



Cuba Today

Continuity and Change since the 'Periodo Expecial'

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Contents

List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vii
Part I: Changing Perceptions, Emergent Perspectives	
1 Critical Perspectives on Civil Society <i>Sujatha Fernandes</i>	3
2 Dollarization, Consumer Capitalism and Popular Responses <i>Katherine Gordy</i>	13
3 To Live Outside the Law You Must Be Honest <i>Dick Cluster</i>	31
4 The Nueva Trova: Frank Delgado and Survival of a Critical Voice <i>Lauren E. Shaw</i>	41
5 Humor in Literature and Film of the Special Period <i>Iraida H. López</i>	51
6 Gay Space in Havana <i>Scott Larson</i>	63
Part II: Economic Transformations	
7 Banking Sector Reforms <i>Mario A. Gonzalez Corzo</i>	81
8 The Future of Cuba's Energy Sector <i>A. Alhajji and Terry L. Maris</i>	97
9 Food Security in Cuba <i>James E. Ross</i>	115
Part III: Immigration and Ethnic Identity	
10 The Clash Between Cuban Immigrant Cohorts <i>Susan Eckstein</i>	129
11 Of Rafters and Refugees <i>Ted Henken</i>	147
12 Remaking Havana's Barrio Chino <i>Kathleen López</i>	155
13 Cuba and China: Labor Links <i>Terri R. Dabney</i>	171
Part IV: Evolving Institutions	
14 Anatomy of the Bill on Agricultural Cooperatives <i>Peter Roman</i>	187

15	Political Dimensions of International NGO Collaboration with Cuba <i>Adrian H. Hearn</i>	209
16	Cuba Through Mexico's Mirror <i>Patricia Olney</i>	229
17	Aspects of the Dead <i>Todd Ramón Ochoa</i>	245
18	History of the Cuban National Library <i>Carlos Riobó</i>	261
19	Cuba's Social Work Education Initiative <i>David Strug and Walter Teague</i>	271

Figures

8-1.	Cuban Primary Energy Consumption in 2001	98
8-2.	Cuban Energy Consumption by Sector in 2001	99
8-3.	Cuba's 59 offshore Sections and the Operating Companies	100
8-4.	Cuba's Petroleum Production and Consumption (Thousand b/d)	101
8-5.	Number of Producing Oil Wells	103
8-6.	Cuba's Petroleum Imports (Thousand b/d)	104
8-7.	GDP vs. Petroleum Consumption (1980-2002)	109
15-1.	Residents of Marianao at work in the PCCA kitchen	218
15-2.	The front cover of an early issue of <i>Se Puede</i> , which focused on natural medicinal remedies	224

Tables

- 10-1. Cross-Border Views and Involvements Among Émigré Cohorts in 2004 139
- 13-1. Population 175
- 13-2. Population 176
- 13-3. Chinese Contracts 176
- 13-4. Chinese Labor Costs 177
- 13-5. Ethnic Groups (2003) 180

Part I
Changing Perceptions,
Emergent Perspectives

Critical Perspectives on Civil Society

Sujatha Fernandes

Civil society is the new buzzword of the eighties and nineties, and given its theoretical primacy in explaining transitions to democracy across Asia, Europe, and Latin America in both academia and political life, not surprisingly it has come to dominate discussions about politics, citizenship, participation, and transition in Cuba as well. People from opposed ends of the political spectrum use the term – from an article in the notoriously anti-Castro *Miami Herald* titled, “In solidarity with Cuba’s civil society,” to a Marxist website that emphatically proclaims, “Civil Society in Cuba? Indeed, and Socialist!” Clearly these articles have divergent notions of what they mean by civil society. Like the older debates about democracy in Cuba, where both anti-Castro exiles in Miami and supporters of the revolution would claim that they were promoting democracy, the concept of civil society has come to be appropriated in different ways by actors with distinct political agendas. The concept of civil society itself has a long and complex genealogy, which I cannot hope to cover in this paper. Rather, I propose to look at how civil society is being used by various actors in the context of contemporary Cuba, including the Cuban socialist state, the Cuban exile community, US-funded institutions such as USAID and critical intellectuals within Cuba.

The concept of civil society, which extends back into the work of nineteenth and twentieth century European thinkers such as Marx, Hegel, and Tocqueville, has been resurrected in recent years and has also been expanded beyond the western context in which it originated to encompass diverse non-western experiences. Scholars theorizing the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe spearheaded this revival by promoting civil society as the harbinger of new liberal democracies. Beginning with analysis of the Polish opposition movements in the early 1980s (Arato 1981) and gaining momentum in the 1990s, social scientists invoked the concept of civil

society to explain the transitions to democracy in a range of different contexts. These scholars argued that civil society, as a broad set of activities consisting of public communication, associations, and social movements, was instrumental in the development of political alternatives that could oppose and ultimately replace authoritarian regimes.¹ Given the historical linkages between Soviet communism and Cuban socialism, a range of scholars, dissidents, actors such as the Catholic Church and US government bodies began to search for similar signs of civil society in Cuba, as the basis for a possible future transition.

But in some ways, it seems like an oxymoron to talk of civil society in Cuba. Especially given the historic associations of civil society with the market and market economies, it seems impractical to apply it to Cuba where market openings have been extremely limited. Theorists in other non-European contexts have also asked whether we can usefully consider the concept of civil society as a transhistorical empirical category. According to Jean and John Comaroff (1999), the liberal concepts at the core of civil society, including “the nation-state, the individual, civil rights, contract, ‘the’ law, private property, democracy,” presume a series of exclusions and separations that rule out the participation of certain sectors. Moreover, they argue that interactions between public and private are culturally specific; non-European contexts produce their own forms of accountability, public spheres and associations that may not be reducible to the Euro-specific concept of civil society (Comaroffs 1999). The term civil society itself has come to be such a polyvalent concept that it is hard to apply usefully in an empirical sense.

I argue that part of the problem lies in the normative underpinnings of the concept of civil society that is prevalent in the transitions to democracy literature. Civil society is seen as an ideal-typical model based on European-derived notions that Cuba must attain. In contrast to this normative conception, I propose an historical, strategic and empirical concept of civil society. An historical or genealogical understanding of civil society means that we analyze the narratives of a range of actors to understand the ways in which civil society has entered the local lexicon in a context such as Cuba. A strategic notion of civil society looks at how the term may provide local actors with the basis for action and contestation. An empirical sense of civil society seeks to use the term to describe the actual features of emerging spaces of public life. Rather than employing a vague and nebulous concept of civil society, I propose that we give depth and form to the concept through the

1. This definition is taken from the exhaustive and influential text by Cohen and Arato (1992), but I refer here to a more general, though geographically and theoretically diverse, range of work within comparative politics and political theory, including O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991; Linz and Stepan 1996; Keane 1998; Bernhard 1993; Weigle and Butterfield 1992.

Gramscian notion of civil society as hegemony and the Habermasian notion of public space as a specific structure within civil society.

The History of the Civil Society Concept in Cuba

For many years, Cuban officials and academics have claimed that civil society is not a Marxist concept and therefore it has no relevance to Cuba. In January 1996, the official Cuban daily newspaper *Granma* published an article entitled, “Sociedad civil o gato por liebre?” According to the author of the article, Raúl Valdés, civil society was an instrument for “promoting the internal fragmentation of Third World countries and for resisting any progressive role the state may play in social development.” NGOs were represented as a tool of US interests that were aimed at “undermining socialist society from within.” This article was followed by an official statement by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (the CCP), which lambasted important academic institutions, critical publications, and many NGOs (Dilla and Oxhorn 2002:24). Haroldo Dilla and Philip Oxhorn (2002:25) report that this political offensive was followed by the dismantling of the Center for Studies on the Americas (CEA), increased control over NGOs and refusal to give legal recognition to other various new organizations.

Although the Cuban state had overreacted greatly, there was some basis for its fears of US geopolitical maneuvering and intervention. The US government had begun to aggressively promote the idea of a transition in Cuba with the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (the Torricelli-Graham bill) and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996 (the Helms-Burton bill), which included among other aspects a tightening of the embargo and the travel ban. In 1996, a USAID Mission was established to “develop civil society on the island.” According to the Mission co-ordinators:

Successful implementation of this objective will result in the development of a Cuban civil society increasingly knowledgeable of their civil and legal rights and responsibilities under a freely elected Cuban government. It will provide understanding of the function and benefits of a free market enterprise system. It will help to alleviate the suffering of political prisoners and their families. It also will strengthen the role and delivery capacity of independent Cuban NGOs and provide transition scenarios on the development of economic, financial, and legal institutions required in a post-Castro democratic and free-market Cuban society.

This kind of connection between civil society and a free market economy is made even more strongly in US policy statements than in the academic literature, although it is clear that a notion of the market underlies both conceptions of transition.

Following an initial negative reaction to the concept of civil society, Cuban officials, ideologues and some academics began to incorporate it into their lexicon. In an article in *Granma* entitled, "Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations," former Minister of Culture, Armando Hart argued that civil society should be seen as more than the market, it should be seen as the kinds of spheres of public debate and discussion which he claims do exist in Cuban society. The Main Report of the Fifth Congress of the CCP in 1997 stated that the socialist nature of Cuban civil society emerged from the nature of its social system and the state. State officials and political leaders claimed that long-standing mass organizations such as the Central Trade Union of Cuba, the Federation of University Students, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Women, the Small Farmers Association, the Union of Writers and Artists, and a host of state institutions and associations constituted Cuban civil society.

Some Cuban intellectuals began to criticize this official notion of socialist civil society and a series of debates were published in Cuban academic journals such as *Temas*. "Rereading Gramsci: Hegemony and Civil Society" was published in 1997, and "Civil Society in the 90s: The Cuban Debate," was published in 1999. Haroldo Dilla (1999:163) contended that the concept of civil society was not at all applicable to Cuba prior to 1989. Dilla makes the point that prior to 1989, "The Cuban system was organized in a highly centralized schema when it came to the assignment of resources in a centrally planned economy, with an omnipresent state in all and every aspect of daily life." Dilla argues that given the entrenched nature of the Communist Party in Cuban political life, the utopic notion of socialist civil society was never applicable to Cuba. Moreover, Dilla (1999:165) argues that the notion of the state withering away is absurd, and is compatible with a neo-liberal vision of politics, where society is left to carry out the social welfare tasks that have been abandoned by the state. For Dilla and other scholars in the debate such as Jorge Luis Acanda, the notion of a constrained state, responsible only for guaranteeing public order, is as dangerous as the idea of an all-powerful state.

Civil Society as the Organization of Hegemony

In contrast to the versions of civil society put forth by US and Cuban government representatives and officials, critical Cuban scholars have been developing alternative notions of civil society, that draw on the kinds of frameworks developed by social theorists such as Gramsci. Gramsci conceptualized civil society as a series of trenches or fortifications within society that serve as a means for the organization of hegemony or counter-hegemony. In contrast to the opposition between state and society that we find in the transitions to democracy/US policy literature, Gramsci saw civil society as

both distinct from and coterminous with the state. For Gramsci, state and civil society do not exist as bounded categories but as a set of power relations that make sense only when situated in a specific historical and ethnographic problem.

Dilla and Luis Acanda follow a Gramscian approach to the study of civil society. They have pointed to what they call a “redimensionalizing” of the state-society relationship in Cuba in the decade of the nineties, whereby the state has withdrawn from various channels of civil society, giving the latter greater space to function. Dilla and Luis Acanda accord this greater role of civil society to a number of factors, including the opening up of Cuba to a global market economy, the scarcity of resources which has reduced the economic power held by state institutions over their members, and the political crisis of the special period which has forced the Cuban government to concede space to other social actors, while establishing new forms of control over emerging social groups and institutions. Adopting a Gramscian framework, critical Cuban scholars show the ways in which the state operates through civil society, but by retaining a methodological distinction between the two levels they are also able to trace historical shifts in state power as the state withdraws from an omnipotent role in civil society, but brings newly emerging critical movements and activities under its purview.

In addition to analyzing the changing empirical contours of state-civil society relations, Dilla and Luis Acanda also deploy Gramscian notions of hegemony in a strategic way. Luis Acanda compares the current conjuncture in Cuba to the crisis of the bourgeois state as analyzed by Gramsci. According to Luis Acanda, Gramsci saw that the bourgeois state entered into crisis in 1970 after the Paris Commune and he analyzes the ways in which the bourgeoisie reorganized their hegemony following that crisis. Gramsci speaks of a molecular diffusion of the state in civil society, whereby the state infiltrates the pores of civil society, a range of institutions that used to be private were made public and began to play a role in reproducing hegemony. Drawing on Gramsci’s analysis, Luis Acanda (1999:160) argues that in Cuba there needs to be a renewal of the hegemonic project of the state. He says that civil society should not be rejected as “the market,” nor should it be identified as “the people,” because this ends up being everything that is not the state.

Dilla also suggests that in order to rebuild its hegemony, the Cuban socialist state needs to identify with emerging and alternative forces. In an article, entitled “Cuba: la crisis y la rearticulación del consenso político (notas para un debate socialista),” Dilla (1993) called for the rearticulation of political consensus, which would require:

...the capacity of the system to produce a new discourse and a new liberatory practical politics of subjectivities, in a way that the call to resist will not be an invitation to holocaust or immobility, but rather a launching point for a new articulation of national consensus built on a participative and pluralistic basis.

Dilla suggests in his 1993 article that it is possible for Cuban society to rearticulate consensus on a more plural basis, and in a 2002 article entitled, "The Virtues and Misfortunes of Civil Society in Cuba," he suggests that civil society is the ideal instrument to achieve this reorganization of consent. But in contrast to a normative, western liberal notion of civil society, Dilla seeks to recalibrate the concept for use in the context of contemporary post-Soviet Cuba. Rather than promoting a more liberal notion of civil society, which has prioritized individual over collective rights, Dilla argues that a powerful civil society lies in "collective rights and collective action in pursuit of the goals of sociopolitical inclusion shared by its principal actors (Dilla and Oxhorn 2002:13)." Moreover, civil society according to Dilla and Oxhorn (2002:13) should not be characterized so much by autonomy and differentiation from the state, as by a fluid and mutually reinforcing relationship with the state. Dilla and Oxhorn (2002:13) suggest that, "the state can build civil society." According to both Luis Acanda and Dilla, the conditions in contemporary Cuba exist for both empowering new social forces and enhancing state power, as a prominent scholar has claimed in the context of post-Mao China (Shue 1994). State power can be maintained and extended in the contemporary period by decentralizing tasks and strategies of governance.

Public Spheres as a Specific Arena of Civil Society

While Gramsci has been useful for understanding the cultural forms by which the Cuban state continues to organize consent and hegemony in the post-Soviet period, Habermas may help us to locate the specific activities and institutions through which public life is renewed and expressed in this moment. Public spheres are an arena of deliberation within civil society that emphasize plurality and rational-critical discourse. For Habermas, the public sphere has its origins in the literary-cultural public sphere as a space where citizens, through intimate discussions and reflections on questions of humanity and personal identity, gained a sense of themselves as a community.

Dilla describes the emergence of these new kinds of public spheres in contemporary Cuba. Given shifts in state-society relations, the community has begun to assume new roles and develop representative organizations (Dilla 1999:164). Dilla (1999) argues that previously existing institutions, such as workers unions, have begun to take a critical distance from the state, as they become more actively involved in determining their role in the new

situation. Processes of economic change and crisis have produced the conditions for a “certain autonomous dynamic at the grassroots level, especially where conditions are right for leadership and collective action” (Dilla 1999:164). But Dilla (1999:164) also describes the ways in which the new roles and different representative organizations of civil society have been penetrated and sanctioned by the state. Unlike Habermas’ example, where critical public debate and reflection were generated by the imperatives of an external market economy against the state, public spheres in Cuba are for the most part funded by the state and exist in collaboration with the state, rather than in opposition to it.

In contrast to Habermas’ construct of a unified, singular public sphere in eighteenth century Europe, in contemporary Cuba we see the existence of public spheres in the plural, or what Nancy Fraser (1992:123) calls alternative or subaltern counterpublics, in addition to dominant public spheres. Similarly, in Cuba today we find multiple spheres of public discussion, some of which exist in mainstream institutions and others that are more marginal. The new local and foreign entrepreneurial sector is an important emerging group in Cuban society that may lead to the development of professional associations. The self-employed and informal sector also constitutes a growing group, and one that is garnering increasing economic power in society. While these sectors may still be somewhat unstable, they do represent new ideologies and are pushing for reforms of the traditional socialist system, but are not yet working entirely outside of this system. International feminist exchanges have produced new associations and projects between Cuban and foreign women, which have sparked new debates around questions such as sexuality and domestic violence, which were not addressed by the FMC.

Artists also constitute a vibrant and openly critical voice within Cuban cultural politics. Movements such as rap music and visual arts have an increasing presence in society and have been successful in raising certain issues into public discourse such as race and racism in Cuban society. This latter manifestation of public spheres in Cuba specifically questions the emphasis of Habermas on discourse as speech-acts and as rational. In Cuba, we can see a range of contestation taking place within society in performance, music, imagery, and other non-verbal forms. The emphasis on identity politics of race, gender, and sexuality within these public spaces further suggests that differences may not just come from the validity of one point of view versus another as Habermas suggests, but from the cultural heritage, experiences and orientations of individuals (Warneke 1995). Moreover, public spheres in Cuba are not simply shaped by the political and cultural milieu of the nation as in Habermas’ account; they are generally spaces that are linked to forces, discursive spheres, and forms of cultural expression beyond the

nation as theorists of transnationalism and globalization have argued.² But while globalization theorists such as Arjun Appadurai (1990:14) argue that global cultural flows constitute a danger to the project of the nation-state, I suggest instead that transnational public spaces may also work to reinforce the hegemony of the Cuban socialist state.

Drawing on an example from my own research – that of Cuban rap – can help illustrate this point. While Cuban rappers build networks with US rappers based on race and marginality that transcend affiliations of nation, they simultaneously generate a critique of global capitalism that allows them to collaborate in some ways with the Cuban socialist state. In a speech following the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, Fidel Castro argued that the global economic crisis was “a consequence of the resounding and irreversible failure of an economic and political conception imposed on the world: neoliberalism and neoliberal globalization.” Taking a stance of moral authority, Fidel claimed that it is the path being forged by the Cuban nation that will provide a solution to the crisis: “The fundamental role has been played and will continue to be played by the immense human capital of our people.” Cuban rappers identify strongly with these ideas of Cuba as a rebel nation, forging a more just alternative to neoliberal capitalism. In their song “Pa’ Mis Negros, Cien Por ciento,” Original propose, “Let us help one another for a nation of blacks more sensible, for a nation of blacks more stable.” Rappers associate the Cuban nation with the condition of “underground,” and its connotations of political awareness and rebellion. In their song “Juventud Rebelde,” the name of the official youth newspaper, rappers Alto Voltaje claim that “Like a cross I go, raising the ‘underground’ banner for the whole nation,” and in “Mi Patria Caray!,” Explosión Suprema state, “We are the Cuban ‘underground,’ almost without possibilities, but with the little that we have we are not gusanos (dissenters).” Rappers identify their movement with statements by the political leadership about justice between nations in the international arena. In recent years, the Cuban state has issued several statements condemning the incarceration of five Cubans imprisoned in Miami because of their intelligence work for the Cuban government in the United States and the state has founded a Cuban solidarity campaign to “Free the Cuban Five.” In the song “Asere” (Cuban slang for friend, or “homie”), a collaboration between Cuban rappers Obsesion and Anonimo Consejo and Puerto Rican rapper Tony Touch, the rappers link the campaign of the “Cuban Five” to the struggles of Puerto Ricans on the small island of Vieques against US nuclear testing, and they criticize US hegemony in the region.

2. The concept of transnational cultural spaces draws from the literature on transnational cultural studies as it has evolved through the journal **Public Culture** and in the work of scholars such as Arjun Appadurai (1990) and Susanne Rudolph (1997).

Local actors comply with and reinforce official narratives in strategic and self-conscious ways.

To summarize my argument here, I suggest that what we see in Cuba today are emerging spaces of public debate, discussion – and contestation – that exist in creative tension and collaboration with the Cuban socialist state. Changes in post-Soviet Cuban political economy have produced a range of new actors with critical, often competing ideas and demands. But given the relatively closed nature of the Cuban economy and the continuing identification of various sectors with some aspects of the socialist project, the state is able to retain a degree of hegemony over these public spheres. I suggest that we shift attention away from the broader question of does civil society exist in Cuba, to explore the ways in which civil society is used discursively by a range of actors and to analyze specific institutions of civil society such as the public sphere that give us a more grounded, empirical sense of what “Cuban civil society” might look like.

I would like to conclude by posing some questions: Can concepts of civil society and public spheres, developed in a western capitalist context, be used to describe Cuba, that is, is it an oxymoron to say that public spheres of civil society exist in Cuba? What does it mean that public spheres and institutions of civil society remain within the purview of the state? What is the relationship between this emerging sphere of associational activity and the market? How do public spheres or contentious politics in Cuba look different to their counterparts in other comparative contexts such as China and the Soviet Union? I propose that delving into these questions can give us better idea of the kinds of governance and contestation emerging in contemporary Cuban society that require new methods of analysis and serious study.

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Dollarization, Consumer Capitalism and Popular Responses

Katherine Gordy

Journalists and academics have brought us numerous accounts of the ways in which people in Cuba have struggled to make do, given the termination in 1991 of the Soviet trading block, and the consequent changes in the Cuban economy. These writers often emphasize the clash between Cuban socialist ideology, on the one hand, and government economic policy and daily life, on the other. They say that the Cuban government's use of the market, and the consequences of the market's use, reflect the hypocrisy and impracticality of Cuban socialist ideology, and that the existence of the black market/informal economy proves the government's utter failure to translate the ideology of Cuban socialism into daily life.¹

An examination of popular criticisms of and reactions to recent economic policy in Cuba, however, suggests that an economy that is de facto in crisis may leave intact a robust ideology. Popular expressions of discontent with the current state of affairs in Cuba often use such implicit principles of Cuban socialism as unity, equality and nationalism to complain about its failings. The discontent reflects a frustration with the failure of socialist principles to manifest themselves in daily life. Contradictions in Cuban society do not necessarily point to the failure of socialist ideology in Cuba or to the conclusion that socialist ideology can only survive as dogma imposed by the leadership. Popular reactions, particularly in the arts, provide evidence of a deep awareness of and concern with the ways that capitalism creates new forms of domination and material scarcity.

1. See, for instance, Horowitz, Irving Louis, ed., **Cuban Communism, 1959-1995**, Eighth ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995), McFayden, Deirdre, "The Social Repercussions of the Crisis," **NACLA Report on the Americas** XXIX, no. 2 (1995).

Images capturing socialist slogans alongside inequality and poverty do capture certain difficult realities and problems of the Cuban situation that demand attention. However, these images are often taken as a conclusion and proof of what was already assumed about the possibility of socialism and alternative projects in general, rather than as a provocation or point of departure for further examination of the issues the images raise.

All economic systems have justifying ideologies that do not match reality.² However, the Cuban government's practice of making clear its ideological commitments makes it particularly vulnerable to the use of images which juxtapose Revolutionary slogans to the Cuban reality. Anthropologist Paul Ryer has pointed to the dangerous uses to which these kinds of images can be put. In a 2000 piece in *Public Culture*, Ryer shows viewers a photo of a wall on which the slogan "Socialism or Death" appears in faded paint. Next to this photo, Ryer places a picture that appears on the book jacket of an account of Special Period Cuba by journalist Christopher Hunt called *Waiting for Fidel*.³ This picture features a woman, perhaps a prostitute, in high heels and a spandex suit with the design of the American flag on it. According to Ryer, both images "too easily map onto Western complacencies regarding the inevitability of capitalism and the futility of alternative ideologies or resistant practices."⁴ Such a complacent reading of the images means that history and politics drop out entirely. The images are used to illustrate a position already preserved.

For German social theorist Walter Benjamin these kinds of images had critical and revolutionary potential, as a challenge to the myth of progress, which both the Right and Left used to justify programs regardless of the effects on exactly those groups the programs claimed to be benefiting.⁵ Benjamin criticized the notion of history as progress because it served as a code word for the continuation of existing power relations despite technological change. Precisely because things "just keep on going," progress is in reality catastrophe.⁶ The chain of events known as history is in fact one enormous catastrophe which appears as wreckage piling higher and higher into the sky as time moves forward. Benjamin's angel of history sees the wreckage and

2. Capitalism, too, has failed to come through on all its promises, yet capitalist ideology, as Marx pointed out, presents the particular interests of capital in the guise of the universal and natural. It thus escapes the kind of scrutiny given to socialist economies, which make clear the subservience of purely market driven considerations to social welfare goals, at least at the level of political rhetoric and ideology.

3. The blurb on the book jacket of the book **Waiting for Fidel**, which I have read, captures the tone of the book. Hunt is also author of **Sparring with Charlie: Motoring down the Ho Chi Min Trail**. "This time he sets his sights on Cuba, where crumbling but elegant facades overlook shady street activities, where vintage Ford Fairlanes rumble past Soviet Ladas in the fast lanes of eerily deserted boulevards, and where an aging Fidel Castro is struggling to maintain his grip on a population yearning for *aire libre*, or at least Air Jordans." Hunt, Christopher, **Waiting for Fidel** (Mariner Books, 1998).

4. Ryer, Paul, "Millenium's Past Cuba's Future?" **Public Culture** 12, no. 2 (2000): 499.

“would like to stay, awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed” yet the strong wind of progress pushes him forward into a future towards which his back is turned.⁷ The wind is difficult to resist for it tells us that what we have was the only possible outcome and paralyzes political agency by making all change seem futile in the face of history’s incontrovertible movement. Benjamin’s angel of history is useful for discussions of post-Soviet Cuba because his framework provides a way of navigating between the language of the cheap shot that Ryer critiques and blind apology for all that the Cuban government does.

In the place of universal history, Benjamin places a brand of historical materialism which sees the present in transition and not as some final culmination of the past. Before one can even construct an alternative to the status quo, one must arrest the flow of events by showing the world through dialectical images that juxtapose what progress claims to provide and what it in reality produces. “Thinking,” argues Benjamin, “involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well.”⁸ Benjamin’s dialectical images should cause the viewer to pause and rethink rather than to affirm what one already believed. During these pauses, one can reexamine not just the present but also the past and what could have been.

Take for instance two apparently contradictory signs that I saw during a visit to the eastern province of Holguin in 2000. On the front of the bus station there is picture of Cuban Revolutionary hero and martyr Frank País accompanied by the words “Morir por la patria es vivir,” [“To die for the fatherland is to live”]. The slogan, often cited as an example of Cuban Communist fanaticism, is in fact a line from the Cuban national anthem written in 1868.⁹ There is also a sign in the center of town telling the people that “What is most important is to continue searching for efficiency.” This slogan, which would seem to represent Cuba’s newfound concern with economic viability,

5. Benjamin’s points of reference were Stalinism and the ideologies that supposedly opposed it, but one can see the operation of this myth today. International lending institutions insist that economic development be defined in terms of a macroeconomic growth that comes at great cost to poorer populations of these countries and rarely benefits those who sacrificed the most to allow it to happen. One sees the myth in Cuba, where the government continues to insist that labor unions and other independent organizations representing the interests of workers, Afro-Cubans, women and farmers, to name a few, are superfluous to the socialist revolution made in their name. In both cases, one measure of progress occludes another measure of equal importance and the voices of those actually affected by these policies drop out. Apparently opposing ideologies produce similar results.

6. Benjamin, Walter, “Convolut N [Re The Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress,” in **Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History**, ed. Gary Smith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 64.

7. Benjamin, Walter, “Theses on History,” in **Illuminations**, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 267.

8. *Ibid.*, 264.

9. “To the Battle, Bayameses!/Let the Fatherland proudly observe you!/Do not fear a glorious death,/To die for the fatherland is to live!”

in fact harks back to the 1970s when Cuba adopted an economic strategy of industrialization based on the Soviet model of central planning. Thus neither of these signs is as new as they might appear and each contains a story that complicates both the official narrative of revolution and socialism in Cuba and that of the opposition (defined broadly as anyone who does not accept the official account).

Frank País was the head of the revolutionary July 26th Movement's operations in Santiago de Cuba where he was assassinated by police in July 1957. País has come to be an important symbol of the sacrifices made by Cuban Revolutionary youth during the Batista dictatorship. He did, indeed, die for the fatherland. The actual story of País' life and involvement in the struggle to overthrow Batista, however, does not place him clearly on the side of the triumphant Revolution and the ideology that represents it today. País was a devout Baptist and an advocate of liberal, rather than socialist, reforms in Cuba. His death prior to the radicalization of the Revolution made it possible for him to remain a popular figure in official Cuban revolutionary history. However, his differences with the ideology that Castro adopted after the Revolution's triumph mean that he is also admired by those wishing the Revolution had taken another course.

The two signs also represent two elements of Cuban socialism that have at times conflicted but at others have supported one another. Both signs exhort sacrifice in the name of the country — to defend it militarily or to build it up economically. From the moment that Cuba declared itself a socialist republic, Cuba has struggled with the issue of just what the right balance of moral and material incentives should be. This issue was dealt with during the "Great Debate" of 1962-1965 when "the advocates of 'revolutionary ethics' confronted the supporters of economic rationality."¹⁰ These debates would emerge again and again; in the early 70s with the failure of the 10 million ton sugar drive; in the late 70s when the Soviet economic model had taken hold; and again in the late 80s with the Rectification Campaign of Ideological Errors and Negative Tendencies. Thus, many of the tensions brought about by the economic crisis of the 1990s have always existed. The severity of the 1990 crisis, however, brought many of the tensions into high relief.

10. Silverman, Bertram, ed., **Man and Socialism in Cuba: The Great Debate** (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 3. The former, and primarily Che Guevara, believed that creating institutions to foster a socialist consciousness was more important than economic efficiency. The latter group, represented by Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, believed that elements of capitalism such as market, mercantile and financial relationships, profit criteria and material incentives were necessary, especially in an underdeveloped country, in order to establish a strong material foundation for socialism.

*The Economic Crisis of the 1990s: Special Period
Cuba*

While there is hardly consensus as to what the fundamental flaws of the Cuban economy are and when they began to manifest themselves, there are few who do not identify the disappearance of the Soviet block as the most immediate source of Cuba's economic crisis. The statistics documenting the effects of the decline and ultimate disappearance of the Soviet trading block (The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance or CMEA) in 1991 are dramatic.

Between 1989 and 1993, Cuba's import bill decreased by 70 percent, the Soviet Union decided to stop automatically covering Cuba's trade deficits, and Cuban national output fell by more than 50 percent.¹¹ During the same period, the GDP fell by 35 percent,¹² private consumption dropped by 30 percent and gross investment decreased by 80 percent. By the end of 1993, the fiscal deficit was almost a third of GDP.¹³ Between 1989 and 1992, total trade with the member countries of CMEA fell 93 percent.¹⁴

The living conditions of Cubans during this period present the crisis more vividly. Schools and factories shut down. Electricity was scarce and black outs a daily occurrence. Hospitals operated under wartime conditions. While laid off workers continued to receive 60 percent of their salaries, the money in their pockets was of little use as there was nothing to buy with it. While the government attempted to move people to the countryside to support the drive for food self-sufficiency, those in the countryside flocked to Havana in the hopes of acquiring hard currency and scarce goods. Fuel deliveries to state and private sectors were reduced by 80 percent. Bicycles and ox drawn carts replaced fuel consuming cars and tractors. The nickel-processing plant and oil refinery were both shut down to save energy. Food and clothing rationing was reinstated.¹⁵

After Cuba's initial sectoral response to the macroeconomic crisis failed to pull the country out of the crisis, the Cuban government began introducing market mechanisms into the internal logic of the economy and creating insti-

11. Pastor, Manuel, Jr. and Andrew Zimbalist, "Cuba's Economic Conundrum," **NACLA Report on the Americas**, Sept/Oct 1995, 8.

12. 35 percent is the official figure but unofficial sources have suggested figures as high as 50 percent Leogrande, William M. and Julie M. Thomas, "Cuba's Quest for Economic Independence," **Journal of Latin American Studies** 34, no. 2 (2002): 343.

13. Brundenius, Claes, "Whither the Cuban economy after recovery? The reform process, upgrading strategies and the question of transition." **Journal of Latin American Studies** 34, no. 2 (2002): 366.

14. Fitzgerald, Frank T., **The Cuban Revolution in Crisis: From Managing Socialism to Managing Survival** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994), 2.

15. Jatar-Hausmann, Ana Julia, **The Cuban Way: Capitalism, Communism and Confrontation** (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1999), 49.

tutions resembling private property starting in 1993. That year, the government legalized the US dollar (Law-Decree 140) in August and set up dollar stores where Cubans with access to dollars, mostly those with family in the United States, would be able to buy imported goods.¹⁶ The text of the law stated bluntly that legalizing the possession of dollars would reduce the number of acts deemed punishable by the law and thus alleviate the work load of the police and courts.¹⁷ In general, the tone of the law's text was pragmatic. It stated clearly that "the conditions of the special period" and the economic difficulties of the country "made it necessary to introduce new regulations and methods in relation to the possession of convertible currency" (US dollars).¹⁸

In September of 1993, the government also passed Law-Decree 141 that authorized self-employment in 117 occupations.¹⁹ The text of the self-employment law, like the text of the law legalizing dollars, argued that only the necessities of the moment justified legalizing self-employment and that it should be heavily monitored by the state in order to avoid the values of entrepreneurship from contaminating those values and practices fostered by socialism.²⁰

The same year, the government also transformed most state farms into worker-run cooperatives called Unidades Basicas de Producción Cooperativas (UBPC) or Basic Units of Cooperative Production and reopened the free agricultural markets. In 1995, the government replaced the 1982 foreign investment law, Law-Decree 50, which had closed most sectors of the Cuban economy off to foreign investment, with Law-Decree 77 which permitted foreign investment in almost all sectors of the Cuban economy except education, health and the armed forces. The text of the foreign investment law, like the texts of the law legalizing dollars and the self-employment law, argued that foreign investment was only desirable in light of current changes to the global economy. Foreign investment was the only way that Cuba could maintain its revolutionary achievements, argued the law, since a redistributive economy must also be a growing economy.²¹

16. The stores were aptly named **Tiendas Para la Recuperación de Divisas** (TRDs) or Stores for the Recuperation of hard currency (**divisas**).

17. The increased police work load was, of course, the consequence of a shortage of goods and people's consequent attempts to acquire them illegally.

18. **La economía cubana: reformas estructurales y desempeño en los noventa**, (Mexico, D.F.: Fondo de cultura económica/CEPAL, 1997), 520.

19. The number of permitted activities increased to 157 by 1997 Henken, Ted, "Condemned to Informality: Cuba's Experiments with Self-Employment during the Special Period (The Case of the Bed and Breakfasts)," **Cuban Studies** 33 (2002): 4.

20. The law stated: "It is necessary to provide the organization and establish the required order to ensure that self-employment responds to particular principles that favor its development in all areas that are useful to the people, while keeping the practice of it from taking harmful forms." **La economía cubana**.

21. *Ibid.*, 417.

With the important economic changes, the government has been able to weather the 1990's with the majority of the revolution's achievements intact. Even according to the World Bank's 2001 edition of World Development Indicators (WDI), Cuba has not only maintained the revolutions achievements in low infant mortality rates, primary education and health care, but improved them despite the presence of the US trade embargo and the collapse of the Soviet trading block. Cuba ranks among the western industrialized nations in many of these indicators. Much of this has to do with high levels of public spending.²²

In spite of critics' contention that these kinds of services are not sustainable,²³ statistics like these have been the government's constant defense in light of increasing economic,²⁴ social, racial and gender inequality, material scarcity, overt and subtle discrimination against Cubans in their own country, often harsh crackdowns on those trying to make their way in Cuba's illicit economy or seeking political change in Cuba, and continuing attempts by Cubans to leave their country.

The legalization of the dollar has created a severe division in a society that was previously highly egalitarian.²⁵ Those with family abroad who can send remittances and those with links to tourism and the dollars that tourists bring with them have much higher incomes than those living on state salaries.

Very few people in Cuba actually live on a state salary. If they work a government job, they supplement their income in a variety of ways.²⁶ A lot of people don't even bother with a government job. Then there are the full time *jineteros*, which literally means jockeys because they ride on the backs of tourists, as guides, middlemen or prostitutes. Almost no one can say that they do not participate in illegal activities or at least benefit from that participation and yet there is a great deal of finger pointing especially at those who have fewer outside resources.

The finger pointing has contributed to the reemergence of many racial and gendered stereotypes. With the increased reliance on dollars and fewer relatives abroad from whom they can receive them, Afro-Cubans have found

22. Lobe, Jim, "Learn From Cuba, Says World Bank," **Inter Press News Service Agency**, April 30 2001.

23. Solaún, Mauricio, "On Political Change in Cuba: A Comparative Introduction," in **Cuba in Transition** (1999).

24. The Gini coefficient increased from .22 in 1986 to .41 in 1999. Whereas the upper fifth of the population received 33.8 percent of the income in 1986, they received 58.1 percent in 1999. The bottom fifth of the population received 11.3 percent in 1986 and received 4 percent in 1999. According to Claes Brundenius, "if this trend continues, income distribution in Cuba will increasingly resemble that of the rest of Latin America" Brundenius, "Whither the Cuban economy after recovery?" 378.

25. While wage differentials in Cuba have always existed as a way of stimulating productivity, what is distinct now is that pay is based on one's involvement in the dollar economy.

26. The story of the doctor who drives a cab is a familiar one.

themselves forced to participate in the more illegal aspects of black market, prostitution and petty theft. Such participation facilitates the reemergence of stereotypes of Afro-Cubans as lazy, shiftless and thieving. Afro-Cubans also have a harder time getting jobs in the tourist industry, which is vulnerable to racist assumptions about what constitutes a “pleasant aspect” (*buena presencia*).²⁷ Gender inequality has also been exacerbated. During the initial cut-backs, women were fired first and many were absorbed into the growing Cuban prostitution business. While women’s staying home is also more compatible with the culture of *machismo*, what is newer is that female prostitution has become increasingly acceptable in Cuba. Many families rely on the money their daughters, wives and sisters bring in from prostitution.²⁸

The leadership has generally argued that, in spite of these social shifts, the crisis is economic and measures to tackle the crisis unavoidable. In a 1993 interview, Secretary of the Cuban Council of Ministers Carlos Lage Davila was asked whether the economic problem was worse than the political. He answered that Cuba’s problems were “economic, not political” and that only those who were not familiar with Cuban “reality,” would ask Cuba to make political changes.²⁹ In a 1994 piece entitled “Las estrategias antes la situación económica actual,” Lage argued that Cuba had two choices given the new situation in which it found itself after the collapse of CMEA. The first option was to impose a program of structural adjustment by raising prices, closing factories, cutting social welfare programs and decreasing social security, thus imposing great hardship on the Cuban people. The second option was to “apply a policy that corresponded with the ideology, the ideas, the aspirations and the objectives of the Revolution: to share amongst everyone the weight of [the] grave economic consequences” of Cuba’s economic isolation.³⁰ While far superior to the first option, argued Lage, the second option had negative consequences which were well known before they manifested themselves.

Lage’s comments and the texts of economic reform are indicative of the leadership’s tendency to characterize current economic policy as the lesser of two evils and to isolate the crisis to the economic realm. By isolating the crisis to the economic realm, officials hope to link the longer term survival of the Cuban revolution to the maintenance of basic social services such as

27. de la Fuente, Alejandro, “The Resurgence of Racism in Cuba,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 2001, 32-33.

28. The existence of prostitution, however, is not just rationalized by dependence. One hears it increasingly used even as a compliment.

29. Author’s Translation. Lage Davila, Carlos, *Enfrentamos el desafío: Entrevista concedida por el Secretario del Consejo de Ministros a Mario Vázquez Raña* (La Habana: Editora Política, 1993).

30. Lage Davila, Carlos, *Las estrategias antes la situación económica actual* (La Habana: Editora Política, 1994).

healthcare, education, housing, regulated prices and low inflation and to the maintenance of Communist Party control.

There is much support among the Cuban population to maintain these social services. A 1995 poll showed that 75 percent wished to keep education free and 77.9 percent wished to keep public health care free. 22.1 percent wished to keep education partially free and 19.6 percent wished to keep health care partially free. The remaining percentages either opposed free or partially free education and health care or were not sure.³¹ Those who have done research in Cuba and spoken with Cuban people generally recognize that in spite of the Cuban people's dissatisfaction with such things as state salaries upon which they cannot subsist, the poor purchasing power of the Cuban peso, and a new class system based on access to dollars, the majority of Cubans continue to value and depend upon the Cuban social welfare state and do not wish to see it disappear under the weight of a hyper individualistic consumer society.³² My own conversations with people in Cuba support these general conclusions.³³

While one may be suspicious of an opinion poll carried out by the government of a one-party system or question the objectivity of the type of foreign researcher who would even be given permission to enter Cuba,³⁴ a complete dismissal of this data would fail to take into account several important considerations. First, the fact that not all Cubans supported absolutely free education and health care demonstrates that people were sufficiently honest to express at least a mild opposition. Second, it is significant that many of the dissident organizations on and off the island also support some sort of welfare state. While the Cuban American National Foundation has come to represent the Cuban exile community in the minds of many Americans, their platform is hardly representative of the views of most Cuban Americans and of dissidents on the island. Many insist upon the maintenance of basic social

31. Machado Rodríguez, Darío L., "Democracia Política e Ideología: Una Opinión Después del V Congreso del Partido," *Cuba Socialista* 9 (1998).

32. Azicri, Max, *Cuba Today and Tomorrow: Reinventing Socialism*, ed. John M. Kirk, *Contemporary Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), Rosenthal, Mona, *Inside the Revolution: Everyday Life in Socialist Cuba*, ed. Roger Sanjek, *Anthropology of Contemporary Issues* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), Sznajder, Mario and Luis Roniger, "Politics, Social Ethos and Identity in Contemporary Cuba," (Jerusalem: The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001), Vasquez, Miguel, "Cultural Integrity in Non-Traditional Societies: Cuba Encounters the Global Market System," *Cultural Dynamics* 2002.

33. I have been visiting Cuba since 1996 and lived in Havana from 2000 to 2002. While I have had informal conversations with Cubans from all walks of life and regions of the country, most of my formal conversations have been with academics, artists and students in Havana.

34. Economist Carmelo Mesa-Lago has written extensively on the difficulties of doing social science research in Cuba, pointing to the ideological bias within Cuba that places obstacles in the way of the "search for the truth" Mesa-Lago, Carmelo, *Availability and Reliability of Statistics in Socialist Cuba* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1970), 54.

services and are critical of non-Cuban solutions that would impose savage capitalism or deprive Cubans of property or other advantages acquired from the Revolution.³⁵

It is difficult to contextualize politics in Cuba. There has long been debate over the existence of democracy in Cuba.³⁶ However, one need not enter into discussions about the defects and merits of Cuba's formal democracy in order to deal with politics in Cuba. Realms deemed outside the political provide examples of political views that do not fit neatly into the framework of the Cuban leadership nor of those wishing to juxtapose socialist dogma against the image of a Cuban people embracing wholeheartedly the elements of capitalism that have seeped into Cuban daily life.

It is the case that after 40 years, government ideology has become the hegemonic ideology. According to anthropologist Mona Rosenthal in one of the few post-1960s and post-Special Period anthropological studies of Cuban everyday life: "the hegemonic political ideology, the centralist planned structure and the planned economy pervade everyday life" and "[n]o one in Cuba can avoid being affected by socialist ideology in one way or another, whether one accepts its premises or not."³⁷ Thus, to use Gramscian terms, the state does not rule from above by imposing certain rules and norms on pre-constituted subjects. Rather, it sets the standards of appropriate behavior and provides the structures through which individuals interpret their situations thereby producing and maintaining subjects who come to view law and other forms of coercion, not as something externally imposed, but as freedom, since they have been taught to believe that these laws contain moral or social value.³⁸

The discursive framework in Cuba is limited by these considerations and one should not underestimate the various forms of oppression that the state uses.³⁹ However, two important qualifications should be made, one at the theoretical level and one at the level of Cuban society. First, there is a normative/philosophical issue at stake in distrusting Cuban public opinion for there is only so far that you can take these objections before they become downright undemocratic. At what point does awareness of the ways that hegemonic ideologies produce their subjects become disrespect for the opinions of those

35. The Miami based **Cuban Change**, for instance, supports a Social-Democrat platform.

36. For an intelligent discussion of Cuban democracy by a variety of Cuban and foreign academics, see Dilla Alfonso, Haroldo, ed., **la democracia en Cuba y el diferendo con los Estados Unidos** (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1996).

37. Rosenthal, **Inside the Revolution: Everyday Life in Socialist Cuba**, 156.

38. Gramsci, Antonio, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks** (New York: International, 1971), 34.

39. Whether the government in Cuba actually knows all does not matter for it has succeeded in making most Cuban citizens believe that it does. Foreigners wishing to see the best of Cuba often have a difficult time understanding this fear by virtue of their limited time in Cuba, the special treatment they receive and their ability to leave.

supposedly dominated by that hegemonic ideology? The issue becomes even more complicated in a case like Cuba where the national hegemonic ideology is not hegemonic globally. The existence of strong criticism in Cuba and of counter-hegemonic movements means that we can also take seriously strong opinions in support of certain government policies. In Cuba one can find anarchists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Quakers and followers of a whole range of ideologies that do not match either Cuban socialism in a broad sense or official definitions of it. Can it be assumed that somehow they have escaped the hegemonic ideology? Can it be concluded then that they are the only Cubans whose opinions are truly expressed or acquired consciously? On what basis could such a claim possibly be made? These are important philosophical questions but they are not questions that apply only to Cuba.

If we move to Cuba specifically, we must ask if belittling Cuban popular opinions does not make us complicit in the same logic used by the Cuban government to dismiss genuine outbursts of dissatisfaction with daily living conditions. For instance, this is how the Museum of the Revolution characterized photos of a mass uprising that took place in Old Havana and Central Havana during the height of the Special Period in 1994:

Groups of antisocial elements and tramps performed counter-revolutionary riots in two neighborhoods Old Havana and Central Havana on August 5, 1994. The workers responded immediately and, without weapons, put an end to the revolts, supported by the presence of Fidel, who had rushed to join the revolutionary people. Huge popular demonstrations followed, frustrating all attempts to create instability.

The characterization, which I read during a visit to the museum in 2000, transforms a genuine expression of discontent over unacceptable conditions into the work of a few misfits eager to upset an otherwise stable situation. The police, who had come to quell the situation, are transformed into the representatives of the workers. In spite of the fact that the neighborhoods in which these riots took place are predominantly Afro-Cuban and Afro-Cubans are generally more in favor of maintaining the "achievements of the revolution," the Museum quote can brand the participants counter-revolutionaries.

The complexity and variety of the responses of Cubans themselves to Cuba's current situation call into question the simplistic categories of criminal anti-revolutionary elements, active/thinking opponents to the system, fearful citizens of a totalitarian state, or fanatical hard-line Communists/party elites. Being part of the system often means that one continues to engage and to criticize rather than disengage from politics altogether. There are cynical explanations for this. Those marginal to the system and deeply imbedded in informal economic activities may wish to keep as low a profile as possible and thus go through the minimal motions expected of Cubans within the sys-

tem: voting, signing referendums, allowing the fumigators in and, depending on the neighborhood, attending a local meeting or two. Those who participate in the system must be given some leeway in order to convince them that their involvement means something. The stories are always complicated.

For instance, while many Cuban youths see little reason to continue their studies in light of the low state salaries, being a student does provide certain material benefits from the state. Subsidized food (the University of Havana cafeteria has the cheapest lunch around), access to the Internet and computers and an environment where status can depend on standards other than the dollar are all appealing aspects of continuing one's education. These students are not necessarily apologists for the system and indeed their educations may make it harder for them to accept inconsistencies within it. A friend of mine, who is studying sociology at the University of Havana, is a member of the Union of Communist Youth (Unión de la Juventud Comunista) and regularly does voluntary labor (a thing associated with either the idealism or tyranny of the 1960s). On the other hand, she refused to sign a national referendum in support of the Cuban Constitution and against the Varela Project,⁴⁰ even when the local representative from the neighborhood CDR (Committee of the Defense of the Revolution) came to her door and made her write a letter explaining why and even though her refusal might make future advancement difficult. For her, supporting the Revolution, as she does, is not compatible with signing a document that argues that the Constitution is "untouchable." For her, giving such power to the Constitution was anti-Revolutionary. At the same time, she herself has helped with neighborhood voluntary programs and is writing a thesis on the manipulation of information about Cuba in one U.S. newspaper. She is equally critical of the Cuban press, however, and finds the Cuban magazine *Temas*, which publishes a variety of academic articles including those of foreigners, too compromised.

A 32-year old independent artist I spoke with at a party emphasized the necessity of an economic base for socialism and the tendency of the people to rationalize the situation in Cuba by referring to the provision of social services. At the same time, she saw socialism as providing good things.

Cuban socialism for me are ideas favorable to man but in reality they would more viable if there was a more solid economic base. Sometimes socialism loses its meaning in reality because it does not have structural support. Yes there are benefits to socialism but they are precarious because they want everybody to have them without having an economic base.

40. The referendum was called in response to the Varela Project, a petition with roughly 11,000 signatures requesting "a referendum to guarantee Cuban civil liberties: freedom of expression and association, the right to own a private business (foreigners can own businesses in Cuba but nationals cannot), the release of nonviolent political prisoners and the right to directly elect representatives in multi-party elections" Payá, Osvaldo, "Cloud of Terror Hangs Over Cubans Seeking Rights," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14 2003.

Thus she pointed to what she saw to be a trade-off between social welfare and individual wealth accumulation. When I asked her whether she would sacrifice free health care for a higher salary, she told me no. At the same time, she was critical of the ways in which the provision of social services in Cuba served to justify severe inadequacies to the system. When I asked if socialism for her amounted only to free education and medicine, she told me “that is the banner that people raise here. People protect themselves with this.” But again, she did not see these rationalizations of the government’s failure in Cuba as a sign that socialism, in the sense of decommodification, did not have its virtues. Thus, when I asked if she would want to leave Cuba, she told me no because “money corrupts” and causes problems.

These examples are anecdotal but they represent many conversations I have had. More importantly, they are reactions which are not knee-jerk repetitions of party slogans. Their complexity raises a troubling question for the leadership for, while their concern with the maintenance of social services is one that the government can feel secure about, not all Cubans trust in the state’s ability to maintain them (as evidenced in the woman’s concern with a solid economic base). This distrust, however, is not only based on the issue of viability but also on what socialism means beyond the provision of social services, and on whether the attempts to salvage a narrow definition of socialism may well work to undermine the possibility of a true political consensus around socialism. As Cuban social scientist Haroldo Dilla Alfonso argued in 1999:

[T]he slow commercial colonization of socialized areas of the economy has posed challenges at many levels to the most central of all political questions—the distribution of power. If we take as axiomatic the fact that a combination of militant anti-imperialism and the provision of free social services does not amount to socialism, we are left with the question as to the real depth of these systemic changes: first, at the social (and more specifically the class) level and second, at the level of the rearticulation of the whole of political life.⁴¹

If Cuba is heading towards marketization with the state increasingly allying its interests with capital, it becomes increasingly important for discussions of Cuban socialism to center on what elements of Cuban socialism are most important for its long term survival. Marketization may help to maintain the social welfare state, but what happens when the social welfare state comes to identify with capital?

Take, for instance, the propaganda displayed in a Central Havana shopping mall. In the entranceway of Tienda Carlos Tercera, a sign announces

41. Dilla Alfonso, Haroldo, “Comrades and Investors: The Uncertain Transition in Cuba,” in *Global Capitalist Versus Democracy: Socialist Register 1999*, ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999), 229.

that “Sales plus economy plus efficiency equals revolution.” Another sign hanging from the ramp that slopes up to the top of the shopping complex says “Together to defend what is ours” and is credited to CIMEX (Consortio de Importaciones y Exportaciones), Cuba’s largest trading company and the firm that runs the shopping complex. The shopping complex Carlos Tercera and others like it in Havana testify to the expanding role that consumption plays in public life in Cuba even as the number of people who can consume diminishes. The stores and prices demonstrate the vast differences between the peso and dollar economy. The identity of its shoppers represents class shifts and a new system of remuneration. One must possess dollars to buy anything at Carlos Tercera.

Opened in October of 1998, Carlos Tercera is a self-contained. It is a space full of the new with few reminders of the scarcity and dilapidation of Havana outside. The mall offers everything: home appliances, cosmetics and perfume, clothing, pet supplies, shoes and a food court. There is a Benetton where t-shirts for children cost \$25. The grocery store sells sugar cereals, peanut butter, imported apples that cost up to a dollar each, olive oil and other tinned products that most Cubans could never afford. There is even an “everything for a dollar” store in the tradition of the United States where one can buy plastic toys and flowers, buckets, and pencils, much of it made in China. There are often long lines outside these stores. Everything is “only a dollar” even when a dollar can buy you 60 bus rides (120 if you ride the infamous *camello* instituted during the Special Period), ten cinema tickets, ten pounds of oranges or five packs of unfiltered cigarettes. However, a dollar in the world of dollars in Cuba gets you very little. In the grocery store like the one in Carlos Tercera, a can of Tropicola, the Cuban cola, costs 45 cents and a beer costs 60 cents. A stick of butter can cost up to a dollar, more than what it costs in the United States. Toilet paper costs \$1.40 for four rolls. Eggs cost from ten to 15 cents each. When the highest salary in Cuba is 40 dollars a month, these prices are very high indeed.

Carlos Tercera, however, does not simply provide Cubans with a window onto the goods they may not have access to in the peso economy. It is not simply a store; it is a shopping experience. Just like the malls in the United States, it’s a place where people congregate by virtue of their commonality as consumers. Just as in the United States, it is a place where one has agency as a buyer and where one can take control of one’s life by adding new objects to it. And, just as in the United States, this agency as a buyer does not translate into political power.

Thus those who go shopping at Carlos Tercera are “defend[ing] what is [theirs]” by helping to keep the economy functioning. Sales plus economy plus efficiency does equal revolution if the revolution has come to

mean nothing but the influx of hard currency to keep the economy going, the government afloat and basic social services intact. Other activities such as domestic production, popular political and direct participation, and the search for Cuban solutions are absent from this equation. If “sales plus economy plus efficiency equals revolution,” then revolution in Cuba is reduced to economic calculation and conspicuous consumption which are not only activities that few Cubans can actually participate in, but are also principles fundamentally at odds with such important principles of Cuban socialism as unity, equality, and nationalism.

It is in the various realms of Cuban popular culture that one finds the strongest criticisms of this consumer culture. One such realm is that of music, and particularly nueva trova, rap, and rock and roll, which because of its location outside the political has greater space to speak.

The songs of Cuban trovador Carlos Varela deal with Cubans’ self censorship and fear (“Like Fish,” “Walls and Door”), the irony of a system that says that all is for you but forbids you to change it (“Like They Did to Me”), and the failure of the Cuban news media to report on the ugly realities of Cuban life (“Politics Doesn’t fit in the Sugar Bowl”).⁴² Yet Varela’s concern with greater freedom of expression in Cuba and his criticisms are not unproblematic embraces of consumer society. His 1989 song “Tropicollage” addresses both the ways in which Cuba’s desire for dollars has damaged Cubans’ respect for one another and the ways in which Cuba has been commodified by its reliance on the tourist industry. “I know that the dollar makes the economy like flour makes bread” sings Varela, “but what I don’t understand is why money confuses people so much that if you go to a hotel they treat you badly because you are not a foreigner.”⁴³ In the same song, Varela reminds the typical tourist who never goes to the places where Cubans actually live and work that Cuba can’t be bought nor captured in a photograph.

Trovador Frank Delgado’s song “Trovatur” (1995) is a song about Cuban musicians who pander to tourists’ romantic vision of Cuban revolutionaries. “I was a tropical virus, communist Latin lover, trafficking in the revolution and its points of views.” In “Johnny, the Babalao,” Delgado sings of Afro-Cuban religious figures whose spiritual concerns have been clouded by their entrepreneurial aspirations and who accept only dollars and name brand rum.⁴⁴

42. All songs are from Varela’s albums **Como los peces** (TRAK 1995), **Monedas al aire** (Anides-Sonido 1992) and **Jalisco Park** (EGREM 1989). Lyrics in Spanish from www.carlosvarela.com.

43. All song lyrics are translated from Spanish to English by the author.

44. Both songs from the album **Trova-Tur** (1995). Lyrics in Spanish from www.trovaadores.net.

Cuban rap has provided an increasingly important outlet for criticism especially in relation to Afro-Cuban identity, police brutality, and racial profiling. Yet these issues are not necessarily treated independently from economic ones. Thus the rap group EPG&B tell their listeners in one song not to be a Mickey Mouse, which means to be a copycat and a blind consumer of American culture, but rather to be Carabali, in reference to Cuba's African cultural origins and influences.⁴⁵

The group Buena Fe's song "psicología al día"⁴⁶ portrays capitalism as literally something that "grab[s] you by the neck" and demands that you resign yourself to it. The song's verses go on to describe the ways in which capitalism appears to provide freedom but in fact creates forms of obligation for which capital does not compensate in the end. Thus one stanza of the song refers to the situation of the underdeveloped country that must squander its natural resources and its environment in order to acquire loans which they will be paying off indefinitely. Each chorus ends with a different "point of view" whether it be ecological or humanist and yet their characterizations of these views show the extent to which they have been perverted by capitalism. Humanism is about resignation to the world being an unequal one where each exists to enjoy her own individual life. If one looks on the bright side, goes the song, at least poverty and suffering can be profitable.

The final chorus tells the listener that the desired result of this ideological and economic onslaught is that people themselves ask to be grabbed by the neck and promise that they won't complain since "at the end of the story, being hanged isn't so bad." The final lines conclude that "you will see it this way, in a conformist way, from the slavish point of view." The song represents precisely the kind of Gramscian dynamic that Rosenthal uses to describe Cuba. Yet, in this case, it is explicitly a critique of neo-liberalism and its attempt, not simply to impose a certain world order, but to make it appear as if this is what people really wish.

There is much to criticize about Cuban economic policy and daily life and those criticisms can be found not just among the dissident community but also in the streets and in popular culture. People's dissatisfaction with the status quo does not represent a straightforward embrace of the free market. Indeed popular criticisms can be far more socialist than the official propaganda of the Cuban state and this may be something that neither the Cuban state, who believes itself to be the last socialist holdout, nor critics of socialist projects, who appear often to share the same belief, wish to recognize.

45. "Rap con Churre" from the album **Con los Puños Arriba: Compilación de Hip Hop Cubano** (EGREM 2002).

46. From the album **Dejame Entrar** (EGREM 2001).

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To Live Outside the Law You Must Be Honest

Dick Cluster

The title of this paper is from Bob Dylan, and I choose it for two reasons. The first reason is the source and subculture: Anyone who has had anything to do with the consumption, buying, or selling of small quantities of banned substances has experienced one of the closest U.S. analogies to the Cuban experience I'm going to talk about. Other analogies would be working off the books to avoid taxes or bureaucratic impediments, or being an undocumented immigrant – or, finally, traveling to Cuba without benefit of a Treasury license.

The second reason for the choice is the quote itself. I believe that most Cubans engaged in the widespread, barely underground world of illegal economic activity do want to be honest, especially in the Spanish, *honesto*, sense of the word. That is, they do want to live up to societal values as best they can, and these values include truthfulness, fairness, equality, and lack of exploitation – values I would call socialist, as some Cubans who hold them would also name them, and other who hold them would not. But wanting to remain is one thing, and succeeding is another. Or as Dr. Dylan put it, “But where are you tonight, Sweet Marie?”

First let me list and categorize some of what I mean by illegal economic activity. Then I'll take a look at its macroeconomic causes; then at its effects on consciousness, particularly as reflected in some recent Cuban literature. My examples will come primarily from Havana. The patterns are somewhat different in the interior, especially in smaller towns and countryside, and maybe someone else on the panel or in discussion can speak to that, but I'm going to stick to what I know best.

1. Buying or selling goods stolen from the state retail distribution system, especially from the dollar-store sector but also from the peso one. Key examples would be protein: cheese, eggs, chickens, yogurt and powdered milk. In some

neighborhoods, door-to-door vendors are so common that those well-enough connected with their own suppliers (or poorly enough fixed for cash) post signs saying “Not buying anything. Don’t ring the bell.” Also rum, as in this example from one of the works I’ll discuss later, Leonardo Padura’s *La novela de mi vida*:

Bacán’s business is fantastic. He makes rum in his own house, and has a machine to seal the caps the same as in the factory. Then, with two or three contacts he has, they sell this rotgut rum in the dollar stores and he takes the same number of bottles of good rum and sells it himself – at a lower price, of course. So his confederates in the store never get caught stealing, because there aren’t any bottles missing, and he’s always got steady customers. He told me that soon, he’s going to start making Coca-Cola too.

2. Buying or selling goods stolen from other venues, usually by state employees. Key examples would be home repair and improvement goods, generally from new hotels and other state construction projects: windows, window glass, cement, paint, plumbing and electrical supplies. Also transportation-related: gasoline, Lada carburetors, any number of other parts or supplies to make your car go, or, say, to make your refrigerator or computer work.
3. Using state or personal property in unauthorized ways. Your car as a taxi if not licensed to do so, or as a taxi carrying foreigners if not licensed to that, or your state employer’s vehicle to do the same, or any of the above to carry produce from the countryside to sell in the city; renting out a room without a license, or renting two or three rooms with a license for only one.
4. Accepting bribes or gifts for performing state-provided services. Accepting a chicken from a patient if you’re a doctor, or, more grievously, performing surgery or other care off the clock, say at night in the hospital, for such a fee; putting someone at the top of a waiting list for bus or train or airplane trips; accepting money to fudge dates, names of residents, number of square feet, etc. in *permutas*, the regulated trading of houses and apartments.
5. Trafficking in goods and services that are not supposed to be available on a market basis, or at all: permuteros, private coaching for school placement exams, accepting hard-currency payments or gifts directly from a foreign firm rather than the legal indirect and most-often peso salary through the state employment agency; making or importing pirate satellite dishes; running a private restaurant before they were legalized; offering to private consumers services in the profession for which you were prepared free of charge the public higher education system; selling food freelance, outside the farmers’ markets.

I’m sure I’ve forgotten some categories. One which seems to have vanished with the coming of the *agromercados*, though it was a key symbol in

films, stories, and jokes for a while before, is the raising of clandestine pigs inside apartment houses. Like that pig production, many if not most of these illegal activities are done without much secrecy, often in ways that are completely obvious to one government authority or another, such as when freelance guides or translators accompany foreign businessmen or journalists, or vendors sit and sell foreign-made toilet stopcocks outside dollar stores. At the same time there are penalties, both juridical ones (warnings, fines, and jail terms) and political ones (possible evidence of a bad attitude when you're seeking university admission for yourself or your child, an exit visa for foreign travel, a promotion at your legal, state job, or an exception or broad interpretation of one of many regulations that might or might not be applied). So they carry the stigma – of being a lawbreaker, and the vague unease that comes with the possibility of being discovered and penalized, or at least threatened with penalty. Again, as a U.S. analogy, I think of the federal crime of unauthorized travel to Cuba, since the regulations are constantly changing as well as being arbitrarily and unpredictably applied. The difference between Cuba and U.S., on this particular axis is that in Cuba nearly everybody does these things, t do it themselves, they depend on someone else in their family doing so, about which, depending on the individual or the family, they may want to know all the details, or they may want to look the other way. The next question is, why is this so, to the point where the state is unable or unwilling to stamp out the widespread illegality?

The planned economy always had rigidity that made some unauthorized use of state property necessary – you brought home a bolt, a valve, some cement from the plant to meet some need of yours or your neighbor's or maybe you traded these for something else, and occasionally you bought or sold these things, or non-staple food, for Cuban pesos at a moderate price. Similarly if you managed a state firm, I gather that sometimes you had to do grey market activity with other firms to bypass clogged supply lines. I don't know any studies of this, but a very interesting Cuban detective novel written in the '80s though not published until '92, Justo Vaco's *El muro*, portrays a black marketeer who made his living on such wholesale transactions, enjoying more than his share of weekends at Varadero hotels (then shared by Cubans and foreigners) as a result. But these were exceptions, a minor part of the economy; the villain of Vasco's novel is clearly a villain, a depraved and marginal and dishonest character; the tragedy of the book is the way that his dishonesty affects the factory manager's daughter, who becomes involved with him and eventually commits suicide out of shame arising from this relationship. Also on the margin of pre-Special Period economy and society were the moneychangers, who sold pesos for dollars, their customers being almost exclusively the limited numbers of foreign tourists. The cause of this activity

was the artificial state exchange rate of 1:1, and the fact that there were in those days lots of peso-denominated restaurants, night clubs, transport etc. that tourists might want to spend money on.

