

CULTURE OF OPPOSITION IN CUBA

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The recent attention in the social sciences to social movement organizations as actors in the drama of social change, needs to be modified to make cultures of opposition the more inclusive topic of analysis and theorizing in comparative studies of change in political systems. The paper identifies ten attributes of cultures of opposition (CO) in state polities and illustrates, with information on Cuba, the value of the conceptualization for understanding the forms of collective action that occur in these polities.

The paper identifies the characteristics, context and conditions of Cuba's culture of opposition generating collective action in the island. It concludes that its counterideologies are undeveloped and relatively unknown by the Cuban people. Its extent of appropriation of the constitutive myths and symbols of the Cuban nation is incomplete, contested by the nationalist ideology of the state and its organs of social control. Modally, the CO has been embodied by subcommunities whose ideological voice has not been sufficiently articulated and broadcast inside Cuba. Nor have iconic dissident leaders been able to operate for long in the island. Voluntary organizations and institutions independent of the state that could provide support to it are mostly absent. Organized collectivities have until recently lacked systematic, ongoing cooperative contacts with organizational affiliates outside Cuba. It is a culture of opposition that facilitates the occurrence of loosely structured, uninstitutionalized collective action.

PRELIMINARIES

Cultures of opposition, often devoid of the actions of social movement organizations facilitate and struc-

ture channels for the expression of political dissent. This paper uses the Cuban case to illustrate one such occurrence. Rapid change in national political systems throughout the world, commonly studied nowadays by political scientists and sociologists under the general rubric of the "politics of transition" (Centeno, 1994; Pagnucco, 1996) causes difficulties for existing theory of social movements and social change. The obdurate facts of the recent past force us to question dominant theoretical preconceptions, such as the importance of the actions of social movement organizations (SMO) as producers of these political transformations. Events in Eastern Europe and elsewhere show that the presence of SMOs is not a necessary condition for the occurrence of antihegemonic collective action. It is partly for this reason that scholars (Steven, 1996; Johnston and Klander-mans, 1995; Oberschall, 1993) advance theories of culture to understand rapid social change of political systems.

The concept of a culture of opposition (CO), most fully developed by Scott (1990), alerts us to the importance of generalized cultural change, particularly in language and other collective symbols. Such changes facilitate and enrich the occurrence of collective action. Examples of works using the CO concept abound (Johnston, 1991; Fantasia and Hirsch, 1995). The CO gives expression to and facilitates the creation of an imagined, antihegemonic viewpoint of oppressed people. It represents a set of socially restricted collective reactions to shared indignities. Actions of "heroes" dramatize the grievances of collectivities. It is fueled by the elaboration of alternative ideologies and the occurrence of shared experiences

of domination. It is located in social spaces to the extent that these are insulated from the control of the state or dominant caste or category of people and inhabited by trusted, known others. The participation of people in the activities and shared experiences of the CO creates individual and collective alternative identities. The CO creates and sustains antihegemonic interpretations of events and standards of rights. It affects their daily activities and social organization. It creates and preserves a collective memory of their experience with prior collective actions. It teaches participants how to deal with the system of repression to which they are exposed (Tilly, 1978: 156).

COs are different from general political cultures, cultures of social movements, and civil society. Analytically, the first three of these dynamically interrelated concepts tap levels of diminishing analytical inclusiveness. The political culture of a nation state impacts the characteristics of its CO. The CO of a nation state shapes the cultures of social movements that are often parts of it (Fine, 1995; Lofland, 1995). Obversely, social movement cultures create and transform COs which in turn bring about changes in the general political culture (Fantasia and Hirsch, 1995; Lofland, 1993: 84-133). The strategic emphasis in this paper is on cultures of opposition, but very fruitful research is done at the other two levels of analysis. Finally, the concept of civil society connotes the relative degree of autonomy of society from the state and its political instrumentalities. It identifies a dimension of the concept of CO (see below).

The concept of CO is analogous to M. Weber's concept of political parties in situations of political repression. Empirically, COs are composed of people who may or may not be members of organized collectivities but who would like to exert control of the bureaucracy of the state to bring about social change. They cannot act openly as political parties do ideotypically, without fear of state repression. Members of COs are opposed to varying degrees to the government, to the political party or parties represented by the government, and to its policies and programs.

The CO is composed of the explicit, often organized political dissidence of a nation state. It is also made

up of the countercultures and subcultures in the society to the extent that significant proportions of these communities have an oppositional *political* consensus regarding the desirability of social change. Not all subcultures and countercultures have such preponderance of opinion. To wit, in Cuba this is the case for the various African-religious associational subcultures.

Counterculture communities, including deviant and criminal communities, which by their very nature are persecuted by state authorities, often do not have a consensus regarding desirable political change. Thus, despite the homophobic nature of Cuba's culture and the long history of discrimination against gay people (Arenas, 1992), there has not been a gay movement in the island. COs are social organizations, with cultural codes and patterned structures of social relationships.

Ten attributes of the COs of national political systems are implicated in the forms of political collective action in these national political systems. These attributes are the proportion of the population of a nation-state that participates in the CO; relative ease of communication among members of the CO; strength and viability of the collective memories of heroes, heroic acts and instances of collective suffering in the CO; number and variety of places in a society in which the CO is practiced; degree of connectedness of the CO with institutions and organizations in the society which are independent of the control of the state; extent to which groups and organizations in the CO are involved in international cooperative projects and activities with other national and international associations and movements; presence in the CO of iconic leaders with wide followings in the society; degree of conceptual sophistication of the ideologies of resistance articulating the values and goals of the CO; average degree of knowledge of these ideologies among participants; and degree of connectedness of the CO to the central constitutive historical experiences, beliefs, values and myths of the nation. It is useful to think of these dimensions as forming a multidimensional space. In one of its regions are COs with high loadings in these variables. A historic example would be Poland's CO and the

centrality in it of the Catholic Church and the Solidarity Movement immediately prior to the collapse of the communist government. Cuba's CO belongs to a different set with comparatively low scores in many of these variables and in which strong, significant social movement organizations do not occur.

