

# CUBAN PUBLIC OPINION DYNAMICS (1997-1998) AND THE POTENTIAL FOR BUILDING A CIVIL SOCIETY

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This paper is written as a policy paper to discuss the dynamics of public opinion in Cuba in terms of the impact of selected events on different groups of the population and the potential it provides for building a civil society in Cuba. It is a follow-up of a previous analysis published by Freedom House in 1997 under the title *Cuba: Bringing the Background to the Foreground*. It contains three sections designed to address various levels of interest of potential readers.

The first section, "Analysis of Impact of Selected Events on Public Opinion Dynamics" provides a summary of events that took place between the Spring of 1997 and June 1998. It summarizes in a chart the resulting dynamics of Cuban public opinion in response to these selected events. If you just want to get an idea of the trends in public opinion and do not have an interest in further elaboration, this will be all you need to read.

The second section, entitled "Summary of Selected 1997-98 Events," provides a brief description of the events selected and the resulting dynamics of Cuban public opinion, with the exception of the Pope's visit which is covered at some length because the magnitude and intensity of its historical impact. If you are interested in learning more about the selected events included in the Analysis, then this section will be useful to you.

Finally, an Appendix provides the description of the various sectors into which Cuban public opinion is grouped for purposes of this analysis. In essence, this grouping of the population is an application to the

current Cuban situation of the methodology developed in my book *Revolutionary Strategy: a Handbook for Practitioners*, which was published by Transaction Books in 1991. If you are interested in learning more about the methodology, or you do not agree with the criteria I use, this is the section for you to read. Any comments or suggestions are welcomed.

## ANALYSIS AND IMPACT OF SELECTED EVENTS ON PUBLIC OPINION DYNAMICS

First, we will discuss briefly how Castro stays in power and then we will analyze the events of the last year.

### How Castro Stays in Power

Over the years, Castro has developed a very effective scheme to stay in power. He understands very well revolutionary dynamics, since he learned the strategy of how to play that game during the struggle against Batista. Only this time he is following the strategy of the leadership of the *status quo*.

In essence, the strategy is simple. The first asset in favor of perpetuating his rule is his charismatic leadership. Many of Castro's international initiatives are undertaken to preserve his image as a symbol of Cuban nationalism and as an internationally respected statesman. Domestically, Castro shifts blame to others for failures and takes credit for successes. At the same time, he prevents the emergence of alternative ideologies and of an opposition leadership. That is why freedom of expression is not allowed in any local mass media and the rights of association and assembly are repressed. This is complemented by overwhelming repression.

The regime, aware of the inevitability of the displacement of population groups along the spectrum of positions, from support to indifference to opposition, has tried to prevent the final stage of the process that will force the transition from a totalitarian to an authoritarian situation which will inevitably end in a democratic and free Cuba. To do that it has resorted to relentless but controlled repression, sending people to prison or exile, whether internal or external, unleashing gangs of thugs to intimidate dissenters, preventing the publication of their positions, refusing legality to their organizations and forbidding their meetings. It has also deprived them of their livelihood, confiscated their equipment, papers, and so on, and engaged in other means of repression, including occasional resort to killings. The resulting Pavlovian response is what Marta Beatriz Roque refers to when she says that “every Cuban carries his own internal policeman.”

Despite all this, more and more people are losing their fear and crossing the threshold of enduring violent repression. Once that happens, a totalitarian regime has either to crush the opposition or go down the slope of a transition away from authoritarian rule, at which point it becomes extremely vulnerable. Instead, in Cuba Castro is trying to attain an indefinite continuation of his rule. But the need for international support limits his repressive options.

Resorting to open violence is not feasible for the opposition in view of the overwhelming repressive capacity of the regime and the effectiveness of the intelligence apparatus. But eventually, overt manifestations of opposition and willingness to endure repression, combined with the inability of the regime to satisfy the needs and aspirations of those on whom it depends for support under groups A and B (see definitions below and the Appendix), are eroding its repressive capacity. In Cuba, this process is not easy to observe through outward manifestations; as is possible in freer societies, even in the traditional Latin American dictatorships.

In an authoritarian situation, those willing to resort to violence in opposition gain support slowly in the face of hesitant repression until eventually they are

able to challenge successfully the forces supporting the regime under group A. The overthrow of Batista and Somoza are good examples of this case of revolutionary dynamics.

