviewees said their colleagues lacked many of the best qualities of a journalist that they had listed in answering my earlier question. According to the descriptions of my interviewees, Cuban journalists (and my interviewees themselves) might very well be classified in the four categories described by Lauk among Estonian journalists: “cynical conformists” who do not oppose the official ideology but make fun of it; the “cultural responsible” journalists who use metaphorical language, allusions and allegories to challenge the constraints of the media discourses; those who just do their work without problematising it; and the directors and senior editors. (Lauk, 1996: 97)

“Journalism in our socialist countries,” Castro said, “countries that have more discipline, has a content and a responsibility. The journalist has to work

seriously; he does not work as a mercenary...Journalism in socialism has serious, important responsibilities.” (Castro, 1972: 448) “Rather than journalists, we are spokespersons of the official policies,” replied M. in Santa Clara. However, my interviewees were not ingenuous with regard to capitalist media. They listed defects of liberal journalism: commercialisation, banality, the concentration of media in the hands of a few mega corporations. They have been clearly influenced by their Marxist education and by Castro’s denunciation of the liberal concept of freedom of the press. “The bourgeois freedom of the press...is the freedom of the rich to be the owners of most of the means of thinking, which they use to defend their interests as a class against the exploited” (Castro 1966: 50). Castro was paraphrasing Lenin, who had said that the freedom of the press was “the freedom of the rich to everyday deceive, corrupt and fool, in a systematic and continuous way, with millions of newspaper copies, the exploited and oppressed masses of the people, the poor.” (Lenin, 1979: 239) A. said exactly the opposite: “The main difference between media here and abroad, which explains any other difference we could see...is the freedom of information, which is not complete, of course...the freedom of movement and the freedom of expression journalism has outside Cuba...”

But freedom of expression and freedom of the press were concepts my interviewees seldom used. I can only guess that those concepts have been worn off by propaganda, their meaning dried out by continuous controversy in both the political and academic fields. “I ask why we should use an alien concept like that for a reality that is essentially different,” said P. In general, they were very cynical about the role of journalists in both capitalism and socialism. “All journalists have the same disadvantage...they have to adjust their work to the interests of the owner,” said T. “You know, here and everywhere else, the one who pays, is the one who commands. Everywhere in the world. Here as well, the one who pays, commands. OK?” A. told me. “Censorship,” M. told me, “there is censorship everywhere, because censorship is nothing else but the control someone has over the news, according to his interests.” “Big media are always organised in the same way, aligned with power,” said T.

Disappointed by Cuban media, but suspicious of media in capitalism (of which some have first hand knowledge) my interviewees seemed desperately confused, sometimes incoherent. According to their answers, they seemed to be closer to the principles of the liberal journalism. M. told me that in capitalist media “there was more plurality, more possibilities...they are less totalitarian because there is more diversity, and you have greater possibility to choose.” The possibility of alternative media captured their imagination. “It is very likely that those media are tied to special interests...maybe most of

them are tied to the same interest..." T. said. "But beyond that, in capitalism I would still have the possibility to create a little magazine read only by my mother, my father and me, saying what I think of the world...and nobody would get mad because of it."

I noticed how many of the young Cuban journalists I found in foreign media were very critical of their new professional environment. Most of them complained of the commercialism of the media they now work for, though none remotely insinuated that Cuban media were better. They still possess a solid critical thinking, like my interviewees living in the island. "You could think that because there are so many newspapers in a capitalist country, with so many different owners and political orientation, it is possible to find in one what you do not find in the other," said J. "But we are in a period in which most newspapers are concentrating; the owner of a newspaper is not the owner of just one newspaper, but of 10. They are increasingly uniform; the space to find something different is increasingly reduced. Each time there is greater manipulation of the public, and media represent the interest of fewer people." "The worst [in capitalist media] is that major economic groups have increasing control of media and they force all the multiple sides of truth to merge in a single version," said K. in Spain. Those calls of the Union of Cuban Journalists for its members to study the experience of their socialist colleagues in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe have long ago vanished in the wind of history, but Lenin's criticism of the liberal journalism, repeated by Castro and his propagandists, and the lecturers of the Faculty of Journalism/Communication of the University of Havana, still have great resonance.

I asked my interviewees which changes they would make in Cuban media if they had the power to do so. According to their answers I divided them into three categories: moderates, reformists and radicals. Moderates were those who most wanted to get rid of mediocre journalists "who obstruct their colleagues' work," as M. said. The reformists pointed towards a change in the Party's policies of media and information. They demanded greater freedom, an "opening to the world...a true opening, without fear," as another M. put it. A typical radical was yet a third M., who said: "The first thing you have to change to make the Cuban press work well is the system, brother." The radicals were those that suspected that an opening would not be enough and a major structural change in the political system was needed. These three Ms are, I think, representative of roughly as many positions in today's Cuban politics: those who support continuity, those who demand a reform within socialism, and everyone who wants a fundamental change of the political system. This depends on where each individual locates the main source of problems: in the character or competence of the persons running the system, in their policies, or in the political and economic structures. The radicals do



not necessarily advocate a capitalist restoration, but imagine that policy changes that are not accompanied by a vast reorganisation of the political and economic system would, at the end, being easily reversed, as the failure of the moderate opening of the late 1980s proved. In 1990, Julio García Luis, then Chairman of the Union of Cuban Journalists, declared: "In a country like ours the press does not change but as a part of a transformation of the society." (Borges Triana, 1990: 8) Two years later, Carlos Aldana, the Party's chief ideologue, declared that "the improvement of the socialist democracy will always remain incomplete and will lack a fundamental support if it does not include the improvement of the press." (Aldana, 1992: 5) And in 1994, shortly before leaving the country, Wilfredo Cancio, lecturer in Journalism at the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana, wrote: "It is unthinkable a change of the communicative model without transformations in the Cuban politics and society." (Cancio, 2003) After the political backlash of 1991-1992, a radical socialist stance probably lost any viability, but remains a theoretical possibility, certainly in the imagination of some of my interviewees. I do not know how many Cubans could be labelled moderates, reformists or radicals, but among my interviewees, none of these groups significantly outnumbered the others.

Somewhat surprisingly, even among the young journalists working abroad, I found moderates and reformists. But I found none that in the first instance justified the restrictions to public information in Cuba with the US hostility. And that is one of the biggest results of my work, because it seems to demolish the main argument of the Cuban leadership to limit journalists and media's autonomy and directly control their work. Forty years before the triumph of the Cuban revolution, Lenin replied to those Bolsheviks who wanted to restore freedom of the press in Russia: "If we march towards the social revolution, we cannot add to the bombs of Kaledin bombs of lies." (Lenin, 1979: 246) Cuban leaders would repeat ad nauseam Lenin's words: "Freedom of the press in the RSFSR, surrounded by bourgeois enemies of the whole world, is freedom of political organization of the bourgeoisie and its loyal servants..." (Hopkins 1970: 72). In 1961, Castro emphatically declared: "The counterrevolutionaries, the enemies of the Revolution, do not have rights against the Revolution, because the Revolution has a right, the right to exist, the right to develop and the right to win." (Castro, 1961: 11-12) Cuba has faced the stubborn enmity of 10 US Administrations. None of my interviewees would say that is not true. "This country works in circumstances no other country does, nobody can deny it," said A. However, I have every reason to suspect that the conflict between the two countries has lost some visibility and urgency for the common citizen. American efforts to force a change in Cuba are nowadays mostly concentrated in the economic, political,

diplomatic and propagandistic fields. The younger generation, born years after the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Missile Crisis, feel and understand the relationship with Cuba's "historical enemy" in a very different way of their seniors. My interviewees' attention is not focused in Washington, but in Havana. They rarely mentioned the US embargo (or *bloqueo*, blockade, a word that was not used in all 47 in-depth interviews), which is often used by the Cuban leaders to explain the economic difficulties of the country. Only three vaguely alluded to the American hostility. There has been a very significant political shift: my interviewees mostly blamed the incompetence and/or authoritarianism of the Cuban leaders (Fidel Castro, Party officials, media bosses) for the problems of the island's journalists. "I do not want *Granma* to be the best newspaper in the world," Castro allegedly said to Gabriel García Márquez, when the Nobel Prize winner asked el Comandante to give him the reigns of that newspaper for a week. The story might be not true, but F. delighted in its symbolism. Whether in the people, in the policies, or in the system, journalists located the source of problems and the possibility for change in Cuba.

Tragically, this movement does not mean that my interviewees see change any closer. In fact, it seems to make positive change even more unlikely. A passive, cynical attitude was very common. "Waiting, waiting, waiting. Everybody is waiting," F. said. "Well, I am one of those who think that this is never going to change. Too many things are needed for this to change." My interviewees often showed disdain for power, which appeared in their answers as both corruptive and conservative. They do not see themselves as the agents of a change. Their early experiences, often traumatic, have made them cautious. "There is resignation, Orlando. It's like accepting our destiny, like 'This is our fate, there is no choice but doing this.'" T. told me. Many of my interviewees have opted for keeping a strict separation between their personal lives and their work. Moral duplicity is apparently a typical pathology in Cuban newsrooms. My interviewees often criticised their colleagues for being hypocritical and opportunist. "They do not even deceive themselves, because they do not believe what they are doing. They know that they are not deceiving the people, because the people do not believe them," said M. In that atmosphere, my interviewees appear increasingly isolated and apathetic. M. told me that she never say anything at the staff meetings. "I do not get involved...I would like to think this is a dignified attitude, but I know this is not, this is not dignified...but what else can I do?" Political disaffiliation is common. Only a few of my interviewees are members of the Party, though that does not necessarily mean conformity or acceptance.

The political beliefs of my interviewees are, anyway, an intricate emotional territory. In their answers I noticed residues of certain revolutionary

idealism, and also the early signs of middle-class conservatism. J. and M., for instance, work in the same newspaper in Havana and have the best relations. J. declared that a journalist has an “inexcusable duty” to the Revolution, which was “to educate the people.” M., meanwhile, said that newspapers must “entertain” their readers. He harshly criticised his colleagues for ignoring the writers of modern classics like Aldous Huxley. “I do not have those problems. I was always concerned with increasing my knowledge. I was interested in literature, art, languages...mostly English and French,” he said. J. said that it was necessary for his newspaper to negotiate with the Party a coherent editorial policy. He emphatically told me that Cuban media should show “all the beautiful things this Revolution has brought, but also the problems.” M., a typical radical, said that “the first thing you have to change to make the Cuban press work well is the system.” He added: “The Cuban press will never work with this system. There could be whatever kind of opening, that will never be enough...” J., who does not have a home in Havana and lives in a Party dormitory, seems happy searching the Internet late at night, when the newsroom is empty. M. owns a laptop and has applied for an Internet service, but told me that he was last in the queue, because he was not member of the Party. He showed disdain for the Cuban public. “They do not think with their brains, but with their hearts, they are too passionate to understand certain things, and they are intolerant,” he said. J. criticised those journalists “who write certain things only they can understand.” He sighed: “The public is not fool, but we should not drive them crazy with complicated words they would not understand.” J. also criticised the concentration of capitalist media in a few mega corporations. M. declared: “I do not know how media were in the USSR or the GDR, but the Cuban media are lost, because they are not oriented towards the market.” But neither of these two very different young men were as ingenuous as they may sound. J. said that it was difficult for him to find any advantage of working in Cuban media. At last, he found one: “A journalist here does not work for money,” he said, but immediately added: “At the same time, that is a disadvantage, because journalists lack motivation.” M. said: “All media misinform. Why? Because media are always subordinated to someone’s interests.” He said that he couldn’t stand either *Radio Rebelde* or *Radio Martí*. “They both lie.” Without hesitation, J. said that death would be the only reason why he would leave journalism. M., who apparently does not believe he has any “inexcusable duty” with the Revolution, confessed that he has been examining the possibility of moving abroad. “I know for sure that I can go wherever in the world and I can write professionally and do it well. Wherever, I can tell.”

Not even these two, one the antipode of the other, are ideologically pure. Very often they are in opposite sides of the argument, but they work out their

differences in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance that their seniors never knew. There is a feeling of togetherness, of a new community that is far wider and inclusive of that of the “revolutionaries” of the 1960s. National, generational or professional identities are becoming more relevant than political ideology. The proof is that my interviewees have managed to remain friends with classmates of different beliefs, and that leaving the country no longer necessarily means breaking up with colleagues and friends living in Cuba. In this I find the embryo of a new public sphere, which will acquire institutional forms once a political transition begins in the island. That attitude was probably cultivated in the Faculty of Journalism/Communication of the University of Havana, a place my interviewees praised for its openness to debate and political plurality. “You could talk with entire freedom,” remembered D. “There was a famous occasion, when we form two sides, one in favour of the government, the other against...And the side against the government won the debate.”

I had suspected, during my preliminary research, that the transformation of the Faculty’s curriculum in 1990 had had a greater influence in the professional ideology of young Cuban journalists. But now I think that the technical and theoretical education provided by the Faculty was at the end less influential than the atmosphere of relative freedom, political tolerance and ideological diversity of the University of Havana in the early 1990s. There is evidence (Kovats, 1998; Gross, 1996; Lauk, 1996; and Splichal, 2003) that the schools of journalism in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe were nests of dissent and unrest. The Faculty of Havana was hardly a refuge for dissenters, but it was certainly more liberal and free-spirited than *Granma*.

None of my interviewee is a “counterrevolutionary.” Not even those who work in Miami would confess being against the “Revolution.” The Revolution is, for these young men and women, like a mythical animal described in very different manners by everyone who claims to have seen it. They have a conflictive, ambivalent attitude towards the Revolution, its ideals and its legacy. A. said that he “still” is a “revolutionary, a supporter of this social project,” but in his native Santa Clara he was considered hypercritical. “I was a Bolshevik and they made me a Menshevik.” He talked about the “essence of the Revolution.” “I always say that I work for the essence of the Revolution, not for any leader.” Not many of my interviewees talked about the Revolution, with capitals, which they probably thought might have sounded pompous and ridiculous. The word “revolution,” with or without capitals, appeared only 34 times in 47 interviews. In approximately 70 hours of conversation with 34 journalists in Cuba, the word “revolution” was registered only 29 times. Only three interviewees used it more than twice: A. used it seven times; M., five. The vast majority of interviewees—39—did not use it

at all. I can conclude that “the Revolution” is a concept that has greatly lost its denotative quality. It used to mean everything: the guerrilla war in Sierra Maestra, the people, the government, the ideals, the projects, the changes, the infinite possibilities, Fidel Castro. Now, as far as I can see, means almost nothing.