All this changed, of course, with the collapse of the aid and trade relationships with Eastern Europe. Because of the lack of imports of both finished goods and industrial/agricultural inputs, there were shortages of everything, and you suddenly could buy hardly anything through the legal distribution system. Eggs, which teenagers used to go buy *por la libre* so they could (not having any snowballs like I did in my youth) throw them at buses for fun, practically disappeared, and so that for a time eggs were nicknamed *americanos* (Americans are coming, or how many they would be). *Por la libre* vanished, and the ration supplied maybe 50 percent of what a household needed to get through the month. A new joke said there were three classes in Cuba: *dirigentes* (high officials cushioned from the crisis), *diplorente* (diplomats and other foreigners with access to the dollar stores), and *indigentes* (poor people). But those *indigentes* did have money to spend, from savings and because they were cushioned from the unemployment that in a capitalist society would accompany such an economic collapse. So suddenly there was a demand for food and other necessities, at practically any price.

Even in midst of such a supply crisis, demand and desperation created some measure of supply: stolen goods, vegetables and animals raised privately one way or another, home-made pizzas about which no one asked the source of the flour, tomatoes, and cheese; gasoline the same. And concurrently, with people spending up to 1,000 pesos a month on necessities, savings and official salaries weren't enough, so they needed to find new ways to make money, which fueled the black market from the supply end – not just through theft, but all manner of freelance trades to replace that state services that had stopped functioning, from haircutting to taxis to restaurants to appliance repair. Add to that on the demand side a new clientele – much increased numbers of foreign tourists, who produced employment in the illegal sector newly and inventively dubbed *jinetismo*, jockeying on the backs (or fronts) of such tourists and a new source of cash among Cubans, hard currency from tips which at that point there was still no legal channel to spend. Given all of the above, the joke changed; there were now four classes in Cuba: *dirigentes*, *diplorente*, *indigentes* and *delincuentes*, people who broke the law.

When the state responded to both the illegality and the supply crisis with economic reforms, especially those of '93-'95, some of this illegality became legal. The dollar was decimalized and then even prioritized, with the opening of ever more dollar stores and of channels to get money from relatives abroad. A market in most agricultural products was legalized within the *agromercado* system, as were some forms of self-employment. At the same

time, though prices of necessities came down compared to the high black market prices and very low peso value of the early '90s, still shipping in the agromercados or the dollar stores was and is expensive, which created and creates a new cycle of the need to make a buck complicated by growing inequality and the accompanying pent-up demand for semi-luxuries as well as bare necessities. Thus many of the new illegal activities that I mentioned at the beginning of this paper have emerged.

The question of why the reforms stopped where they did, why so many kinds of market activity remained illegal, why the dual currency, etc., are outside the range of my topic, except to say that the state was trying not to lose control of the economy, trying to prevent the emergence of powerful new economic actors, trying to limit inequality, and trying to stick to what it knew, as states will do. I do want to point out that the dual currency is mostly a symptom, though an aggravating one in terms of consciousness, rather than a cause of the macroeconomic problems. If the state chose to and found a way to float the peso completely against the dollar or euro, and charge real cost-of-production or cost-of-importation peso prices for what's now sold in the dollar store, significant quantities of these goods (like significant quantities of those sold in the agromercados) would still be out of reach of most Cuban consumers who depended only on their legal wage.

In sum: the result of the various reforms and measures taken to deal with the crisis has been to ease the material problems of most Cuban households, but not to do so through 100 percent legal means. This conference refers to "after the Período Especial," but as one Cuban friend says, "The Special Period will be over for me when I can feed myself and my child just on the income from my official state job." By the same token, of course, the illegal activity also subsidizes the legal: the doctor who performs paying procedures at night also performs free ones during the day; the moonlighting recently graduated engineer who uses his state computer and printer to do private design work for a foreign firm at night also uses it to design a dormitory or historic reconstruction by day; the teacher who coaches would-be emigrants in English for dollars also teaches in a high school or college with equal care; the bus driver who sells gas also drives the *camello*, under very difficult conditions, every day.

Well, and so what? If living outside the law has now become a necessity, the exception rather than the rule, how do people feel about this? How much does it affect it affect how – including the revolutionary regime or socialist ideals or themselves? And, as is always a key question, usually ignored in the black-and-white either/or debate that characterizes looking at Cuba, compared to what? In Cuba such issues are not discussed in journalistic mass media, but they are taken up fiction writers and filmmakers, live comedy per-

formers, and the like. What I'm going to do is look at a few works or recent fiction and drama, all of them published or performed in Cuba within the past few years, many published also abroad, most of them prize winning works.

On one end of the issue, if we look to the crime novel for an examination of illegality, we find in Daniel Chavarría's *El loro con la pluma de rojo* the character of Bini – Sabina López – a principled prostitute, a type borrowed in part from the character of the American western, the whore with a heart of gold. In Chavarría's novel, Bini is a young jinetera who enlists heart and soul – even to the point of risking some jail time – in a campaign of revenge against an Argentine torturer who is seeking cover under a false identity in Cuba, where his ex-victims would least expect him to be hiding out. Though the thinking in this scheme is done by Aldo Bianchi, an Argentinian ex-victim exiled to Italy who makes himself Sabina's lover and financial supporter, Bini throws herself into the role, so that the torturer can be arrested on false charges in Havana long enough for a legal extradition claim to be mounted from abroad. So does one of her partners in crime, her childhood friend Pepe, a middle manager at the Hotel Triton who arranges for her to stay in the hotel with foreigners, and so do an assortment of hotel maids, babalawos, and other folkloric Cuban characters who have nothing to gain personally, though many of them are also engaged in their minor crimes to get by.

Bini lives outside the law, and has no particular politics; she has considered trying to make her way to Florida by sea; her definition of human rights is to be able to live like the glamorous Europeans and Americans she sees in the movies, with sports car and access to ATMs. But she is honest, committed to basic human values, on the right side of this contest between Latin American dreamers or reformers and U.S. imperialists and their allies — and in the end of the novel, Aldo makes an honest woman out of her by marrying her, though neither of them expects the marriage to be fulltime. We might call Chavarría's fable the rose-tinted end of the spectrum, but it has been quite popular in Cuba, so readers have evidently found much to recognize there.

From another angle completely, Nancy Alonso's story collection, *Cerrado por reparación*, examines with humor, sympathy, and irony the often bizarre effects of the new Cuba on daily life. In "La prueba," Berta nervously downs coffee and smokes cigarettes before going to the clinic for a test that will reveal whether her condition has improved or not since the year before. She had been smoking and sipping like a fiend for the last two months, but when the result comes back she's ecstatic to find out that a) her bleeding ulcer is fully as bad as it was the year before, and b) she can now give up the cigarettes – which she hates – for another ten months. Since her stomach lining is as raw as ever, she's entitled to another year of special diet on her ration card – another year of breakfast with milk, as she says.

In Alonso's story "El viaje," the trip, the protagonist is not the perpetrator of a fraud but the victim. When her son hopes to enlist in an apple-picking contingent in Canada (a false rumor which really did sweep Havana some years ago), Inés goes to the cemetery to make a request at the tomb of Amelia la Milagrosa, where offerings of thanks for many successful voyages and other miracles can be found. There she meets Leobardo, an alleged official of the Ministry of Economic Collaboration, who reveals to her a much better invitation to work in the petroleum industry in Venezuela for four hundred dollars a month, and eventually invited Inés and her son to recruit 180 well qualified applicants, who are accepted, and then to gather the applicants' processing fees of 100 pesos each. Leobardo disappears with all of the fees, the equivalent of some \$800. The Ministry has no knowledge of the Venezuelan invitation, or of Leobardo, and when Inés returns to Amelia's tomb, there is a new floral offering from the con man, thanking the miracle worker for his trip abroad.

So there are those like Berta who are honest because they are only getting breakfast (and, in a small way, defrauding the state), and those like Leobardo who are not, because they are getting rich and defrauding fellow citizens. But the most comical and poignant story in Alonso's collection is "Nunca se acaba," the tale of Carmen and Manolo, an elderly couple unsuccessful in their efforts to repair the leaky roof over their kitchen, who finally decide the solution is a *permuta* – a house trade, which is how the Cuban housing market works. They find a couple with two children who will trade a smaller but not leaky house, and who evidently have the energy and money to make the needed repairs on this one. Only, the man of this couple points out, there are a few problems to be resolved.

"We're going to buy the house we showed you from a cousin of mine and request permission to trade two for one, our little apartment and my cousin's house for yours. That way we kill two birds with one stone: we get legal cover for buying that house and we balance out the trade." "Three birds with one stone," his wife added, "because my sister will get the little apartment in the end." The younger couple fielded all questions with an evident mastery of the subject, citing articles, clauses, whereases, and provided-thats of the housing law. Finally, as if he'd forgotten something of minor importance, the man said. "Of course, the two of you will have to get divorced."

Divorced? Carmen and Manolo exclaimed at once.

"Don't worry, it's only on paper," the woman said. "Of course, you'll live together, but Carmen will be the owner of the house, and Manolo of the apartment. Then my sister will marry Manolo, just on paper, and then after a while they'll get divorced. Manolo will give her title to the apartment, and then you two can get married again so you can both have title to the house."

Faced with the various prospects of divorce, Manolo marrying an attractive young woman, and the possibility of either Manolo or Carmen dying before all the wheeling and dealing gives them each secure tenure in the new place, the old couple finally decide that this complex extralegal mechanism is not for them. If there's nothing exactly wrong with what the permutantes are proposing – though their apparent wealth does make them slightly suspicious – still, as the title suggests, the problem is that it never ends, and not everyone is prepared morally or in terms of energy to enter into such a life. Carmen and Manolo prefer to don raincoats and hardhats (left over, significantly, from Manolo's former occupation in the old days) and to survive in their own kitchen as best they can.

The dilemma of the new Cuba also gets a comical treatment in Mylene Fernandez's surrealist novel of Havana and Miami, *Otras plegarias atendidas*, where those in Miami are always waiting for the big break that's about to transform their lives, while those in Havana are searching for a little space and a new way to make a buck. The heroine's neighbor invents the expedient of renting Havana's glorious sunsets for a dollar a pop. More specifically, she rents an hour and a folding chair on her spacious sea-facing Vedado balcony for a dollar per guest, at the hour of sunset every day. The guests are foreign tourists, particularly those "who prefer the Havana of their dreams without having to actually rub elbows with it." The scheme hurts no one and brings more customers to all the other residents of the apartment building, who are in the business of renting rooms. Yet it contributes to a false image of the city, and its effect on the youth is dubious: the entrepreneur's son, who receives gifts from the many customers-turned-friends-of-the-family, concludes he wants to be a foreigner himself.

I hope these examples from Alonso's and Fernandez's books are suggestive of where I think the center of gravity lies: that the illegality of daily life brings no dramatic break from societal values, nor necessarily from whatever is left of the former political consensus, but that it eats slowly away at the soul. However, I'd like to look at three examples that join the question of illegality to the question of what legal economic liberalization does or might bring. In Esther Suarez' play "Baños Públicos, S.A.," a customer at one of Havana's scarce and decrepit public bathrooms tries to convince the attendant of the prospects for privatization. The attendant, he is sure, is barely eking out a living by pocketing half of the meager 10-centavo-per customer revenues she collects. What ensues is a hilarious debate about whether the happiness of customers and owners is or is not mutually exclusive, a debate that defies my ability to excerpt or summarize, but the question of whether privatization would be a move out of the frying pan and into the fire is clearly and cleverly joined.

Let me end with two novels each of which follows a group of friends, mostly male, from their youth in the '60s and '70s to more-or-less today. Both novels are about many things, but for my purposes, in each case, on one of the friends has become an executive of a joint-venture firm, with car, cell-phone, and other privileges to match. One book is by Leonardo Padura, Cuba's premiere writer of detective novels in the '90s, though this book contains no murders or cops; the other by Abel Prieto, Minister of Culture and member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party.

In Padura's *La novela de mi vida*, Fernando returns to Cuba after many years abroad and finds a country whose economy is characterized by the home-made rum racket quoted above, or, as his old Latin professor says, "If I drink milk and eat meat it's because my youngest son, the one who never studied anything, has a stall in the farmer's market and makes five hundred pesos a day selling pork and stealing everybody blind." Tomás teaches at the university, without too much conviction, and lives by serving as a freelance, under-the-table driver and guide to visiting European professors, having to take their orders and laugh at their jokes. Miguel Angel, an apostate communist, publishes an occasional critical article abroad but – a proof of honesty, to my way of seeing – does not allow himself to be used by any of the small dissident groups. He lives off occasional under-the-table translations, or gives English classes to Cubans about to depart for the North.

But most interesting for my purposes is Conrado, the consummate opportunist, who knew he was no match for the rest in literary ambition, but liked to hang out with them just the same. He rose through the state bureaucracy and has now become the Cuban administrator of a Cuban-Spanish candy firm. He moves through life "surrounded by an indelible aroma of expensive cologne." Though his salary is in Cuba pesos, he uses his position to trade on the black market: candy for wine; backpacks with the firm's logo for cooking oil; chewing gum for gasoline; and of course he gets a dollar bonus under the table from his Spanish boss. Economic liberalization and greater opening to foreign capital are often seen by outside observers, especially economists, as antidotes to the socialist rigidities that give rise to black markets; but in the character of Conrado, the two are merely sides of the same coin. The nature of Conrado's firm's business is also worthy of note: exporting cacao, importing finished candies – the same pattern of exporting raw material and importing manufactured goods that prevailed in Cuba's colonial and capitalist pasts.

Conrado's doppelganger in Abel Prieto's novel, *El vuelo del gato*, is Godofredo Laferté, aka Freddy Mamoncillo, also the most upwardly mobile of his group. There's no discussion of illegality in Freddy's current role in a joint venture that brings him similar rewards to Conrado's in terms of house, car, cellphone, and the rest. But Freddy's first entrepreneurial apprenticeship,

before he joined the Department of Public Relations and Dissemination of the Ministry of Internal Commerce sometime in the '70s, came while stationed in the army in Pinar del Rio, when he was a kind of Cuban Milo Milerbender, wheeling and dealing and amassing what at the time was a small fortune in the currency of Soviet sweetened condensed milk. So in this character, too, illegality and the newly legal private or state-capitalist sectors are conjoined.

In the end, I'm trying to raise the question of the effects of illegality more than offer an answer, because like many things about Cuba the answer remains to be seen. But sketchily, I would say that the ubiquitous illegal activity has brought – besides survival and a certain personal empowerment – increased inequality, a decline in pride and values, and an increase in hypocrisy. But I'd say that the same effects accompany the growth of a legal free market or legal state capitalist mechanisms as well. In trying to assess the stew of mixed emotions and mixed consciousness within which most Cubans go about their daily lives and develop their thinking about their country, I'd say that, for many, to live outside the law and try your best to be honest remains preferable to living inside a different law under which you may not be able to be any more honest, and may be required to be less honest, in fact.

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The Nueva Trova: Frank Delgado and Survival of a Critical Voice

Lauren E. Shaw

The *nueva trova* is not a genre or an artistic school. Rather, it is a musical movement that is not characterized by a particular style. As a movement, it belongs more to a certain ideology and way of life than to a certain time period. The musical forms it encompasses are many: *bolero*, *guaguancó*, *guajira*, *guaracha*, *danzón*, *son* and ballad. Some troubadours even include reggae and rap into their repertory. It is the ballad, however, that is used most frequently due to its flexibility of form that can accommodate more adeptly to lyrics.

The *nueva trova* emerged in Cuba at the end of the sixties with singer-songwriters Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés as its two-main founders. It has come to be associated with the ideological, historical and social-political context of the Cuban Revolution. In fact, in the last few decades, its songs have conveyed the impact of socialism on the island. Although it is part of the world-wide movement of protest songs in the sixties, the *nueva trova* is unique, due to the political situation in Cuba.

Some of the foremost artists taking part in this international song form are: Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez in the United States; Violeta Parra and Víctor Jara in Chile; Mercedes Sosa in Argentina; Oscar Chávez and Amparo Ochoa in México; Roy Brown in Puerto Rico and Joan Manuel Serrat, Paco Ibáñez, Luis Llac and Raimón in Spain. Insisting on social justice, these artists strove to raise consciousness and to speak out against oppressive social and political systems. They represented the antithesis of music as a business.

In Latin America, this song form came to be known as the *nueva canción*: *nueva*, new, because of its aesthetic and thematic innovations. The *nueva*

trova shares what was new in the *nueva canción* but differs from it because of the very specific reality from which it emerged: communist Cuba. It was created in a particular time and country where it was assumed that the people's needs were addressed and oppression from social inequity and political tyranny was a thing of the past. The selection of the word *trova* instead of *canción* speaks to the conscious desire of the Cuban singer-songwriters to claim their thematic and textual connection to Cuba's traditional troubadours of the nineteenth century. What separates the *nueva trova* from the nineteenth century *trova tradicional* is the Cuban Revolution and the possibilities it promised for those who participated in its ideology and formation.

In 1972 el Primer Encuentro de Jóvenes Trovadores (The First Gathering of Young Troubadours) was celebrated in Manzanillo, where young troubadours of various provinces could join together to exchange ideas amongst themselves and also to establish a dialogue with laborers and educators. This event marks the inception of what is known as the "organizational movement" of the *nueva trova*, which eventually dissolved in the mid eighties. The musical movement has never ceased to exist. In addition to Rodríguez and Milanés, its other principle-founding members are Noel Nicola, Vicente Feliú and Augusto Blanco. Later, other troubadours joined the movement, such as Amaury Pérez, Alejandro García, known as Virulo, Pedro Luis Ferrer, Mike Porcel, Angel Quintero and Sara González. In the eighties, a second "generation" of new troubadours developed with artists such as Frank Delgado, Santiago Feliú, Donato Poveda, Alberto Tosca, José Antonio Quesada, Anabel López, Xiomara Laugart, Carlos Varela, Gerardo Alfonso and Polito Ibáñez. This "generation" is referred to as *generación de los topos* because of their underground origins. Delgado maintains the line established by Ferrer, working predominantly with Cuban rhythms set to aggressively critical lyrics. Of this group, Varela has become the most famous in Cuba, fusing rock and roll with *trova*. Ibáñez began as a solo troubadour but now plays primarily with his band, assuming a more popular-commercial style than that of solo acoustic guitarist. The Afro-Cuban Gerardo Alfonso incorporates reggae and rap in his repertory. Feliú stands out for his unique style on the guitar. With the exception of Laugart, who resides in New York City and Poveda who lives in Miami, all members of this group have remained in Cuba.

At the end of the eighties, a third "generation" of new troubadours appeared at the time the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cuban people entered the período especial due to the sudden loss of Soviet economic support in the form of trade and subsidies. The irreverence and critical tone of their lyrics reflect these difficult times. The third "generation" came to be known as *la generación del 13 y 8*, which refers to the address of the *peña* where they would gather to play in el Vedado, a neighborhood in Havana.

Gema y Pável, the trio Superávit and the group that calls itself Habana Abierta represent some of this generation of troubadours. By as early as 1993 many of this generation had begun to establish themselves in Madrid where they all continue to survive on their musical talents giving concerts and producing CDs for Spanish record companies. The fact that they have chosen to leave Cuba reflects the lack of opportunities for them on the island.

The most recent expression of the *nueva trova* is manifest in various regions of Cuba: Havana, Santa Clara y Santiago de Cuba. These young troubadours, born in the mid seventies in Havana are known as the Cantores de la Rosa y la Espina: Samuel Águila, Ariel Díaz, Carlos Lage, Karel García, Yhosvany Palma, Sergio Gómez (poet who collaborates with Samuel), Silvio Alejandro, Fernando Bécquer, Axel Milanés, Diego Cano and Eduardo Frías. As of my last visit to Cuba in 2000, they had little experience performing off the island, with the exception of a few government-sponsored concerts in Guatemala. They usually share concert programs since none possesses the sufficient repertory or artistic level to sustain a solo concert. Heidi Igualada and Rita del Prado belong to this generation also. Yamira Díaz, from Pinar del Río, could be included in this generation although chronologically she belongs to the *generación del 13 y 8*. Among the villaclareños are Diego Gutiérrez, Aláin Garrido, Raul Marchena, Leonardo García, and el Trío Enserie (Raul Cabrera, Rolando Berrío and Levis Aliaga). Enserie stand out from their peers perhaps because they are a trio which enables them to produce a greater number and variety of songs. In 1999 they also released a CD produced by Silvio Rodríguez's recording studio and record label, Abdala. They have traveled extensively, but have since disbanded, with two members residing in different areas of Spain and one in Cuba. From Santiago de Cuba William Vivanco, stands out as a significant singer-songwriter of this generation.

Having delineated the key artists participating in the *nueva trova*, I would like to turn to the lyrics of Frank Delgado from the generation of *los topos*. When I first interviewed him, he hesitated to admit being part of the *nueva trova*.¹ He went on to say that for him the *nueva trova* is Pablo and Silvio, and perhaps the next group of musicians that immediately followed the founders. However, he clearly admitted his connection to the *nueva trova* by saying that he shares aesthetic similarities with *nueva trova* musicians, but that there are differences. When pressed about the differences he described his own lyrics as more prosaic than those of the *nueva trova*. To Delgado, the *nueva trova* texts came out of the vanguard style emphasizing the cryptic and polysemous

1. All comments from Frank Delgado are translated from the 1999 interview in Havana, transcript of which can be found in the original form in: Lauren Shaw, "La nueva trova cubana: una poética y política menor," diss., City U of New York, 2002, 341-376.

vein of poetry. He sees his own texts (and those of his generation) as narrative rather than as poetic, as descriptive but also more direct and more critical. He gives the example of one of Silvio's verses to show the difference in style, calling it opaque, difficult and *vallejiano*: un reloj se transforma en canchero y la capa de un viejo da con una tempestad de comején.² He also mentions that in the late seventies and early eighties, the *nueva trova* was becoming a caricature of itself, so much so that anyone who carried a guitar, wore dirty boots and combined the banal with unrelated imagery in his songs could be considered a troubadour. Delgado's generation broke from this trend with its clear, direct texts that spoke to tangible issues in contemporary Cuba. His songs continue in this vein, while the most current generation receiving state support under the auspices of the UJC (Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas) tends to avoid critical commentary in its texts. Hence, one reason for the misconception that the *nueva trova* is dead and out of touch with contemporary Cuba.

Delgado has managed to keep his critical voice heard, humorously commenting on the shortages and restrictions imposed on the Cuban people. The CD *Trov-Tur*, which was recorded in 1995, represents Delgado's response to the período especial. The song "Cuando se vaya la luz, mi negra" is one example:

Cuando se vaya la luz, mi negra, nos vamos a desnudar,
 Temprano tiene su encanto, como la gente en el campo.
 Lo malo es que sin agua y sin ventilador,
 Acabaremos pegajosos y sudados como en un maratón.³

Introducing this song at a solo concert at Bard College in 2000, Delgado explained its context in the período especial, the frequent electrical blackouts exemplifying Cuba's decaying infrastructure without economic support from the Soviet Union. The song served to give comic relief at a time when Cubans were particularly burdened with sacrifice and hardship. Humor has been one of Delgado's best devices.

As a musician of certain category, Delgado has special privileges not granted to the common Cuban. He is able to spend long periods of time away from Cuba on tours that he arranges himself. He always returns to his native land and has written songs about those who have made the other choice.⁴ In Cuba he appears on recordings and concert programs that feature *nueva trova* artists and he performs solo concerts in venues such as the Casa de las Américas. His CDs, however, though recorded in Cuba, are usually produced off the island. His latest, *El Adivino*, was produced in Miami in 2002.

2. Silvio Rodríguez, "Como esperando abril," **Te doy una canción**, fonomusic, 1975.

3. Frank Delgado, "Cuando se vaya la luz, mi negra," **Trova-Tur**, Mutis, 1996.

4. See Frank Delgado, "La otra orilla", **La Habana está de bala**, Nuestra América, 1997.

Because of his more international exposure and experience, he has a broader base than that of the younger troubadours. He now has a web page containing most of his lyrics, which can be accessed by anyone: a recent example of the Internet's effect on communication between Cuba and the United States. However, during the late nineties and the beginning of the new millenium, while I was researching my dissertation, no such information was available to me over the Internet. Even while in Cuba, I found it difficult to extract written lyrics from troubadours who seem to relate more to the aural nature of their profession. Delgado, on the other hand, always has had his songs typed and collected in his own unpublished songbook. Perhaps a sign of professionalism or maturity, he has always been conscious of the value of his lyrics. He has always been an independent musician not relying on the state funded and controlled recording labels, which explains his living arrangements. At the time of our interview in 1999, he was living with his parents in a room that he had converted into a make-shift music studio.

The songs I would like to discuss concern issues relating to Cuba's struggles since 1990, as well as the troubadours' struggles at the dawn of the twenty-first century. In the liner notes of the CD, *Trova-Tur*, Delgado states that "being a troubadour in Cuba is synonymous with possessing a certain attitude about life which constitutes a type of musical and poetic militancy. It is the historical antithesis of the singer and is to the left of the song, circumscribed in a particular historic reality and a product of a tradition."⁵ He concludes by defining himself as a troubadour. His song titled "El proceso" from this CD refers directly to the troubadours' trade and he defines himself as un simple trovador, which refers to this notion of poetic militancy. He mixes humor with a certain aggressiveness while openly pointing to the controversial role the troubadour has taken on in Cuba.

Que soy maldito y objetor dice la fiscalía.
Me acusan de manipular datos de economía,
de ser un típico provocador irresponsable
en un país inestable.

...

Que soy un simple trovador que dice lo que piensa,
que soy poeta e intocable, dirá la defensa.
Que quien ha visto a un trovador objetivo y valiente
hablar bien de un presidente.

...⁶

Delgado sets up a dialogue between the troubadour's audience and his judges, against whom he defends himself. He describes the polemic involved

5. Delgado, *Trova-Tur*, 1996.

6. Delgado, *Trova-Tur*, 1996.

in speaking out and living within the restrictions of a duplicitous society. He contrasts “the simple troubadour who says what he thinks with an environment that accuses him of performing demagoguery out of very few elements and of looking for a salve in the applause of an audience that supports his opinions.” Throughout this dialogue, Delgado criticizes Cuba of the nineties from his marginalized position of poet/critic. “El proceso” represents the delicate position of the troubadour with a critical voice who is judged by hypocrites and defended by people.

The question of censorship is one that frequently concerns North Americans about Cuban artistic expression in relationship to the state. Cubans, by the way, seem to be quite aware of what songs make the radio, what songs do not (as well as why) and which troubadours have become silent in the public arena. During our interview, Delgado commented that if the government doesn’t like a song, it doesn’t get aired on the radio. Other interviews I conducted with Cuban troubadours, who wish to stay off the record, not only convey that certain songs are denied access to the airwaves but that certain performers are also denied access to concert venues. Of course, the radio and concert halls are not the only ways of disseminating the *nueva trova*. Small and informal gatherings called *descargas*, along with clandestine and not-so-clandestine cassette recordings, serve as powerful avenues of expression.

The problematic song (for its chauvinistic perspective on prostitution) titled “Embajadora del sexo” uses humor to criticize the fact that prostitution has arisen since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Cuban economy, specifically the type of prostitution that is now widespread: between la *jinetera* and the foreign tourist. The mere fact that this song directly addresses the issue of prostitution, however, speaks to the failure of the Cuban government to deliver on its initial promises. The reappearance of prostitution in Cuba represents a huge blow to the Revolution since one of the first social programs that Castro implemented in his early days sought to wipe out this age-old response to social inequity. The Revolution was successful in educating all sex workers and ensuring that they were gainfully employed in jobs that the Revolution condoned. The absence of prostitution in revolutionary Cuba has always been one of its prize achievements as well as a certain proof that the government’s policies were genuinely helping its people. It was another useful statistic, along with those regarding the successes of the literacy campaign and socialized medicine, pointing to the ills of capitalism and the benefits of socialism.

Embajadora del sexo, funcionaria del deseo, de
día estudias inglés y por las noches te veo.
Escarnecida en historias como burdas mesalinas,
pero envidian tu aventura de ser puta clandestina.

Que no paga al sindicato ni a chulos ni pretendientes,
 por esa parte te digo, son putas independientes,
 que utilizan la avenida sin tener que pagar nada,
 por esa parte te digo, son putas privilegiadas.
 ...⁷

Through humor derived from a lexicon of professional terms, Delgado specifically criticizes a society that can't offer the legitimate positions of: *embajadora*, *funcionaria*, *canciller*, *cónsules*, *jurisprudentes* etc. Also, the efficiency and freedom from bureaucracy in their line of work stand in sharp contrast to the legitimate labor structure of Cuba.

Turning to the song "Río Quibú," Delgado offers more than a simple trip down the river that traverses the city of Havana. The trajectory of the river reveals the contradictions that, theoretically, do not exist in a socialist country.

Nació en la espuma sideral de una laguna podrida,
 de los residuos de un central y alguna lluvia caída;
 él nunca tuvo en su abolengo
 un manantial por nacimiento.
 Se fue acercando a la ciudad entre barrios marginales,
 de casas hechas de cartón y mágicos materiales;
 si no lo crees, vete y pasa por "Zamora" y "La Corbata".
 ...
 El río va caminando con su causa y sus desgracias...
 y la mierda de su antigua aristocracia.
 Su curso es un muestrario de grandes contradicciones:
 Ciudadelas y centros de convenciones...
 Río Quibú, río Quibú...
 El río sucio llega al mar después de una gran batalla,
 depositando su carga, contaminando la playa.
 Claro, estás sobre la pista; esta canción la hizo un bañista.
 Río Quibú, río Quibú
 ...⁸

Alluding to the embargo and the scarcity of goods in Cuba, in the final lines, Delgado jokingly blames these deficiencies on Cuba's rejection of capitalism: how great it would be to defy the whole world and on its shores build a little restaurant. This song makes reference to specific places and events in contemporary Cuban life, particularly in Havana: names of marginalized neighborhoods; the state corporation, Cubanacán; and a privileged neighborhood endowed with a golf course, swimming pools, and streets where only

7. Delgado, *Trova-Tur*, 1996.

8. Frank Delgado, "Río Quibú," *Nueva trova: selección de éxitos*, ARTEX, 1993.

foreigners and a few select Cubans such as Silvio Rodríguez live. Delgado disparages the environmental contamination that this river suffers but he also exposes the unequal social terrain through which it flows. He achieves a comical tone with the ironic commentary about himself as a river bather and the absurd suggestion for how to avoid the pollution of the Quibú: take off for Varadero, the tourist beach, which has become off limits to the common Cuban.

On his latest CD, the song “Viaje a Varadero” describes an attempted trip to Varadero that relays his disapproval of the new form of colonization taking place on the island. He begins with:

Cuando a Varadero llegué, había una frontera
con gendarmería, garita y pasaporte.
Y la última vez que anduve por estas tierras
Esto todavía era Cuba, mi consorte.

He closes describing a depressing sense of dislocation from his own soil where everything is now written in English:

Pero aquí todo está en inglés y no hay nadie conocido;
Me siento como Santa Bárbara en casa de un militante del Partido.
...
Allá amigo Maximiliano, después de una hora me fui con tristeza,
...
No sé cuando. la península se nos fue de las manos,
No sé cuando lo decidieron y yo no me acuerdo si me preguntaron.⁹

Other themes Delgado explores are: exile, the lack of necessities on the island, the decay of Havana, and the changing landscape that tourism brings with it in songs such as “La Habana está de bala,” “La otra orilla” and “Mata-moros no vira pa’ tras.” A song from 1998, “Vivir en la casa de los padres,” humorously proposes a wild scheme for income in a family that lacks basic needs much less the luxuries taken for granted in the United States:

Ahora tengo un nuevo invento
Para que mi familia sobreviva
Les alquilo un cuarto a esos primos lejanos
Que gustan de nuestro estilo de vida.
Y aunque la casa está algo apuntalada
Conserva todavía su majestad.
Nosotros nos quitamos la comida
Porque andamos calculando un negocio a largo plazo
Y les tocamos música divina
Pa’ que vayan con el tiempo asimilando los garbanzos.

9. Frank Delgado, “Viaje a Varadero,” *El adivino*, Pimienta Records, 2002.

Yo sé que en tu casa no hay apagones
 Y siempre está repleta la alacena,
 Que puedes expresar tus opiniones
 Y hay muchos más canales en tu antena.
 Pero en casa yo me siento como en casa,
 ...¹⁰

Delgado's unpublished, unrecorded song written at the turn of the new millenium and titled "En Cuba los trovadores" unabashedly reveals the danger in which the Cuban troubadour finds himself today as spokesperson for the ills of society that rarely enter public discourse. He describes the role of the troubadour in various ways: "saytrs, defamers, vandal professors, singing newscasters, cave-dwelling senators," all of whom possess an irreverent attitude toward power.

En Cuba los trovadores son como pátnas de colores
 sobre el oro macilento que hay en la cámara de los lores.
 En Cuba los trovadores son como sátiros detractores
 que bailan una mazurca sobre la cama de los rectores.
 En Cuba los trovadores a veces pares, a veces nones
 Se paran sobre el abismo de sus canciones.
 Por eso yo te aconsejo que no te pares donde se paran los trovadores.

...
 En Cuba los trovadores a la mitad de algún estribillo
 tienen que cantar un silencio con puntillo.
 Por eso yo te aconsejo que no te calles si un día se callan los trovadores.¹¹

Delgado juxtaposes the figures of the political authoritarian world (cámara de los lores, rectores, profesores, directores, senadores, mayores) with the lexicon of the musical world (*becuadros, bemoles, estribillo, puntillo*). In spite of the fact that authority has the power to silence the troubadour, it does not have absolute power if the people continue to listen and if the troubadour maintains his critical attitude toward society. With irony, repetition and variation, Delgado warns about "the danger" of the troubadour advising his audience to avoid his company. However, the tone of his final piece of advice in the last verse of the song switches from ironic to sincere. Here, he directly states the need for the function of the troubadour in Cuban society. The closing lines associate the voice of the troubadour with that of the people: this is why I advise you not to shut up if one day the troubadour does.

In conclusion, Delgado came out of a period in the nueva trova during which direct critical discourse was preferred and the organizational dogmatic

10. Delgado, "Vivir en casa de los padres," **El adivino**.

11. Delgado, "En Cuba los trovadores," unpublished song.

movement of the *nueva trova* was dissolving. He has maintained this orientation of undogmatic directness throughout the nineties and into the twenty-first century, while many of his contemporaries have changed course or become silent. A combination of poetic talent (albeit in the more narrative style), profound knowledge of Cuban music, a resounding voice, musical dexterity and biting humor, Frank Delgado is a consummate troubadour: undaunted, so far, by the perils of his trade.

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Humor in Literature and Film of the Special Period¹

Iraida H. López

Nancy Alonso's collection of short stories *Cerrado por reparación* was the recipient of the 2002 Alba de Céspedes Award for women fiction writers granted by the United Nations Fund for the Development of Women (UNIFEM), the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC), and Casa de las Américas. The book is titled after the last short story included in the collection. This final story relates the tribulations of Ramón, head of the Departamento de Atención a la Población de la Dirección Provincial del Poder Popular de La Habana. The agency's mission is to receive complaints from the population and channel them to the appropriate State office for resolution. A year into his appointment at the agency, as Ramón is getting ready to submit to an inspection, he reflects on the Department's many accomplishments. The average time to put through a complaint has decreased from fifteen to eight days, and the margin of error in putting through those complaints reduced from 40 to 30 percent! There is only one glitch, though. The number of citizens who came back to the office to report the same problem more than once had noticeably increased, but Ramón, ever the optimist, saw this as an expression of confidence from individuals who entrusted them with their troubles. Needless to say, details about the report Ramón intends to present at the impending visit of the inspector are shot through with irony, an irony that intensifies as the story progresses. It is clear that the report is not to be taken at face value. To his dismay, Ramón realizes that only two of the agency's ten employees had come in on the day of the scheduled inspection, owing to chronic problems they themselves faced, ranging from lack of transportation and running water, to an accident due to a pothole and water leaks at home.

1. The full title of this essay, "Strange Times That Weep With Laughing: Benign Humor in the Literature and Film of the Special Period," draws from a quotation from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, "Strange times, that weep with laughing, not with weeping," used also by Mathew Wilson in his article on black humor.

Adding to the irony is the fact that these are the problems featured in the preceding ten stories, problems that, as the reader well knows, have been anything but resolved. The plot, then, comes to a cul-de-sac that is worked out conclusively only when Ramón, ever the resourceful, vacates the office hanging a *cerrado por reparación* sign at the door. He will figure out later how to deal with the inspector.

The end of both the story and the book raises a question: What happens when the State offices that handle requests for vital renovation and refurbishment of all sorts are incapable of meeting those demands—perhaps because they too require a metaphorical overhaul? What is the average citizen left to do? These queries are not, of course, directly answered in the last story of *Cerrado por reparación*, but they appear as a subtext in the book as well as in the film *Lista de espera*, a comedy directed by Juan Carlos Tabío and released in 2000, and in short stories by other writers. They all address aspects of incompetence, scarcity, and inefficiency, simultaneously offering creative solutions to the myriad of no-exit situations encountered by the characters. This portrayal of a cross-section of Cuban reality exhibits a fair dose of bright humor, making these works, with their irreverent and sometimes transgressive—although not necessarily subversive—tone, even more appealing. It is the combination of positive criticism and humor in a time of crisis that sets them apart. While filmmakers in particular have used humor to highlight sore points in the system (think of Gutiérrez Alea's *Muerte de un burócrata* with its critique of bureaucracy or Tabío's *Se permute*, on the chronic lack of housing), it is now deployed in various ways to expose the unforgiving effects of the Special Period on Cuban minds and bodies. Logically, any attempt to probe these works would benefit from examining the function of humor in a literature grounded on a local, and at times surreal, reality that dwarfs the imagination.

In this paper, I will comment on the uses of humor in Alonso's stories and Tabío's film. I will highlight the critical function of humor in both works, while noticing its curative and benign nature. It is a humor that, although disapproving of the status quo, seeks to transform from within in an attempt to regain spaces for action in Cuban society, spaces that are taken over by what some critics would call "civil society" (Hernández). This type of humor offers clues about the thinking of socially committed intellectuals on the island today. Of course, not all of the literature using some sort of humor is as benevolent as the one examined here. For example, a story by Antonio José Ponte that begins with the words "Una mesa en La Habana" is followed by a most eloquent blank page (Ogden 42). Stories such as Ponte's adopt the "typical ambivalence" of black humor, reminding us of the "pain and misery

beneath what we are laughing at, which are not obviated by the laughter” (Wilson 37).

In approaching the upside-down world of so many Cubans today, Alonso and Tabío rely on some forms of humor that, at first sight, appear to overlap with traditional Cuban *choteo*, that quintessentially Cuban tendency to laugh at ourselves, making light of adverse circumstances. According to Victor Raskin, this self-disparaging humor is but the final stage in the evolution from primitive, ancient forms of humor, such as laughter elicited by the mishaps of others, to the “ability to laugh humorously at oneself” (22). The Cuban version of this type of humor is described, as we know, in Jorge Mañach’s seminal “Indagación del choteo,” originally a lecture delivered by the writer at the Institución Hispano-Cubana de Cultura in 1928. In his well-known essay, Mañach analyzes the Cuban national character at a time when intellectuals were questioning the stagnation brought about by a Republic that had failed to deliver on its promises of political autonomy and economic prosperity. Mañach took part in the most salient debates of his time, participating in the *Protesta de los Trece* (1923), the *Grupo Minorista* and the *Revista de Avance*, all committed to cultural and political renovation. In “Indagación” Mañach circumscribed his comments to the particularities of *choteo* in the Cuban society of the 1920s, in fact predicting its attenuation as a result of the anticipated strengthening of the social fabric. However, some of his observations could be extended to the Creole humor found in today’s literature and film, also products of a time of uncertainty, expectation, search, and hope. For example, we would be remiss not to notice how humor acts as “a subterfuge before authority” (Mañach 62), that it betrays “a state of impatience” (65) and “a relaxation of all ties and joints” that give things an appearance of articulation and smoothness (67) and, finally, that it doubles as a “descongestionador eficazísimo” (a most efficient escape valve) “that diminishes the importance of things by not letting them get the best of us” (85). Affording relief through distancing, this last mechanism is particularly effective in the kind of anxiety-provoking circumstances prevalent on the island since the onset of the Special Period.

The use of both Creole and universal forms of humor such as irony, satire, and the absurd as tools to carry out a critique of society is perhaps facilitated by the many changes taking place in Cuba since the 1990s. The editor-in-chief of UNEAC’s *Gaceta de Cuba*, Arturo Arango, on whose story the film *Lista de espera* is based, has remarked in one of his essays that cracks in the social and cultural landscape brought about by the Special Period produced a more unprejudiced and free literature including a diminished focus on self-censure (Espinosa Domínguez, “El sano hábito”). The publication of a number of incisive novels, among them Leonardo Padura’s *La novela de mi vida*,

with its pointed critique of authoritarianism, can be hailed as proof of a more open environment. The dialogue between the State and intellectuals is still admittedly “tense” or, as another Cuban writer describes it, characterized by “mutual suspicion” (Hernández 46), the result of decades of conflict between the two. However, according to Arango, after an initial period in the 90s when the State tried to woo the arts into a strategic alliance of resistance to a changed, post-Cold War world, the intellectual elite made up its mind to recuperate spaces where the “unequivocal expression of principles and intentions” is upheld (Arango, *Segundas reincidencias*, 91). Intellectuals have also identified alternative means of self-promotion no longer entirely dependent on State institutions, thus allowing for more autonomy. For Arango, among intellectuals

predominaba una conciencia libertaria, emancipatoria, y también nacionalista y crítica, que hizo falta para sostener la ideología misma de la revolución. En puridad, pienso que la intelectualidad cubana es hoy más revolucionaria que los políticos que intentan dirigirla. Y uso la palabra revolucionaria en un sentido profundo, verdadero, y no como calificativo de procesos históricos (“Entrevista con Arturo Arango”).

The writer refers to an apparent fissure between representatives of the State and intellectuals and, by extension, other civil segments of the population, symbolically, but also remarkably mirrored in the literature and film under discussion here. This is not to say that the writers and artists authoring this kind of work adopt an oppositional stance; rather, their gestures and propositions are seemingly directed to effecting certain crucial changes within the current scheme. One indication is that the humor is not of the corrosive or resentful type; instead, as the Spanish playwright Miguel Mihura would argue, its function is to show “por dónde cojean las cosas; comprender que todo tiene un revés, que todas las cosas pueden ser de otra manera, sin querer por ello que dejen de ser tal como son...” (305). In these works humor is used as a corrective to flawed, or “hobbling”, situations. Raskin calls it “the loser’s humor par excellence, with the help of which he gets back at the winner.” Raskin adds that the latter is generally someone who is “responsible for denying the loser something he needs [such as] political freedoms” (23). However, he at once notes that this form of humor “requires a modicum of freedom, a certain unhealthy combination of repression and some possibility to laugh at it and still get away with it” (23).² Finally, the atmosphere of tolerance to which Arango (as well as Raskin, in more general terms) refers “coincidió, a su vez, con una creciente curiosidad por lo que estaba ocurriendo en ese país tan singular llamado Cuba.” All of these changes have produced a

2. The same critic points out that unlike the Stalin years, the comparatively more tolerant Khrushchev government in the Soviet Union gave rise to numerous political jokes.

burst of publications (not to mention the launching of first-rate journals such as *Temas* signaling an artistic revitalization after the cultural slumber of the early 1990s (“Entrevista con Arturo Arango”).

Nancy Alonso would agree with Arango not only about the curiosity Cuba inspires, but about the singularity of the island as well. She has observed “las cosas pequeñas y familiares, las humildes cosas que están en torno nuestro” cited by Mañach in his essay and made them part of her stories—as Vitalina Alfonso notes in her review of Alonso’s book. In addition to Alfonso’s, favorable reviews of *Cerrado por reparación* have appeared in both *La Gaceta de Cuba* and the Madrid-based *Encuentro de la cultura cubana*—two journals on different sides of the ideological divide. At least one critic has read the book as a “metáfora polivalente e irónica de la vida en la Cuba de hoy” (Costa 271). The narratives are woven around everyday problems that, as Carlos Espinosa has written in his review of Alonso’s collection, *Franz Kafka en Luyanó*, draw heavily from the literature of the absurd, for daily life and the survival strategies it generates are best approached from an aesthetic of the absurd. The absurd rises from situations experienced by ordinary citizens in their attempt to cope with a chaotic infrastructure and the extreme material need that is widespread on the island, as well as from the bewildering remedies applied to those situations. It stands out all the more due to the colloquial language and conversational tone employed throughout the book to refer to the quotidian, in addition to the conventional structure of the short stories. Their formal elements bring to the fore the incongruity of the situations depicted therein.

In an illustrative story, “Historia de un bache,” the female protagonist reports to the Popular Power delegate in her neighborhood a pothole caused by broken water pipes outside her home. However, as the delegate acknowledges, there is not much hope the pothole will be filled, or if it is, that it will happen any time soon, as there is a backlog of more pressing problems to attend to. So she takes it upon herself to complain to an ever-widening circle of agencies to no avail until, two years later, she notices that a tiny *flamboyán* is growing in the middle of the pothole. At that point, she makes up her mind to grow a community garden. Thus ends the story of a pothole that through the narrative gains catastrophic proportions—as Espinosa also remarks—going from *el bache* (pothole) to *el hueco* (hole) to *el foso* (pit) to a hyperbolic *la furnia* (abyss, chasm).

Interestingly, the character turned the situation to her own advantage even though she failed at correcting the problem she had set out to fix. In this as well as other stories, such as “Motín a bordo” and “Una visita informal,” the characters come through with flying colors, each devising their own tactics to dupe or manipulate an unjust and abusive *modus operandi*. In the first of

these two stories, the female chronicler is waiting for a bus to Cojímar along with a host of other characters. When the bus approaches, a dozen so-called employees of the transit system come out of nowhere to board the vehicle before any of the anonymous passengers who, sensing the injustice, storm through the front door and take over the bus. The driver, enraged, refuses to budge. An impasse ensues, with the two sides arguing their case. The setting serves to display the entrepreneurship of individuals turned street merchants who pass by selling their home-made goods, as well as a repertoire of characters who engage in small talk. Thus adorned with even snippets of conversation, the vignette resembles a “cuadro de costumbres” that offers a glimpse into the social interaction that takes place in public spaces. Police officers intervene to resolve the conflict, and after hearing the evidence reported by the passengers’ designated spokespeople, representatives of “different sectors of society” (49), scold the driver, ordering him to move on.

The characters in these stories must navigate the system, negotiating within a defective or dysfunctional structure that they cannot or will not escape, but they manage to keep their dignity. If there is an attempt to pass judgment on the existing state of affairs, it is done through the mere exposure of present circumstances. Nonetheless, Alonso’s characters make the best of their circumstances. And they are aware of the collective dimensions of the crisis. It is not just individual characters (although some of the stories do focus on individual conundrums) that are out to “resolver” (to use a word of high frequency in Cuban idiolect today), but a collective entity, a nascent civil society, that forges ahead, occupying whatever spaces there are at their disposal and offering resistance, however symbolically, to the *status quo*.

It is the latent spirit of this collective entity that animates the rundown bus station converted into a paradisiacal garden in *Lista de espera*. The script of this light comedy loaded with intertextual references is by Arturo Arango and Tabío in collaboration with Senel Paz. Paz and Tabío had previously collaborated with Gutiérrez Alea in *Fresa y chocolate*. As in his previous work, Tabío assumes, like other film directors following trailblazer Gutiérrez Alea, the role of “social critic” (Chanan 51). This more recent film is based on a story with the same title included in Arango’s book of short stories *La Habana elegante* (1995). The film stays close to the underlying thrust of the story, at the same time enriching it with satire, comedy, and allegorical allusions. After briefly summarizing the story, I will address each of these aspects of humor in the paragraphs below.

At the plot level, the film *Lista de espera* revolves around the lack of public transportation and its consequences among would-be passengers who, at an unnamed location somewhere in the middle of the island, are waiting for buses to Havana and Santiago. After the only bus available at the station

breaks down and they lose all hope of leaving soon, a group of passengers led by a young engineer decide to take matters into their own hands, successfully taking over the station. While trying to repair the bus, they begin to fix up their surroundings and tend to a subsistence garden. Over time, the characters' active involvement in the improvised community would seem to have eliminated most, if not all, of the difficulties that the passengers faced at the beginning. When a bus passing by with a vacant seat stops to pick up a passenger, no one wants to leave. At the end, however, it becomes apparent that it has been nothing but a dream, a flight of the imagination shared by all of them while dozing away that first night at the station. Once they wake up in the shabby station the following morning, the dream dissolves and they go their separate ways. Most of the narrative time is devoted to the action within the collective dream, for this is the main interest.

To be sure, the dream illustrates what a group of determined, civic-minded individuals can attain when they are left to their own devices instead of waiting for handouts from a paternalistic State. Deeply implicated in a communal life project, they begin to craft their own destiny, unhindered by the odds. The odds in this case are represented by a key character, a dogmatic, rigid man who slavishly insists on following orders, on not stepping out of established boundaries. By all standards a parody of dogmatism and therefore narrow-mindedness, this character cringes every time an initiative is taken, threatening to report the defying citizens, and even the station administrator who goes along with their plan, to the proper authorities. After leaving the station, we see him returning with functionaries at the end to make good on his threat. By stripping this character of every trait except his intolerance, the filmmakers turn him into an object of derision and ridicule. He is far from being the exemplary Party militant one would expect to encounter in a socialist society that until recently aspired to create a "new man." When addressing the category of political humor, Raskin writes that "the opposition between the script for what [a particular leader or political figure, a political group, its ideas, or the entire way of life] are supposed to be and the script for what they actually are [constitutes] the opposition which forms the joke" (222). This opposition is at the basis of the satiric scenes in the film.

The conflict between these two forces—innovative and regressive—reverberates with Arango's remarks with regard to the revolutionary (in a deep sense) breadth of Cuban literature today as well as the existing tension vis-à-vis a sector of the political elite. The writer has acknowledged in one of his essays that the road toward the completion of *Lista de espera* was anything but smooth due to the corrupted revolutionary zeal of some officials:

Cuando escribía el guión para la película *Lista de espera* un amigo me dijo que no debía esperar dificultad alguna de carácter ideológico para su aprobación, porque la historia constituye una defensa candorosa de la solidaridad entre los seres humanos y, en última instancia, del socialismo. Estuve de acuerdo con mi amigo, pero le advertí que tenía la percepción de que algunos dirigentes estaban más empeñados en defender su parcela de poder que la ideología. El azaroso camino que atravesó la aprobación del guión de *Lista de espera* confirmó mis prevenciones (*Segundas reincidencias* 29).

In addition to this political dimension that determines a “bumpy road” resulting more from an abuse of power than ideological disagreement, the obstacles to achieving the utopian commune also come from within the group, embodied in two comic characters that go to great lengths in order to survive. One of them is an unrepentant hoarder who, despite the expressions of solidarity all around him, hangs on to his selfishness—and his large cardboard box filled with cans of food—throughout the film. No contributor to the commune, he ends up being marginalized. The other comic character, nicely played by Jorge Perogurría, feigns blindness in an attempt to get ahead on the waiting list for the bus. This picaresque character plays some of the most memorable comic scenes, as he is able to sustain his masquerade in front of the other characters while winking an eye to the audience. A black market profiteer, he is carrying a load of lobsters to Havana, but decides to donate them to the commune before they spoil. Perhaps because he too contributes to the common good with his skills as a mechanic, at the end he is unmasked but forgiven, and embraced as a member of the group. Evidently, there are degrees of impropriety applied to the ethics of everyday life under the Special Period. A third challenge to achieving a better society within the national context is flight, either by leaving the country or by retreating into the private sphere. Escaping the harsh reality—the film suggests—is the equivalent of turning your back on a possible collective project of renewal. The film shuns evasion and the ideology of “every man for himself” in favor of an ethos of engagement and solidarity.

Finally, the allegorical overtones of this film are conveyed by way of the dialogue that takes place at the bus station. Albeit disconnected from one another, phrases like “Aquí las guaguas no entran ni paran,” and “[Estamos] tratando de irnos a algún lugar,” while the lack of “piezas de repuesto [que ya no llegan] de Rusia o los Estados Unidos,” a reminder of the “double blockade,” makes the going difficult, these phrases, I posit, point to the allegorical domain. Others like “Esto no está fundido” and “Con nuestras manos podemos construir un mundo mejor,” outline a world of possibilities for a nation—for this is where I think the allegory is pointing—mired in a multi-faceted *período especial*, but longing for a brighter future. Revolving around

the binary being trapped/being able to move forward, these enunciations elicit a knowing smile in the viewer, who is drawn in to empathize with the film's grounding. The public is invited to agree with its set of practices and beliefs, which creates by default a hierarchical structure within a value-laden field. This gesture to nudge in a certain direction parallels the dynamics embedded in the rhetoric of irony as described by Wayne Booth. As he remarks, irony dramatizes the choice of the reader (in this case, the viewer) to accept or reject a given proposition.

To a national audience, the film also calls forth an active engagement with the reality in which Cubans are immersed, taking as a point of departure the conditions resulting from the immediate past. In this respect, they resonate with Martínez Heredia's reflections on the Special Period, which, although lengthy, are worth citing:

In the face of the kind of economic determinism that advises us to sit and wait—in effect, a philosophy of surrender to capitalism—the Cuban option is *to begin from the realities in which we live in order to force them to give better results than what can be expected from their simple reproduction*. This is possible only through conscious, organized actions that mobilize the social forces we can still count on, their interests, their ideals, and their project. A national identity that does not renounce the heritage of the past decades but that is capable of revising itself from within, without lies or cover-ups, would be an extraordinary force, because of the profound anchorage that identity has in the people and because of its capacity to lift us above narrow interests to prefigure utopias and to summon us to give a more transcendent sense to life and to the search for well-being and happiness (147). (Emphasis on the original)

The works discussed, and clear statements that appear in various interviews and essays, lead me to believe that a number of intellectuals—though surely not all—are committed to the project described by Martínez Heredia.

Does *Lista de espera* suggest that for the time being the only option left is dreaming—dreaming in Cuban? The film strongly hints that the act of dreaming proper has an impact on reality and behavior as well as on the intangible realm of the imagination. When the bus in which he is at long last traveling stops for a break and there is yet another line to endure, this time in front of a cafeteria, the “blind” character picks up his dark glasses and stick, ready to put on his show. But after observing the people in the line, he hesitates and finally cannot muster enough courage to go through with it. Meanwhile, an open ending is constructed around the character of the young engineer who, at a different station, meets another woman. These characters, somewhat transformed by the oneiric experience, will likely continue to pursue the

dream. The film thus expands the limits of the imaginable while advancing new parameters for agency, intervention, and ultimately empowerment.

Besides dreaming of a better future, Cuban writers and filmmakers sketch in their works other options—for instance, to transmute their surreal reality into fiction even while confronting it. In considering this option we have come full circle, for this is what the end of the clever first story of *Cerrado por reparación* insinuates: that the writer, after leaving her house to look for a working public phone in the city, a hopeless errand amidst the generalized decay, collects and rewrites the stories that follow. Casting light on the spectacle of the here and now in a comic mode, these stories will remain as fine examples of the cultural production on the island over the last decade. Their stimulus originates in a complex society that—paraphrasing Shakespeare—weeps with laughing, not with weeping, in these sad, uncertain, and challenging times.

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Scott Larson

For decades homosexuals¹ have been viewed as social undesirables in revolutionary Cuba, and even today certain aspects of homosexual behavior can be construed as criminal.² In the past, those who were found “guilty” of being gay were ostracized, stripped of their jobs or social positions and at times even imprisoned or sent to forced-labor camps.³ Such treatment ultimately led thousands of Cuban gays to flee the country.

No longer officially demonized for their sexual orientation, homosexuals in Cuba are ostensibly free to live as they wish, and an estimated 4 percent to

1. Any discussion of homosexuality in contemporary Cuba raises the question of terminology (Lumsden, p. xxiv), especially as homosexual spaces often are shared by a multitude of diverse individuals who, for the sake of convenience, fall under the collective heading of homosexual (i.e. queers, transgender, transvestites, not too mention the finer Cuban distinctions **pasivo**, **completo**, **maricón**, **bugarrón**, **loca**, etc). Lumsden argues for use of the term “homosexual” (as opposed to “gay” or “queer”) since he claims it is the more readily recognizable and meaningful term to the community in Cuba. Since I have found many among Havana’s homosexual community to also use and relate to the term “gay,” I use gay and homosexual interchangeably throughout the study.

2. In 1971 the first National Congress on Education and Culture declared homosexuality to be antisocial and queers “sociopaths.” The Congress determined that known gays – “notorious homosexuals” was the phrase used – shouldn’t be allowed to infect others with their deviant ways by holding down jobs where they might come in contact with the nation’s youth. Even after consensual homosexual sex in private was decriminalized in the late 1970s, official prejudice continued. It took a revision of the Penal Code in 1987 before “ostentatious” homosexual behavior in public and private homosexual acts witnessed by a third party were no longer considered crimes. Still today, homosexuals who kiss or touch in public run the risk of being accused of “creating a public scandal,” an act which can bring a stiff fine.

3. In 1965 the Communist government of Fidel Castro established forced-labor camps, dubbed Military Units to Aid Production as a means of rehabilitating citizens who didn’t exhibit socialism’s requisite conformist attitude. Slackards, counter-revolutionaries and others whose “immoral” behavior was considered anathema to the new Cuba were sentenced to labor in rural sugar cane fields. Known by their initials, UMAP, the camps became notorious for their brutal conditions, and gays and effeminate males were among those put to work there as a means of molding them into “real” men. The camps existed for three years before internal and international pressure led Castro to close them in 1968.

6 percent of the country's 11.2 million inhabitants are gay.⁴ Still, the gay community in Cuba is more tolerated than accepted, and a powerful cultural tradition of machismo contributes to an overall environment of male homosexual marginalization. Consider the words of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, whose 1993 film *Fresa y Chocolate* focused international attention on the issue of repression and discrimination of homosexuals in contemporary Cuba:

Even today, it's still there at the social level – I won't say the official level, but at the social and individual levels. The macho tradition of our country, as in many other, especially Latin American, countries, is very strong, and the rejection of homosexuals is visible in all of them. (Chanan, p. 48).

Yet within that environment, male homosexuals in Cuba's capital city, Havana, have managed to claim a number of the city's public places as spaces of their own. It is through these spaces – where homosexuals meet to socialize, make new acquaintances and exchange information – that the community has gained a share of societal visibility and viability.

This study⁵ aims to explore the role space plays in the lives of Havana's homosexuals, to investigate how gay-tolerant spaces there are constructed, defined and defended. It focuses on three main geographic spaces: *Calle 23*, also known as *La Rampa*, in *Vedado* where a string of bars and cafes functions as a magnet for gays; a stretch of the *Malecón*, the broad avenue that runs along Havana's oceanfront where gays gather to socialize at night; and *Parque Central* in *Habana Vieja*, a traditional meeting point for homosexuals which continues to serve as a prime, modern-day homosexual cruising spot. Together these spaces form part of what has come to be known in Havana as "el mundo bajo," or literally "the lower world."

Why homosexual space? Why Havana?

Contemporary Cuba and its ever-evolving, ever-controversial relationship with the outside world remain fertile areas of interest, particularly in regards to political freedoms, social constraints and human rights. Within that context, much attention has already been focused on the lives of homosexuals in Cuba, in large part because a significant number of immigrant gay artists, writers and filmmakers have contributed their stories to the voluminous and oft-politicized discourse on life on the communist island.

At the same time, there has been a plethora of geographic research into the general issue of homosexuality and space in relation to society, especially as it relates to the creation of gay or socially marginalized space and the role that process plays in the formation of group identity (Elder, 1995; Knopp

4. Source: International Lesbian and Gay Association

5. Research for this project was supported by a grant from the Centro de Estudios Puer-torriqueños at Hunter College of the City University of New York

1987; Mitchell 1995; Rothenberg, 1995; Myslik, 1996; Valentine, 1993; Visser, 2003).

Yet as a number of researchers have pointed out, the bulk of the body of work on homosexuals and space revolves around North American and European experiences, particularly urban ones. As a result, in the past when geographers have studied sexuality and space there was “a total lack of questions focusing on how sexualities are constructed and negotiated in peripheral economies” (Visser, 2003, p. 124) and a bias toward “categorizations informed by Anglo-industrialized experience” (Elder, 1995, p. 58).

It is within this context that Havana’s homosexual community offers particularly compelling insight into how socially marginalized groups can and do claim a certain degree of visibility and acceptance, even within a largely restrictive society, through the use of physical space.

While Havana itself is one of Latin America’s least densely populated major cities with 2,849 people per square kilometer, perpetual subdivision of houses and apartments has left families crowded into tiny spaces. In addition, in many cases throughout the city, family living arrangements are fluid, with various relatives and friends – often unemployed and officially not allowed to live in Havana – bedding down in whatever space is available in already compact apartments and houses. Such cramped and often dismal surroundings offer little in the form of relative comfort or entertainment, not to mention privacy. As a result residents of Havana often opt, if one considers that they have much choice, to live a large amount of their private lives in public places. They flock to parts of the city that offer escape, and this interplay between Havana’s residents and its public spaces is a fundamental element of the city’s character.

Private Uses of Public Spaces

The primary role of Havana’s public spaces – parks, plazas, museums and certain streets and avenues – flows from the socialist imperative to provide for the needs of the collective whole before those of private individuals. (Curtis, 1993, p. 66) Of all of Havana’s landmarks, the *Malecón* is perhaps the most famous. Described by Scarpaci et al as “Havana’s social living room,” (Scarpaci et al, 2002, p. 277) this broad, ocean-front boulevard is active 24 hours a day and attracts all sorts of visitors: lovers, street musicians and those out for a walk along Havana’s rugged northern shore. Here *habaneros* gather to socialize or just to hang out, and only during storms, when waves crash over the bulwark and flood nearby streets, is the *Malecón* empty. During the day, enterprising boys and men fish off the rocky seawall, entrepreneurs sell copies of pirated compact discs and hustlers of all stripes work the strolling tourists. Late at night the seafront becomes an open-air party

with various groups staking out space all along its length. Despite the ever-present police, the *Malecón* has also become a place for Cubans to voice discontent, though usually in subtle, self-edited ways.

Parque Central and *La Rampa* serve similar roles. There, couples, families and groups gather to relax and socialize, free from the restrictive environments of the home. In *Parque Central*, *beisbol* aficionados gather daily to debate the goings on the *Liga Nacional*, while *La Rampa* is home to the popular movie house, *Cine Yara*; *Parque Coppelia* with its world-famous ice cream emporium; and various cafes.

These three spaces have also become important to habaneros in another vital sense: as spaces for sexual expression. Given the lack of privacy available in the typical Cuban household, it should come as no surprise that a significant amount of interaction between couples of all ages and persuasions takes place away from the home, and that public spaces such as the *Malecón*, *La Rampa* and *Parque Central* would become active sexual spaces. This is particularly true in terms of male homosexuals, who at certain times claim at least parts of these spaces as their own. Historically it has been through this use of public spaces that Cuba's gays have asserted their right to participate in public society.

Gay Havana: Then and Now

As mentioned above, the story of homosexual life in revolutionary Cuba is a complicated one and several writers have tackled the topic from a scholarly perspective. One of the most current and comprehensive is that produced by scholar Ian Lumsden, who speaks of an institutionalized homophobia that stems from a Cuban strain of machismo. Lumsden notes how 500 years of entrenched social attitudes left over from Spanish colonialism have left their mark on Cuban society. He details how, in Cuba, typical modern definitions, terminology and perceptions of homosexuality cannot always be applied to Cuban males who have sex with other males. "Before 1959," Lumsden notes, "masculine, ostensibly heterosexual males were able to satisfy some of their sexual needs with 'nonmasculine' males..." (p. 28), and that such *activos* ("inserters," according to Lumsden) were considered "'real men' who passed as hombres but who used *maricones* (the equivalent of the English 'faggot') as occasional or even regular outlets to satisfy their sexual appetites." (p. 30). *Entendidos*, or discreet gays who at least outwardly appeared to be heterosexual males, were tolerated if still "despised" within Cuban society. Those less inclined to submit to such self-oppressive behavior, however, faced complete rejection. Not surprisingly such conditions forced many of Havana's pre-revolutionary gays to adopt double lives, hiding their homosexuality from friends, family and co-workers while privately enjoying intimate relationships with other males. Still, in spite of such societal pressures and prejudice,

the city's gay community actively sought to establish places where its members could meet and be themselves. As Lumsden writes:

There were countless bars, such as Dirty Dick, Johnny's Bar, and the Bar-rilito, where they could hang out day and night. The ambiente of the Colón barrio in Centro Habana attracted some American tourists just as it did gente decente from the middle-class neighborhoods on the other side of town...Male brothels such as the Lucero, which catered to tourists, were the exception, and unlike female brothels were not really part of the ambiente of the barrio Colón. There were many cinemas like the Rialto, the Verdun, and the Campoamor to which, according to an old homosexual, 'you could go and immediately pick up a young guy. Many had their first experience there. There was a lot of sex in those cinemas.' There was also a rich street life in which you could always find someone with whom to pass the time of day. (Lumsden, 1996, pp.33-34).