**CUBA'S CULTURE OF OPPOSITION:
A WEAK CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE ABSENCE
OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The activities of dissident social movement organizations in Cuba are hindered by the absence of voluntary organizations autonomous from the state and of constitutionally protected citizenship rights (Appendix 1 documents the methods used in this research). The unequaled present day economic crisis and state repression are paired by the absence of opportunities to change the political system through nonviolent legal means and access to political institutions. The crisis has not been accompanied by significant political transformation, the emergence of successful, dominant autonomous associations and dissident social movement organizations akin to Poland's Solidarity, the creation of a new repertoire of collective protest activities (Oberschall, 1994), a weakening of the state's repressive apparatus and the ideological opening of the Castro regime (Gras, 1994). The extent of appropriation by the CO of the constitutive myths and symbols of the Cuban nation is incomplete, contested by the nationalist ideology of the state and its organs of social control. Modally, it has been a CO embodied by subcommunities whose ideological voice has not been sufficiently articulated and broadcast inside Cuba. Until very recently, they have failed to appropriate the history, myths and symbols of the nation from a state that jealously claims exclusive possession of them.

The top leadership of the government remains stable while iconic dissident leaders have not been able to operate for long in the island. Near-absent are the signs of important transformations of the political system such as the legalization and acceptance by the state of new political parties, independent mass media, environmental associations and others concerned with the public good, special interest associations such as labor unions, professional organizations of

lawyers, journalists, physicians, artists, and consumer cooperatives. Mostly absent are voluntary organizations and institutions independent of the state that could provide support to a culture of opposition. Existing institutions such as mass organizations and workers' collectives have not gained their autonomy (Gras, 1994; on the repression of the state-directed "Fundación Pablo Milanés," see Puerta, 1996, 21-22). Nearly absent are organizations concerned with specific class or group interests. Moreover, associations concerned with solidary global interests are also persecuted by the state (Puerta, 1995). The exceptions are quasi religious organizations. The most important of these are two Catholic church associations, "Caritas," the service organization of the Conference of Cuban Catholic Bishops, and the "Centro Félix Varela," "Consejo Ecueménico de Cuba" (Cuban Ecumenical Council) an African religion association, "Asociación Cultural Yoruba de Cuba" (Cuban Yoruba Association), a Jewish association, "Casa de la Comunidad Hebrea de Cuba" (House of the Hebrew Community), and the Masons, or "Gran Logia de Cuba de A.L.Y.A.M." (Puerta, 1995; compare to Gunn, 1995).

Reforms carried out in 1993 allowed people to establish businesses independently of the state. Approximately 400,000 Cubans, or 10 percent of the labor force, are now legally or illegally self employed. These reforms were not carried out completely, however, and the government is increasingly opposed to the new class. Indeed, the activities of self employed small entrepreneurs, an important segment of the CO, are under constant scrutiny by the police. They face important difficulties caused by the legal stipulation that they cannot hire workers outside their own family, their lack of legal credits, housing, transportation, supply of materials and intermediaries, and very high taxes. The majority of the self employed (*cuentapropistas*) use the black market as the source of supply of materials for their businesses (Jatar-Hausmann, 1997, 12).

While laws are passed to sanction perceived problems brought about by the special period (Cubamet #1; henceforth CN—see Appendix 2 for full citations), there have been no advances in the rights of catego-

ries of persons. Changes in criminal laws used by the security system to justify its activities have not occurred (Alfonso, 1994; Hidalgo, 1994, 292-299; Murray, 1994). In the aftermath of the 1991 Fourth Party Congress the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) became more homogeneous and pliable to the policy dictates of Fidel Castro (Bengelsdorf, 1994, 169-173; Domínguez, 1994; del Aguila, 1994). In a comparative international context, Cuba is in a pre-transitional stage in which civil society is undeveloped (O'Donnell et al., 1986; Munck, 1994; Puerta, 1996). Cuba's political dynamics are very different from those of East Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1989. In their cases, the worker brigades refused to back the police against the demonstrators (A. Oberschall, personal correspondence) They are quite dissimilar to events in Central Europe in 1989 and similar to the case of Bulgaria and Romania before the disappearance of the USSR (Chilton, 1994; Linden, 1995) and to contemporary events in China in which the state attempts (with mixed success, see Locay, 1995; Centeno, 1994) to keep political power while managing economic and social change.. Absent in them are the political opportunities that come with the end of state repression, as in Hungary and Poland during most of the communist period. The CCP continues to oppose political change (Granma, 1996; Amuchástegui, 1997; Darling, 1997a; CN #2) and leads mobilized supporters and members of the secret police in very effective acts of repression.

INSTITUTIONAL SHADOWS AND IMPLOSIONS

The relative small number of people who participate in dissident organizations even as the CO grows is a function of the social organization of Cuban society, more specifically of its institutional arrangements. The long-standing and unresolvable systemic contradictions of socialist Cuban society, the lack of isomorphism between its institutional practices and the rhetorical fantasy of the state (Bormann, 1985; Staniszki, 1984) help us understand the present-day institutional implosion and the resulting discontent (on the present day economic crisis see Cuban Council of Ministers, 1993; Fernández and Duyos, 1996; Tejada, 1994; for a personal account of its effects on daily life see Doriga, 1996, 39ff., Mesa-Lago, 1997).

In Cuba, officially sanctioned institutions commingle with their dual deviant shadows. These shadows are not supposed to exist even as they facilitate the operation of the legal institutions. Although unsanctioned by the established institutions, shadow institutions do not exist independently of the institutions that they complement. Parts of the CO, they offer opportunities for covert and surreptitious activities rather than explicit, open to the public acts presenting demands to the authorities. The dynamics of forced deviance caused by the failure of official institutions and the resulting cynicism it engenders in the population has been documented in the Eastern European countries (Sztompka, 1994, 246-258; Dahrendorf, 1990). They also apply to Cuba (Fernández, 1993; Puerta, 1996; Valdés, 1996; CN #3).