Those journalists who have left their job in Cuba mostly fit the description of Nicholson’s first category and the first subgroup of the fourth. Those who remain in Cuban media, have either adapted to the circumstances, or continue fighting a solitary war, as M., in Santa Clara, said he was. I do not know how each of these 47 stories will end. I do not know even what is going to happen in Cuba next week. Bantz anticipated three outcomes for cultural conflicts in media organisations: first, “workers leave the workplace, seeking work in organizations that seem to have developed norms more consistent with their training;” second, “workers may alter their meanings and expectations to become more consistent with the workplace they currently are in;” third, “workers may make the conflict between professional norms and existent organisational norms...itself an expected occurrence,” meaning that conflict becomes a norm. (Bantz, 1999: 134) These are three typical solutions of which I could find numerous examples among my interviewees. Most of the graduates of the Faculty of Journalism/Communication of 1991-2000 do not work in journalism, and a very significant part of them do not live in Cuba. Nicholson identifies four categories of career change:

“First are the young...whose change is exploration among fitness landscapes to choose where to invest their Motivation. Second are the lifelong explorers— individuals whose personality is restless, entrepreneurial, and driven by high openness...Third are people whose fitness landscapes change abruptly, as the forces of Selection expel them from settled employment...The fourth and largest group are those in more gradually changing environments, where many perceive a potential progressive degrading of the fitness landscape.” (Nicholson, 2000)

Two subgroups are identifiable: those who perceive a climate of instability and threat and jump ship before they are pushed, and those who enact a strategy of moving regularly between employers to stay ahead of change waves and to avoid the risks of dependence on a single long-term employer. (Nicholson, 2000)

I can imagine that some of those young Cuban journalists working in the island’s media will quit journalism and/or leave the country in the near future, if a political change in the country does not find them still in their current positions. Those whom the transition will find still in Cuban media, will very likely play a leading role in the transformation of the system of public communication. A sudden liberalisation of the press market will be upset by

the shortage of professional journalists in the country. I suspect that most of my interviewees would easily adapt to the change and will take important positions in the new media industry. They might not be entirely prepared in terms of skills, but they are certainly close to complete the ideological transition towards the liberal journalism. They are young enough to re-invent themselves in a completely different political and professional environment, as the experience of the young Cuban journalists working abroad definitively proves. With regard to the country, there is not much I can say, but I do not foresee any possibility of adopting any form of democratic journalism, certainly not Lenin's, or Raymond Williams', or James Curran's. Capitalist radicals will likely defeat socialist radicals, reformists and moderates. A capitalist restoration and the aggressive liberalisation of media are at arm's length, in historical terms. But when, exactly, and how that will happen, is the most carefully hidden secret in Cuba. Not even Fidel Castro knows it. In the days I was conducting my research, Fidel, now 79, spoke for hours from a wheelchair to a congress of the Young Communist League. He said the word "Revolution" (always with capitals 20 times. The word "truth" 10 times. The word "ideas" 47 times. The word "future" only three times. "Our Revolution is born everyday," he said. One thousand five hundred delegates applauded. But nobody was actually listening.

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## *Internet Policy and Users' Practices*

*Iris Cepero*

Nine years after the first connection to the Internet, the Cuban government has reiterated its policy and commitment to the expansion of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the country. Baptised as the “informatization of the society,” Cuban policy on the Internet follows a pattern described as “alternative.” This concept stimulates the social use of ICT in the scientific, technical education, public health, communication and cultural fields as well as the development of the most important sectors of the national economy. This model is based in a collective use of ICT and gives no preference to individual access to the Internet. (*The Round Table*, 2004; Rosabal and Sanz, 2005)

When summarising the improvements and achievements of recent years, Cuban Minister of Informatics and Communication Ignacio González, reiterated that through promotion of mass use of ICT, Cuba’s aims to harmonically develop and introduce “those technologies in all the social, economic and political sectors of the society.” (Rosabal and Sanz, 2005) Such a policy is on line with the 1997 UNESCO proposal that Internet policy “focus on community programs and the strengthening of development sectors like education, prior to wiring each individual home.” (Venegas, 2003)

By year-end 2005, the Cuban government had registered around 300,000 computers, or 2.7 computers per 100 Cuban citizens. At the same time there were 1,209 sites under .cu, the Cuban national domain; more than 1,500 Cuban Internet sites (136 of them related to the Cuban media), more than 790,000 email users and more than 150,000 Internet users as well. (Rosabal and Sanz, 2005) Six national Internet service providers operate on the island, as well as a public net for data transmission with 51 data transmission points throughout the country. (Heredia, 2005) Likewise, the Cuban software indus-

try aims to be among the most the country's important export products in the near future.

However, all advances in Internet access and ICT use in the country has followed the "planned and harmonic" policy mentioned above. Acts, decrees, political declarations and specific rules are among the methods applied by Cuban authorities regarding ICT allocation and use of the Internet, and each, in many ways, is an example of the traditional vertical Cuban policy model regarding information and communication.

Since 1997, official Cuban policy has promoted use of ICT as a means of developing of the national information technology industry, the establishment of comprehensive services for citizens, the "informatization" of governmental, administrative and economic sectors as well as territorial informatization. (WSIS, 2003) However, within Cuba's borders, the political discourse also describes development following a vertical pattern of resources allocation. As in official international declarations, national proclamations promote the expansion of the national networks and e-mail usage, but not the public access to the Internet.

Various structural reforms in the government, including the creation of a new ministry and numerous agencies and technical enterprises related to the information and telecommunications issues, have taken place, as well as some additional changes in the educational agenda, investment in telephone service, the importation and domestic production of computers, the establishment of criteria for the allocation of information and communication resources and the development of electronic commerce.

### **Technical considerations**

When this comprehensive policy was launched, Cuba's technological situation of was woefully lacking. In 1995, at the time Cuban Telecommunications Company (ETECSA) was created, there were only approximately 350,000 telecommunications landlines installed in the country. Telephone density was 3.2 phones per 100 inhabitants, and the majority of users were government offices. Some private users were still using lines installed in the pre-revolutionary period. From the 1960s on, the connection of new lines was hampered by a lack of technical capability, as well as a selective criteria approach that gave priority to people with important responsibilities in the economic, political or social sectors. Lines were also installed as rewards for important contributions those sectors. Indeed many families that had asked for lines in the 1960s are still waiting. (IPS, 2003) Even today, connection of the country to international networks is made by satellite (*The Round Table*, 2004; WSIS, 2003), which even the director of the National Office of Informatization acknowledges is more expensive and lower in quality than fiber

optics. However, Cuba cannot gain access to the international fiber optic network due to ongoing economic embargo applied by the American government. Cuban authorities regularly call attention to this issue in international forums noting the severe repercussions to Cuban economic and social development. (WSIS, 2003)

Likewise, Cuba has revealed that due to the embargo the Cuban communication sector has lost several millions dollars in commercial transactions. Specifically, the U.S. government has blocked the import of digital signature technology that is essential to electronic commerce. As a consequence, Cuba has limited its participation in the International Communication Union program. In April, 2003 the U.S. Department of Commerce denied permission for the export of 423 computers that an American NGO wished to donate to Cuban hospitals. (WSIS, 2003)

Equally, it was only in July 1994 that the Treasury Department authorised the transference of data or information to Cuba from U.S.-based servers, even though financial transactions were still restricted. This occurred in spite of the fact that the 1992 Torricelli Act called for improving communication with Cuba in order to foster change in the country. (Venegas, 2003)

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### *The Meaning of Social and Planned Use of ICT*

Under the particular conditions of Cuban social and economic system and framed by the historical confrontation with the American government, Cuban Internet policy has been based on political criterion for resources allocation and operation. The government decides when, where and under what conditions technology is deployed. It also controls allocation of Internet connections. The existence of the technology in specific places does not signify the subsequent permission to the net access.

The Cuban economic system is still highly centralized and the allocation of resources by the state is still one its main characteristics. In fact, the allocation of ICT resources is typically a political decision. Decisions regarding allocation of computers and other ICT are basically limited to those entities without market functions, and in many cases consideration is not based on economic viability. In the majority of the cases—such as schools, media organizations, government offices and hospitals—equipment is provided for free, and users seldom are aware of the real costs of either equipment or connection.

At the same time, the Cuban government has made clear its intention of creating a national community of technicians and teachers capable of fostering expansion of ICT. The quality of the Cuban educational system makes this goal highly achievable.

The process of allocating computers to schools began in the 1980s but soon was restricted to a few privileged places, mainly in the capital city and typically scientific research centers. Expansion, both in terms of equipment and education, began again in the 1990s, and by 2004, 46,290 computers were installed in primary schools classrooms where students began receiving computer instruction in their earliest school years. In the secondary, technical and high schools there are now 2,290 computers; Cuba's 423 schools for disabled people have 1,500 computers. During this span, Cuba has produced 78 educational software packages, all designed to support computer education. (*The Round Table*, 2004; Rosabal and Sanz, 2005)

Similarly, many technical schools have modified their general curricula to include specialised information education. Today, 38,000 students are enrolled in information technology schools, including 6,000 at the University of Information Sciences—which was built in 1992 on the location of a former Soviet military base. Already, the University has produced 3,000 graduates. In addition, in the early 1990s a program was implemented with the purpose of graduating teachers to provide primary school instruction in an Emerging Course of Basic Computing. Over the course of 1 ½ years 1,200 students took the modules. (IPS, 2003) In 2004, Cuban universities housed 15,800 computers, 52 percent in computer education classrooms—an average of one computer per 12 students—and 84 percent of them connected to the national network with 37 percent having full Internet access. (*The Round Table*, 2004)

All told, Cuban scientific and research centers and the country's public health system have been privileged in terms of the distribution of ICT and access to the Internet. (*The Round Table*, 2004) Cuban universities and research centers are connected to a national "cluster" where accessible information is stored. Cuban officials have deemed that "this is better than having everybody accessing in a disorganised way to the information." (*The Round Table*, 2004) One of the most celebrated of these national networks is INFOMED, which serves clinics, hospitals and medical personnel across the country with a specialised digital library database of medical information from national and international sources. Some 300,000 Cuban professionals have access to INFOMED.

The cultural field has also benefited from the introduction of ICT as well as access to email and the Internet. In 2004, 591 national and regional cultural organisations had national email and access to the national cultural network, *Cubarte*. In addition, more than 1,000 artists and intellectuals also enjoyed the privileges of surfing the national net and using national and international email. Still, as of that year only 47 national institutions, with 500 individual accounts, had been given full access to the Internet, mainly

through two or three cybercafés built on the premises of select cultural institutions. (*The Round Table*, 2004)

Certain sources argue that technological inadequacies are the reason for the limited number of cultural institutions with computers, equipment and network access. Nonetheless, many of those working in Cuban organizations note that even if they had the necessary resources and access to the national cultural net, they would still not be given access to the Internet. Similarly, they explain that in many places only one computer is connected to the net while others operate essentially as word processors. Usually, the computer connected to the national net is operated only by one person who receives, sends and distributes most information, typically e-mails. Decisions regarding who can use the connected computers are left to the heads of organizations. The most frequent explanation for restricted access inside the organization is the need to protect equipment and avoid technical disruptions due to lack of user expertise.

Outside of the formal educational system, in 1987 the Youth Communist League gave birth to the *Joven Club* project, whose goal was the creation of a classroom for teaching computing and electronics in every municipality of the country. Today, there are 400 *Joven Club* rooms in the 169 municipalities. Since 1987, half a million people have studied the basic computing under this project, including housewives, elderly people and the general public. In the year 2004, 143,395 persons were registered, 2,167 disabled persons among them. (Rosabal and Sanz, 2005)

Considered to be one of the priorities of Cuban policy on ICT, the national software industry was reorganised in 2002 toward promoting exports of its products. (IPS, 2003) Simultaneously, universities and other information technology organizations have produced educational software for use on the island. Some of them are designed to solve basic problems in specialized areas, but others are considered marketable products that can be exported to developing countries. Despite a laudatory vision within the Cuban press, however, development of an export-oriented software industry has been disappointing.

The informatization of administrative activities, aimed at providing better services to citizens, is also in its earliest stages. In general, this so-called informatization amounts to a computer with access to limited data. Many organisations receive second- or third-hand computers from privileged organizations in the same ministry. In many instances these are older 386 or 486 models that function as word processors only. Other times equipment is a mix of quality resources with old-fashioned, nearly useless equipment that has been repaired several times. Such machines have been dubbed "Frankensteins." However, among the services beginning to be computerised is the

post office system. Computers already perform such basic services as money sending or message transmission within the national territory. Differing levels of resources between the regions, however, often makes transmission even worse than before. Likewise, the so-called Government Online—which contrary to its name is not intended to promote democratic participation but to connect the local government with the central government—is still in an early stage of development. (Rosabal and Sanz, 2005)

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*The Legal Framework: Selective Criteria, Technological Monopoly and Reliability*

In June 1996, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment issued decree 58-96, detailing the norms for the connection, access, use and diffusion of Internet services. By the end of 1996, it had also issued decree 204 concerning the Protection and Technical Security of Information Systems. These laws apply to all institutions and organisations within the Cuban state, all the state's enterprises, joint ventures and international economic associations. The rules are compulsory although they include specific sections for the foreign organisations and enterprises. Among the obligations of the network managers are technical and Home Ministry-mandated requirements relating to the safeguarding of information. Each organisation is required to create mechanisms for tracing and registering the actions of ICT users. Web managers must be Cuban citizens, and demonstrate not only technical expertise but also demonstrated reliability. Part of their job is to elaborate and distribute internal rules regarding use of the net, and propose measures against the people who violate them.

It is evident that the laws regarding the use of ICT and accessibility to information not only establish the technical measures but also establish a centralised mechanism to determine and apply a selective criterion for accessibility. Simultaneously, such legislation implements mechanisms of control and punishment for the misuse of services. The combination of technical measures with other mechanisms of control—reliability, for example—is one of the main characteristics of the Cuban policy on the Internet. In January 2000, the Ministry of Communications was renamed the Ministry of Information and Communications. The former minister of Heavy Industry and Electronics became the new Minister of Information and Communications. He is still in the post. His main function is regulating, running, supervising and controlling the policy of the state and the government in regard to ICT activities.

Until the year 2000 the resolutions, agreements and other lawful pacts regulating the ICT use and access did not refer to criteria other than technical

expertise. However, the lack of political or ideological reference in these of documents could suggest that the reliability principle, for instance, would be addressed by other means, such as political speeches or specific practices.

Only in November 2001, with decree 188 issued by the Ministry of Information and Communications, did the state explicitly regulate by law the conditions and procedures that a Cuban organization must follow to obtain the permission to access to the Internet. One of those procedures was authorization from the minister of the organization to which it belongs. The permission includes the technical dictate related to security conditions. Each organisation must register and control authorized persons within its premises. It establishes that the web master must fulfill a reliability criterion and be Cuban national, residing in the country on a permanent basis. (Economic Press Service, 2002a) This document, however, makes no declarations about Cuban citizens and the Internet. As a result, Cubans, as individual citizens, are neither given nor denied access to the Internet. Under this legal framework, organizations themselves, once authorized, become the bodies to permit access. There are no laws regarding those who do not belong to an authorized organisation.

Such decrees, agreements, laws coincide in creating a vertical structure of permission for accessing ICT and especially the Internet. Thus, it follows a pattern, common to the Cuban tradition of organizational centralization, of a series of mechanisms, or “filters,” that create levels of accessibility to the resources and information. Known as “the chain scheme,” this insures that the government alone decides where to situate ICT. No organization without special permission has the right to introduce ICT, or to use the Internet. No individual citizen is authorised to access to the Internet. Within privileged organizations, only certain privileged people are allowed to make use of such resources.

### **Beyond the law**

During the first days of 2004, a rumor made the rounds in Havana that on New Years Eve the Ministry of Information and Communications had passed a decree declaring that connection to the Internet would be possible only through telephones paid in dollars. While a large number of Internet users in Cuba are foreign companies or Cuban organizations with dollar accounts, in many other organizations Internet access is subsidized, symbolically paid in the national currency, and citizens are not allowed to have a telephone line paid in dollars.

Behind the rumor was word that the Ministry had data that 40,000 people were accessing the Internet through a “pirate connection.” At that time—as it still is today—it was possible to find black-market computers and passwords.