With the communist revolution of 1959, life changed dramatically for Cuba's homosexuals.

Cuba was also led by Fidel Castro, whose public persona was the incarnation of machismo. Revolutionary Cuba, he said, 'needed strong men to fight wars, sportsmen, men who had no psychological weaknesses.' The traditional Cuban image of homosexuals hardly fit this paradigm of revolutionary attributes. (Lumsden, 1996, p. 61)

Far from providing new freedoms and space for homosexuals, then, the revolution only heightened the sense of outsidership among Cuba's gays, at times even institutionalizing what until then had been homophobic cultural traditions. Through its efforts to transform Cuban society by asserting absolute control over the population and discouraging all manner of anti-social activity, the revolutionary government deemed the gay community deviant and began to close or alter many of its traditional social spaces. Again according to Lumsden:

...[T]he ambiente available to [gays] – also began to diminish. For example, bars patronized by homosexuals began to close because of state intervention, emigration of their owners, or unprofitability due to declining patronage. Cruising and sex became more difficult in traditional venues such as the Campoamor, Negrete, and Duplex cinemas on account of increased police surveillance. There was less room for homosexuals to socialize or even to 'pass' and therefore all the more reason for entendidos to be protective of their private lives. (Lumsden, 1996, p. 62)

While the situation for gays has improved dramatically since the early years of the revolution, being gay in Cuba still carries a significant stigma and finding spaces for the free expression of one's sexuality is a challenge. As a result, as Lumsden points out, few contemporary Cuban homosexuals

are “out,” at least in the Western context, and most lead hidden lives, much as their predecessors did for the better part of four centuries. Revolutionary Havana, unlike cities in the capitalist West, contains no permanent or overtly gay spaces, and while interviewees for this study identified the aforementioned gay-friendly places, many other one-time meeting places – such as in front of the Fiat car dealership on the *Malecón* and two cafés, *Bin Bom* and *Arcada*, along *La Rampa* – have been closed or otherwise restricted by the authorities.

Even those places where gays have found some material space in which to gather are marked by a conspicuous police presence, and these spaces remain decidedly temporal. Not only do they become increasingly gay late at night, but accessibility to them can ebb and flow along with the prevailing mood of Cuban authorities.

“We go to [*Cine*] *Yara* or the *Malecón*. We used to go to *Arcada*, *Bin Bom*, but they [the authorities] are closing them down,” said one interviewee, a 26-year-old, in late May 2003. “Now I go to my house with my partner because there is no longer a place for us. Now the only [public] place we can go is the *Malecón*.”⁶

Aside from the outright shutting down of a location, one favored tactic of the government is to impose per person consumos – or minimum orders – at restaurants and bars, which under Cuba’s socialist system are controlled by the state; another is for the police to descend, whistles blowing, whenever a crowd begins to congregate in a chosen public place. Ostensibly, the police are merely ensuring public safety and order by keeping a tight reign on groups gathering in public, but their presence in gay friendly spaces is particularly ubiquitous. The need to stamp out drugs and prostitution is often used as the rationale for such patrols. “But sometimes there is no explanation, just a power play,” said Kristian, a straight street musician who along with his musical partner, Orleydis, plays songs for money along the same section of the *Malecón* as the gay community meets.⁷

At other times there have been broader, more sweeping clampdowns on spaces frequented by homosexuals. Often these crackdowns are in response to larger events that have occurred elsewhere or have no direct relation to the gay community. These, it can be presumed, are designed to send the message to the entire Cuban population that the authorities are in complete control. Still, these actions have a decidedly disproportionate impact on the gay and other marginalized communities because of the limited and tightly controlled spaces where those groups are allowed to congregate. In late March 2003, for instance, some 75 Cuban dissidents were arrested and sentenced to long jail

6. Interview by author, May 25, 2003

7. Interview by author, June, 1, 2003

terms for criticizing the Castro regime's record on human rights and calling for a referendum on increased civil liberties. In an unrelated incident within days of the arrests, three men hijacked a ferry and attempted to sail across the Florida Strait to the United States. Forced back to Cuban waters by a lack of fuel, the hijackers were captured, and nine days later they were executed following expedited court proceedings that were deemed little more than show trials in the West.

Fearing an increase in dissident activity, a backlash to the executions and additional hijack attempts, the Cuban government moved quickly to head off potential problems by reasserting its control over Havana's public spaces. The number of police patrolling public places such as the *Malecón*, the long stretch of *Calle 23* that leads to it, and *Parque Central* increased noticeably. "It got much worse in March and April, in the sense that the police were around more," noted Kristian, the musician.⁸ The authorities, he and other interviewees maintained, became much quicker to confront Cubans for seemingly trivial things such as talking to foreigners or simply hanging out.

Also, within days of the arrests, the gay-friendly café *Arcada*, located just off *La Rampa*, was shut down. "One day it was just closed," said Marco, a 32-year-old who visited the café nightly and often augmented his income as a model at an art school by surreptitiously selling clothes and jewelry to those sitting at the café's tables.

Until the day in early April when it was closed, the café, which is marked by a red-and-white awning and floor-to-ceiling windows offering a clear view of the goings on inside, had served as a vital communication hub for the gay community. By day it was one of the hundreds of non-descript government-owned cafes in Havana that serve an uninspiring menu of ham and cheese bocaditos (sandwiches), pizza and juice, soda or beer. At night, however, it metamorphosed into an unofficial gay social house. Its location made it an accessible waystation on the way to the *Malecón*, a convenient place for *pingueros*, or male prostitutes, to bring their foreign friends for coffee or a beer and for members of Havana's gay community to trade gossip and find out about parties or what their friends were planning for the night. By 9 p.m., pairs or groups of men – often two or three young Cubans and an older foreigner – began to occupy the tables and by 11 p.m. the place would be bustling with male activity. Among *Arcada's* regular clientele were dozens of transvestites, but on most nights the only women around were either in the cafe with gay friends or were merely stopping by to use the restroom.

A month after it was shuttered, *Arcada* reopened, but with changes that reduced its accessibility and attractiveness to the gay community. A US \$3 minimum *consumo* was established, which effectively meant that only those

8. Interview by author, June 1, 2003

with money and the intent to spend it were allowed inside. Since most Cubans have little discretionary income, many of the former clientele were effectively locked out. Similarly, the sale of alcohol was prohibited, and the frequency of police patrols outside increased. Taken together, these measures insured that large numbers of gays could no longer meet there for a leisurely night of conversation over a soda or beer. By first closing *Arcada*, then allowing it to reopen but with the new regulations in place, the government had effectively cut off one of the few public spaces in Havana where the homosexual community had felt free to congregate.

Illegal in their own land

Revolutionary ideology and invasive government have had additional impacts on gay spaces as well. In the capitalist West, the location of marginalized groups – including gay residential communities with their attendant businesses and services – can often be attributed to economic factors (Winchester and White, 1988; Knopp 1990; Adler and Brenner 1992; Binnie 1995; Kirby and Hay 1997; Visser 2003). But with the adoption of socialist policies that have effected every aspect of life – from the theoretical elimination of social classes to government ownership of all property and enterprise and state control of housing – the Castro regime has insured, whether it purposefully intended to or not, that Cuba's cities have no concentrations of homosexual residences; no gay neighborhoods; no explicitly gay clubs, bars or businesses and none of the gentrification so often associated with male homosexual communities in developed countries.

Instead, Havana's gay spaces are impermanent, contested sites typically converted into temporary gay social spaces by stealth. The process, as described by members of the community, is a fluid, ongoing one: a homosexual pair finds a place – a public park or street, bar, restaurant or café – that isn't too crowded and where the atmosphere is to their liking. They begin to frequent the place, then tell friends who tell other friends and so on in a process similar to that described by Rothenberg (1995) in her study of the creation of lesbian social space. As the number of gays gathering increases, heterosexuals stop coming, presumably uncomfortable with or fearing the stigma of frequenting a spot popular with homosexuals. Soon, the location has become defacto gay, a place where homosexuals feel comfortable because they are surrounded by others like them.

But much as the *Arcada* example illustrates, such places offer relatively provisional haven. Once a location becomes overwhelmingly gay, the authorities take note, beef up the police presence and keep close tabs on whatever activity goes on. Eventually such spaces are closed, restricted or the authori-

ties make being there so uncomfortable that the group moves on, and the cycle starts over again.

Another example of the government's conspicuous impact on gay social space is the effort to control migration to Havana. As one might expect, homosexuals say they face greater discrimination outside of the relatively cosmopolitan capital. Elsewhere, they maintain, life is much more conservative and social traits such as machismo often manifest themselves more fully. Such constraints have led hundreds of predominately young homosexuals to leave the countryside and Cuba's smaller cities for Havana, where, despite the capital's own oppressive atmosphere, the sheer size of the gay community offers some degree of anonymity and escape. But because of the strict laws governing where Cubans can travel, work and live, a gay migrant's mere presence in Havana can make him a criminal.

Police patrol high-profile public areas such as parks and main streets asking those who frequent them for their national identification cards, or *los carnet*. Those without a *carnet* or the proper permission to be in Havana are taken to a nearby police station where they are held for several hours before being released with a fine, or *multa*.

"If they discover you are illegal they give you a 500 peso [roughly \$50] *multa*," explained one 21-year-old gay émigré from Holguín.⁹ While the amount of the fine is not so much by foreign standards, it is a crippling amount in a country where doctors and teachers can make the equivalent of US\$12 a month. Equally, if not more punishing, is the reminder that in Cuba, where one lives, works and plays is subject to government approval.

"Imagine," said the 21-year-old. "In your own country you are illegal."

The Primacy of space

Of course, gays are not the only Cubans who face such overt government intrusion into their lives. Indeed, all Cubans deal with such conditions on a daily basis. For those who frequent spaces associated with homosexuals and other marginalized groups, however, the likelihood of being asked to produce a carnet is much greater. The term "el mundo bajo" is used equally by those who frequent these spaces and the city's mainstream citizens. Depending on who is speaking, however, it carries far different connotations. To the marginalized, *el mundo bajo* represents temporarily appropriated space where, to a degree, everyone is free to be themselves. Among the average citizenry, however, the perception runs that this "world" is a place for drugs, illegal or immoral conduct and anti-social activities. To many *habaneros* only people of dubious character would enter these spaces. To be sure *el mundo bajo* attracts a certain amount of illegal activity. But in keeping with the theory of

9. Interview by author, May 26, 2003

Winchester and White (1996), the widely held but not entirely accurate negative view of this world only contributes to the marginalization of those who gather there.

Ironically, virtually all of the spaces that make up *el mundo bajo* are public places that at other times of day or in other ways serve much more socially accepted purposes. Indeed it is their very nature as places where, theoretically at least, everyone is free to assemble, which makes them attractive to gays and the other marginalized groups in the first place. Additionally, the fact that many of Havana's traditional homosexual spaces (the *Malecón* and *Parque Central*, for instance) remain important to the contemporary gay community is a testament to the central role these places have played and continue to play – geographically, symbolically and emotionally – in the public life of the city. In many ways both the *Malecón* and *Parque Central* serve as Havana's version of the traditional Latin American central plaza, a place of “primacy within the urban landscape” which can offer “daily interaction between friends and strangers and provide important sites for the public life of the city” (Rosenthal, p.50). In addition, much as the classic plaza, they provide a point of contact between different classes and types of people. It should come as no surprise that in seeking greater social access, Havana's gays would gravitate to them.

Parque Central also sits at the heart of the government's efforts to develop a robust tourism industry, which gives it additional geographic significance. The park – which covers two city blocks on the border between *Habana Vieja* and *Centro Habana* – is ringed by up-market hotels like the *Inglaterra*, *Telégrafo*, *Parque Central* and *Plaza*, and is near popular tourist attractions such as the *Capitolio*, the *Gran Teatro* and Ernest Hemingway's old haunts, the *El Floridita* bar and the *Hotel Ambos Mundos*. It is also within walking distance of numerous museums and *Vieja's* collection of colonial buildings, churches and plazas.

As a consequence, the park is especially important to Havana's male homosexual prostitutes because of its proximity to potential clients – the relatively wealthy foreign tourists who visit these sites and stay in these hotels. For many gays the park serves as a sort of headquarters. During the day many *pingueros* stroll the shady paths looking for likely customers while others simply sit in groups on stone benches passing the time until nightfall when they move on to *La Rampa* or the *Malecón*.

For Havana's male homosexual community the *Malecón* is a default destination, a place where one can always find friends, foreigners and escape from the drudgery of their daily lives. At night Havana's gays can be found all along the boulevard, but the greatest numbers congregate along the sea-wall just west of the intersection with *La Rampa*, in the shadow of the grand

hotel *El Nacional*. On a typical evening, scores of gays meet there, often splitting off into smaller groups to talk, drink rum or listen to music. They move up and down *Calle 23* to buy cigarettes or rum at a nearby gas station (in Cuba, one can invariably find alcohol, snacks and ice cream being sold alongside spare parts and motor oil) or something to eat in the nearby cafes, bars and clubs. Much like *Parque Central*, this stretch of *Calle 23* and the *Malecón* is near a number of high-profile hotels such as the *Havana Libre* and the *Hotel Vedado*, making it a prime place to encounter and mix with foreign tourists.

Space, or more accurately the places one chooses to frequent, can also serve as a vital means of expressing one's sexual preference. Single men, for instance, know that by going to places such as *Parque Central*, or certain parts of the *Malecón* and *La Rampa* at specific times of day, they will not only find but also be found by other gays. Of course one's presence in such spaces sends the same message to the authorities and homophobic Cubans. As such one's dress, behavior and choice of where to spend free time can be unmistakable – and inherently anti-social – statements about one's inclinations.

"It's not possible to live an open life," said one interviewee, a 26-year-old gay mechanic originally from the city of Holguín who was interviewed late one night in June 2003 on his way to the *Malecón*. "The police hassle us all the time," he added, grasping his wrist in a motion akin to being handcuffed, a reference to being hauled off to the police station for some violation or another. As if on cue, just minutes after being interviewed, the man was stopped by the police on *Calle 23* and asked to produce his *carnet*.

"D'acuerdo?" he shouted across the street. "You see?"

"Here in Cuba we're very discriminated against," added a 16-year-old transvestite, an unemployed English student who lives with her male partner but works as a prostitute at night. "The police bother us constantly, asking for our papers. They know who we (gays) are and that's why they continually bother us. Now, every so often they round us (transvestites, or *trasvestis* in Spanish) up and lock us up (*nos encieran*) for three or four days and fine us."

"Why?" I ask.

"Because we're not allowed to dress like women."¹⁰

Despite the oft-stated opinion that they are harassed purely because of their sexual orientation or manner, it is unclear whether this is the sole explanation for the mistreatment of Havana's homosexuals and transvestites. Being outwardly gay or dressing like a woman certainly marginalizes them, makes them easier to identify and stigmatizes them. But professing one's (homo)sexuality or being a transvestite are not specifically prohibited by law.

10. Interview by author, May 26, 2003

And while many of those interviewed for this study believe their lifestyle alone is to blame for police harassment, observation suggests that whether a person is gay or not, or is a transvestite, can, to some degree, be a partial, perhaps even secondary explanation. Part of the experience, certainly, stems from living in an overall oppressive society, one where all sort of freedoms – not just the freedom to publicly announce one’s sexuality – are limited. Gays undoubtedly experience police harassment more because as gays they are forced to the fringe of society; but all Cubans deal with this lack of freedom to some degree.

Indeed, there is also plenty of observational evidence to support Lumsden’s view that the police in and around recognized homosexual spaces are more focused on maintaining order and control rather than just hassling gays. Most of the places where gays congregate, after all, are occupied by non-gays as well, and straight groups and individuals appear to be just as likely to attract police attention. In fact, the argument could be made that homosexuals are targets for police harassment not so much because of their sexual orientation but because as homosexuals they inhabit marginalized and contested spaces. Much as Winchester and White theorize, the homosexual spaces discussed in this study exist on the margins of acceptable society. As a result, a person’s mere presence in such places – whether that person is gay or not – makes him or her a candidate for police suspicion, and homosexuality has become “criminalized” precisely because homosexuals choose to occupy such public locations.

A related explanation is that Cuban authorities equate homosexuality with prostitution and that an ongoing crackdown on the selling of sex, particularly when it involves tourists and other foreigners, leads to increased harassment of gays.

While Cuba has no laws that explicitly prohibit homosexuality, there are numerous broadly defined offenses that can be used to criminalize homosexual behavior. For instance, public displays of even innocent affection among homosexuals can bring *multas* of up to 400 pesos. “If the police see us holding hands they take [arrest] us for causing a public scandal,” said one 21-year-old baker.¹¹ As a result one rarely sees Havana’s homosexuals holding hands, kissing or touching each other in public.

That does not mean there is not a sexual component to Havana’s male homosexual spaces. Clearly, the spaces identified in this study are vital for all manner of homosexual activity leading up to actual sexual relations. These spaces are where male homosexuals meet other gay men, go on dates, find sexual partners and learn of and arrange for safe spaces in which to be intimate. Due to the lack of privacy inherent in Havana’s housing situation, and

11. Interview by author, June 1, 2003

the very real possibility that one's neighbors, friends or coworkers might discover one's sexual persuasion, many of Havana's gay men – even those with long-term partners – prefer to visit *alquileres*, or houses where rooms can be rented by the night or the hour, to have sex. Such rooms – which usually offer little more than a toilet and a metal frame bed topped by a tattered mattress – are scattered throughout the city's neighborhoods, and typically rent for 25 pesos a night.

Desperation also forces Cubans of all sexual persuasions to steal private moments in public spaces. For Havana's homosexuals, there are two parks – *Parque de la Fraternidad*, situated just south of the *Capitolio* and *Parque el Curita* – where once the sun goes down, many among Havana's gay community go in search of casual sex. Even within the marginalized world of *el mundo bajo*, however, these two parks have a somewhat notorious reputation.

For Havana's homosexuals, then, the search for “safe” space in which to live a gay lifestyle and pursue gay relationships is never-ending. While outright violence is rare, homophobic traditions, vague laws and the confines of contemporary Cuban life all conspire to push Havana's homosexuals to the margins of society, both culturally and physically. Gay spaces, to the degree that they exist, are secure only as long the authorities allow them to be, and the ongoing process of finding new spaces remains fraught with risk.

Conclusions

Clearly, Cuba does not fit many of the descriptive frameworks from which geographers have looked at gay communities in western, free-market democracies. And it should come as no surprise that the forces that have helped shape gay spaces across Europe and North America often fail to describe the dynamics at work in Cuba. While the situation for gays has improved markedly since the openly homophobic rhetoric of the early revolution, being gay in Cuba still carries a significant stigma, and finding spaces for the free expression of one's sexuality remains a challenge. This is especially true in public spaces. Today, those among Havana's homosexual community who wish to live public lives have been forced by a powerful mix of societal disapproval and official antagonism to create their own spaces when and where they can, and often in the face of official antagonism.

In spite of this limited and contentious access to space, Havana's gays have managed to establish a number of gay-tolerant sites within which they are able to lead some semblance of an open life. Three in particular – the *Malecón*, *Parque Central* and *La Rampa* – have long and established traditions as gay meeting places. These spaces continue to form physical focal points for the gay community. Still, as the stories of these spaces illustrate,

they are temporary and temporal havens, with access to them subject to the whims of the authorities.

For Havana's more public homosexuals, then, their very presence in specific public spaces becomes simultaneously a declaration of their sexuality and a challenge to existing homophobic traditions and societal mores. By frequenting high-profile public spaces Havana's gays, in effect, are publicizing their homosexuality and putting themselves in the precarious position of confronting Cuban authority. Still, that there are spaces in which Havana's homosexuals have found relative haven suggests a willingness among certain gays to expose themselves to the resulting harassment and abuse in exchange for physical locations to call their own. Consider the words of a 26-year-old gay mechanic originally from Holguín: "The police bother us because we're gay and they know we're gay because we concentrate in groups in these places. Every day we go the *Malecón* and every day the police come and hassle us so it's sort of a game. A serious game, but a still a game."¹²

In the end, had certain homosexuals not persevered in, in fact insisted on, creating and publicizing these locations, no gay-tolerant spaces, no matter how temporary, would exist in Havana.

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Part II
Economic Transitions

Mario A. Gonzalez Corzo

During the last three decades of the Cold War, Cuba had one of the most collectivized, egalitarian, and subsidized economies within the Socialist Camp. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies in the early 1990s, resulted in a severe economic crisis for the island.¹ The magnitude of this external sector shock prompted the Cuban leadership to implement a series of structural reforms to confront the crisis, and to reinsert the country into the world economy, while preserving the socialist character of the Cuban revolution.² While Cuba embarked on a wide range of domestic and external sector reforms, reaching multiple sectors of the island's economy, one of the most notorious among these measures³ were the structural and organizational reforms implemented in the banking and financial sectors during the mid 1990s.

Given the scope and magnitude of these reforms, one fundamental question emerges: Did Cuba's banking sector 'reforms' constitute a legitimate effort to transform this sector of the economy, as the country embarked on a gradual process of economic transition? Or did they just represent a short-term measure to help the country overcome the difficulties of the "Special Period" and prolong the survival of the current regime?

To address this question, this paper provides a historical overview of the evolution of Cuba's banking sector during the Special Period, after the intro-

1. For a detailed analysis of the causes and effects of the economic crisis of the 1990s, see Mesa-Lago (2003).

2. Carranza, Gutierrez, and Monreal (1998) present a "Cuban perspective" on these measures.

3. Some of these reforms included opening the island's economy to foreign investment and tourism, legalizing the possession of U.S. dollars by ordinary Cuban citizens, reorganizing the agricultural sector, promoting some limited forms of self-employment, restructuring state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and repositioning the banking and financial sectors to facilitate domestic and international payments, and increase the size and scope of commercial transactions.

duction of Decree Law No. 172, and Decree Law No. 173 in May 1997. Following this presentation, the paper discusses the perspectives and implications of these reforms for the future, and presents several ideas and recommendations regarding the policy imperatives essential to further transform this vital sector of the Cuban economy once the process of the transition begins to take place.

The Evolution of Cuba's Banking Sector During the Special Period

Prior to the modest structural and institutional reforms initiated in 1995, Cuba's banking sector was comprised of a limited number of institutions, all with very specific functions, and product and service offerings. Among these were: the *Banco Nacional de Cuba* (BNC), which acted as the nation's central bank and bank of issue, the *Banco Popular de Ahorro* (BPA), which served as the island's only retail oriented depository institution, the *Banco Financiero, S.A.*, (BIFSA), which provided funding and financing for state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and their overseas affiliates and subsidiaries, and the *Banco Internacional de Comercio, S.A.*, (BICSA), which mainly functioned as a conduit to finance imports and exports (i.e., international trade). In addition to these institutions, the Cuban system counted with representative branches of two Dutch-owned and operated banks: ING Bank, N.V., and the Netherlands Caribbean Bank, N.V.

The efforts to restructure select sectors of the Cuban economy, resulting from the collapse of the so-called "Socialist Camp"⁴ in 1991, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union later in the same year, required the transformation of Cuba's banking sector in order to facilitate the country's reinsertion into the world economy.⁵ As a result, beginning in 1995, the Cuban leadership embarked on a series of gradual reform measures mostly designed to reposition and modernize the country's banking sector (Banco Central de Cuba [BCC], 2004).

4. The term "Socialist Camp" represents an informal, yet commonly accepted, reference to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, or Comecon). The CMEA was established Jan. 25, 1949, by Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the U.S.S.R. Albania joined in 1949, but withdrew in 1961. The German Democratic Republic (GDR), or East Germany, joined in 1950; Mongolia joined in 1962; and Cuba became a member in 1972. In 1978, membership was expanded to include Vietnam. It is worth noting that even though Yugoslavia had joined the CMEA since 1965, it mainly participated as an associate member. The principal objectives of the CMEA were to stimulate intra-member trade and exchange, to provide credit, and technical assistance and help members finance development projects. The CMEA was officially dissolved in 1991.

5. For a detailed account of the impact of the crisis on the Cuban economy and the outcomes of Cuba's policies to confront the crisis, see Ritter (2003).

The principal objectives of these reform measures were:

- To improve the technical and operational capabilities of national banking institutions through the automation of bank processes and procedures, information processing, and the retraining of bank management and personnel.
- To create a two-tiered banking system that would operate under the supervision of a newly chartered central bank (i.e., the Banco Central de Cuba – BCC) responsible for conducting monetary policy, and supervising and regulating the banking sector.
- To restructure the banking sector by authorizing the creation of dynamic and flexible institutions (i.e., banks and non-bank financial institutions) capable of better handling the diverse financing needs of individuals and state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Modernization and Automation of the Banking System

Given the technological state of Cuba's banking sector in the mid 1990s, the first step in the reform process was the modernization of the banking system. This began with the automation of more than 500 branches and representative branches throughout the country, and the deployment of industry-wide computer networks beginning in 1995 (BCC, 2004). This process of modernization required the extensive training of more than 15,000 bank personnel and managers in the use of computer-based technology and sector-specific proprietary software (BCC, 2004). By 1998, the modernization and automation of Cuba's banking system was further extended by the implementation of an industry-wide connection effort carried out through the newly-developed *Red Pública de Transmisión de Datos* (RPTD, or Public Data Transmission Network) (BCC, 2004). The full implementation of this industry specific "intranet" facilitated the integration of the country's banking sector and sped up the transmission of data between main offices and their correspondent branches. Finally, by the end of 1998, all the Cuban banks involved in international transactions were directly connected to their foreign counter-parties through SWIFT,⁶ and several banks began to offer technologically advanced services such as automated teller machines (ATMs) and electronic account access cards (BCC, 2004).

Finally, it is worth noting that in an effort to reduce the costs of importing and obtaining the required components for effectively automating and modernizing Cuba's banking sector, a procurement strategy based on the following principles was implemented (BCC, 2004):

6. SWIFT is the industry-owned co-operative supplying secure, standardised messaging services and interface software to 7,650 financial institutions in over 200 countries. The SWIFT community includes banks, broker/dealers and investment managers, as well as their market infrastructures in payments, securities, treasury and trade. SWIFT provides several products and services, such as: electronic account matching and netting, secured electronic funds transfers, instant messaging, and transaction clearance and settlement. Source: http://www.swift.com/index.cfm?item_id=41322

- Acquisition of unassembled computer parts and components, so that final assembly could take place in Cuba, thereby reducing the final cost of the equipment
- Purchases were limited to quality name brands in order to use and deploy reliable and durable equipment and components
- Transportation costs were to be reduced by using sea transport as the primary means to import heavy technical equipment and components
- The replacement of parts and essential components was scheduled to take place at least every four years (or earlier)

Personnel Training and Development

Between 1997 and 1998, the *Centro Nacional de Superación Bancaria* (or the National Bank Training Center) offered a series of courses designed to train bank personnel and managers. According to official sources, more than 3,000 individuals participated in these courses or programs, out of which more than 1,000 were enrolled in graduate-level courses (BCC, 2004). The majority of the courses in this program were designed to train specialists in central bank policies and operations, and covered diverse topics such as: micro and macroeconomic policy, financial and business mathematics, monetary policy, bank supervision and management, financial statement analysis, and the roles and functions of the financial markets (in capitalist or market economies). In addition to these courses, and training program, technical and computer systems training was provided to key personnel and managers responsible for maintaining, supporting and managing information technology (IT) networks and systems.

Institutional Reforms and Newly Created Financial Institutions

The efforts to modernize and automate Cuba's banking system, and to retrain essential banking sector personnel and management, were complemented by the institutional restructuring of the banking sector, and the creation of a new central bank and several new financial institutions. The principal legislations dealing with these efforts were Decree-Law No. 172 (May, 1997), which outlines and defines the roles and responsibilities of the newly created central bank, the *Banco Central de Cuba* (BCC), and Decree-Law No. 173 (May, 1997), which specifies the rules and regulations pertaining to the creation, function, and supervision of depository institutions and non-bank financial intermediaries.

Decree-Law No. 172 (May, 1997)

Decree-Law No. 172 specifically outlines the functions of the Cuban central bank, the rules and regulations governing its functions and operations, and the intricacies of its organizational structure. The approval of this legislation by the Council of Ministers in May 1997, stemmed from the need to restruc-

ture and complement the functions of the *Banco Nacional de Cuba (BNC)*, which until the implementation of Decree-Law No. 172 had functioned as the island's central bank (BCC, 2004). With the approval of Decree-Law No. 172, the Cuban leadership initiated the first of a series of structural and institutional reforms aimed at restructuring the country's banking system to provide the necessary mechanisms to attract more foreign capital to various sectors of the economy.

The first chapter of this legislation outlines the general framework defining the roles and responsibilities of the new central bank (i.e., the *Banco Central de Cuba – BCC*). This is followed by a series of guidelines and regulations outlining the BCC's function as a bank of issue, its daily operations, its role as a fiscal agent for the State, the conduct of international operations, foreign exchange transactions, supervision and regulation of the financial system, and its overall organizational structure.

General Purposes and Functions of the *Banco Central de Cuba (BCC)*

According to Decree-Law No. 172, Chapter 1, the general purposes and functions of the BCC are (BCC, 2004):

- To function as the sole regulatory and supervisory institution for banks and non-depository financial intermediaries and institutions, operating in Cuban territory, national dependencies, free trade zones, and off shore locations.
- To contribute to the macroeconomic stability of the nation by ensuring, safeguarding, and promoting the soundness and stability of the banking system.
- To serve as the custodian and administration of the nation's foreign currency reserves.
- To authorize, regulate, and supervise the creation and operation of banks and non-bank financial intermediaries.
- To conduct the nation's monetary policy.

Bank of Issue

According to Chapter 2 of Decree-Law No. 172, the BCC is authorized to function as the nation's exclusive bank of issue. This means that the bank is the only institution with the legal authorization to issue or remit legal tender (i.e., paper currency and coins commonly accepted as a medium of exchange, a store of value, and a unit of account).

Bank Operations

Chapter 3 identifies the types of commercial (or business) operations in which the BCC can participate as part of its normal course of business. This section is broken down into five categories: (1) operations with (all types of) financial institutions, (2) fiscal agent for the State, (3) international operations, (4) foreign exchange operations, and (5) supervision and regulation of the financial system. According to Articles 16 and 17, in its dealings with

other financial institutions (both bank and non-bank) operating in Cuba, the BCC can provide loans, secured lines of credit, and short-term financing to institutions needing funding or facing temporary liquidity problems (BCC, 2004). In its functions as the sole regulator of credit and the circulation of money in the economy, the BCC is authorized to: provide loans (to member banks) drawn against required reserve deposits, offer discounted loans to depository institutions, buy and sell securities, real estate assets, and other financial and non-financial assets to influence the money supply, establish credit policies and regulations, regulate and oversee all types of financial transactions, and formulate and implement the rules and regulations governing acceptable practices and behavior in the financial system (BCC, 2004).

Articles 18 through 24, stipulate the functions that the BCC can perform as the sole fiscal agent for the State. Accordingly, the BCC is authorized to act as the official cashier (or payments agent) for the State, subject to the guidelines and stipulations established by the Ministry of Prices and Finance. This capacity allows the BCC to accept and remit payments, serve as a trustee or representative of the State, and perform all functions pertaining to its role as a fiscal agent (BCC, 2004). The BCC, however, is not allowed to issue new currency (or increase the money supply) to cover any deficits between the State's receipts and its obligations, unless authorized by the Council of State. Similarly, it is not permitted to buy (or sell) assets directly from (or to) the State (BCC, 2004). Finally, in its role as fiscal agent, the BCC is authorized to represent the State in any negotiations, conversions, or reappraisals of the nation's external debt. Acting in this capacity, the BCC is permitted to enter into legally binding agreements with the nation's creditors, as long as the Council of State authorizes such agreements or contracts (BCC, 2004).

In terms of international operations, Article 25 stipulates that the BCC can represent the State in negotiations with foreign creditors (in both the public and the private sectors), procure short-term and long-term financing or credit on behalf of the State, and buy and sell hard (or reserve) currencies (BCC, 2004). In addition, the BCC can extend credit to foreign central banks, and financial institutions, open accounts, maintain deposits, and conduct transactions on behalf of foreign banks and financial institutions, and administer the nation's foreign exchange reserves (BCC, 2004). In terms of foreign exchange operations, Article 26 requires the BCC to establish a foreign exchange mechanism (or system) that takes into account the nation's balance of payments and economic conditions, and maintain the official exchange rate system for the Cuban peso (BCC, 2004).

In addition to its "core" operations, the BCC is responsible for the creation, regulation, and supervision of all types of financial institutions operat-

ing in Cuba. As indicated in Articles 27 and 28, the BCC has the legal faculties to create (or establish) depository and non-depository institutions by the issuance of a corresponding license (BCC, 2004). It is also responsible for regulating and supervising all aspects of the employment of Cuban nationals by banks and non-bank financial institutions, and overseeing their operations in Cuba, as well as the operations of Cuban banks in offshore locations. On the domestic front, Article 29 indicates that the BCC is required to publish consolidated financial statements showing the financial conditions and operations of other financial institutions, prepare periodic research reports about the Cuban economy, conduct research and studies in the fields of banking and finance, and prepare and publish the nation's balance of payments report (BCC, 2004).

Decree – Law No. 173 (May, 1997)

Decree – Law No. 173 was approved with the objective of stimulating the development of Cuba's banking institutions and non-bank financial intermediaries, and to provide the legal and institutional framework to foster the creation of Cuban-based branches (i.e., subsidiaries and affiliates) of foreign banks interested in doing business in Cuba. In accordance with the provisions of Decree – Law No. 172, this legislation establishes and recognizes the BCC as the nation's central bank and sole supervisor and regulator of the financial system. In addition, Decree – Law No. 173, establishes the legal framework for the creation, regulation, supervision, and dissolution of new banks and non-bank financial intermediaries. In particular, this legislation deals with areas such as: (1) the creation of financial institutions, (2) the organization and function of financial institutions, (3) capital requirements, (4) business operations, (5) requirements and procedures for financial disclosure, (6) payments and compensation, (7) banking supervision, and (8) the voluntary or involuntary dissolution of banks and non-bank financial institutions.

One of the most visible results of Decree – Law No. 173 has been an increase in the number of financial institutions operating in Cuba and the scope of their operations. The following is a partial list of the most resilient of these newly created domestic institutions and their key functions, as well as the leading foreign financial institutions operating in Cuba.⁷

1. *Banco Nacional de Cuba (BNC)*

The BNC no longer serves as the central bank; instead, after the approval of Decree – Law No. 181, it performs the following functions:

- Commercial (business) lending in both domestic and foreign currencies
- Management and record keeping of the State's foreign debt

7. For a complete listing, go to: www.cubagob/cu/des_econ/banco/espanol/sistema_bancario/bcc/htm

- It also provides insurance-oriented products and services to entities and institutions engaged in the export-import business.

2. *Banco de Crédito y Comercio (BANDEC)*

BANDEC is authorized to function as a commercial bank, and it operates more than 200 branches throughout the island. The following is a list of highlights pertaining to the types of products and services that it offers:

- As of 2000, it had more than 55,000 “business” accounts, with balances denominated in both Cuban pesos and hard currencies.
- Most of its lending and financing activities center around the sugar sector.
- Its loan portfolio exceeded \$38 million USD as of late 1998.
- Out of an estimated 273,000 individual savings accounts, more than 12,000 were denominated in freely convertible currency.
- Some 47,000 accounts belong to small farmers and agricultural workers.
- BANDEC is also the leading provider of debit cards, offering automatic teller machines (ATMs) mostly in Havana, and other tourist centers (or polos turísticos).

3. *Banco Popular de Ahorro (BPA)*⁸

The BPA was chartered as a State-owned bank on May 18, 1983 through the approval of Decree – Law No. 69.

It has been authorized by the BCC to provide the following bank-related products and services:

- Accept deposits (in both Cuban pesos and USD)
- Offer savings accounts (in both Cuban pesos and USD)
- Extend short-term and long-term credit and financing to individuals and qualified “business” entities
- Participate in the sale, trade, and exchange of negotiable financial instruments
- Provide trust and custodial services, as well as administrative services
- The BPA has the largest network of branches in the island, with a presence in all 14 provinces through more than 270 branches.
- Its offices are equipped with personal computers and other related technologies needed to provide customers with real-time access to their accounts.
- The BPA offers customers direct access to their accounts via a network of ATMs and the issuance of electronic debit cards.
- The bank has an estimated 4.3 million accounts, out of which approximately 97% are peso-denominated savings accounts.
- It has a 25-percent ownership stake in the Netherlands Caribbean Bank, N.V., and had an active role in the creation of the *Corporación Financiera Habana, S.A.* in conjunction with Spain’s *Caja Madrid*.

8. For more information about the **Banco Popular de Ahorro (BPA)**, see: <http://www.banpopulardeahorro.com/content.asp?show=131>

- As of December 31, 2003, its net income (in thousand pesos) was 47,896.5, which represents a 12.37 percent increase from the 42,622.6 reported by the end of 2002.
- By the end of December 2003, total assets (in thousand pesos) were 9,469,772, which represented an increase of 6.92 percent from the amount reported by the end of 2002 (which was 8,856,549).
- By the end of 2003, the bank had a total of 9,089 workers, out of which 1,365 were “executives,” 5,265 were classified as “technicians,” 559 worked as administrators, 1,474 were employed as “service employees,” and 426 were simply classified as “workers.”
- Of the total employees for 2003, 66.9 percent were women; and 39.8 percent were under 35 years of age.

4. **4. Banco Financiero Internacional, S.A. (BIFSA)**

BIFSA was created after the approval of Decree – Law No. 84 on October 13, 1984.4. Banco Financiero Internacional, S.A. (BIFSA)

It is authorized to provide the following products and services:

- Accept deposits in freely convertible currency
- Provide short-term and long-term credit financing and loans
- Transfer funds abroad
- Buy and sell precious metals, freely convertible currencies, and other transferable assets denominated in hard currencies
- Accept deposits denominated in hard currencies, and extend loans based on such deposits
- Issue letters of credits
- Act as a correspondent bank with national and foreign banks and non-bank financial intermediaries

5. ***Banco Metropolitano, S.A.***

Banco Metropolitano, S.A. began operations in 1997 as a regional bank (operating in Havana) to meet the banking needs of foreigners residing in Cuba. It was granted authorization by the BCC to provide the following:

- Individual accounts – denominated in Cuban pesos and freely convertible currencies
- Short-term and long-term deposits and certificates of deposits
- Travelers’ checks, credit cards, and electronic debit cards

6. ***Casas de Cambio, S.A. (CADECA)***

CADECA operates a wide-ranging network of foreign exchange “houses” throughout the island. CADECA was established in 1995 to provide the following:

- Foreign exchange services (i.e., buy and sell domestic and foreign currencies)
- Check processing

- Credit card services

Foreign Banks with Correspondent Branches in Cuba

- Havana International Bank Ltd.
- ING Barings
- National Bank of Canada
- Banco Bilbao Vizcaya
- Banco Sabadell
- Société Générale
- Argentaria, Caja Postal y Banco Hipotecario, S.A.
- Fransabank Sal
- Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior SNC
- Caja de Ahorros y Monte de Piedad de Madrid

Foreign Non-Bank Financial Intermediaries with Representative Offices in Cuba

- Caribbean Finance Investments, Ltd.
- Fincomex Limited

Perspectives for the Future

The comprehensive (albeit gradual) series of reforms that have transformed the nature and structure of Cuba's banking sector since the mid 1990s, are part of an evolutionary and systematic process to re-adjust the Cuban economy to the "new realities" of the post-Soviet era, without the radical (or revolutionary) alterations (predicted by many experts and observers) of the State-centric nature of Cuban socialism. The creation of a new central bank (the *Banco Central de Cuba* – BCC) after the approval of Decree – Law No. 172 in May 1997, and the structural changes in the banking sector that took place after the approval of Decree – Law No. 173 in the same month, have gradually transformed this vital sector of the economy and have (hopefully) opened the door for further transformations once a comprehensive process of economic transition gets underway. While it is true that the institutional landscape in which Cuban depository and non-depository financial institutions, as well as their foreign counterparts doing business in Cuba, has been changed by the above-mentioned legislations, several unresolved issues and problems remain as obstacles to a truly revolutionary transformation of this key sector of the Cuban economy.⁹

First, the role of the State places a series of limitations and constraints on the functions of the banking system. For instance, because the central bank is

required to act as a fiscal agent for the State, there is no clear line of demarcation, which separates one from the other, significantly limiting the independence of the central bank (Echeverria, 1997). The use of artificial (i.e., non-market derived) interest rates and exchange rates further limits the ability of the central bank to act independently, since it must adhere to the policies set by the State, rather than those formulated by the market, when conducting monetary policy and standing ready to maintain an artificial exchange rate. In addition, the role of the State as the largest singular stakeholder in the central bank means that the central bank is obliged to extend loans, and honor the debts of the State, without having the flexibility to conduct adequate assessments of the risks associated with these practices. In essence, the central bank is required to extend credit to the State and honor its obligations without conducting the necessary analysis of its creditworthiness as a borrower. Finally, the central bank's role as the chief regulator of the banking and financial sector is limited by its dependence on the State; because the State retains the sole power to regulate and monitor the activities of the central bank, it is truly the State, not the central bank, who acts as the principal regulator of the banking and financial system (Echeverria, 1997). The main problem posed by this conflict resides in the fact that the majority of the customers in the banking and financial sectors, with the exception of individual depositors and borrowers, are State-owned enterprises (SOEs), and/or their partners and affiliates. Under these circumstances, it is quite plausible to conceive of a situation in which traditional lending criteria may be ignored given the legal relationship between the prospective borrower(s) and the State. This increases the risks associated with the loan portfolios of the central bank and the other institutions in the banking and financial system, and the probability of future banking crises.¹⁰

In the future, steps have to be taken to ensure the total separation of the State and the central bank, and divest the State from the banking and financial sector.¹¹ The proposed separation and divestiture, of course, should take place with the exception of some development banks or other similar institutions (e.g., community banks), which are vital to foster the development of certain economic sectors during the period of transition.¹² This will ensure a far

9. For a comprehensive list of suggestions for a desirable tax regime during the period of transition, based on the experience of other transition economies, which would complement the transformation of the banking sector, see Gallagher (1999).

10. Cartens, Hardy, and Pazarbasioglu (2004) provide a series of guidelines to help developing countries avoid banking crises.

11. Bentancourt (2004) provides a detailed account of the role of the State in advanced capitalist economies, developing economies, and economies in transition. His paper also provides a series of recommendations and guidelines regarding the role of the State in a future Cuban transition.

12. Gaynoso (2004) outlines the role and potential economic contributions of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), including credit cooperatives and development banks, in a future Cuban transition.

greater degree of independence and transparency for the central bank, and would facilitate the liberalization of interest rates and the exchange rate. In addition, these measures would transform Cuban lending practices so that the extension (or provision) of loans and credits more accurately reflects the risk characteristics and credit ratings of existing and potential customers. Comprehensive credit analysis, based on the analysis of financial statements prepared using sound accounting practices should become a fundamental aspect of the lending decision for all financial institutions. Finally, a great deal of work has to be done to improve the methods and practices used by the central bank to regulate the banking and financial system. The regulation of areas such as lending practices, disclosure requirements, product and service offerings, trading rules and procedures, among others, should fall under the jurisdiction of the central bank, along with specific regulatory institutions designed to oversee the business practices of non-bank financial intermediaries. The central bank and its newly created counterparts should stimulate the development of industry-based self-regulatory organizations (SROs) responsible for defining industry best practices and carrying out self-regulation. This would further enhance the independence of the central bank, as well as other newly created regulatory entities, while contributing to greater degrees of transparency and accountability, which would ultimately lead to increased investor confidence in the country's financial institutions.¹³

The second issue that emerges with respect to the current status of Cuba's banking and financial sector has to do with institutional redundancies and overlaps. There seems to be a significant overlap in the types of products and services offered by many banks and non-bank financial intermediaries. This points out to a relative lack of product and market differentiation among several institutions in the system, which, under different circumstances would more than likely result in consolidation via mergers and acquisitions (M&As) and/or hostile takeovers. However, the fact that there are several institutions in the Cuban banking and financial system with clearly visible overlaps in product and service offerings, as well as functions, and organizational structure, suggests that perhaps some of them may not be profitable, and only exist to meet the needs (either political or economical) of specific constituencies or "interest groups."

The third challenge confronting Cuba's banking and financial sector relates to the central bank's lack of access to the traditional tools necessary to successfully conduct monetary policy. Tools such as open market operations (i.e., the bank's ability to buy and sell government bonds in the open market

13. As Betancourt (2004) states, however, "one must ensure that the regulatory system is not used to prevent (market) entry. This is a common problem when regulatory agencies are captured by existing producers or when the rents from limiting entry accrue to those holding political power."

to affect the money supply), the use of a flexible discount window through which the central bank can influence the direction of interest rates, and control of a market-driven discount rate, seem to be absent from the Cuban system. The central bank, instead, maintains an artificial set of interest rates, which are channeled through depository institutions participating in the system. This means that rather than being market-determined (by the demand and supply of money or loanable funds); interest rates are artificially established by the central bank under the auspices of the State. In some cases, this means that borrowers that would otherwise be charged, “market rates” for credit and loans pay artificially low rates when using credit or loans to meet their financing needs. This, of course, reduces the profit potential of one of the most lucrative sources of income for commercial banks: the spread between the rates paid on deposits and the rates charged for loans (Fabozzi and Modigliani, 2003). In the future, artificial interest rates will have to be liberalized in order to maximize the profit potential of banks and non-bank financial institutions, and to stimulate the extension of credit, and consumer spending.

Finally, the potential of the banking and financial sector is limited by existing limitations on property rights and self-employment activities for ordinary Cubans. Limitations on the types of property that can be legally owned, transferred, and sold in the open market by ordinary Cubans, place artificial constraints on their ability to use personal property and assets as collateral to secure business and personal financing. Existing restrictions on self-employment activities, furthermore, limit the credit and financing demands of potential micro-entrepreneurs and privately-operated small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that would otherwise rely on credit financing, micro-financing, and collateralized loans to meet their businesses’ capital and funding needs, further reducing the potential profitability of the banking and financial sector. To address this major limitation, future reforms of the banking and financial sector should be complemented with a comprehensive program of reforms to address the need to establish property rights, grant ordinary Cubans with the opportunity to operate private business enterprises, and use their assets as collateral to secure various types of loans and financing.¹⁴

After more than a decade since the inception of the reform process described in this paper, the Cuban banking and financial sector still remains heavily controlled by the State. The creation of a new central bank, responsible for granting licenses authorizing the creation of new financial intermedi-

14. As Betancourt (2004) indicates, “a Cuban state that pretends to guide citizens through a democratic transition **must show its commitment to the protection of individual rights.**” Such commitment, he states, “is necessary for the development of markets essential for economic growth.”

aries, acting as a fiscal agent for the State, conducting and monitoring international operations and foreign exchange transactions, and responsible for the regulation and oversight of all depository and non-depository institutions, has facilitated the evolution and modernization of the Cuban banking and financial sector. This gradual process of evolution has been complemented by the creation of a series of financial intermediaries responsible for extending the scope of the financial products and services available to consumers, State-owned enterprises, and foreign firms doing business in Cuba.

However, despite the wide-ranging objectives of this reform program, the State continues to wield significant control over the banking and financial sector; there are notable institutional overlaps and redundancies; the central bank lacks full independence and access to the tools necessary to effectively conduct monetary policy; and limitations on property rights and self-employment opportunities severely limit the profit potential of this vital economic sector. Rather than signaling a revolutionary transformation of Cuba's banking sector during the Special Period, these recalcitrant reforms have simply constituted a gradual evolution from a Soviet-era system into a State-centric model of administration in which the State continues to play a significant controlling role as the sole administrator, proprietor, and regulator of the nation's banking and financial sector.

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The Future of Cuba's Energy Sector

A. Alhajji and Terry L. Maris

Introduction

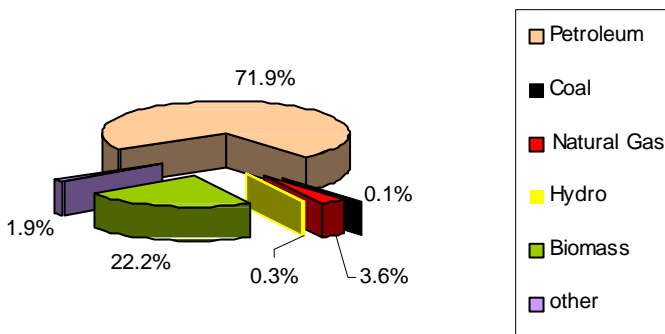
The current economic, political, and social trends in Cuba indicate that energy consumption will increase substantially in the future. Transition to a market economy would accelerate this trend. In this article the word “transition” refers to any movement towards a market economy. It does not necessarily mean regime change.

The proximity of Cuba to the United States and the possibility of massive oil deposits in Cuban waters will have a tangible impact on political, economic, and social environments, not only in Cuba, but in the whole region. The discovery of commercial deposits of oil would affect Cuba's economy on one hand and US energy policy and energy security on the other. If US-Cuba relations improve in the future, discovery of large oil deposits could affect the energy trade patterns between the two countries and affect oil trade between the US and other oil producing countries, especially in the Middle East.

The Cuban government has come to realize the importance of developing domestic energy sources, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1991. Cuba embarked on several renewable and non-renewable projects to generate electricity and enforced a number of conservation and efficiency measures. Political instability in Venezuela, Cuba's chief energy import source, endangers the flow of cheap oil to the country. The near term goal is energy self-sufficiency, which would have a direct benefit in the manufacturing, transportation, and tourism sectors. Ultimately Cuba would like to be an oil exporter, which would generate much needed revenue to revamp its deteriorating infrastructure and to enhance its relations with other countries, especially in the Caribbean region and Latin America.

This paper provides a brief synopsis of Cuba's energy sector and outlines the future opportunities and challenges. Section II presents an overview of the energy sector in Cuba with a brief summary of recent activities in the oil sector. Section III outlines the opportunities for growth in both energy consumption and production. It also outlines opportunities for domestic and foreign investment. Section IV summarizes a list of challenges that will face Cuba in developing its energy sector. Section V presents conclusions and policy recommendations.

FIGURE 8-1. Cuban Primary Energy Consumption in 2001



Source: IEA, Non-OECD Country Balances, 2003.

An Overview of Cuba's Energy Sector

Cuba's primary energy consumption is relatively small by world standards. In 2003, it reached a mere 0.474 quadrillion BTU. Cuba depends heavily on oil, which represents about 72 percent of its total primary energy consumption. The rest comes from biomass (22 percent), Natural Gas (3.6 percent), Hydro (0.3 percent), and Coal (0.1 percent), as shown in Figure 8-1. Renewable energy such as solar and other energy sources represent 1.9 percent.¹

Cuba's industrial sector consumes about 70 percent of total energy available, as shown in Figure 8-2. The residential and transportation sectors con-

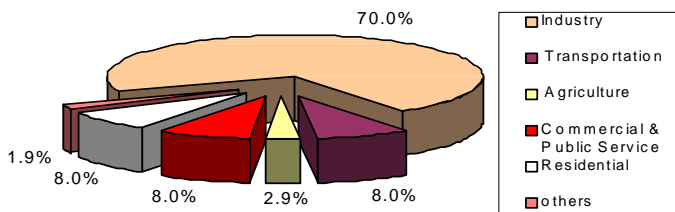
1. The US EIA provides different data in its Caribbean Fact sheet (July 2004). In its report, the EIA states that oil represents 95 percent of the total primary energy supply in Cuba. In a private correspondence, an EIA official stated that "the short answer to your question is that we only take into account renewable and combustible energy use for electricity production, whereas the IEA takes into account other uses by other sectors. Looking at the IEA statistics, I see that in 2001, for example, of domestic supply of solid biomass of 123514 (terrajoules), only 6938 were used in electricity production (only 6 percent). This is all that we capture, hence the great difference. Of course, our assessment of the use by the electricity sector might be somewhat different as well, but the difference would not be that large. So, it is a difference of methodology. I admit that this tends to underestimate energy use in countries with a large amount of wood, biomass, etc., use outside of the electricity sector, but we do not have the resources to obtain independent estimates of these uses."

sume 8 percent each, and the agriculture sector consumes less than 3 percent.² The heavy dependence of Cuba's industrial sector on energy illustrates the role of energy in Cuba's economic growth and economic development.

Crude Oil

With the dramatic failure two years ago of the sugar industry, from which it has yet to recover, Cuba has placed greater emphasis and hope on exploiting its oil reserves. In 1999, Cuba divided the 43,250 square miles of its Gulf waters into 59 exploration blocks in preparation for opening them to foreign investment by international oil companies (IOCs) as shown in Figure 8-3. Six exploration blocks were awarded to the Spanish firm Repsol-YPF and four to the Canadian firm Sherritt.³

FIGURE 8-2. Cuban Energy Consumption by Sector in 2001



Source: IEA, Non-OECD Country Balances, 2003.

The Institute for Cuban & Cuban American studies states on its web site that oil was discovered in Cuba in 1914. In a different location, it indicates that oil was first discovered in 1881, about 20 years after its commercial discovery in the United States.⁴ However, it was not developed commercially until the early 1930s. The USGS estimates that Cuban waters may contain about 4 billion barrels of oil. Several political and economic factors have limited the development of Cuban oil. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the loss of Soviet oil shipments forced Cuba to increase its exploration activities and develop its oil resources. Several reports estimate proven oil reserves to be between 510 million barrels⁵ (mb) and 750 mb in 2004.⁶ Even conservative reserve estimates reflect a substantial increase in Cuba's oil reserves in recent years, which stood at 284 mb in 2001. All current crude comes from

2. These percentages indicate that sugar processing is considered part of the industrial sector.

3. **World Oil** and **Oil and Gas Journal**, various issues.

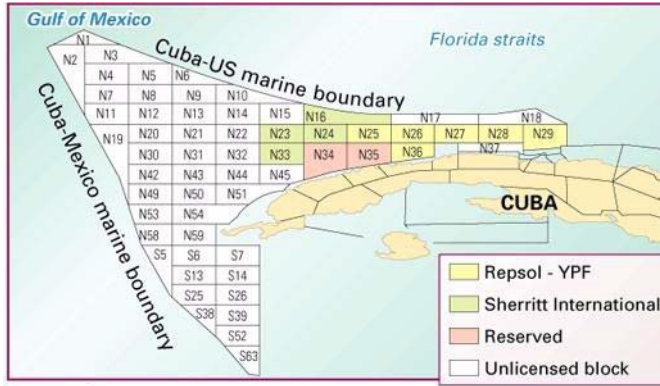
4. <http://cuba.iccas.miami.edu/>

5. World Oil estimate, **World Oil**, September, 2004.

6. Oil and Gas Journal estimate AS OF January 2005, **Oil and Gas Journal** (December 20, 2004)

onshore fields. Almost all Cuban crude is heavy with high sulfur content. Cuba needs to find light crude oil reserves in order to achieve its goal of self sufficiency.

FIGURE 8-3. Cuba's 59 offshore Sections and the Operating Companies



Source: Unión Cuba Petróleo. Cited in the Oil and Gas Journal, August 18, 2003.

Figure 8-4 shows Cuba's oil production and consumption since 1980. Cuban oil production increased rapidly in recent years. It increased from 3 percent of total energy consumption in the late 1960s to more than 20 percent of total energy consumption in 2004. Oil production has increased by three-fold since 1991 to reach 56,000 b/d in 2003.⁷ Production increased by 16.6 percent in 2003 alone. This increase in production resulted from the increase in development wells in recent years, as shown in Figure 8-5. The Figure illustrates the number of producing oil wells between 1997 and 2003. It also shows that most of the onshore Cuban wells are on artificial lift.

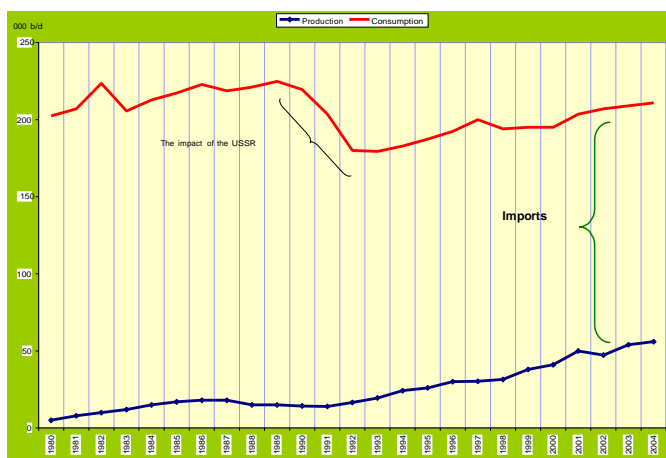
Cuba's petroleum consumption is closely related to its economic activities. Despite various conservation and efficiency measures adopted after 1991 to reduce petroleum consumption, most of the decrease in oil consumption is related to the decline in economic activity after 1991. Cuba's oil consumption reached 209,000 b/d in 2003. Oil is mostly used in transportation, fertilizer plants, the cement industry, electricity generation, nickel refining, and other mining operations. The industrial sector use about 68 percent of the available oil, followed by transportation (14 percent), residential (5 percent), construction (6 percent) and agriculture (3 percent). The remaining oil is distributed among various sectors, including defense.⁸

7. The Cuban Ministry of Basic Industry reported that Cuba produced 60,200 b/d of oil in 2003. This number is slightly above the reported number in the press. The discrepancy is very small and could be the result of differences in the definition of "petroleum."

8. IEA, 2003.

As production has increased in recent years, Cuba's oil imports have been decreasing, as shown in Figures 8-4 and 8-6. Cuba imports around 150,000 b/d of petroleum products. Historically, most of Cuban energy imports, mostly petroleum products, came from the USSR. Currently, most petroleum imports come from Venezuela and other Caribbean nations. It now purchases 78,000 b/d of crude and products under preferential conditions from Venezuela based on a five-year contract signed in October 2000. The dependence of Cuba on oil imports from Venezuela makes Cuba vulnerable to any political change in Venezuela or any change in the attitude of the current government of Venezuela.

FIGURE 8-4. Cuba's Petroleum Production and Consumption (Thousand b/d)



Source: EIA, 2004

The Impact of the USSR on Cuba's Petroleum Sector

The USSR was the main supplier of energy products for several decades. The Soviets bartered oil and oil products for Cuban sugar, tobacco, and other Cuban products.⁹ In such barter, Cuban sugar was overvalued.¹⁰ As a result, the collapse of the communist block in 1989 and the USSR in 1991 meant lower prices for Cuban sugar and higher oil import costs for Cuba. However, it was not the collapse per se that reduced the Cuban oil imports from the USSR. Rather, the decline in oil imports was the result of a trade protocol

9. For detailed information on the oil-for Sugar deal see Alonso and Galliano (1999).

10. In 1988, the price of Cuban sugar was for times the world price. For more information see Perez-Lopez (1992) who cited data from Comité Estatal de Estadísticas, Anuario estadístico de Cuba. He also cited instances where Cuba bought sugar in the open market and resold to the Soviets and gained massive profits that help finance petroleum imports.

that was signed in 1990 that eliminated barter deals and preferential prices and replaced them with world market prices and convertible currency payments. This protocol dealt a serious blow to the Cuban economy in general and the energy sector in particular. Energy imports represented a striking 34.2 percent of Cuba's total imports before the collapse of the USSR.¹¹ After signing the protocol, Cuba had no choice but to reduce its oil imports. It was not able to pay for them. In addition, the protocol prevented Cuba from receiving additional cheap oil for re-export, which had generated additional revenues and hard currency for the government.¹²

As shown in Figures 8-4 and 8-6, the collapse of the USSR had a tremendous impact on the petroleum imports and consumption of Cuba. Petroleum consumption declined by 19 percent between 1988 and 1992; petroleum imports declined by 20.6 percent during the same period. The decline in imports was higher than the decline in consumption by about 1500 b/d. The increase in domestic petroleum production by 10 percent accounted for this difference. The ability of domestic production to cover the gap between consumption and imports indicates that the impact of conservation measures and increased efficiency programs that the Cuban government adopted after 1991 was minimal at best.¹³

Recent Exploration Activities

Almost all current production is heavy crude from onshore wells in northeastern Cuba. Several IOCs operate in Cuba today through joint ventures with Cuba Unión des Petróleo (Cupet). These companies include Sherritt International (Canada), Petrobras (Brazil), Repsol-YPF (Spain), Pebercan (Canada). Several other companies from the UK and China have also signed contracts.¹⁴ The Helms-Burton Act prohibits US oil companies from investing in Cuba despite the fact that US oil companies started the Cuban oil industry.¹⁵ In December 2003, the Government of Cuba invited US oil companies to join offshore exploration efforts. The government noted that US farmers were

11. Ibid

12. Cuba started re-exporting Soviet oil in 1977. The average yearly exports stood at 687,000 metric tons between 1977 and 1981. It increased between 1982 and 1988 to an average of 2,952,000 metric tons. For more information see Perez-Lopez (1992)

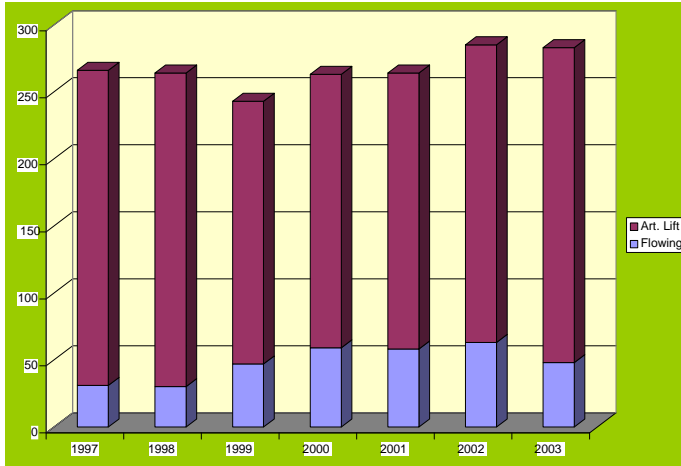
13. The collapse of the USSR also affected Cuba's electricity generation in various ways and forced Cuba to modify its generation plants, which increased inefficiency and widespread blackouts.

14. The French oil company Total abandoned Cuba in the early 1990 after drilling two offshore dry holes for more details see **Financial Times** (January 15, 2003), USA Edition.

15. In the 1930s, Standard Oil Company of New Jersey owned the only refinery in Cuba at Belot, across the bay from Havana ("Cut in Oil Tariff Proposed in Cuba" **NYT** (Nov 11, 1931)) In 1956, the **New York Times** reported that "Oilmen from Texas, Oklahoma, and California in particular are appearing in Cuba in increasing numbers. Various small companies and some with considerable resources have been formed." ("Rise in Domestic Oil Flow Bolsters Cuba; Exploratory Capital Pouring Into Island." **NYT** (January 5, 1956).)

selling their products despite the four decades embargo and the US oil companies could follow suit.¹⁶

FIGURE 8-5. Number of Producing Oil Wells



Source: World Oil, August, 2004.

In 2001 Brazilian oil company Petrobras ceased exploration in Cuban waters after its \$17 million wildcat well in Block L resulted in a dry hole.¹⁷ The company’s earlier seismic testing indicated the possibility of up to 700 million barrels of crude. In January 2003 Petrobras signed a letter of intent with Cuba to return.¹⁸

In July 2004 Spain’s Repsol-YPF announced that its \$50 million, 10,800 foot exploratory well drilled in Yamagua 1 on the northwestern coast indicated the presence of a petroleum system, but concluded that extraction was not commercially viable. The company estimates the probability of finding high quality crude at less than 20 percent. It plans to further analyze test samples and drill another hole in 2005.¹⁹

China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec) signed a memorandum of understanding with Cupet to explore four blocks and to conduct geological studies over six months. This agreement could lead to the signing of a production sharing contract.

16. **Oil Daily** (December 4, 2003).