As in the former USSR, in Cuba there is a socialist economy and a shadow secondary economy; dollar and peso currencies (currently exchanged at one for one official parity and at 21 to the dollar in the black market; the differential between the two rates of exchange creates opportunities for illegal profit for persons with access to dollars); a socialist constitution and an officially approved, state organized shadow system of illegal and criminal practices violating the former; until very recently official atheism and the persistence of the sacred; a one-party national political system with centralized and stratified power and a micro, local, Machiavelian-like plurality of political arenas and practices (e.g., "sociolismo"), a state program that was designed in the 1960s to provide homes to people and an extraordinary housing crisis and illegal housing market resulting from its failure, or another state program designed to maximize the equal social and economic development of all provinces of the country and an unprecedented in-migration to the City of Havana, especially of people from the province of Oriente searching for a better way of life (CN #4; *Cubanews*, May 1997, 10; July 1997, 9). In these and many other instances, the failure of "official" institutions explain the presence of these shadow.

Shadow institutions impact the civic education and socialization of the citizenry into a deviant culture and social practice that inform the CO and challenge

the legitimacy of state authority. They provide institutional spaces in which people create and enact a culture of opposition. Participants in these illegal activities are always faced with risk, for the official acquiescence that usually makes their activities possible is typically an unstable negotiated outcome. Their criminality obtains meaning and justification from an antihegemonic collective definition in which the powerless offer and share alternative interpretation of their motivation, its historical antecedents and the society in which they find themselves. Two good examples are prostitution and illegal economic activities (Alonso and Lago, 1995; Fogel and Rosenthal, 1994, 396-403; Puerta, 1996, 29). Participants in them engage in collective deviant acts in awareness of others and in protected spaces in which surveillance and repression by the state is temporarily suspended.

Prostitution is very often the only way young people have to frequent places such as restaurants and stores that demand dollars and are thus for the use of foreigners and their guests. Prostitutes' services in Varadero Beach and elsewhere could not occur without the authorities' cooperation (Fisher, 1997). These and similar practices show an unresolved contradiction between de jure public morality and de facto public practice (see below). The contradiction is partly resolved through the redefinition of deviance practices in the CO, such as the ongoing transformation of the social meaning of the occupation of "jineteras," as female prostitutes are known. Segments of Cuba's CO show empathy towards these young women. Their deviance is redefined as a "natural" adjustment to the national crisis (Fernández Martínez, 1996; Cifuentes 1996). López (1996) describes the anger and consternation of the neighbors of Zuleidi, a 19 year old jinetera, after she received a prison sentence of two years. Zuleidi is a nice girl. She is a college student, from a good revolutionary family, and prior to her arrest was an important source of material support for her family and neighbors. This ongoing redefinition of prostitution is an example of how the institutional implosion has brought about changes in the value and normative system of Cuban society. What was once for many people orthodox political revolutionary praxis is abandoned.

Illegal economic activities proliferate in Cuba. One of the most important of these involves subterranean exchanges among the economic production units of the state, what in Cuba is known as *cambalache*. As in China, it represents a way used by the administrators of these legal economic enterprises to resolve the rigidities inherent in the centrally planned economy. It involves top managers keeping multiple accounts of the enterprise and reserving a percentage of production for illegal barter exchanges with other state enterprises. Often these exchanges benefit the workers in the enterprises. They secure for them commodities and services that otherwise would not be generally available to them.

The unprecedented post-1989 national economic crisis probably increased the occurrence of illegal economic activities. It rendered individualistic economic adaptations increasingly ineffective as ways of adjusting and surviving in Cuba, even for people who had been active supporters of the regime. It has encouraged and facilitated the development of an explicit collective opposition stance among Cubans. It increased their participation in protests and in dissident organizations. Cuba's CO is energized by the economic deprivations the Cuban people have experienced since 1989 (Alonso, 1995; Rivera, 1995; Valdés and Felipe, 1996; Tejada, 1994). Many people who until recently still believed in the message of Fidel Castro cannot continue to do so, for it is much harder to deny the increasing ruin of the country (Fogel and Rosenthal, 1994, 248). Many who until recently supported the government and were members of its leading cadres can no longer offer rhetorical defense to their revolutionary selves (Bormann, 1985). Nor can they continue to profit from the system. The contemporary economic crisis has meant the destruction of the operational capability of institutions throughout Cuban society that were the source of livelihood for people and provided services to the public. Thus, for example, Popular Power, the nationwide system of political representation at the local level, is widely discredited (Bengelsdorf, 1994; Domínguez, 1994, 9-10; CN #5). The crisis has also brought about the onset of widespread unemployment and underemployment throughout the society (Betancourt, 1995; Alonso, 1995, 20, estimates that

between 18 and 25 percent of Cuba's labor force is unemployed). It has brought a nationwide breakdown in the routines of daily life that regulated people's schedules. Unsurprisingly, this institutional implosion has produced unprecedented large numbers of antihegemonic activities of members of highly placed strata in the state apparatus as well as important changes in its repressive strategy and tactics.

The government encourages limited business dealings with capitalist firms (Puchala, 1992). These joint economic enterprises create a great deal of resentment among the Cuban people. They generate profits for the regime and foreign investors. However, the majority of the native population is devoid of hard currencies and is systematically excluded from these profitable economic activities and from the use of the facilities and services generated by them (Betancourt, 1995; Doriga, 1996, 61ff). Simultaneously, this policy created a new class of privileged people with access to dollars. It is made up of small farmers, for reportedly the recently allowed free agricultural markets produced a "massive transfer of income from the cities to the countryside (Betancourt, 1995, p. 2);" Cuban officials who derive illicit profit from their offices' monopolistic control of business relationships with international capital (*El Nuevo Herald*, 12 Feb. 1995, 14A); they profit from the continuation of the Castro regime even as this very state frustrates their illegal behavior through sporadic arrests and harassment; a minority of Cubans with access to the dollar economy generated by family transfers, tourism-related business activities and services and foreign business activities. Their counterparts, accounting for the majority of the population, are losers. They include not only most Blacks but also "retirees, many in the military and police, as well as doctors, teachers and engineers who are specifically forbidden to trade in dollars" (Betancourt, 1995, p. 2). Particularly hard hit by the effects of the present crisis are the poor and blacks, many of who are without social relations outside Cuba who would provide them with aid (Fernández and Duyos, 1996, 112-113; Bobes, 1996, 132). Ironically, they constituted the strongest source of support for the government and are now increasingly alienated from it. Poor neighborhoods in Havana and elsewhere (Darling,

1997b) increasingly become places in which disorder and protests occur. The plight of the poor and their neighborhoods is now the plight of the nation. Their protests now find widespread support among members of other social classes (Fogel and Rosenthal, 1994, 488-497).