People with permission were selling their passwords for 30 dollars a month, advising the buyer to use the line only between midnight and dawn, times when their respective offices were not connected. (IPS, 2004) By early February there were new rumors that the supposed measures, if applied, would be ignored or selectively acted upon. In a press conference, the minister—in an ambiguous speech that did not make clear if he was talking about the expansion of services or the new criteria for payment—offered assurances that there had been no change in Cuban policy on the Internet. After several weeks the rumor and the panic had virtually disappeared. The decree is remains, but it has never been imposed. (IPS, 2004)

Still, it is not known if official data about the number of users reveals the total number of people within a privileged organization or includes those who bypass the restrictions to access to the net on regular or sporadic basis.

In December 2004, the Minister of Information and Communications issued decree 85, which directed that the Internet and e-mail services would fall under the jurisdiction of the Agency of Control and Supervision. The decree states that if an organization violates regulations regarding permitted services, the punishment would be the definitive or temporal cancellation of the permit and the confiscation of the equipment, in addition to other administrative and punitive measures. It added that any office or space with Internet access could be inspected by the agency without notice. The punishment stipulated under this law, combines economic (confiscation of equipment), technical (suspension of the license) and political (permanent cancellation of the permit) criteria together with administrative (again there is space for political or ideological verdict) and legal instruments.

Likewise, the Cuban citizens who travel to other countries are not allowed to import computers freely. In fact, Cuban customs does not mention computers among the forbidden or limited articles to import. Once again the law prohibits, but simultaneously guarantees flexibility and privileges. The Finance Ministry has passed a decree to permit Cuban travellers to import personal computers after obtaining a special permit from the Ministry to which the traveller belongs. Without such a permit, customs confiscates the computer (Economic Press Service, 2002b). The number of computers legally imported from abroad by Cuban travellers is not known. The number of computers received as gifts from foreigners is also unknown. However, it is well known that on the island, mainly in the capital, technicians assemble computers from accessories and components taken from their respective organizations. Some parts are new. Others are used and reported as useless but are in perfect working condition. The prices of computers vary from a few hundred to around US\$1,000, depending on its condition and the number of people involved in and the complexity of the process of illegally acquiring it. For this reason, no



one really knows the true number of computers in Cuba. Nonetheless, few Cubans can afford or are brave enough to buy one through the black market. Consequently, the true number of computers in the country probably is not too different from that found in official data. The December 2004 decree made clear that use of ICT and the Internet is intended for economic purposes and that Internet policy is in tune with the national development strategy. It states that the restrictions are only related to speed connection and timetable for the exploitation within the privileged organizations. (Rosabal, 2004) To this day, in Cuba no citizen can buy a computer on the official market. Indeed, not a single shop sells computers to Cuban citizens. In some stores it is possible to buy accessories and components such as a mouse, pad, microphones or wires, but even buying all the accessories it is impossible to assemble a computer. This market for computers accessories operates only in dollars and prices are very high. Only enterprises, organisations and other entities can buy computers or components and accessories in the specialized shops, and then only after going through an authorization process and with foreign currency. (IPS, 2003)

### **The Cuban press online**

Due the low penetration of ICT in Cuba, Cuban online media are directed at a foreign audience, and when navigating through the Cuban press online and Cuban web sites in general, it is easy to find a clear and evident coincidence with official state points of view. This is evident not only the themes, but also the approaches, with a remarkable trend toward propaganda of the achievements and political efficacy of the government. One of the pillars of the Cuban policy on the Internet has been has been the desire to spread news or Cuban achievements around the world while denouncing policies of the U.S. government and right-wing Cuban exile groups. "In Cuba, it becomes difficult to separate the emphasis on national security from censorship, when official government discourse highlight these dangers and the extreme right-wing exile community (aided by the US government) continues to flood Cuban networks with counterrevolutionary emails." (Venegas, 2003) In recent years, the Cuban press has begun to use the Internet to counteract the effects of this ideological war. By 2001, all of Cuba's print media had launched online versions, and six radio stations and the national television had established an Internet presence as well. Today, the 136 web sites of the Cuban press include 9 national radio stations, one international radio station, 17 regional radio stations, 13 regional TV stations, one international TV station, 19 regional newspapers, 52 national newspapers or magazines (nine of them exclusively online), and six sites from the Union of Cuban Journalists. (Rosabal and Sanz, 2005) Searching the Cuban press online, one can find that the contents and approach do not differ from those of the rest of the media

within the country. In fact, one can say that the contents are even more coincident with the political speech, avoiding the small range of criticism found in Cuba's print and broadcasting media. During the past few years, Cuba's online media also have become a pillars of the island's international political campaigns, as exemplified by the case of the Elián Gonzalez, the campaign for the freedom of the "Cuban Five," and, most recently, requests for the U.S. for the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles so he could stand trial on charges of terrorism.

### **The users and the use**

Even though access is restricted and pages are blocked, there are a variety of practices, mechanisms and tricks users employ to use ICT in ways not sanctioned by the authorities. It is well known, for instance, that members of the scientific community surf the net searching for international scholarships and sponsorship for international events that are not of interest to their organisations. Cubans also appeal to foreign friends to bring components or computer equipment into the country. Moreover, Cubans regularly use e-mail services to communicate with their friends or relatives abroad and, in spite of regulations banning such practices, provide the same services to relatives, friends and neighbours. It is also alleged that technicians in charge of monitoring the Internet impose filters on the general public while, confident of their bosses' IT illiteracy, maintaining full access for themselves and their friends.

Under this scenario no one can confidently assert the influence of the Internet in the people's routine and mentality. It has been suggested, however, that to some extent the types of practices described above could serve to undermine the central authority of the Communist government.

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### *Conclusions*

Information and communication technology (ICT) and Internet policy in Cuba are centralized, politically-oriented and lack market perspective. Both have been implemented following a planned principle of collective use that focuses on selective criterion for privileged access. Research centers, universities, government agencies, scientists, lecturers, doctors and journalists are among the privileged users. ICT and Internet access allocation are in tune with Communist Party priorities and leave no room for personal or individual connection to the Internet. Similarly, the government maintains a monopoly of ownership and management over ICT, centralizing the allotment of resources, forbidding any attempt to promote open access to the technology and strictly regulating the import of communications and information equipment into the country.

Meanwhile, the automation of government and economic sectors and the automation of services have followed a slow, irrelevant, almost insignificant course. The political discourse about the informatization of society and its achievements is euphoric, overconfident, and excessively optimistic. It makes reference to statistics about resources that takes no consideration of its quality. Likewise, the political discourse cynically avoids discussion of restriction on consumption, not to mention the production, of information in the country.

Cuban ICT governance also faces the challenge of the technological illiteracy of political cadres. Those who traditionally generate and implement the communication policy are Party officials, following certain political and ideological orientations. Generally speaking, they lack the technological understanding to do so efficiently. Internet operators are called upon to act as information gatekeepers—virtual censors—following the government's rules. The ideas, feelings and opinions of the professional community in charge of the technical functioning and control of ICT and the net are unknown.

In Cuba, the Internet has not altered the traditional concept of media ownership and management. Instead, the policy has been designed and implemented taking advantages of the centralized and politically oriented mechanism of allocation of resources and information. Therefore, it has not generated democratic participation and has not help make information available to the public. In contrast, the characteristics of the Internet facilitate the government interest in applying a selective and privileged criterion of access to the information.

National security, nationhood, sovereignty, and historical confrontation with the United States are some of the key issues of the Cuban political discourse within the national frontiers and in the international arena. Such a discourse has not change in decades and to some extend has been emphatic during the last years. The very existence of the confrontation with the United States and American government support of Cuban opposition groups' activities, together with the American program for a transition in the island, limit any possibility for more individual, democratic access to the net.

As in the United States during the first years of Internet development, governance of the Internet in Cuba is subject to the absolute ownership and management of the government. However, a new phase in which the governance of the net would be transferred to industry is unthinkable in Cuba. The characteristics of the Cuban political and economic system eliminate any possibility for a market-oriented governance of the Internet or other communications industry. Organizations can, however, develop internal mechanisms of management within the limited space provided by the centralized.

Although the Cuban government's stated policy is to spread the benefits of ICT and the Internet services, the current economic situation on the island discredit the best attempts to carry it out. Poverty is such that even less-expensive technologies cannot function in a pervasive way or on a regular basis. Besides, the basic telecommunication infrastructure in the country is still very precarious, and unstable, making the availability and the accessibility to any potential Internet services quite difficult.

Ultimately, official Cuban policy on ICT and the Internet privilege access, limit the technical and financial possibilities of the technology, and hamper the professional development of a huge mass of educated, highly skilled people. In many ways the policy is, if not isolating, at least, retarding the possibilities of the Cuban professionals to take part in a high level scientific international community. Likewise, the Cuban policy on information and communication technology has reinforced mechanisms that limit access to the information and restrain democratic participation. Nonetheless, it is very likely that even with such policies the Cuban government will be unable to hold off the information revolution forever. Time will be the witness.

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## *Improvements in the Cuban Legal System*

*James H. Manahan*

Cuba inherited its legal system from the Spanish conquerors, as did most countries in Central and South America. However, Communist theory from Russia, East Germany, and China has had a great influence on Cuban practices since 1959.

Cuban lawmakers perceive law and the lawmaking process as educational. All proposed laws are discussed at neighborhood meetings, in an attempt to inform citizens and obtain consensus, and it usually takes several years before new statutes are adopted.

For example, a new criminal code was drafted between 1969 and 1973, but it was not enacted until 1979. This meant that the Code reflected the conditions in Cuba in the '60s, when there was still fighting with the United States (the Bay of Pigs is only one example) and the CIA was trying to kill Fidel Castro. A new Code went into effect in 1989, a more modern approach which uses incarceration as a last resort and encourages alternative sanctions. The repressive criminal justice system was transformed into a system that relies more heavily on education and re-socialization than on incarceration.

The court system was restructured in 1973 and 1977. At that time the private practice of law was eliminated, and all lawyers were integrated into law collectives (*bufetes colectivos*). Further procedural reforms were made in 1990.

All courts have a mixture of lawyer judges and lay judges. Municipal and provincial courts now have two lay judges and one professionally trained judge, and the Supreme Court has two lay judges and three professional judges. The purpose of lay judges, like our juries, is to bring a non-legalistic, popular sense of justice into the proceedings, and to educate citizens about legal proceedings. Most lay judges belong to the Cuban Communist Party (82

percent in the Supreme Court, 57 percent in provincial courts, 77 percent in municipal courts).

As in the rest of Spanish-speaking America, there is a movement toward a more fully oral and adversarial system such as we have in common-law countries. I saw an oral criminal trial last year in which two men were accused of breaking and entering a home. The only witnesses called to testify at the trial were the victim, the defendants, and the wife of one defendant; no police officer testified, and the trial took less than two hours. The lawyers and judges wore black robes. Witnesses stood before the judges, and a typist (using a loud typewriter) summarized the testimony. The presiding judge frequently interrupted the lawyers and witnesses. I did not see any lawyer cross-examine a witness, but the lawyers did give long and powerful closing arguments. However, I believe Cuban lawyers would benefit from training in direct and cross-examination skills and the techniques of persuasion in oral trials.

Trials (such as the one I saw) which carry penalties of less than eight years in prison have one professional judge and two lay judges; more serious crimes have three professional judges and two lay judges. Lay judges are nominated by fellow workers and elected by the municipal or provincial assemblies. They serve one month per year for five years, and work at their regular jobs the rest of the time.

Last July I spent 10 days in Cuba interviewing a number of people about the functioning of their legal system. In general, law professors and older lawyers seem satisfied with the present procedures, whereas younger lawyers are more interested in reform.

Cuba was actually the first country in Latin America to start using oral, adversarial trials in criminal cases. This reform occurred in 1889 when Cuba was still a Spanish colony. Prior to that they used the Inquisition system of written, secret trials, and only in the past 10 years have the other countries of Latin America begun changing their system to an adversarial model.

On July 21 I spoke at an International Criminal Law Seminar which was held at the Summer School of the University of Havana Law School, and was given an award for being a "Founding Professor" of the Summer School. My topic was "The Role of Advocacy in the Procedural Reforms of Latin America," and I criticized the fact that vestiges of the Inquisition system still persist in the Cuban courts (as in the courts of many other Latin American countries that have reformed their procedures).

In the Inquisition system, the judge's role is to investigate the case and determine the "truth" about what happened, while the lawyers simply file written arguments and motions. In an oral, adversarial system, the judge should have a very different role, that of referee, and the job of the lawyers is

to produce evidence and prove their contentions through accreditation and contradiction of witnesses. The judge should be passive, limiting his or her role to guarantying the rights of the parties and deciding the issues. The judge is simply an arbiter.

There are three vestiges of the old system that still persist in Cuba and elsewhere:

(1) When witnesses are called to testify, they first give a spontaneous statement telling what they know about the matter, rather than answering questions of the lawyer who called them. This may seem like a quick and easy way to get their stories told, but more often than not there is a lot of irrelevant and incomplete testimony. Even worse, this practice does not allow the lawyer to develop the testimony in a coherent manner which is consistent with the lawyer's theory of the case. The adversary system is supposed to be contradictory and dialectic, and the lawyers should be in charge of the presentation of the evidence.

(2) After the lawyers have questioned the witnesses, the judges can (and do) question them further. This also may seem to be a good way to make sure that the witnesses tell everything they may know, but the judge's role should be passive, simply listening to the evidence and not trying to "produce" it. However impartial the judge's questions may be, it might have the effect of destroying what one of the parties has accomplished during direct or cross examination. The judge thus loses his neutrality and appears to be just another cross-examiner. If the judges have doubts after hearing the testimony, they are supposed to resolve those doubts in favor of the accused.

(3) Finally, the court rules prohibit the use of leading questions, even during cross-examination. The theory is that leading questions may put words in the witness' mouth, thereby preventing the witness from giving his or her own testimony. Since the witness is normally affiliated with the lawyer who called the witness to testify, this rule makes sense on direct examination. However, the witness will be hostile to the other lawyer, whose job is to show that the witness is mistaken or is lying.

In common-law countries, lawyers try to show that by using leading questions on cross-examination. John Henry Wigmore, the great legal scholar in the United States, said that "without doubt, cross-examination is the best machine invented by man for the discovery of the truth." Another expert, Charles McCormick, said "For two centuries, common law judges and lawyers have considered the opportunity to cross-examine as an essential safeguard of truth...and have insisted that the opportunity be more than a privilege, that it be a right." The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that cross-examination "is essential in determining if a witness is credible."

An Italian scholar, Francesco Carnelutti, said that “Everyone knows that testimonial proof is the most false of all proofs.” For that very reason, court rules ought to permit the most effective methods to demonstrate that the witness may be mistaken or even lying.

In El Salvador, the law on oral adversarial trials was changed in 1998 to permit leading questions on cross-examination, and to prohibit judges from questioning witnesses except to clarify their testimony. The same is now true in Chile, which adopted the oral, adversarial system in criminal cases for the entire country just this past summer.

Despite this fact, several members of my audience spoke out rather strongly against my views. They asked how I could come to Cuba for a few weeks and think that I understood their system. They pointed out that in the United States only about 10 percent of criminal cases actually go to trial and the rest are resolved by plea bargains, whereas in Cuba every single case goes to trial. Defendants cannot plead guilty even if they want to do so! Because of this, they said, the courts do not have time for long cross examinations and lengthy procedures, usually having to hold several trials every day. My response to this was that a lawyer’s job is to advocate strenuously for the client, and to use every technique legally available to persuade the judges that the client’s version is true; if this takes time, then time must be taken to do the job right. That’s what we mean by the adversarial system, and Cuba cannot expect to achieve justice in its criminal cases by continuing to keep vestiges of the old Inquisition system.