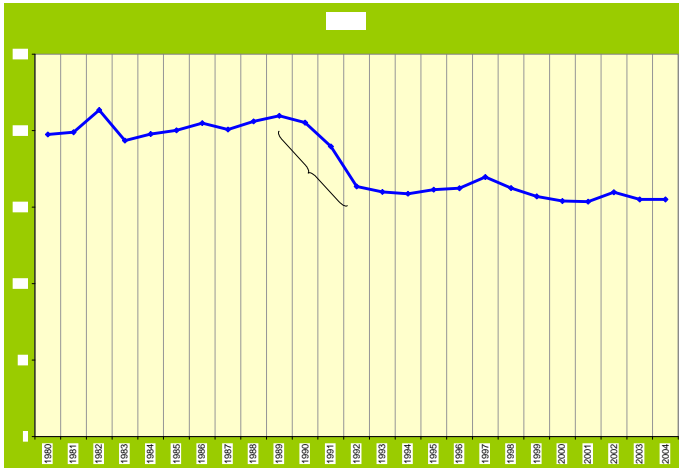
17. **Oilgram** News (December 2003).

18. “Brazil interested in exploring deepwater GOM off Cuba, **Oil and Gas Journal** (August 18, 2003).

19. “Spain Strikes oil near coast of Cuba” **The Sun-Sentinel** (July 30, 2004). The same story was also reported by **Reuters** (July 25, 2004).

Canada's Sherritt International recently announced plans to recommence exploratory drilling later this year in block Y off the northern coast, followed by work in blocks 9 and 10 over the following months.²⁰ The company spent \$46.2 million in the first half of 2004 on capital expenditures. At the end of 2004, Sherritt discovered a 100 million barrel deposit off the coast of Santa Cruz del Norte. The discovered crude is similar to other Cuban crudes. It is heavy (18 API) and contains high sulfur (5 percent). Sherritt plans to start production from the new field in 2006.²¹

FIGURE 8-6. Cuba's Petroleum Imports (Thousand b/d)



Source: EIA, 2004.

The Cuban government reported that it drilled 16 wells in 2003. One of them was dry. It planned to drill 17 oil wells in 2004, one of them offshore. They include 3 exploratory wells and 13 development wells.²²

Natural Gas

Cuba's natural gas consumption is minuscule and represents only 2.7 percent of its total primary energy consumption, as shown in Figure 8-1. Despite a small production of associated natural gas, production potential is large given that the Oil and Gas Journal estimates natural gas reserves to be around 2.5

20. For detailed information on Sherritt's earlier operations in Cuba see "Cuba's oil output rises, other projects loom absent sanctions", *The Oil and Gas Journal* (January 7, 2002).

21. "Castro Announces New Oil Find" *Reuters* (December 26, 2004).

22. *World Oil* (August, 2004).

TCF.²³ Associated natural gas was historically flared until 1968 when Cuba decided to utilize it.

Natural gas production was 59.5 mcf/d in 2003. In 1997, Cuba established a joint venture with a Canadian firm with the goal of supplying households in the Mantanzas Province with natural gas.²⁴ Some of the gas is delivered to Havana for residential use. The IEA reports that the industrial sector uses 80 percent of the natural gas and the residential sector uses 19 percent. However, natural gas represents only 6.7 percent of the total energy used in the industrial sector and only 14 percent of the energy used in the residential sector. These low figures indicate that the potential for natural gas market growth is great, especially since Cuba has no coal. The increasing demand for electricity and the spread of blackouts indicate that Cuba will most likely utilize its natural gas to generate electricity rather than for export. The behavior of the oil producing countries supports this conclusion. They use natural gas to replace oil in utilities and for industrial use.²⁵

Renewable energy

Cuba's desperate need for energy resources, especially after the collapse of the USSR, forced it to try various renewable energy technologies and to continue its heavy reliance on biomass, especially in the sugar industry. Renewable energy generated 6.1 percent of total electricity generation in Cuba in 2001, while oil supplied the rest.²⁶ Cuba's experimentation with renewable energy has had some success, but not enough to solve the energy shortfall on the island. One of the main obstacles that faces the development of renewable energy is that most of the technology is not designed for tropical areas.

Cuba's largest potential renewable energy source is biomass, primarily in the form of sugar cane residue, known locally as "bagasse." It represents about 22 percent of total energy consumption in the country. Bagasse is used in boilers to generate electricity for sugar mills. Cuba produced 600 MW from bagasse in 2002. Many sugar plants are energy self sufficient and only about 70 sugar mills connected to the power grid.²⁷ Politics aside, consumption of bagasse is very inefficient. The traditional process produces no more than 20 kwh/ton of ground sugar cane in the older steam turbines. Efficiency is double in the newer turbines, but there is still room for improvement.²⁸ Fur-

23. However, conservative estimates, such as that of **World Oil** (September 2004) show natural gas reserves to be around one-fifth this number, only 0.550 TCF.

24. Werlau (1998)

25. This conclusion contradicts the conclusion of Jaffe & Soligo (2000) that the discovery of natural gas in Cuba may lead to exporting it to Florida.

26. IEA Energy Statistics, 2003.

27. "Euro-Caribbean Island cooperation on Sustainable Energies" OLA-Caribbean Project, 2003.

28. Santamarina (1992).

thermore, the high transportation costs of solid biomass have forced decision makers to locate processing sites near the sugar cane fields which limits the economical distribution of the energy produced and largely limits its use to the sugar industry. With new technology and appropriate funding, the sugar industry can generate enough electricity to prevent blackouts in Cuban cities.²⁹

Cuba also uses biomass to produce biogas from the residue of sugar and coffee processing plants. An example is “cachaza,” the residue produced from filtering pressed sugar cane juice. Cachaza is converted to methane gas to be used as cooking fuel in local communities. Cuba started using this process in the industrial sector in the early 1990s when it built the first industrial gas plant with financial help from a Christian group in Germany.

Other biomass sources include wood, charcoal, livestock waste, paper and food processing waste, and urban waste. Recent government reforestation efforts have limited the use of wood. However, the consumption of fuel wood may have increased after 1991 when energy resources became scarce.

The absence of large rivers in Cuba limits the production of hydroelectricity to small rivers. Hydropower supplies 2.7 percent of total electricity generation in Cuba, as shown in Figure 8-1. Recent estimates put Cuba’s total gross hydro power potential at 14,600 GWh/year. It will be generated mostly from Cuba’s 219 existing water reservoirs, which were constructed for water management and irrigation.³⁰ The development of hydropower started in the 1980s as part of a national plan to expand the use of this unutilized source.³¹ Four major plants were built in the 1980s with capacity up to 46250 kW. Hundreds of small scale hydro energy operations are already in place throughout the country, primarily in rural or mountainous areas.³² Very few of these operations are connected to the grid. These micro operations might have a great potential once Cuba has the financial resources to convert these micro operations from manual to automatic, thus utilize most of the hydro power potential. Cuba imports some of these plants from China and manufactures the rest with Chinese financing.³³ Downside factors, however, include the normal fluctuations in the depth and flow of the water as well as the seasonal need to divert water to irrigate crops.

Solar energy has large potential but its use is still limited despite the financial support of several countries and world organizations. Cuba has

29. Even with the improved efficiency, it is still almost half of that in the West. For more information see Lippman, Lent, Hawthorn, Stone, and Duncan (1997).

30. “Cuba takes up hydro” **International Water and Dam Construction** (January 1, 2003).

31. Experts argue that Cuba’s mountainous landscape can support an estimated hydro potential of 14,600 GWh/year. This amount could substitute for one million ton of oil costing an estimated \$120 million. For more information see Oladle and Martinez (2000).

32. Ibid.

33. **Economic Eye on Cuba** (April 10, 2000). US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council.

implemented a photovoltaic program to serve numerous locations not on primary power grids, especially schools, municipal buildings, and medical clinics in remote sections of the country.³⁴ Photovoltaic devices also provide electricity for other uses such as communications, electric cattle fences, and forest guard stations.³⁵ The use of solar energy in Cuba suffers from several problems. Most of the solar energy technology installed was not designed for tropical areas.³⁶ Lack of financing prevented Cuba from producing or importing new technology that suits its climate. Solar energy is also used to dry crops. Recent reports indicate that the Cuban government intends to expand these operations.

The harnessing of wind has become widespread in Cuba. It is estimated that there are more than 8,000 windmills throughout the island. These are used primarily to irrigate fields and provide water to livestock. More recently, with financial backing from several European countries, several modern "wind farms" have been constructed to generate electricity in addition to small 1 kW turbines. The first wind farm, which generates 0.45 MW, was commissioned at Turigwanò Island in 1991. Studies indicate that at 400 MW power could be generated in windy areas such as the northern coast.³⁷ The government intends to combine microgenerators with small wind mills that are designed to charge batteries.³⁸ Some of the limitations of wind power include lack of funding and the inability to repair thousands of idle wind mills.³⁹

Nuclear energy

Cuba attempted to build its first nuclear power plant for electricity generation in 1958 when it signed an agreement with an Anglo-American consortium to build a 220,000 kW nuclear power plant in Santa Lucia. The revolution of 1959 halted the development of the plant. Cuba started its own nuclear program in 1969 with the hope that it could develop its own nuclear plants. Cuba signed an agreement with the USSR in 1976 to build a nuclear power plant. The inability of Cuba to finance the project delayed the project for several years.⁴⁰ In 1983, with considerable financial backing from the Soviet Union, Cuba began construction of two 440 megawatt pressurized water reactors for the purpose of generating electricity. Located southeast of Havana near Cien-

34. The OLA Caribbean Project reports that solar energy supplies electricity to more than 350 medical centers, 2364 primary schools, 1864 TV rooms, and 150 social centers. For description of various PV panels see Lippman (1997).

35. Santamarina (1992).

36. Stone (1996).

37. OLA-Caribbean Project, 2003.

38. Santamarina (1992).

39. Lippman (1997).

40. Institute of Cuban and Cuban-American Studies database, 2001.

fuegos, Juragua 1 and 2 are Eastern European design VVER-440 reactors. Although the first reactor was to be operational by 1995, the breakup of the Soviet Union and its rapid transition to a market economy dramatically changed both technical assistance to and commercial relations with Cuba. On September 5, 1992, after spending about \$1.1 billion, Castro formally announced the termination of the project. Civil construction on Juragua was estimated by the GAO to be approximately 90-97 percent complete with 37 percent of the reactor equipment installed. Juragua was estimated to be 20-30 percent complete with reactor equipment installation unknown. In October 1995, a Russian delegation traveled to Cuba to negotiate an \$800 million agreement to complete both reactors. In 2000, both Russia and Cuba agreed to abandon the project. Cuba needs at least \$1 billion to finish both projects.⁴¹

The Juragua project met with considerable opposition from the U.S. government as well as the world scientific community. Concern was expressed that shoddy construction, structural defects, lack of a proper quality control processes, poor training, and the inexperience of Cuban personnel had created the potential for disaster, especially given that the design is not intended for tropical areas. The Helms-Burton Act specifically states that the construction of a Cuban nuclear reactor would be considered “an act of aggression.” Consequently, nuclear energy is not a viable option at the present time to satisfy Cuba’s energy needs.⁴²

Opportunities

While the number and size of opportunities depend on future policies, they exist in all scenarios. Under any future scenario, the Cuban energy sector has no other way but to grow in both consumption and production. Such growth creates several profitable investment opportunities for the Cuban government, the Cuban people, Cuban expatriates, and foreign investors. Three important factors will play a significant role in increasing future energy consumption: economic growth, private ownership growth, and tourism growth. While population growth currently hovers around zero, a move toward a market economy and the return of expatriates might increase population growth. Such an increase in population would also increase demand for energy.

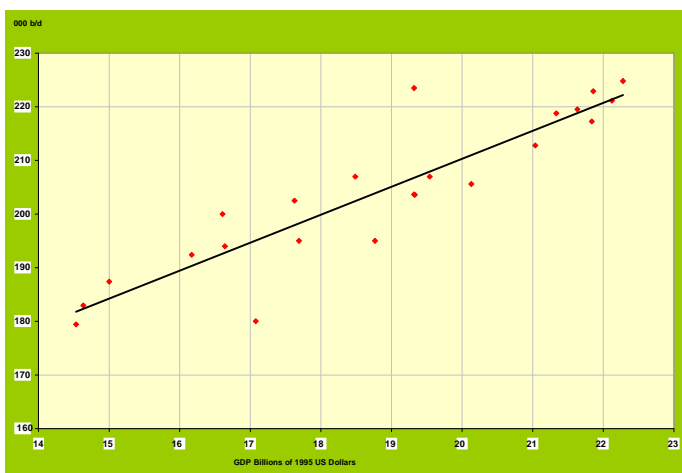
Based on the current situation in Cuba, energy consumption will grow. Cuba’s energy consumption is positively correlated with economic growth, as shown in Figure 8-7. The Figure shows the positive relationship between petroleum consumption, which represents 72 percent of total energy primary consumption, and GDP.⁴³ Increased openness and movement toward a market

41. For detailed information of Cuba’s nuclear projects see. Perez-Lopez (1987) and Benjamin-Avarado (1998).

42. Parrish (1997).

economy will accelerate energy consumption to the extent that Cuba may face a future energy crisis as supplies cannot keep up with demand. Three factors cause acceleration in energy consumption. First, countries in transition experience higher economic growth than countries not in transition. Second, countries in transition, in general, experience faster growth in energy consumption than economic growth. Third, growth in energy consumption in Cuba could be even higher than other countries in transition. Cuba has one of the lowest per capita energy consumption, per capita electricity consumption, and cars per 1000 people in the world. Countries in transition typically experience large growth in both per capita energy consumption and number of cars per 1000 people. To meet such demand, Cuba will need massive investment in energy infrastructure and energy services.

FIGURE 8-7. GDP vs. Petroleum Consumption (1980-2002)



International Energy Annual 2002, EIA, 2004.

Under any future scenario, the potential for Cuba to become a net oil exporter is great. Its proven oil reserves are higher than that of Sudan, but it produces only about one fifth of Sudan.⁴⁴ Sudan is planning now to double its production from the same reserves, which also indicate the potential increase in production in Cuba. While oil in Cuba is more expensive to produce than in Sudan, Cuban oil is more accessible and closer to world markets than Sudanese oil. In addition, it is very close to major refining centers and stor-

43. The relationship between per capita energy consumption and economic growth is also positive.

44. Sudan's proven oil reserves are 563 mb as of January 2004. Its production stands at 345,000. Sudan plans to increase its production to 700,000 in the next few years (EIA, Country Briefs, 2004).

age facilities in the Caribbean. Unlike Cuba, Sudan suffers from a long history of civil war and political instability. Like Cuba, Sudan is under US sanctions.

Opportunities for Foreign Investment

As indicated above, Cuban energy production and consumption will increase in the coming years under any scenario. Moving toward a market-orientated economy will only enhance and accelerate these trends, which require ever-increasing investment. The experience of the oil producing countries indicates that IOCs will invest even in the direst of circumstances as long as governments offer good investment terms to reflect the high risk in these countries. Foreign oil companies will invest despite political instability, dictatorship, human rights abuses, and unilateral sanctions as they have done in Algeria, Colombia, Sudan, Yemen, Myanmar, Iraq, and Iran. IOCs have increased production in several oil producing countries despite adversity and high risk.⁴⁵

Based on Cuba's optimistic reserve figures and the experience of other countries, we estimate that Cuba will produce more than 700,000 b/d by 2015 under any possible scenario, even if US sanctions stay in place. The differences among various scenarios will have an impact only during the initial years, mostly between 2005 and 2009, but the outcome is the same after 2010. Cuba needs at least \$9 billion to reach that level of production.

While we believe that US sanctions have an impact on Cuba's energy sector and that lifting them will accelerate its development, we believe that Cuba, with the right changes, can attract foreign investment and develop its energy sector despite the sanctions. In this case, sanctions would have a bigger impact on US oil companies than on Cuba. Countries that were able to develop their oil sectors despite the sanctions include Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Myanmar.

Renewable energy, especially biomass, has a great potential in Cuba. New technology and increasing efficiency may eliminate the possibility of future blackouts in Cuban cities. The ability of biomass to solve the blackouts problem indicates the existence of a large market for its power, which in turns creates opportunities for investment and expansion. Investment opportunities also exists in other renewable resources, especially wind and solar. Wind farms create a good opportunity for foreign investors. Cuba's need for PV panels that operate efficiently in tropical areas also creates new investment opportunities.

45. For more information on the behavior of IOCs in unstable or embargoed countries see Alhajji (2004).

Challenges

Despite the above optimistic view regarding future opportunities, Cuba has to overcome several serious technical, legal, economic, political, and social challenges. Most of the Cuban oil is in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Deep-water exploration is always risky and very costly. Attracting such a large investment for a naturally risky venture is difficult, quite apart from legal and political factors. While the remaining 4 billion barrels in deep water are the only hope for Cuba to become a net oil exporter and generate badly needed revenue, the quality of crude in these reserves might be detrimental to such hopes. Most of Cuban crude in the onshore fields is heavy with high sulfur content, which has limited uses. Heavy crude with high sulfur contents is usually cheap and sold at a large discount in the world oil markets. It is becoming less attractive as industrial countries impose stiffer environmental restrictions.

Several legal issues may slow down investment in the Cuban energy sector. A change in the legal framework is required to encourage investment, guarantee property rights, and create a suitable, fair, and stable tax system. Creating such a framework takes time and may face stiff domestic opposition under any political regime. Cuba has to resolve legal challenges that some US and other international firms pose to the development of certain oil and gas fields and some parts of the downstream sector. The nationalization of the foreign companies' assets about 4 decades ago without fair compensation entitles these companies to sue the companies that operate in their nationalized properties. For example, in 1996 a US company sued a Canadian consortium and the Canadian government for profiting from illegally seized oil drilling leases that it once operated in northern Cuba.⁴⁶

Several economic challenges may hinder Cuba's efforts to attract foreign investment. These include the ability to create fiscal and monetary policies that are hospitable to foreign investment, the ability to borrow from foreign institutions, privatization of government commercial enterprises, liberalization of markets, and reduction of government subsidies.

Cuba also has to deal with several political issues that may affect investment in its energy sector. These issues include US sanctions, the possibility of regime change in Venezuela, allegation of human rights abuses, the fate of Cuban expatriates, and the role of Cuban Americans.

Changing the legal framework and moving toward a market economy may create social tension. Under such a change, the regime would have no choice but to lower subsidies and increase prices. The experience of countries in transition, and countries that partially opened their economies, indicate

46. "US Firms Sues over Cuban Oil Leases." **Knight Ridder** (July 3, 1996).

that the income gap between the poor and rich increases initially. Cuba has to deal with such a possibility in a way that prevents social unrest.

Despite encouraging steps in the development of renewable energy, it is still in its infancy. Most of the problems that face the development of renewable energy are technical and financial. Most of the renewable energy technology was not designed for tropical climates, and Cuba's researchers are not yet able to solve this problem. In addition, Cuba is not able to finance these projects and the R&D needed to develop and improve these projects.

Finally, detailed data on Cuba's energy sector is scarce. The problem became more severe when IOCs could not find significant oil deposits in the Cuban waters. Drilling and more seismic studies can provide better information to attract foreign investors. The Cuban government may need to start the initial phase of data collection on its own to present to the IOCs in an effort to attract investment.

Conclusions

Cuba offers unique opportunities. Based on historical energy trends in Cuba and countries in transition, and based on trends in IOC's investments, energy consumption and production in Cuba can only grow. Historical trends in Cuba confirm this point. Since Cuba suffers from one of the lowest levels of per capita energy consumption in the world and has one of the lowest levels of cars per capita in the world, consumption may grow faster than production and imports to the extent that Cuba may face energy shortages and possibly an energy crisis.

Under any scenario, several investment opportunities exist in the Cuban energy sector. These include renewable energy. During any sort of transition, energy production, consumption, and investment will boom. Even if US sanctions remain, Cuba will likely become a net oil exporter. Regardless of the political future of Cuba, lifting US sanctions alone will speed up the development of Cuba's energy sector and increase its energy production, especially of oil and gas. However, several countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Syria) developed their energy sectors despite sanctions.

Under any scenario, Cuba will face several challenges. Technical challenges include the remote location of its offshore fields and the low quality of its crude. They also include lack of advanced deepwater technology and shortage of qualified personnel. Economic challenges include lack of funding and difficulty in attracting foreign investment. Legal challenges include establishing a legal framework that encourages investment, creates a fair and stable tax system, and protects property rights. They also include settling property rights issues with foreign oil companies that lost their assets to

nationalization. If Cuba moves toward a market economy and goes through a transition, additional challenges will emerge. The most important transitional challenges would be the political, economic, social, and legal ramifications of liberalization and privatization of its energy sector. The increase in energy demand during a transition and how to meet such a demand is another important challenge with which any future government must deal.

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James E. Ross

In terms of food security, it was the worst of times. It was the early years of the 1990s and a “Periodo Especial,” a Special Period in Time of Peace.¹ Cuba had lost Soviet and Eastern Bloc trade preferences and per capita caloric consumption had fallen 18 percent, from 3,050 (1985-89) to 2,513 (1990-94).² Rationed foods were not adequate to meet the population’s nutritional needs and many Cubans were surviving through the informal market and/or were suffering malnutrition.³

Background

To alleviate the problem of lower food production following the revolution and to improve the welfare of the population, Cuba had entered into preferential trade arrangements with the Soviet Union. Eastern Bloc trade preferences and Soviet economic assistance, which peaked at nearly \$6 billion annually in the 1980s, largely offset any adverse effects of U.S. sanctions and enabled the Cuban economy to grow.⁴ Human nutrition on a national scale was not a major problem from 1961 through 1989.

With the loss of Soviet economic support, food security became one of the most serious problems facing the Castro administration. Per capita caloric intake in the early years of the Special Period fell below the level maintained for the previous thirty years. Annual per capita caloric consumption during

1. Officially declared by President Fidel Castro in September 1990.

2. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *FAO Statistics, Food Balances, Cuba*, (2001) available at <http://apps.fao.org/page/collections?subset=agriculture>

3. Based on various sources, including a 1998 U.S. Senate Committee Report and the author's visit to Cuba in 1994.

4. Jonathan R. Coleman, “The Economic Impact of U.S. Sanctions with Respect to Cuba.” *Cuba in Transition*, Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, 87 (2001).

the years following the Castro Revolution averaged 2,763 (1961-1989), with 653 calories from animal products.

Prior to the Special Period (1988-1990), Cubans were consuming 674 calories from animal products. But a decade later (1999-2001), per capita caloric consumption of animal products had fallen to 372, a drop of 45 percent. Calories per capita from vegetable products decreased only slightly.⁵

While Cuba's economy showed economic recovery in the mid-1990s, largely as a result of implementation of several economic reforms, food production did not increase at the same pace. Food consumption from the level of 1993-94, on the other hand, increased with growth of the economy. Food production, caloric consumption, and the economy all declined sharply from 1990 to 1994.

Food Supply at the National Level

Cuba's government supplies food for its people, as do almost all other countries, from national production and imported foods. The Cuban government's policy is to give priority to purchasing food from national sources, first from state and non-state entities and then from mixed-enterprises (companies with foreign investments in Cuba). If these sources are not adequate, Cuba will then purchase food on the foreign market.

Food from National Production

Agricultural production in the early years of the new century (2000-2002) is estimated at about 90 percent of the annual level of some ten years earlier (1988-1991).⁶ Climatic conditions, according to the Cuban government, are largely responsible for lower production. It is true that Cuba endured three hurricanes from November 2001 to October 2002; however, the lack of foreign exchange to import production inputs, such as fertilizer and pesticides, has had an important detrimental impact on output. In addition to extraordinary climatic conditions and lack of production inputs, it can be argued that state-control of agricultural production and marketing is also responsible for the decline.

Two-thirds of the agricultural land, totaling 6.6 million hectares in the year 2000, was classified as land in the non-state sector.⁷ Agricultural land in the non-state sector refers to land utilized by the Basic Units of Cooperative Production (Unidadas Basicas de Produccion Cooperativa – UBPC), Cooperatives of Agricultural Production (Cooperativas de Produccion Agropecuaria

5. **Id. at 3.**

6. **Id at 3.**

7. Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 2002, Capitulo IX Sector Agropecuario.

– CPA), Cooperatives of Credit and Services (Cooperativas de Credito y Servicios – CCS), and private farmers. Sixty percent of the non-state sector land is farmed by the UBPCs.⁸

UBPCs, formed from state farms, were authorized in September 1993. Reportedly, when many State Farms were formed the more fertile agricultural land remained with the State Farms and the less productive agricultural areas were transferred to UBPCs.

At the beginning of the Special Period, 1990/91, the non-state sector accounted for less than 20 percent of the country's agricultural output. By 2001/2002, production by the non-state sector had increased to more than 90 percent. Yield per hectare for the non-state sector, however, fell 47 percent, from 63.7 metric tons to 33.5 metric tons per hectare. The yield for State Farms, on the other hand, had fallen less, 39 percent, from 54.9 tons to 33.3 tons.⁹

UBPC members are not given full title to the land, only the right to farm the land. In addition, they must buy all inputs from state-controlled agencies. Also, only the output over quota to be delivered to the state buying agencies can be sold in the state-controlled agricultural markets at market prices. Therefore, although classified as the non-state sector, the UBPCs and the cooperatives are under significant state control.

At the national level, UBPCs and State Farms are the main suppliers of food. Cooperatives and private producers (Campesino Disperso and Otros Privados) also are important food suppliers, but account for less than one-third of the total cultivated area.¹⁰ They operate under authority of the Ministry of Agriculture (Ministerio de Agricultura – MINAGRI), as do the State Farms and UBPCs.

Several companies, also under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, supply food and agricultural products for sale through the complex of the country's food markets. Companies include: Frutas Selectas, Citricos Ceiba, Citricos Ciego de Avila, Citricos Caribe, CAN, La Cuba, Apicultura, Labiofam, Empresas Porcino, Empresa de Tabacos y Cigarros, Horticolas, OROCA, CAI Arrocero, Acopio, Empresas Pecuarias, Cuba Café and Suministros Agropecuarios.

Processed products of national origin are provided by manufacturers operating under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Food Industries (Ministerio de la Industria Alimenticia – MINAL). MINAL oversees industries manufacturing milk and meat products, cereals, confections, bread, biscuits and crackers, pastries, fruit and vegetable products, alcoholic beverages, water,

8. **Id.**

9. **Id.**

10. **Id.**

soft drinks, beer and other products. Industries milling bulk commodities, such as wheat, soybeans and rice, also are under the jurisdiction of MINAL.

International assistance for research and development in Cuba's food industry, prior to the Special Period, had led to substantial growth in food manufacturing. Production increases were especially important for canned meats, canned fruits and vegetables, cheeses, and wheat flour. The number of production lines had grown from 57 in 1975 to more than one thousand by the time of the announcement of the Special Period.¹¹

With the loss of Soviet and Eastern Block trade preferences in 1989 and 1990, there was a progressive decline in Cuban production in general until the mid-1990s. Food industry executives were forced to introduce products that made it possible to raise production volumes through increased use of extenders and substitutes in products destined for the domestic market. The imperative was to maintain nutritional values despite a reduction in agricultural production, especially of meat products.

Between 1990 and 1994, the worst period for the Cuban economy, the food processing industry registered a dramatic decline of 42 percent in the value of its output, along with a reduction of 74 percent in national raw-material supplies from the agricultural sector, and a 34 percent drop in imported raw materials.¹²

In 1994, Cuba's production of manufactured food products was 45 percent of the output in 1989. The output of beverages was 56 percent. By 2001, beverage production had increased to 83 percent of the 1989 level. Food manufacturing increased more slowly, reaching only 52 percent. While the food industry has had significant growth since 1994, production remains substantially less than the output level of more than a decade earlier.¹³

Production lines that are growing the most include: beer, soft drinks, mineral water, alcoholic beverages for export, powdered milk, pastas, flour, soft cheese, ice cream, and yogurt. Wheat flour production also showed some increase, while milled rice production decreased substantially.

Food from Foreign Sources

Historically, before and after the revolution, and now during the Special Period, imported food has been an important factor in feeding Cuba's population. During the years of favored trade with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries, Cuba had the financial means to continue importing many of the bulk and U.S. branded food items that its consumers preferred. With the

11. Business Tips on Cuba, Oficina Nacional Tips-Cuba, Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba, 20 (Aug. 1996)

12. Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 2001, Capítulo VIII Sector Industria.

13. *Id.*

loss of Soviet aid beginning in the 1990s, food imports declined significantly in dollar value but increased dramatically as a percent of total imports.

In 1990 food and beverage imports were 11 percent of total imports. In the early 1990s those imports increased to 20 percent or more and did not recede as a percentage of total imports until economic reforms were initiated in the middle 1990s. During the past three years (2000-2002), a decade after the loss of Soviet support, food imports have averaged 16 percent of total imports. The higher percentage at the beginning of the 1990s was a result of a reduction in total imports and a continuing need for Cuba to import food to feed its people. The lower percentage at the beginning of this century is a result of an increase in value of total imports (relative to 1992-1994), the government's efforts to increase food production and to feed its population with lower-value imported food products.

Food and beverage imports in 2002 totaled \$754 million.¹⁴ Data for 2002 compared to 1998 show substantial increases in imports of meat and dairy products, compared to decreased imports of cereal and animal feed. Prior to 1998 imports of rice and beans increased, while there were substantial reductions in imports of other food items. Reduced imports included high protein foods, such as poultry meat. Imports of dairy products, corn, wheat, wheat flour, feed grains and barley also declined in the mid-1990s.

Importation of grains, oilseeds, and other bulk commodities, as well as intermediate products such as wheat flour and vegetable oils, are regulated by Cuba's Ministry of Agriculture. Meat, poultry, dairy and other consumer-oriented products are imported under the jurisdiction of the Cuban Ministry of Public Health (Ministerio de Salud Publica – MINSAP).¹⁵

While meat and other consumer-oriented foods may be imported through several different agencies and companies, most intermediate products and bulk commodities are imported through Alimport (Empresa Cubana Importadora de Alimentos, under the auspices of the Ministerio del Comercio Exterior – MINCEX). Consumer-oriented foods may also be imported by Alimport to supply the peso market, such as ration stores, school lunch programs, hospitals and other institutions. Alimport also imports food ingredients for the food industry sector. In addition, other government-owned companies receive food products imported by Alimport.

Alimport accounts for about one-fourth of Cuba's food imports.¹⁶ Other official importing agencies of food include government-owned holding com-

14. Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, Anuario de Estadístico de Cuba 2002, Capítulo VI Sector Externo.

15. Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Foreign Agricultural Service. GAIN Reports #CU2001, 2002, and 2003.

16. Presentation, Pedro Alvarez Borrego, President of Alimport, Agricultural Sales Conference, Cancun, Mexico, Jan. 30-Feb. 2, 2002.

panies that supply retail stores and government-owned companies and mixed enterprises that own or operate tourist facilities. Alimport, however, is the only agency authorized by the Cuban government to import food from the United States.

In terms of import value, food and beverage products are approximately at the level of the beginning of the Special Period. Food imports in 1991 and 1992 averaged \$663 million and beverage imports averaged \$4 million. In 2001 and 2002 food imports averaged \$762 million and beverage imports \$16 million. While the value of food imports increased 15 percent, the import value of beverages quadrupled.

Wine at \$7 million in 2002 accounted for 44 percent of the beverage imports. From 1991 to 1995, wine imports were negligible. Increased wine imports during the Special Period reflect the government's emphasis on tourism, which has become the driving force of the economy. Tourism also requires importation of higher value foods than is required for the national population.

At the beginning of the Special Period, 1990, Cuba exported food and beverage products valued at \$4.8 billion. In 1991 agricultural exports fell to \$2.6 billion and in the following decade hovered around \$1 billion. In 2001 and 2002 food and beverage exports totaled \$943 million and \$746 million, respectively. Food and beverage imports were less than one-fifth the value of food and beverage exports in 1990. By 2002 the value of food and beverage imports exceeded the value of food and beverage exports, \$794 million compared to \$746 million.

Agricultural exports as a percentage of total exports during the 1990s were around 80 percent. Sugar accounted for about 90 percent of the value of agricultural exports. With the significant loss of foreign exchange from sugar exports, Cuba has had to find other means of generating hard currency to import food and other essential products. Opening retail stores to sell food and other consumer goods for hard currency and promotion of tourism have been the main approach.

Food Availability at the Consumer Level

Cuban consumers purchase food from two sources, the peso food market and the dollar food market.¹⁷ Peso food markets are not meant to compete with food being sold in dollar stores; however, the same or similar products may be available in both markets.

There are two principal marketing outlets for food sold for dollars in Cuba. They are the dollar stores and the tourist trade. Other entities involved in the dollar food chain include in-home family restaurants (*restaurantes par-*

ticulares), known generally as paladares and the underground or black market. The importance of the black market, which deals in both pesos and dollars, has fluctuated with the availability of food through official channels and economic reforms and regulations imposed by the government.

In-home restaurants are limited to family employment and may serve only 12 customers at one time. They may charge their customers in either pesos or dollars; however, most paladares request dollars for payment. Paladares do not import food products, but purchase those products through the retail dollar stores, state-operated agricultural markets, semi-private agromercados, and from other sources using both pesos and dollars.

In addition to purchasing food for dollars at retail stores, Paladares owners may exchange dollars for pesos at government-operated CADECAs (Cajas de Cambio S.A.) in order to purchase food in the peso agricultural markets.

Purchasing Food with Pesos

Peso food markets include: ration stores (Mercado de Alimentos Racionados); free agricultural markets (Mercado Libre Agropecuario – MLA); Ministry of Agriculture markets selling food at fixed prices (Mercados Agropecuarios Estateles previously referred to as Mercados Agrícolas a Precios Topados); agricultural “fairs” held on the last Sunday of each month (Las Ferias Agropecuarias); urban garden markets (ventas en los huertos y organoponicos); places of sale direct to the consumer by the Cooperatives of Agricultural Production (Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria – CPA) and the EJT (Youth Work Army); and the Cadena de Tiendas Imágenes – stores selling processed foods under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Trade (Ministerio de Comercio Interior – MINCIN). Other food outlets include fish shops, bread stores, and the unofficial “mercado subterráneo” or the black market.¹⁸

The peso food market is supplied, primarily, through domestic production and direct food imports, such as rice and pulses. The dollar food market is

17. As used in this paper, the term “dollar food market” refers to the buying and selling in Cuba of food and beverage products, whether imported or produced domestically, for dollars and/or convertible pesos. On November 14, 2004 the Cuban government implemented a requirement that dollars must be exchanged for convertible pesos before use in retail stores authorized to recover foreign exchange. The impact of this policy change is not addressed in this paper; however, it is anticipated the “real” cost of dollar foods to the consumer will increase. A 10-percent fee was imposed by the Cuban government to exchange dollars for convertible pesos.

18. For detailed information on the internal markets, including price comparisons and an explanation of why consumers buy at dollar stores when the same product can be purchased for less at other markets, see Jose Alvarez, **Rationed Products and Something Else: Food Availability and Distribution in 2000 Cuba**, Cuba in Transition, Volume 11, Association for Study of the Cuban Economy, 305 (2001) and Armando Nova Gonzalez, **El Mercado Interno de los Alimentos**, Reflexiones Sobre Su Economía, Universidad de La Habana, 193 (2002).

supplied, largely, by importation of consumer-oriented food products and food products processed by mixed enterprises in Cuba using imported bulk and intermediate agricultural products.

Buying Food with Foreign Exchange

Of Cuba's official food markets, only the dollar stores (TRDs—tiendas de recuperacion de divisas, also referred to as tiendas en divisas and “la chopin”) trade in dollars. Retail stores selling food and beverage products for dollars are scattered throughout the country. No foreign investment in the stores has been permitted. In all of these retail stores, food products that have been imported or produced domestically are sold for dollars.

Cuban consumers obtain dollars to purchase food in the dollar market, largely, through remittances, tourism and foreign businesses. Remittances, funds sent to Cuban nationals by family members living abroad, are the primary source. While the flow of remittances to Cuba is less than to many other Latin American or Caribbean countries, the amount is growing. Data from the Inter-American Bank show more than a twenty-percent increase in 2002 from the year before. Dollars sent to family members by the one million Cubans residing in the United States, and the thousands living in other countries, totaled more than one billion dollars in 2002.¹⁹

In addition to remittances, Cubans providing services for tourists may receive tips in dollars. Cubans working for foreign businesses operating in Cuba sometimes receive bonuses in dollars. Some mixed enterprises supplement workers' income with dollars, either through negotiated arrangements with the Cuban government or through other means. Private enterprises, such as in-home restaurants and home room-rentals, also earn dollars for Cuban families.

In Havana there are approximately 300 dollar stores, and in the entire country roughly 1,000. Most of the dollar stores outside Havana are located in the tourist areas of Varadero (140 kilometers east of Havana) and Jardines del Rey (500 kilometers east of Havana), Norte de Camagüey, Norte de Holguín, Santiago de Cuba, Costa Sur and Archipiélago de los Canarreos.

Companies servicing the dollar stores are government-owned, but operate as semi-autonomous private companies. The companies are incorporated and have the Sociedad Anónima (S.A.) designation. Generally, the companies control their own hard-currency revenues and can make purchases on their own account. Sociedad Anonima companies must remit a monthly payment to the government. The amount is negotiated between the government and the company directors.²⁰

19. Paolo Spadoni, **The Role of the United States in the Cuban Economy**, Cuba in Transition, Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Thirteenth Annual Meeting, (2003).

Names of the major dollar store chains and the government corporations owning them include: 1) Tiendas Panamericanas (CIMEX, S.A.), (2) Tiendas Universo (Cubanacán, S.A.), (3) Tiendas Caracol (Caracol S.A.), (4) Tiendas Meridiano (CUBALSE, S.A.), (5) Tiendas TRD Caribe (GAE S.A.), and (6) Tiendas Habaguanex (Habaguanex S.A.).

Prices of products sold in the dollar stores are normally higher than those offered in other internal food markets. The consumer may pay a price that is 200 percent or more above the imported price or the price in one of the internal food markets.²¹ Products similar to those available in the dollar stores may be found at lower prices in other internal markets. Dollar stores, reportedly, sell imported products at 240 percent of cost, and products of national origin at 170 percent.

Sources of Food for Foreign Consumers

Foreign consumers in Cuba consist of business entrepreneurs and tourists. Both groups have the option of buying food in the peso market, except not in ration stores, or in the dollar market. While the number of foreign business representatives visiting or living in Cuba is significant, it is the number of tourists that has the largest impact on the country's food needs for foreign consumers.

Annual growth in tourism in the 1990s was more than 15 percent, but in 2001 the number of tourists was only slightly more than the year before, approximately 1.8 million. A slow start for tourism in 2002 resulted in even fewer tourists, 1.7 million. In 2003 tourism rebounded to 1.9 million.

In the early 1990s, when tourists numbered some 300,000, only 12 percent of the products and services required for the tourist industry were provided through national production. Almost all food products needed for tourist hotels and restaurants were imported. All of the beer and bottled water served to tourists was imported. As a result of economic reforms in the mid-1990s, pursuit of a policy of import substitution, and international assistance to the food industry, the supply situation was reversed and Cuba now supports, according to a Cuban study, some 65 percent of the tourist hotel and restaurant needs through national production. One national brewery, a joint venture, supplies about 95 percent of the tourist market for beer and another joint venture supplies almost all of the bottled water.²²

20. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, **Cuba: A Guide for Canadian Businesses**, (June 1999).

21. Armando Nova González, "El Mercado Interno de los Alimentos," in **Cuba--Reflexiones Sobre Su Economía**, La Habana, 194 (2002).

22. Miguel Alejandro Figueras Pérez, "El turismo internacional y la formación de clusters productivos en la economía cubana," in **Cuba--Reflexiones sobre su Economía**, La Habana, 111 (2002). Note. Cuban data on national supply may consider a food product manufactured with imported food ingredients, or a repackaged foreign product, as national origin.

Coping With Food Security

While food production in Cuba has not regained the level of the Pre-Special Period, it has rebounded from the depths of 1993 and 1994. The Cuban government has taken various measures to deal with the food gap. Re-instituting agricultural markets, where food produced beyond quota can be sold for market prices, has been one of the most successful policy changes in increasing the country's food supply. A program to developing gardens in urban areas has been important in increasing supplies of fresh produce. Forming UBPCs from State Farms, based on official yield data, has had limited success.

Permitting Cubans to hold dollars along with the expansion of stores designed to recover hard currencies has had a major impact on food security. This measure has been an important factor in the government's efforts to gain foreign exchange needed to import food.

Foreign financing, investment and technical assistance in food and agriculture have played an important role in increasing agricultural exports and the supply of processed foods and beverages for export and for domestic consumption. Research and development in the food industries, with substantial international assistance, before the Special Period was instrumental in attracting foreign capital for food manufacturing. There was little growth in food processing until the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the governments of Sweden and the Netherlands provided financing for applied food research. Until a few years before the Special Period, most of the processed food consumed in the country and most of the primary material used by the existing national food manufacturing industry was imported.

Bilateral humanitarian assistance also has been important. As a result of the economic crisis, particularly in the earlier years of the Special Period, food availability decreased substantially. Drought in the eastern provinces of Las Tunas, Holguin, Granma, Santiago de Cuba and Guantanamo placed vulnerable population groups at risk of nutritional deficiencies. Hurricanes Isidore and Lili in 2003 and Michelle in 2004 added to the concerns of food security throughout the country.

Fortified foods containing micronutrients and vitamins have been provided to the people of the eastern region by the World Food Program. In addition, bilateral humanitarian assistance has been provided by several countries. The United States has been the largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Cuba. Donation of humanitarian goods to the people of Cuba was encouraged in the U.S. Cuban Democracy Act of 1992. Between 1992 and 2000, gift parcels and other humanitarian donations valued at more than \$4.3 billion had been sent to Cuba.

Food security in Cuba for the foreseeable future will depend on food produced by other countries. Cuba must import food to feed its population and to provide food for tourists. Since tourism has become the engine of economic growth for Cuba, it is apparent that increased amounts of food will need to be imported. Foreign exchange is needed to pay for the imported food, and that places pressure on selling food in Cuba for foreign currency. That pressure could place the population that does not have access to dollars, and/or other foreign currencies, at danger. Proteins and fat, generally higher in the dollar foods, are essential for maintaining an acceptable level of nutrition.

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Part III
Immigration and
Ethnic Identity

The Clash Between Cuban Immigrant Cohorts

Susan Eckstein

The new immigrants, from Third World countries, often retain homeland ties. Theories that focus on assimilation accordingly do not adequately capture their experiences. More useful is a transnational conceptual frame.¹

But analyses premised on transnational as well as assimilation perspectives typically conceptualize immigrant generations similarly. The big social divide that they point to is between first generation immigrant parents and their children born and raised where they resettle. That is, both perspectives focus on differences between generations genealogically defined.² Yet, generations take on distinctive meaning depending on historical context. Though not in reference to immigration, Karl Mannheim (1952), and scholars influenced by him (c.f. Eisenstadt 1956, Zeitlin 1970, and Rumbaut 2004),³ for example, have addressed how generational political outlooks, shaped by key historical experiences, may be longstanding in their impact. Shared experiences give rise to shared worldviews influencing subsequent involvements and attitudes.

If true, values shaping life are not necessarily left behind when people uproot. And if true, émigrés who leave their homeland at different points in

1. The literature on transnationalism has already become too extensive to cite in full. Some examples include Basch, Glick-Schillar and Szanton-Blanc (1994), Glick-Schiller (1997), Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001), Guarnizo (1997 and 1998), Levitt (2001), Portes (1999) and **International Migration Review** (Winter 2004). For a sampling of assimilationist studies see Alba (1990), Alba and Nee (2003), Lieberman (1985) and Waters (1990).

2. Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001), however, offer a post-modern deterritorialized conception of generations. They conceive a generation as including all people who share common experiences irrespective of where they live and irrespective of kinship based genealogical remove. Accordingly, they consider the second generation to include the entire generation both in the homeland and new land who live their lives within a transnational social field involving informal social ties spanning country borders.

3. Rumbaut in this article focuses on immigrant cohorts that are age as well as genealogically but not historically defined. For an earlier discussion of immigrant cohorts, among Poles, see Thomas and Znaniecki (1996).

time may well be influenced by different pre-migration lived experiences, even when all are first generation newcomers. The term “cohort” provides a basis for capturing varying first generation pre-migration experiences. Depending on when émigrés left their homeland they can be presumed to have had different historically grounded experiences of potentially long-term impact.

Of course, pre-migration experiences are not necessarily destiny. Immigrants arrive with assets and views of variable use in their new homeland, and they differ in the use they make of the assets they arrive with, partly depending on opportunities where and when they resettle. Even immigrants arriving with little human, economic, and social capital are not necessarily passive subjects and victims of circumstance. They may find ways to shape conditions to their own advantage, including by resisting domination (see Scott 1985, 1990).

A cohort analysis will be shown below to enhance our understanding of Cuban immigrants. In so doing it possibly can contribute to the formation of a foreign policy toward Cuba attune with the interests of the largest number of Cubans, currently unrepresented by the community’s leadership. Émigré cohorts will be shown to differ in political power and influence acquired here and in their cross-border views and involvements. I will focus on Miami where most first generation Cuban émigrés live.

Pre-Migration Background of Émigré Cohorts

In 2000 over a million people in the U.S. identified themselves as Cuban-American (Diaz-Briquets and Perez-Lopez, 2003: i). Fifty-five percent were Cuba-born (Eckstein 2004: Table 1). Most who emigrated came after the 1959 revolution. Among the Cubans who emigrated after 1959, approximately half arrived before 1980 and half since. Since émigrés who arrived in the first five years of Castro’s rule lived almost their entire lives in pre-revolutionary Cuba, my cohort analysis of pre-1980 émigrés focuses on them. Similarly, my analysis of post-1980 émigrés focuses mainly on islanders who emigrated since 1990. Émigrés of the 1990s, like those of the 1980s, lived the revolution. However, émigrés of the 1990s also experienced the revolution’s unraveling, once the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc were relegated to the dustbin of history and aid from as well as trade with the Communist allies of thirty years ground to a halt.

The archetypal émigré of each of the cohorts arrived with different assets, different pre-migration experiences, and different values.⁴ The 1959-1964 cohort included the pre-Revolutionary middle and upper classes who had

4. For more detailed discussions of émigré cohorts, see Eckstein (2004), Grenier and Perez (2004), and Pedraza (1996).

experienced a life of privilege. They fled as the revolution stripped them of their property and bases of wealth. Known as the “*exilio histórico*,” “historical exile,” they interpreted their exodus politically even when fleeing because their economic interests were at stake. They were conservative, devout Catholic, elitist, and deeply anti-Castro and anti-Communist. They barely if at all knew the revolution first hand and rarely wanted to. Their conception of Castro’s Cuba was largely a construct of their imagination, and a very negative construct at that. Hostile to the Castro regime, and wanting to bring it to heel, they advocated a personal along with official national embargo of Cuba.

In contrast, post-1980 émigrés represent another Cuba. Most were laborers and few were professionals. With time many workers became disillusioned with the revolution, as their living conditions stalemated and the revolution made political and labor demands of them they disliked, such as exhorting them to help out in unpopular back-breaking sugar harvesting. And by the 1990s everyday living for nearly everyone took a downward turn. In the post Soviet era economy no one could live on their official salary.

The 1990s émigrés differ from the early émigrés also in their island political formation. They lived the revolution and have a nuanced understanding of it. For them the revolution is not imagined and pre-revolutionary society not idealized. At the same time, they experienced no civil society involvement independent of the state, in contrast to the middle and upper classes, and to a lesser extent the organized working class, before the revolution. And unlike earlier émigrés, many recent arrivals moved to America for economic reasons, including to help, not break with, family left behind. The moral frame of reference of these émigrés is family based across borders, not ideologically grounded in a blockade between life in a capitalist democracy and a Communist dictatorship.

Power and Influence

Cuban Americans have become one of the most politically influential immigrant groups, and the most influential from Latin America. They have become important players in local politics where they have settled in large numbers, and nationally on foreign policy toward their homeland.

Leveraging Local Politics

Most Cuban Americans immigrants live in Greater Metropolitan Miami, Miami-Dade County. In areas of the county where they are concentrated they have joined the political class, since the 1980s (c.f. Garcia 1996, Stepick et al 2003). Sweetwater became the first city in South Florida to elect a Cuba-born mayor. And the City of Miami has had a majority Cuban American Commission since 1985 and a Cuban American mayor almost continuously since then. Similarly, the City Commission of Miami Beach, the county’s third

largest city, became majority Cuban American around the same time. Meanwhile, Hialeah, home to more Cubans than any city other than Havana, has had a Cuban American mayor since the early 1980s.

Cuban Americans have assumed political importance also at the county level, in Miami-Dade. In the latter 1990s the first Cuban American was elected countywide mayor: Alex Penelas. By then Cuban Americans also constituted the majority of the County Commission, and the county sent a predominantly Cuban American delegation to the state legislature. Cuban Americans became politically influential at the county level even though they accounted for only 29 percent of the county population (Boswell 2002: 11).

Cuban American representation extends to Congressional positions. As of 2004, there were four Cuban American Congressmen and one Senator. The one non-Floridian was Congressman Robert Menendez from New Jersey. He was a former mayor of Union City, NJ, once the second most important city of Cuban settlement, though never a match to Miami. Both he and Mel Martinez, the first Hispanic elected to the Senate, in 2004, required far more than their ethnic vote to win office.

By the century's turn Cuban Americans also acquired top administrative posts. In 2000 in Miami-Dade they held one-third of the top appointed positions, more than any other ethnic group. Miamians, in turn, perceived Cuban immigrants to be the city's dominant ethnic group. Seventy-five percent of the eight hundred Miami-Dade residents polled by the Miami Herald that year believed Cuban Americans to be the most politically powerful of the county's ethnic groups (Miami Herald September 4, 2000).

The Cuban Americans who dominate politically either emigrated in the 1960s or are U.S. born children of émigrés of this cohort. While I am aware of no data documenting first cohort political domination, in my research I never came upon or heard of an influential politician who emigrated since 1980. Two of the Congressmen, Robert Menendez and Mario Diaz-Belart of Miami, are U.S. born children of 1960s émigrés. Mario and his more influential older, Cuban-born brother, Lincoln, elected to Congress before him, moreover, come from a politically prominent pre-revolutionary Cuban family. Their uncle served in Batista's cabinet. While Castro's government crushed the family influence in Cuba, Miami Cuban Americans polled in 2000 named Lincoln more frequently than anyone else as the local person most likely to play a major role in Cuba when a transition to democracy occurs (FIU-IPOR 2000).⁵ Martinez and Ileana Ros, the other Cuban American in Congress, also emigrated in the 1960s.

5. In an ironic twist of history, an aunt of Lincoln's and Mario's was Fidel Castro's first wife, their son, Fidelito, thus a Diaz-Belart relative!

Recent émigrés are so at the political sidelines that few even vote, much less hold political office. As of 2000, nationwide, only 26 percent of eligible 1990s émigrés had taken out citizenship, a prerequisite for voting. In contrast, 92 percent of 1959-1964 émigrés were citizens (Eckstein 2004: Table 4). Since the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act entitles all Cuban émigrés to citizenship after five years of U.S. resident status, and resident status after one year on U.S. soil, almost all islanders who emigrated before 1995 not “naturalized” by 2000 did so at their own choosing.⁶

Several factors contribute to recent émigrés’ low citizenship rate. One, in general, poor and uneducated Americans participate minimally politically (c.f. Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Recent émigrés tend to be both low income earners and poorly educated (Eckstein 2004: Tables 3 and 4). Two, many 1990s émigrés, as detailed below, remain enmeshed in homeland ties. Consequently, political engagement locally is not necessarily a priority of theirs. Three, recent émigrés may feel politically alienated because the first cohort political class does not speak to and represent their interests, also detailed below.

Cuban American voters, recent émigrés aside, are sufficiently forceful in Greater Miami that most politicians, even if not of Cuban background, address the immigrant group’s concerns. But the politicians focus on the pre-occupations of the politically active first cohort. For opportunistic reasons if not political conviction they accordingly advocate a hard-line policy toward Cuba. In particular, they support the embargo, a mantra in Miami. To appeal to Cuban American voters when running for reelection in 2004, President Bush, for example, deliberately tightened the embargo at the people-to-people level. The restrictions appealed to the two-thirds of registered Cuban American voters who had emigrated before 1980. Following the announcement of the new regulations polls reported nearly all of these émigrés to favor Bush, more than before (Wall Street Journal September 20, 2004: 4). Foreign policy towards Cuba is a domestic political issue.

Leveraging National Politics

Although Cuban-origin people comprise less than 1 percent of the U.S. population (Boswell 2002: 2), they have become one of the most influential ethnic groups in Washington: through electoral politics, lobbying, appointments to top government positions, and informal ties to powerful non-Cubans. But their influence at the national level as well as the local is first cohort based, and those well placed politically use their influence to advance the interests of the cohort from which they emanate. Sometimes, however, they have

6. All Cubans who reach U.S. territory are presumed to be refugees and made eligible, after a year and a day (and after having been inspected, paroled, or admitted), for U.S. residency status.

worked against their own best interests, when letting their anti-Castro obsession get in the way of respect for U.S. law and when letting intra-ethnic conflicts weaken their collective strength.

While nationally of little demographic importance, Cuban Americans benefit politically from their concentration in Florida. The state commands the fourth largest number of electoral college votes and it is a “swing state.” Therefore, both parties pander to the Cuban American vote. The 2000 election made transparent how critical Florida can be to national politics. Florida was decisive to George W. Bush’s winning the electoral college but not national popular vote. Some 85 percent of Miami Cuban Americans reported voting for Bush that year (FIU-IPOR 2000),⁷ and Cuban Americans defended Bush when the state’s vote was contested. Politically indebted, Bush appointed several Cuban Americans to senior posts on the National Security Council, the State Department, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development during his first term of office, and to the Department of Commerce as well in his second term. Such appointments ensured that first cohort views could be heard in the highest circles. All of the appointees emigrated in the early years of the revolution.

Cuban Americans became influential nationally also because they became adept lobbyists: moneyed, well organized, and savvy strategists. Their national influence began under President Reagan, who supported the formation of the Cuban American National Foundation (popularly called the Foundation) in exchange for the Cuban American vote. Jorge Mas Canosa, the community’s most influential and charismatic leader, who assumed the helm of the Foundation, in the process gained access to the White House.

Mas Canosa financed the Foundation with a portion of his fortune. He had owned MasTec, which at the time of his death in 1997 was one of the two largest Cuban American owned firms. The Foundation received 200,000 shares of the company’s stock. The Foundation also benefited from large annual donations from individuals who by virtue of their contributions influenced Foundation policy. As of the early 2000s the Foundation’s 170 directors, trustees, and associates each typically gave \$1,000 to \$6,500 (if not more) annually to the organization, and some 55,000 regular members paid up to \$100 a year (Tamayo 2002).⁸

The Foundation drew on these funds to buy political influence. It formed a Political Action Committee (PAC) that deftly targeted its money for a number of years through a dedicated lobbying office in Washington. The Foundation modeled itself after the influential Jewish ethnic lobby, and among ethnic PACs its financial contributions grew to exceed all but the pro-Israel’s.

7. For this and other FIU-IPOR references in the text, see FIU-IPOR (2000).

8. It is my understanding that Foundation directors contributed \$10,000 annually, more than Tamayo specified.

Cuban Americans in Florida provided the lion's share of the funds (c.f. www.opensecrets.org/pubs/cubareport/comparisons.asp)⁹. So influential did the Foundation become that the Center for Public Integrity named the Foundation the most effective lobby in America in 1997 (Miami Herald March 23, 2002, at www.canfnet.org), a lobby that advanced the political concerns of the first post-revolutionary émigré cohort. Although the Foundation is not the only Cuban American lobbying group, at the century's turn none had achieved comparable clout.

The national influence of the Foundation, however, soon thereafter began to crumble. Changes in Washington, Cuba, the global political economy, and Miami all contributed, in different ways, to a waning of Foundation influence. After refusing to comply with the law of the land the Foundation, for one, lost credibility in Washington, at least under the Clinton Administration. In 2000 the Foundation had led the fight to allow six year old Elian Gonzalez to stay in America when brought ashore after his mother died at sea. Because of Cuban American resistance, the Clinton Administration took Elian at gunpoint. The White House believed that Elian's father in Cuba had paternity rights.

At about the same time Congressional opposition to the embargo gathered storm, especially among farmers (though not among Cuban American legislators). Congress accordingly voted in 1999 to exempt food and medical exports from the embargo. Congressional commitment to U.S. trade embargos in general waned with the Cold War's end and prioritization of free trade to expand markets for American business.¹⁰ In the changed global geopolitical and economic context, business interests got the upper hand. As Dennis Hays, in charge of the Foundation's Washington office at the time, noted, "For a long time there was no significant economic power working against the embargo. Now the mantra is 'market, market, market'" (Tamayo 2002). While the Foundation's muscle proved no match to farmers', it sufficed to get a proviso inserted into the multi-country embargo-lightening legislation requiring Cuba, but none of the other countries involved, to pay cash for U.S. purchases. Foundation lobbyists assumed that without access to credit the Cuban government would be too poor to purchase U.S. products. Within two years, however, Castro's government came up with cash, and strategically made purchases from over half U.S. states. In so doing, it astutely broadened the American base of support for trade with Cuba. The Cuban government,

9. On ethnic lobbies, see Tony Smith's (2000) interesting work.

10. The new legislation opened Cuba to U.S. exports, but Washington continued to restrict Cuban imports to the U.S. Accordingly, U.S. business benefited while the Castro regime could lower its import costs but not gain possible export revenue. Free trade was one of the pillars of the new neoliberal global economic project that Washington and international financial institutions advocated after the Cold War's end. In this case, free trade flowed only in one direction.

along with U.S. business, accordingly eroded Cuban American influence over U.S. Cuba policy.

Against the backdrop of such highly visible defeats, and some political seachange in Cuba, Jorge Mas Santos, the U.S. born son of Mas Canosa who took over the leadership of the Foundation upon his father's death, began to rethink the organization's anti-Castro strategy. Simultaneously, some wealthy, prominent conservative Miami businessmen did the same, independently of the Foundation.¹¹ They both began to believe that islanders, and not exiles singlehandedly, could democratize island governance. The Foundation consequently began to support selective cross-border political engagement. Mas Santos went so far as to announce willingness to meet with high-level Cuban officials to discuss a democratic transition, and to support a nascent dissident movement on the island (Elliott and de Valle 2003). Mas Santos refused only to meet with Fidel and his brother, Raul, second in command. Especially appealing to Mas Santos and his backers was Oswaldo Paya. Paya, through his courageous and ambitious Varela Project, mobilized over 11,000 islanders to petition for political and economic constitutional reforms.

Mas Santos legitimated his new cross-border tolerance in terms of his deceased father. The charismatic Mas Canosa commanded more respect in death than his son in life (c.f. www.centredaily.com/mld/centredaily/news/4899576.htm), but not enough to avert a split within the Foundation that further weakened its influence. Mas Canosa's son faced the problem of institutionalizing charismatic rule. He was competent, but more business-like and more Americanized in his political style than his father had been and his followers favored. And U.S.-born, he lacked certain authenticity among core Foundation members. Adding fuel to the fire, Mas Canosa's heirs secretly removed some longtime members from the board controlling Foundation funds, replacing them with Mas family members (c.f. Yanez and San Martin 2001; Tamayo 2002).

Against this backdrop, an impassioned, articulate, influential, and moneyed Foundation faction split off in 2001 and formed a rival group, the Cuba Liberty Council (CLC). Mas Santos' support of Miami hosting the Latin Grammys that Cubans could attend proved the coup de grace that led the faction to bolt. The CLC immediately attacked the Foundation, while using its influence to promote a continued hard-line toward Cuba. CLC members are well connected politically. Ninoska Perez Castellon, who had hosted a Foundation radio program, for example, maintained a Miami program of her own.

11. These businessmen formed the Cuba Study Group. Although moneyed, the businessmen's group never managed to become a significant political player. Politically inexperienced, they proved no match to the Miami leadership opposed to their conciliatory stance. Other anti-Castro groups, such as the Cuban Committee for Democracy (CCD), opposed the embargo as well as favored cross-border engagement. The CCD sponsored a radio program but it lacked the economic resources of the harder-line groups.

And she, among others, had close ties to then Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, and through him a pipeline to his brother, George W., in the White House. Lending symbolic strength to the new splinter group, President Bush invited CLC members to join him in the Rose Garden on October 10, 2003, when he announced harsher U.S. Cuba travel restrictions. The Foundation was noticeably absent. And the following year Perez Castellon, along with other CLC members, lobbied hard and successfully for the tightening of travel and remittance rights the Bush Administration then instituted. Meanwhile, the CLC won over the support of other hard-line first cohort groups, such as Mothers and Women Against Repression and Unidad Cubana, an umbrella organization comprised of more than thirty exile groups (San Martin 2003). Miami cultural politics further divided and in so doing weakened the Foundation. In 2001 Mas Santos promoted, along with the then county mayor, Alex Penelas, Miami hosting the Latin Grammys. They believed the event would add to the city's luster, plus be a money-maker. Mas Santos himself had vested material interests in the event. But Cuban music groups had been nominated for awards and were scheduled to attend, which hard-line members of the Foundation's inner-circle found intolerable (www.Cunet.org/CNews/y03/jan03/31e3.htm). Hard-line exiles in South Florida so opposed local performances by island musical groups that they had previously used their political muscle to convince the county to ban them.¹² The hard-liners did not want popular and award-winning Cuban talent on U.S. soil, and they successfully won the battle. The event was moved to Los Angeles.

The Foundation was yet further weakened by new, internal financial problems. Its revenue nosedived for reasons independent of the loss of annual contributions from the members of the directorate who defected. Coincidentally, the price of MasTec stock, the Foundation's main endowment source, plunged. At the time of Mas Canosa's death the stocks had been valued at about \$5 million. By 2001 their value had halved (Miami Herald August 8, 2001 <http://64.21.33.164/CNews/y01/ago01/08e7.htm>, p. 3).

In 2003 the Foundation was in such financial duress that it sought to sell off both its Washington townhouse, from where it had coordinated its lobbying, and its recently acquired Freedom Tower property in Miami. Cuban émigrés of the first wave considered the Tower their symbolic equivalent to Ellis Island to European immigrants around the turn of the last century. The Tower housed immigration offices that processed Cubans fleeing the revolution until shuttered in the 1970s. The Foundation also downsized its staff, closed its Washington office, and shut down its radio station, its key Miami venue for influencing public opinion. Foundation monthly income from all sources

12. Miami had been selected to host the Latin Grammys only after a county ordinance limiting performances NOTES by Cuban nationals had been struck down, an ordinance exiles previously had pressed for.

allegedly dropped from \$80,000 to \$60,000 under Mas Santos' watch (Tamayo 2002; Miami Herald March 28, 2002, cited in www.canfn.net.org/News/archived/020401nesa.htm). The crisis was such that a former Foundation employee acknowledged to me, when interviewed in late 2003, that the Foundation persisted mainly as a figment of the imagination. "It existed because in the minds of people it existed," said she. And in 2004 the Foundation's articulate Executive Director, Joe Garcia, a second generation Cuban American whose family emigrated in the 1960s, left the job. He had been the point person for media interviews, including for the national media.

In essence, at the same time that Cuban Americans individually increasingly joined the ranks of Miami's political class,¹³ collectively the political class fragmented and accordingly weakened. Nonetheless, members of the community continued to have influence in the highest circles of the George W. Bush Administration. Bush's reelection bid, in 2004, gave the well-connected CLC a window of opportunity to exert political influence, an opportunity they did not let pass by. They pressed the White House to close loopholes in the embargo that had permitted selective travel and remittance-sending, by all Americans, not merely Cuban Americans. They hoped to deprive the Castro government of desperately needed hard currency, to hasten its demise.

The internal political divisions within the émigré community notwithstanding, Cuban American influence remained exceptional among latinos. The comparison with Mexicans is particularly telling. In 2000 Mexicans were by far the largest immigrant group. They accounted for 59 percent of all latinos, Cubans for a mere 6 percent (Ruggles and Sobek et al 2003). Yet, in California in general, and in Los Angeles in particular, where Mexican origin people are most concentrated, few Mexican Americans have attained political preeminence or capitalized significantly on the state commanding the largest number of electoral college votes. Mexican Americans lack the money, organizational prowess, and political connections Cubans of the first post-revolutionary émigré cohort have.

Cohorts, Their Cross-Border Views and Involvements

Although the Cuban American leadership by the early 2000s showed signs of divide, early émigrés continued to dominate public discussion. They advocated a foreign policy consistent with their pre-revolutionary political and class formation. On most matters they opposed cross-border engagement

13. In Union City, New Jersey, as well as in neighboring West New York, Cuban Americans also became the most important ethnic group politically. Cuban American elected mayors were either first cohort émigrés or grown children of such émigrés.

on the presumption that it involved a moral compromise and bolstered the regime.

The first cohort took advantage of its political dominance both to establish hegemonic influence within the Cuban American community and to speak in the community’s name to the non-Cuban American world. Florida International University (FIU-IPOR 2004) survey data indicate that Cubans across the cohort divide concur that not all points of view are heard in Miami, e.g. on how to deal with Castro (see Table 1).