The CO is also informed by a second type of institutional failure in which the official institutions achieve goals that are contrary to the seminal rhetorical fantasy of the socialist state (Bormann, 1985). The best example is Cuban education, one of the often claimed achievements of the post 1958 regime (Aguirre and Vichot, 1996). Despite the claim, the educational system has been one of the most important instrumentalities in the reproduction of systems of social inequality in the island. Meritocratic educational policies and programs are very important means for upward social mobility even though they conflict with a rhetorical fantasy that stressed universal access, equality of educational results and abandonment of the distinction between manual and intellectual work (Jiménez, 1991; Castro, 1991). The unresolved conflict between the rhetorical fantasy and the educational practices undermined the legitimacy of the socialist project and created socialization experiences that forced people to participate in the CO.

The generalized existence of shadow and subversive official institutions such as formal education force people to live in two worlds, the world "as is" and the world as "it should be" as outlined by the dominant rhetorical fantasy of the social system. People adapt to this duality by developing an indifference to politics, to issues affecting the public good, and an acceptance of deviance and criminality. Instead, their primary orientation is towards their own private affairs. This duality must be understood as an important factor increasing the resistance of people to cooperate with others and participate in the organized dissidence that is part of Cuba's CO. Multiplied many times in many different contexts, the CO gradually becomes an accepted part of life of people, typified by emergent definitions of right and wrong and by grays of moral meanings.

Institutional arrangements in Cuba prior to 1989 allowed people to use this passive, alienated individualistic orientation towards the political system. It was an orientation that made them members of the CO and unwilling to participate in protests and dissident organizations. The comparatively much more serious economic difficulties of the special period makes such individualist adaptation increasingly untenable. They create discontent in all strata of the society, both former elite and the poor. The economic crisis and its resulting social effects facilitate the occurrence of antihegemonic collective action. It increases the size and activism of what was, prior to 1989, a much more passive and probably smaller national CO.

STRUGGLE FOR AN ALTERNATIVE IDEOLOGY

The development of an alternative ideology by Cuba's CO is rendered difficult by the vigilance of the government and its aggressive insistence that it has a monopoly on legitimate interpretations of the nation's past, present and future. This claim justifies the political hegemony of the CCP. The contemporary emergence of a nationwide dissidence has produced conflict over control of the constitutive symbols of the nation that are part of the ideology of the government. This struggle over control of symbols includes many of the symbols created during the founding of the nation, the Republican period (1902-1958), and the post 1958 revolutionary culture. It also includes struggle over the definition of objectionable symbols. An example is the recurrent concern expressed in *Granma*, the official newspaper of the government, over the lack of patriotism of some Cuban youngsters presumably shown by their use of the US flag to adorn their clothes (CN #6; Arocha, 1997). Nowhere is this symbolic struggle better exemplified than in the controversy over control of arguably the most important symbol of the Cuban nation, its most exalted founder, José Martí y Pérez.

The government emphasizes Martí's antiimperialist writings to justify its own fears of the US. It justifies the lack of a multiparty political system in Cuba by pointing out that Martí created **one** revolutionary party as he organized Cuba's war of independence

against Spain. On the other hand, the dissidence points to Martí's magnanimous humanism and his emphasis on human rights and freedoms (CN #7; Piñera Llera, 1981). While both emphases are reflected in Martí's writings and revolutionary praxis, the real political issue of social conflict is whether the dissidents' view will find wide resonance among the Cuban people. At stake is the granting of legitimacy for an alternative vision of the history and destiny of the nation. Government repression tries to stop dissidents from celebrating Martí's birthday (CN #8), commemorate his death (CN #9), and quote from some of his writings. And in an unusual twist, the government conducts mass rallies for its army and security personnel in which officers sign declarations reaffirming the validity of the government's interpretation of Martí (CN #10).

Attempts at repressing people from using Jose Martí as a symbol, however, have failed. Martí is the rallying point of all dissidents. Thus it is that independent journalists claim Martí's approval of their duty to inform the nation (CN #11). The most important effort to organize the dissidence "Concilio Cubano" (Cuban Council), scheduled its first national conference in 1996 for 24 February, in remembrance of the date in 1895 of the initiation of the war of independence organized and led by José Martí. Masses are conducted throughout the country to celebrate his birthday (CN #13). Affinity dissident groups incorporate his name in theirs, for example, the "Liga Civica Martiana" and the "Organizacion Juvenil Martiana por la Democracia." Other organizations are founded on his birthday, as is the "Ex Club Cautivo" (Club of Ex Prisoners). Then annually, on the anniversary, they celebrate their founding while venerating Martí's memory (CN #14).

Increasingly, attempts are made to establish alternative, coherent, comprehensive ideologies. So far their success is unclear. One of the most celebrated of these efforts was a document entitled "The Homeland Belongs to Us All." A working group of the internal dissidence wrote it. They criticized the platform of the most recent V Congress of the CCP. They challenged and offered alternative interpretations to every aspect of the CCP's document. Their

criticism included the CCP's interpretation of the historical origins and experiences of the nation; the nature of the dissident movement; and the government's view of Jose Martí, the Batista dictatorship, the republican period (1902-1958) and the missile crisis of October of 1962, among others. They reminded the people of the disastrous effects on their liberties of the CCP's emphasis on unity, the chronic mismanagement by the government of foreign assistance and the public good, the need for a multiparty political system, the present national economic impoverishment and the lack of freedoms and legal protections (CN #15). Characteristically, all four members of this working group were arrested almost immediately after the press conference in which they expressed their opinions, prompting a worldwide alert by Amnesty International (CN #16). The other effort is by a group representing a surviving faction of the Concilio. As others have done before, they asked the Council of State for a national plebiscite in which the Cuban people would vote on whether to establish a multiparty political system and constitutionally protected civil rights for minorities (CN #17). The quickness and effectiveness of government security in repressing these (and all other attempts to voice well thought out) alternative visions of Cuba make it very doubtful that a significant proportion of the people of Cuba learned about the details of these documents.