### **Dissent**

Many people to whom I spoke felt completely free to tell me how dissatisfied they are with the Cuban legal system. A young lawyer, Fidel Rivero Villasol, told me at length that the court system does not deliver justice in Cuba. The police control the prosecution, suspects don’t (in practice) have a right to a lawyer (though they do have that right on paper), officials are corrupt and accept money under the table, and political cases are decided even before trial.

Comments of this type, whether true or not, reveal a perception among many Cubans that the legal system needs to be reformed. In my opinion, a stronger commitment to the adversarial system and more training in trial skills and effective oral trial techniques would go a long way to improve the Cuban system of justice.

### **The University of Havana**

The University of Havana has 15 schools with 29 separate career paths, as well as several Centers of Study. It has some 20,000 undergraduate students, 19,000 post-graduate students, and 4,000 master’s candidates. Some 600



workers take night courses, and there are 20,000 “distant learners” who study at home and take tests at the University. Thirty-two percent of the professors have their Ph.D. The University has 19 branches in Havana. Higher education is free.

The law school is a five-year course, starting at age 18, and 80 percent of the students are women. Forty-three percent of the graduates pass the national bar exam on their first try. Students must do three years of public service to repay their free education. Graduates work for three years as assistant prosecutors, in a law collective, in tourism, or prepare to become law professors. Under the *descalifón* system, a job is offered to every student who passes the bar exam, with the top student getting first choice, down to the last student.

The students and young lawyers with whom I spoke are very interested in learning more about the common law system used in the United States, England, Australia, and Canada, and specifically about our system of oral, adversarial trials. Once the United States embargo is repealed, law professors, lawyers, and judges should make a concerted effort to go to Cuba to talk and teach about our trial system and to assist in the effort to improve the Cuban legal system. We can also learn a lot from studying the Cuban system, including the use of lay judges, which we might be able to incorporate into our court system in the United States.



**Part IV**  
**Making Material Culture**



## *Art in a Changing Cuba*

*Natania Remba*

Despite the lack of a national art market in Cuba, artistic talent is flourishing. This paper addresses questions that will be explored in a forthcoming exhibition on contemporary Cuban art at the Boston University Art Gallery. The exhibition and accompanying catalogue will include viewpoints gleaned from 2005 interviews with several renowned Cuban artists, art historians from Havana University, art administrators from Casa de Las Américas, and writers from two major art journals, *Artecubano* and *Revolución y Cultura*. Although the exhibition will include a broad view on Cuban art, this article focuses primarily on current issues relating to Cuban art production and the art market.

The first topic of discussion touches upon the applicability of a transition paradigm to the Cuban art world. The concept—as applied to the economy, society, and culture of Cuba—has been widely debated and has even been rejected by some in the artistic community. For many Cubans, the very notion of the contemporary art scene being “transitional” is an outsider’s construct. Foreigners often discuss “the transition” as if it is eminent, but because of the dynamic nature of Cuba’s art and culture, the applicability of a static transition paradigm is questionable and ultimately unproductive. Clearly, periods of artistic change in Cuba are not clear cut, but rather, are complex processes of ongoing opposition between preservation and transformation of culture and identity. It would be more suitable to forecast the future of the art world, not as fixed, but in flux, or as a complex process of dialectical dichotomies that embody the inherent social contradictions of continuity and change. Artist José Angel Toirac put it quite brilliantly when he said: “The word ‘transition’ has a very specific connotation in the argot of the tensions between Cuba and the United States. The phrase ‘future transition’ expresses an appallingly simplistic and erroneous idea of the culture. Cultural identity is

not a moving towards a specific point or an arriving at a specific point, even if we do find that point in the future. It is a vivid process of constant change and transformation. It is about a permanent transition that lives in the past, populates the present, and continues into the future and beyond.” (Toirac, 2005)

Change, as in “transition,” is used by Cubans as a kind of malleable construct. The following comment of Toirac illustrates this amorphous notion: “When I was born, Fidel was already the most important living political figure in Cuba. I cannot conceive of a Cuba without Fidel. It is absurd to do so, because that would be like pretending he is eternal. I know a change will happen, but I am not prepared for such a situation. What I am sure of is that Cuba—not Fidel—had a history before and will have a history after.” Toirac later added:

Every society changes every day and even more so a society like Cuba, which is a revolutionary society. For instance, unemployed women, who had become prostitutes to earn a living, were quite amazingly working in a bank the very next day managing the money of the wealthy! That was the revolution. That is what makes Cuba a dynamic society. The logic of Cuban thought is change, so it is logical for us to expect even more change.” (Toirac, 2005)

While some in the Cuban art community hope for a political reform translated into an open market economy, others take comfort in believing that the political elite has a calculated plan aimed at the continuance of a socialist regime. Several angrily resist even the concept of a transition and deny the role of the United States as the solution. However, the majority seem puzzled by this question of transition and voice wonder about its direction, its beginning, and its end. Because of the wide array of opinions given by interviewees, a monolithic forecast of “a transition paradigm” in the Cuban art world is not applicable.

Actually, Cuba has undergone a myriad of transitions since the 1959 revolution, advancing towards a socialistic future while restructuring its strategy towards economic stabilization. Within a 10-year period—from about 1993 to 2004—its economy also evolved, from the legalization of the dollar and the creation of a partial dollar economy to full sanctions against the dollar and the introduction of the peso convertible cubano. Comparable transformations have occurred in the art world as well. The new Cuban art of the latter half of the twentieth century evolved from numerous restrictions in the “gray years” during the seventies; to more openness during the “Cuban Renaissance” of the 1980s; and finally, to the exile of former established artists and the emergence of younger artists during the 1990s. Perhaps the question we

should pose is: what can we forecast for the next series of dialectical processes in the Cuban art world and its market?

The Cuban art economy is moving closer to North American and European models, with the export of Cuban art to wealthy collectors and institutions that can afford such work. It is interesting to contemplate how a socialist country, with a rich artistic tradition, could develop such a dynamic international art market, but not a viable national one. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the cultural model of Cuba has been based on mass democratization and the ideals of the revolution. All sectors of society had the opportunity to produce and appreciate art, but, for many years, the state demonized a capitalistic buyer mentality and praised culture as the antidote for consumerism. The art market was used primarily as a tool to promote national culture, rather than to advance private interests.

Despite such ideology, however, individual collectors were able to acquire artwork through long-term credit arrangements with Havana Gallery and through participation in art auctions organized by the National Museum of Fine Arts and Bonfil Gallery. But, during the socio-economic crisis in the early nineties, the state closed art institutions, eliminated outreach programs and vastly reduced the circulation of artworks. Simultaneously, the export of the Cuban artistic patrimony, not covered by the embargo, was legalized. Legal export of art, therefore, resulted in the opening of the art market to foreign buyers, which in turn inflated the prices of Cuban art. These newly inflated prices for art—based on international standards—were not affordable by either the Cuban general public or by local collectors. At the same time, visits from foreign gallery owners and museum curators increased and provided artists with international exposure and the adoption of Western models for art sales. Because of this new consumer-based economy and the import of international standards of review and criticism, Cuban artists became strategically poised to move away from collective projects and socialist subjects and towards the embracing of individual styles with personal themes. For many, financial survival depended upon creating works of art for both the cultivated foreigner as well as the ordinary tourist.

While the government established a new centralized gallery system called *Génesis*, ostensibly to eliminate competition among artists, the galleries actually catered to outside markets and resembled those in capitalistic economies. Some galleries were more prestigious than others, depending on a variety of factors: the prominence of the artists being exhibited, the size and location of the galleries, and whether or not they sold to a domestic or foreign market. In order to ensure sales and profitability, the government accepted or rejected—in accordance with their own standards—the applications of artists looking for an exhibition venue. Cuban artists, who were accepted into the national

gallery system, were allowed to keep 50 to 60 percent of the profits made upon the sale of any work. While this was beneficial for the most recognized artists, those rejected artists looked for alternative marketing formats and usually found them in tourist venues, such as state-sponsored art fairs and street stands.

The Cuban government today is faced with a dilemma: domestic sales of Cuban art may have the unanticipated consequence of actually devaluing those works of art. For instance, a foreign collector might buy a Cuban work of art for US\$500 in the United States, but that same piece might sell for less than US\$50 in Cuba. Naturally, both the Cuban government and the artist would prefer to establish a higher price point for sales. Consequently, the government appears to focus its marketing efforts on the foreign rather than the domestic collector. As a result, Cuban artists are becoming less dependent on a state salary as they rely increasingly on their own resources to sell in dollar equivalency. Many artists earn an above average annual income, compared to similar wage earners in other professions. That is why the Cuban art community is enthusiastically embracing the North American and European markets and concentrating less on its own national art market.

These market trends have caused concern in the Ministry of Culture. What is it doing to combat the forces of the international art market, in order to regain influence with the local artists? How can it get artists to once again focus on national institutions, even when these institutions do not pay? The Ministry, at its core, is dedicated to the promotion of the visual arts and has served as an intermediary between local needs and international competition. Since many artists seem to have shifted from the traditional role of the “cultural worker” to become earners of hard currency, (Camnitzer, 2003: 333) they have learned to negotiate with national art institutions from a stronger position, and they have the weight and wealth of the international art market behind them. For this reason, the Ministry is attempting to strengthen its own art institutions and to promote a culture of collectors, while still upholding its socialist principles. In an effort to stimulate art sales, for instance, the Ministry encouraged the development of galleries in towns outside of Havana and commissioned artists to produce works for Cuban hotels and government buildings. It has also proposed that state organizations allocate part of their investment budget to buy art. State institutions—such as banks, stores, and government offices—have already invested in art for their buildings, thereby expanding the national artistic patrimony, and at the same time, serving as an educational opportunity for the public who visit such buildings.

The Ministry has another project under consideration: the creation of a national gallery of contemporary Cuban art. In 2002, Rafael Acosta de Arriba—former president of the National Council of Visual Arts—said,



“Today’s collector culture becomes the museums of tomorrow.” (De la Hoz, 2002: 29). Acosta de Arriba’s statement may sound intellectually reasonable, but a collector culture in Cuba today is virtually non-existent. Although a few members of the artistic community purchase art inexpensively and artists may exchange artwork among themselves, they do not consider themselves collectors. The Ministry has attempted to promote a collectors’ culture among average Cuban citizens by selling reproductions of original artwork on posters, postcards, art books, and fine art prints, or on plates, cups and mugs. It has also looked into opening stores that sell arts and crafts, and it has even offered interior design services, hoping that these efforts will enhance art appreciation by the general public, who would buy and collect art as they would any collectible, such as books or stamps.

The Ministry has also worked diligently to generate the growth of national collectors through the in-house and online art auction business *Subastahabana (Havanaauction)*, and through the establishment of state-sponsored indoor and outdoor art fairs in Havana and other towns. The main art fair—the Biennale of Havana—has attempted to highlight the cultural value of the artwork, regardless of art market considerations, while focusing on educational activities and the exhibition of smaller shows off-site. Unfortunately, public access has sometimes been limited, due to high ticket prices, and the attempts to stress cultural value have been somewhat unsuccessful. (Camnitezer, 2003: 333)

In addition to these projects, the Ministry has encouraged a greater public appreciation of visual art through journals—such as *Artecubano*—monthly newsletters, art books, television programs dedicated to Cuban artists, and electronic bulletins and state-run Web sites. Moreover, the Ministry has provided better copyright protection for individual artists, and established benefit programs dealing with disability, maternity leave, pensions and death. Artists may be entitled to retain 12 percent of their salary as a benefit, pegged at 200 to 500 pesos taken per month, depending on the value of their sales. (*La Seguridad Social de los Creadores Plásticos*, 2001: 91).

With all of these new programs in place, the Ministry has demonstrated its commitment to supporting artists and to strengthening the role played by the commercial entities that function as their patrons. Nonetheless, the international market continues to have a strong presence in Cuban artistic circles and is not only shaping—but may continue to regulate—artistic production in Cuba. Knowing this, can we predict what forms artistic production will take in a changing Cuba?

Cuban iconography today thrives on diversity, originality, and individuality, and cannot be placed into one overarching category. It may more accurately be classified as “pluralistic.” Even when it has a strong connection

with the international avant-garde and its model is primarily imported from North America and Europe, it is usually contextualized within Cuban culture. Artistic practices very often balance a sense of “Cuban-ess,” that is Cubanismo, with foreign demands. Nevertheless, new artistic products appear closer in sensibility to the Western mainstream than to what one would typically associate with a socialist country. Artist Sandra Ramos interpreted Cubanismo not as homogeneous in nature, but, rather, as quite wide-ranging and complex. She said, “In today’s world, it is difficult to establish what defines national art. The national interest is increasingly more diffused and extremely varied.” (Ramos, 2005). Elvia Rosa, an editor of *Artecubano*, shared her thoughts regarding the current transformation of the arts in Cuba. “There is not one particular trend that dominates. Today, there is a global equilibrium.” (Rosa, 2005).

One of the consequences of global reintegration is the regulation of artistic production. Toirac expanded on the effects of this outcome. “At the end of the eighties, the art game between artist and institution was clear—the state regulated artists. Today, the rules of the game have changed. The game is a tacit accord, in which both artist and institution struggle for the same goal, that is, to find a way to convert art into gold.” (Toirac, 2005) Since market pressures are bound to influence art production in today’s Cuba, many artists claim to intentionally avoid making commercial art, but they are clearly playing with market rules, if only to sell ideas. According to Acosta de Arriba, “The market—willingly or not—establishes bullet-proof vests, and that which is not commercial passes immediately to a second (third, fourth...15th) plane.” (De la Hoz, 2002: 23) For Acosta de Arriba, all of these market barriers are new and there is no point of reference—no history from which to learn. He elaborated: “The status quo continues to be the Revolution, but the transformations are profound and, in [the art] sector, radical.” (De la Hoz, 2002: 23).

Where we may begin to witness the affects of outside influences upon Cuban artists is in their creative practices. Works of art may be smaller in size, to ensure easier transport abroad. Artist Abel Barroso created a piece that was specifically designed to travel in a wooden box and be assembled later by the consumer. Some artists also employ a visual language that lampoons the challenges facing Cubans today—a desire to attain economic stability, while still being trapped in the hard economic realities of the present. Barroso, for instance, carved a woodcut portraying Cuba as the embodiment of a sensual woman born of the Revolution, but now in her new role of attracting business and investors.