TABLE 10-1. Cross-Border Views and Involvements Among Émigré Cohorts in 2004

	Cohorts	
	1959-1964	1985+
Shared Views		
1. At the time of the case interviewee felt Elian should have been returned to father in Cuba*	17	22
2. Strongly favors support for human rights groups in Cuba	84	87
3. Believes that in Miami not all points of view concerning how to deal with Castro are heard	70	74
Divergent Cohort Views		
1. Favors diplomatic ties	29	61
2. Believes that embargo does not work	67	81
3. Favor continuation of embargo	75	56
4. Favors unrestricted travel to Cuba	28	68
5. Favors ban on Cuban musicians	64	44
6. Favors dialogue among exiles, dissidents and Cuban government	45	68
7. Opposes farm trade with Cuba	65	35
Cross-Border Involvements		
1. Currently has close relatives in Cuba	54	95
2. Traveled to Cuba since left	23	45
3. Sent money to relatives	31	75
4. Sent money in 2003	20	50
5. Sent \$1,000+ in 2003	3	11
*survey query in 2000 source: FIU-IPOR, FIU/Cuba Poll 2000 and 2004 (www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba2000/years.htm).		

On a few other issues most Cuban immigrants across the cohort divide agree, either because they have their own independent reasons for sharing the same views or because the dominant cohort convinced them to think simi-

larly. Cubans across cohorts, for example, agreed (in 2000) that Elian should not have been returned to his father in Cuba after his mother died at sea. So strong were sentiments that Elian should have stayed that Manny Diaz, the lawyer for the boy's Miami relatives who fought to keep Elian here, rose from political obscurity to city mayor in 2001. For only the second time in thirty years an incumbent mayor lost a race. Diaz is reputed to have captured the general Cuban "ethnic vote." (c.f. www.usatoday.com/news/washington/nov01/2001-11-13-miami-mayor.htm).

Yet, first cohort influence proves far from complete. Although recent émigrés remain near-voiceless publicly, survey data permit uncovering cohort differences in views about relations across the Florida Straits (see Table 1). The 1959 to 1964 and post-1984 émigrés differ significantly in their stance towards (1) the embargo, (2) the sale of food and medicine to Cuba, (3) diplomatic relations with Cuba, and (4) travel restrictions. They also differ in their views toward cross-border political dialogue and cultural exchanges. The 1990s much more than the first post-Castro émigré cohort want policies that will benefit on-island Cubans and that facilitate bonding across borders.

The survey data also point to differences in actual cohort involvements across borders. In 2004 recent émigrés were nearly twice as likely still to have relatives on the island and to have visited them since emigrating. And though poorer, more than twice as many of recent émigrés send money to help island relatives. Recent émigrés also are more likely to send over \$1,000 annually, if 2003 is a typical year. Thus, in advocating for a tightening of travel and remittance-sending rights the Cuban American leadership is promoting interests of its cohort but not of the new immigrants who are growing in numbers by some twenty thousand a year.

The different cohort cross-border views and involvements are traceable to different pre-migration lived experiences and different solidarities maintained and reinforced in the U.S. The differences are not, in the main, traceable to lapsed years since emigrating, for the first post Castro cohort never engaged in life across borders on any scale. First cohort political formation, antipathy to Castro, and commitment to a personal along with a state-to-state embargo of Cuba under Castro have kept their bonding across borders minimal.¹⁴ For them, a personal embargo is a matter of principle (though some quietly defy in practice what they preach). It represents a moral rejection of the revolution. Even in 2000, when over 60 percent of the 1959-1964 émigrés still had close relatives on the island, only 18 percent had ever made a return trip in their approximately forty years in the States.

14. Also, Cuban government policy made visiting difficult until the 1990s, except under the Carter Administration (see Eckstein and Barberia 2002).

Recent émigrés, in contrast, are more pragmatic in their views toward cross border ties and they are guided by a different morality, rooted in the moral economy of family, not ideological principles. They want to help, not hurt, family left behind, and they want to continue to bond with them. When the remains of the Cuban American National Foundation in 2003 and 2004 opposed the tightening of travel and remittance-sending regulations the CLC pressed for, they were defending interests of recent émigrés. The Foundation reached out, not with much success, to a new political base, among recent immigrants, after losing its initial “historical exile” base with the CLC split-off.

If recent émigré attitudes differ so markedly from the first cohort’s, why are their views not heard? There are several reasons for the silence. For one, the more working class cohort lacks the personal attributes (previously described) associated with political involvement in America. Two, Cubans raised in Castro’s Cuba were without civil society experience on which to build. Batista highly circumscribed political activity, but the permissible involved the upper and middle classes. With rare exception, Castro’s Cuba blocked citizens from civic engagement independent of the state. And some recent émigrés developed a distaste for political involvement in Cuba, a distaste they brought with them to the States. They disliked the Party controlled political life they experienced in Cuba.¹⁵

But recent émigré views have not been heard also because the first cohort leadership made no effort, at least until the early 2000s, to represent the interests of recent arrivals ill-served by the Washington Cuba policy it pressed for. The views of the 1990s cohort were off the political radar screen not merely, however, because of benign neglect, leadership unfamiliarity with, and therefore insensitivity to, recent émigré concerns. The leadership never even spoke for all of its own cohort, and deliberately so. Over the years the dominating faction relied on intimidation, economic blackmailing, and violence (especially in the 1960s and 1970s), and denial of media access, when normative means did not suffice to keep dissidents within their ranks in tow (c.f. Forment 1989; Didion 1987, Portes and Stepick 1993).¹⁶

Like dissidents among the first cohort, recent émigrés have been publicly silent in part because they have been silenced. My interviews reveal that recent émigrés who tried to challenge the dominant early émigré viewpoint experienced repression, rejection, and resistance. Much of the silencing occurred removed from public viewing, for example, when recent émigrés submitted editorials to the news media and when they tried to voice their

15. Both my U.S. and Cuban interviews suggest this.

16. My interviews suggest that the less hard-line first cohort émigrés had moved to America as children at their parents’ discretion.

opinion on popular Miami call-in radio shows. They interpreted their rejection politically.

The clash of cohort interests came to the fore for the first time in 2004 when President Bush announced that émigrés could visit island family only every three years and even then only visit immediate kin, parents, children, and siblings, not grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and the like. The assault on transnational family rights brought hundreds of recent immigrants to the streets. They picketed offices of the first cohort Cuban American legislators whom they blamed for the new restrictions (Wall Street Journal September 20, 2004: 4). The Bush Administration imposed the new restrictions at a time when new immigrant visits soared. The percentage of the cohort who traveled to the island to see family jumped from 31 to 45 between 2000 and 2004 (see FIU-IPOR 2000 and Table 1). Meanwhile, the work of first cohort hard-liners, with their ties to the Bush White House, contributed to a step-up in opposition to unrestricted travel, especially though not only among the “historical exiles” (FIU-IPOR 2000 and 2004).

Conclusion

A historically grounded cohort analysis highlights aspects of immigrant experience that both assimilation and transnational theoretical frames have left undocumented and unexplained. And specifically in reference to Cuba a cohort analysis highlights marked differences in cross-border views and involvements that the current structure of domination, first cohort based, conceals.

Immigrant adaptation and sentiments prove in no small part traceable to pre-migration social and political formation. Pre-migration experiences do not alone determine post-migration experiences but their significance does not stop at the border. They shape how immigrants adapt to their new land and relate to their homeland, and how they exercise political power attained.

Nonetheless, history is not entirely destiny. Even immigrants who arrived with few assets and who remained at the political and economic sidelines have not entirely been victims of circumstance. Covertly if not overtly they have challenged structures of domination, and in ways that appear to be quietly changing norms and practices, even amidst policy set-backs. For example, first cohort informal policing, by ostracizing, stigmatizing, and penalizing economically émigrés who defy the taboo on ties across the Straits, has tapered off. The sheer weight of new immigrant cross-border bonding has eroded early émigré ability to maintain normative and social control. Possibly, U.S. policy in the not distant future, in turn, will be responsive to the cross-border yearnings of the Cuban immigrants who put family

above politics and who consequently will maintain ties covertly and illegally if Washington does not allow them to do so legally.

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Ted Henken

Ten years ago, as Cuba suffered through the worst of its post-Soviet “special period,” President Fidel Castro decided to let off steam and call Washington’s open-armed bluff by allowing uninhibited emigration from the island. Though Castro had thrown down this particular gauntlet at least twice before, this time the results would be quite different. By the time the rafter exodus was halted in early September 1994, more than 30,000 Cubans had left the island and made it either to American shores or, temporarily, to a “safe haven” at Guantanamo. However, the special treatment that had greeted virtually all prior Cuban immigrants to the U.S. since 1959 came to a sudden and surprising end (Ackerman 1996; Ackerman and Clark 1995; LeoGrande 1998; Nackerud 1999).

As a result of a pair of bilateral migration accords between the two governments in September 1994 and May 1995, the U.S. granted Cuba an annual minimum of 20,000 legal immigrant visas and, at the same time, determined that Cubans picked up at sea would henceforth be sent home just as any other group of “illegal” immigrants (Rodríguez Chávez 1996). Thus, while the Clinton Administration allowed the Cuban rafters still in detention at Guantanamo to be gradually paroled into the U.S., it also sent a clear message to Castro, the Cuban people, and, perhaps most importantly, to the increasingly restrictionist American public: we had regained control of our borders and would no longer allow illegal immigration, even from enemy states like communist Cuba.

Notwithstanding Washington’s effort to construct an even-handed policy toward unauthorized immigration, the Clinton Administration’s supposed 180-degree policy change has turned out to be quite slippery in actual practice. Cuban rafters intercepted at sea are routinely *repatriated* to Cuba by the U.S. Coast Guard, but are almost never *deported* to Cuba after arriving in the

United States (Macgee 2000; Puzder 2004). Special treatment of Cuban immigrants continues despite the fact that both the original intent and immediate consequence of the migration accords was to halt unsafe, disorderly, and unauthorized immigration from Cuba to the United States (Alvarez 1995).

Reacting to our new policy of repatriation, Cuban migrants, fully aware of their continued special status under the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act if they were able to make landfall here, have largely abandoned the dangerous and unreliable strategy of migrating in small rafts and increasingly opted to cross the sea in motorized speedboats with the aid of smugglers (LACCAR 1999). Are these people refugees from communism, desperate migrants hailing from a poor island nation, both, or something in-between? Before addressing this important question, let me point out a few lessons from the past decade:

- While dramatic landings and contested repatriations of Cuban rafters (a la Elian Gonzalez) have drawn much media attention in the ten years since 1994, a much more significant result of the 1994 migration accords has been the fact that the number of legal Cuban immigrants admitted to the U.S. since then (250,000) has dwarfed the number of Cubans arriving illegally by sea (10,000) (DHS 2003; USCIS 2004; USCG 2004; Arrington 2004).
- Cubans are neither the only nor the most numerous group of rafters setting sail for the U.S. Over the past decade the U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted far more Dominicans (19,953) and Haitians (14,956) than Cubans (8,675). These numbers indicate that what has often been interpreted as a Cuban crisis, is in fact a Caribbean (and even global) phenomenon, calling into question the continued appropriateness of special treatment for Cubans (USCG 2004).
- The U.S.-Cuba migration accords of 1994 and 1995 achieved short-term success in solving the problem of dangerous migration on the high seas and have encouraged “safe, legal, and orderly emigration” from Cuba to the U.S. through a generous policy of granting Cuba a minimum of 20,000 immigrant visas annually (USDS 2000).
- However, at the time few observers realized the implication of the fact that neither the September 1994 nor the May 1995 migration agreement addressed the continued applicability of the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act (Meissner 1999). This is the case even if the September 1994 agreement clearly stipulated: “the U.S. has discontinued its practice of granting parole to all Cuban migrants who reach U.S. territory in irregular ways” (Rodríguez Chávez 1996). In practice, this has meant that virtually all Cubans who make it to U.S. territory, by whatever means, are permitted to stay.

While the Cuban Adjustment Act has received much attention recently as the legal basis for the so-called “wet-foot, dry-foot” policy, few people understand its origins and the nuances of its current application. Though originally passed during the cold war, the Act was not primarily intended as an ideological beacon giving welcome and granting protection to refugees from communism. Instead, it was a practical solution to the fact that most Cuban

exiles who came to the U.S. after 1959 entered without a fixed legal status, not expecting to stay for very long. However, by 1965 it was apparent that the revolution had been consolidated and the over 250,000 Cubans in the U.S. who had expected to be “next year in Havana” (as the perennially hopeful Miami bumper sticker declares) would need to legalize their immigration status. Thus, the original intent and function of the passage of the Act in 1966 was simply to allow Cubans already physically present in the U.S. to adjust their immigration status from a situation of limbo to that of permanent residency (del Castillo 2000).

It is often incorrectly assumed that the law’s current applicability is automatic, and that any change would need to pass through Congress. However, granting parole to all Cuban arrivals is not a mandate of the Cuban Adjustment Act. Instead, the Act only grants the attorney general the authority to do so. However, given the strength and focus of the Cuban-American lobby, the political will necessary to revoke or reinterpret the Act or to implement a deportation agreement with the Cuban government will be lacking as long as the potential costs are greater than the benefits for U.S. elected officials (Smith 2002).

In fact, the controversial new restrictions that limit the return visits of Cuban-Americans to just once every three years seem inspired in part by the logic inherent in the current application of the Act. In other words, the special treatment that Cuban arrivals continue to receive is based on the presumption that they fear persecution in Cuba. In effect, we are demanding that Cubans act like refugees, when in fact few are. While generalized political repression is a systematic part of Cuban life, few recent migrants can legitimately claim to have suffered personal persecution while in Cuba (the international criteria for refugee status) or fear it upon their return to the island as visitors. Of course, this fact has long been a taboo among Cuban-Americans. However, with the Bush Administration’s recent curtailment of their right to travel, many have begun to speak out.

While the current interpretation of the Cuban Adjustment Act is in direct violation of the September 1994 migration agreement, which promised to deny entry to unauthorized Cuban arrivals, the U.S. has never specifically promised to return them to Cuba, nor has the Cuban government ever agreed to receive them. In fact, apart from a small number of Mariel “excludables,” the Cuban Government has balked at accepting any Cuban deportees (del Castillo 2000). Indeed, the existence of the Act allows each government to accuse the other for contradictory and inhumane migration policies. Both governments are right.

On the American side, the U.S. Interest Section in Havana has repeatedly sought to discourage potential Cuban rafters from departing (in one case by

unsuccessfully attempting to have a warning video broadcast on state television), yet we reward those who make it across successfully by allowing them to stay (EFE 2004). We also seek to prosecute migrant smugglers for the crime of transporting illegal immigrants to the U.S., yet allow those migrants who pay them to obtain parole and eventual legal residency if they reach land.

Furthermore, we place an increasingly harsh economic embargo on the island, yet ignore the fact that the embargo itself contributes to conditions whereby more people will seek to emigrate by any means available, contradicting our efforts to achieve a safe, legal, and orderly migration policy (Nackerud 1999). There is a strange illogic to having an overall U.S. policy, strengthened by the May 2004 measures of the Commission for Aid to a Free Cuba, aimed at toppling the Cuban government by cutting off revenue to the island and exacerbating the economic crisis, yet at the same time allowing entry to all Cuban arrivals under the pretext that they are fleeing political persecution, not economic hardship (Rodríguez 2004).

If the U.S. allows Cubans access to the Cuban Adjustment Act based on the assumption that all of them fear persecution in Cuba, how is it that the Cuban government welcomes the vast majority of these same migrants back within a few years as tourists and family visitors? The answer is quite simple: the so-called traitors (*traidores*) of years past have become the dollar bringers (*trae-dolares*) of today; the infamous worms (*gusanos*) Castro rejected as scum in 1980 have been magically transformed by economic necessity into today's butterflies (*mariposas*).

On the Cuban side, Havana's justified criticisms of the Act (aka, *la ley asasina* – the murderous law) for encouraging perilous sea crossings ring hollow given its own restrictive and manipulative policies on the free emigration and return of its own citizens. Until Cuba ends its own anachronistic and repressive emigration policies, such as requiring an exit permit of all Cubans, harassing those who chose to emigrate, restricting the emigration of doctors and other professionals, and making unauthorized emigration a crime (Boucher 2004), the Castro government has little credibility in complaining about U.S. immigration policy, which already provides Cuba with access to an extremely generous level of legal immigration.

Likewise, while the Castro government has made a show of its recent, supposedly generous elimination of the costly and humiliating visa requirement for citizens returning for visits, it still requires them to have their passports pre-screened (“*habilitados*”) before returning, reserves the right to deny any citizen access to their homeland, refuses to allow those who have emigrated to return home again permanently, and continues to cynically manipulate its migration policies for financial and political gain (Cancio Isla 2004;

Suárez 2004). In sum, Cuba's current emigration policies toward those who live on the island, as well as its return policies toward émigrés, treat the Cuban people essentially as subjects, not citizens, reserving for itself the right to deny exit permits and/or return visits to anyone and effectively holding some Cubans hostage inside the country while banishing others from ever returning (Blanco 2004).

The ultimate irony in the current application of the Cuban Adjustment Act is the very real probability that it will finally be revoked only after Castro and his regime no longer control the Cuban government. If this were to happen, the current Cuban government would get its wish that the U.S. cease encouraging Cubans to emigrate only after (and directly because) it has ceased to exist. Of course, U.S. politicians are likely to argue that there is no longer a "need" for such special treatment in a post-Castro Cuba. However, pressure to emigrate from Cuba is likely to increase not decrease in the foreseeable post-Castro future (Estévez 2004; Werlau 2004).

A final irony is the fact that in recent years more Haitians, Dominicans, and even Ecuadoreans have attempted clandestine maritime entry to the U.S. than have Cubans (USCG 2004; Thompson and Ochoa 2004). This fact undermines the Cuban government's claim that it is merely the Cuban Adjustment Act, not its own failed political and economic policies, that pulls Cubans to the U.S. and causes them to unnecessarily risk their lives at sea. Persons of many nationalities continue to set out for the U.S. in great numbers, knowing that upon arrival they will not be able to take advantage of such a generous exception to U.S. immigration law, as can Cubans.

The challenge presented by the refugee is nothing new, nor has it gone away. While the end of the cold war was used for a time as an explanation of the reduced numbers of refugees around the world, such logic only reinforces problematic ideological refugee criteria based on the dubious assumption that only communist regimes practice repression. The Cuban government likes to claim that all Cuban émigrés are economic immigrants, while the U.S. has a similar tradition of labeling all Cuban arrivals political refugees. In reality, the determination of an individual migrant's actual mix of motivations is rarely so simple. There continues to be a need to treat all Cuban (and Haitian, and Dominican, and...) migrants with the dignity that any human being deserves, without blindly labeling them all political refugees on the one hand or illegal immigrants on the other.

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Remaking Havana's Barrio Chino

Kathleen López

In March of 2002 Felipe Luis, a 98-year-old Chinese former bodega owner, had not left his second-story Havana apartment in five years. Yet he was fully aware of the changes occurring in his neighborhood, the *barrio chino* or Chinatown. News of the construction of a Chinese government-funded portico marking the entrance to the *barrio chino* and of the annual festival of overseas Chinese had reached him, despite his inability to roam the streets as in former days. Like Luis, many members of the aging community of native Chinese in Cuba are often mere observers of the government-sponsored “revitalization” of Havana’s Chinatown, spearheaded by “mixed” descendants of Chinese. After providing historical context to Chinese migration to Cuba and the formation of the *barrio chino*, this essay interrogates the formation of a “Chinese Cuban” identity and the contradictions inherent in the revitalization project. The aspirations of the community of aging native Chinese and the goals of the state-sponsored Havana Chinatown Promotion Group have resulted in a complex set of interactions between the two groups. Compounding the picture even more is the involvement of multiracial descendants of Chinese who maintain varying notions of a “Chinese” identity.

Chinese migration and the formation of the barrio chino

The first major migration of Chinese to Cuba began in 1847 with a massive scheme to import low-cost workers for Cuban sugar plantations prior to and during the period of gradual abolition of slavery in the Spanish colony. Approximately 142,000 men, mostly from southeastern Guangdong province, left for Cuba between 1847 and 1874. Roughly 17,000 died on the journey due to sickness, violence, and suicide.¹ The “coolie trade” ended after a

Chinese imperial commission investigated abuses in the system in 1874.² After the end of the coolie trade, the population of Chinese in Cuba declined due to secondary migration to the United States and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, a relatively small return migration to China, and deaths.³ Those who remained continued working as day laborers on sugar plantations, in construction, and on shipyard docks. As early as 1858 some former coolies laid the foundations for Havana's *barrio chino*. Buoyed by the arrival of Cantonese immigrants from California and directly from China, Chinese settlements began to take shape in towns throughout Cuba during the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴

Restricted during the United States occupation from 1899 to 1902 and the early years of the Cuban republic, Chinese labor immigration was re-initiated in response to a demand for agricultural workers to boost sugar production during World War I. By the early twentieth century, Chinese had formed bustling communities across the island. Havana's Chinatown was lined with small commercial establishments such as restaurants, bodegas, laundries, shoe and watch repair shops, bakeries, photography studios, and pharmacies. In addition to district, clan, occupational, and political associations, there were also theaters, four newspapers, a cemetery, two bilingual schools (one Catholic and one Presbyterian), a hospital, and a residence for the elderly. Unlike the majority of Chinese coolies from the previous century, the newer migrants were better able to maintain political, economic, social, and cultural links with their hometowns in China.

Chinese migration to Cuba dropped significantly during the depression and after World War II, when the United States eased restrictions on Chinese entry and sugar prices dropped. After 1949, Chinese fleeing the political upheaval in the aftermath of China's Communist revolution produced a brief resurgence in migration. In the years following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, which nationalized Chinese-owned businesses, a significant secondary

1. Juan Pérez de la Riva, **Los coolies chinos en Cuba (1847-1880): Contribución al estudio de la inmigración contratada en el Caribe** (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2000 [1967]), 179.

2. From 1847 to 1874 about 100,000 Chinese also signed contracts to work in Peru. See China, Zongli geguo shiwu yamen, **Chinese Emigration: Report of the Commission sent by China to Ascertain the Condition of Chinese Coolies in Cuba, 1874** (Shanghai: Imperial Maritime Customs Press, 1876; reprint ed., Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Company, 1970). See also the paperback reissue of this document, **The Cuba Commission Report: A Hidden History of the Chinese in Cuba**, Intro. by Denise Helly (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

3. Between 1865 and 1874, only 2,000 Chinese returned to China. Helly, Intro. to **The Cuba Commission Report**, 25. By 1899, official census data reported 8,035 Chinese laborers in Cuba (8,033 males and 2 females). U.S. War Department, **Report on the Census of Cuba 1899** (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), 472-75.

4. According to Pérez de la Riva, approximately 5,000 "Californians" went to Cuba between 1860 and 1875 for business opportunities. Pérez de la Riva, **Los coolies chinos en Cuba**, 178-83.

migration of Chinese Cubans to Miami, New York, and Toronto was part of the larger exodus. Today the remaining Chinese are mostly elderly men who came to Cuba in the 1950s. With little new immigration since 1959 and the loss of private businesses, the *barrio chino* fell into decline.⁵

The revitalization of the barrio chino and ethnic identity

Today the Chinese Cuban community is composed of two major groups: the *chinos naturales* or native Chinese, most of whom are men who came to Cuba before 1959, and the *descendientes*, or children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of Chinese, most of whom are descendants a Chinese man and Cuban woman. In addition to the few hundred elderly native Chinese who remain, it is these mixed descendants who form contemporary Chinese Cuba.⁶ Both in Cuba and the United States, Cubans continually join the Chinese Cuban community after learning they have a Chinese grandfather or great-grandfather.⁷

With the end of subsidies from the former Soviet Union, a severe economic crisis in the early 1990s forced Cuba into reforms resulting in a "mixed socialist economy" and the legalization of the U.S. dollar. The ongoing revitalization project in Havana's Chinatown coincides with the Cuban government's efforts to develop tourism as a solution to its economic prob-

5. For the history of the Chinese in Cuba, see Antonio Chuffat Latour, **Apunte histórico de los Chinos en Cuba** (Havana: Molina y Cia., 1927); Duvon C. Corbitt, **A Study of the Chinese in Cuba, 1847-1947** (Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury College, 1971); Denise Helly, **Idéologie et ethnicité: Les Chinois Macao à Cuba: 1847-1886** (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1979); Juan Jiménez Pastrana, **Los Chinos en la historia de Cuba: 1847-1930** (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1983); Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Coolie Labour in Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: Free Labour or Neo-slavery?" **Slavery and Abolition** 14:1 (1993): 67-86; Baldomero Álvarez Ríos, **La inmigración china en la Cuba colonial: El Barrio Chino de la Habana** (Havana: Publicigraf, 1995); José Baltar Rodríguez, **Los Chinos de Cuba: Apuntes etnográficos** (Havana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1997); Pedro Cosme Baños, **Los Chinos en Regla 1847-1997: Documentos y comentarios** (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1998); Napoleón Seuc, **La Colonia China de Cuba (1930-1960): Antecedentes, memorias y vivencias** (Miami: Ahora Printing, 1998); Pérez de la Riva, **Los culies chinos en Cuba**; Miriam Herrera Jerez and Mario Castillo Santana, **De la memoria a la vida pública: identidades, espacios y jerarquías de los chinos en La Habana republicana (1902-1968)** (La Habana: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, 2003); and Kathleen López, "One Brings Another: The Formation of Early-Twentieth-Century Chinese Migrant Communities in Cuba," in Andrew R. Wilson, ed., **The Chinese in the Caribbean** (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 93-127.

6. According to Casino Chung Wah President Alfonso Chao Chiu, in 1998 there were about 430 remaining ethnic Chinese, with an average age of about 80, and about 3,200 descendants of Chinese. Angus MacSwan, "Cuban Chinatown enjoys revival but lacks Chinese," Reuters, 9 December 1998. There are also a handful of ethnic Chinese that were born in Cuba.

7. A similar phenomenon exists among Jewish Cubans. See Ruth Behar's documentary on the search for identity and memory among Sephardic Jews with Cuban roots, **Adio Kerida**, VHS, 82 min., Women Make Movies, New York, 2002.

lems and to attract foreign investment. The priority of the Grupo Promotor del Barrio Chino de la Habana (Havana Chinatown Promotion Group) has been to transform the historic *barrio chino* into a tourist attraction. For five days every spring, the “Festival de Chinos de Ultramar” commemorates the arrival of the first ship of Chinese coolies in Havana on June 3, 1847, with Cuban and international scholars, businessmen, and community members participating. The theme of the “Fifth Festival of Overseas Chinese” held in Havana in May of 2002 was “Chinatowns of the World as Zones of Tourist Attraction.”

In addition to promoting tourism, the Cuban government organization was formed to “recover” Chinese culture, customs, and traditions for the Cuban community. Its projects include a center for Chinese arts and traditions, an evening language school with native Mandarin speakers, a martial arts club, a clinic for traditional Chinese medicine, celebrations of festivals, food stands and Chinese restaurants on the pedestrian walkway (Calle Cuchillo), and the publication of a magazine.⁸ The Promotion Group sponsors a residence for elderly Chinese who do not have family to assist them. In addition to accommodations, the residence arranges excursions and provides medicine and food. Promotion Group Director Neil Vega Paneque emphasizes that the entire community living in Havana’s Chinatown benefits from the organization’s social work, such as street repairs and building renovation.⁹

The Promotion Group’s efforts to “recover” or maintain Chinese culture are not completely novel. Throughout the twentieth century, Chinese attempts to retain “Chineseness” have existed alongside incorporation into a notion of *cubanidad*. Chinese migration to Cuba was almost exclusively male.¹⁰ Although a small number of Chinese merchants brought their wives with them or sent for wives from China, the Chinese in Cuba maneuvered in a multiracial society, forming unions with black, *mulata*, and even white Cuban women. Thus, the majority of second-generation Chinese in Cuba

8. Map and pamphlet “Presencia China en Cuba” (Havana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, Grupo Promotor del Barrio Chino, Ediciones GEO, 1999); Alvarez, *La inmigración china en la Cuba colonial*, 49-54; Isabelle Lausent-Herrera, “El renacimiento de la comunidad china en Cuba,” *Oriental* (December 1998). The inaugural issue of *Fraternidad 2* was published in May, 2002. The magazine *Fraternidad* was originally founded in 1934 as the official organ of the Unión de Detallistas del Comercio de la Colonia China en Cuba (Union of Commercial Retailers of the Chinese Colony in Cuba).

9. Neil Vega Paneque, interview by author, March 2002, Havana.

10. Scholars have attributed this skewed gender ratio in Chinese migration to bureaucratic hurdles and legal restrictions to entry, the prohibitive cost of transportation, the desire among labor recruiters for unattached male workers, patriarchal standards that confined Chinese women to the home, and economic strategy on the part of Chinese families. Although Chinese migrants lived in “bachelor societies” in the Americas, the majority of them either were married or intended to marry upon return China. The general pattern in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was for women to remain in home villages in China.

have a Chinese father and a Cuban mother and grew up speaking Spanish.¹¹ Given the gender imbalance, the loss of Chinese language and culture among second generation Chinese Cubans was felt almost immediately. These descendants began to adapt to their Cuban setting in creative ways. In the early 1940s a "crisis" of Chinese theater in Havana ensued when Chinese actors departed with traveling troupes from the United States. As a solution, music teachers founded the Ópera Chung Wah and three other theater companies in Havana. In an effort to preserve this element of Chinese culture, "mixed" female descendants from age eight to 28 who did not speak Chinese were trained to sing Cantonese opera. They memorized a phonetic pronunciation written next to the Chinese characters in the libretto. Also, according to informants, some participants "were not Chinese nor children of Chinese, but *apadrinados* [godchildren] of these, although the cases were minimal."¹²

After the end of World War II, many Chinese decided to establish themselves permanently on the island, as evidenced by an increase in marriages between Chinese and Cubans registered from 1940 to 1950.¹³ Mixed descendants of higher economic strata were admitted to participate in some of the political and fraternal associations, including the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) and Triads (Minzhidang). These associations promoted musical bands, dance groups, and martial arts teams formed with "mestizos."¹⁴ The participation of mixed descendants in theater companies and associations are examples of the early formation of a "Chinese Cuban" identity.

Today, the Promotion Group's goal to strengthen political and economic ties with the People's Republic of China and "to improve relations between the Chinese people and the Cuban people" gels with that of the Cuban government. Official relations between Havana and Beijing have warmed, especially after Fidel Castro's visit to China in 1995. With the improved relationship, China has become a major exporter of food products and manufactured goods to Cuba. In a symbolic display of *amistad*, China funded the construction of a traditional-style portico on Calle Dragones at the entrance of the original barrio chino. The Promotion Group has also focused efforts on renewing commercial exchange with diasporic Chinese, especially in the Americas. Some restaurants on Calle Cuchillo are backed by Chinese Canadians (Americans are banned by the embargo from investing in Cuba). The

11. Jesús Guanche, **Componentes étnicos de la nación cubana** (Havana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 1996), 84-87; Baltar, **Los Chinos de Cuba** 100-05.

12. Baltar, **Los Chinos de Cuba**, 159, based on interview with ex-actress Yolanda Eng, who in her childhood and adolescence worked in two companies. For Chinese Cuban opera troupes, see Chen Kwong Min, **Meizhou huaqiao tongjian (The Chinese in the Americas)** (New York: Overseas Chinese Culture Publishing Co., 1950), 649-50; Baltar, **Los Chinos de Cuba**, 156-66; Álvarez, **La inmigración china en la Cuba colonial**: 74-76.

13. Baltar, **Los Chinos de Cuba**, 157, referring to the Registro de Matrimonios for Havana, North Havana, Matanzas, Sagua la Grande, Morón, and Camagüey.

14. Baltar, **Los Chinos de Cuba**, 157-58.

Promotion Group director has visited Cuban exchange students in China and toured Vancouver's Chinatown to promote business ties. Luciano Wong, president of the Minzhidang (a Chinese fraternal association in existence since 1902) in Cárdenas, exemplifies the diasporic ties of Chinese in the Americas. He is a Cuban citizen, and his two brothers are citizens of Canada and the People's Republic of China, respectively.¹⁵

The Chinese Embassy works closely with the Promotion Group, providing Chinese products, medicine, furniture, paintings, ornamentation, books, newspapers, and magazines to the associations and supporting the renovation of association buildings. In addition, the embassy supplies the Chinese-language school with books, pencils, and notebooks and the new restaurants with supplies. For the restoration of the famous Cantonese restaurant "El Pacífico," the embassy sent an architect and two culinary masters to instruct Cuban chefs. It also donated utensils, ornamental tables and lamps, and a wood carving of a dragon. Members of the Chinese community are invited to celebrations of festivals with Chinese lanterns, food, singing, and dancing. The embassy has also reached beyond Havana to descendants of Chinese in other provinces. For example, it donated a dragon, lion, and drums to the Chinese association in Santiago de Cuba.¹⁶

The Promotion Group supports the preservation of Cuba's only remaining Chinese newspaper, an important component in community building.¹⁷ Today *Kwong Wah Po* has bi-weekly circulation of about 600.¹⁸ It contains articles mostly on Cuba and China and has a section in Spanish for descendants who are unable to read Chinese. The turn-of-the-century U.S.-made printing press stands in a small room surrounded by shelves containing thousands of metal Chinese characters that must be typeset by hand. Through this laborious process the Chinese newspaper, with its delayed news of China extracted from a Hong Kong newspaper, remains an important link in the maintenance of transnational ties to the homeland. Representative of the resilience of such ties is a Chinese former bicycle repair shop owner in Rodas (near Cienfuegos). Like many other Chinese, Ricardo Chao came to Cuba in the early twentieth century, but he was never able to return home. Despite this long-term separation from his homeland, in March of 1999 he enthusiastically relayed to me the latest developments in the transition of Hong Kong and Macao back to China, events he had read about in the Chinese newspaper.¹⁹

15. Neil Vega Paneque, interview by author, March 2002, Havana; Luciano Wong, interview by author, May 2002, Havana.

16. Zhao Tiesheng, Consul, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, interview by author, March 2002, Havana; Álvarez, *La inmigración china en la Cuba colonial*, 51-55.

17. Neil Vega Paneque, interview by author, March 2002, Havana.

18. Before the revolution *Kwong Wah Po* was published daily and had a circulation of 1,500. In addition, there were three other Chinese-language newspapers in Havana.

19. Ricardo Chao, interview by author, March 1999, Rodas, Cuba.

Facing dwindling memberships and funds, the remaining Chinese clan and regional associations have opened their doors to "mixed" descendants. Descendants of Chinese may apply for a permit to open a small business, such as a food stand or shop. The associations have also received permission to open restaurants in former meeting rooms. One of the most well-known restaurants in the *barrio chino* is Los Tres Chinitos. Although originally a Chinese association, it is the restaurant's pizza that draws long lines of Cubans outside. Profits generated from these restaurants have enabled some Chinese to renew ties to their home villages in China through visits, which until recently were an impossibility. The Zhongshan Regional Society (Sociedad Regionalista Chung Shan) operates the restaurant/bar Los Dos Dragones, offering "original" Chinese food. Francisco Lee, the association secretary and restaurant proprietor, has recently made four trips to China. Although he has family in China, Lee has decided not to return permanently, because as he states, "I am accustomed to Cuba."²⁰

Despite criticism of the government's "revitalization" from both within and outside of the Chinese community, many feel that it has benefited descendants of Chinese in Cuba, especially economically. Chinese descendant Juan Seuc, now living in Miami, had received a permit to open a food stand in Havana. He explained, "The old Chinese were living in poor conditions. There was no special attention given them. I think it's a good idea. For the young people it's an opportunity to make some money." He continued, "You have the interests of the Chinese people and their descendants on the one side and the interests of the government on the other side. It is difficult to balance the two." In Seuc's opinion, although there is room for improvement, the changes since the Promotion Group began operating have overall been positive. He states, "I noticed a change since the Grupo Promotor started working, and it's a change for the better."²¹

Chinos naturales

Tensions are inherent within a project that, on the one hand, claims to promote the interests of the Chinese community and an "authentic" Chinese culture, and on the other hand, actively promotes Havana's Chinatown as a tourist attraction to boost the Cuban economy. Efforts from above to impose an homogenizing coherence on the Chinese Cuban "community" can be both exclusionary and artificially inclusive. Ironically, those excluded are often the native Chinese themselves, mostly retired men who spend their days sitting in the associations. During the last Festival of Chinese Overseas, the original community members were present at the opening ceremony, but absent during the debates over the incorporation of the *barrio chino* into

20. Francisco Lee, interview by author, March 2002, Havana.

21. Juan Seuc, interview by author, September 2000, Miami.

Cuba's tourist industry. Yet these same Chinese are being "commodified" as part of the tourist circuit, with visits to the associations included in the official festival schedule.

On the one hand, the native Chinese are receiving some material benefits from the Chinese Embassy and the Promotion Group. But some Chinese Cubans (both ethnic Chinese and descendants) expressed concern that the group's ends are more economic than cultural. One native Chinese who is active in the community is doubtful that the Chinese residents will benefit from the tourist impetus. "The old Chinese men are living in poor conditions. Overseas Chinese should come to help us revive the Chinese community rather than participate in a festival," he said.²²

These tensions have not gone unnoticed by the Promotion Group. The director declared, "The biggest challenge we have encountered is to make it understood—above all by the native Chinese—that the Promotion Group's project is not economic, but cultural, and to achieve unity of action to perfect the work." When further questioned about the push for tourism, he responded, "The project is not essentially economic," but recognized the tourism impetus. His goal is to build a coalition between the elderly native Chinese, younger descendants, and the Promotion Group. The director speaks of a good relationship marked by "cooperation and respect" between the Promotion Group and the 13 associations.²³

Rather than festivals, what it seems that it would take for an "authentic" revival to reach these elderly native Chinese is a return to some form of entrepreneurial autonomy. Retired Chinese lament the devastating impact of losing their businesses (and livelihood). Both Santiago and Felipe Luis are former bodega owners who vividly recalled the *barrio chino* of the old days: ice cream made with fresh fruit, a plethora of Chinese food and products, and Sunday cockfights after the shops had closed.²⁴ Today, like many other Cubans, elderly Chinese survive on government-issued ration cards and a monthly pension paid in pesos. Chinese tea and medicine are sold in shops in the *barrio chino*, but only for dollars (and, as of November of 2004, pesos convertibles), which are difficult to come by. The wooden drawers of the traditional Chinese pharmacy are usually empty. Instead, Santiago depends on medicine mailed from friends in Hong Kong.²⁵ Cuisine has also suffered a major impact. Santiago prepares "Chinese-style" dishes with the food and

22. Abel Fung, interview by author, June 2000, Havana.

23. Neil Vega Paneque, interview by author, March 2002, Havana.

24. For an interview with Felipe Luis before he died in September of 2003, see Mitzi Espinosa Luis, "**Si tú preguntá, a mi gusta hacé cuento.** 'If you ask, I'll be happy to tell you': Felipe Luis narrates his story," (translated by Kathleen López) in Andrew R. Wilson, ed., **The Chinese in the Caribbean** (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 129-142.

25. Santiago Luis, interview by author, March 2002, Havana.

condiments available, carefully slicing one piece of bok choy to make it last over several meals.

Descendientes

As the Promotional Group seeks to encompass native Chinese and mixed descendants within the rubric “Chinese Cuban,” some members of this group themselves question how they can identify themselves as Chinese. One descendant in Havana describes his “mixed” father as follows: “He was not raised by his [Chinese] father. People call him ‘chino’ because of his last name, but he’s a Cuban. I know how to use chopsticks better than him. I look more Chinese than him.”²⁶

In her discussion of Asian American identity, Lisa Lowe analyzes a short story in which two Asian American women together explore their guilt at not being “authentically” Chinese enough. Lowe states, “The story suggests that the making of Chinese American culture—the ways in which it is imagined, practiced, and continued—is worked out as much ‘horizontally’ among communities as it is transmitted ‘vertically’ in unchanging forms from one generation to the next. Rather than considering ‘Asian American’ identity as a fixed, established ‘given,’ perhaps we can consider instead ‘Asian American cultural practices’ that produce identity; the processes that produce such identity are never complete and are always constituted in relation to historical and material differences.”²⁷

Today a “Chinese Cuban” identity based on ancestry and incorporating blacks, whites, and *mulatos* (in addition to native Chinese) has been created. Many descendants subscribe to markers of “Chinese” culture, religion, and language, even without these “ethnic gestures” promoted by an official organization. They cook Chinese food in the home, know a few words of Cantonese, have a statue of San Fan Con, or participate in painting and calligraphy or martial arts classes.²⁸ For example, Maria Isabel León, the granddaughter of the former president of the Chinese Association of Lajas,

26. Julio Tang Zambrana, interview by author, June 2002, Havana.

27. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 68.

28. In the nineteenth century a syncretic religious tradition known as “San Fan Con” developed, mixing elements of Afro-Cuban *santería* with the cult of Guan Gong, who was transformed into a protector of Chinese immigrants in Cuba. San Fan Con was a development particular to Cuba, and from May to September related festivals took place throughout the provinces. For an analysis of how San Fan Con became monotheistic and Confucian in its Cuban setting, see Frank F. Scherer, “Sanfancón: Orientalism, Self-Orientalism, and ‘Chinese Religion’ in Cuba,” in Patrick Taylor, ed., *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity, and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 153-70. According to Ernesto Alay, who was born in Cuba to two Chinese parents, San Fan Con today is practiced in the home by burning incense and does not necessarily involve public display. Ernesto Alay, interview by author, June 2002, Havana.

recalled that her Cuban mother “learned to cook Chinese food.” She proceeded to relate the recipe for a marinated “100-year-old egg.”²⁹

Beneath this outside surface is another layer of “Chinese” identity, marked by childhood memories and attachments to the homeland (although most of the descendants have never been to China). Even third-generation descendants of Chinese in Cuba have created imaginative ties to an ancestral homeland. Blas and Santiago Pelayo Díaz are descendants of a Chinese indentured laborer and a slave in Cuba. In 1859 at age 15, their grandfather Tung Kun Sen (Pastor Pelayo) arrived in Cuba from Dongguan County, Guangdong for work on a sugar plantation. Pastor Pelayo eventually became a contractor of Chinese laborers in Cienfuegos and purchased the freedom of his wife.³⁰ In March of 1999, strolling down the dusty streets of the former Chinese neighborhood in Cienfuegos, Blas and Santiago Pelayo shared their family history with me. They pointed out the building of the former Chinese association “La Gran China,” of which Pastor Pelayo was president in 1884, and its patio where a theater company rehearsed during the evenings.³¹ The dilapidated skeletons of Chinese shops and associations highlight the stark contrast between the tourist-oriented “revitalization” of the *barrio chino* in Havana today and the reality of the former Chinese communities throughout smaller Cuban towns. We proceeded to the cemetery “La Reina” where Pastor Pelayo was buried in 1913, now overgrown with weeds and inundated with water from the adjacent bay. Blas Pelayo has “poco a poco” (little by little) raised money from family members to refurbish his grandfather’s grave and erect a memorial plaque. Although he maintains good relations with the Promotion Group, Blas had developed an interest in his Chinese ancestry (and his African ancestry) long before the revitalization project. Extremely proud of his Chinese heritage, Blas has researched his family tree, learned elementary Cantonese (as opposed to the Mandarin that is currently being emphasized in the *barrio chino*), and is writing a novel based on the life of his grandfather.³²

Given the economic and cultural incentives, it is not surprising that descendants of Chinese are finding their way to the *barrio chino*. The “pull” of the revitalization project has even reached those who previously had little knowledge of their Chinese heritage. However, this does not mean that these expressions of Chinese ethnicity are a fabrication. As Lynn Pann states in her history of the Chinese diaspora, “Clearly the Chinese, like any ethnic minor-

29. Maria Isabel León, interview by author, July 2002, Lajas, Cuba.

30. Enrique Edo y Llop, *Memoria histórica de Cienfuegos y su jurisdicción*, 3rd ed. (Havana: Ucar, García y Cía, 1943), 626–27.

31. Blas and Santiago Pelayo Díaz, interviews by author, Cienfuegos and Havana, Cuba, March 1999 and December 1999.

32. Parroquia “La Purísima Concepción” S.I. Catedral de Cienfuegos, *Libro de Bautismos*, Tomo 15, Folio 242, Número 698.

ity, lead lives that are balanced on an invisible see-saw between two or more identities. Circumstances, the nature of their audience, and calculations of risk and benefit dictate whether their 'backstage' or 'frontstage' identity is to the fore in any particular situation."³³

Within the broad, supposedly inclusive category of Chinese Cuban, subtle racialized distinctions are nonetheless maintained. While native Chinese are still viewed in a sense as "foreign," Cuban-born descendants fall into the full spectrum of racial categories that exist in Cuba. Whiteness and blackness thus figure into the formulation of a "Chinese Cuban" identity. Although a black Cuban may be just as "Chinese" as a white Cuban and equally attracted by the economic and cultural "pull" factors of the revitalization project, the difference is often implicitly or explicitly noted. Several of the Afro-Cuban youths who participate in the martial arts and language classes were pointed out to me as "negrito," a racialization of difference that emphasizes their blackness over both Chinese ancestry and ability to speak Chinese.

Although the 1959 Cuban revolution embraced the notion of *cubanidad* and declared an end to institutionalized racial discrimination, it failed to achieve a color-blind society. As the editors of *Afrocuba* state, "It is our contention that few countries can boast the advances made in Cuba since the Cuban Revolution in breaking down institutionalized racism. It would, however, be shortsighted to think that racism has been eliminated."³⁴ Since the revolution, the question of race has been subsumed under a nationalist and socialist (often imagined as raceless and classless) umbrella.³⁵ As Cuba enters an undetermined future with the reforms of the past decade, the unresolved question of race and *cubanidad* resurfaces. Within the hegemonic Cuban social formation, individuals incorporated into the ethnic formation "Chinese Cuban" continually change as negotiations between state interests and those supposedly included are played out. The multiracial nature of societies in Latin America and the Caribbean, coupled with the fact that the "revitalization" of the *barrio chino* in Havana is government-sponsored, allows for a project that is more inclusive, drawing in white, black, and mulatto descendants who have made varying claims on their own "Chineseness."

33. Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (New York: Kodansha International, 1990), 247.

34. Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, eds., *Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writing on Race, Politics and Culture* (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 1993), 7..

35. Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 322-29; Pérez and Stubbs, *Afrocuba*, 9

Conclusions

The Promotion Group brings together native Chinese and descendants, providing organization, public space, and in a restricted society, an outlet for personal expression. However, alongside the project of the Havana Chinatown Promotion Group exists another phenomenon, one that is marked by a lack of neat categories. The “restoration,” if there is such a thing, is around rather than on Calle Cuchillo, and even beyond Havana in other provinces. What transpires in private interactions and within individuals is a matter often outside of the hegemonic construction of a “Chinese Cuban” identity.

Alongside the government-sponsored “revival,” the University of Havana has established the School of Studies on Chinese Migration in Cuba (Cátedra de Estudios sobre la Inmigración China en Cuba, Casa de Altos Estudios Don Fernando Ortiz) to promote the study of the Chinese presence in Cuba. Recent work by Cuban scholars has reached beyond the traditional scholarship on Chinese coolies in Cuba, utilizing oral interviews and archival documents for investigations in history, anthropology, literature, and linguistics.³⁶ These publications have stimulated new interest in the Chinese in Cuba, as well as in China itself. Two great-grandchildren of a Chinese from Cienfuegos are reading a book on Chinese legends written by the wife of the former Cuban ambassador to China.³⁷ Books published in Cuba remain one of the few remaining products that are affordable to Cubans who only earn pesos. Cuba maintains a high literacy rate, and with the lack of varied programming, many Cubans are avid readers and flood local book fairs.

The remaining native Chinese in Cienfuegos are discussing the possibility of reviving Chinese associational life. However, they face the challenge that according to Cuban law, no new associations may be formed; only branches of existing associations may be established. Besides Havana, associations remain in Cárdenas, Santa Clara, and Santiago de Cuba. Although dilapidated, these regional associations never lost their original buildings.

Without significant new immigration, the future of Havana’s Chinatown remains uncertain. Jorge Alay, in his presentation on the history of the *barrio chino* at the Fifth Festival of Overseas Chinese, described it as a “Chinatown without Chinese” (*barrio chino sin chinos*). However, the possibility of a new trickle of Chinese immigration exists, as relations between the Cuban and Chinese governments are solidified and niches open up for Chinese entrepreneurs. The Alay brothers are three relatively young ethnic Chinese who live in Havana. Their parents, who came to Cuba in 1949 for business,

36. Examples of this research are a special issue of the Fundación Fernando Ortiz’s journal *Catauro* dedicated to the Chinese presence in Cuba, *Catauro* 1:2 (2000); and, most recently, Herrera and Castillo, *De la memoria a la vida pública*.

37. Mercedes Crespo, *Leyendas Chinas* (Havana: Editorial SI-Mar S.A., 2001). Crespo spent a decade in China accompanying her husband, the former Cuban ambassador.

stressed the importance of learning Mandarin (mainland China's official language). Now, Jorge proclaims, not only can he communicate with Chinese in China, but he can teach Mandarin to descendants of Chinese in the *barrio chino*. His brother Ernesto, who is in the tourist industry, recommends the establishment of a Chinese museum that would fulfill both tourist and community needs.³⁸

Rather than being restored to an approximation of what it once was, the Chinatown is being "remade" into something new, both out of demographic and economic necessity. During the course of this government-sponsored project, second-, third-, and fourth-generation descendants of Chinese, by taking advantage of special economic opportunities and learning about and participating in Chinese traditions, are claiming an ethnic and cultural identity and redefining themselves. In the process, they are ultimately forging new spaces along the margins, where the expression of identity and the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity may develop.³⁹

An unchanging *barrio chino* in Havana is unrealistic. In a different political and economic context, Chinese migration to Cuba would likely reflect the types of changes that have occurred elsewhere in the diaspora. As Lisa Lowe states, ". . . rather than representing a fixed, discrete culture, 'Chinatown' is itself the very emblem of shifting demographics, languages, and populations." In the 1950s, the composition of the *barrio chino* was similar to that of other "bachelor society" Chinatowns in cities such as San Francisco and New York. These Chinatowns have since been transformed due to a continual flow of immigration from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, as well as movement to the suburbs.⁴⁰

The "revival" of Havana's Chinatown has largely left behind the native Chinese, providing them only incidental economic benefit. While it has not

38. Jorge Alay, interview by author, June 2002, Havana.

39. Compare to Frank F. Scherer, who makes a connection between the phenomenon of "self-Orientalism" and the remobilization of Chinese-Cuban "saint" Sanfancón. Scherer states, "It is my contention that the recent revival of 'Chinese' ethnicity in Cuba is based both on a number of Euro-American Orientalist assumptions of a distinctive and essential Chineseness, and on the 'Oriental' use of Orientalist discourse, which perfectly illustrates the "indigenous" employment of what I call **strategic** Orientalism. While the former is being promoted, somewhat ambiguously, by the Cuban state and its intelligentsia, the latter is articulated by first- and second-generation Chinese Cubans. In this way, the very process of reintegrating, re-creating, and re-ethnicizing the Chinese Cuban 'community' is marked by the peculiar practice of self-Orientalization (Ong 1993; 1997; Dirlík 1996). This complex discursive practice, complete with Confucian ideas and certain capitalist aspirations, facilitates the articulation of difference conceived in ethnic and cultural terms by first- and second-generation Chinese Cubans and allows—at least in Cuba—for the opening of alternative spaces, where the construction of identities other than those prescribed by the Cuban state can take place." Scherer, "Sanfancón," 153-54.

40. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 65. See Peter Kwong, *Chinatown, N.Y.: Labor and Politics, 1930-1950* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979) and Timothy Fong, *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remaking of Monterey Park, CA* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

attracted new Chinese immigrants, the “revival” has created economic and cultural “pull” factors to draw descendants who may have had little prior “Chinese” identity into the *barrio chino*. In this manner the *barrio chino* continues to evolve as have other Chinatowns, although not quite in the same way. Also, the revival program has enabled connections between native Chinese and descendants.

Mitzi Espinosa Luis is the granddaughter of Chinese merchant Lü Fan (Francisco Luis), who had come to Cuba in 1918. Through remittances and return trips, Francisco Luis also maintained a family in China. He actively promoted communication between his Cuban daughters and his Chinese daughters, shaping their conceptions of family and identity. When Francisco Luis died in 1975, the correspondence ceased. In the summer of 2001, with information provided by the Cuban daughters and the assistance of the local overseas Chinese affairs office, my research assistant and I were able to locate and meet the elderly Chinese daughters. They still live in Lü Village and maintain the house that their father built upon his first return trip from Cuba in the early twentieth century. Since then, communication with their Cuban relatives has resumed. Lü Fan’s Cuban daughter Violeta Luis and granddaughter Mitzi Espinosa Luis have been integral to this renewal of family ties.⁴¹

Back in Havana at a Chinese New Year festival, Mitzi approached members of the Chinese community, inquiring if there were others with the surname Lü. Armed with photos, she located Felipe and Santiago Luis, who also come from Lü Village in Xinhui County.⁴² In a display of “fictive kinship” for fellow villagers from the other side of the ocean, they recognized Mitzi as a granddaughter. Mitzi’s desire to establish contact with her Chinese relatives in China, coupled with a public event sponsored by the Promotional Group that brought together native Chinese and descendants, provided the opening for this reunion to occur.

Matthew Frye Jacobson suggests that a diasporic imagination and attachments to the homeland are linked by a “cultural thread” to descendants of early-twentieth-century Irish, Polish, and Jewish immigrants in the United States.⁴³ Like the Pelayo brothers, Lü Fan’s Cuban granddaughter Mitzi Espinosa Luis possesses such an imagination. Although she has no “lived experi-

41. I extend my deepest appreciation to Chen Liyuan and to the Daze Overseas Chinese Affairs Office for their role in reuniting the two sides of the Lü family. Lü family, interview by author, Xinhui County, China, August 2001.

42. Felipe’s grandfather brought him to Cuba in 1926, and Santiago came in 1952. While Felipe had family in Hong Kong, Santiago never married in China or in Cuba.

43. Matthew Frye Jacobson, **Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 5.

ence” in China, she hopes to visit her relatives in person, though political and economic restraints in Cuba remain a barrier.

Another more fleeting encounter is Blas Pelayo's connection with native Chinese in the *barrio chino*. Following is an excerpt from an essay Pelayo wrote for the Chinese Cuban community chronicling the visit of China's President Jiang Zemin to Havana's Chinatown in 1993. He compares the official visit to the imperial commission that came to Cuba over 100 years earlier to investigate the abuses in the coolie trade. The essay expresses the sense of connectedness a descendant of a Chinese migrant experienced with his own family history, with the Chinese Cuban community, and with the remaining elderly native Chinese. The significance of President Jiang Zemin's visit varied for different segments of the population: for Cubans, it held the promise of improved diplomatic relations and material goods in a time of scarcity; for Chinese in Cuba, it re-established a connection with a homeland that had been severed for nearly half a century; and for descendants of Chinese, it may have been a “cultural thread” linking their past with the present.

I only await the next day, which promises to be filled with emotions because of the economic and political significance of the visit of the president for our country; once again, as when the first time a state leader from the former Celestial Empire came to Cuba . . . Chen Lanbin, with the specific mission to learn about the problems from the mistreatment and abuses of Chinese coolies. . . .

The moment is significantly emotional: the native at my side yells immediately in Cantonese “Forever China!” Even though I do not know that language, perhaps out of ethnic instinct and solidarity, I repeat it in Spanish.

In another very old native, I was surprised to see his tired eyes filled with tears of emotion and joy, so rarely expressed among Chinese.⁴⁴

44. Blas Pelayo, “Breve crónica sobre la visita del presidente de La República Popular de China, Jieng Ze Ming a La Habana, del 21/11/93 al 22/11/93, ambos inclusive” (Short Chronicle of the Visit of the President of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zemin, to Havana, from November 21, 1993 to November 22, 1993). Translation by author.

Cuba and China: Labor Links

Terri R. Dabney

Introduction

Rarely spoken of or written about as if it ever occurred, was the “middle passage” of the Chinese to Cuba. Though not nearly as brutal, nor the loss of life as tremendous, the transporting of human beings as “cargo” produced the same type of carnage for the Chinese as it did for the Africans on their way to the Americas. From 1847-1889 over, 125,000 Chinese arrived in Cuba to work, not as slaves but as indentured servants. This period is unique in that it was the link between labors. The link between free and slave labor, the skilled and unskilled worker.

The primary focus of this paper will look at three perspectives: that of the historian, the recollection of Esteban Montejo, a runaway slave and those Chinese-Cubans living in and outside of Cuba today. Very limited, I used small articles or essays written by newspapers, websites of individuals in order to ascertain the opinions of today’s Chinese Cubans.

This research will encompass some of the development of the Chinese in Cuba beginning in 1847 until the end of Cuban slavery in 1889, to the current relationship between China and Cuba. This research provides several charts taken from Rebecca Scott's work: *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*. These tables illustrate the population of Chinese in entering and working in Cuba between 1861 and 1877; other tables illustrate the labor contracts of the Chinese as far back as 1848. The last table shows the cost of paying a Chinese worker or indentured worker versus that of a free laborer.

Historical Perspective

Numerous events lead to the migration of the Chinese. The Treaty of Nanking, which ended the Opium Wars from 1839-1842, the Abolitionist Movements in the U.S. and England from 1800 to 1859, and the Law of 1845 passed by Junta de Fomento a type of Agriculture Board. Each of these events made it much easier for Spanish representatives and brokers to recruit Chinese workers. The Chinese were recruited, kidnapped and intimidated into signing contracts to work in Cuba. Many came from poor peasant communities and therefore it was easier to persuade them to sign contracts to come to Cuba. The Chinese were disillusioned in their belief that they could become rich from working on Cuba's sugar and tobacco plantations. The Chinese were naïve to believe that they would work eight years of their contract, collect their riches and return to their families in China, sadly, this was never the case.

The first 800 Chinese came to Cuba in 1847; it was a busy time for Cuba economically because the sugar and tobacco industries were in high and steady demand. During this time, the Laws of 1845 were formalized by the Junta de Fomento. These laws were established by the Spaniards who feared Black slaves; they feared the same uprising would happen in Cuba as it did in Haiti. Therefore, although more Chinese workers were contracted to work in Cuba it was never meant to put an end to slavery, just to slow it down in order to quell possible uprising by slaves. As part of their contracts or agreement, the men would work on either sugar or tobacco plantations. They were also assigned duties as tailors, hat makers, cigar, cigarette makers, cooks, gardeners, waiters, carpenters and hotel or house servants. For their work they would receive wages between twenty and thirty cents per day, as well as a ration of food; 1-2 pounds of potatoes or wheat, grain, or in some cases as it was mentioned by Esteban Montejo¹, taking a credit and purchasing items from the general store in town. They also received clothing, a blanket, medical assistance and promised but never fulfilled was their return fare to China at the end of their eight-year contract. Many Chinese continued to come to Cuba and similarly like the "middle passage" the ships claimed hundreds of Chinese lives. According to some of the research:

A few ships crossed the Middle Passage without any deaths. Some ships lost most of their 'cargo.' The average losses were between 10 percent and 20 percent, through sickness, suicide and even murder at the hands of the slave crew and captains. 10 percent means over 1,000,000 Africans died on board the ships, 20 percent represents over 2,000,000 deaths.²

1. Esteban Montejo, a runaway slave who assisted in the writing of the autobiography of his life as a slave. Montejo's perspective of the Chinese are scattered throughout his autobiography.

The Chinese did not go to Cuba in the same numbers as African slaves did to the Americas but, regardless of quantity, the numbers of lives lost were astronomical and importunately humans have been reduced to being considered as animals or referred to as lost 'cargo.' Nearly 28 percent of men lost their lives from poor and inadequate food, hard labor, inhuman working conditions and suicide. From 1853-1857, the slave trade continued to boom in Cuba and over 5,150 Chinese were imported,³ despite laws and the persistence of the abolitionist movement against slavery in the U.S. and England. This second voyage was said to have lost 11 percent of its passengers (about 840). In March 1854, a royal decree was issued by Spain and China that opposed and warned those in the international slave trade of its abuses and mistreatment of contracted laborers. Regardless of the decree, the Chinese laborers were still treated as slaves; even tortured and whipped like slaves. Some data say that between 1853 and the end of Chinese importation in 1873 more than 132,432 Chinese came to Cuba. During this 20 year period more than 13 percent died either in route from China to Cuba or while working out their contracts.

In 1857, many of the Chinese actually came from China to Cuba via U.S. ships. One of the most famous of slave ships was the Kate Hooper. According to the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, the ship sailed to the port of China and picked up 652 indentured Chinese laborers. The Chinese thought they were going to San Francisco, when they realized they were not traveling to California they tried to revolt. San Francisco today hosts a large number of Chinese as well as many Chinese-Cubans who fled after the 1959 Revolution.

The Kate Hooper was in trouble on many occasions due to Chinese revolts, but almost on its last trip another ship, the Flying Childers, came to its rescue and helped the crew gain control of the ship. They did this by torturing and killing the leaders of the revolt. This time the Kate Hooper docked in Macao in February 1858, only 612 passengers survived. The U.S. National Archives⁴ say that the mortality rate was 6 percent to 17 percent from 1857-1858. Around November 1858, the crew of the Kate Hooper sued James A. Hooper the owner of the ship for an additional \$10 bonus, which they claimed was promised to them. After many courtroom battles a decree was

2. Port Cities Bristol Website: <http://www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/showNarrative.php?narId=46&nacId=49>.

3. Cuba: Una Identita en Movimiento. *Cuba and the Coolie Trade* by Eugenio Chang Rodriguez, Website: <http://art.supereva.it/carlo260/chang.htm> downloaded on December 10, 2003.

4. U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, by Robert J. Plowman. The Voyage of the "Coolie" Ship Kate Hooper: October 3, 1857-March 26, 1858. Summer 2001, Vol.33, No 2. Part 1 & 2. downloaded from website: http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/summer_2001_coolie_ship_kate_hooper_1.html and http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/summer_2001_coolie_ship_kate_hooper_2.html

issued by the District Court of Baltimore, which stated that Mr. Hooper had to pay the crew of the *Kate Hooper* \$40 each with interest. It is said that the *Kate Hooper* did sail again to China but was set on fire near Australia in 1860 and that in February 1862 Congress passed a law that prohibited the trade of Chinese. The act claimed to “Prohibit the ‘Coolie Trade’ by any U.S. ships or vessels.

The Chinese’s contracts stated they were “wage laborers” and yet their contracts were sold for \$60 each to plantation owners. Although some Chinese were poor and uneducated peasants, the majority had some skills that allowed them to supercede Black slaves on the plantations. The Spanish used the Chinese’s skills to help mechanize the sugar industry that would ultimately increase production in order to meet the demand. The Chinese knew they were not like the African slaves or any of the Free Black slaves, but they were beaten and whipped as if they were slaves, unable to leave the island and were under constant surveillance by the overseers. There were times when the Chinese would become frustrated, angry over their treatment, and revolted. The Chinese revolts resulted only in harsher treatment and murder by their masters and overseers. The harshness and brutality of the slave and labor trades would end almost one decade apart. For the Chinese the final passages aboard U.S. ships ended in 1862 and later 1877 final importation decree would end importation of the Chinese. In 1886 slavery in all of its forms officially ended.

Chinese Movement and Impact From 1847-1889

Depending upon the source, it has been written that between 125,000 to 200,000 Chinese indentured servants came to Cuba to work on the sugar and tobacco plantations; the total is even higher when the number of Chinese immigrants who perished in route from China to Cuba is taken into account.

All of the following tables were taken from Rebecca Scott’s *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, and she states, that depending on the sources, data for slaves (and wage laborers) may not be accurate but can be used to illustrate comparisons and perspectives. Tables 13-1⁵- 13-5⁶ illustrate the number of Chinese laborers recorded as having arrived in Cuba and the various statistics of their impact on the labor force during 1847-1889.

5. Scott, 29. Introduction: Sugar and Slavery.

6. This chart was taken from an article by Eugenio Chang Rodriguez called *Cuba and the Coolie Trade*, Website: <http://art.supereva.it/carlo260/chang.htm>, downloaded December 10, 2003.

Esteban Montejo: A Runaway Slave’s Perspective⁷

This section only takes into account the perspective of Esteban Montejo. In the autobiography of his life called *A Runaway Slave*, Esteban Montejo gives numerous accounts of his experience as a runaway and a look into his personal relationships and opinions of the Chinese.