The result is that an alternative ideology to the ideology of the government that is widely understood and accepted by the Cuban people is missing. The two most likely options for the dissident movement are Christian ethics and the adoption of some version of the liberal democratic ideology that informed the Cuban Constitution of 1940. However, it has been difficult for former Marxists in the dissident movement to accept these alternatives. During almost four decades, the government taught people that this was the constitution of the US-dominated Republic and of the exiled *gusanos*, or worms, as the presumed class enemies of the people were once labeled. Government's laws and policies were militantly anti religious, stressing the old Marxist dictum that religion is the "opium" of the people. It has proven difficult to counter the well-established secularism of the cul-

ture or to escape the effects of this ideological war against the ideals of the Republic. Instead what is taking place is the gradual gaining of legitimacy of the dissident movement and a CO as a social formation providing alternative interpretive schemes to that proffered by the government but **without** a clear coherent ideology (Thompson, 1990). This emergent interpretive scheme comes from the failures of the institutions created by the government and their shadows, the increasing misery of the people, the unintended consequences of government repression, the presence of a dissident movement enriched by former elite members and transnational resources, and the work of an independent press reporting on events in Cuba.

NEW COMMUNICATION LINKS AND THE EMERGENCE OF A TRANSNATIONAL OPPOSITION

Telephone, radio, and electronic communication links now available have eroded the government's control over the information the Cuban people receive about events in Cuba and elsewhere. This in turn has facilitated their collective action. Approximately 15 percent of Cubans listen to the radio daily; 17 percent of daily users listen to US-source radio stations, primarily to Radio Martí (*Cubanews*, 1995, p. 11). In 1989, there were 86 television sets per 100 inhabitants. People spend approximately 40 percent of their daily free time watching television programs (Aróstegui and Fernández, 1991). In 1997 CNN opened a news bureau in Havana (*Cubanews*, February 1997, 7). Also serving Cuba is an international courier mail service. Telephones are widely available in the island.

Average daily international telephone calls increased from 500 in 1995 to 50,000 in 1997 with the lifting of the telecommunication embargo by the U.S. government (*Cubanews*, July 1997, 8). Partly with the assistance of Mexican and Canadian investors (López, 1993, see also *Cubanews*, November 1996; 2; July 1996, 4), international telephone communications were significantly improved after decades of decline in services. It is an important source of income for the Cuban government. During 1995 it received \$54 millions in revenue from approximately ten mil-

lion calls between the United States and Cuba. This revenue exceeded gains from important crops like tobacco (*Cubanews*, 1996a). Reportedly, telephone services inside Cuba are much worse off, although apparently improving (Press, 1996). In contrast to the recent past, it is much easier today to have telephone communications with people in the island.

The economic crisis weakened the government-controlled mass media. The scarcity of paper and ink brought about by the crisis curtailed publication of a number of newspapers and journals. A similar problem with energy affected Cuban radio and television stations. Thirty radio stations continued to operate in 1995 (Editor, 1995, p. 11). Even as the government curtailed their operation, however, established and new electronic means of mass communication operated against it from outside the country. Among the former, the most important is Radio Martí, funded by the U.S. government. Other smaller radio stations operate as parts of specific transnational movement organizations. Examples are "El CID" and the "Voz de la Fundación," the radio station of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), with headquarters in Washington, D.C. Despite official attempts to curtail the practice (CN #9) some people also have access to CNN and other major U.S. television stations (*El Nuevo Herald*, 25 September 1994, p. 3E).

Private citizens' use of electronic mail is curtailed by the government. This is done avowedly to protect them against pornography and to insure national security (Keating and Hecker, 1994). With the possible exception of the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, nongovernmental organizations and private citizens do not usually have access to it. The use of electronic mail and the internet is also restricted to the personnel of foreign governments and corporations doing business in the island (Klee, 1996), and to a limited number of officials, ministries, scientific institutes and other organs of the Cuban government (López, 1996; CN #18). The newly established web page Cubaweb (www.cubaweb.cu) serves many of these entities.

While the Internet (and e-mail) is effectively censored inside Cuba, it is playing a key part in energiz-

ing and transforming the organizations and affinity groups that are part of Cuba's CO. They do not have access to the Internet but have access to the recently improved international telephone services. Increasingly, they also have organizational representatives and cooperating organizational affiliates and representatives outside Cuba that have access to the Internet. These are key sources of organizational resources. Examples of this pattern abound: "Movimiento Humanista Evolucionario Cubano" (Cuban Evolutionary Humanist Movement) circulates its telephone, e-mail address (MHEC@compuserve.com) and home page in the Web (<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mhec>), as does "Hermanos al Rescate" (Brothers to the Rescue; <http://www.hermanos.org>) and "Partido Demócrata Cristiano de Cuba" (Christian Democratic Party of Cuba, <http://www.pdc-cuba.org>), to mention three well-known organizations operating in Cuba and elsewhere. A number of organized members of the CO act as clearing houses of information on the action of government security and other events in the island. Among them are the Cuban Information Center (CN #14), the Bureau of Independent Journalists, and the Information Bureau of the Human Right Movement in Cuba. Once contacted via telephone, these transnational organizational resources broadcast the problems of people in the island to other Cubans in Cuba via radio as well as to members of the international community. Using this simple communication system, citizens can report events and government actions (CN# 19), and independent journalists in Cuba devoid of access to the Internet, facsimile machines or office equipment other than antiquated typewriters can practice their profession (Rivero, 1997; Ackerman, 1996).