During the 1980s, visual arts played a critical societal role, and many artists produced works that made strong political statements about pressing

issues in Cuban society. But today, although many of these same issues remain, the political emphasis is being diluted. Artists are distancing themselves from the stereotype that all Cuban art must have a political subtext. In one instance, foreigners interpreted a painting by Toirac, which depicted Castro, as being politically charged. Toirac explained his position by saying: “You shouldn’t have a black and white attitude towards my art. It explores the whole gamut between the yes and the no, and the pros and the cons of socialism. When we see a representation of a pharaoh, a portrait of Napoleon, or the images of 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.” (Toirac, 2005)

Many Cuban artists are considering how they present their artwork in first voice rather than by fulfilling pre-imposed agendas. Ramos explained this by stating that “sometimes, it is not a good thing to be recognized by government officials, because it may actually compromise an individual’s artistic integrity. The state may request that you work collectively with other artists on a pre-selected theme—for instance, to decorate a hotel with a mural—but, the work might be interpreted as propaganda.” (Ramos, 2005) As more Cuban artists move away from collective projects towards more independent works, they realize the need to distinguish themselves to remain competitive. They work to appeal to foreigners, not only for economic purposes, but also to maintain their international reputations. Many are already returning to work on traditional national themes, as it has become more trendy and such work sells well. Others seek recognition by the international artistic community by strategically integrating gender and race issues into their work or by marketing themselves as feminists or multi-ethnic. However, some sense a danger in such strategies. When artists produce works based on outsider constructs, they may dilute the authenticity of Cuban art, or *Cubanismo*. Toirac expanded on this concept. “The market regulates stereotypes of what is Latino, Black, or Asian art. It is challenging to be promoted by the market, when one falls outside market-established stereotypes.” (Toirac, 2005)

In conclusion, although art in its purist construct should not have a monetary payout as its goal, the prosperous global art market is having a significant influence on art practices in Cuba today. The future of the contemporary Cuban art world may look like this: members of the Cuban artistic community will either submit to or resist market pressures. Either way, they will be compelled to enter into a process of ongoing negotiation between the collective and the individual, the cosmopolitan and the local, the Western and the indigenous, the state and the market. Young collectors will attempt to cultivate a nascent national art economy, while the older generation will work to maintain the principles of the revolution. Foreign dealers will focus on the

development of an international art market, while Cuban critics will concentrate on maintaining the purity of a socially committed art practice. Local artists will work to maintain national identity, while artists in exile will mix their heritage with that of their adopted host country. Nevertheless, despite Cuba's attempts to reintegrate into a global economy and to enter into the international discourse, artists in Cuba will probably remain as outsiders for many years, as their country exhibits an exceptionally idiosyncratic dichotomy—a socialist and restrictive art economy, with an open and enlightened artistic community.

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# *Material Culture Across Revolutions*

*Raúl Rubio*

Conversations on transition in contemporary Cuba typically contemplate postulations on the end of Castro's regime; some admittedly hypothesize on the timing of Castro's death and its aftermath. Theories abound on the metamorphosis of Cuban socialism; many envision the gains of a free market economy, while others postulate on the consequences of an ultra-capitalistic nation and United States intervention. In this essay I argue that a detrimental part of Cuba's ongoing (and future) "national" renewal, long-term re-development and global re-integration agenda should be an evaluation of the evolving cultural imaginary established as "Cuban" nationality or national identity. As such, I propose that by engaging in the study of "Cuban"-oriented cultural production—especially popular cultural materials—new arguments broaching the definitions of Cuban national identity can be postulated. I argue that by tracing the particularities pertaining to nationally-oriented cultural materials and by analyzing their aesthetic qualities (both artistic and ideological) and relevant commodifications (the economies they are part of) an accurate assessment of Cuba's current and future nation-state and citizenship, both territorial and diasporic, can be formulated.

First and foremost I part with the premise of the existence of diverse definition(s) of Cuban nationalism which take into account the multiple and diverse meanings of "Cuban" identities, a topic which has been central to the discussion of Cuba in a transnational context since the 1990s. In line with historian Louis A. Pérez's arguments in his seminal text *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (1999), where he posits: "the proposition of national identity not a fixed and immutable construct but rather as cultural artifact, as contested—and contesting—representations often filled with contradictions and incoherences, almost always in flux" (Pérez, 1999: 8), I propose that considerations of "Cuban" be non-cohesive, non-collective,

a shifting narrative of sorts that is more proximate to the idea of a composite of sparse “national memories.” Until now “Cuban” nationality has been profiled in the light of fluid, multi-national, and I would argue “exilic” formats. In the anthology *Cuba, the Elusive Nation: Interpretations of National Identity* (2000), edited by Damián Fernández and Madeline Cámara, theoretical undertakings point to the same idea of a fluidity and dispersity of Cuban nationalism. However, I align myself more with Antoni Kapcia’s (2000, 2005) amplification of “Cuban” as myth. He approaches “Cuban” culture metaphorically and correlates his metaphor of Cuba’s traditional national myths to those of the historic and current imaginaries of “Cuban” culture. Most of these are continuously composed of the elements pertaining to the national foundational allegories tied to the imaginaries of Cuban nationality and identity that rise out of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They relate to or combine aspects pertaining to “Cuban” racial, ethnic, ideology, and class composition; the urban versus rural binary; colonial, Republican-era, and Revolutionary-era historical allusions; and many exoticized images of stereotypes attached to Cuba. In this essay I analyze the aesthetics of visual popular cultural items as vehicles, and holders, of these national imaginaries, while at the same time building upon their material commodification. I specifically approach items of graphic art, photography, and objects of nostalgia. I hypothesize on their production and consumption, while observing how socio-political discourses found within them partake in modeling or remodeling the myths of “Cuba.”

My general research proposal beyond this essay is to embrace many areas of Cuban-themed consumption in a global perspective, specifically those transactions pertinent to cultural materials and places: literary, photographic and print production; visual and media production; and those objects or sites typically labeled “popular culture.” Along these lines I specifically consider contemporary, culturally-oriented commodities created either within territorial Cuba, or in international sites, some connected to Cuban diasporic localities. As mentioned, many of these materials are commodified to include allusions to the traditionally-established Cuban national identities, yet more current are those tied to themes surrounding the ongoing Revolutionary process that began in 1959. My discussion parts with the consideration that transformations within the territorial confines of the island evolve in connection with the transnational and global locations and actions of Cuban citizens, at times postulating on the roles these citizens hold for the future of Cuba. My focus not only relies on the exchanges that occur within the island but also those concerning transnational movements either originating or concluding in Cuba or even those not territorially bound to Cuba yet Cuban-identified. They range from early-Revolution-era and Cold-War-era socialist

paraphernalia to those based on the Cuban heyday of the 1950s. Many Cuban citizens of the diaspora and hyphenated Cuban-Americans in the U.S. participate in a global market of Cuban-oriented goods that are manufactured in a multitude of sites outside Cuba. These materials are produced by both Cubans and non-Cubans alike, who intend on portraying an idealized Cuba of the past, pertaining to one or more of the socio-historic ambiances of Cuba. Since the 1990s, however, the demand for Cuban-themed products has increasingly been in connection to a wide variety of non-Cubans, manufacturers of clothing, rum, cigars, and antique replicas. The label “Cuban” has thrived on everything from ethnic food to popular cocktails; objects and subjects that might not have any territorial connection to the island or its culture, but that are built within a composite of traits or characteristics aligned with an expectation of what “Cuban” is or could be.

I place this type of analysis within the scope of Cuban material cultural studies which I denominated as such in a previously printed journal article, “Materializing Havana and Revolution: Cuban Material Culture” (Rubio, 2005) which appeared in *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*. I defined “Cuban material culture” as the market of products that are Cuban-identified; a sizable mass that takes into account trade material goods, cultural artifacts and locations of consumer transactions based on the assumed compositions of “Cuban” nationality. In that piece I argued that within the aesthetic discourses found in these items there is a fixation on exemplifying the diverse notions pertaining to the urban symbolic of Havana and the historical processes of the Revolutions of Cuba. These focuses on Havana and Revolution(s), I argued, have become thematic centerpieces of cultural production that is “Cuban” identified. In this piece, similar arguments are discussed yet, the focus lies in pointing to the utilization of diverse elements of assumed “Cuban” identities or myths as selling-points for these materials. Their demands are aligned in many cases with a desire to visually, in the situations broached here, play upon the stereotypes and exoticized nature of the labels of “Cuban.” Most salient are “exported” or “globally constructed” goods which transcend the territorial borders of Cuba and function in the globalized circuit of Cuban cultural products.

My proposal departs with the idea that sadly, and unfortunately, consumption on the island consists of limited government rationing, a weak Cuban currency that has been dependant on the influx of foreign currencies, mainly dollars, that are later converted into pesos, and an underground black market of mercantile material needs (food, medicine, clothes, etc.) and material wants (video movies, internet access, brand name clothes, toys, etc.). Meanwhile, a strong marketplace outside the island thrives on manufacturing Cuban-identified materials in a transnational context—Cuban-style *guayab-*

eras, designed in Cuban Miami and manufactured in Taiwan, for instance; or Cuban coffee or rum produced in diverse Latin American countries and sold as “Cuban” in Miami and New Jersey (or the “International” or “Ethnic” aisle of your local supermarket). I demonstrate here that these objects, beyond being representative of the established national and mythical “Cuban” labels, are nevertheless tangible to real historic, social, ideological and political characteristics and therefore innately connected rubric of the nation and its umbrella economy. I propose that in many cases the aforementioned identity notions, as well as the ones pertaining to Havana and revolutionary fixations, are represented, appropriated and materialized with the intent of marketing upon the popularity of these notions for economic gain.

In the United States, the taste for things Cuban, specifically those tastes that encompass the notions of Havana and Revolution(s), pertain to a multitude of reasons including the most salient, ideological demarcation, observable in contrasting subjects (or objects) and notions, such as Che Guevara paraphernalia and concept memorabilia such as the ones framed by the logo “Havana, B.C.,” meaning “Before Castro.” Purchasing practices most clearly participate in the representation of images pertaining to two distant poles; one evokes Cold-War and post-Cold War eras which establish Havana as the last stronghold of Marxist and socialist ideals in Latin America, while the other establishes Havana as a nostalgic site, claiming the Old-world Cuba motif, particularly Cuba’s heyday prior to 1959.

In my research I have proposed the formulation of a new concept, “*Cubana*,” which encompasses the objects and sites that pertain to that established as material culture. The concept of *Cubana* is defined as a label created in sequence of the established Americana and Africana area studies that relate national identity to the consumption of popular culture. A definition of *Cubana* builds off of the research done on the concept of Americana, a loose term consisting of meanings of national rigueur derived from a grouping of texts that are symbolic of the culture of the United States. Since Americana includes media and is focused on the concepts labeled as material culture, I fashion *Cubana* as a field including print, visual, and material culture.

The lack of empirical data on the production and consumption of these cultural economies does not allow a comprehensive sociologically-based project offering specific trends and taxonomies. For that reason this essay does not intend to create this type of survey but rather an examination of a partial selection of texts within the parameters of “Cuban” cultural capital. Given the vast number of Cuban-identified texts of a variety of genres there is no doubt that Cuba has created a niche market within material cultural studies. The present work approaches just a few photographic and graphic art texts as well as some objects of nostalgia within this large-scale dialectic.



Rising out of this analysis, I propose that the most visible signs of social-political and economic turnaround for Cuba will be in the forms of the next revolution, one possibly stemming from shifts in cultural production and consumption, the effects of consumerism on politics, and a future of free-market enterprise. As such, I envision the study of Cuban material culture across revolutions as a detrimental part of this research frame. By juxtaposing the images and visual cultures that span the “golden” heyday of the Havana of the 1940s-1950s, the triumph of the Revolution and the prolific socialist expansion of the late 1960s and 1970s, and the more recent pictorials of the “Special Period,” one can deduce that the evolving situations of Cuba have been ingrained on the utilization of image. Mostly for export, but also utilized for internal social impact in terms of motivation mechanisms, these images have been globalized as trademarks of the meanings of Cuba, venturing to offer insight on how Cubans have conceptualized and re-conceptualized themselves and how others have in effect appropriated and contributed to these conceptualizations in the era of post-national citizenship.

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### *The Nation in Graphic Arts, Photography and Memorabilia*

Two sets of graphic art books explicitly counterpoint the material culture of the two main historical periods relevant to this study, the Republican era (1902-1959) and the Revolution era (1959-present). In the first set, *Cuba Style: Graphics from the Golden Age of Design* (2002) by Vicki Gold Levi includes a nostalgic visual journey through posters and touristic memorabilia of “Havana’s Heyday,” circa the 1940s-1950s. Most interesting are the collection of luggage labels from Cuban airlines, mementos from Havana hotels, and menus from restaurants such as the Sans Souci and La Florida. These items have a patina texture of age which in turn has been transferred onto the replication of the book. The graphic book, a coffee-table style pictorial, is in turn a present-day commodified piece that extenuates the imaginary of a lost Old World indicative of a certain specificity of distinctive tastes and privileged culture. An explanation of this can be observed in the text that accompanies the graphics of the book. The author lays out her coordinates for envisioning “Cuban” culture or what she calls “Cubanness” by demonstrating how the texture of these materials were tied to the dominant bourgeois class. She states, “The proliferation of Cuban bourgeois culture was encouraged in the pages of a handful of cosmopolitan magazines published in Havana during the first half of the twentieth century. The Havana-based *Social*, *Bohemia*, and *Carteles* propagated a true sense of Cubanness.” (Levi, 2002: 126) Levi points to the formulation of the label of “Cuban” of the times as that pertinent to this upper-crust world and juxtaposes the dissemination of the

marketed exotic romance of Cuba with the marketed and privileged world of bourgeois tastes. This internationalist and elitist representation, one of the common realities and stylistics of the time, is explained in Levi's text as intent by the government and the business sector which promoted Cuba's (and Havana's) prosperity as packaged tourism or packaged culture. Rosalie Schwartz, in her book *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (1997) also refers to this packaging by Cuban civic organizations and business venture capitalists, most in line with promoting Cuba to U.S. consumers during the 1940s and 1950s. Levi's book allows for an interpretation of how and why Havana's mystic and urban symbolic materialized a demand for Cuba and Cuban things throughout the Western Hemisphere. Levi claims that "advertising had two missions: to sell as many goods as possible to a large Cuban bourgeoisie and to sell Cuba to North American tourists and investors;" (Levi, 2002: 8) a reasonable explanation supportive of the theory that visual graphics and materials marketed upon that mystique. Havana, in the 1940s and 1950s, was a touristic center which offered the entertainment venues that the tourists and investors were looking for and a metropolis that regional elite Latin Americans and countryside Cubans (that could afford to travel there) yearned to be a part of. Havana offered the best of both worlds; a city and beach area all compacted within the Havana radius.

Of particular interest to me is the tourism discourse that is observed in the Levi book's aesthetic from the onset. The poster used for the front cover, for example, is an image of a man sitting inside an aircraft looking out of a large window that overlooks Havana Bay. The view features the Morro Castle and Old Havana framed in a top/down perspective as the man holds in hand an apparent travel guidebook, which for the book cover serves as the location for the names of the editor and art director. The narrative blends a historical perspective that mentions the exuberance of the times and details the work of the Cuban grafistas who in their particular style—which "combined elements of art nouveau, art deco, European modernism, and Vegas-style kitsch" (Levi, 2002) with a Cuban sensibility—perpetuated the marketed appeal desired by entrepreneurs and city promoters. In Levi's introduction, the usage of a particular word combination struck me as interesting; she describes these materials, posters and objects as "ephemeral artifacts." In the same light she accurately points to Cuba's post-colonial relation with Spain after 1898 and the newfound intimate relations with the United States, which very much affected the vacation-oriented content, a civilized and cosmopolitan-like urban appeal, and brand advertisement that went into many of these posters and ads. The aura maintained was that of a modern, at times tropicalized exotic destination, yet as Levi points to, "no truly independent ideological or philosophical foundation emerged" (Levi, 2002: 11) within the aesthetic of

these graphics. The spirit though, I would argue, a consumerist one, was to appropriate the myth that was created by the travel industry. In many graphics tropically-dressed women invite, welcome, or provoke the tourist, while in others scenic views of Havana or the beaches purvey viewers with expectations. Most interesting to me are the graphics of souvenirs, postcards, and locales such as restaurants and cabarets, Sloppy Joe's, El Floridita Bar and Restaurant and Tropicana. Other graphics memorialize Cuban products such as cigar labels, movie posters, song sheets and record albums.