Once the Chinese set foot on Cuba soil, they were sent to live on various plantations in buildings known as barracoons or barracks. The barracks according to the runaway slave Montejo could be large or small depending on the number of slaves on the plantation. Rebecca Scott's work claims that Flor de Sagua plantation became the depot for Chinese because the sugar mills demanded labor that was more skilled. Montejo says that all slaves lived in the barracoons:

Around two hundred slaves of all colors lived in Flor de Sagua barracoon.⁸

TABLE 13-1. Population

Status of the Chinese Population, 1872 and 1877				
Status	1872		1877	
Under contract	34,408	(59%)	25,226	(54%)
Free ^a	14,064	(24%)	21,890	(46%)
Runaways	7,036	(12%)		
Runaways held in <i>depósitos</i>	1,344	(2%)		
<i>Cumplidos</i> in <i>depósitos</i> , pending recontracting	864	(1%)		
In jails or prisons, or pending trial	684	(1%)		
Total	58,400		47,116	

SOURCES: Same as Table 13.

^a In 1877 the category used is “*cumplidos*,” meaning those who had fulfilled their contracts.

He describes life in the barracoons as depressing and claiming that they were always whitewashed on the outside but filthy on the inside. The floors were made of mud and had very little ventilation inside that everyone used the same bathroom facilities, and to clean ones “arse” they had to pick leaves or use cornhusks. The barracoons were places full of infestations: ticks, fleas and sickness. In his autobiography he says, the Negro could never get used to it, because of his love for trees and the forest; however the Chinese liked creepy things.

In China- there they have weeds, praline, morning-glories and that sort of thing that creep along.

The Chinese always stayed apart from the other workers and that when every one was going to dances, taverns, and playing games that the Chinese

7. Montejo, Esteban, *the Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*, ed. Miguel Barnet, New York: Pantheon Books, a Division of Random House, 1968.

8. Montejo, pg. 21. Life in the Barracoons.

did not participate, they stayed silent and always to themselves. Montejó fervently denies that the Black slaves killed themselves, however he does claim that the Chinese often committed suicide:

After several days they would turn up hanging from a tree or dead on the ground.⁹

TABLE 13-2. Population

Estimated Costs of Indentured and Free Chinese Labor, 1874	
INDENTURE	
Cost of one "coolie" under contract for 8 years	\$ 400
Interest on capital invested for 8 years at 12%	384
Wages for 8 years at \$4 per month	384
Maintenance for 8 years at \$15 per month	1,440
Total	\$2,608
FREE LABOR	
Wages for 8 years at 35 cents per day	\$1,008
Maintenance for 8 years at \$15 per month	1,440
Total	\$2,448

SOURCE: DUVON C. CORBITT, *A Study of the Chinese in Cuba, 1847-1947* (Wilmore, Ky.: Asbury College, 1971), p. 23.

TABLE 13-3. Chinese Contracts

Chinese Workers' Contracts Sold in the Port of Havana, 1848-1874					
Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1848	571	1860	6,193	1868	7,368
1853	4,307	1861	6,973	1869	5,660
1854	1,711	1862	344	1870	1,227
1855	2,985	1863	952	1871	1,448
1856	4,968	1864	2,153	1872	8,160
1857	8,547	1865	6,400	1873	5,093
1858	13,385	1866	12,391	1874	2,490
1859	7,204	1867	14,263	Total	124,813*

SOURCE: J. PÉREZ DE LA RIVA, *El barracón y otros ensayos* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 471.

* This is the total given in the Pérez de la Riva volume. It may reflect a minor typographical error; the total of the annual figures given is actually 124,793.

Often of the Chinese revolted, and had confrontations with overseers or sailors, Montejó does not indicate that the Chinese revolted, he only declares that they had "respected no one" often did things in "silence." He even reported on how they killed the overseers with sticks and knives. Moreover, to gain their trust the Master or owner of the plantation would appoint one of the Chinese men as an overseer. Montejó believed that the Chinese were "born rebels;" he later after spending much time in Sagua la Grande started seeing the Chinese from a different perspective.

9. Montejó, pg. 44, *Life in the Barracoons*.

The Chinese were not the only foreign workers during this time; Montejo mentions and describes the mannerism of all groups present on the plantation: the Canary Islanders, Philippines, and Africans from all countries but predominantly from two tribes of the Congo and the Lucumi. Esteban never mentions any fighting between the various groups other than the Congolese and the Lucumis. He said:

Relationship between the groups remained unchanged.¹⁰

TABLE 13-4. Chinese Labor Costs

Chinese Population, 1861-1877			
Province	1861	1872	1877
Pinar del Río	2,221	3,396	3,137
Havana	9,456	11,365	10,108
Matanzas	15,782	27,002	20,054
Santa Clara	6,274	15,878	13,301
Puerto Príncipe	341	297	94
Santiago de Cuba	754	462	422
Total	34,828	58,400	47,116

SOURCE: 1861—Cuba, Centro de Estadística, *Noticias estadísticas*, "Censo de población según el cuadro general de la Comisión Ejecutiva de 1861"; 1872—Expediente General Colonización Asiática, AHN, Ultramar, leg. 87; 1877—Iglesias, "El censo cubano."

It was not until the Sagua la Grande that Montejo changed his opinion of the Chinese, recognized, and respected the Chinese as a people, with talents and abilities. It was during this period the Chinese opened their community to the island sharing their talents and skills, spiritually, medicinally, artistically and socially. Spiritually and medicinally, Montejo says that Chinese (and the African witch doctors) were highly respected so than the Spanish doctors whom nobody trusted. He even recalled one of the doctors by name, "Chin" whom he said he would never forget; he even went as far as to describe Chin's clothing:

...He wore a shabby-looking doctor's tunic and a straw hat¹¹

He claims he charged a lot for his visits and only the rich could afford to pay him. He says Chin's herbs are probably the same medicines used at pharmacies today (1968).

Though there was no population breakdown given, it is an estimate that there were about 125,000 Chinese in Cuba during this time, Montejo (for closer estimations see Tables 13-1 – 13-5).

There were lots of Chinese in Cuba...I saw a lot them, especially in Sagua la Grande, which was their neighborhood. Plenty of workers went to Sagua on Sundays, from all the plantations.¹²

10. Montejo, pg. 69, *Life on the Plantation*.

11. Montejo, pg. 93.

Artistically, the Chinese were able to build their own theatre; they painted it in vivid colors. Everyone always enjoyed Chinese Theatre, “people applauded wildly and the Chinese bowed politely,” affirms Montejo, and during the Chinese festivals or religious holidays, the streets would be crowded with people watching the celebration.

The Chinese were excellent entrepreneurs according to the autobiography; “clever” says Montejo, The Chinese had owned many shops and sold various items, for perfumes to toys. They operated various service-oriented businesses; barbershops, tailors shops, candy stores, and opium shops. Almost naively, Montejo tells of some of the vices of the Chinese, opium and gambling. He says of Opium:

The Chinese were very fond of opium, I don't think they knew it was harmful....They smoked it in long wooden pipes, hidden away at the back of their shops so the whites and Negroes shouldn't see them, although no one was ever persecuted for smoking opium in those days.¹³

Whether or not the Chinese knew that opium was “harmful” or whether or not the Opium War had ended, meant little since some of the negative aspects of Chinese culture was still able to find its way to Cuba. The fact that the Chinese did “hide” their opium consumption from the whites and the Negroes is some indication that the Chinese knew that consumption was illegal or would be or have some kind of negative attachment to them.

With a change of heart, accounts, of the Chinese Montejo now boast that the Chinese are the greatest inventors of gambling games. Charades is one of the three so-called gambling games invented by the Chinese. Today, this game is not seen as a gambling, but the today it is a family game or general game that can be played by anyone not normally for money but for the thrill of winning over another person, family or team. Montejo claims that the Chinese set up shop and ran the gambling shops like modern day casinos, complete with a door attendant who served as a bouncer that would control the types of people who entered. When they finally lost their money, the Chinese would return to peddling or selling sesame seeds, fruits and vegetables.

Esteban Montejo's final reflections on the Chinese mentioned their fear about death. He said that they believed if they died there that their bodies would be reborn in Canton. That they were so afraid of death, that even if one of their own had fallen down and died, they would runaway and return with someone who would prepare the body and burry it.

In his last chapter on War of Independence: Life as a Revolutionary Fighter, Esteban Montejo relives his time fighting in the war against the

12. Montejo, pg. 93 – 94.

13. Montejo, pg. 94.

Spanish. However, it maybe refutable Montejo claims that in all his time he had come across all races of guerrillas, but none Chinese.

The real guerillas were stupid countrymen...Don't anyone try to tell me a man of letters would become a guerrilla.¹⁴

Montejo felt that there were two kinds of guerillas; the Mambises¹⁵ for whom his troop was named because of the relentless and ferocious way in which they attacked their enemies. The Mambis where real nationalist, "clever" and educated, they fought and wanted to liberate Cuba from Spain. The other type of guerilla was a negative connotation in which said:

Some whites use to say that he (Morua) was a guerilla, but they were Americans, scabs! They tried to accuse him (Morua) of being a guerrilla just because of the colour of his skin.¹⁶

In addition to skin, color guerrillas were callous and wanted to fight in the war but only as cold-blooded killers, even attacking the Mambis who felt they were true and sincere liberators of Cuba.

Again, it is important to reiterate here that these opinions are that of Montejo, a mulatto Cuban slave who was a runaway, not of other slaves or run-aways. Nevertheless, it is evident of his softening to the Chinese that he gains more respect and admiration as he spends more time working along side them in Sagua la Grande, he affirms:

The Chinese were the most elegant thing in Cuba"...Everything they did was in silence, bowing away the whole time. They were well trained.¹⁷

Chinese Cubans: Todays Perspective

Chinese Cubans in 2004 are still struggling, the continued U.S. trade embargo that stifles exchanges and blocks economic growth. Chinese Cubans are also finding it difficult to maintain themselves culturally.

The Table below illustrates the data taken from the World Fact Book of 2003.¹⁸ The statistics on the ethnic population of Cuba is broken down in the Table 13-5.

In an article produced by the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project (CHCP), they estimate that there are only about 500 Chinese left in Cuba while an article from CUBANET puts the number of pure Chinese at around 430. The CHCP, gives no figures for the total population of Chinese Cubans,

14. Montejo, pg. 208, Life as a Revolutionary Fighter.

15. According to Esteban Montejo, **Mambi** is an African word meaning the child of an ape and a vulture.

16. Montejo, pg. 94, Life as a Revolutionary Fighter.

17. Montejo, pg. 94.

18. This data was compiled from the World Fact Book 2003, published by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html>.

CUBANET sources say 3,200 Cubans have Chinese blood. The Chinese-Cuban population will further decrease since many of the pure Chinese are elderly and in their 80's. This means that inevitably the Chinese population in Cuba will disappear.

TABLE 13-5. Ethnic Groups (2003)

Mulatto	51%
White	37%
Black	11%
Chinese	1%

TABLE 13-6. For the Chinese Cubans today this means scrambling about to find ways to maintain the Chinese heritage and revitalize Chinatown. This is very difficult to do under Cuba's current economic situation. Many of the Chinese have begun to build associations in which they ask for assistance from China in which to help them rebuild the Chinatown. In 1998, the Chinese held a festival, the goal was to celebrate and exchange history and experiences with Chinese Cubans as well as share experiences with other Chinese across the globe. The Chinese Cubans are almost desperately trying to reach out to Chinese around the world in order to get other Chinese to help them by reinventing in Chinatown in Cuba. Many of these good intentions were criticized within the Chinese-Cuban community. The sentiment from the older Chinese was that the third generations of Chinese-Cubans only look at the festival as a business transaction, only wanting to generate commerce and business in order to restore Chinatown. The older Chinese, do believe that restoring Chinatown will take some funding, but that the more important part of the festival is to learn about Chinese ancestry and the history of Chinese in Cuba.

In addition to the traditional business: restaurants, laundries and produce farms and markets, in 1993 a school was opened that focused on Chinese Language and Art. The Chinese Cuban community also has plans to open a museum complete with Chinese style architecture. The Chinese Cuban community are receiving donations to help revitalize the interest in Chinese culture; books, music, videos, newspapers are all donations sent by the international Chinese community. While the international Chinese community donates smaller items, the Cuban government is in support of the Chinese doctors by allowing them to introduce acupuncture and massage some forms of traditional Chinese medicine. Much of the Cuban governments support is due because of the lack of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals in the country.

It is not that today's Chinese-Cubans have forgotten their ancestry, on the contrary. What is difficult is beating back time. In all of the research, that I have come across there was never mention of women or Chinese social or

sexual explorations. This only came later perhaps around the turn of the century. Therefore, much of Chinese culture has been wiped out because of interracial marriages with Creoles, Mulattos and Africans. The majority of Chinese-Cubans know the history of slavery and their ancestor's participation in it, this is no surprise as even part of Spanish culture the closeness of family and traditions are important. The Chinese-Cuban population in San Francisco for years after the 1959 revolution has been the eyes and ears for Chinese-Cubans still on the island, as they have had more freedom and economic resources to travel to China and to move about within other Chinese community circles. What most Chinese-Cubans long for now is opportunity. The opportunity to visit China in order to see where they came from and to put a place and faces with the history they have only read and heard about.

China and Cuba Relations

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba needed find as many friends and allies as possible to help Cuba maintain. In 1993, the president of China-Jiang Zemin went to Cuba. He did not vow to take up the economic burdens or ask Cuba to reform to the standards of China, he merely demonstrated his solidarity to Cuba by providing them with rice and bicycles and as the relationship grew China would become Cuba's top three trading partners the other two being Russia and Canada.

With bilateral trading average about \$400 million per year. China offers loans and credit to Cuba for \$700 million dollars to finance state-owned businesses and enterprises. China is the leading importer of food staple: rice and beans, while Cuba exports raw-sugar and nickel to China.

The Cubans have asked for assistance from China and reach out to former Chinese and Chinese-Cubans around the world. In which to continues to help rebuilding Chinatown and Chinese heritage. In 1998, the Chinese held a festival, the goal was to celebrate and exchange history and experiences with Chinese Cubans as well as share experiences with other Chinese across the globe.

In addition to the traditional business: restaurants, laundries and produce farms and markets. The Chinese Cuban community is receiving donations to help revitalize the interest in Chinese culture; arts and architecture, books, music, videos; newspapers are all donations sent by the international Chinese community.

While the international Chinese community donates smaller items, the Cuban government is in support of the Chinese doctors by allowing them to introduce acupuncture and massage some forms of traditional Chinese medicine. Much of the Cuban government's support is due because of the lack of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals in the country.

Conclusion

There are many similarities in the history of slavery for the Chinese and the African. Both groups became the means by which completely different cultures controlled and dominated them in order to accomplish their own goals or satisfy their own need. The length at which the Spanish (the English, Americans, and Italians) accomplished all this was through brutal and dehumanizing labor, labor that was slave, free or indentured. Between each race, thousands have died in their passages to Cuba or California and whilst working on plantations. It is sad phenomena in humans that most would think could never happen, or would be forgotten.

The prejudices of Esteban Montejo surfaces in many of his earlier accounts of the Chinese. It is likely that Montejo had never been to China, but this did not stop his skepticism and negative imagery of the Chinese. His earlier impressions were that the Chinese were not social and sneaky, as he wrote “they like things that creep”. However, his opinion changed only after he was able to witness and work with large groups of Chinese in Flor de Sagua or the Sagua Le Grand. The Chinese became more human even elevating themselves to “fine” in Montejo’s eyes. he knows the Chinese in Cuba are a dying breed. He comments in as far back as 1968 when his autobiography was published:

The Chinese have lost the cheerfulness they had in Spanish times. If you see a Chinese now and ask him, ‘How are you? He says, ‘Me not know’

The Chinese culture depends very strongly on tradition and family. It is obvious from some of the research that Chinese Cubans of today still want to remain connected: through the mandarin language, martial arts, cooking, and the celebration of various holidays. The only way these traditions can continue to survive is through the people. The exchange and celebration of knowledge from people to people. People, either of the same race or that of another race. The traumatic and somewhat sad reality is that the rich culture and tradition of the Chinese is becoming extinct in Cuba. In 1998 CUBNET published an article stating that there are only “430 pure Chinese” left in Cuba and that many of them were already in their eighties and that there are about 3, 200 Cubans who are descendant of Chinese heritage. With so few Chinese left in Cuba, the challenge will be to see if there is enough room in nationalistic pride to allow memory and homage to such an ugly yet unique moment in Cuban History.

The challenge for descendants and (non-descendants) of both races is to remember is to pay homage to those who sacrificed themselves by celebrating the culture. In other wards never letting the next generations forget that such a horrific incident took place in the history of their country, Non-

descendants of Chinese or African culture should be encouraged to respect all the beauties of another culture even if it is different from their own. People who are Chinese or African ultimately become encouraged to talk about and pass on all parts of their heritage. If this were done, it would seem impossible that slavery and any forms of it would die.

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Part IV
Evolving Institutions

Anatomy of the Bill on Agricultural Cooperatives

Peter Roman

Among the attributes of the Cuban National Assembly (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular or ANPP) is to approve, modify or repeal laws. Legislation may be proposed by National Assembly Deputies, the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, National Assembly commissions, the governing bodies of the Federation of Cuban Workers (Central de Trabajadores de Cuba or CTC) and mass organizations, including the National Association of Small Farmers (Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños or ANAP), the Supreme Court, the Attorney General, and by petition of at least 10,000 voting citizens.

Neither the Cuban Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Cuba or PCC) nor the Union of Young Communists (Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas or UJC) has the right to propose legislation. However, general aspects of the need for new legislation or policy may emanate from Party Congresses. As I wrote in “The National Assembly and Political Representation:”

The party programs passed at the Congresses are supposed to set the parameters for government policy. However, these parameters are very broad and general. In some cases, for example, they set limits, such as the economic resolution passed in the 5th Party Congress in 1997. Referring to private economic activities among Cubans, the resolution did not mention middle-sized enterprises, which were not included in the subsequent legislation on the economy.¹ The people’s councils were called for in isolated rural areas in the program of the Third Party Congress in 1986,² and subsequently pilot projects were set up in a few locations in 1988, but when they were established throughout all of Cuba in the early 1990s, they bore little resemblance to what

1. “Resolución Económica del V Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba,” *Granma*, November 7, 1997, 1-8.

2. **Resoluciones Aprobadas por el III Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba**, (La Habana: Editora Política, 1986), 18-21.

had been proposed in the 3rd Congress, and [President Fidel] Castro said as much during the debate on the People's Council law in the National Assembly in 2000. The constitutional amendments, passed in 1992, came in great part from the program passed in the 4th Party Congress in 1991, but with a lot of debate and many changes made during the Assembly plenary session . . . All proposed legislation is sent for consultation to the PCC as well as to government bodies, mass organizations, specialists, deputies, and sectors of the population.³

Proposals are initially circulated among Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, to all the ministries, and to the provincial assembly administrative councils to gather and possibly include their opinions and suggestions. The Council of Ministers sends the bill to the National Assembly.

The National Assembly president then forwards the proposed legislation to the permanent National Assembly commission whose mission corresponds to the material included in the bill. It is also sent to the Constitutional and Juridical Affairs Commission, which determines the constitutionality of the project. The commissions can approve the project with or without amendments, and call for more consultation, recommend changes, or reject the bill. The National Assembly president subsequently sends a copy of the project to all National Assembly deputies at least twenty days prior to the assembly session where it will be considered, and has the option of organizing meetings with deputies in the provinces to explain the project and take into account their opinions.

As a final step before presentation to the National Assembly the commissions involved write evaluations (*dictámenes*) which are distributed to the deputies. During the Assembly session the bill is introduced by the leader of the organization or group proposing the legislation, and the *dictámenes* are read by the commission presidents, and both are then voted on (usually together) by the National Assembly.

The Consultative Process for the Agricultural Cooperatives Bill⁴

The Agrarian Reform law, passed in 1959, gave land to approximately 200,000 farmers who had previously worked it as sharecroppers (*parceros*) or renters, and began to organize them into agricultural cooperatives, which were called Credit and Service Cooperatives (*Cooperativas de Crédito y Ser-*

3. Peter Roman, "The National Assembly and Political Representation," in **Cuban Socialism in a New Century: Adversity, Survival and Renewal**, ed. Max Azicri and Elsie Deal, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

4. For a discussion of the consultative process preceding the Law on People's Councils in 2000, see Roman, "The National Assembly and Political Representation."

vicios or CCS). While the individual farmers continued to own the land privately, the state began to offer them collectively credits and services such as tractors and other implements. The first congress of farmers was held in May 1961, where it was decided to form the ANAP. The ANAP has officially represented Cuban farmers since 1968. In 1977 the Agricultural Production Cooperatives (Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria or CPA), in which the farmers owned the land collectively, were formed.

The ANAP is not part of the government and is self-financed. Ninety-nine percent of farmers who own land in cooperatives belong to the ANAP. They own about twenty six percent of the farmland, and produce forty percent of the Cuban agriculture products. Each cooperative is led by a general assembly, consisting of all of the members, which has maximum authority over the affairs of the cooperative.

In 1993 much of the rest of the farmland, which is state owned, was converted to Basic Units of Cooperative Production (Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa or UBPC). This land was divided up and turned over to workers collectives in the form of long-term leases, with the state retaining ownership. While in some ways similar to the CPA and CCS, the main difference is that the state has greater control over production and those who work on the UBPC do not own the land. They are considered to be workers not farmers. Orlando Lugo Fonte, the President of ANAP, in an interview with me on December 28, 2000, explained that since the state owns the land, the UBPC are not considered to be agricultural cooperatives, where the land is owned by the farmers, do not belong to the ANAP, and are not covered by the laws regulating agricultural cooperatives.

Law 36 on agricultural cooperatives was passed in 1982. The need for agricultural cooperatives to improve the organization of production and the relations with the state sector, and to encourage all private farmers to join cooperatives, was included in very general terms in the resolution on economic plans passed by the Third Congress of the PCC in 1986.⁵ Subsequently new rules regulating the cooperatives were passed by the Council of Ministers, mainly dealing with the CPA. Responding to pressure from the ANAP in 1996, the Council of Ministers issued new regulations giving more state aid and benefits to the CCS who met certain criteria (called CCS fortalecidas), by having the state sell them resources such as machines and tools to be used collectively, authorizing the CCS to hire contracted labor including an economist and vendor for their products, holding collectively owned land, and having bank accounts. However, Cuban agronomist Niurka Pérez Rojas, in an interview with me on November 25, 2001, told me that these regulations did

5. **Resoluciones Aprobadas por el III Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba**, (La Habana: Editora Política, 1986), 57.

not sufficiently meet the needs of the cooperatives, which consequently lead to the demand for a new law.

The proposed new legislation on agricultural cooperatives to replace Law 36 was drafted by ANAP at its ninth congress in May 2000 and passed by the National Assembly in November 2002. During the debate at the ANAP congress, the delegates (elected by members of Cuba's agricultural cooperatives) discussed the problem that Law 36 dealt mainly with the CPA and largely ignored the CCS. Sixty-five articles dealt with the CPA and only seven with the CCS. It was felt that a new law needed to differentiate clearly between the two types of cooperatives, and treat them equally. Furthermore the process of strengthening the CCS needed stronger legal backing.

The delegates also pointed out that the old law did not adequately take into account the new economic characteristics and changes that had occurred over the previous twenty years, especially with the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the initiation of the "Special Period" in Cuba in the early 1990s to deal with the ensuing economic crisis. They brought up many practices that they felt were necessary for the operation of their cooperatives that they were already doing or that were necessary to do, but which contradicted Law 36. These included the products that were allowed to be sold in the free market, the election of the president of the cooperative, housing, and profits.

After analyzing the inapplicability of Law 36, the delegates passed a motion calling on the ANAP leadership to draft and propose to the National Assembly a new law on agricultural cooperatives to substitute for Law 36. In June 2000 the leadership of the National Assembly met with the leadership of ANAP to coordinate subsequent steps to be taken. By the end of the year 2000 the national leadership of the ANAP made an agreement with the National Assembly to draw up a new law, to be presented to the Assembly in its December 2001 session.⁶

ANAP formed a task force composed of members of the ANAP leadership and lawyers (led by José Garea Alonso, an ANAP legal counsel), and representatives of the Ministry of Sugar (Ministerio de Azúcar or MINAZ) and the Ministry of Agriculture (Ministerio de Agricultura or MINAG). It first consulted with the leadership of the Communist Party regarding the scope and extent of the project.

The task force composed a first draft, which established that all the agricultural cooperatives are founded on socialist principals, which were designed to avoid the possibilities of exploitation of labor. These principals, as outlined by Lugo Fonte at the meeting of National Assembly deputies in Pinar del Rio Province on December 5, 2001, are "voluntarism, mutual aid,

6. José M. Garea Alonso, "El ejercicio de la democracia en Cuba en el proceso de elaboración, discusión y aprobación de las Leyes por el Parlamento," paper presented to the Congreso Internacional de Derecho Agrario, Holguín, Cuba, October 2002, 8.

contributions to the development of the national economy, cooperative discipline, collective decision-making, territorial rights and the welfare of the cooperators and their families.”

This first draft was sent to forty presidents of cooperatives and ANAP’s provincial bureaus in Havana Province, Matanzas, Sancti Spiritus and Ciego de Ávila for opinions and suggestions for revisions. These bureaus met with provincial representatives of MINAZ and MINAG, and on the basis of their suggestions the commission drew up a second version of the proposed law. This version was sent for review to between twenty-five and thirty cooperative members (CPA and CCS) in each province, who went over it article by article. Based on their criteria for changes a third version was drafted by the commission, and was sent to central government agencies connected with this project, including MINAZ and MINAG, who are in charge of the land and agricultural production; the Central Bank of Cuba, the Ministry of Finance and Prices (Ministerio de Finanzas y Precios or MINFAP), the Ministry of Economy and Planning, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, regarding financial and labor issues; the Housing Ministry and the Housing Institute; and the Ministry of Armed Forces. These government agencies requested more than fifty changes.

Using a table, which contained the suggestions from the ministries regarding each article, the task force drafted the fourth version of the proposed law. This was forwarded to the provincial assemblies and their administrative councils for suggestions. This version also went to the PCC, which sent to its provincial bureaus for comments and suggestions, which were sent to the party’s Central Committee. The PCC then called a meeting with Lugo Fonte and two ANAP attorneys, and two members of the PCC Political Bureau, to discuss all the opinions gathered by the party. Lugo Fonte told me that nothing was imposed by the party, and that ANAP had rejected some proposals made by the party representatives.

Based on suggestions made by the provincial governments and the PCC, the task force prepared the fifth version. From September to October 2001, it was sent for comments to the Secretary of the Council of Ministers Carlos Lage Dávila, who in turn dispatched it for consultation to each government minister, all the central state bodies, and other institutions, such as the national meeting of Cuban Jurists. Based on the 150 proposals and suggestions gathered during this round, together with adjustments made according to guidelines set forth by the Ministers of MINAG, MINAZ, and MINFAP, a sixth version was written, approved by the Council of Ministers and sent to National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón for consideration by the ANPP. Alarcón consigned the proposal to the Assembly Commissions on Productive Activity, presided over by Leonardo Martínez, and on Constitu-

tional and Juridical Affairs (regarding its constitutionality), presided over by Victor Toledo (the director of the University of Havana Law School). Also a working group was constituted composed of the presidents and other deputies and auxiliary personnel from these commissions, and ANAP leaders plus some presidents of agricultural cooperatives.

A copy of the proposed law was sent to all National Assembly deputies, who were asked to consult with their constituents, especially with farmers in rural areas. For example a deputy from the Commission on Local Government (Organos Locales del Poder Popular or OLPP) told me that in her municipality she met with the twenty-three presidents of the cooperatives together with the local ANAP leadership, followed by meetings with cooperative presidents and farmers in the rest of the province.

In November and December 2001 meetings were held in the provinces with National Assembly deputies to explain the project and take their opinions and criticisms into account. Participating in these meetings were the ANPP President, Vice President and Secretary, Martinez and Toledo from the Assembly commissions, directors and lawyers from ANAP (including Lugo Fonte and Garea) and representatives from MINAG and MINAZ).

On December 14, 2001 the Assembly working group met to analyze all the proposals and opinions, both written and verbal, emanating from these meetings. I attended this meeting, and the discussion was very contentious. A deputy from Matanzas told those present that if the certain issues, especially housing, which had been debated by the deputies, were not settled, the bill as written was unacceptable and submitting it to the National Assembly for the December 2001 session as had been planned, would create a bombshell which would “explode in their faces.”

The Cuban National Assembly operates on the basis on consultation and consensus prior to submission to the National Assembly session for a final vote. Taking into account the dissatisfaction with the bill, the number, magnitude, importance and far-reaching consequences of the proposed changes, it was felt that farmers, deputies and government ministries should evaluate them to reach consensus. Therefore the Commission on Productive Activities and ANAP decided on December 16 that the project should not be presented to the December ANPP session, but rather, in an attempt to resolve contentious issues, should be sent out for further commentary and discussion.

Shortly thereafter a new version incorporating more than fifty changes was sent to all cooperative farmers: two of the “whereas” clauses, nine of the chapters and forty-four articles were modified, and four articles, one general disposition and one transitory disposition were added. From January 15 through April 2002, meetings to discuss the project were held with farmers in all of Cuba’s agricultural cooperatives. A new version, based on the farmers’

inputs, modified thirty of the articles and added a new article. Furthermore, farmers' suggestions not relating directly to the proposed law but rather to raising efficiency in agricultural production, were compiled.

In May and June 2002 this version was sent to all the deputies and another round of meetings was held with them in the provinces. It was also sent again to the central state organs, and political and mass organizations. The task force subsequently approved modifying three "whereas" clauses, fifteen articles, added a new special disposition and eliminated another. On November 1, 2002 the Commissions on Productive Activities and on Constitutional and Juridical Affairs approved this version with five changes, which were included in the dictamen submitted to the Assembly plenary session. On November 2, 2002 session of the National Assembly, Commission President Leonardo Martinez presented the dictamen, and Lugo Fonte presented the proposed law, which were debated and, with minor modifications, approved unanimously.

The new law deals with both the CPA and the CCS in an integral way, but recognizes the differences and distinctions. It regulates the portion of production determined and contracted by the state and that which can be sold in private markets. It defines percentages and distribution of profits, allowing for the distribution of up to seventy percent of the profits to long-time members. It mandates setting aside part of the profits for contingency funds to deal with emergencies such as natural disasters. It regulates the relationship of the cooperatives with the central and local governments and with the ANAP. It defines the leadership structure within each cooperative, and the resolution of conflicts. It regulates the employment, labor rights and social security of hired workers, their incorporation as members of the cooperatives, and their share of the profits. It defines the process of formation and dissolution of cooperatives.

Inputs by Deputies and Cooperative Farmers

In December 2001 I attended the meetings with deputies where the Agricultural Cooperative Bill was discussed in the following provinces: Havana, City of Havana, Pinar del Rio, and Matanzas. I was also given the tape recordings made of the meetings in Camagüey Province held on November 30, 2001. In June 2002 I attended a meeting with deputies in Camagüey which included deputies from Sancti Spiritus Province, and was given the tapes of the meetings held that month in Santiago and Holguin Provinces. I was also given the minutes of general assembly meetings held at five CPA and one CCS in Pinar del Rio and Havana Provinces. In each meeting many deputies and farmers spoke, showing no hesitation in voicing their concerns and disagreements. Those who participated demonstrated a thorough knowledge of both the text of the existing Law 36 and the new proposed legislation.

Some of the most contentious topics debated by the deputies and cooperative farmers during the meetings in the provinces were housing, roads, hired labor, distribution of profits, and control over production. To be sure the debates and changes made in the bill do not include all topics covered nor all revisions made as a result of deputies' and farmers' inputs.

The failure to resolve these differences, prior to the December 2001 Assembly session when the bill was scheduled to be voted on, especially regarding illegal housing, led to the decision to postpone the final vote. During his December 2001 interview with me, Lugo explained the housing problem under existing and proposed law.

In the CCS all housing that is constructed on a farmer's land belongs to the farmer, who owns the land and all its installations. He can allow that housing be build on his land for his children and blood relatives who work on the farm. But his child may not necessarily work on the farm, but rather in a refinery or a bank. So the farmer could be the owner of ten illegal houses on his farm, and there is no way to legalize this housing. It could be that his child is divorced and his former wife remains living in the housing and marries another man who has nothing to do with the farm, and that is illegal. This must be modified. What is the problem in the CPA? The CPA cannot give land to construct housing to someone who does not belong to the CPA. The land can be used to construct housing for the cooperators, who do not become owners of this house with a title until they have lived there and paid for it for twenty years. The problem arises when someone leaves the cooperative but keeps the housing. He lives there but does not work in the cooperative anymore. He should not just be thrown out of his home. Other housing must be found. What was being discussed with the deputies is the person who leaves the cooperative, and goes to work elsewhere, but tries to remain owner of his house. The new proposal allows the relative who leaves the CCS to keep his home, but with different rights and prerogatives as compared to the farmers. In the case of the CPA, the cooperative recuperates this housing. If a person leaves the cooperative an inferior house would have to be built for him on another part of the cooperative's land.

When I asked Lugo why the deputies representing farming districts were so angry, he responded that the farmers had committed what were considered to be illegal acts because the old law did not permit them to make so called illegal housing legal. Adding to difficulties were the large number of illegal houses. Lugo stated that even though such "illegal houses" were widespread and large in numbers, the problem was not dealt with in the proposed new law, because a law on agricultural cooperatives cannot legislate regarding housing, since it is not a housing law. The lawyer for ANAP, José Garea, told me that much of the illegal housing had been constructed by people who

were not members of the cooperatives and without the permission of the land owners in the case of the CCS, and without the authorization of the general assemblies of the CPA. When I asked him why the cooperative members complained about tearing them down, he replied that the illegal housing usually belonged to their relatives and friends. When, at the December 14, 2001 meeting, held to consider deputies' suggestions, it was suggested that therefore this issue should not be included in the new legislation, Commission President Martinez replied that this was impossible since the housing issue had already been discussed with the deputies. Lugo also informed the meeting that the Political Bureau of the PCC had requested that the housing issue be dealt with in the new legislation.

The deputy from the OLPP Commission told me that in her meetings with cooperative leaders and farmers they wanted to be able to construct not only their own homes but also offices and dwelling for family doctors. They also called for eliminating the contradiction between the section on housing and the existing housing law regarding dwellings within the jurisdiction of the cooperative. Much of the older housing on cooperatives was labeled "illegal" due to lack of legal documents and because they were categorized as unfit huts (*bohios*). The farmers claimed that despite the fact these were being improved they were still considered to be illegal, and therefore they demanded that the law contain a process to legalize these dwellings.

During the meeting in Matanzas Province on December 7, 2001 with deputies to debate the proposed law, one deputy stated the following:

There is a tragedy for us in the province; it regards illegal constructions in the cooperatives. We must specify in a temporary regulation what steps will be taken to confront the magnitude of this problem. The law should deal with what happens when those living in housing on land belonging to a cooperative no longer are connected to the cooperative because of emigration or working in another sector. This mess exists in the whole country and affects us greatly in our province. The law should also deal with construction of private housing. Suppose I live in a cooperative and my brother wants to construct a house. Who authorizes this? The cooperative's general assembly? The local government? I believe that the cooperative cannot give permission to anyone who is not a member. If the cooperative authorizes construction by non-members, the cooperatives will be finished. Permission to build given by the president of the cooperative has no legal backing. Therefore we have no legal document which enables us to legalize the housing and the person living there is an illegal occupant. We must find a way to legalize this housing. All housing should follow the policy drawn up by the National Housing Institute. Nobody should be able to just give a person a piece of paper with permission to construct.

In a meeting with deputies held in Camagüey Province on November 30, 2001, a deputy from Santa Cruz del Sur Municipality, referring to the CCS fortalecidas, requested that the new law “legalize housing built for contracted workers. Sometimes that housing needs to be built on land not belonging to a private farmer but rather held in usufruct, that is owned by the state but used by the cooperative farmers. Legalizing this housing guarantees that the contracted workers will stay.” Another deputy added that under present law housing built for relatives and other cooperative members could be legalized, but not for a medical doctor or an accountant. Still another added that the CCS fortalecidas are going to need many workers, since the family members and members are not enough. “We need economists, tractor drivers, truck drivers, teachers, medical doctors. This housing is constructed on state owned land held in usufruct, and we must find a legal solution for this problem.”

At meetings held with cooperative farmers in Pinar del Rio Province, at the CPA Eliseo Caamaño (February 2, 2002), the CPA Rafael Morales (March 15, 2002), and the CPA Carlos Baliño (March 16, 2002), to discuss the pending legislation, farmers’ proposals regarding home ownership were included in later versions. They suggested that the sentence concluding Article 41, “The cooperative concedes to them the surface rights,” for those own houses located on cooperatives, be added to Article 42, applying it to those buying their houses on installment plans, who should also be given surface rights and title of ownership when they finish paying for them.⁷

As a result of these interventions and similar ones by deputies in other provinces in winter 2001 and spring 2002, changes in the proposed legislation were made regarding housing. One important addition granted cooperative members title to surface rights to enable them to obtain ownership of the housing situated on this land. The General Assemblies’ right to approve new housing occupants was eliminated. The CCS were allowed to construct housing for temporary and permanent workers. In cases where cooperatives were being dissolved the provincial housing authority was included on the commission to carry out the liquidation of the assets in the cases where housing was located on land. The final version of the legislation as submitted to the National Assembly in November 2002 contained following changes (bold means additions, [deletions] are within brackets):

Article 2.- Agricultural Property: The land, animals, installations, area under cultivation, equipment and other means and instruments of the cooperative earmarked for agricultural production, as well as housing connected to and

7. **Acta Nro. 2, Asamblea General (extraordinaria), CPA Eliseo Caamaño**, February 2, 2002, 3; **Acta Extraordinaria, CPA Rafael Morales**, March 15, 2002, 3; **Acta, Asamblea General (extraordinaria), CPA Carlos Baliño**, 3.

the basic components of the cooperatives, as long as its property is not transferred to its occupants.

Article 41.- Housing located on land pertaining to the CPA, continues being personal property of the cooperative member and its legal occupant, who maintain the rights established in the relevant legislation. The cooperative concedes to them the surface rights.

Article 42.- Houses constructed or acquired by the cooperative on connected land or as part of its basic structure, are occupied by cooperative members by agreement of the General Assembly of the cooperative, who have the right to acquire their property by means of payment of its legal [just] price, once the period of stay as established by the relevant legislation has elapsed. The cooperative concedes to its members the surface rights with title to ownership of these houses.

Article 43.- In spite of what is stipulated in this section regarding ownership of houses, exchange or ceding of any other right [and the incorporation of new occupants], should be previously approved by the General Assembly without violating (*sin perjuicio*) the fulfillment of established legal procedures. When it concerns hereditary transmission it will conform to what is stipulated in relevant legislation.

Article 44.- The CCS can construct housing for their salaried workers on land on which the state previously has conceded to them surface rights in accordance with the regulations dictated by the competent state organism. These houses have the characteristics of being connected to the cooperatives or being part of its basic structure (*médios básicos*).

Article 81.- To carry out the liquidation of the assets of a cooperative in process of being dissolved a Liquidation Commission with representation from...the Provincial Housing Authority when there is housing on connected lands...

Final Stipulations

FOURTH: The National Housing Institute together with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Sugar taking into account the opinion of the National Association of Small Farmers, will decree within ninety (90) days, after the publication of the present law in the Official Gazette, the Regulations for the solution of the illegal houses constructed on land belonging to or in usufruct to the cooperatives of agricultural production and to the small farmers.⁸

8. Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas Agropecuarias**, November 2001, 14 (my translation); Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria y de Crédito y Servicios**(Law #95), November 2002, 16, 28, 30 (my translation).

At the December 16 meeting of the Commission on Productive Activities, in his announcement as to why the submission of the bill for consideration by the ANPP plenary session was being postponed, Garea read aloud this newly added fourth disposition and added, "Tomorrow at 5 PM we will meet with the President of the Housing Institute, with the participation of the Ministers of Agriculture and of Sugar, in order to begin specifying this obligation that the law is imposing on these organisms in order to begin to work on solutions."

Another hotly debated issue concerned road construction and maintenance on the cooperative farms. In the version sent to the deputies in November 2001, in the section titled "Relations with the local organs of People's Power," Article 23 stated: "The cooperatives and the local organs of People's Power will be able to offer mutual collaboration for the construction and repair of roads and rural projects which benefit the community or the cooperative in conformity with the relevant legal stipulations and with what is stipulated in the regulations."⁹

Lugo told me:

The principal roads for the cooperatives are the responsibility of MINAG, but for rural roads it depends on their usage. Those used to transport cane are repaired by MINAZ. If it is an internal road within the cooperative the cooperative pays. What is debated is that the cooperatives do not want to pay for the maintenance of these internal roads. This is very expensive and earnings do not provide enough funds to pay for these internal roads, and I am in agreement with them. We are working to change this aspect.

At the meeting with deputies in Camagüey Province on November 30, 2001 deputies insisted that MINAZ and MINAG build and maintain all internal roads for the cooperatives. They were told that the state would provide machinery and materials but that the cooperatives would have to build and finance the roads out of their profits since the internal roads were only for the use of the farmers. One deputy stated that in the proposed law Article 23 was not clear as to what constituted an internal road used to transport agricultural production. He noted the serious problem of who was responsible for maintaining it in conditions for it to be used to fulfill the fundamental mission of the cooperative, which includes production as well as transport. Article 23 did not clearly define the cooperation or the help to be provided by the local government.

Other deputies at the meeting pointed out that Camagüey is a very extensive province in territory and in agricultural production. Large investments are made in agricultural development, and, above all, in milk production. To

9. Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas Agropecuarias**, November 2001, 11 (my translation).

transport the milk the internal roads must be financed by the state. They argued that the government cannot avoid this, since it is essential for agricultural production. Only the state is able to do this. They pointed out that road repair is among the problems most frequently brought to the attention of the municipal assembly delegates by their farmer constituents.

Garea, speaking as the ANAP representative, responded that Article 20 refers to collaboration by the state for the development and strengthening of the agricultural cooperatives. With regards to their relations with local governments, cooperatives help in repairing country roads that serve small settlements, and the local governments help the cooperatives to resolve problems related to transporting their production. However, the exact forms of collaboration and the procedures should be specified in the regulations drawn up after the law is passed.

In the session held with deputies in Camagüey Province on June 4, 2002, a deputy who was also president of the Florencia Municipal Assembly complained that a major problem for the cooperatives was the lack of resources to fix the roads. The Camagüey Provincial Assembly President agreed:

In some cases it is better not to produce sugar cane than have to pay to maintain the roads. If the cooperatives have to maintain them then the price of sugar must be adjusted so that the harvest can finance the roads. Sugar cane production is the objective, it must be transported on these roads and it must finance road repair. It is in the interest of the state to transport the cane to the railroads. There are now parts of the roads which have been abandoned and are impassable. This must change because in this way we are creating a new culture which holds that if one considers it to be the state's responsibility then it is not mine. The people always had kept their roads clean, fixed up the sides of the roads, which now we are abandoning. I am not speaking of major highways.

In the final version the word "rural" was removed at the request of a deputy from Havana Province and reference to road construction was eliminated, presumably to provide more flexibility in relation to state aid. The article reads as follows:

Article 23.- "The cooperatives and the Local Organs of People's Power will be able to offer mutual collaboration for the construction of [and repair of roads and rural] projects which benefit the community or the cooperative in conformity with the relevant legal stipulations and with what is stipulated in the regulations."¹⁰

Another issue that was extensively debated during the meetings with deputies and farmers concerned articles dealing with relations with the state. As

10. Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria y de Crédito y Servicios**(Law #95), November 2002, 11 (my translation).

a result input by deputies and farmers the help the state offers in terms of constitution, development and strengthening of the cooperatives was defined more precisely and expanded (Article 18).¹¹

Deputies and farmers debated articles which required certain production to be determined by and contracted to be sold to the state instead of being sold privately. I asked Lugo whether this did not limit the cooperatives' autonomy, he replied, "No, because that is what we have been doing in practice. For example, we cannot let milk be sold at market prices, since Cuba guarantees milk for all children at a minimum price. The farmer can consume personally what he wants and the rest is sold to the state. The same goes for tobacco, honey, coffee, all of which are for export."

During the November 30, 2001 meeting with deputies in Camagüey Province a deputy from Waymar Municipality, where the main production is milk, complained that this article lacked percentages of the production which the CCS were required to sell to the state, and that the state should regulate what percentage it is going to give to the cooperatives in terms of resources (Article 16 parts d and e). Another deputy, and also Garea, said specifying such percentages was not a good idea since national requirements differed depending on the crops, and this suggestion was rejected.

Referring to Article 16 part j, the deputy from Waymar stated that it should specify genetics when referring to zoology, since the milk producing cooperatives in the area deal with insemination of cows. A deputy from Camagüey Municipality suggested that in Article 16 part d, following the words "national requirements" it should state "subject to the complementary regulations of the MINAG and other organisms of the state administration." Another referred to Article 22, which allowed for the immediate sale of "agricultural products" (producciones agropecuarias) which are at risk of spoilage. This deputy argued that this formulation incorrectly included livestock breeding, and thus should be rephrased as "agrarian products" (producciones agrícolas) referring only to spoilage in crop cultivation, because livestock and milk products are contracted as part of the national requirements and should be treated differently than tomatoes or yucca, for example. These suggestions were included in the final draft approved by the ANPP.

A deputy in this meeting suggested that in Article 10 the law should explain the steps to determine and authorize the "social objective" for each cooperative, which defines its authorized productive and service activities. The theme of giving individual cooperatives a say in determining its social objective was also brought up at the meetings with farmers. At the meeting on March 29, 2002 of the CPA Héroes de Yaguajay in Havana Province, one

11. Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto. Ley de Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria y de Crédito y Servicios** (Law #95), November 2002, 9.

stated that “The social objective should result from something official and the cooperative should approve the objective in its assembly, not like it is now, where the state authority approves it.”¹²

During the December 7, 2001 meeting in the City of Havana Province, a women deputy suggested that in Article 16 the cooperatives and the state carry out a policy regarding species and varieties of seeds. She also recommended that Article 20 part b include technical assistance for environmental sanitation and matters relating to soil. In the version sent to the deputies prior to the meeting held in Camagüey Province on July 7, 2002, Article 16 part d had been changed to read, “Sell products contracted as decided (según se determina). A deputy from Camagüey Municipality complained that they had not included suggestions made in the November 30 meeting, that it should state “as decided by state organisms,” which he claimed would make it much clearer. If left as written, without specifying who decides, it would be weak. These suggestions were also included in the final draft.

Complaints registered by farmers at the meetings held on February 2, 2002 (CPA Eliseo Camaño) and on March 15, 2002 (CPA Rafael Morales), involved the language in Article 19 part b. He pointed out that the cooperatives’ general assemblies, rather than MINAG and MINAZ “approve” production plans.¹³ The language was modified by adding that the approval process would involve the general assemblies of the cooperatives. The language was also changed in Article 16 part c, from having the cooperatives “propose” rather than “submit” their production plans to MINAG and MINAZ. In relationship to this article, a farmer at the March 16, 2002 general assembly of CPA Carlos Baliño, proposed “that the state guarantee to supply us with the minimum of supplies necessary in order to guarantee that we will meet the conditions necessary to fulfil the contracts.”¹⁴

Other changes in the bill which resulted from commentaries and suggestions made by the deputies basically, according to Garea speaking to deputies in Santiago Province in June 2002, cleared up concepts of production contracted by state enterprises, in the sense that it not be conditioned by national requirements, and thereby freeing up more production to be marketed as decided by the cooperatives. The changes also included defining the power of each cooperative, with the approval of its general assembly and of MINAG and MINAZ, to determine its social objective; modifying the approval process for production plans and programs for the development of the cooperatives, to include both the ministries involved in production and the cooperatives, and not just the former; specifying that cooperatives, besides

12. **Acta No. 3, Asamblea General, CPA Héroes de Yaguajay**, March 29, 2002, 2.

13. **Acta No. 2, Asamblea General, CPA Eliseo Caamaño**, 3; **Acta Extraordinaria, Asamblea General, CPA Rafael Morales**, 3.

14. **Acta, Asamblea General Extraordinaria, CPA Carlos Baliño**, 3 (my translation).

their contractual relations with state enterprises to receive productive resources and supplies assigned by the state, can acquire directly from state organizations other products and services which are necessary for the fulfillment of their economic and social activities. The following are excerpts from the final version of the bill highlighting some of these revisions:

Article 2.- Mandated production [production contracted for national requirements]: those agricultural and forest productions, whose cost and destination is determined by the State to cover part of the basic needs of the national economy and which are contracted with the cooperatives with this objective [whose transaction with and sale to corresponding state entities, has the characteristic of being a mandate].

Other agricultural and forest productions: those [not destined to fulfill national requirements] which the cooperatives can [contract to or] sell to state entities or to others who have been authorized, offer at the Agricultural Markets, or designate for their own use or that of other cooperatives.

Social Objective: encompasses the fundamental line of production, other agricultural and forest production and other legitimate activities of a productive nature or of services and commercialization linked to agricultural production, which have been properly authorized for the cooperatives.

Article 16.- The cooperatives, object of this law as productive entities, are inserted in the system of the country's primary organizations of the country's agricultural production and have the following obligations with the state:

- c).- Elaborate and propose [submit] for approval annual production plans and [medium and long term] development plans;
- d).- Sell the mandated products as determined by the competent organism [Contract with and sell to state entities production set by the national requirements (balance nacional)];
- e).- Contract with, acquire [receive] and utilize rationally supplies (insumos) and other productive and financial resources [allocated by the state].

Article 19.- It is the responsibility of the Ministries of Agriculture and Sugar [in accordance with the fundamental type of production of each cooperative]:

- a) To authorize [approve] the social objective of the cooperative as proposed by the General Assembly taking into account the opinion of the National Association of Small Farmers, and oversee its fulfillment;
- b) To approve [and control] together with the cooperative production plans and development programs of the cooperatives, as well as controlling its implementation;
- c) To establish the state policy and decree the regulations for the designation and acquisition of supplies and other resources of production destined for production, internal consumption and social projects of the cooperatives, and

oversee their implementation [To designate the supplies and resources of production].

Article 20.- The relations of the cooperatives with the state enterprises are contractual with the goal of [contracting with and] selling mandated products [according to national requirements], other products mutually agreed upon, [contract with] and receive supplies and resources for production and other [assigned] productive resources necessary to fulfill its economic and social activities [and the sale of others in the free market, as well as lending technical, agricultural and other services demanded by the cooperatives].¹⁵

Deputies and farmers sought changes in the articles on the distribution of profits. According to Lugo, “The new law states that the person with more seniority gets a higher percentage of the profits. A farmer who has worked twenty years on the cooperative has contributed more than a new member to the creation of capital on the cooperative. At first there was some rejection of this new proposal by some very good and very rich cooperatives, but not the majority.”

In the new legislation up to 70 percent of the profits may be distributed to the cooperative members (an increase from the 50 percent in the previous legislation) if the reserve fund for contingencies has been funded.

Both deputies and farmers demanded that the reserve fund for emergencies be set at a percentage of a cooperative’s assets, and in the final version this was set at ten percent. They also insisted that in order to distribute up to seventy percent of the profits to the farmers, at least half of the contingency fund must have been financed, and that at least 50 percent be distributed. These changes were accepted in the final version.

The original version of the bill increased the profits distributed to those farmers with at least five years seniority to encourage them to remain, and to reward retired founders of the cooperative who had contributed land or other items, such as machinery to the cooperative (jubilados aportadores). At the March 29, 2002 general assembly at CPA Héroes de Yaguajay a farmer complained about unequal distribution of profits based on seniority, stating that it should be equal for all farmers.¹⁶ During the March 15 CPA Rafael Morales general assembly a farmer proposed that the reward be given to all retired members, and not just jubilados aportadores, since all retirees “had contributed to the economic stability, to the creation of its assets.”¹⁷ The language was subsequently changed to include all retired founders of the cooperative.

15. Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas Agropecuarias**, November 2001, 7, 9, 10, (my translation); Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria y de Crédito y Servicios**(Law #95), November 2002, 3, 9-10 (my translation).

16. **Acta No. 3 Asamblea General, CPA Héroes de Yaguajay**, 2.

17. **Acta Extraordinaria, CPA Rafael Morales**, 2 (my translation).

Debates involved workers contracted by the CPA and the CCS, Some of whom are needed only a few months per year. Lugo told me:

The CPA has contracted workers who have to work for a relatively short trial period. If they want to be members they must be brought immediately to the general assembly of the cooperative. There are many members of the cooperatives who do not want them to become members, because if they are not members they cannot share in the cooperatives' profits. But this is exploitation. The new version of the bill states they must be considered for membership by the general assembly within three months, and, if accepted, have a right to share the profits from the first day of employment prior to becoming members. There was protest on these matters from the deputies. There are many members who have a lot of money and don't want to share this with non-members, but that is exploitation which cannot be permitted. In the general sense sharing profits in this manner has been accepted. There was also discussion regarding the distribution of profit. In the CCS *fortalecida* the contracted labor also shares in the profits. But some of the farmers hired labor on their own, and these workers did not receive social security, maternity benefits, or accident insurance, as do other Cuban workers. The Revolution cannot permit this. The new law says that in the CCS only the cooperative, and not individual farmers, can hire labor. The farmer who uses the labor, pays the worker and also pays the CCS for the workers' social security and taxes for the use of the labor power. Thus the contracted worker will have pension rights and disability insurance. This covers about 100,000 workers. This has not been a problem with the CPA which pays social security for all members and contracted workers.

Those workers hired by the CPAs who become members were granted the right to receive part of the profits, starting from their first day on the job. The original bill's language granted profit sharing to all workers contracted by the cooperatives, but farmers objected to including short-term workers (such as during the harvest) who do not become members. Several farmers emphasized this point at the March 7, 2002 CPA Niceto Pérez general assembly. One pointed out that some hired workers come to their province during their vacations and work for one or two months and then disappear. Another argued that allowing short term workers to share in the profits constituted a disincentive for the cooperators, by granting the former excessive rights without the obligation owed to the cooperative and to ANAP. A third farmer added that if approved as written no worker would be motivated to become a cooperator.¹⁸ In the March 16, 2002 general assembly at CPA Carlos Baliño in Havana Province, a farmer argued that short term contracted workers should not share in the profits, since by law they work eight hour days and

18. **Acta No. 2, Asamblea General, CPA Niceto Pérez**, March 7, 2002, 4.

would not have the same love as the cooperators who work ten or twelve or more hours since their work is for their own benefit.¹⁹

In all versions of the bill contracted workers and all CPA and CCS members are covered as all other workers in Cuba by existing legislation regarding retirement age (60 for men, 55 for women), social security and disability insurance.

The following excerpts indicated the changes made in these areas:

Article 2.- Reserve fund to cover contingencies: a compulsory financial fund, not for distribution, which each cooperative should create and maintain, to come from its profits, whose total cost should not be inferior to ten percent of [be in direct relation to] the value of its assets, which is destined exclusively to resolve difficult economic situations, due to natural catastrophes or other causes not covered by insurance [to guarantee the economic life of the cooperative].

Article 51.- When the cooperative has completed the payment of goods produced by the cooperative, distributed to the cooperators, and has constituted more than half of [stabilized] the reserve fund to cover contingencies, it can distribute more than fifty percent, up to seventy percent of the profits [among cooperators and workers].

Article 53.- These cooperatives also dedicate part of their profits to rewards the retired contributors and founders, depending on years of work and merits earned.

Article 65.- Workers who become members of the CPA, have the right to the participation in the profits from the first day of their incorporation as workers.²⁰

During a heated debate in Pinar del Rio Province in December 2001 the stand taken by some deputies that the UBPC be included in the legislation was rejected. One deputy argued that the UBPC, while having distinctive origins and characteristics, are based on the principle of cooperative production. "Why then," he asked, "if we are dealing with a law on cooperatives, do we not include them in this law in a separate chapter? It seems to me that due to the importance of the UBPC, due to extraordinary importance in production within the country such as with sugar cane, they should not be excluded." Another responded that since the UBPC does not own the land, but rather uses state owned land, the farmers were workers, analogous to factory workers, rather than cooperating farmers.

19. **Acta Asamblea General (extraordinaria) CPA Carlos Baliño, 3.**

20. Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas Agropecuarias**, November 2001, 8, 16, 19 (my translation); Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, **Proyecto, Ley de Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria y de Crédito y Servicios**(Law #95), November 2002, 3, 18-19, 23 (my translation).

The issue of the UBPC came up at meeting in Holguin Province in June 2002 during the discussion of the bill's title. A woman from Manzanillo Municipality argued that the title "Agricultural Cooperatives Law" implies that it includes the UBPC, which are not covered in the law, even though Article 3 of the version sent to the deputies in May 2002 defined the CPA and the CCS as the cooperatives covered by the new law. A deputy from Las Tunas suggested that the law's title include both "Agricultural Production Cooperatives and Service and Credit Cooperatives." The topic of the title was also brought up at the meeting in Santiago Province in June 2002. A deputy from San Luis Municipality reiterated that the title had been discussed in the whole country. He said that the original title, "Law on Agricultural Cooperatives" sounded to many farmers as if it only concerned the CPA, and did not cover the CCS. There was also worry expressed that without more clarity in the title, farmers would incorrectly suppose that the UBPC were also covered. In the final version, as recommended in the dictamen issued by the Productive Activity and Constitutional Affairs Commissions, passed by the ANPP the title was changed to "Law of Agricultural Production and of Credit and Service Cooperatives."

At the November 2, 2002 plenary session of the ANPP the Commissions' dictamen contained four suggested changes, all of which were accepted. The most important ones were the new title, changing "Contracted production" to "Mandated production", and the inclusion of the Provincial Housing Authority in the commissions overseeing the dissolution of cooperatives.

In the Assembly debate, a deputy asked that to Article 16 (obligations that cooperatives have with the state) part d (regarding sale of mandated production to the state), add that it be "determined by the organisms of the Central State Administration." He argued that what is most important is "the control that should be exercised regarding the fulfillment of the contracts in order to avoid diversion of products to destinations other than those projected. One should ask if the mandated production is done . . . with attention paid to soil quality, the existence or non-existence of an irrigation system, seed quality, or does empiricism prevail?" This change was accepted, with the addition of "determined by the competent organism" added to Article 16 part d.

A deputy pointed out that since in the dictamen "contracted production" was changed to "mandated production" in Article 2, the same change should be done in all the other articles where "contracted production" appears, namely Articles 8, 9, 16, 19, and 20. This change was accepted.

The suggestion by another deputy that the paragraph in Article 22 regarding cooperatives directly supplying agricultural productions to social institutions, specify "commerce and gastronomy." This was not accepted, as Lugo

responded that this was be too limiting, leaving out, for instance, education and health centers.

Much of the rest of the debate concerned prices, transport, and the role of middlemen in the sale of agricultural products in private agricultural markets, items that were not covered in the pending legislation. It was only concerning these items that President Fidel Castro spoke. The bill passed by a unanimous vote.²¹

In conclusion, the main parts of the process involved consultation and consensus. ANAP was the major player in drafting the legislation. Modifications came from consultations with ministers, specialists, the PCC, but mainly from deputies and cooperative farmers during meetings held in the provinces, who were not hesitant to voice their opposition to certain part of the bill. Of course, the suggested modifications had to be accepted by leadership from ANAP and the Productive Affairs Commission. When consensus was not achieved prior to submitting the bill to the plenary session in December 2001, ANAP and the Productive Affairs Commission decided to withdraw the bill and dispatch it for more consultation with farmers, deputies and state organs. The recommendations for changes in the Commissions' dictamen came mainly from suggestions made by deputies during the consultation process. The plenary session debate did not involve much substance, since most of the contentious issues had been dealt with previously. Clearly opposition by deputies to certain parts of the bill had been voiced, heard, taken into account and, overall, had been effective. By the time the bill was submitted consensus had been achieved which accounts for the unanimous vote. Neither the PCC nor President Castro played an important role during the whole legislative process.

It should be noted that not every bill passed by the ANPP goes through this lengthy consultation process. It is also important to point out that when consultation does take place, it usually involves those groups and sectors of the population linked to proposed legislation.

Not only did suggestions made by deputies and farmers contribute to important changes made in the final version of the bill, but the debates also demonstrated that these participants had studied the bill, and were familiar and knowledgeable regarding its content. I noticed the same when deputies were debating the Law Against Terrorism passed in 2001. Compare this with the United States Congress whose members passed the Patriot Act in 2001 without having read it, and passed the 2005 budget (over 1000 pages weighing fourteen pounds) the day after receiving it at the end of November 2004, admittedly and obviously without having time to read it.

21. **Acta: Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Noveno Período Ordinario de Sesiones: Quinta Legislatura**, November 2, 2002, 1-22 (my translation).

Political Dimensions of International NGO Collaboration with Cuba

Adrian H. Hearn

Since the evaporation of trade relations with the former Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, Cuba's realignment with the global economy has impacted strongly on social service delivery. Cuban authorities have adopted a more decentralized, locally sensitive approach to urban development that has brought state institutions into collaboration with a wide range of community organizations and neighborhood self-help groups. This has attracted the interest of international development agencies, which have become indispensable to Cuba in initiatives ranging from neighborhood revitalization to regional economic planning.¹ A recent United Nations report identifies over 2000 functioning partnerships between Cuban and foreign non-governmental organizations, a figure that is bound to increase as the Cuban Government continues to decentralize development planning and streamline its social service commitments.²

But Cuba differs from other emerging economies in the extent to which its government maintains an active role in regulating the flow of resources and avenues of collaboration. While foreign investors are permitted no more than a 49 percent share in commercial joint ventures, international development agencies are subjected to the meticulous background investigations and constant scrutiny of the Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (MINVEC). They are also required to work closely with state affiliated partner organizations, ranging from centrally governed ministries to

1. M Sinclair, **NGOs in Cuba: Principles for Cooperation (working paper #3)**, Boston: Oxfam America, 2000.

2. United Nations, **Contribución de las ONGs Cubanas e Internacionales Radicadas en Cuba Para el Forum del Milenio**, La Habana: ONU, 2000, p 9.

local NGOs, which often limit collaborative development activities to a slate of pre-designed projects.

This level of legal regulation has enabled the Cuban State to coordinate the efforts of international development agencies more efficiently than authorities in post-socialist scenarios such as Eastern Europe, where service duplication and a lack of inter-agency communication have slowed the formation of nationally and regionally integrated strategies for economic recovery and social development.³ Nevertheless, the rapid changes of the 1990s have exposed the shortcomings of central planning and top-down control of resources, which have not been adequately sensitive to emerging problems at the community level, even when projects are locally designed.⁴ Working in an environment that is regulated from above to simultaneously protect national interests and promote formal sector commercial expansion, international development NGOs have faced challenges in Cuba that are becoming increasingly relevant around the world as governments (particularly in the ASEAN region) experiment with more robust regulatory frameworks to stabilize domestic economic environments and attract “sticky” foreign investment.⁵ Two particularly salient challenges are the definition of mutually acceptable NGO-state-community relationships and the balancing of public interest with commercial competitiveness in sustainable projects. Based on 18 months of fieldwork this article examines these challenges as they have emerged in recent collaborations between Cuban state institutions and foreign NGOs.

I begin by arguing that many of the problems that commonly beset collaborative initiatives result from a disjuncture of Cuban and foreign approaches to promoting popular participation and building “civil society.” Next I present two case studies of projects funded by the Australian Government’s Agency for International Development (AusAID) and managed by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), an environmental NGO that operated in Havana from 1993 until 2001. Required by AusAID to “strengthen civil society” through “participatory” and “sustainable” projects, the ACF was simultaneously obliged by the Cuban State to recognize its authority and sovereignty in development planning. The first case study shows how the understanding of “civil society” employed by Cuban authorities allowed a

3. Editorial, ‘NGOs: Sins of the Secular Missionaries’, *The Economist*, 354, 2000, pp 25-27; A Ishkanian **Women’s NGOs in Armenia: The Challenge of Working at the Global-Local Nexus**, paper presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., 2001.

4. A Fernández Soriano, ‘Realidades, Retos y Posibilidades de los Municipios Cubanos en el Fin de Siglo’, in B Stolowicz (ed), **Gobiernos de Izquierda en América Latina**, D.F., México: Plaza y Valdés, 1999, pp 165-182.

5. D Jarvis, **Changing Economic Environment in Southeast Asia**, The University of Sydney: RIAP, 2004, p 10.

greater degree of state involvement than that followed by AusAID. The ambiguity of the term “civil society” in official contracts enabled the ACF to emphasize the goal of community participation in its reports to AusAID, even though project funds were ultimately managed by the Cuban State.