News about events affecting a community, group, or person in Cuba is more likely to be known nowadays. An excellent example is the convocation by the "Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos" (Committee for Human Rights) of the population in the municipalities of Guines, Nueva Paz, Nicolás de Bari, Güira de Melena, and others in the Mayabeque region in the Province of Havana, to attend a religious rally in the Chapel of Santa Barbara, in the City of Güines, on December 4, 1991, to pray for

the democratization of the country. Cuban activists sent the invitation to Cuban Catholic priests in Miami, Florida. The priests were asked to broadcast it to Cuba through "Radio Martí," "El CID," and the "Voz de la Fundación." The system also makes it possible, for example, for interested persons outside Cuba to double-check with their contacts in Havana about the truthfulness of reports circulating outside Cuba of bombings of public buildings and have the information divulged worldwide in a matter of hours after the initiation of the request (CN #20). Government actions are known that in the past were unknown by most people. This includes rumors of political infighting in the CCP and among the highest authorities of the government as well as knowledge of political mobilizations (*LAT 92-188*; *LAT 92-146*). Recently, at least one independent journalist advertised his services to the public (CN #21); and in an unusual case, an underground activist actively being searched for by government security used the system to ask for international protection before his capture (CN #22).

The dependence of organized members of Cuba's CO on transnational organizational partners existed prior to 1989. What is new in the post 1989 period is the enormous power of the Internet to broadcast their appeal and to mobilize their constituencies outside Cuba. Its impact on Cuba's CO and on the Diaspora community in Europe and the US is hard to overestimate. The new electronic system neutralizes governmental secrecy, improves the accuracy and timeliness of the ongoing monitoring of the Cuban government and helps people evaluate their interpretations of events and coordinate their actions. This is the case even though the Cuban government retains the power to effectively block the distribution in Cuba of hard copies of important works of contemporary literature it finds objectionable, for example, the anathematized work of Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas (CN #23).

Increasingly, antihegemonic political collective action by Cubans in and out of Cuba is not a national but an international process. As is the case in other social movements in the United States and elsewhere, events in Cuba and South Florida often coincide

with political sensitivities and agendas of agencies and organizations that are distant from the place of action. Distal political participatory events occur as reflections of events elsewhere (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). The transnational nature of the politics of Cuba's CO is shown by instances in which social movement organizations (SMO) contact their organizational counterparts outside Cuba. In a prototypical fashion, the "Cuban Workers Coordinate," an independent labor union organization, sends its greetings to labor unions throughout the world on the occasion of International Workers' Day (CN #24). "Movimiento Cristiano de Liberación" (Movement of Christian Liberation) sends congratulations to the Venezuelan political party COPEI on its 50 anniversary (CN #25). The proscribed youth association "José de la Luz y Caballero" expressed its thanks to Hungarian youth organizations who refused to participate in the 1997 XIII Festival of Youth in Havana as a way of protesting the exclusions of the Cuban youth group from the festival (CN #26).

The transnational nature of politics is also shown by the attention that members of Cuba's CO give to political events in the United States and elsewhere. Again, examples of this are plentiful: Mr. Gustavo Arcos Bergnes, General Secretary of "Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos" (Cuban Committee for Human Rights), expressed his views from Havana about the "Torricelli" Law after hearing the opinions about the law of a well known Miami Cuban lawyer and a Cuban American professor. Independent journalists and dissidents object to the opinions on Cuba expressed by US members of Congress who visited the country for a few days (CN #27). The "Partido Pro Derechos Humanos" objects to the United Nations General Secretary's decision to exclude it from the four organizations in the dissident movement inside Cuba that would be accredited to address the UN Commission on Human Rights (CN #28).

The new system of communication facilitates the mobilization of international organizations on behalf of members of the CO. Thus, the Cuban National Jurist Union in cooperation with the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) with headquarters in San José, Costa Rica, conducted a "Semi-

nar On Human Rights” in Havana in May of 1994 (IACHR, 1997). Dissidents attend international conferences on the topic of Cuba and are at times successful in eliciting declarations of support from them. An example is an international conference on Cuba sponsored by the government of Holland. It was attended by Representatives of “Plataforma Democrática Cubana” (Cuban Democratic Platform). Participants condemned violations of human rights by the Cuban government (Alfonso, 1997a). In another case, dissidents sent an open letter to government representatives attending the Ibero American Summit in Madrid in July of 1992. Fidel Castro participated in the Summit. The letter asked them to promote peaceful change in Cuba and to request from Castro greater political freedoms (*LAT 92-132*). Prompted by Cuban independent worker organizations, the International Labor Organization continues to speak on behalf of the Cuban labor movement and the right of workers to unionize. The AFL-CIO gave the George Meany Award for Human Rights to 30-year political prisoner Mario Chanes de Armas (Alfonso, 1994c). Human Rights Watch asked the Cuban government for the freedom from imprisonment of Cuban political prisoners (CN #29). Appeals are made to foreign politicians and other personalities to intervene with the Cuban government on behalf of political prisoners (*LAT 92 193*). Newspapers and other mass media outlets throughout the world often voice support of Cuba’s CO (for example, Fisher, 1997; Editorial, 1996); to facilitate their work news items are translated into English and French (CN #30).

The new means of communication facilitate the occurrence and spread of collective behavior throughout the society and the integration of organizations in the Diaspora community into the political dynamics in the island. For example, in June of 1995, the leader of “Cambio Cubano” (Cuban Change), a movement active in Miami and Cuba spoke with Fidel Castro about the future of the island. Cuban exile writers in Paris denounced police brutality against Cuban journalists (CN #31). Exile organizations in Puerto Rico, in cooperation with clandestine organizations in Cuba, called for a campaign of civil disobedience for December 4, the feast day of “Santa Bár-

bara,” the patron saint of Cuba (CN #32). The Cuban American Foundation called for a demonstration for September 6, 1991, in front of the notorious prison facility known as “Villa Marista,” in Havana, to demand the freedom of political prisoners (*FBIS LAT 91-175*, 9 September, 1991). Members of “Vigilia Mambisa” rallied in Miami to ask for a massive demonstration in support of dissidents in Cuba (*El Nuevo Herald*, 20 de Julio, 12a). The Cuban Human Rights Committee in Mexico protested the repression of the Cuban Democratic Coalition (*LAT 91-175*). In Cuba, leaders of the “Movimiento 13 de Julio” (13 July Movement) advised members of “Movimiento Democracia” (Democracy Movement) in Miami who were forming a flotilla of boats to protest in international waters off Cuba on the anniversary of Cuba’s independence day, May 20, 1997 (CN #33; Corzo, 1997). The boat heading this flotilla was bought two years earlier with public donations of Cubans from Miami and it made its maiden voyage to Cuba in June 13, 1995, as part of elaborate ceremonies in Miami protesting the sinking by the Cuban authorities of the tugboat “13 of March” in Havana Bay (see below) (CN #34).