On the other hand, the graphic book, *Street Graphics Cuba* (2001), by Barry Dawson presents a visual journey of objects within Cuban material culture pertaining to the Revolution-era. Based mostly on the culture of the Revolution, it presents graphic material pertinent to Che memorabilia and street propaganda that serves as public art. The graphic style presents a different utopia than the previous period text, creating another type of glossed and patinized appearance. This one is based on the aesthetic of socialism and the particularities of Cold-War fetish. Objects include national motivation billboards along Havana streets and on buildings as well as souvenirs with Marxist rhetoric. Others contain propaganda slogans that support Revolution civic movements such as that supporting the national sugar crop during the 1970's. I found the most symbolic to be a postage stamp section which featured commemorative stamps of Soviet accomplishments like the space program and a one remembering the twentieth anniversary of the Granma fleet in 1976. In another section a more recent occurrence is graphically represented. A billboard and a poster demand the return of Elian González during the bi-national political battle that altered many sensitivities and created significant tension between the two countries. On the billboard there is a photo of Elian leaning against a barbed wire fence, looking onto the other side. The implied message is that he is imprisoned, while the statement on the billboard says "*Devuelvan nuestro niño*" ("Return our child"). (Dawson, 2001: 33) Of most peculiarity is the purchase location where I located the book. Although I keep myself attuned to new publications nationally and internationally I seem to run into some new publications by chance in the strangest locations. This one, for example, I found sifting through the national clothing store Urban Outfitters. This may be indicative of the store's market segment which targets college students as well as 20 and 30 year olds.

In her essay "Picturing Havana: History, Vision, and the Scramble for Cuba," Ana María Dopico argues that the "photographic image has triumphed in exporting Cuba during the Special Period" (Dopico, 1997: 452). She goes on to prove how the images of Havana circulate as "currency and tableaux" an interesting combination since the meaning of tableaux specifically denotes "a depiction of a scene on a stage by silent and motionless cos-

tuned participants.” The combination of the meanings of the two words used by Dopico exemplify the cultural commodity of the photography genre pertinent to Cuba of late (e.g. the Special Period) but also demonstrates that there is a conscious consideration of how the scene or site is “staged,” an ingredient of the photo symbolic and the performance of Cuban identity. The idea of staging narrowly becomes the means of combining the aesthetic of the text, the ideological context, if any (although it may be inherent and not purposeful), and the economies it strives to encounter, meaning the consumer market it capitalizes on. Similar to the analysis of popular culture, the photographic and graphic art genre combines the use of metaphor, allegory, stereotype, and the nuances associated with ideology. Inclusive are highbrow and lowbrow tastes as well as elite and popular registers which withhold substantial correlations to symbolic meanings of *lo cubano*, *cubanidad*, and *cubanía*. In the same light, the book *¡Revolución!: Cuban Poster Art*, edited by Lincoln Cushing (2003), relates the historical transformation of the mid-1960s through the 1980s, figuring the prolific appearance of poster art pertaining to the social experimentation of the period. As a medium to generate the messages of the Revolution, they were distributed both in and out of Cuba. The content varied from film marketing to promotional advertisements announcing resources for citizens. These encouraged participation in civil brigades and advocated voluntary work for the sugar harvest, health brigades and armed forces. The theme of iconography was common, including subjects such as Che Guevara and Sandino, as well as abstractions pertaining to military resistance against imperialism. In contrast to the previously studied graphics, whose purpose was to expand the economies of tourism, these were produced in order to build solidarity within the newfound socialist state. Albeit, many of the film posters of the ICAIC, [Cuban Institute of Cinematic Art and Industry], as Cushing confirms, have been replicated in order to “meet the demand for sales,” in many instances via the internet. Most interesting to me is the point Cushing raises in summarizing the importance of this poster art for Cuban history vis-à-vis other graphic arts of Cuba. He states, “Posters are a vital, expressive visual art form that has historically been a medium of choice for presenting oppositional voices.” (Cushing, 2001:19) Although it seems this was not the case for these posters during this specific timeframe of Cuban history, there is straight forward allusion to the effort of national pride that these provided for the country. Since then, one could argue, they have been memorialized and commodified as remembrances of those “lost” times, ideological incursions onto the journey that the country embarked upon during that first revolutionary epoch. In contrast, as I will now expand upon, the Revolution’s “Special Period” has been an

extremely photographic site; visual images of Cuba have been prefaced in numerous pictorial books and documentaries.

In the same format, the June 1999 edition of the *National Geographic Magazine* featured Cuba with a photo essay by David Alan Harvey accompanying a text by John J. Putnam. The title of the article, "Evolution in the Revolution: Cuba," is indicative of the changes within the then 40-year-old regime. It can be implemented first, as symbolic of the evolution of services within the socialist state (given the aftermath of the post-Cold War era); and second, as an example of the changes of the realities of the socialism of the Revolution which originally had a tight grip of its anti-capitalist rhetoric, meaning an evolution toward an economic recovery in the shape of the touristic.

The most conclusive ingredient the article pointed to, possibly much more importantly than its written content, was the incredible popularity and attraction the images of Cuba had obtained within the North American public. Scholars such as Dopico credit this new image fetish to the tourist campaign that began with 1995 foreign investment promotion of the island. The cover of the magazine featured a young boy hanging out from the side of a car, his skin tone darker than white, with a piercing look directly at the camera. Yet what the images portrayed was the young face of the Revolution, a young boy's smiling profile and body with a red towel on his shoulder, a frame unarguably affected by a socialist tone. The photo may also be taken as a play on the pioneer handkerchief that students wear when they take the oath of becoming a "Pioneer for the Revolution." Although possibly a far-fetched consideration, the substitute towel may be symbolic of the irony of the island's turn to tourism for survival. The towel may be representative of tourism (capitalism) which has substituted the pioneer handkerchief (ideology) of the Revolution as its newly adopted morale.

The photograph which opens the interior layout of the photo spread within the magazine has a similar content. On the *Malecón* (or seaside promenade) a girl of similar dark skin tone looks into the camera while wearing clothes that serve as a play on the Cuban flag. She wears a short blue mini-skirt and a white t-shirt that has an abstract post-modern red heart in the middle of it. This heart can be considered as a parallel to the perennial Revolutionary image of Che that has been globally commercialized; the heart significant of love takes the place of the ideological rhetoric symbol of Guevara's face. This parallelism may translate as a move from "we sell ideology" to "we sell love" as the new slogan for tourism. This portrayal would be taken as play on the *jineterismo* or hustling economy that became prevalent since the island's economy began focusing on tourism. Many of these hustlers offer a multitude of services from tour guide to prostitute while others

hope romance or marriage will help them leave the island. By contrast the *National Geographic Magazine* used a simple and straightforward explanation for the picture of the girl. It claimed a typical romanticized interpretation which stated: "The austere times affecting her island haven't made a Havana teenager lose heart."

The pictures of the photo essay feature the distinct images of Cuba and partake in what Dopico labeled "a visual and virtual historical theme park." (Dopico, 1997: 452). They create a variable combination portraying a colonial Caribbean island, an innocent countryside and a third-world city. Yet beyond this romanticized connotation, the pictures are loaded with meanings and contradictions of a place held in time. A Havana street scene features a man wearing a New Orleans jazz t-shirt and a woman porting a Marina style purse from the U.S., as well as two younger women wearing fashionable clothing that is very American. These examples demonstrate the influence of the United States in spite of the existing embargo. The mutual attraction of the two cultures is primarily visualized through commercial means. The photo essay in the June issue was a preview to the *National Geographic* book that would be published a few months later with the simple title *Cuba*, also featuring the photography of David Alan Harvey but excluding a textual narrative leaving the photo interpretation up to the viewer. Yet the publication of the book performs or stages the exterior gaze of foreigners to a place previously left out of the visual limelight for almost 30 years. In fact this can be supported by the one book that did a similar task a decade before; *Six Days in Havana* (1986), by James Michener, which provided a the discursive representation that was expected at that time. Its platform was a project that documented for the "American public" what was not visibly or tactically permissible given the embargo.

Therefore, photography formulates the latest global presentation of the historical scramble of understanding and documenting Cuban affairs. What Dopico leaves out is an expanded consideration of the markets of these products. Even though she points to the markets of Miami and New Jersey, she only alludes to the specific North American commodification of the pictorial texts she minutely examines. She does point to the interesting conundrum of the market appetite of the U.S. desiring Cuban images. William M. LeoGrande in his chapter, "The United States and Cuba: Strange Engagement," which appeared in the book *Cuba, the United States, and the Post-Cold War World* (2005), points to the fact that commerce seems to be winning over anti-communism, as farmers from the Midwest continue to push for open economic relations as Cuban exiles, who are still interested in a "strong" embargo, seem to be pushed aside by trade interests. Dopico finely textures the exportation of the images of the Special Period as a triumph of

Cuban foreign economy and excels in pointing to the potential re-colonization that the photographs seem to announce. The number of Cuba-oriented photography publications based on Havana, Cuba, and the Revolution has grown significantly. A quick internet search provides more than 37 titles published between 1999 and 2006, indicating a huge consumer market.

Perhaps one of the greatest observations Dopico brings to the table of photography as material culture is that of observing the agency of the portrayed and that of the viewer. She considers the enlightenment of the consumer as a historic one and alludes to the multiple fetishes that contrive Cuba. These vary from the touristic route of ruins in Havana, the Caribbean paradise frozen in time, and a third-world Latin American country still entrenched in the Cold-War aftermath. She also inquires about the silenced voices of those within the pieces, images of those that look out of the frame beyond their quotidian everyday life. She labels this “a real nation functioning as a historical theme park,” (Dopico, 1997: 452) and contrasts the visual world of photography with its counterpart, the print lettered city, and correlates both genres to the reality of the city’s daily life, arguing that Habaneros become illegible. (Dopico, 1997: 462) Dopico goes on to study numerous texts throughout her essay; amongst them: *Cuba y Cuba* (1998) by René Burri; *Ay Cuba!: A Socio-Erotic Journey* (2001) by Andrei Codrescu; and *Cuba: Going Back* (1999) by Tony Mendoza. All of these employ a style similar to the documentary approach used by James Michener 10 years before.

One text that Dopico does not reflect on given its recent publication is the photo book *Cuba on the Verge: An Island in Transition*. Published in 2003 by Time Warner and edited by Terry McCoy, it is a fine example of the most recent production, combining photo essay with brief commentaries on the state of Cuba by both Cubans and non-Cubans living inside and outside the island. It carries an introduction by writer William Kennedy and an epilogue by dramatist Arthur Miller. It also features cameo appearances by writers and photographers such as Russell Banks, Susan Orlean, and Cubans Abilio Estévez, Mayra Montero, Cristina García, Nancy Morejón and many others. The text combines poetic literary pieces with photography; many of them corresponding in themes but others diverging. Yet the photographs here correlate the abstract images to Cuba within realities of everyday life. They approximate the established allegorical *mélange* that is typically part of the photo and coffee-table book on Cuba yet strive to add a balanced perspective on the Cuban trajectory by offering a variety of points of view.

The introduction by William Kennedy, “Going to Cuba?”, is illustrated by a black and white photograph of a bellman waiting for the recently arrived; a simple welcoming smile and an arm drawn behind his side portray an air of

polite service. In his essay, Kennedy explains the attraction of Americans going to Cuba; he ponders the attraction of one of the major social experiments of the twentieth century or even the idea of wanting to see what has been taboo for over 40 years (Kennedy, 2003:8). The first section, titled "Time" is narrated by Cuba's Antonio José Ponte, who makes a claim to why he stays in Cuba. His idea of time is connected to the layered texture of the vivid and vibrant disaster of living under the Revolution in Cuba, a place and time he could probably not live without. The images that accompany the text are by Manuel Piña and feature close-up weathered frames of walls and iron-work decoration.

These texts then establish a commodified texture to the popular cultural practice of photography and graphic arts. They create diverse discursive representations based on ideological, political, personal, and collective experiences pertaining to Cuba. These representations are sites filled with authorial intent, ideological weight and economic gain, which therefore creates mechanisms by which Cuban culture becomes a marketed factor. Not only are the producers of these objects subject to analysis but also the consumers become important factors in establishing the shape of this marketplace.

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### *Consuming Nostalgia: Producing and Consuming Lost Havana(s)*

The market for Cuban memorabilia and nostalgia products has become a popular economy in recent years. A yearly heritage festival called "CubaNostalgia" held in Miami now for seven consecutive years, offers booths featuring Bacardi samples, memento stores and antiquarian kiosks, amongst Cuban art work, food and marketing booths that market national brands to Cuban Americans such as Chevrolet and Goya Products. Journalist and author Ana Menéndez wrote an opinion piece titled "Nostalgia is now for sale, and it's costly," in *The Miami Herald* (May 24, 2006) in which she postulated about some of the issues discussed here. She writes that "CubaNostalgia" was a place "where history is a marketing concept and memory is always priced for a quick sale." (Menéndez, 2006) Along the same lines, José Quiroga has textured these ideas in his book *Cuban Palimpsests* (2005), in which he states: "Time itself, and history, have been codified by the memory of exile, frozen by the memory of empire, and placed on a permanent soft focus with nostalgias of meaning lost." (Quiroga, 2005: viii) The existence and abundance of a multitude of Cuban memorabilia stores in Miami, Florida, and in particular in the Little Havana neighborhood, have materialized these ideas. Stores like *Sentir Cubano* (<http://www.sentircubano.com>) or Little Havana-to-Go (<http://www.littlehavanatogo.com>) specifically target consumers of Cuban material



culture or “cubana” and offer a variety of products from memorabilia to domino games to food products, including Conchita, Bustelo, Badía, and Goya brands. There are also female dolls available in three styles, all stylized after the traditionally-marketed women stereotypes: a *cubana santera*, a *cubana rumbera*, and a *cubana cabaretera* (cabaret dancer). A selection of T-shirts replicates vintage styles that bring to memory sporting clubs from the 1940s and 1950s such as The Havana Yacht Club and the Marianao baseball team. In these instances products are produced memorializing diverse markers of national identity. In the case of the dolls, characterizations of women which were prevalent in the graphic and poster art of the Republican-era (1902-1959) return as symbolic of “cubanía” while the t-shirts market upon significant athletic groups that can re-gather in exile and partake in remembering times past or lost times sharing their sport in their homeland.

One non-memorabilia product not for sale in Miami but symbolic of Cuban-themed consumption is the coffee, Havana Cappuccino. It has been launched in the U.S. market recently and found in convenient stores in the Northeast and South. Havana Cappuccino bottles materialize images and allegories connected to the racial identity of women by personifying the Havana coffee drink as a woman on the bottle design. Havana Cappuccino is produced by the North American Beverage Company based in Ocean City, New Jersey ([www.havanacappuccino.com](http://www.havanacappuccino.com)) which sells the brand in a diverse set of drink flavors, five all together. All of the coffees can be prepared to be hot or iced and are 99-percent fat free as per the label. The variety of flavors includes the Original, Classic Dark Roast, Mocha, Vanilla, and Caffeine Free; each bottle’s design varies accordingly. Havana, or the woman that lends face to the label on the bottles, is profiled with a frontal caricature where the drink name appears. Surrounding her facial profile are the decorative strips that flow onto the rest of the bottle assuming the shape of strands of her hair, amongst which are scattered coffee beans. The woman’s features are the same on all the bottle flavors, yet the shades of her skin tone vary accordingly to the flavor of the drink. The original has a moderately shaded woman indicative of the mestiza color of Cubans; the classic dark roast Havana is a shade darker; yet the darkest color is given to the mocha Havana which is made with Dutch Cocoa. The Vanilla Havana is a white woman and the caffeine-free Havana is an even paler European white woman. These products, albeit not memorializing a specific time frame, ideology, or political process, are building upon an established tropicalization based on “Cuban” identity which grew out of the Republican-era. Women have, historically, appeared in a symbolic manner on Cuban products; specifically the Cuban cigar *marquillas*, still a popular collector’s item.