The second case study highlights the difficulty of reconciling community welfare with commercial growth. When the ACF sought to generate grassroots interest in urban agriculture through an educational magazine, a key AusAID requirement was that the publication become “sustainable.” The ACF interpreted this directive in terms of generating popular interest, but its Cuban partner organization viewed it solely in terms of achieving commercial viability. Despite the conceptual disjuncture over the precise meaning of “sustainability,” official progress reports sent back to AusAID stressed its gradual accomplishment. As with countless emerging development initiatives in contemporary Cuba, distinct readings of key reference terms enabled an international donor to achieve its stated development objectives while facilitating the Cuban State’s ability to maintain political sovereignty and to cultivate profitable commercial ventures.

International NGOs and Civil Society in Contemporary Cuba

In a paper entitled, “Cuba’s NGOs: Government Puppets or Seeds of Civil Society?” Gillian Gunn has observed that many of the Cuban organizations that refer to themselves as “NGOs” are more committed to reinforcing the authority of the central State than building truly non-governmental initiatives.⁶ The director of Oxfam America’s Cuba program, Minor Sinclair, has explained this paradox in terms of productive public/private integration:

In broad terms, they [Cuban NGOs] have not looked to substitute or compete with the State in the delivery of services... They look towards an integrated approach, by engaging the citizenry and yes, by engaging the government, in the task of development... NGOs, as part of civil society, have a vital role in reverting the economic crisis.⁷

Sinclair’s inclusion of Cuban “NGOs” in “civil society” raises the question of what these terms actually mean, for as Jenny Pearce writes:

The same language and concepts are used by all, from the World Bank to Southern NGOs and grassroots movements. The reluctance to clarify the distinct meanings invested in these concepts, however, reflects collective collu-

6. G. Gunn, **Cuban NGOs: Government Puppets or Seeds of Civil Society?**, Washington, D.C.: Center for Latin American Studies, Georgetown University, 1995.

7. M. Sinclair, **NGOs in Cuba**, 2000, **op cit.**, pp 2, 8.

sion in the myth that a consensus on development exists, or even that some clear conclusions have been reached about how to deal with global poverty.⁸

The way policy makers and scholars have dealt with and utilized “civil society” both in Cuba and internationally is a case in point: the consensus seems to be that civil society is an interactive, voluntary social arena that carries the seeds of participatory democratization and empowerment.⁹ Skeptical of this consensus, Keith Tester remarks that, “You won’t find anyone who has a bad word for civil society. Everyone sees it as a thoroughly good thing...but why?”¹⁰ Writing in 1992, Tester was among the first theorists to suggest that civil society may be best understood as “an imagination,” with a variety of applications and strategic uses.¹¹ Indeed, when the finer details of the concept are unpacked, Tester’s observation is borne out in the distinct, even contradictory, ways the term is used to describe and prescribe how governments regulate their economies and manage social affairs. International debates about the specific meaning of civil society reflect this ambiguity:

Civil society is so often invoked in so many contexts that it has acquired a strikingly plastic moral and political valence. The recent renaissance of the term began with anticommunist dissent in Eastern Europe, which gave civil society its association with opposition movements and “parallel polis” to the state...Civil society is sometimes conceived as spontaneous growth, prior to and independent of government, and sometimes as dependent on government for legal structure, robust recognition, or outright fiscal support.¹²

The fact that such different, even contradictory, scenarios can be referred to with the same term has important practical consequences in Cuba, where the notion of civil society has been employed to describe everything from a space for the expression of popular interests with “the active participation of the authorities” to anything that is “in counter-position to the State.”¹³ As

8. J Pearce, ‘Development, NGOs, and Civil Society: The Debate and its Future’, in D Eade (ed), **Development, NGOs, and Civil Society**, Oxford: Oxfam, 2000, pp 15-16.

9. See, for example, JL Cohen and A Arato, **Civil Society and Political Theory**, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992; H Dilla, ‘The Virtues and Misfortunes of Civil Society’, **NACLA Report on the Americas** 32(5), 1999; N Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy’, in B Robbins (ed.), **The Phantom Public Sphere**, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993; T Skocpol and MP Fiorina, **Civic Engagement in American Democracy**, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999; IM Young, ‘State, Civil Society, and Social Justice’ in I Shapiro and C Hacker-Cordón (eds), **Democracy’s Value**, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

10. K Tester, personal communication, Melbourne, 4th August, 2004.

11. K Tester, **Civil Society**, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p 125.

12. NL Rosenblum and RC Post, **Civil Society and Government**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, p 1.

13. M Recio et al., ‘Sociedad Civil en los 90: el debate Cubano’, **Temas** (16-17), 1999, pp 155-175; see also H Azcuy Henríquez, ‘Estado y Sociedad Civil en Cuba’, **Temas**, 4, 1995, pp 105-110; H Dilla, ‘Civil Society’, in A Chomsky, B Carr and PM Smorkaloff (eds), **The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics**, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, pp 650-659.

Ariel Armony has argued, the ways that power relations operate in Cuba are determined largely by the question of how the Cuban State relates to civil society; that is:

...whether civil society in Cuba should be construed as being within or outside the State. This problem is not merely theoretical or terminological: this conundrum has vital implications for the organizing of hegemony in Cuba...It is important to ask, what are the tactical advantages of the phrase “civil society” in Cuban discourse? What is the legitimacy that actors can gain from “being part” of civil society?¹⁴

Actors ranging from community organizations to Cuban state institutions clearly have much to gain from “being part” of civil society, not least the capacity to attract the recognition and funds of foreign development agencies. Clearly the Cuban Government maintains significant control over the channels and destinations of such funding, with the aim of directing its flow to organizations that are administratively and ideologically connected to the State. As a result, the strategic initiatives of development agencies and the donors who finance them, which are usually phrased in terms of strengthening civil society and building democracy, are often implemented with much more involvement of the Cuban State than officially acknowledged.¹⁵ The U.S. State Department has attempted to minimize this possibility by requiring U.S. NGOs to demonstrate the independence of their Cuban counterparts when they apply for a license to operate in Cuba. This requirement, which views Cuban civil society as “oppositional” to state interests, is embodied in the Cuban Democracy Act (Track II policy), which seeks to “reach around” the Castro Government to support the growth of independent organizations.¹⁶

Guarding against the empowerment of domestic oppositional organizations is a key factor influencing the Cuban State’s insistence on authority in development planning. As Alfonso Quiroz puts it, “attempts to enhance the autonomy of non-governmental associations in Cuba have been regarded as suspicious and possibly contributing to foreign efforts to undermine the socialist character of the Cuban system.”¹⁷ Raúl Castro articulated this concern in a 1996 speech to the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, when, as Joseph Scarpaci et al. write,

14. A Armony, ‘Civil Society in Cuba: A Conceptual Approach’, in ME Crahan (ed), **Religion, Culture, and Society: The Case of Cuba**, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003, pp 22, 25.

15. M Cisneros, **Respectful Engagement: Cuban NGO Cooperation with Latin America, Europe, and Canada**, Philadelphia: The American Friends Service Committee International Division, 1996, pp 7-8, 18.

16. E González and RA Nuccio, **Conference Proceedings: The RAND Forum on Cuba**, Washington, D.C.:RAND, 1999, p 33.

17. A Quiroz, ‘The Evolution of Laws Regulating Associations and Civil Society in Cuba’, in ME Crahan (ed), **Religion, Culture, and Society: The Case of Cuba**, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003, p 56.

He emphasized that the Cuban concept of civil society is not the same as that in the United States, and he claimed that some foreign NGOs in Cuba, “attempt to undermine the economic, political and social system freely chosen by [the Cuban] people...[their] only aim is to enslave [Cuba].”¹⁸

Nevertheless, the support of foreign NGOs has clearly functioned to ease the State’s budgetary commitments particularly in the area of social service delivery. It is worth noting that some of the most effective community projects in the past decade have resulted from the work of religious congregations, both Christian and Afro-Cuban, often in collaboration with decentralized state institutions. The organization CARITAS, for example, in conjunction with the U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services, invested more than U.S. \$10 million into Cuban “living parishes” between 1993 and 1997, the years most severely affected by the economic crisis.¹⁹ CARITAS officer Rolando Suárez Cobain explains that, “because of shortages of medicine, for example, people in the parishes can identify their neighbors who need something like insulin, and we can try to get it to them”²⁰ Committed to the wellbeing of their congregations, over Christian 54 organizations and community centers had emerged in Cuba by 1997, with over 50,000 members.²¹

The emergence of organizations like the Centro Católico de Formación Cívico-Religiosa (Catholic Center for Civic-Religious Education), the Equipo Promotor para la Participación Social del Laico (Team for the Promotion of Lay Social Participation), and the Comisión Justicia y Paz (Commission for Justice and Peace) represents a new Catholic appetite for social engagement. By 1998 the Cuban Catholic church was operating 20 childcare centers, 21 retirement homes, 5 hospitals, and numerous free medicine dispensaries.²² The Church’s public voice has gained further tenor through the circulation of new pamphlets and journals (currently over 20), plus the revival of old ones like the *Vida Cristiana*. Meanwhile, the multi-denominational Christian Centro Memorial Dr. Martin Luther King, supported by the U.S. based Pastors for Peace, has developed a public street lighting project in collaboration with the government’s electricity provider in the Popular Council of Los Pocitos, and worked closely on social programs with the Psychiatric Hospital of Havana.

18. JL Scarpaci, R Segre and M Coyula, **Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis**, Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002, p 165.

19. L Chauvin, “Cuba Opens its Doors to Greater Church Life and Charity Services”, **National Catholic Reporter** 33(18), 1997, p 10.

20. L Chauvin, 1997, *op cit.*, p 10.

21. JM Wall, “Diplomatic Dance: Cuba’s Religion Factor”, **Christian Century** 114(19), 1997, p 579.

22. R Orozco and N Bolívar, **Cuba Santa: Comunistas, Santeros Y Cristianos en la Isla de Fidel Castro**, Madrid: El País, 1998, p 460.

Perhaps no organization has been more active than the Centro Cristiano de Reflexión y Diálogo (Christian Center for Reflection and Dialogue). Founded in 1991 by the Presbyterian pastor Raymundo García Franco, the Centro has begun to deliver basic social services in the city of Cárdenas, assuming a large share of previously state-administered responsibilities (Margaret Crahan, personal communication May 12, 2003). With funds from religious institutions in the United States, Canada, Germany, and Spain, the Centro repairs public buildings, supplies state schools, hospitals, and nursing homes with fresh agricultural produce, and runs environmental care programs with newly purchased trucks and other heavy equipment.²³

Despite its considerable social impact, García Franco is careful to point out that, "Our organization is a modest resource for the nation and our people that in no way competes with or substitutes for the State...we respect the political authority of the government."²⁴ Nevertheless, researchers at Havana's Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociológicas (Center for Psychological and Sociological Research, CIPS) detect a changing of the guard in the area of social service delivery, characterized by "religious organizations assuming roles and functions, particularly in basic services to the population, at a time when state social institutions cannot deliver them as they used to given the real limitations of the period"²⁵ Welfare activities, they write, have facilitated Christian evangelical efforts:

- The distribution of medicine and other products, such as prizes for children's and young people's activities, produces a kind of attraction in participating communities at the grassroots, which could be characterized as the "japonización [disinfecting] of evangelization."²⁶
- To the extent that church related welfare programs respond to local demands, they serve to ease some of the pressure on the State to fund social services at the grassroots. It is difficult not to connect these kinds of projects with recent state tolerance for religious expression in Cuba. As I have discussed elsewhere,²⁷ Afro-Cuban religious communities have also emerged as key participants in collaborative state/non-state welfare projects in the past decade, though their capacity to form official international linkages with donors is currently less developed than that of their Christian counterparts.

The participation of religious groups in officially sanctioned collaborative projects indicates the gradual emergence and diversification of civil society in Cuba. This process is of great interest to international NGOs, most of

23. R García Franco, 'La Participación de los Religiosos Cubanos en la Vida Social del País', *Transcript of La Mesa Redonda*, 25th December 2000, published by Juventud Rebelde, 2000, p 6.

24. R García Franco, 2000, *op cit.*, p 6-7.

25. A Del Rey Roa and Y Castañeda Mache, 'El Reavivamiento Religioso en Cuba', *Temas* 31, 2002, p 99.

26. A Del Rey Roa, and Y Castañeda Mache, 2002, *op cit.*, p 99.

27. AH Hearn, "Afro-Cuban Religions and Social Welfare: Consequences of Commercial Development in Havana," *Human Organization* 63(1), 2004, pp 78-87.

which identify the fortification of civil society as a central development objective. The controversy surrounding collaboration with the Cuban Government as a means to accomplishing this goal is reflected in the range of approaches taken by foreign donors. At one extreme are organizations like the Ford Foundation, which according to one of its program officers, complies with U.S. State Department regulations by maintaining strict distance from Cuban State institutions:

- Ever since the Ford Foundation was accused of funding the 1960 Kennedy election campaign, we've been required to prove that our grantees satisfy a set of "due diligence" regulations. In Cuba this requirement is applied with extra care because we have to make sure that partner organizations are independent from the State. This affects the kinds of projects we can fund... One recent project was to provide resources for a female symphony orchestra in Santiago de Cuba.
- Some educational and humanitarian aid agencies are less constrained in choosing who they work with. The organization Global Exchange, for example, gives a lot of autonomy to its on-site employees, who have pioneered a form of close person-to-person contact and developed really strong grassroots relationships. Global Exchange does this because technically it is a private organization with an educational and humanitarian mission. But I think its enthusiasm for building relationships with Cuban institutions comes at the expense of really investigating the backgrounds of those institutions. In other words, Global Exchange has no "due diligence" regulations. As a commercial enterprise, it only seeks to satisfy the requirements of its customers.²⁸

Governed by "due diligence" regulations, the Ford Foundation is clearly not at liberty to develop collaborative projects with Cuban state institutions. Global Exchange, on the other hand, works with governments—socialist or otherwise—around the world to promote grassroots development, community activism, and cross-cultural understanding through face to face contact, despite a history of legal difficulties with the U.S. State Department. The director of the Global Exchange Cuba Program described the organization's links with Cuban state institutions in terms of respect for the country's political sovereignty:

We bring ordinary U.S. citizens to Cuba to show them the reality behind all the U.S. media propaganda, and we always conduct these "reality tours" through Cuban host institutions. Many of our groups arrive at hospitals and other locations with backpacks full of antibiotics and want to be directly involved in the donation; to see with their own eyes the delivery of goods. We tell our customers to ask their Cuban chaperone about this before handing things over, because this kind of direct giving can aggravate inequalities and encourage a sort of dependence. That's why the Cuban government calls the Economic Crisis a cancer, for which tourism is the chemotherapy: it can work as a short-term cure, they say, if it doesn't kill us!²⁹

28. Interview with author, New York, 15th May, 2003.

29. Interview with author, San Francisco, 25th April, 2003.

While Global Exchange treads a middle ground between direct community engagement and collaboration with the Cuban State, the eleven United Nations bodies operating in Cuba represent the most explicit form of cooperation with Cuban authorities. The director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in Cuba spoke of the benefits and limitations of this relationship:

- We always work through the Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration [MINVEC], which operates very effectively as a coordinator of foreign donors and investors. It can do this precisely because it has knowledge of all the foreign initiatives in Cuba. And so it directs funds to the projects that need them most. Following MINVEC's instructions, we turn over resources to a designated ministry, be it health, education, environment, or whatever, and then the project is out of our hands. So we never deal directly with the population or community groups. If I went, for example, to a hospital as a UN representative to assess its needs or to talk about a donation then I'd get into serious trouble with MINVEC.³⁰
- The testimonies of these three development workers indicate intense contradictions underlying international approaches to engagement with Cuba. Case studies of two projects undertaken by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) show how these contradictions surfaced in distinct approaches to promoting community empowerment and commercial growth, ultimately reflecting alternative political interpretations of "civil society" and "sustainability."

Case 1: The Politics of Plant Life

In the four years following the withdrawal of Soviet support, total economic activity in Cuba was reduced by 40 percent, so that by the mid 1990s Havana residents were consuming only 20 percent of the FAO's recommended vegetable intake.³¹ From 1993 until 2001 the ACF developed a series of programs to help compensate for these losses in inner city Havana through the dissemination of a horticultural technique called permaculture. Originally developed in the early 1970s by Tasmanians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren,³² permaculture integrates the cultivation of nutritional and medicinal plants in such a way that diverse organisms benefit each other as they grow. Shade dwelling plants are grown beneath taller plants, whose seeds and shade-giving leaves fall to the ground in autumn. These are consumed by free-range chickens, which fertilize the soil for a productive harvest the next year. The result is ordered chaos: plants of remarkable diversity planted not in regimented rows but in seemingly arbitrary—though carefully planned—positions relative to each other. The technique's use of small spaces is well suited to the cramped conditions of urban Havana, and the Cuban Government has

30. Interview with author, Havana, 25th February, 2002.

31. AJ Jatar-Haussmann, *The Cuban Way*, West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1999, pp xv, 38; Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), *AusAID/NGO Cooperation Program: Activity Proposal*, Melbourne: ACF 2000, p 5.

32. M Caridad Cruz, *Educación Sobre Permacultura en la Ciudad de La Habana*, La Habana: Fundación de la Naturaleza y el Hombre, 1997, p 2.

supported the project by offering open tracts of public land free of charge to anyone willing to cultivate them.

The ACF's Cuba Project coordinator, Adam Tiller, remarked that the symbiosis of organisms in the permaculture model metaphorically reflects the ACF's political philosophy: just as the plants flourish through their natural interdependence, grassroots community groups are most effective in addressing local needs when they are allowed to collaborate on neighborhood welfare projects without being overly regulated by the State.³³ One Cuban neighborhood organization that shared the ACF's community focus was the Proyecto Comunitario de Conservación de Alimentos, Condimentos, y Plantas Medicinales (Community Project for the Conservation of Foods, Condiments, and Medicinal Plants, or PCCA). Based in the Havana municipality of Marianao, the center had worked through neighborhood CDRs (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution) since 1996 to conduct public workshops on the benefits of home-made medicine and inexpensive methods of food preservation.³⁴ The center's commitment to community welfare was reflected in its publicity brochure, which stated that it, "does not commercialize the products that it creates" and that it, "operates without monetary ambitions and without charging for its training and educational programs."³⁵

FIGURE 15-1. Residents of Marianao at work in the PCCA kitchen



33. Interview with author, Melbourne, 23rd September, 2000.

34. The CDRs are organized at a street-by-street level, each square block of four streets forming a larger administrative unit or **manzana**. A CDR's primary responsibility is to ensure compliance with the law at the neighbourhood scale, ideally resolving problems without involving higher authorities or the police. CDR representatives are elected in their neighbourhoods and **manzana** presidents usually maintain communication with the delegates of their local government and other locally relevant organisations, such as the Federation of Cuban Women (**Federación de Mujeres Cubanas**, or FMC).

35. Proyecto Comunitario de Conservación de Alimentos (PCCA), **Condimentos y Plantas Medicinales**, La Habana: PCCA, 2000.

Impressed by this commitment the ACF began to raise money in Australia to donate to the PCCA, seeking support from private donors and from the Australian Government's Agency for International Development, AusAID. At the same time the ACF began to build a relationship with its officially designated Cuban partner organization for the project, the Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (Cuban Institute for Popular Friendship, or ICAP).

ICAP has historically been the Castro Government's primary mechanism for handling international donations. Having secured foreign funds, ICAP takes sole responsibility for assessing development priorities and designing projects. In this way it insulates citizens from direct foreign contact by positioning itself as the sole intermediary between donating agencies and target communities. Many donor organizations are content with this arrangement because it relieves them of complicated tasks like analyzing project budgets and evaluating reports of project outcomes in Spanish. ICAP, they feel, can do this more effectively. Furthermore, most Cuban solidarity and friendship groups around the world adopt this form of support as an expression of respect for Cuba's national sovereignty.

While ICAP offers a relatively simple mechanism for foreign donors to support Cuban development projects, it has drawn criticism from inside and outside Cuba. Concerns have been raised about ICAP's exclusion of community input in its centrally planned projects, but even sharper criticism has focused on ICAP's lack of transparency. Prior to 1989 ICAP's ambassadorial activities earned it great national prestige, along with a generous budget allocation. The economic crisis precipitated ICAP's fall from grace both in terms of its capacity to finance domestic projects and its ability to keep pace with the changing expectations of international development institutions. According to a Norwegian NGO officer:

ICAP is more concerned with politics than development, and it's just not up to speed on the rules of neoliberal cooperation. For example, it has no transparency at all. You can't let anything go unspoken with ICAP, so you have to say, "it is a requirement of our funders that every dollar is accounted for."³⁶

An inside perspective on this problem was offered by a woman employed by ICAP in the mid 1990s, the most austere years of the economic crisis:

Listen, at ICAP we used to take whatever came through the door: pens, books, calculators, clothes. I got this sweater from there. I used to bring books and stationary home and send my daughter out to sell them. I think the Italians sent us these things to forward to other ICAP offices and then on to schools in the countryside. It wasn't a problem when my boss found out because she was worst of all: she took more than anyone; she was just trying

36. Interview with author, Havana, 17th March 2002.

to feed her family. Life has become a bit easier since then and now ICAP is more careful...those were very difficult years.³⁷

Notwithstanding its concerns about ICAP, the ACF secured funds from AusAID with a proposal that emphasized the “strengthening [of] civil society,” “sustainable development” and “community participation,” while describing ICAP’s role in the project as a “funds transfer agency.” In an interview three years after the fact Adam Tiller noted that at the time his primary concern in dealing with ICAP was to “elicit transparency,” which he attempted to do in letters and emails to ICAP like the following:

The project process is quite straight-forward and uncomplicated...we are very pleased that ICAP is able to play its role in this project, as we believe that ICAP brings another level of accountability and legitimacy to the international assistance process, indicated by its flawless track record of annual financial and organizational arrangements over the last 15 years or so. We also appreciate that this decade ICAP has established itself in a significant role as a coordinating international network and clearinghouse for [the] setting up and funding of aid and development projects in Cuba.³⁸

But for ICAP this was not business as usual: it was accustomed to receiving donations and distributing them as it saw fit, and not accustomed to acting as a “funds transfer agency” for a specific project. Nevertheless, after some months of negotiation an ACF officer based in Havana sent an email to Melbourne: “The money can now be sent, and should be as quickly as possible, to the account of ICAP, who will pass it on to the PCCA.”³⁹ The project money was divided into two installments, the first of which, AUD \$12,000, was sent to ICAP on 23rd May, 2000. This was where the problems began.

ICAP never acknowledged receipt of any funds, and despite the efforts of the ACF field officer and PCCA staff, the situation remained unresolved for over two months. Finally, on the 1st August, the ACF attempted to reverse the money transfer, but was unsuccessful. Later that month, the director of ICAP’s Australia and Asia Division visited Melbourne and Sydney to work with the Cuban Olympic team and to promote ICAP to Australian donors. In a meeting with an ACF officer she noted that banking problems are common, and that a more reliable method of sending money would be to give her cash to carry on her person. A different Australian donor, she explained, had recently given her AUD \$10,000 for her to take in her suitcase. “I told [her],” said the ACF officer, “that I didn’t think that this was appropriate for the ACF’s situation!”⁴⁰ The missing funds were finally recovered and it was

37. Personal communication, Havana, 26th February, 2002.

38. Email to ICAP, 23rd September, 1999.

39. Email to ACF, 24th April, 2000.

40. Email to ACF, 9th September, 2000.

decided that the project money should be sent as bank drafts with ACF staff visiting Cuba on three separate occasions.

Prolonged negotiations with ICAP about the handling of the funds resulted in a delay of almost two years before the first two instalments arrived in the hands of the PCCA community project, and this was only possible by passing the money through a special branch of ICAP that supervised its spending. I visited the PCCA community center in March 2002, by which time the third instalment had still not arrived. Its director told me her understanding of the situation:

To be honest we're not looking for any financial support from foreign NGOs. What we're doing is already working fine. Everything we do has its base right here in the neighborhood, and from here the project has expanded right across Cuba. Too much collaboration with foreign donors, NGOs, and tourists can damage our community focus. Dealing with foreign agencies requires a huge amount of time and energy, and detracts from our community work.

Over six months ago we were supposed to receive a [U.S.] \$6,000 donation from the ACF, with which we were going to buy a computer and some books for the center. For some reason the ACF never sent us the money. I'm sure it has to do with bureaucracy at some high level of administration, but really no one knows exactly what happened. So the end result was a loss of valuable time and energy, which we could have used much better here in our community.

We don't refuse these kinds of donations, but nor do we ask for them...The mass organizations like the FMC and the CDRs, and the Ministry of Agriculture all help us by printing our pamphlets and distributing them around the country, so it's natural for us to work with the State. Why try to invent a new set of relations and networks when we can use those already in place?⁴¹

In a context where state organizations like the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women, or FMC) and CDRs provide the supporting services necessary for the functioning of the PCCA and the dissemination of its educational materials, its director did not appear to be concerned about strengthening civil society and reforming modes of community participation. By contrast, ICAP was extremely concerned about protecting state authority, particularly its own role as the supreme intermediary of international relations: "Everything," it wrote, "should be sent through ICAP, both ways."⁴² As the ACF on-site officer explained, ICAP was neither accustomed nor content to act in the capacity of a "funds transfer agency:"

41. Interview with author, Havana, 8th March, 2002.

42. ICAP fax to ACF, 16th July, 2000.

ICAP got very upset that the ACF was not corresponding enough with them. What was actually happening was that the ACF was trying to work directly with the PCCA. But ICAP felt that it should be able to use the funds according to its own priorities.⁴³

ICAP was not accustomed to dealing with the requirements of the ACF, particularly when these involved simply passing on donations to a community group. Behind this methodological difference was the underlying conceptual disjuncture of Cuban and Australian approaches to “building civil society,” which found practical expression in delayed financial transactions and confusion on the ground about the workings of “bureaucracy at some high level.” The ambiguity of “civil society” enabled the ACF to claim in its project renewal proposals that, in line with AusAID strategic goals, civil society (whatever its finer interpretations) was indeed being “strengthened” through community empowerment and participatory project design.⁴⁴ Like thousands of development initiatives in contemporary Cuba, foreign and Cuban collaborators emerged having promoted their own distinct interpretations of the key reference terms. The situation resembles recent decentralized development initiatives in Old Havana that I have discussed elsewhere,⁴⁵ where the collaboration of state development agencies and Afro-Cuban religious communities has resulted in unifying projects that ostensibly address common goals, and yet allow actors to derive very different—even contradictory—benefits, ranging from personal commercial gain to broader community consolidation. Carmelo Mesa-Lago has argued that the reconciliation of commercial and community interests has become a key challenge for Cuban authorities,⁴⁶ and in this light a second case study of an ACF project is instructive. As with the case above, distinct Cuban and foreign objectives were masked behind the veil of discursive consensus, built this time on the mutual goal of “sustainable development.”

Case 2: Se Puede: “It can be done”

Despite their often conflicting visions of State-civil society relations, one goal that most governments and development NGOs have increasingly in common is the building of political legitimacy through commercial effectiveness and management strategies adopted from the corporate sector.⁴⁷ For

43. Interview with author, Havana, 24th March, 2002.

44. ACF, *AusAID/NGO Cooperation Program: Activity Proposal, Year 2*, pp 4, 15.

45. See AH Hearn, 2004, *op cit*.

46. C Mesa-Lago, *Market, Socialist, and Mixed Economies - Comparative Policy and Performance: Chile, Cuba, and Costa Rica*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp 289-290, 321-322.

47. D Salskov-Iversen, HK Hansen and S Bislev, ‘Governmentality, Globalization, and Local Practice: Transformations of a Hegemonic Discourse’, *Alternatives* 25(2), 2000, pp 183-222.

Marx, capitalist expansion resulted not only from an ability to incorporate new technology or even to generate income through trade, but also from a capacity to create new commodities out of goods and services that were previously not for sale.⁴⁸ Contemporary development financing institutions promote this entrepreneurial spirit by emphasizing the need for transparency and democratic governance not as ends in themselves but as means to marketisation and commercial competitiveness.⁴⁹ This has prompted some researchers to argue that even when the commercialization of services is not an explicit operational goal, NGOs in the 1990s have implicated themselves in a “new colonialism” that mystifies processes of social marginalization through a rhetoric of global economic integration and sustainability.⁵⁰ While global socio-economic inequalities have been legitimized and even exacerbated through privatization schemes supported by Northern corporations and neoliberal governments through affiliated NGOs, a dire need for hard currency has made the Cuban Government itself a key proponent of commercialization. A second scenario involving the ACF shows how the commercialization of community services can have social costs, but also that these costs have become a generally accepted consequence of “sustainability” in a market-driven world.

From 1994 until the ACF’s withdrawal from Cuba in 2001, its principal official partner organization was the Fundación de la Naturaleza y el Hombre (Foundation for Nature and Mankind, or FNH). According to an FNH publication, the organization is “a civil, non-governmental, cultural and scientific institution dedicated to researching and promoting environmental programs and projects, in particular those that relate to society and culture.”⁵¹ Like other Cuban NGOs, the FNH is in fact closely linked to a central state ministry, in this case the Ministry of Agriculture. One of the ACF’s primary projects with the FNH was the publication and circulation of a short bi-monthly magazine called *Se Puede* (“One Can,” or “It Can [be done]”). Financed by the ACF with a grant from AusAID, the first seven issues were dedicated to practical matters like popular recipes, home medicinal remedies, and permaculture gardening techniques. Articles were written by a combination of FNH specialists and community permaculture activists, and since it was sold at 5 pesos (about U.S. 20 cents), it circulated widely among Havana gardeners, reaching an estimated 50,000 people in 1997.⁵² By encouraging

48. K Marx, *Capital*, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1981: 445-448.

49. World Bank, *Governance and Development*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1993; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Participatory Development and Good Governance*, Paris: OECD, 1995, pp 13-15.

50. J Petras, ‘NGOs: In the Service of Imperialism’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 29(4), 1999, p 434.

51. M Caridad Cruz, 1997, *op cit.*, p 4.

52. M Caridad Cruz, 1997, *op cit.*, p 3.

readers to grow their own gardens the magazine's populist orientation was central to the ACF's strategy for making permaculture self-sustaining in Havana, in line with AusAID project guidelines.

FIGURE 15-2. The front cover of an early issue of *Se Puede*, which focused on natural medicinal remedies



Also in the interest of project sustainability, the FNH gradually assumed editorial authority as *Se Puede*'s readership grew. But the FNH had always been more interested in the philosophical implications of environmental awareness than the technical details of planting gardens; that is, it saw its mission as ideological: from “the awakening of citizens to the promotion of values and principles...the defense of life, and not only from the biological point of view but also the psychological, socio-cultural, economic and political.”⁵³ This orientation surfaced in *Se Puede* when the FNH made its first executive editorial decision: to start replacing the magazine's practical content with naturalist poetry by the FNH's deceased founder (and close friend of Fidel Castro), Antonio Núñez Jiménez. Around the same time the new editorial committee unveiled its strategy for making *Se Puede* self-sustaining: “When the [next issue of] the magazine is finished, we will proceed to its dis-

53. Fundación de la Naturaleza y el Hombre (FNH), ‘Crecimiento Económico y del Consumo con Criterios Sustentables’, *Medio Ambiente y Consumo*, 2(9), 1997, p 2.

tribution and commercialization by the company Copretel. Once this is done the magazine will be available to anyone who is interested...[it] has the potential to reach 150,000 readers."⁵⁴ Along with a 300% increase in the magazine's price, these editorial innovations did not please the ACF, whose 1998 progress report to AusAID noted that:

The focus of the magazine [has been] altered from that originally conceived by Cuban and ACF staff in 1994. Articles with a general environmental theme have been introduced, in addition to the articles on practical food and household solutions. The committee is also promoting a more intellectual/scientific and commercial presentation, with the aim of increasing its economic viability, including international sales to earn scarce foreign currency income. These changes, however, may be compromising the original core practical, educational and populist aims of the magazine.⁵⁵

Pressure from the ACF eventually led the FNH to reintroduce community-authored content in the magazine, though this amounted to little more than a "letters to the editor" page. According to the ACF Cuba Project Director, Adam Tiller, the situation reflected a fundamental paradox of sustainable development:

It's like Cronus and Zeus. At some point you have to respect the autonomy of the thing you helped create. We put years of work into *Se Puede*, but ultimately it's the FNH's project, and it's important that we don't try to impose our priorities on the FNH. One of our goals from the beginning was to help the FNH to develop sustainable projects...for better or for worse we accomplished that goal.⁵⁶

The evolution of *Se Puede* suggests that sustainability and commercialization have become kindred ambitions in the global era. Indeed, the future of the Cuban State depends very much on how successfully it re-links itself with the currents of international trade, an objective made no simpler by the U.S. trade embargo and its fortification in the 1996 Helms-Burton bill.⁵⁷ The FNH's commercialization of *Se Puede* was an attempt to introduce a Cuban commodity to the world market: a survival strategy deemed necessary regardless of how much it deviated from the wishes of its foreign benefactor. Ultimately the magazine was a collaborative project underwritten by the shared ambition of sustainability, though the meaning of the term ranged

54. M Caridad Cruz, *Educación Sobre Permacultura en la Ciudad de La Habana*, pp 37, 9.

55. ACF, *AusAID NGO Environmental Initiative: Annual Project Report, Year 1, July 1996-December 1997*, Melbourne: ACF, 1998, p 2.

56. Interview with author, Melbourne, 15th May, 2000.

57. The Helms-Burton Bill, signed in December 1996, strengthens key aspects of the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act by prohibiting international corporations and governments that trade with Cuba from trading with the U.S. Specifically, it "urges the President to take steps to apply sanctions described by [the Cuban Democracy] Act against countries assisting Cuba" (quoted in M Cisneros, 1996, *op cit.*, p 50).

from self-sufficiency to profit maximization according to the interpretations and objectives of the collaborating parties. As in the previous example, this semantic flexibility resulted in a functioning alliance that adhered to key project reference terms while allowing participants to pursue distinct interpretations of those terms. The achievement of sustainability across a range of projects resulted in the ACF's withdrawal from Cuba late in 2001. By that time permaculture "skills transfer" programs had been effective enough for the FNH to run its own training course. According to the ACF on-site officer, her three years in Cuba had been a successful, though uphill battle. She felt that the ACF's basic objectives had been accomplished, even though there was still much to be done in the area of promoting dialogue and interdependence between community groups. She had just returned from a month of researching organic farms in the Western province of Pinar del Rio, and while she was away some local project trainees had looked after her permaculture garden. As we sat there chatting on a bench I was struck by the diverse colors of the fruit bushes, medicinal plants, and vegetable patches, which her new recruits had neatly arranged, to her dismay, into perfect rows and columns.

Conclusion

The case studies suggest that emerging collaborative linkages between international NGOs and the Cuban State are often forged through deceptively consensual development discourse, and that this has facilitated the latter's efforts to conserve political authority. When the ACF sought to "strengthen civil society" by financially supporting a grassroots community organization, ICAP's mediation of the relationship ensured that the flow of resources remained firmly under state control. The financial confusion resulting from this level of regulation proved frustrating to the ACF, though ultimately it reflected an alternative interpretation of civil society that endorses state stewardship over community interests, democratic governance, and national sovereignty.⁵⁸ The project's eventual settlement of a mutually acceptable NGO-State-community relationship resulted from an integration of these political philosophies behind the practical goal of supporting the PCCA community center, while the finer political details of "civil society" were never openly fleshed out.

The precise meaning of "sustainable" development in the second case study was no less obscure. The ACF's working definition of the term was based on generating local interest in permaculture training while its partner organization, the FNH, adopted a more commercial interpretation. The *Se Puede* project was ultimately forced to subordinate the interests of its target

58. M Harnecker, 'Democracia y Socialismo', *Temas* 16/17, 1999, p 120.

community to the pursuit of economic sustainability, a compromise that has emerged over the past decade as a key national challenge with Cuba's gradual adoption of market-driven development strategies. While Cuba's gradual reintegration into the global economy raises questions about the impact of commercial expansion on community welfare, it is clear that the Cuban State remains determined to defend national sovereignty through whatever resources become available, be they material, legal, or linguistic.

Cuba Through Mexico's Mirror

Patricia Olney

The Revolutionary Tradition

Cuba and Mexico have a long history of excellent diplomatic relations.¹ Over the course of almost half a century this close relationship was borne out of the “revolutionary” tradition both countries shared. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has its roots in the Revolution of 1910 in which landed elites, the Church, and foreign businesses all came under attack by a government that claimed to be a proxy for “the people” (*el pueblo*). The state gradually established ownership over a broad list of “strategic” industries as well as a system of corporatist rule involving quotas for peasant, worker, and, initially, military sectors to have top-down representation in the government. The system proved remarkably effective at establishing central government control over the population and blended well with the deep-seated traditions of personalism, patron-clientelism, patronage politics, and authoritarianism characterizing Mexican politics throughout its history. It was a system that put control over efficiency, but one that was efficient enough to maintain elite consensus, at least until the 1960s. Up until then bouts of unrest were frequent at the local level, but in the late 1960s they bubbled up to the national level and signaled the need to implement changes to address the efficiency issue. Despite its relative success at industrializing Mexico, the PRI political system was corrupt and its extreme centralization and lack of mechanisms of

1. To comply with submission requirements I had to divide my paper in two: one on the evolution of Cuba-Mexico relations and how it reveals the effects of Mexico's shifting benchmark of legitimacy from the Revolution to Democracy, and this one on the emergence of an illusionary alternative to Liberal Democracy: Cuba's Revolutionary Democracy. Therefore, there will be references to Mexico-Cuba relations but these will not be covered in depth in this paper. This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in Cuba in the summer of 2004 and in Mexico from 1995 to 2001.

accountability led to the exponential growth of corruption and the inability to generate resources to satisfy an increasingly demanding urban population or to target funds in the most rational way.

In Mexico, the Revolution was not just an event; it represented an entire package of symbols, rhetoric, and values providing the benchmark of legitimacy for the regime. The Cuban Revolution embodies an almost identical package of values and Mexico's strong relationship with Cuba and its defiant opposition to fall into line with positions recommended by the U. S. was long considered critical to its political stability. The United States permitted Mexico to maintain this "independent" and contrarian foreign policy because stability was the most critical issue to the U. S., and, as recent evidence reveals, because the Johnson Administration made a deal with President Adolfo López Mateos in 1964 to permit this apparent foreign policy independence in return for Mexico using its embassy in Havana to spy on Cuba for the United States.²

The key component of revolutionary ideology was the idea that the state or national government was equivalent to "the people," a term which referred not to all the people but to the lower-middle and lower classes- the workers and peasants in opposition to businessmen, large landowners, the clergy, and foreigners." The people" came to include state dependent professionals – doctors, lawyers, the media, teachers, and informal workers, all encapsulated in a corporatist sector known as the "Popular" sector of the PRI.

Cuban Revolutionary ideology is almost identical: it embodies the same rhetoric, the same values, the same legitimizing myths. The systems are different in that Mexico created a strong executive, ending the perpetuation in power of any one charismatic individual. Second, unlike the Cuban system which emulated the Soviet Leninist model, the Mexican political party was always a tool of the government, and not vice-versa. Finally, the government established civilian control of the military, unlike the Cuba. However, both systems are formulas for a powerful central government that rules in the name of "the people" and essentially legitimizes authoritarian, paternalistic rule and a highly interventionist state with extremely low levels of transparency.

Between 1988 and 2000 Mexico began a transition away from its revolutionary bedrock of legitimacy and shifted it toward liberal democratic ideology, encompassing a more modern set of values that privilege efficiency over political control. The Mexican debt crisis of 1982 had made it painfully clear that Mexico could not afford a "revolutionary" regime focusing on providing

2. "Mexico offered base for Bay of Pigs invasion: Report," **Agence France Presse**, June 15, 1998. See also "New report reveals spy plot in Cuba," **United Press International**, March 6, 2003. A full summary of Cuba-Mexico relations was edited out of this paper to comply with submission guidelines.

jobs and funding social programs but generating only a fraction of what these cost, particularly since the number of people entering the workforce was increasing by leaps and bounds. Unemployment was reaching intolerable levels throughout the country. New funding could only be secured from international lending agencies by agreeing to control public spending and this prevented the PRI machine from being "greased" as it had to be to work appropriately.³

President Carlos Salinas de Gortari shattered the myth that the state equals the people with several different measures. First, opposition party victories at the state and municipal levels were recognized for the first time since the PRI had come to power (but only those of the liberal PAN, the leftist and revolutionary PRD was repressed and its victories went largely unrecognized).⁴ Second, the constitution was changed to end the prohibition against the private ownership and sale of state-owned agrarian cooperative (*ejido*) properties. Most significantly, he built on president Miguel de la Madrid's (1982-1988) policies to encourage free trade and foreign investment, after decades of protectionism and Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), ending tired government rhetoric that any relationship with the rich and the U. S. only results in further impoverishment.⁵ Furthermore, Salinas reestablished relations with the Catholic Church, a former "enemy" of the Revolution. The details of these reforms have been covered extensively in other articles but the shift in the benchmark of legitimacy from the Revolution to liberal democracy is vital to understanding the evolution of Cuba-Mexico relations in the last two decades and the difference in their political paths.

The Revolution put the majority above the individual, equality above freedom, and made the state a proxy for "the people." The private sector and free trade were both condemned in the class perspective of this worldview: those whose object was to make money could only do so at the expense of the poor. There was no such concept as the generation of wealth that all could profit from, however disproportionately. As talk about democracy started to

3. Judith Adler Hellman. **Mexico in Crisis**. New York and London: Holmer Meier Publishers, 1983.

4. The PAN victories in Baja California and Chihuahua were recognized by Salinas while the PRD victory in Michoacan and many of its municipal victories in Guerrero and elsewhere were not. These electoral battles have been documented in books by Rodriguez and Ward, Chand, Bruhn, Crespo, and several others, but most of my evidence about local Mexican politics comes from fieldwork conducted between 1995-2001 in 62 municipalities contesting PRI hegemony since 1949.

5. Many still argue that this is the case, as inequality has increased since the Salinas reforms, but I would argue that Mexico's problems have far more to do with the immense corruption of the regime and economic mismanagement than with the free market policies themselves. See, for example, Ernesto Lopez-Cordova and Fernando Borraz, "Has Globalization Deepened Income Inequality in Mexico?" paper presented at Seventh Annual Conference on Global Economic Analysis, Washington D.C., April 28, 2004.

replace talk about the Revolution, the individual became paramount, freedom started to compete with equality as a goal, and the state ceased to be a proxy for the people. While social concerns and equality continued to be valued by most citizens more than freedom, a new issue served to redirect social sensitivity from “the people” to the individual- human rights.⁶

Democracy became an acceptable benchmark of legitimacy partly because principles of majority rule became the key to populist survival and partly because the myth of the state equals the people came tumbling down in the face of cases of state repression against them. An increasing number of small businessmen, mostly forced into their professions due to high levels of unemployment and the inability of the state-driven economy to absorb them, began to see a limited state and genuine rule of law as imperative to their interests. This sector of the population was slowly emerging as a rival to the substantial segment of the state-dependent population that desperately wanted an interventionist state able to provide the levels of security they had grown accustomed to.

In their analysis of Revolutionary One-Party systems, Huntington and Moore observed that eventually efficiency became more important to political control than ideology and technocrats started to win out over populists in the state bureaucracy.⁷ Mexico was able to postpone this shift through debt financing. Cuba has been able to postpone it through a deft administration of what Corrales refers to as the “Gatekeeper” state⁸ – a selective application of free market principles that create pockets of efficiency but are meticulously managed to prevent the development of a less state dependent sector of the population (at least inside Cuba) that is necessary for the kind of economic shift Huntington refers to, and one that seems to be a prerequisite for establishing a democracy based on classic liberal principles.

In Mexico, the lesson was evident at the local level for several decades: the less society is active in politics and economics, the less its real interests are served and the more deformed its governments become.⁹ This lesson is less evident in Cuba, where the two visions of the ideal social order – Revolutionary and Liberal – compete in a far more complicated way because Cuba

6. Charges against former president Luis Echeverría for the repression of workers and students during his administration is indicative of the primacy of human rights over the Revolution as a new benchmark of legitimacy. Echeverría was previously regarded as one of the most “revolutionary” presidents and supported by the same leftist critics who now condemn him.

7. Samuel Huntington and Clement Moore. **Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society. The Dynamics of Established One-Party Systems**, New York and London: Basic Books, 1970, pp. 33-48.

8. Javier Corrales. “The Gatekeeper State. Limited Economic Reforms and Regime Survival in Cuba 1989-2002,” **Latin American Research Review**, Summer 2004.

9. These observations are based on the conclusions of fieldwork that are now part of a manuscript I am preparing for publication: “Deceptive Democracy: Fifty Years of Local Politics in Mexico.”

is both better at providing higher levels of security to the population and at preventing higher levels of transparency.

The revolutionary vision in Cuba boasts some very tangible benefits and its appeals to the hearts of Cubans and non-Cubans are very strong. Cuba not only provides all Cubans with access to excellent health care and education, but it also extends these services and opportunities to foreigners. Over 10,000 foreigners have graduated from Cuban medical schools, many of them on government scholarships. Currently there are 100 American students in Cuban medical schools, most of them African Americans from Harlem, on full scholarships sponsored by the Cuban government. Cuba sends doctors and teachers throughout the developing world, particularly Africa and the Caribbean.¹⁰ The effects of the propaganda victory these efforts represent cannot be underestimated in a world that increasingly endorses the idea of democracy as majority rule. Poor majorities everywhere as well as urban elites throughout the world could not help but be impressed by the "human face" of Cuban socialism. Organ transplants are allegedly as available to a 70-year-old peasant woman as they are to a 40 year old neurosurgeon. Cuban second graders can solve algebraic problems that many of my university students would be unable to tackle.

The Cuban experiment appeals to the tendency toward magical thinking in less developed countries as well as to the yearnings of urban middle classes for a more civilized and humanitarian social order. Furthermore, some middle class professionals who still reside in Cuba demonstrate a strong commitment to a regime that demands that the middle classes subsidize the extensive social safety net for the poor. In Cuba, the peso earning middle class (doctors, professionals, people in the arts) struggles just as much as the poor majority. The absence of a service sector means household emergencies and home improvements must be undertaken by neighborhood "brigades." Clothes are inaccessible to anyone who does not have dollars, as are many other basic goods. Meanwhile, those with access to dollars, either because they are in the tourism industry or have friends or family abroad, almost always have to engage in illegal practices and live in fear of arrest, insuring that everybody stay on their best behavior.

What is emerging in Cuba is the dangerous mirage of an alternative to liberal democracy: revolutionary democracy. It is a system that appeals to yearnings for social justice but one that cannot afford itself- its productive apparatus is inefficient, requiring outside supplementation. Revolutionary democracy is revolution without violence and democracy without neoliberalism. It is the "dream" regime for Latin America and could become its worst

10. Interview with Dr. Luis Ceruto Santander of the Cuban Health Ministry, Havana, June 4, 2004. Information about citizens in this section is based on informal interviews conducted with Cubans over the Summer of 2004.

nightmare. The Mexican mirror, of which Cuba-U. S. relations are a telling surface phenomenon, illustrates the difference between the ways they have chosen to deal with the obsolescence of the One-Party Revolutionary system. Mexico has taken baby steps toward creating a system that can afford itself, although it may take decades to root out the corruption the PRI-state or revolutionary system institutionalized. Cuba has taken further steps to make corruption the system, and is providing the illusion of the possibility of an effective system for the vast majority of citizens in developing world without the painful price tag exacted by neoliberal formulas.

The PRI's failure in Mexico to provide employment for the middle class, a safety net for the poor and the absence of state services in most of the country, made it more difficult to defend the revolutionary system against the backdrop of economic realities. The Cuban system has been far more successful at providing its population with security that most would not want to give up lightly. Cuba fuels the dreams of those in Mexico who want democracy to defend the Revolution and of those elsewhere who hear the siren's song of revolutionary promises.

The deterioration of Mexico-Cuba relations reflect an intense domestic, international, and regional struggle between Revolutionary Populism and Liberal Democracy as ordering principles of society. It is emblematic of an intense political and ideological struggle between the two types of political elites Huntington and many others have referred to, the populists and the technocrats, whose goals and survival needs are fundamentally incompatible. However, instead of technocrats and liberal democracy phasing out its populist, revolutionary predecessors, the old elites are hanging on and creating a dangerous illusionary alternative: Revolutionary democracy.

The Creation of a Dangerous Mirage: Revolutionary Democracy

According to major theorists, Revolutionary One Party regimes pave the way to their own demise by successfully accomplishing their goal: modernization. They create an independent private sector that sustains the economy and a middle class that demands opportunities and increasing standards of living. The lower classes may still be poor but those who mobilize them have been dramatically weakened and no longer have a monopoly over opportunities. In addition, risk takers among the poor can theoretically aspire to upward mobility, reducing the need for ideology to maintain elite consensus and political control. Or so the theory goes.¹¹

Cuba has managed to subvert this process with a three-pronged formula. First, it engineered an economy that appears "revolutionary" but is really

capitalism with intermittent access, preventing both independence from the state and consensus for rule of law. Cuba further distracts the population from focusing on the economy's inefficiency by maintaining a permanent state of siege mentality. Finally, it provides the population with high levels of security by safeguarding what are seen to be the pillars of the Cuban Revolution: the health care and education systems.

The first part of this strategy involves an extremely complicated shell game that Corrales masterfully describes in "The Gatekeeper State." It is designed to produce the resources to keep the government in power without leading to the economic independence of those who participate in it. The minimum wage in Cuba amounts to about \$5 per month with \$13 per month at the high end of the salary range. While housing, health care, and education are covered by the state, and food rations are heavily subsidized, almost all Cubans are involved in a daily struggle for survival. In fact, Cubans admit that they cannot survive anymore on their rations — they literally have to "cheat" to survive. Housing was shelved for higher priority projects creating a crisis that discourages Cubans from having more than one child. The housing crisis is also allegedly behind the high rates of divorce (the inability to escape one's mother-in-law or any other problem relative). Divorced couples inevitably must continue to live in the same household.

Maintenance crises, increasingly frequent as the infrastructure and dwellings get older, must be addressed by neighborhood "brigades." Citizens must purchase the materials needed for repairs and additions with the little they make — it can take ten years or more to earn enough to finance a small addition to a home, something that also requires official permission, and months to years to solve relatively minor plumbing or electrical problems. Each Cuban household receives a bar of body soap one month and a bar of laundry detergent on alternate months. I offered a standard bath towel to a Cuban professor who exclaimed: "My wife would kill me if I brought this home! I would have to cut it in half because it would require too much detergent." Public transportation is affordable but hard to come by and extremely inconvenient because of the energy crisis Cuba has faced since the end of the Cold War. Clothes cannot be purchased in pesos at all, and this is true of most consumer products as well. In all these respects, post-*Periodo Especial* Cuba is not that much easier to survive in than when things hit bottom in 1993.

If Cubans cannot even buy clothes, an arguably important part of survival, why don't they rebel? Despite the desperate situation the figures above reveal, there a million ways to cheat in Cuba and almost everyone has access

11. See, for example, Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, **The Origin and Development of Political Parties**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, Huntington and Moore (see footnote 7), Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Decline of the Party in Single-Party African States," in Huntington and Moore, 1970.

to one of them. While most Cubans barely survive on a daily basis, most also thrive on an occasional basis. A booming black market makes dollar goods available to people who cannot afford them. The lucrative tourism industry provides a select group of individuals with access to dollars, raising their standards of living to levels most Cubans can only dream of. Yet these income disparities do not seem to produce explosive tensions, partly because there are other escape valves. Organizations in all of the economic sectors give employees “bonuses” or “incentives” not calculated into the salary information. Some get bags of dollar goods including items like toothbrushes and toothpaste at the end of the month. Others receive a ten-dollar bill, resulting in salaries above the salary cap.

However, what give most Cubans a break from the drudgery of daily survival are their international connections, either through their employment or through friends and relatives abroad. Almost every Cuban I encountered either had “*Fe*” (familia en el extranjero) or “American Express” (amigos en el extranjero). In addition, middle class professionals who maintain good revolutionary credentials are allowed to spend time abroad working or going to conferences. Therefore, despite the fact that their survival is directly related to the introduction of free market principles in Cuba, this ghost economy of cheaters allows the regime to perpetuate the myth that the Revolutionary system is a real alternative.

Although they never turned down an opportunity to eat at a restaurant or spend time abroad, most Cubans I spoke with insisted that every place had strengths and weaknesses and that the U. S. was “el mismo perro con otro collar” (same dog with another collar). In other words, all systems are equal, a trick the PRI in Mexico also used to discredit the opposition. By extension, as in “revolutionary” Mexico, the economic system is not a determining factor in their eyes, and neither is the legality of the system: whether or not there is an effective rule of law.

Yet, the economy is definitely the Achilles’ heel of the revolutionary regime and much effort is devoted to the search of external sources of funding because it is not a self-supporting regime type. This is one reason why ideology is important. “The prevalence and intensity of propaganda is inversely proportional to the government’s economic success,” one well-known movie director told me. “Right now we have no freedom to produce anything but propaganda because the economy is in shambles. There is more freedom for people in the arts to address social problems but no one can touch Fidel or the economy.”¹²

One of the architects of the new economic strategy, Hiram Marquetti,¹³ was more optimistic. “In 1989 we imported over 95 percent of our oil, today

12. Interview with a well-known Cuban cinematographer, June 3, 2004.

we import less than 10 percent. Our goal is to reach 100 percent self-sufficiency in oil. We have hired international experts to help us locate and extract new oil deposits in the Gulf of Mexico. Already we have made great strides in all areas of the economy compared to the *Periodo Especial*." He claims the post Cold War economy is not yet a "model," just pragmatic adaptations to post Cold War challenges, but he implied it had that potential.

The approach consists of a state led process in which the state still controls 90 percent of the wealth and is "omnipresent in all sectors of the economy." He notes that while tourism now contributes about 10 percent of the country's GDP, Cuba is currently in the process of taking over the management of many of the hotels. Second, its priority is political, in particular, preventing adverse political consequences to economic changes. It is therefore highly selective and pragmatic based, in part, on trial and error." There is a highly selective and complex redistribution of wealth at all levels that are never recorded in official economic data."

The economic "approach" relies heavily on managing "the factors preserving internal consensus" – the prevention of ungovernability. Marquetti accepts that the system failed and says that is why they are replacing it, but he stridently denies that the introduction of foreign investment, a tax and banking system, and of private business activities indicates a shift towards free market economic principles. "This is not privatization, nor is there really a private sector due to the "omnipresence of the government." In fact, he indicates that the Cuban economy has recovered to the point that anything suggesting neoliberalism is being phased out. The convertible peso is aimed at "dedollarizing" the economy, he notes, and already foreign investors must conduct all transactions in Cuba in convertible pesos." He admits that it is a complicated juggling act but argues that progress in biotechnology, plans to dramatically expand the tourism sector, the discovery of new oil deposits, and the successful management of "factors of internal consensus" will likely give the system a new lease on life.¹⁴

Meanwhile, ordinary Cubans are legally required to conduct all transactions in Cuban pesos, not convertible pesos. Therefore, the regime is constantly increasing activities that permit it to capture dollars, but through the convertible peso, it retains the illusion of a peso-economy and perpetuates the myth of a Revolutionary model. Together with the complex system of selective rewards and punishments, the Cuban regime has avoided the normal repercussions of such a shift- technocratic dominance. In fact, as Corrales

13. All information on the Cuban economy is based on several interviews with Hiram Marquetti from the Centro de Estudios Economicos, June 1-5, 2004. Marquetti has access to the annual reports on the Cuban economy and is one of the architects of its economic policy.

14. Interview with Hiram Marquetti, Havana, Cuba, June 4, 2004.

demonstrates, the technocrats have been consistently losing ground to the revolutionary elites and the sector that is being given the most access to the free market is the military, definitely not the Huntingtonian route to transition from a Revolutionary to a democratic system.

The second pillar of Revolutionary democracy is a permanent state of siege mentality. The regime reminds citizens of Cuba's daily struggle against the evil American empire in hundreds of ways. Propaganda is especially targeted toward the newer generations who never experienced the Revolution directly. Students have "bomb drills" in which they drop to the floor and huddle under their desks. There are numerous competitions for students and young writers encouraging patriotic speeches glorifying the Revolution in the face of "Yankee adversity." School children recite poems and sing songs that tell the tales of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the CIA's role in the death of the beloved "Che" Guevara, and the effects of the cruel U. S. embargo (or "blockade" as it is known in Cuba). After the fourth grade, children wear red handkerchiefs as part of their uniform to symbolize all the blood Cubans have spilled in their struggle against enemies, mainly the Americans.

There are reminders everywhere of the heavy hand of U. S. ambassadors and a huge monument to Elián González, with signs proclaiming that Cuba will never waver in its struggle against Yankee capitalist imperialists. George Bush posters depicting him with a Hitler-like mustache, military uniform and swastikas adorn the walls in parts of Havana and neighboring cities. There are huge protests organized by Fidel against Bush's Cuba policy, like U. S. refusal to release five Cuban "political prisoners" in the U.S. As mentioned in the opening section of this paper, these were Cubans convicted on charges of spying by infiltrating Cuban-American organizations. The Cubans claim these were heroic efforts to stop terrorism because the Cuban-American organizations are nothing but terrorist groups plotting to assassinate Castro and invade Cuba. The campaign to release these five prisoners is probably meant to counter the European and American condemnation of Cuba's arrest and imprisonment of 78 Cuban dissidents.

It is not unusual to hear people defend the state of siege policy as completely appropriate: after all, if Bush invaded Iraq with no real justification, a country with far more resources and military might than Cuba, one can only imagine how easily the U. S. could target Cuba next. One professor told me: "three bombs is all it would take. It is a very real danger." While the U.S. is vilified, Venezuela, the newest revolutionary sister, is glorified. Posters of Fidel and Hugo Chávez pictured in a "Revolutionary embrace" are displayed prominently in the halls of schools in both Havana and the countryside. Cubans still glorify Mexico and its revolutionary heritage, but it is no longer

the “revolutionary sister” it once was: pictures of Fidel with Salinas, Zedillo, or Fox are nowhere to be found.

The solution proposed in this state of siege policy is the same Mexico supported for almost 70 years: Unity. Anything but an unwavering allegiance to Fidel and his objectives is considered treason. Even the schizophrenic economy has been linked to the state of siege. “This hotel has produced one million dollars for the Revolution,” a sign reads in an entrance of the luxurious *Hotel Nacional*. It has been suggested that Castro deliberately acts in a way to prevent the U. S. Congress from overturning the embargo by undertaking such actions as shooting down Brothers to the Rescue planes or arresting close to 80 dissidents right before Congress is scheduled to deliberate on the embargo issue and is leaning in the direction of ending it. However, there is also evidence that he is using tourism to turn Americans against the embargo, a measure that is estimated to have cost Cuba over \$2 billion dollars since it was imposed. Either way, Castro has manipulated the embargo issue very effectively to maintain the illusion that Cuba is always on the brink of a U.S. invasion.

In July 2004, Castro closed all the dollar stores so prices could be increased by 40 percent in response to Bush's announcement of tighter restrictions. “We will not leave the children and poor without milk...the tourists, those who have the most, must sacrifice the most.” By letting the tourists bear the brunt of his economic measures, he managed to strengthen opposition to the U.S. embargo. In fact, Cuban measures have forged an unlikely alliance of supporters: a large number of international NGOs, sister city programs that include a partnership of Seattle and Cienfuegos, and governments of poor countries that are recipients of Cuba's generous humanitarian aid programs – a representative of the Cuban Health system, Dr. Luis Ceruto Santander, could not give me exact numbers of the doctors posted abroad but he suggested that they were probably in the tens of thousands.

The Humanitarian aid program links up to the third pillar of Revolutionary Democracy: maintaining the social safety net seen as the legacy of the Cuban Revolution. This is the pillar that keeps the population state dependent and makes the Revolutionary myth possible. Disguised as a “gift” from the government it is actually subsidized by the effective high tax rates hidden underneath the obsolete salary structure. A bellboy can make in one day more than most university professors and medical doctors make in one month. A taxi driver can make that much in a couple of hours.

Yet, both urban and rural residents said the health and education systems are good (though not excellent). The Cubans boasted of universal computer access for school children (although not internet access, and any “.com” domain name is usually blocked from places with access), including a solar

powered computer for a child in a mountainous rural area with no electricity. Ironically, by adhering so strictly to a “no child left behind” policy, the regime may be neglecting the poor majority that badly needs some of these resources redirected towards housing or quality food.

There are currently 64 university campuses (2004 data) up from 28 in 1976 and three in 1960. Since 1959, 700,000 have graduated from college with 42 percent going into education, 16 percent into medicine, 37 percent going into other professions and 7 percent into graduate programs. All graduates receive a job along with their degree.¹⁵ The system is calculated to produce the specialties needed in each region, making universal employment easier. Military service is done within the academic program. At the end of their careers, students select five job possibilities, in order of preference, and the decision is made on a competitive basis based on grades, “citizenship,” and other such criteria. Grade school education is first rate but is centrally controlled and comes with a heavy dose of propaganda. The same is true in higher education. When I asked one professor what would happen if he wanted to teach his class in a different way he said the process was very collegial and that it was easy to get alternatives approved. He said, “Of course, nothing counterrevolutionary would ever be approved but none of us are destructive and unpatriotic!”

Grade school classrooms were surprisingly relaxed – students were encouraged but never obligated to participate. They were given one very nutritious meal at school at a highly subsidized rate, one pencil per month, and a few other supplies. They borrow their textbooks as well as books from small libraries. Numerous contests and activities rewarded the most revolutionary students and revolutionary values are drilled in at every opportunity.

University education seemed highly effective and modern and many departments actively collaborated with foreign researchers from all over the world. Every student donates two years of mandatory social service but has considerable freedom in selecting their post and can keep it afterwards, if they so choose.

While the education system seemed excellent, students in the street would beg for a pen and university graduates complained to me that they can’t win – either they are the fortunate few who can join the tourist sector and make some real money but not use any of their education, like a waitress-economist and chamber maid-medical technician I met, or they obtain a satisfying job in which they can use their skills but have to live a miserable life just scraping

15. Information about the education system comes from several sources: an interview with and lecture by Dr. Francisco Martinez from the Ministerio de Educacion Superior, June 3, 2004, conversations with the directors of two grade schools in Havana, a conversation with a historian in Cienfuegos, a visit to the university of Havana, and conversations with students, teachers, and professors. I am deliberately withholding the names of many of my interviewees.

by. Frustration levels among recent college graduates appeared to be only slightly lower than those among taxi drivers.

There is considerable evidence that the health system also lives up to its reputation, but the former health minister I spoke with, Dr. Luis Ceruto Santander, was not as candid and generous with details as other experts I spoke with. He said the formal medical system had a complimentary informal system encouraging preventive medicine. Informal older citizens groups, *Circulos de Abuelos*, have been set up across the country to help older citizens cope with the loneliness of old age that often leads to depression. There are also temporary and permanent medical initiatives. When a serious problem arises like an epidemic affecting people in a particular community, there are medical "campaigns" that are dissolved when the problem is controlled. The structure of the Cuban medical system and education requirements for physicians at different levels, as well as requirements for continual education, seemed to set high standards. Cuban medical schools have students from all over the world, many on Cuban government scholarships, all need-based. Some medicines are free, others are subsidized, but he said great effort went into securing the right medicine for patients who needed it.

Cuban citizens had few complaints about the medical system but disagreed about whether health products and medications were readily accessible. One professional told me she cleaned her hard contact lenses with saliva and had terrible problems with her eyes. Contact lens solution is only available in dollar stores and costs the equivalent of several months of her salary. Other Cubans said it was common for them to have to move to take care of a loved one because many services were only available in Havana and that the government did not provide the spouse with a new job.

The real evidence of how important this pillar is to Revolutionary Democracy is the amount of the budget it absorbs. While no exact figures were available, approximately one fifth of the annual budget goes to social expenditures.¹⁶ Since doctors and teachers receive well under \$30 per month, Cuba may have the least expensive skilled labor force in the world, permitting it to keep an extensive safety net in place without bankrupting the country.

The new "perfeccionamiento" phase of economic restructuring the economy is succeeding at laying a misleading foundation for the myth of Revolutionary Democracy. Together with the permanent state of siege and the maintenance of excellent education and health care systems, the Cuban regime has produced an "alternative" regime type that could capture the imagination of revolutionary idealists throughout the developing world.

16. This figure is from the 2004 issue of an annual report on the Cuban economy only available in Cuba. I purchased the most recent issue from Hiram Marquetti but it disappeared from my office upon arrival.

Conclusion

If one observes Cuba through Mexico's mirror, it is apparent that Cuba is experiencing the effects of the obsolescence of the ideologically driven Revolutionary system, a system that has never been able to pay for itself and therefore cannot effectively provide for its poor majority, let alone its middle classes. It is also a system that rests on illegality. Corruption is the system, and any introduction of transparency requirements, necessary for rule of law can bring it down. The PRI in Mexico rotted from within but opposition movements at the local level were able to gain enough strength in their struggles against the PRI to reveal the corruption that impeded real progress toward development. Two alternative but weak parties now compete with the PRI in an incipient party system that will struggle with the legacy of Revolutionary rule for at least a couple of decades.