The new communication links also energize voluntary associations of Cubans out of Cuba for which I could not document a clear organizational representation in Cuba. Thus, more than 12 organizations of Cuban exiles in Spain protested the downing of civilian airplanes by the Cuban air force in February of 1996. “Cambio Cubano” (Cuban Change), an organization of Cuban exiles in Stockholm, Sweden, was received in an act of solidarity by the members of three Swedish political parties (CN #35). Cubans in Tampa, Florida, conducted elections in 1994 to select officials to represent them in Cuba after the fall of Castro’s government. Dissident artists in the City of Santiago de Cuba requested financial support from interested persons in the U.S. Diaspora in order to practice their art (CN #36). Similarly, hospitals and other Cuban institutions on their own initiative use their e-mail capabilities to request aid from individuals and institutions outside Cuba.

These examples argue for the existence of a transnational political dynamic affecting Cuba’s CO. The

collective actions that occur in Cuba and among Cubans in South Florida, Puerto Rico, and other communities of the Cuban Diaspora must be understood in light of this recently emerged transnational political reality that is facilitated in large part by the new means of mass communication. The new means of communication and the strengthening of its transnational organizational links encourage the occurrence of organized, institutionalized collective action. The Cuban people have a long-standing tradition of opposition to the Castro government mostly enacted in muted acts of defiance that occur in shadow institutions. Increasingly, however, these muted acts are transformed into nonsecretive, open-to-the public antihegemonic acts.

Cuba's weak civil society and the absence of political opportunities, its institutional shadows and implosions, and the lack of alternative ideologies, determine that the most common forms of collective action occurring exemplify loosely structured, uninstitutionalized collective action (Oberschall, 1993: 187-212). These forms are the heroic actions of protest by individuals, prison and food riots, brutality generated protests, mass behavior, and rumors. While there are a number of social movement organizations in Cuba, most have small number of members, are restricted to a city or region, and are the targets of very effective system of state repression. They sponsor a pacifist ideological stance, petitioning the government to allow for peaceful change to take place, trying to convince members of the ruling elite about the need for a multiparty political system and respect for human rights. This strategy has failed to have any measurable effect in bringing about significant changes to the political system of Cuba (Aguirre, manuscript in progress).

CONCLUSION

This paper has documented the more important characteristics of Cuba's culture of opposition and briefly identified the modal forms of collective action occurring in the island. Cuba's political system is inhospitable to social movement organizations. Comparatively, the collective action forms that take place are much less institutionalized. These protests are not usually planned by movement organizers or entrepre-

neurs, nor can these activities be accurately described as carried out by transitory teams led by the staff of social movements. The collective action of dissident organizations in Cuba and among Cubans in South Florida, Puerto Rico, and other communities of the Cuban Diaspora is very much impacted by the recently emerged transnational political system. It is facilitated by the new means of mass communication. This change in connectivity with the outside may precede a more important role for social movement organizations. The Cuban case documents the importance for social movement organizations of **both** distant and indigenous sources of resources.

Models of political opportunity are not fully applicable. Cuba is in a pre-transitional stage in which civil society is undeveloped and in which there has not been increases in legal rights. Likewise, explanatory schemes such as new social movement theory (Johnston, Larana, Gusfield, 1994, 3-10) that do not put emphasis on people's master social statuses and central socioeconomic grievances are also not very useful to help us understand the dominant forms of collective action taking place. The same is true of frame analysis. It assumes the existence of an organization creating a symbolic system or "interpretive schemata" to mobilize constituencies. Undoubtedly such framing efforts take place. However, in Cuba the frames fail to mobilize people **not** because they would not respond to the messages but because government security destroys the organizations and blocks the broadcasting of their frames (Hart, 1996, 95). The consequence is the creation of a tradition of protest without a clear ideology. The Cuban case also shows that there is no necessary correspondence between the extent of people's grievances and their tendency to participate in collective action.

A sociology of culture gives the most useful understanding of antihegemonic collective political participation in Cuba. It is both the result and the means through which a shared symbolic understanding of selves and collectivities occur. Counterculture activities and shared experiences create individual and collective identities that fuel the antihegemonic collective viewpoint in Cuba. People's participation in the CO as well as the organized government reaction the

CO engenders generates instances of relatively unorganized forms of protest which in turn help the CO grow. In the face of an inauspicious political oppor-

tunity structure, these collective actions reflect and help form enduring traditions of resistance to the government.

Appendix 1 METHODS

This paper concentrates on the more recent post 1989 period. It uses information from the archives of the Miami-based Information Bureau of the Human Rights Movement in Cuba (www.netpoint.net/~infoburo). The Bureau is an important source on post-1989 collective behavior events and social movements (and social movement-like) organizations and activities. The Bureau is a good source of information on human rights, but it underrepresents unplanned street actions, emergent collective behavior, and unorthodox and sudden transformations of complex organizations.

A second source of more general information is news items distributed electronically by Cubanet, identified in the text with the initials CN (see Appendix 2; cubanet@netpoint.net; www.cubanet.entorno). It includes articles from Cuba authored by independent journalists (also available at ella.netpoint.net/cubanet/bpic/index.html and at www.cubafreepress.org). The information in the archives of the Bureau and in Cubanet appears to be both reliable and valid. It was cross-checked and augmented with information from other sources, if available.