In conclusion, the photographic and graphic text, as well as objects of nostalgia, amongst other objects and subjects of Cuban material culture, are becoming visible signs of the global popularity of things Cuban. Could this be an indicator of transition in territorial Cuba or throughout the transnational Cuban nation-state? Although predictions about transition concerning Cuba abound, some things can be claimed but nothing is certain. Although not publicly admitted, the current Revolutionary platform is basing its survival on its marketable political and ideological underpinnings. Given this, the real Cuba is now, possibly more than ever, a true player in its own culturally-oriented marketability.

One can argue though that by participating in the global game of capitalizing on their “national” marketability Cubans in Cuba and world-wide have capitalized on the historical situation that resulted from the revolutionary processes of the twentieth century. In Cuba, strict adherence to the ideological platform of socialism has evolved in order to survive monetarily, while Cubans abroad have memorialized their nation and nationality through the recreation of sights and objects that exemplify the fixtures established as Cuban. Non-Cubans have also partaken in the global production and consumption of Cuban material cultures, often creating and re-appropriating that established as “Cuban” for their own purposes. These evolving “Cuba crazes” will persist. The shapes they will take and the contributions or detractions they will offer the future of Cuba and Cuban nationality will only be seen in time.

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## *Jesús Díaz Rewrites Cuban Exile*

*Antonio Daniel Gómez*

No exile process exhibits as many radical turns as Cuban exile after 1959. Involving undoubtedly the most successful exiled community in history, Cuban exile has gone through so many stages and includes such complex processes that it resists, to this very day, its historization. There is, in fact, no history of Cuban exile that could be described as even ‘satisfactory’—perhaps because, among other reasons, it is still an ongoing process. The last of these radical turns—both clearly visible and ‘unofficial’—was the ‘legal’ exile of scholars and intellectuals from the onset of the Special Period, which coincided with the Rafters Crisis in the summer of 1994.

Jesús Díaz’s case is inscribed against this background. In the wake of the Cuban revolution, Díaz built his political and intellectual persona in terms of revolutionary values and premises, and would eventually become one of the most prominent figures of Cuban culture associated with the post 1959 era. Unpredictably—surprise is a frequent reaction when recalling the case—Jesús Díaz went into exile in Europe in 1992, where he stayed until his early death in 2002. Behind his decision was a public discussion with Fidel Castro around politics in the Special Period, which took form in the text “*Los anillos de la serpiente*” (“The coils of the Serpent”). I do not intend here to make a historiographical intervention into Cuban exile, a topic I have just depicted as extremely complex, but to reflect on the effect of Díaz’s displacement in the configuration of the Cuban intellectual field, always (and not only after 1959) the result of the interactions between the island and its outside. Neither will I focus, though I will briefly refer to it, on the most prominent feature of Díaz’s intellectual project: the launch, from Madrid, of the journal *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana*; instead I will focus on his resolute concentration on the writing of narrative, especially his first novel from exile: *La piel y la máscara*, published in 1996.

I want to particularly focus on the way this novel metaphorizes the author's own transformation (and thus also the transformation of the collectivity which he has joined: that of Cuban exiles) from the actual condition of dislocation. Symbolically, this process is dominated by the figure of duplication, since *La piel y la máscara* is partially the novelization of the 1985 film Díaz had directed in Cuba: *Lejanía*, a work in which he reflected on Cuba's geographical, ideological, and political split. Thus, the writing of the novel is, strictly speaking, a rewriting, which suggests, on the one hand, what I will refer to as Díaz's "rewriting of Jesús Díaz" (following the characterization that best fits, in my understanding, his ideological turn: the figure of the "convert");<sup>1</sup> and, on the other hand, the rewriting of the relationship between Cuban exile as a historical phenomenon and the island itself.

This is certainly a privileged instance through which to closely study the material traces of exile displacement on textual configuration. Díaz contemplated both *Lejanía* and *La piel y la máscara* as very personal projects, and they both responded intimately to their particular circumstance of enunciation: respectively, Havana before the dismantling of the USSR, and Berlin after the fall of the wall. I want to argue that the result of contrasting the novel and the film is the textual materialization of a geographical and political dislocation.

I will focus on the three most obvious elements that derive from this contrast, each of them the result of the confluence between a series of circumstances that includes technical determinations, expressive possibilities, and a clear resolve to point up the interactions between the arts, official politics, and cultural industries. These three elements are: the "formal" metamorphosis of the text, not necessarily limited to the obvious passage from film to novel, but also entailing deep transformations in terms of poetics and rhetoric; the modifications in the level of the narrated story; and the widening in the novel of the field of narrativization to include the process of making the movie; the backstage of filming, so to speak.

The passage of the narrative format, from cinematographic to literary, is indeed the most evident transformation, and maybe the most productive in terms of its conceptual implications. It is in fact the inflection of a crucial move: the passage from the sphere of the state to the sphere of the market. Since Cuban cinema should be defined as national cinema, and since the Cuban state takes part in its production not only in the area of publicity or through the setting up of cultural policies and general guidelines for realization, but also through attitudes to supervision and the regulation of circulation, a film like *Lejanía* is a statement both by the man directly responsible for it and by the state itself—maybe even more by the latter than the former.

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1. I owe this suggestion to Víctor Fowler.

To a great extent, the novelization of the film is nothing other than an attempt to recuperate the personal content in *Lejanía*, watered down in the larger undertaking, less critical and decidedly more institutional. By imposing a level of denunciation that is almost redundant, *La piel y la máscara* points to the evidence that the film became a personal project co-opted by the state. In showing how the movie would (and should) have been, the novel utters—elliptically, only through difference—the “state’s statement,” in a game that also has a decisive impact on the relationship between the context of enunciation (predominantly the spatial context but also the temporal one) and political analysis. Thus, the objects rendered for comparison multiply: the film, the novel, and the film figured in the novel; and the change in format turns into, above all else, a political statement: on individuality and on the decision to exit the sphere of the state.

If the conversion of the visual into the linguistic stands out as the most eloquent statement, the differences between the script of *Lejanía* and its novelization, at the level of the plot, give way to specific analyses of the results of the neutralization of the official voice. I want to address three issues here, all of them in close relation with the key components of both narrative structures, i.e. the figure of the author, and the symbolic protagonist couple: mother/son. These three elements are: the incorporation into the novel of a fictional first person, absent in the film; the “moral” turn of the character of the son; and the resignification of the role of exile in the character of the mother.

Regarding the first point, it was certainly worthwhile to modify, in the novel, the script of the film by way of incorporating a new central character, cipher of both the author and the director. It is, moreover, an addition that manifestly shows its fictional mode by unifying in one narrative space the director of the film, the actor of one of the key roles, and the central character in the story that is being filmed. The fictionalization of Jesús Díaz the director by Jesús Díaz the writer is also the reevaluation of Jesús Díaz the revolutionary intellectual by Jesús Díaz the exile, and should be read as the result of an alienation/distancing (à la Brecht) that presupposes the will to reassess his own political performance and his own aesthetic practice. In this sense, *La piel y la máscara* works to become a disclaimer of *Lejanía*’s failure in the artistic field.

The second point serves as the most pointed attack on the morals of the revolution: the son goes from the film’s rigid representation of him as a conflicted but still prototypical revolutionary who prevails over his disputes with his own personal past by retreating to the public duty imposed, once more, by the ethics emanating from the state, to its more human dimension in the novel, with his manifestly unexemplary behavior. It is clearly meant to exem-

plify the effects of censorship: the most prominent modification in the plot is the son's extra-marital sexual intercourse with his cousin from Miami, who has come to Havana with her aunt; while it appears as a successfully resisted temptation in the film, it turns into actual consummation in the film within the novel.

The third point is already within the scope of what I will analyze next: the incorporation of the process of film-making; and it openly stages the mechanics that dominate the relationship between Cuba and exile: the mother returns to the island for a short time, but the actress who plays the mother has plans to go into exile herself. Díaz uses the conflicts between an actress and her character—already alluded to by the title of the novel—to offer an explanation of the dynamics of desire and rejection that dominate, according to him, the severing of the Cuban national body into island and exile.

The film becomes a novel, its director becomes a character, pious militants turn into fleshly men, and national actresses into volunteers for exile. Díaz frames this radical transformation through the fictionalization of the creative process: a device for the representation of the dynamics of representation, and another level of reference for the title. This *mise en abyme* allows him to demonstrate the interaction between the individual and the official agencies of representation. If the film provides the scene for the resolution of private conflicts (achieved differently in the actual film than in the film within the novel), its “backstage” sets the scene for Díaz to rehearse the clash between individual will and state power which appears both in the national representativeness of *Lejanía* and the personal representativeness of the novel. This process of inclusions, on the other hand, allows him to show the dynamics by which the private is used by the public and vice versa, in order to make evident, for example, models for the ideological understanding of events like exile. By revealing official interference in the realization of the film, *La piel y la máscara* works to redeem *Lejanía* of its dogmatic content, and to separate it from its complicity with the present. Díaz confronts an ethical conflict which derives from being himself in a situation (exile) for which his own cultural production is in to some extent responsible. Such a paradox compels him to “rewrite himself,” especially in political terms, from exile, understood both in terms of space and time. His rewriting starts by rewriting his own text. Thus, unwriting *Lejanía* and restating its models of historical interpretation are for Díaz not only an ethical imperative, but also a vital necessity.

For this not to become an episode of schizophrenia, Jesús Díaz must at one and the same time rewrite his own past and validate his present, i.e. his absence from the island, as a political statement that does not necessarily erase his key principles, nor dismantle a life's aesthetic and theoretical schemes. Eventually, his efforts would result in an attempt to define and



materialize a third position in the Cuban cultural field, identified neither with the inflexibility of official politics on the island, nor with the sectarian agendas of the Miami exiles. This third position (only partially achieved by Díaz, since both sides would immediately work towards reestablishing the clear-cut polarization) was materialized in the project of the journal *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana*, published in Madrid with the explicit aim of regrouping Cuba's diasporic intellectuals. Such an open, good-hearted, influential, and visible project is echoed in Díaz's narrative production only in *La piel y la máscara*. His subsequent novels—surprisingly more frequent after he left Cuba, probably in reaction to his sudden entry into the logic of a capitalist cultural market—do not correspond to this program, and become more and more dangerously caught up in Miami rhetoric. *La piel y la máscara* epitomizes one of the most brilliant examples of the effort to make some sense of the confrontation between Cuba and Cuban exiles. Díaz's failure not only confirms this irreconcilable opposition, but also signals the end of the usefulness of binary dynamics in articulating Cuba as a nation or as a culture. Without doubt, Díaz's failure has been not only the final—definitive—failure but also the starting point for a radical transformation of the models for approaching Cuban exile; these now disregard previous assumptions about geographical and ideological relations in tracing the map of Cuban culture.



## *Dissonance in the Revolution*

*Juan Carlos L. Albarrán*

*...Ven que te quiero cantar de corazón así/La historia de mis raíces/Rumba, son y guaguanco todo mezclado/Pa' que lo bailes tú/Mira, ay quien no baila en la habana/Candidato /Pa' rumbiar en la cadencia/Represento a mis ancestros toda la mezcla /No lo pierdas bro /Latino Americano de la habana te lo mando con sabor mejor/Aprenderás que en la rumba está la esencia/Que mi guaguanco es sabroso y tiene buena mezcla /A mi vieja y linda Habana / un sentimiento de manana Habana/todo eso representas/CUBA... ("Represent," *A lo Cubano*)*

The acclaimed work of the Cuban rap group *Orishas*, whose lyrics reflect the intense reality of Cubans in the last decade, represents the roots of the hip-hop movement in Cuba. The lyrics I start my paper with show a group that loves and is proud of the domains of Cuban culture, music, and religion. However, the success of *Orishas* was not first accomplished within the territory of Cuba; it took hard work and the eventual migration of the group members to Paris, France where their work was finally acknowledged. I have chosen Cuban hip-hop music and specifically the work of *Orishas*, as my topic because music in Cuba is a reflection of our character, the familiar element that connects us with ourselves and to the outside world; it is through music that Cuba is best described. Analyzing Cuban music is the best way to know and measure how the country as a whole feels. In this paper, I will demonstrate how the group *Orishas* has broken through the traditional boundaries of Cuban music and opened the doors for Cuban hip-hop, making it possible for a new generation to express both national identity and individualism in a manner especially relevant for Cubans of African heritage.

This group came together mainly on the streets of Havana, in some of the municipalities of Havana with a predominantly black population. Two members of the group, Yotuel and Ruzzo, were previous members of *Amenaza*

("threat"), one of the first known hip-hop groups from the streets of Havana in the beginning of the 1990s. With options for rap performance censored by the government because of its American influence, they migrated to France in 1996 and together with two other Cuban musicians (Flaco-pro and Roldán) already in Europe; created *Orishas*. (Cantor, 2000)

The Afro-Cuban band *Orishas* was the first hip-hop group to gain an international audience. An important characteristic of *Orishas* is that it has always built its music around typical Cuban genres like *son*, *rumba*, and *guaguancó*. *Orishas* has its headquarters in Paris, France, where the group launched a record deal with Universal. They have sold millions of copies of their three compact discs: *A lo Cubano* (2000), *Emigrante* (2002), and most recently, *El Kilo* (Paoleta, 2005). The song "537 C.U.B.A." from the CD *A lo Cubano* samples the well-known Compay Segundo song "Chan Chan" released on the Buena Vista Social Club's 1997 record. Their identifiable Cuban hip-hop sound was a total success, energizing Cuban rap, and giving the movement a defined Cuban identity. (Llewellyn, 2003a) The work of *Orishas*, always enriched by the use of drums, and the traditional *sonero* voice of one of its members, gives them a distinctive sign of a *Cubanidad*.

*Orishas* is the name for gods used in *Santería*, a Cuban-born religion that has its roots in the mixing of African Yoruba religion and Catholicism. In the crisis period of the 1990s it was accepted that the Cuban people turned to religion as a desperate measure to find a solution through prayers and invocations to the African gods. The Cuban government that always saw religion as a threat to the ideology of the revolution could not stop the wave of religion even among the younger generations. To name the group *Orishas* is an acknowledgement, respect, and a welcoming to the Afro-Cuban religion *Santería*, a significant part of Cuban culture that was not being portrayed as an active element of Cuban life. As open followers of the Afro-Cuban religion, the group *Orishas* took an important role within that religious community, not only with the name of their group, but they also by portraying in their lyrics their love for the Afro-Cuban religion.

Analyzing the song "*Canto Para Elegua y Changó*" on their first CD, they combine a prayer commonly used in *Santería* in Cuba to call the gods with some of their devotions for the religion. This song, the lyrics of which I present below, is commonly used as a document for many Cubans to learn and keep alive the influence of African oral traditions in this culture.