The PRD, representing the revolutionary faction of the former PRI as well as outside revolutionary components previously locked out by the system, is advocating the return to a state-driven Revolutionary program providing extensive social benefits instead of privileging economic growth, and competitive individualism. The PAN, a party with deep roots and a diverse heritage but largely liberal democratic values, has been leading a transition to a new benchmark of legitimacy that started at least since 1988. Mexico is slowly shifting from the Revolutionary values depicting the U. S. and business classes as the enemy and stressing equality and state largesse over individual freedom and free association, toward liberal democratic ones stressing respect for human rights, individual freedoms, and particularly rule of law. This shift has been reflected in the evolution of Cuba-Mexico relations since Salinas took over in 1988.

The Cuban regime has been far more effective than Mexico's PRI-regime not only at providing social services for the population but also at establishing effective control over the territory. The democratic opposition in Mexico evolved over a period of fifty years at the local level where the PRI ruled only indirectly through local strongmen. The Cuban Communist Party has control even in the most remote localities. Furthermore, Cuba has been far more effective at rooting out elite divisions and those in the middle classes, through a combination of immigration and repression. While Mexico co-opted dissidents, Cuba imprisoned, executed, or sent them into exile. Mexico was able to repress pockets of dissent but eventually there were so many that they were impossible to keep track of. Also, the gap between policy formulation and implementation was much greater in Mexico than it is in Cuba. The Mexican government was centralized and authoritarian, but never had the control over territory and population that the Cuban government has.

However, the two countries also have much in common. Both have oil and were at some point banking on oil keeping the political system alive. Both also have immigration as an escape valve for popular discontent. Both also have a population socialized to embrace Revolutionary values, although the new generations in Mexico are being socialized into liberal-democratic practices and values.

In Mexico, it was small businessmen who led opposition movements at the local level that eventually had a national level impact. In Cuba, it is also small businessmen who harbor the most resentment against the regime. In Mexico, the process was unstoppable – as people became aware of the entrepreneurial route to social mobility and the effects of the almost total lack of transparency inherent in the political and economic systems; they were unwilling to settle for the minimal security afforded by the revolutionary regime. While the Cuban government may be able to continue to use access to pockets of free market economies as a system of rewards and punishments, it seems unlikely that it can stop the growing tide of those who have tasted free market realities that shatter the mirage of a Revolutionary economy. How long will professors and architects be willing to spend months or even years walking buckets of water up five flights of stairs to deal with plumbing problems or figuring out what to do with food rations that include only sugar, oil, peas, rice, and a pound of chicken a month? It is very possible that Fidel Castro will survive all of these challenges, particularly since even some of the taxi drivers proclaimed that they were Fidelistas though not at all comunistas. Regardless of the possibilities for regime change in Cuba, the advent of Revolutionary Democracy represents a threat to the region that could set countries back economically by decades and encourage the coming to power of populist autocrats with non-transparent regimes- rife with corruption and secrets, the effects of which we can only imagine.

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Todd Ramón Ochoa

Introduction

This paper discusses the Kongo-inspired sacred society of *Palo* and its practitioner-teachers in Cuba.¹ Its focus is the status of *Palo* in Havana at the turn of the 21st century, forty years after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, and five years into the transformation of the Cuban economy spurred by tourism and the opening of the domestic economy to the US dollar. Ethnographic in character, the paper draws on my relationship with two teachers of *Palo*, who for 18 months between 1999-2000 guided my doctoral research under the rubric of a *Palo* apprenticeship. In tracing an image of *Palo* at the end of the 20th century, this document represents the status of American ethnographic interpretation of African-inspired life in Cuba during this period.

Palo is a craft of working with the dead so as to transform the fates of the living. It is taught by knowledgeable women and men, who instruct their initiates in forms of thinking that celebrate the visceral apprehension of the dead as the basis for knowledge and action. *Palo* thrives on this apprehension of the dead, and is perpetuated along with ideas that organize it into socially important registers. Much of *Palo* practice involves engagements with the dead through socially powerful objects, called *prenda nganga* (sing.), which are made and cared for at the heart of *Palo* sacred societies. *Prendas* or *ngangas*, as they are called in the plural, take the form of cauldrons or urns packed

1. Following the convention of scholars of Africa, I employ an uppercase “K” when referring to Central African cultures that exist and existed along the lower Congo River in what is now Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is to distinguish the people, their languages and cultures from these political entities and their predecessor states. I employ the upper case “C” when referring to these same people when I cite sources from Spanish, which do not make this distinction; e.g. Kongo Law=La Regla de Congo, see p.5, below.

with innumerable substances, but always including earth, sticks, animal and human remains. From these objects, teachers of Palo manufacture works [*trabajos, obras*] that heal and harm. Because of the considerable air of mystery that surrounds *prendas* and their use, *Palo* is widely feared as a form of witchcraft [*brujería*] in Cuba—a tag practitioners of *Palo* do not always reject.

Palo craft includes rites of cleansing, the making of protective bundles, the working of dangerous strikes of fate meant to frighten or kill rivals, and, ultimately, the manufacture of the *prendas* teachers of *Palo* keep at the center of their craft, and from which all other works emerge. Each work engages the dead where these are found in matter, but principally in earth, sticks, bones and blood. Those highly knowledgeable in the secrets of *Palo* work the dead in less palpable registers, such as carefully worded allusions, and in the shadowed flight of rumor. *Palo* is as much the art of crafting matter into fatefully powerful works, as it is a discursive art that creates shapes of fear and hope from the silences that pervade everyday life. Despite the considerable air of dread that surrounds it, Cubans of all sorts are drawn to *Palo* when their immediate prospects seem to sour, and despair enters their lives

“*Inspiration*”

Palo is Central African, specifically Kongo-inspired. I am interested in African “*inspiration*,” rather than “*derivation*,” thought the latter term is preferred among researchers. My apprehension about the “*derived*” is that it implies the thing under discussion is in some way a degraded version of an immutable African “*essence*,” to which it is forever beholden. I choose to think in terms of “*inspiration*,” as well, because of my discomfort with the term “*Afro-Cuban*,” also popular among researchers, but which links people and cultural forms to a primary and homogenized African past. Neither of these formulations necessarily acknowledges “*the new*” that is so crucial a part of Diaspora and Creole hybrid culture. “*Inspiration*,” as I use it here, functions as a hinge between the past and the future, *inspiration* being the active, forward-looking, creative spark linking past forms with objects, practices, and rules of fate born anew. *Inspiration* is a force of the moment that arrives unannounced, which has little time to recognize its debts before being swept up in the currents of its own prodigious, and often unexpected, creation.

Being Kongo-inspired, *Palo* is a social form separate from West African-inspired *Santo*, which is also called *Ocha* or *Lucumí* in Havana (“*Santería*” is not a term preferred by those initiated in *Santo* and *Palo*). Despite the presence of Central African slaves in Cuba nearly since the beginning of the Spanish colony, *Palo* dates to the late 19th or early 20th century, when it

emerged from a cauldron of myriad Kongo-inspirations. Important among these were the healing rites Victor Turner has called “drums of affliction,”² the Central African forms of which John M. Janzen has treated under the name of *ngoma*.³ Among these was *Lemba*, the long-lived trading and healing society that developed on the north bank of the Congo river in the mid-17th century, and thrived until early in the 20th century.⁴ *Lemba* was a response to profound social disruptions caused by the trade in slaves and goods initiated by contact with the Portuguese; and like so much of Kongo sacred life, *Lemba* survived the middle passage to inspire Creole religions throughout the Americas.⁵

Another Kongo society to have made the passage before it became a spark for Palo in Cuba was *Nkita*. Among the people of the lower Congo River, who in the 18th and 19th centuries were ravaged by slavery, *Nkita* was a healing society that addressed ruptures in lineage succession. Through initiation, *Nkita* re-affiliated members of the society “with the ancestral source of their collective authority.”⁶ The terms “nkita,” “ngoma,” and “lemba,” circulate broadly in *Palo* sacred speech. The healing society I was affiliated with in Guanabacoa, on the outskirts of Havana, was the *Munanso Nkita Mana Nkita Briyumba Congo*, which I translate as “Briyumba House of the Dead, and the Children of the Dead.”⁷

During the century and a half between 1725-1875, when more enslaved people were delivered to Cuba than in all years prior,⁸ these inspirations and

2. Turner, Victor W., **The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 15-16.

3. Janzen, John M., **Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa** (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992) 1-7. *Ngoma* means “drum” throughout much of Central and Southern Africa and names rites or feasts marked by the playing of drums and acts of healing.

4. For an exceptional account of Lemba see Janzen, John M., **Lemba, 1650-1930: A Drum of Affliction in Africa and the New World** (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1982).

5. Janzen, *Lemba*, 273-292.

6. Janzen, *Ngoma*, 11-14, 103.

7. Rev. W. Holman Bentley, in his **Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language As Spoken at San Salvador, the Ancient Capital of the Old Kongo Empire, West Africa** (London: The Baptist Missionary Society and Trübner & Co., 1887) cites *muna* as “those who are enclosed,” 310, 358, and *nzo* as “house,” 407. *Muna-nzo* would thus be “those who are enclosed in the house.” “Munanso Kongo”: Those who belong to the Kongo house; Kongo Community. See also Laman, Karl. E. **Dictionnaire Kikongo-Français avec un Étude Phonétique Décrivant Les Dialectes Les Plus Importants De La Langue Dite Kikongo** (Ridgewood, New Jersey: The Gregg Press Incorporated, 1964), 829-839. “Nkita,” is cited by Laman as: “A spirit of the dead that has established a dwelling in water, in ravines,” 721. I take “Mana” to be a contraction of “Mw-ána,” which Laman cites as “Child, descendant, progeny;...a drum played loud,” 645. Keeping in mind the organization of Palo society into a hierarchy based on kinship with the dead, “Nkita Mana Nkita,” by my rendering, is “The Dead and the Children of the Dead.”

8. For estimates that give some indication of the numbers of slaves brought to Cuba during these years see Curtin, Philip D., **The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census** (Madison, Milwaukee, London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969) 265-273. See also Ortiz, Fernando, **Los Negros Esclavos** (La Habana: Editorial Ciencias Sociales, 1975) 37-66.

others from diverse Kongo cultures and peoples were nurtured in Havana's Kongo mutual aid societies [*cabildos*].⁹ *Lemba* and *Nkita* were but two among what must have been many Central African inspirations that recombined fortuitously and creatively, just as surely as they struggled against one another for the hearts of people seeking counteragents for the unprecedented misfortunes of trans-Atlantic dislocation and enslavement. When they emerged as a newly relevant entity from the ruin of slavery and Spanish colonialism in Cuba at the turn of the twentieth century, they did so as *Palo*, which in Havana is referred to as *La Regla de Congo*. I translate *La Regla de Congo* alternately as "Kongo Rule" and "Kongo Law."¹⁰

La Regla de Congo, Kongo Law, *Palo*—I will also call this social force "Palo Society." It is important to stress that Kongo Law has four branches [*ramas*] in Havana, each of which is ritually, musically, and perhaps linguistically distinct from the other. These branches are *Palo Mayombe*, *Palo Briyumba* (*Villumba*, *Vriyumba* or *Biyumba*), *Palo Monte*, and *Palo Kimbisa*. In the countryside throughout the island, Kongo inspirations assume myriad names and forms. This paper concerns Havana-based *Palo Briyumba*. *Palo Briyumba*, like the other branches, proliferates into smaller communities that I call praise houses [*casas templo*, literally "temple houses"], because they coalesce in the home of practitioner-teachers, and around the powerful *prendas* they keep and feast there.¹¹ In the mid- to late- 1990's, *Palo Briyumba* and *Palo Monte* praise houses were predominant in Havana, with the latter apparently more pervasive than the former. Perhaps this explains why *La Regla de Congo* is often referred to in scholarly and popular literature as "*Palo Monte*."¹² In keeping with popular usage among people who practice Kongo Law in Havana, I have adopted "Palo" as more accurate, if more generic, shorthand for it.

The word "palo" has broad currency in Cuban Spanish. Strictly defined, it means "stick." "Palo" may also refer to an entire tree in the Cuban vernacular, as in "*un palo de mango*" [a mango tree]. Derived from its meaning as

9. An historical account of African and Creole social and aid societies during this period can be found in Howard, Philip A., **Changing History: Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth Century** (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). See also, George Brandon, **Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories** (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) 69-76.

10. See note 1, above.

11. I borrow the term "praise house" from Margaret Washington Creel in "Gullah Attitudes toward Life and Death," in Holloway, Joseph E., ed. **Africanisms in American Culture** (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 71, 93n.14.

12. Recent examples include Palmié, Stephan, **Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition** (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002); Arostegui, Natalia Bólvivar and Carmen González Díaz de Villegas, *Ta makuende yaya y las reglas de Palo Monte: Mayombe, brillumba, kimbisa, shamalongo* (La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1998); Barnet, Miguel, *Cultos afrocubanos: la Regla de Ocha, la Regla de Palo Monte* (Ciudad de la Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1995).

“stick,” “palo” also means “club,” or “cudgel.” Moving further into the vernacular, “palo” can refer to a strike or a blow, as in “*¡Le voy a meter un palo a la cabeza!*” [I’m going to knock him on the head!]. Palo can also mean “penis” or “fuck.” The adoption of “Palo” to refer to Cuban-Kongo religious practice lies in the artistry of pun and insinuation surrounding this word in all of its Cuban Spanish iterations.

“Palo” invokes the sticks cut from the branches of powerful trees that are prominent in Cuban-Kongo power objects, the *prendas* used for crafting works of healing and harming. These sticks are imagined as kindling used to light fires in the lives of one’s enemies.¹³ From this understanding, it is easy to conceive of *Palo* as do Cubans of all stripes—as dangerous “heat” or “fire” [*la candela*]. “Palo” also refers to the hallowed power of sovereign trees deep in the forest, which are praised in the songs and rites of praise houses, trees seen as dwelling place, and avatar, of the dead. And of course, “Palo” speaks to the blows Cuban-Kongo practice delivers against the fortune of a healer’s enemies, and to the vaunted masculinity of Cuban-Kongo praise societies. Finally, but not insignificantly, “Palo” refers to the fucking-over of an enemy through cleverness and force.

Given this, it is hardly difficult to imagine why relative to *Santo*, *Palo* is considered the “left hand” of Cuban arts of African-inspired healing.¹⁴ When Kongo inspirations emerged as *La Regla de Congo* sometime near the beginning of the twentieth century, they did so in conjunction with, perhaps in response to, the emergence of a similar code that established the rules for teaching West African traditions of inspiration. This was *La Regla de Ocha*, which I translate literally as “The Law,” or “Rule, of the Pure,” but which I will refer to throughout my text as “Santo.”¹⁵ The relationship between *Palo* and *Santo/Ocha* is exquisitely complex, and is superficially characterized by

13. Ochoa, Todd Ramón. “The Dead and the Living in a Cuban-Kongo Sacred Society.” Diss. Columbia University, 2004. 265

14. Hertz’s elaboration of right and left as regards the use of hands is well known. The left is that which is “repressed and kept inactive, its development methodically thwarted.” The left, in the body and the social alike, is the illegitimate, impure, unstable, maleficent and dreaded. Robert Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, trans. Rodney and Claudia Needham (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960) 92, 100.

15. From Igbo, *Ocha* means “purity,” “cleanliness.” See Williamson, Kay, *Igbo-English Dictionary Based on the Ontisha Dialect* (Benin City, Nigeria: Ethiopie Pub. Corp. 1972), 396-397. See also Echeruo, Michael J.C., *Igbo-English Dictionary: A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Igbo Language with an English-Igbo Index* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) 132, 163, 245, 272. See also Igwe, G. Egemba, *Igbo-English Dictionary* (Ibadan: University Press PLC, 1999) 637, 795. Not by coincidence, *Ocha* is the word used by practitioners of *Santo* when formally referring to their Yoruba-inspired orders of knowledge and practice. *La Regla de Ocha*: The Rule of *Ocha*, the Rule or Law of the Pure. *La Regla de Ocha* is popularly referred to as “Santo”—referring to the rule of the sovereigns, the “Saints,” at the exceptional pinnacle of purity rising from the broad base of profane life. Importantly, “*ocha*” also means “white” in Igbo, which is the color *Santo* initiates don to distinguish themselves from the profane during initiation and feasts.

a division of labor wherein *Santo/Ocha* does the healing and *Palo* does the harming. Though not entirely false, this distinction is overly simplistic.

A rivalry exists between *Palo* and *Santo*, between Kongo and Yoruba inspirations in Cuba, that, in its present form at the end of the 20th century, speaks to divisions and strengths pitted against one another since these groups of slaves met on ships crossing the Atlantic. It is not so violent a rivalry that a single practitioner cannot benefit from the dedicated practice of both *Palo* and *Santo*. Rather, *Palo* and *Santo* exist as mutually competing sovereignties [Reglas, Rules] vying to constitute subjects among the living. *Santo* establishes its sovereignty by virtue of its uncontested access to West African-inspired divinities, and the awesome power of Divinity per se. Historically, because West African ideas order experience into realms ruled over by divine powers, *Santo* has positioned itself closer to Catholic understandings of universal order [cosmos] than has *Palo*. In part, its sovereignty in Cuba is derived from the role it plays as mediator between Catholic and Kongo inspirations.

Refusing all dominant terms, either Catholic or Yoruba-inspired, *Palo* claims sovereignty, and thereby cosmological autonomy, through privileged access to the dead. Its love of the dead, and consort with the dead in its craft, led *Palo* to be viewed as malevolent in the eyes of Spanish Catholic Cubans. In response, rather than abandon their dead for greater assimilability, Kongo-inspired peoples appear to have adopted Spanish Catholic prejudices and figures of dread (the witch, the devil, the Jew) as the organizing terms by which Kongo Law is asserted.¹⁶ The command by which *Palo* imposes its sovereignty in Havana is drawn as much from long-fertile Kongo ideas about the dead, as from Kongo-inspired interpretations of 19th century popular Catholic ideology, and from paradoxical folds in Catholicism's narrative of God's Rule, which requires the death of the divine (at the hands of Jews according to 19th century Catholic anti-Semitism) on Good Friday each year.¹⁷

Just as *Santo* has benefited from proximity to Catholic motifs of divinity relative to *Palo*, so has *Santo* and its practitioners been advantageously positioned to draw greater benefit from the influx of tourist dollars since the economic changes initiated in 1993-4. Those who practice *Palo* are acutely interested in the dollar and the purchasing power it brings at hard currency-only stores, and were it not for the radically inassimilable quality of prendas and *Palo* initiations to tourist aesthetics, would likely have made broader inroads in trading on their practice. Relative to *Palo*, *Santo* societies and their initiates have been awash in dollars, and have transformed accordingly.¹⁸ Yet it is important to note that dollars wealth has not transformed the basic cos-

16. Ochoa, 330-332

17. Ochoa, 322-326.

mological boundaries that separate *Palo* and *Santo*, and which are guarded through a careful balance of power to guarantee mutual sovereignty for each rule of fate [*Regla*]. It is with *Palo's* boundaries of action, and basis of sovereignty, that the remainder of this paper is concerned.

Aspects of the Dead

Following my teachers of *Palo*, I have asserted that *Palo* is before anything else a practice of apprehending and working with the dead, this to the extent that its adherents are said to “wander with the dead” [*andan con muerto*].¹⁹ If one in to try to understand the *prendas* practitioners of *Palo* keep, and the elaborate social worlds that coalesce around these, then it is vital to grasp this point. One must have a “sense” of wandering with the dead before proceeding with any attempt to represent *Palo*, its *prendas*, or its practice of healing-harming. Isidra Saez, my principal teacher of *Palo* craft, taught me this through typical *Palo* pedagogy, which involved stories, songs, specific modes of talk and recollection, and not least through the practice of *Palo* craft. In each of these registers, she taught the dead as a mode of visceral apprehension, felt in the body and held in consciousness through it.

If there can be said to be a conceptual statement that communicates this viscerality of the dead, it is the following: the dead are contiguous and immediate to the living—my teachers argued that the material world is comprised of them both. And if this statement can be affirmed, it is only through the visceral apprehension of the dead in the bodies of the living, as sensation prior to codification or signification. I want to stress this because it introduces an argument important to what follows, which is that *Palo's* understandings of the dead are not only conceptual affairs that revel in the mutual and indivisible affirmation of matter and the dead, but primarily visceral ones felt in the bodies of the living and discerned in the world around. In this, *Palo's* definitions of the dead reside simultaneously in categories that are generally considered mutually exclusive by scholars inspired by Platonic, and thereafter Hegelian, traditions of dialectical logic: concept and matter, and immediacy and the object.

My characterization of *Palo's* dead depends on describing these as having many aspects, mutually coexisting and concurrently affirmed. My approach insists that one sustain multiple (at times necessarily exclusive) definitions of the dead simultaneously. This method helps portray, literally, the baffling proliferation of the dead in *Palo's* teaching and craft. When contradictions

18. Treatments of the transformations undergone by *Santo* in the 1990's have been undertaken with tact by Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 260-289; and Hagedorn, Katherine, *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería* (Washington and London: Smithsonian University Press, 2001) 219-227.

19. Cabrera, Lydia. *El Monte* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2000) 42.

arise between these mutually acknowledged definitions of the dead, it is best not to attempt to resolve them by means of dialectical negation, which usually clarifies things. Rather, my teachers taught me to affirm each definition, or aspect, of the dead, while affirming the others at once. In one moment the dead were discrete responsive entities such as a deceased parent or sibling, and in the same moment the dead was an undefined and pressing mass [*Kalunga, el muerto*] made up of infinite numbers of unrecognizable dead. Simultaneously, the dead were/was a chill running up one's spine, or a pinch of ash. The difficulty in characterizing the dead with such variety is that instead of narrowing an understanding of the dead to a single established identity, the logic of affirmation I pursue here leads to a proliferation of definitions.²⁰ If *Palo* can fix the dead at all, it is only as a ceaseless and glorious propagation that suffuses all things and is immanent to them.²¹

To help describe the proliferation of *Palo's* dead and the mode of understanding these imply—wherein a thing can be itself and its apparent opposite without contradiction, and where this is known in the senses of the body—one must comprehend the dead as proliferating into innumerable aspects, each one a version of the other. A person becoming familiar with *Palo* will perceive these aspects of the dead spreading through lived experience, so that before long the dead will be revealed as a feeling of un-attributable apprehension, and as a bit of sawdust from a powerful tree; the dead will be what is felt as important in a song, and also what is chilling about a skillful allusion in a moment of danger. The dead are the words of ancestors that return to echo in our minds with uncanny poignancy in a given circumstance, and they are bones exhumed from forgotten graves; they are blood and stones. The dead in *Palo* are best imagined as an uncontainable spreading, each aspect becoming yet another, until the multitude that accumulates overtakes and saturates the very imagination that attributes to the dead presence and volition. One can seek to understand *Palo* by approaching it through any aspect of the dead.

It is necessary at this moment to point out that the Cuban-Kongo dead, the inestimable aspects of *Palo's* dead, have no dominant entity to authorize their

20. Wyatt MacGaffey, in his outstanding study of BaKongo thought, refers to this proliferation as a “series” of the dead. Unlike his series, however, the proliferation I suggest for the Cuban Kongo dead is more resistant to the categorizations MacGaffey proposes for the dead among the BaKongo. MacGaffey, Wyatt, **Religion and Society in Central Africa: The BaKongo of Lower Zaire** (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 76.

21. My use of a logic of affirmation, propagation and paradox in describing *Palo's* dead is indebted to Gilles Deleuze, **The Logic of Sense**, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) 1-41, 253-264. For propagation and proliferation as modes of understanding and experience, see Bataille, Georges, **The Accursed Shared, Vol. I: Consumption** (New York: Zone Books, 1988) 19-40. See also Bataille, Georges, “The Notion of Expenditure,” in **Visions of Excess: Selected Writings**, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 116-129.

proliferating forms.²² Rather, what was described to me by my teachers, Isidra and Rodolfo, was an anonymous mass of the dead [*Kalunga, el muerto*], to which no discrete identity is ascribed. All aspects of the dead, including those that comprise the world of the living, are immanent to *Kalunga, el muerto*, before they emerge in discrete form to be apprehended by the sensing body. I learned to perceive this anonymous mass of the dead as an “ambiance,” immediate to all matter.

It is no surprise that my teachers would equate the dead with *Kalunga*, the realm of the dead residing beyond the depths of the sea, for BaKongo people.²³ Kongo cosmology emphasizes the dead as an important force in the world of the living, and in its explanations situates the dead not only as residing beyond the sea, but as prolific and excessive, much like the sea in its vastness.²⁴ The dead are in the teachings of Palo’s practitioners much as they were in Kongo thought: immanent to the living. The dead are to the living, in Bataille’s words, “like water is in water,” dependent on no object and belonging to no subject, rather everywhere within these at once.²⁵

Kalunga, el muerto—the vast sea of the dead—is comprised of all the dead that could possibly exist or have existed. It is ancient beyond memory, and within it the dead exceed plurality and become instead a dense and indistinguishable mass.²⁶ This dispassionate mass of the dead is felt pressing close; one is educated to discern it filling-up space and crowding around in moments of indeterminate importance. Then it appears to recede. My teachers felt *Kalunga* suffusing them, as a range of visceralities and ineffable feel-

22. People familiar with Kongo cosmology, or with Palo’s dead, will immediately suggest **Nzambi Mpungu** as such an authority, because Nzambi Mpungu is often offered as a likeness to God by those who understand this power either in Kongo or Palo thought. These readers will also recognize that the status of Nzambi Mpungu as a singular authority over the dead is much in doubt. See, for example, MacGaffey, **Religion and Society** 6, 73-76. In the case of Cuban Palo, I propose that Nzambi Mpungu is but another form of the dead. Nzambi Mpungu in Cuban Palo is that form of the dead that is the power in matter that pushes back against human manipulation and imposes itself against a person’s will. Like any aspect of the dead in Cuban Palo, Nzambi Mpungu is in practice no higher, or more sovereign, than any other form.

23. MacGaffey, **Religion and Society**, 43. See also Bentley, **Dictionary and Grammar**, 288; Laman, **Dictionnaire**, 207.

24. MacGaffey, **Religion and Society**, 63-88.

25. Bataille, Georges, **Theory of Religion**, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1992) 23-25. For a characterization of immanence in relation to subjects and objects see Deleuze, Gilles, **Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life**, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001) 26.

26. Canetti calls this mass “the invisible crowd.” He writes: “It could be argued that religions **begin** with invisible crowds. They may be differently grouped, and in each faith a different balance between them has developed. It would be both possible and fruitful to classify religions according to the way in which they manipulate their invisible crowds.” Canetti later depicts the opposition of the crowds of the dead to the crowd of the living as essential not only for social cohesion but for despotism as well. He writes, “The two crowds keep each other alive.” Canetti, Elias, **Crowds and Power**, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Seabury Press, 1978) 45, 63, 265-9.

ings that took form in speech in uncanny metonymy—of liquids. Isidra said that Kalunga, the sea, should be thought of as a broth [caldo] where the dead float and drift among countless other dead.

Feeling *Kalunga, el muerto*, so close—in her body and on her skin—Isidra insisted that the living and the dead float together. Her elaboration of *Kalunga* dissolved the expected opposition of living and dead, so that not only did these two great ordering categories no longer stand in opposition to one another, but at the limit of her characterization became an indivisible coupling, mutually becoming one another like the surfaces of a mobius strip. Placed within the context of Kalunga's saturating immanence, the living are best understood as singular densities of the dead precipitating in a fluid at saturation. In precipitating subjects and objects and lending them density amidst its indifferent flows, *Kalunga* gives them meaning and singularity (though not identity).²⁷ From out of the immediacy of *Kalunga*, the living and the dead, and the world in which they exist, are a series of emergences, forever becoming, dissipating, and repeating upon themselves.

Having a form that achieves duration, such as a body, involves precipitating with more or less force within the immanence of *Kalunga, el muerto*. Sustaining the duration of a form likewise requires a combination of forces, and such combinations are what we call life. In *Palo*, the combination of forces that gels a life is not protected by social prohibitions such as those that add up to the European values of good and evil. Rather "life" is one set of forces among many sets that subsist in ever precipitating and repeating series that transfer with great speed through the immediacy of *Kalunga, el muerto*. This understanding establishes the living as tenuous and transitory precipitations, perhaps coagulations, of the infinitely generic flows of the dead. Isidra's notion of the dead as a fluid immanence that permeated and saturated life helped her advance the idea that the body is something shared with the dead. Within the immanence that is *Kalunga*, the body is not fixed by the physics of flesh and bones, it is rather more like a membranous peel constituted in any depth it might have by the hydraulic fluctuations and re-arrangements of the dead permitted across and through its surface. Isidra's formulation of the body cast it as yet another aspect of the dead, material insofar as matter was understood as a momentary condensation, precipitation, or coagulation of the fluid immanence of the dead.

These reflections will take one only so far in *Palo*, however, because the principal characteristic of *Kalunga, el muerto*, the ambient dead, is to evade determination, remain strange, become unexpected, and forever exceed dominant languages that seek to inscribe it. In *Palo* teaching, *Kalunga, el muerto*,

27. For the critical distinction between singularity and identity see Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 43. Deleuze, Gilles. *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, (New York: Zone Books, 2001) 29-31.

resides nowhere but saturates what there is to be perceived. Most often, if it was ever evident in my engagements with my teachers, *Kalunga, el muerto*, was a fleeting sensation in the wake of an insinuation or a clever imputation, discerned only by the person who felt it. It can be said that the dead are a studied and refined discourse on the part of the practitioners of Palo, a discourse not only of words, but also of pauses, of creative omissions, of clever puns, unverifiable implications, and allusions born forever anew, as it were, from the overlap where matter and concept, the felt and the thought, the immediate and the discrete object, touch.

Prenda Nganga—Transformation, the Attack

Palo's rigid hierarchy, exaggerated masculine aesthetics, secret languages,²⁸ and violent initiations are intimately bound-up with the *prendas* teachers of *Palo* make and keep at the heart of their praise houses. Furthermore, the webs of insinuation that cast *Palo* as the principal mode of African-inspired sorcery in Cuba are spun out of these elaborate agglomerations of earth, sticks, animal remains, and labored substances, packed into iron cauldrons and terracotta urns. “Prenda” is a word with a remarkable proliferation of meanings and translations from the Spanish, of which “pawn,” “collateral,” and, by extension, “jewel,” are the most common. “Nganga” is 19th century Kikongo (the language of the BaKongo people) for “sorcerer” or “healer.”²⁹ “Prenda nganga,” the formal name by which all *prendas* are named in *Palo*, is thus a healer’s jewel, her or his guarantee against the afflictions of an indentured life.³⁰

Prendas are inspired elaborations of matter—they are complex and singular efforts to presence *Kalunga, el muerto*.³¹ Their inspiration, like everything in *Palo*, owes to the creative spark that crossed the Atlantic with BaKongo and other central African peoples. *Prendas* are uniquely Cuban forms of

28. The ritual vocabulary of *Palo* is inspired principally by Kikongo. The linguistic anthropologist Armin Schwegler has argued recently that *Palo* speech is the result of a “direct transmission and tight preservation” of Kikongo in Cuba from the earliest moments of slavery on the island. See Armin Schwegler, “El vocabulario (ritual) bantú de Cuba, Parte I: Acerca de la matriz africana de la “lengua congo” en El monte y Vocabulario congo de Lydia Cabrera” in *La Romania Americana: Procesos lingüísticos en situaciones de contacto*, Norma Díaz, Ralph Ludwig and Stefan Pfänder, eds. (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2002) 101-194.

29. For *nganga* as “sorcerer” or “healer” see Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar*. 371. See also Laman, *Dictionnaire*. 683.

30. This is best reflected in a type of prenda broadly known as *Lucero*, or “morning star.” *Lucero* *prendas* often include in the their names, which can be quite long, the phrase “saca empeño,” or “extricates from debt.”

31. See Cabrera, Lydia, *Vocabulario Congo (el Bantú que se habla en Cuba)*, (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1984) 246. Also Cabrera, Lydia, *Reglas de Congo: Palo Monte, Mayombe*, (Miami: Peninsular Printing, Inc., 1979) 129: “Nganga no es Santo, sino puntualmente, el espíritu de un muerto.” See also MacGaffey, Wyatt. “Complexity, Astonishment and Power: The Visual Vocabulary of Kongo Minkisi,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Jan., 1988): 188-203.

Kongo *minkisi* (pl.; sing. nkisi), which are materializations of the influence of the dead that defined, in the 19th century, and continue to define today, Kongo notions of clairvoyance and causality. *Prendas*, like Kongo *minkisi*, are powerful forms of the dead synonymous with curing and affliction, which are traditionally drummed up at the heart of Kongo healing societies.³²

Like the dead, *Prendas* evade the conceptual stasis that accompanies identification. They seek to grow before all else, to continually transform their surface appearance as layer upon layer of objects, substances, and fluids are placed on them. They want only to eat, to be fed the fates of initiates, who they love to have gathered around them in feasts of praise. They delight in drumming, dancing, and meals of sacrificial blood from fowl, goats, rams, and other creatures. Their greatest joy is to have the dead that course through them made flesh and blood in the body of an initiate, who has pledged her or his life to the object. When the feast is over, *prendas* sink into fetid repose, glorying in the coagulating rivulets of blood and crowns of rooster feathers that cover them. In time, as the initiates offered to a *prenda* become many, as a praise house grows, as the offerings become more sumptuous and more regular, a *prenda* will overflow its receptacle, spilling and spreading through a room like a still life of the uncontainable fluid of *Kalunga, el muerto*, itself. A *prenda* (or a collection of *prendas*) will eventually claim entire rooms, which are sealed off and opened only with its permission.

As a praise house becomes influential, drawing scores of initiates into the gravitational pull of its *prendas*, the social force of these objects becomes irresistible. Living and dead circulate through *prendas*. Each is recycled through the body of the objects—the living offer gifts and gestures of obeisance, while *prendas* offer access to a series of privileged encounters with the dead that change petrified configurations of fates and lives. And this is a *prenda's* grace, to dissipate and make anew what is fixed and given; each aspect of the dead that passes through it is at the same moment transformed. The living are forever drawn to this potential when the collection of forces that organize their lives becomes oppressive, and impossible to turn toward good fortune. *Prendas*, their transfers of force forever ambivalent, hold no easy formula for healing, and rather promise only disruptions of what has apparently become inevitable. Such disruptions are neither painless, nor devoid of risk, but the people who come within the atmosphere of change a *prenda* generates find themselves willing to try their fates with the *prenda's* coupling of healing-harming.

To choose to disrupt the forces that organize and sustain a life, to seek to dissipate such a combination of forces by means of other, likewise influential forces, such that a life that is fixed is scattered back into the immanence of

32. Janzen, *Ngoma*, 12, 72, 108.

Kalunga and changed, or lost, this is what *Palo* sorcery is about. It is performed through subtle craft, which is worked as much in the realm of labored materials as in the realm of words and silences. It is an art that combines a sensitive apprehension of the dead with lore in the manufacture of fatefully powerful substances, to create objects and situations that are unique, eruptive, and eventful in their capacity to alter those who possess or experience them. These often take the form of protective charms, healing bundles, concoctions made with animal blood, powders, and intimate encounters with a healer wherein the dead are engaged through divination and possession, and animals are offered in sacrifice.

Palo healing more often than not involves an attack on an oppressing enemy. Threatening an enemy, chasing them off, promises a transformation in the lives of the afflicted. Healing-harming is effected through *prendas*, which collect the generic force of *Kalunga, el muerto*, and condense it so as to transform it into forms that can be directed against an enemy's subjectivity. These forms are not easy to define with certainty, but often take the shape of ruinous storms, hunting cats, birds of prey, raging bulls, and devious imps, each in immanent, emergent, relation with the multitudinous dead.³³ These predatory aspects of the dead obey the keeper's *prenda* (in many respects they are aspects of the *prenda*), and take advantage of the immediacy they enjoy with *Kalunga, el muerto*, to travel through it at exquisite speed, like waves moving through a heavier, clumsier medium. If the life they seek to disrupt is undefended when they reach it, they pass directly through its density, striking time and again until that shape is dispersed and lost amidst the flows of the dead.

A sensitive study of *Palo* involves understanding that *prendas* are, among their other attributes, relays for imperceptible, yet socially potent transfers of force that can both petrify reality and render it fluidly immediate. In this, *prendas* can be understood as synthesizing agents of reifying-dereifying, reification referring to forms of social organization whereby conscious thought becomes petrified and remote. To paraphrase Hegel, when what is apparently most close to one is in truth most removed.³⁴ There are strong intimations in Hegel, assertions in Marx, and emphatic appeals in Lukács that the principal device used in the transfer of this subtle social force is the object which, like a gleaming jewel, seems forever to embody more social potential than its simple matter can possibly hold.³⁵

33. Ochoa, 372-376.

34. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 17-20

35. Hegel, 115. Also Marx, Karl, *Capital, Vol I* (New York: International Publishers, 1967) 76-87. See also Lukács, Georg, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971) 83-89; 92-95.

But thinking of *prendas* as relays for the transfer of force hardly exhausts this socially ebullient object; they are also agents of transformation capable of inspiring entirely captivating landscapes of desire, as later interpreters of Marx and Hegel, such as Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, observed of the object.³⁶ This insight lies implicit in Hegel, whose own fascination with the object is often overlooked, as is the role he accords it in the constitution of human consciousness.³⁷ It is the object—in Hegel’s famous narrative that thing of beauty fashioned by the slave that makes master feel desire—that is responsible for lifting human consciousness out of a consuming “immediacy” characterized by infinite receptivity.³⁹

Hegel’s lesson, made explicit by Benjamin and Adorno, and which I have sought to explore here, is that properly manipulated the object can transfer forces that solidify one version of reality, just as they can unexpectedly create a tear in the screens of petrified thought and for an instant make fluid life possible again. “The object,” a *prenda* in this case, is a daunting thing of control and enchantment, just as it holds tremendous potential for change—of thought, of fates and of lives

Conclusion—Aesthetics of Palo

At the close of the 20th century and the birth of the 21st, *Palo* prizes and educates feelings at the limits of attribution and identification—like intuition, inspiration, and sudden fear. *Palo* loves the implicit and the “given”—the fated—which it revels in turning into something new through a clever play of the will amidst the generic mass of *Kalunga, el muerto*. *Palo*’s discourse of the dead in multiplicity reveals the aesthetic values *Palo* instructs, these being the volatility of substances, speed of decision, the use of secret force against adversaries, and unsentimental action taken to transform fate. The refinement of these is what *Palo* considers beautiful and reveres. These sentiments and values are educated by teachers of *Palo* who instruct their initiates to seek them among *Kalunga, el muerto*, as discursive lines of approach and escape running through series of aspects of the dead, often without apparent affinity or resemblance between them. *Prendas*, one aspect of *Palo*’s dead,

36. Adorno contends with the theory of the object and its reifying quality in Adorno, Theodor, **Negative Dialectics**, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973) 11-12; 31-33; 174-176; 183-192. Benjamin’s concern with the capacity of the object to overtake the imagination is most evident in his sustained inquiry into commodity fetishism, perhaps most accessible in his Paris *oeuvre*. See for example, “Paris Capital of the Nineteenth Century” in Benjamin, Walter, **Reflections**, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986) 146-162. Also “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” in Benjamin, Walter **Illuminations**, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 186-192.

37. Hegel, 115-116.

38. Hegel, 115-118.

39. Hegel, 104-106.

seek ever to grow and draw the fated to the them, so they may be transformed. Such transformations are effected through the organization and condensation of the flows of *Kalunga, el muerto*, into fatefully significant events. Each aspect of *Palo's* dead is singular yet speaks for the others, each in its own irreducible particularity. In so doing, in so valuing the dead and the immediate self-otherness of its multiple aspects, *Palo* scatters itself along the frictionless plane of its becoming, thus eluding attempts to assimilate or appropriate it. By this valuation, which is also a physics of the dead, is *Palo's* sovereignty, is Kongo Rule in Cuba, affirmed.

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History of the Cuban National Library

Carlos Riobó

This paper is based on research and interviews I conducted in Cuba beginning in 1999, on an initial trip sponsored by the State University of New York at Binghamton, and concluding in 2004, with a second trip sponsored by Barnard College of Columbia University. I visited the Cuban National Library, La Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (“BNJM”) and La Biblioteca Provincial “Elvira Cape,” in Santiago de Cuba, to learn about the system of satellite libraries the BNJM had implemented in the Cuban provinces.¹ These satellite or provincial libraries were meant to facilitate the literacy campaign, especially in rural areas, but also to allow cultural idioms the provinces felt represented their own culture to be collected and shared with the National Library and with city dwellers as part of a new collective national consciousness promoted by the revolutionary regime. I was initially intrigued by the idea that the provinces could authentically represent their mostly rural culture to people in Havana as anything other than archetype or myth, and to a national institution once known for high-brow culture — the BNJM. I wanted to know what criteria and methodologies were used by the provincial, or satellite, libraries to choose and collect their cultural artifacts.

This paper traces the history of both the Cuban National Library in Havana and the Cuban public libraries (also known as satellite or provincial libraries) while asking a more universal question: how do the culturally marginal learn to reify and to exhibit their provincial culture? And, in so doing,

1. The Cuban satellite libraries are also known as Apublic libraries and Aprovincial libraries. They are not to be confused with the controversial A-independent libraries started in 1998 to Aestablish surreptitiously private collections for semi-clandestine public use in the homes [of private individuals] (Salazar 2). These latter libraries are not officially sanctioned by the Cuban state, but often ignored. Some of them contain books banned by the government. Some scholars have argued that it is not these libraries’ books that are banned, but the libraries themselves.

do they either gain or lose political agency, or do they contaminate, denature, or even lose their culture?

The Cuban National Library, today's Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, was founded in 1901, during the historical moment of Cuba's independence from Spain. It is no coincidence and no surprise that an institution such as a national repository of culture should have arisen during a period as traumatic, memorable, and explorational as a country's autonomization. At such a moment, the new country was in the process of creating an official history that both rescued its colonial heritage selectively and forged a new itinerary and destiny. The transformation of the country's colonial patrimony to a republican one required a corpus of works from which to fabricate a new national mythology, as well as a national warehouse within which to frame and unify these works. As one of the national library's original proponents put it,

había recibido varias ofertas de amigos que se hallaban dispuestos a donar libros, planos, láminas, etc.; [...] que no admitirían esos donativos ni contribuirían con mucho de sus bibliotecas privadas a menos de obtener completa seguridad de que dichos documentos no se perderían por falta de estantes adecuados en que colocarlos (Echevarría 65).

Library Science, as we know it today, was not operative in turn-of-the-century Cuba. Libraries then were more for warehousing and displaying than for lending to a reading public. They would seem to us today more like museums than libraries.

La Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (BNJM), was founded only a few months before the founding of the Republic on May 20, 1902, and during a period of United States intervention on the island. The United States's military government's occupation had been officially established in Cuba on January 1st, 1899. In 1901, the island's governor, Leonard Wood, issued military order #234 in *la Gaceta de La Habana*, establishing the National Library and naming Domingo Figarola Caneda as its director, retroactive to the 18th of October. The National Library has no foundational document. The only extant official prose is the military order referring to October 18, 1901 as the origin of the Institution and designating Figarola's salary and the location of the library.

It is important to underscore that the origins of the Cuban National Library are tied to U.S. intervention on the island. As Tomás Fernández Robaina suggests,

Es posible que la fundación de la Biblioteca Nacional haya sido vista por el gobierno interventor ... como uno de los factores necesarios a largo plazo dentro de la política de modernización o de americanización, ...que se llevaba a

cabo en Cuba para preparar su evolución acored a los planes inmediatos de penetración económica e ideológica. (11)

Other Cuban writers such as Juan Pérez de la Riva and Emilio Setién have suggested similar ideas. In part, the lack of a founding document and the focus on salary and location in the military order seem to suggest that the earliest, official, preoccupations were not with a grand plan and future for a “national” library. To the contrary, the order points to a paltry salary for the library’s first director and inadequate space for its first building.

From its inception in 1901 until 1958, the Biblioteca Nacional had no ties to Cuba’s public libraries. There had been a handful of provincial libraries since the early nineteenth-century in Cuba, which were more akin to what we might think of as museums or archives today. These housed private collections of various types of treasures, as well as books, belonging to a few wealthy, private individuals. The constitution of 1940 had foreseen the establishment of “una biblioteca en cada municipio” (Ministerio de cultura 116) but the project never entirely came to fruition.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 saw in the National Library an opportunity to disseminate Revolutionary ideals as well as a symbolic institution that could be made accessible to the masses at large. By the end of 1959, the Library had already begun to be used to collect and to organize studies and documents having to do with history, literature, music, and science. The National Library endeavored to collect what it considered to represent Cuban culture and to designate it as Cuba’s patrimony to be shared by all, even if that meant first educating the “grandes mayorías” of people as to how to study their own culture. This latter endeavor was accomplished, as is well known, mostly through “la exitosa y trascendental campaña de alfabetización sobre casi un millón de analfabetos y la creación de la Imprenta Nacional” (García-Carranza, “Contribución de la BNJM” 22); in part, it was also done through the Library’s vast bibliographic projects, especially since the end of 1961 when it published “un primer intento bibliográfico de carácter nacional, un catálogo titulado *Movimiento editorial en Cuba 1959-60, con motivo de una exposición de libros, folletos y revistas que mostraba la producción de las editoras cubanas,...*, con lo que se iniciaba la revaloración de la cultura cubana” (García-Carranza, “Contribución de la BNJM” 23). The library’s *revaloración* enfranchised works through its list and tacitly disavowed those not on it. It would become a symbol of a revalorization of cultural works and an institution that could be used by a plurality of people.

One of the early challenges to the Cuban Revolution after 1959 was to create a consciousness among the rural and provincial peoples of having a direct, participatory role in recording their own history on a national scale; that is, of fitting within a historical continuum, within a linear and causal nar-

rative, to which they had had little if any access previously.² To do so, however, meant that these rural peoples needed to have cultural capital or artifacts with which to enter such a narrative as subject and not just object. The Cuban cultural revolution needed to provide literacy, since literature (or writing) was one of the mediums through which people could both learn and create, and thereby enter recorded history. The Cubans wanted a planned culture after 1959 as an activity directed to the formation of the “new man” in the new society. This new individual “se producirá por el cambio de las condiciones sociales y las nuevas posibilidades de elevación del nivel cultural de la sociedad” (Escobar 2). Fidel Castro stated in his Speech to the Intellectuals (Palabras a los intelectuales) in 1961 that a “Revolución económica y social tiene que producir inevitablemente también una Revolución cultural.” This was one of Castro’s early attempts to define revolutionary Cuba’s cultural politics – and the BNJM would be at the center of this culture war. A series of social changes had to be made before the public library system would be in a position to develop as an agent of cultural change. The most significant of these social changes was spearheaded by the aforementioned literacy campaign.

The famed literacy campaign of Cuba started in 1961. In 1959, the population of Cuba was 6 million and 24.3 percent were illiterate (according to the Cuban Libraries Support Group, out of the United Kingdom). In 1999 the population was 11 million, and 4.3 percent were illiterate. According to UNESCO, as cited by the Cuban Libraries Support Group, by 1998, Cuban educational standards were the highest in Latin America. The campaign also began to break down barriers between urban and rural areas, blacks and whites, and between manual and white collar workers who spread across the countryside to aid in the campaign.

In 1964 (five years after the revolution), Cuba had thirty two public libraries, which developed, partly in a response to the surge in literacy, and partly as a means of sustaining it. Between 1963 and 1970, Cuba’s economic considerations curtailed the development of public libraries, but in the 1970’s and 80’s libraries jumped from one hundred and eight in 1974 to one hundred and ninety six in 1980. By 1987, there were three hundred and twenty eight public libraries in every part of Cuba. Currently, there are three hundred and eighty eight libraries.

Until 1959, the National Library had had no link to the country’s few public libraries. It had not established an official national system for the country’s libraries. This was the initial step foreshadowing the web of provincial

2. As the BNJM’s National Reading Program states, “Leer es un ejercicio que expresa y sostiene la cultura de una nación, su fuerza espiritual y sus valores, su capacidad de resistencia y **desarrollo**. Leer, aunque parezca una experiencia solitaria, es participar,” emphasis mine (Cuanto antes mejor 1).

libraries that was created in 1962 by the Consejo Nacional de Cultura headed by María Teresa Freyre de Andrade. At this time, she also established the Escuela de Capacitación Bibliotecaria under which the National Library began operating as the methodological center and laboratory for the web of national public libraries. From 1961 to 1967, the reference department of the BNJM “fue ‘piloto,’ pues a él llegaba personal desde las bibliotecas públicas de provincias y municipios para su entrenamiento” (Iglesias Tauler 77). From 1969 to 1975, there were national conferences to develop the central role of the National Library within the system of provincial libraries even further. Until 1976, the National Library functioned as advisor or consultant to Cuba’s various public libraries, giving them technical pamphlets, manuals, and other documents (Carranza y Jiménez López 124). The immediate goals of the Library’s directorship foreshadowing the web of satellite libraries in 1959 were:

1. estudiar y revalorizar nuestra tradición cultural y muy especialmente la del siglo XIX.

We might reflect here for a moment to remember that this was Cuba’s turbulent period of slavery and rebellion against colonial abuses. Obviously, this abusive earlier period would have resonated with the claims of the new Cuban regime leveled against the former Cuban government and the U.S. interventionist government. This study of the nineteenth century would have reflected useful parallels for the new Cuban regime.

2. estudiar e investigar nuestras raíces culturales.
3. trabajar porque se reconociera sin reservas, el talento y la capacidad del cubano, y se valoriza adecuadamente a sus creadores.
4. dar a la ciencia el lugar que le correspondía en la actividad cultural.

We might pause here again to point out that by the early to middle 1980’s, the BNJM was promoting the study of the humanities in provincial libraries as an approach to the technical sciences. As Genshaft observed, “[las] principales tareas de las bibliotecas públicas [son las de] contribuir al progreso científico técnico” (15).

5. propiciar la superación cultural de las grandes mayorías, desarrollando intensamente actividades encaminadas a interesarles en el buen arte y la lectura.
6. hacer desaparecer el gran desnivel cultural existente entre la vida cultural de la capital y el resto de la Isla.

As we read this list, we must, however, ask ourselves: aren’t these notions of high culture? Clearly, “buen arte,” and reading are designations and activi-

ties that mark these directives with a very particular bias toward cultural variants already privileged in Havana.

7. desarrollar las posibilidades de intercambio cultural con todos los países.
(García-Carranza, "Las características tipológicas")

Subsequent to this period, the provincial public libraries developed sufficiently on their own so that the National Library no longer had to continue in this centralized role. The National Library was restructured after the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1976. This latter political body set up the Dirección de Bibliotecas as the provincial public libraries' new governing body. In 1989, however, the National Library resumed its control of the country's public libraries. A State Board was created for the library with four sub-departments. The one most directly important to this talk is the Subdirección Metodológica y Desarrollo del Sistema de Bibliotecas, which included a methodological group and cultural programs that developed and tested new methodological focuses, prior to being implemented in the web of public libraries.³

The Collections of the Public Libraries

Provincial Libraries began collecting rare and valuable manuscripts pertinent to their regions since their founding (some were founded in the early to middle nineteenth-century). This was seen as preserving the province's history, which equaled the nation's history. After the revolution, there was a "rescate y custodia de todos los documentos 'donde aparece la fundación de cada una de nuestras ciudades o villas, y aquellos correspondientes a las distintas etapas de su crecimiento, esplendor, decaimiento y recuperación de la vida en esa región...'" (Vega García 4). These provincial Libraries were now, after 1959, supposed to be responsible for providing the Main Library with an account of their own history, and not the other way around. One of the larger questions that can be asked is if the cultural material that the provinces were collecting and referring to the BNJM was a negotiated or compromised variant since it was gathered and organized according to systems valued and taught by the BNJM in Havana. The BNJM started collecting its current bibliography in 1961, the same year Castro publicly defined the Cuban Revolution as Marxist-Leninist. The BNJM did not start a retrospective bibliographical collection until years later, and then with that work being done by provincial libraries. In 1979, the Dirección de Bibliotecas decided officially to promote this exchange, that is, the retrospective bibliography

3. Dr. Eliades Acosta was appointed in 1997 as the current director of the BNJM. It now has over 3 million volumes, including 26,000 maps, over 200,000 photographs and over 11,000 political posters used during and immediately after the Revolution.

produced by the provincial libraries given to and/or shared with the National Library. Since 1989, when the BNJM became the guiding methodological center for the whole network of public libraries in the country, the National Library directed all the other libraries as far as what rare and valuable materials to collect. Shortly after 1989, BNJM visited the provinces to teach methodology, and provincial library workers were sent to visit BNJM to be trained.

In 1990, BNJM hosted a second seminar in the Eastern provincial region of Las Tunas to update the criteria for collecting and organizing rare and valuable materials according to the kind of impact these materials had on the whole Nation. Also, technical terminology was introduced, through which to categorize and define these works. Now, BNJM was providing a “national” frame. After, 1990, however, the provincial library Elvira Cape, in Santiago de Cuba (Cuba’s second largest city after Havana) began serving as a second national repository, after BNJM, compiling current and retrospective national bibliographies, as a backup to BNJM. As recently as 2001, a third seminar took place that primarily focused on the use of the internet in Cuban libraries as well as to update methodology.

In 1990, the second seminar set out the following criteria for what was to be collected by provincial libraries:

Todos los libros impresos de la provincia y los cubanos que contuvieron información sobre ella (de forma total o parcial), los de autores naturales de la provincia, o los que tuvieron información sobre éstos; se contemplaron también por su alto valor los impresos en la isla en los siglos XVIII y XIX, muchos de los cuales resultan escasos en el Mercado y hasta únicos. (Vega García 7)

With respect to the 20th century’s National bibliography, however, they were directed to continue to work in tandem with BNJM since “la determinación de la rareza bibliográfica en un impreso moderno es más compleja que en uno antiguo” – ‘the determination of bibliographic uniqueness in modern printed matter is more complicated than that in old printed matter.’ Also, this was the century with most at stake politically (Vega García 7). The ley de depósito legal (law of legal deposit) was enacted only recently (within the last six years or so) to ensure that everything published in the region was collected by that region. In theory, the law required all publishers in Cuba to give five copies of each title they published to the National Library. The National Library added a copy to their collection, sent some copies to provincial libraries, and used some copies for exchange with its extensive list of international partners. The law could not always be enforced, however, because of lack of money/resources especially during the periodo especial. As far as foreign printed matter is concerned, the provincial libraries were to

collect that which, because of its age or special characteristics regarding the province itself or its nature, was valuable. Collecting and preserving rare and valuable materials “est[aba] sujeto a un perfeccionamiento y a una complementación práctica” – was done with both perfectionism and practicality in mind (Vega García, 1996, 8).

During the so-called “periodo especial,” the BNJM suffered various setbacks, not the least of which was budgetary. It is during this period that the provincial libraries experienced their greatest degree of freedom with regard to collections, classifications, and exhibitions. As Tomás Fernández Robaina remembers it, “la falta de financiamiento para sufragar los gastos de estancias y viajes fue el elemento fundamental que interrumpió el asesoramiento y las visitas metodológicas a las bibliotecas públicas de las provincias, y por lo tanto todo lo que se había avanzado en cuanto a la uniformidad de los procesos, a la aplicación de las normas establecidas se vio afectado” (103). Despite this greater degree of autonomy in the 1990’s, services in both the BNJM and the provinces were scaled back dramatically. The readership and special programs diminished accordingly. Although this would seem like an opportune moment for provincial libraries to leave their mark on their own collections, by now, they had spent, on again and off again, about 30 years adopting the BNJM’s methodologies and rationales. It was clearly too late, at this point, to move forward with initiatives that were not tainted by the values of the BNJM. In any case, the severe lack of funds during the periodo especial would have hindered any such initiatives.

The network of public libraries in the country today continues to fall under the jurisdiction of one of the National Library’s divisions and has been further divided into thirteen provincial libraries, and below, municipal and branch libraries employing over 3,600 people. The network’s recent improvements include air conditioning, internet service, electronic filing systems, and better coordination between the BNJM and the provinces. There are, of course, those scholars who decry the entire system of provincial libraries as nominally functional. Evidence adduced to support this point of view usually has to do with the size of the provincial library buildings and with the lack of regular users. While it is true that some provincial libraries do adhere to this classification, there are clearly many others that do not. In any case, it is not the object of this study to question the definition of a viable library environment, but to question the power relationship between the urban, literate world and that of the rural, oral sector.

This paper followed the trajectory of the Cuban revolution’s library project and asked the larger question of whether or not a nation’s culture could be defined and organized by its disenfranchised members without their transformation or co-optation. How successful was the revolution’s library

project? What type of negotiation of identity, if any, did the provincial cultures have to undergo? We looked at attempts to bridge the gap between theory and praxis. Ultimately, it is difficult to speak of successes of such a project because the definition of success is relative and contingent. In the end, the BNJM was successful at creating an extensive web of satellite libraries, which aided greatly in the Cuban literacy campaign. It also achieved a wide representation of provincial interests and culture within its own holdings and, by extension, within the consciousness of Havana's dwellers. The real question I would like to answer, however, is one of kind and not of degree. Ultimately, what provincial libraries were collecting and what people were reading were materials sanctioned by the BNJM in Havana.

The thesis with which I will leave you is that the cultural systems of Havana and of a typical province of the Island were distinct and fairly closed. The simple act of becoming literate already compromises a rural culture, when that culture was oral and generationally transmitted. The methodological values that emanated from Havana influenced the provincial culture in question such that perhaps the results of the satellite system of libraries reflect more what BNJM thought of provincial culture than what provincial culture thought of itself.

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Cuba's Social Work Education Initiative

David Strug and Walter Teague

Cuba is a poor country of eleven million inhabitants. Yet it has trained 15,000 social workers in the last three years for work with at risk-children and adolescents, drug addicted youth, and other vulnerable groups, as the result of a recently introduced two-pronged social work education initiative (Pérez Montalvo, 2002).

Cuba's social work initiative began in 1998. Two social work training programs were established as a result of this initiative. One is an advanced, university-level social work education program for experienced social work practitioners (Barthelemy, 2004). The second is a one-year training program for young social work paraprofessionals at newly created schools of social work. Graduates of this program return to their communities of origin for work with at-risk individuals after they finish this training program.

Cuba's top political leadership supports these social work programs and considers that social work has an important role to play in addressing Cuba's social ills (Alvarez, 2003). This social work initiative was a response to emergent social problems in the country and must be understood in the context of a larger program of the Cuban government known as "The Battle of Ideas" (Barthelemy, 2004). The Battle of Ideas refers to the government's effort to strengthen Cuba economically, socially and ideologically through the introduction of a variety of educational and social programs, including schools for the intensive training of social workers. All of these programs have as their goal to improve the lives of individuals from the most marginalized sectors of Cuban society, who have experienced the consequences of growing social inequality and alienation resulting from economic problems in Cuba (Monreal, 2001; Rock Around the Blockade Newsletter, 2003).

Social work educators, policy makers and practitioners from other countries, including developing ones like Cuba, can learn much from one another

(Midgley, 1996). An exchange of information between the Cuban and U.S. social work communities is especially relevant at this time, given the possibility of improved relations and increased contact between Cuba and the US in the near future.

The University Social Work Program

The Ministry of Education established an undergraduate degree program (UP) for already practicing social workers within the Department of Sociology at the University of Havana in 1998. The UP was the first undergraduate university degree program in Cuba's history that offered specialized training in social work. A similar UP, modeled on the one at the University, was established two years later at the University of the Oriente in Santiago, Cuba.

Graduating UP students receive a licenciatura degree in sociology, with a specialization in social work. The licenciatura, which takes six years to complete, is roughly equivalent to a master's degree in the US, but is considered an undergraduate degree in Cuba. Most UP students are experienced social work technicians who practiced prior to entering this program. Every 21 days, UP students receive time off from their social work practitioner jobs to attend classes at the university and to study for exams.

The UP curriculum focuses on community organization and theory driven social work practice. Two introductory courses taken in the first year are Introduction to Sociology and Theory and Practice in Social Work. First-year students also take classes in philosophy, political economy, and the history of the Americas. Students discuss Marxist economics and its relevance to contemporary Cuban society. They study demography, sociological methods, and statistics in their second year. In years three-to-five, students take Social Work I (community intervention), Social Work II (intervention with groups, organizations, and institutions), and Social Work III (interventions with individuals and families), which is similar to casework in U.S. schools of social work. Students also study the history of social work, political sociology, anthropology, sociology and health, and sociology and the family. Much of the sixth year is devoted to writing a professional thesis.

Paraprofessional Social Work Schools for Youth

The first paraprofessional social work school for youth (SSW) was established in Cojimar, outside of Havana, by professors from academic departments of the University of Havana. The stated goal is to train 35,000 students to become community based social workers, which would represent one practitioner for approximately every 300 inhabitants in Cuba.

The first students to attend SSWs were young persons between the ages of 16-22. Students were selected for admission to the SSW by officials from the Union of Communist Youth (UJC) and by SSW administrators and faculty. They were chosen from among youth in the community who were not working, not attending school and at risk for not finishing their education.

These paraprofessional schools of social work offer students a concentrated, social work learning experience that combines classroom activities, independent study and, after the classroom study has ended, a month-long supervised fieldwork experience in the community. An important focus of the SSW training program is to teach students how to work with community leaders, family doctors, school officials and other key actors in their community.

The SSW curriculum is multidisciplinary and includes modules on Community Social Work and Community Psychology, Introduction to Law, Present Day Socialist Cuban Society, Sociology and Applied Social Work, and Social Communication. Law is included in the SSW curriculum because SSW faculty believes that it is important for students to understand how power is distributed in society and to know how the legal system operates at the local, national, and provincial levels (L. Pérez, personal communication, October 10, 2001).

SSW graduates are given the opportunity to study for their licenciatura on a part-time basis in any of eight university degree programs including, the UP, Social Communication, Psychology, and Law after they finish the SSW program. Unlike other university applicants, SSW graduates are not required to pass exams to gain entry to the university.

SSW graduates who return to work in their communities once they finish their SSW training are known as *emergentes*, because they address emergent social problems in the community such as, child malnutrition, school absenteeism, and the needs that the elderly have for economic and social assistance. Emergentes visit the homes of everyone in the communities in which they work and assess the need for support services of all household members. However, they pay special attention to the needs of children not in school, single mothers, and the elderly. They also participate along with thousands of Student Youth Brigade members in major health prevention projects throughout Cuba (Uriarte, 2002).

These *emergentes* give special attention to at-risk youth. They try to develop a nurturing and supportive relationship with adolescents, to win their confidence, and lend support to the young people who have dropped out of school and are not working. The goals are to help prevent delinquency, drug abuse and other problematic behaviors and hopefully assist the youth in

returning to school and being more connected to society (Anonymous SWW student, personal communication, April 22, 2002).

Besides the social work focus there are reportedly as many as 100 other emergentes programs throughout Cuba which are addressing not only the needs of youth, but like the famous Cuban literacy programs of 1959, aim at fundamental change and overall improvement of the quality of life for Cubans.

Relevance of Cuba's Program for Social Work in the US and Other Countries

Cuba's social work program may be of interest to social workers in the US and in other countries, including its curriculum, which integrates sociological and political theory into the social work practice curriculum. Also, social workers in other countries may wish to learn more about the SSW model of identifying young people who are not in school and not working, and of educating them to become active agents of social transformation in their communities of origin and agents of change in their own lives.

Cuba's program for training large numbers of paraprofessionals may be of interest to social workers in the US. Some members of the U.S. social work community question whether it will be possible to continue to provide social services at their current levels to at-risk individuals from underserved populations, given fiscal cutbacks at the national, state and local levels. The possibility of providing increased training and of selectively using paraprofessionals to provide social services has been suggested as one possible response to the effect that fiscal cutbacks are having on the delivery of services in the US (Gibelman, 2003; O'Neil, 2003). This is the case despite the emphasis on professionalism within U.S. social work.

Exchanging Information about Social Work with Cuba

It is necessary to learn more about Cuba's two-pronged social work initiative. Little is known internationally about social work education and practice in Cuba. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) should advocate for an exchange of Cuban and North American social work educators, practitioners and policy makers. The Cuban social work community has expressed interest in learning about U.S. social work theory and is in need of bibliographies, syllabi and other pedagogical materials that are commonly available in the US, but which are difficult to find in Cuba. Cuban social workers have stated that they have a great deal to learn from an exchange with social workers in the US, despite the ideological and political differences that separate the two countries (L. Urrutia Barroso, personal communication, September

26, 2003). An exchange between Cuban and U.S. workers is especially important at this time.

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