For this purpose, I conducted:

- a systematic review of all post-1988 articles on Cuba published by *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami, Florida; www.elherald.com/cuba/cuba_top.shtml) and *Diario Las Americas* (Miami, Florida; www.diariolasamericas.com);
- in-depth cultural analyses of articles published by *Cubanews*, a newsletter on Cuba published by the Miami Herald (mhinternat@aol.com);
- a search of all post-1988 news items on Cuba included in the *National Newspaper Index*;

- content analysis of Amnesty International USA's reports on Cuba (1988; 1990; 1992; for the AI's 1997 report on Cuba see Freedom House; 1997) and the sections devoted to Cuba in Amnesty International's (AI) *Annual Reports* (1981, 135-138; 1982, 128-130; 1983, 128-130; 1984, 145-147; 1985, 140-142; 1986, 143-146; 1987, 150-154; 1988, 106-108; 1989, 117-119; 1990, 75-78; 1991, 73-75; 1992, 97-100; 1993, 108-111; 1994, 111-114);
- occasional hearings and reports on Cuba from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (The Endowment for Cuban American Studies, 1993), the U.S. Congress (House and Senate), and U.S. Department of State (1994; its reports on human rights are in the U.S. State Department web site, www.state.gov);
- other information on human rights available from Of Human Rights (www.ofhumanrights.org); see also www.freecuba.org;
- electronic news items selected from CubaWorld (www.cubaworld.com) and Habaguanex Ciboney (ciboney@netside.net which includes home pages with news and information on various social movement organizations); and
- papers in the annual proceedings of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/ca/cuba/asce)

All of the experiences of citizens and communities presented in this paper (as well as many other similar cases not included here) are documented repeatedly by AI and these other sources. Due to space limitations, the paper identifies (but excludes) extended treatment of the modal forms of dissent in Cuba (manuscript available upon request).

Limitations

The paper has important limitations. It lacks information on individual level variables such as perceived grievance that is customarily ascertained in research on protest. It also lacks information on the likely causes for many of the social patterns described below. Also lacking are longitudinal studies and information about individual and collective acts of protests such as boycotts, strikes, refusals, withdrawals, civil disobedience and blockades for which literally nothing is known at present. At time unknown by me, many of the organizations and patterns described below no longer exist while others have taken their place. Prison, police, and court records and the archives of social movement organizations and the or-

gans of state security contain invaluable but unavailable information on instances of social protest and movement activities, strategies and tactics. When and if they become available, this archival material in conjunction with personal narratives and life histories will undoubtedly allow more nuance understandings than are possible at present. Perhaps most crucially, the study is limited by the present day inability to conduct in Cuba interviews with participants and field observations of antihegemonic political individual and collective action. Researchers cannot make good-faith guarantees to respondents regarding their protection as human subjects. Moreover, they are vulnerable to the actions of state security.

Appendix 2 ISSUES OF CUBANET

#1: "Preparan nueva ley para preservar garantías procesales." AFP, 27 Diciembre 1995; #2: "Depuis Cuba." APIC, 29 Abril 1997; #3: "Cuba, the look from within." 28 January 1997; #4: "¿Quiénes son los culpables?" 9 Mayo 1997; #5: "¿Podría alguien explicarme que es el poder popular?" 1 octubre 1996; #6: "Preocupa a las autoridades el uso de símbolos norteamericanos." 11 Febrero 1997; #7: "Por la reivindicación de la dignidad martiana." 27 Diciembre 1995; #8: "Detenciones y represiones en vísperas del natalicio de Martí." 19 Febrero 1997; #9: "Between tensions and threats." 21 September 1995; #10: "Declaración de los mambises del siglo XX." 18 Marzo 1997; #11: "Truth, once awakened, will not be dormant again." 19 February 1997; #12: "Puja por José Martí entre gobierno y oposición en Cuba." 6 Febrero 1997; #13: "Tensión el 24 de febrero." 25 Febrero 1997; #14: "El Ex Club Cautivo cumplió su primer aniversario." 30 Enero 1997; #15: "La patria es de todos." 6 Julio 1997; #16: "Amnesty International Urgent Action Appeal." 22 July 1997; #17: "Piden opositores cubanos celebración de un plebiscito nacional." 17 Julio 1997; #18: "Cuba Plans Blockade of the Internet." Radio Martí, 6 February 1996; #19: "Declaraciones del padre de Yndamiro Restano hechas desde Cuba via telefónica a la oficina

en Miami del Buró de Periodistas Independientes." 11 Enero 1996; #20: "Bomb in Havana." Larry Daley, 17, 22 April 1997; "Rumors from Havana." Larry Daley, Cuba-L, 10 April 1997; #21: "Aviso de Manuel David Orrio." 20 Junio 1997; #22: "Reinaldo Cozano Alen Asks for International Protection." Radio Martí, 24 Febrero 1996; #23: "La Habana Para Su Amante Difunto." 28 Mayo 1995; #24: "Declaration from the opposition Cuban Workers' Coordinate." 2 Mayo 1997; #25: "Mensaje de Paya Sardinias al COPEI." 15 Enero 1996; #26: "Agradecen jóvenes cubanos a Húngaros rechazo a participar en festival." 2 Mayo 1997; #27: "Mensaje de periodistas independientes al congresista norteamericano Esteban Torres." 22 enero 1997; "Dissidents criticize congressman's visit." 27 January 1996; #28: "Carta abierta del Partido Pro Derechos Humanos al Secretario General de la ONU." 23 mayo 1997; #29: "Human Rights Watch pide liberación presos políticos." EFE, 22 Febrero 1996; #30: "Falsos debates de documento partidista en Cuba." 5 Julio 1997; #31: "Protestan escritores por agresiones en Cuba." 19 febrero 1997; "Declaración de organizaciones en España." Cubapress, 5 Marzo 1996; #32: "Exilio cubano apoyará actos de desobediencia civil." 22 noviembre 1995; #33: "Llama el Movimiento 13

de Julio a la cordura de los integrantes de la flotilla Democracia." BPCI, 16 Mayo 1997; #34: "Flotilla de exiliados recordara hundimiento." 27 Junio 1997;

#35: "Encuentro en Suecia." 14 agosto 1995; #36: "Libertad para las musas." 27 enero 1997.

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