*Dice ori baba olorun, ori baba Olofin, ori baba Olorde,/ommi tuto, ana tuto,  
tuto laroye tuto ile, tuto mo, tuto owo... Ani cumbambao Ochun, Ombao chenita  
ache omi babalawo. Ache orunmila, ache ochalero, ache Elewa, ache chango  
kabo kabetsi, baba tomi dice ache ibeyi, ache bombo orisha baba...*

*Hijo de Eleggua , mi santo Eleggua/mi vida Eleggua , Maferefun el rey de los caminos/la ley de mi destino, rojo y negro como el tinto vino/quien me abre los caminos con su garabato/jicara d'aguardiente, humo de tabaco, vestido de saco quien me deja ver cuando estoy opaco/sigue los pasos, pidele salud/y que te aleje de los malos ratos/pido yo la bendicion pa' expresar mis sentimientos/ todo lo que me pidas , dalo por hecho, no profeso/mi filosofia cuando se trata de Echu/Maferefun Elegua/To ibam echu.*

*Canto pa' elegua y para Changó/Canto de verdad lo digo yo/Canto pa' elegua y para Changó/Canto de verdad lo digo yo/lo que digo es lo que pienso/lo que pienso es lo que siento/Canto pa' elegua y para Changó/canto de verdad.*

*Yo como un rayo digo loco, lo que siento/mi voz que ruge como el viento/blanco y rojo represento, changó virtuoso potente con un oso, bien perezoso, jocoso , fogoso/Santa Barbara bendita es tu chango/guia por el buen camino a tus hijos como yo/dale la luz señora de virtud , fuerza, esperanza/en ti confianza , con tu espada avanza/mi micro es tan fuerte como el machete de Ogun/mi son tan dulce, como el melao de Oshun, y soy un,/soy un Orisha, si, tu boca cierra/enviado por Olofi para gobernar la tierra (Canto para Eleggua y a Changó, CD A lo Cubano).*

This song is a tribute to two of the most important *Orishas* of the Yoruba culture that African slaves brought to Cuba: *Eleggua* and *Changó*. It starts with an African prayer to the *Orishas* asking them for a blessing. The first part of the song is adoration to the *Orisha Eleggua* who is in charge of opening and closing the roads of life to humans. In Cuba, for followers of this religion, it means that to keep a path of happiness and good fortune a person needs to invoke and celebrate *Eleggua*. This is followed by a chorus, which states, "I sing to *Eleggua* and to *Changó*, what I say is what I think, and what I think is what I feel." The second part is dedicated to the *Orisha Changó*, a brave *Orisha* of war who controls the thunder and the sword. This is a deity that controls wars, bad temper, and punishes the excesses that human tend to fall into like alcoholism, fights, unfaithfulness, etc.

...Haya lejos donde el sol calienta más/olvidé mi corazón, un arroyo y un palmar/Dejé mi patria querida hace más de un año ya/ Por más que me lo propongo mi herida no cerrará...

..Vengo de donde hay un río, tabaco,y caña veral/ donde el sudor del guajiro hace a la tierra soñar...Me arrancaré el corazón y esperaré mi regreso para sacarlo otra vez y colocarlo en mi pecho...

..Dónde estás tú, mi Rampa/El sol que canta/la Catedral/el Capitolio/se levantan en el oído/de estas voces/23 y 12/Vedado/Paseo del Prado/tus leones lado a lado/ forman parte de mis tradiciones/mis emociones/eres tu mi Cuba/como tu ninguna/Kábio sile o/soy yoruba que no quede duda/que si lloro es porque la

extraño/no ver mi malecón, a mis amigos de mi zona/los que nacieron conmigo/  
los que jugaron conmigo... (537 C.U.B.A. A lo Cubano)

These lyrics, extracted from the song “537 C.U.B.A.” from the CD *A lo Cubano*, reflect elements of nostalgia in *Orishas*’ work (Schechter, 1999), a theme latent in Cuban culture due to the massive migration that Cubans for diverse reasons have faced for more than 40 years and that has torn families apart. In this part there is a moment of reflection about the places and people that were familiar to *Orishas* and helped to create the identity of *Cubanidad*.

This group started in a very antiestablishment way in the streets of Havana with no support from the government because of the movement’s critical lyrics and defiant attitude toward the system. The work of the group *Orishas* made the market for Spanish-language rap expand enormously in Europe. It also helped the government change its point of view towards Cuban hip-hop to the point of establishing talks with the rap movement. Even Fidel Castro met with the group and asked them “Are you the group that is making such a fuss?” (Llewellyn, 2003a) *Orishas* has many fans and also detractors on the island, who claim that they have betrayed the image of Cuban rap, trying to pursue a more international image. Cuban hip-hop producer Ariel Fernández said that European labels come there to “sniff around” looking for the next *Orishas*. But he argued that the Cuban reality and the nature of daily life make Cuban music more vibrant and raw than what *Orishas* has been producing from Paris. (Llewellyn, 2003a)

I disagree with such a statement because it took the fame of *Orishas* to recognize the strength of Cuba’s hip-hop movement. But it was outside the island that the group achieved such status and once a group breaks local barriers and reaches international status, that group does not belong to one place; their work belongs to the world. *Orishas*’ international exposure as a group can be seen when comparing the sampling of traditional music in *A lo cubano*, *Emigrante*, and *El Kilo*. The last two discs show creativity, authenticity in their work; and their selection of live instruments in their recordings attracts a wider audience from a globalized world. The second CD, *Emigrante*, relates to all the emigrants like *Orishas* who are living far from their home country and share the life of an immigrant.

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### *Cuban Popular Music in the 1990s*

This paper has thus far focused on *Orishas* because this group is one of the most visible examples of fresh artistic expression that reflects the Cuban reality of the 90’s. The outstanding quality of Cuban music has made the world recognize Cuba as one of the beacons of popular music in a global context. For generations Cuban music and musicians have found a place in the world-

wide hall of fame of music. With the new network of global communication, Cuban music can now be studied in any university in the United States and also be played in a nightclub in Japan. Most recently, in the 1990s, the success of the Cuban group, Buena Vista Social Club, gained worldwide reception (Farr, 2003).

It took almost all the 1990s for the hip hop movement to become accepted in Cuba. Some reasons for this delay include the extreme success of the Buena Vista Social Club, also the development of *Timba Cubana* in the same decade, a style of Cuban beat that was a response to the salsa style developed in the United States in the 1980s. Cuban *salsa* groups like *Los Van Van*, *Bamboleo*, *La Charanga Habanera*, *NG La Banda*, or Paulo F.G. had a great success with young Cuban dancers and audiences.

In the middle of the 1990s North American musician Ry Cooder and a collaborating counterpart, Cuban musician, Juan De Marcos, gathered together old Cuban musicians. These musicians, forgotten from the mainstream music, recorded a CD and made a documentary movie, both of which were huge successes. However, the exceptional musical accomplishments of Buena Vista elicited responses mainly from audiences in the United States and the rest of the world, audiences nostalgic for a lost connection with the Cuba of the 1940s and 1950s. To some extent young musicians working in Cuba resented the fame of Buena Vista Social Club. Cuban drummer Equis Alfonso, also known as "X," from the Cuban group *Sintesis*, stated that "the fame of Buena Vista Social Club put Cuban music back 40 years, affecting the development of Cuban musicians, prolonging the myth of old Cuba, the Cuba of nightclubs and old cars." (Llewelyn, 2003a)

The music of Buena Vista Social Club does not act in response to the needs of Cubans who deal with issues such as the long economic embargo that the United States has imposed on the island, the collapse of the socialist system and its effects on the island, and the Special Period, so named because of the loss of Cuba's main trading partners; with the fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, the government was forced to resort to austerity measures and rationing, tightening the domestic economy. It was a time of chaos with deflation of currency, shortage of oil, a period of hardship. The most important point was the return to religious beliefs as a comfort for those in despair in a country ruled by a secular communist party. Other issues that Cubans have had to struggle with are the reemergence of drugs and prostitution, the unofficial black market required for survival, and massive migrations to the United States in rafts or by the lottery. Hip-hop is the only one of the Cuban music genres that has openly addressed these issues. Cuban hip-hop has also challenged the perceived racial democracy that Cuba's post-revolutionary government has portrayed to the world for the past 40 years.

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*Defining Cuban hip-hop*

In Cuba, as in any other socialist system, the communist government controls all means of production; there is no private property, and everything belongs to the government. The government also controls the ideological work of intellectuals and artists and their influence on the political atmosphere of the island. If an artist attacks the image of the revolution in any art type or form, there can be drastic consequences for the artist. In the case of hip-hop, its American influence and the negative image that American hip-hop had in the nineties also helped to create a negative impact with the government slowing its acceptance in Cuba.

Cuban hip-hop music relates to, yet differs from, American hip-hop. The influence of American hip-hop has been very strong in the creation of a Cuban hip-hop movement. Cuban hip-hop started in the 1990s as an underground movement. It exposed important political and economic issues affecting Cubans—especially those born since the revolution—as it did similar issues earlier in the beginning of the rap movement in the United States. (Fernandes, 2003)

An important aspect that influenced the lack of publicity for Cuban rap at home and overseas was the low demand in the market of that time for Spanish speaking rap. In Castro's government there is no competition among music agencies or record labels because the government runs them all. Cuban music agencies are thus not accustomed to taking risks and would not invest in publicity, marketing campaigns, tours, or shows for rap musicians. Under these commercial circumstances and the aggressive political atmosphere that evolved around the hip hop movement in the United States, not a single Cuban label released in the 1990s was a hip-hop CD. However, despite so many limitations, when hip-hop awareness arrived in the island and Cuban hip hop bands started to form, the movement became very strong and with a solid goal, to express via music the daily concerns of the younger Cubans of Havana. (Smith, 1998)

However critical of the status quo, Cuban hip-hop movement has never been a vehicle for radical change in the Cuban political system. The paradox is that the Cuban hip-hop movement does not support an intervention from the United States or welcome the Miami radical right-wing exile group that want to destroy Castro's regime. In this way it differs from the American hip-hop movement that has shifted its ground from political to a more commercial movement. While it started with some groups like Public Enemy, 2 Live Crew, or N.W.A. who had strong political lyrics, American hip-hop has largely developed in a different direction. The majority of songs today portray an image of consumerism, lust, thugs, and gangsters. The hip-hop move-



ment in Cuba has a defined political agenda, and calls for an improvement in the relationship between the government and this younger generation.

Other disparities between Cuban hip-hop and American hip-hop can be found in their lyrics; for the most part, Cuban rappers do not talk about guns, killings, drugs, thug life, give women bad names, or create an image of capitalistic consumerism of platinum chains or sipping expensive champagne. Such images do not reflect Cuban life, and would not resonate with the younger generation. While most of the hip-hop songs reflect the daily life of Cubans on the streets, Cuban rap is not as aggressive as American rap; there is no Cuban equivalent to gangsta rap. (Llewellyn, 2003a) Nevertheless, some of Cuban hip-hop singers and bands do follow an image similar to the U.S. rappers with large baggy clothes, clothes with American brands like FUBU, Nike, or Tommy Hilfiger. (Robinson, 2004)

The rapper image is not monolithic in Cuba nor is it in the United States. In Cuba, some are fond of following the Afro-American image; others are looking for an identity inside the rap world that defines them as Cuban rappers where they wear alternative clothes like t-shirts with the revolutionary Che Guevara's image and green military hats or *boinas*. Many Cuban rappers, lacking money, cannot afford to buy *guayaberas*, a traditional Cuban shirt that is now mostly sold in the souvenir stores for tourists. The use of Afro American haircuts among black Cubans is not just a particular signature of Cuban rappers; Cubans favor it in general with some shaved, others with dreadlocks, etc.

Regarding music equipment, there are more similarities with the rap movement in the United States. Although the United States is a rich country, access to equipment is limited for prospective rappers who often do not have the necessary capital to buy music equipment. In Cuba the hard economic constraints limit Cubans from buying audio systems and musical instruments. Although very limited and expensive, the option of using a turntable to rap and sampling over gives them extra potential. However, one thing that both movements have in common is their love and pride for what it means to be black in a racially prejudiced society, their love for their roots, their color, their features, and life is announced with clear satisfaction in their lyrics. (Smith, 1998)

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### *We opened the doors for Rap in Cuba*

Orishas has challenged the role of the Cuban government towards this new generation of artists. One of the members of *Orishas*, Roldán, said in an interview “*Orishas* is Cuba for a newer generation.” (García) Eventually under internal and external pressure, and due to the international popularity

of *Orishas*, the progressive minister of culture, Abel Prieto, funneled US\$32,000 worth of audio equipment through the rap association *Hermanos Saíz*. He has helped change the attitude toward the Cuban art movement in general, and as a result, the government reluctantly started to sponsor annual rap summer festivals in the town of Alamar (Llewellyn, 2003b), avoiding the same mistake of repression committed towards rock and roll and reggae movements in Cuba in the 1970s and 1980s.

In one of the most critical moments of Cuban economic and political transition, the Cuban government accepted the presence of hip-hop and created a rap agency called *Hermanos Sainz* that promotes and controls the rap movement in Cuba. Susana García Amorós, director of the newly formed government-sponsored Cuban rap agency, which will release a compilation album under the *Aseré Producciones* label, stated that rap has invaded all forms of music and even TV in Cuba and that it is part of Cuban reality (Llewellyn, 2003a). The agency has Pablo Herrera among its managers, one of the founders of the rap movement in Cuba, and he is helping to put the voice of Cuban rappers out into the world; however, there is still a lot of struggle with bureaucracy in Cuba. One of the issues that musicians face is the lack of feedback: for example national record labels like EGREM do not inform their musicians of sales figures, or tell them in what countries the records are being sold. In general, there is no promotion or marketing work. (Llewellyn, 2003a) Now, every year, the rap festival is celebrated in Alamar. This area on the east side of Havana has a high concentration of Afro-Cubans. The “Alamar projects,” as some people call them, are a reproduction of the Soviet building style where massive ugly apartment blocks buildings were spread all over the neighborhood for Cuban families to live in. These apartment blocks were not initially built for blacks to live in, but were intended for the relocation of people whose houses collapsed during hurricane seasons, or when the government displaced them to build tourist hostels, etc. However, fulfilling its responsibility to promote Cuban culture, the Cuban government has exercised more control recently over the rap festivals, and over who performs, and thus over what is said. (Robinson, 2004)

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### *Conclusion*

*Orishas'* music has impacted and has influenced Cuban culture since the nineties. Its music is an example of how popular culture can serve as an instrument for social change. This generation of Cubans has never had an agenda of bringing down Castro's government. They do not want to change the revolutionary system of Fidel Castro, even though many of them belong to a generation that has not enjoyed many of the accomplishments of the revolution. This generation has only seen economic and political hardship. All

they want to do is to be an active part of the system, and to be accepted by the government as a new generation of artists with a new image of music, and a vision of a more richly integrated society. The hip-hop movement in Cuba wants to be recognized and accepted within the island, and the great majority of artists want to create their music at home and for home.

This generation of Cuban rap musicians, mainly blacks, were all born under the Cuban revolution. They are educated, some are college students, but most of all they are the sons and daughters of ordinary working class people. The great majority of these musicians do not come from families with a legacy of intellectuals. They, like every one else on the island, have limited access to information and limited possibilities for travel around the world, but they have had the talent to express their frustration and their goals through this new movement, Cuban rap. Cuban life demanded a new musical approach, and the value of this musical experience that the group *Orishas* achieved can be a tool for change for generations of Cubans to come.

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