However, in totalitarian situations, the overwhelming repressive capacity of the regime, and its willingness to use it mercilessly, prevents the emergence of such a violent challenge. That is, until the dissatisfaction of the population reaches such a level that there is a sudden popular explosion and/or a division among group A forces leading to a coup d'etat or a civil war. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc provides various examples of such revolutionary dynamics.

### Impact of Events Since February 1997

By the middle of 1998, although no clear challenge has emerged to Castro's perpetuation in power, the cumulative impact of the events analyzed in this document continues the negative drift in public opinion that was commented in the previous analysis published by Freedom House in 1997.

The analysis of the impact of selected events since that publication is presented in summary form in the following Public Opinion Dynamics Chart. The totalitarian nature of the regime has precluded so far any open measurement of public opinion changes through polls, demonstrations or elections. In our summary, we consider the potential changes of direction of attitude of the various groups under each sector of national public opinion in response to some selected events during the period. The direction signifies that the sector is decreasing regime support ( > ) or increasing regime support ( < ). Since adequate public opinion measurement is not available at this time, only a judgmental degree of the intensity of the change and its direction during the period is given in accordance with the following criteria: little ( -> or <- ), some ( --> or <-- ), moderate ( ---> or <--- ), significant ( ----> or <---- ), high ( -----> or <----- ), and, no relevant impact ( <=> ).

According to the methodology used, the population is grouped under five sectors or groups:

- A. Those willing to resort to violence to support the status quo;

Chart 1. Summary of Public Opinion Dynamics

Events	Public Opinion Sectors				
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
La Patria es de Todos	More Divided reduced threat ->	More Divided reduced threat ->	Does not care remains neutral <=>	+ Fear, reassured by world support -->	Action example likely to imitate ---->
Struggle for Succession	More Divided power ambitions -->	More Divided ambitions-reform -->	Does not care has no ambitions <=>	More active reforms likely -->	Raises hope more reforms, less fear --->
Bombings of tourist hotels	More Divided reform pressure -->	Fear leads to repressive stance <-	Rejects terrorism supports police <-	Rejects terrorism inept police a plus <=>	Rejects terrorism causes repression <=>
Death of Jorge Mas Canosa	Reduces threat --->	Reduces threat --->	*Does not care <=>	Reduced threat, loss US support - <=>	Reduces threat, potential rival -->
Economy reforms reversal	Hardliners vs Corrupt <=>	Hardliners vs corrupt <=>	Threat to profits drift to oppose -->	Possible hurt, will be critical -->	Possible hurt, highly critical -->
Failure to restore growth	Weaker charisma more repression ----->	Weaker charisma repression-reform ----->	Threat to profits Drift to sector D ---->	More hardships, less passive, drift to E ----->	Feels vindicated, more opposition ----->
Failure to prevent US/EU agreement	weaker charisma need for reforms -->	weaker charisma need for reform -->	Ignorant, if aware will drift to D <=>	Castro setback encourages sector -->	Castro setback encourages sector -->
Congressional finding and US aid initiatives	National dignity vs meeting needs <=>	National dignity vs meeting needs <=>	Very receptive refusal leads to D ->	Very receptive, refusal leads to E -->	Highly receptive, more resistance -->
Latin American hesitation	Legits rights violations, raises charisma appeal <---	Legits rights violations, raises charisma appeal <--	Does not care results not relevant to them <=>	Human rights vote most discouraging <--	Human rights vote seen as betrayal +danger <---
Pope's visit	weaker charisma more resistance ----->	weaker charisma more local defiance ----->	Losing fear more likely drift to D ---->	Losing fear and dissent legitimacy ----->	Great morale boost, Poland 2 ----->

B. Those willing to support the status quo peacefully;

C. Those unwilling to take sides;

D. Those opposing the regime but unwilling to take risks; and,

E. Those opposing the regime willing to endure or resort to violence.

For a more elaborate discussion of the composition of these sectors in the case of Cuba please refer to the Appendix.

As to the events selected for the analysis of this period, they include events in the political, economic and international spheres. The political events selected are: the issuance of “La Patria es de Todos” by the

Working Group of the Dissidence in response to the Party Congress of October, 1997 and the new Popular Power Assembly installed in February 1998; the struggle for succession; bombs in tourist facilities; and, the death of Jorge Mas Canosa. As to economic events, those selected are: the slow reversal of economic reform and the failure to restore economic growth. With regard to international affairs, the selected events are: the agreement between the United States and the European Union; Congressional findings and new U.S. initiatives; and, the hesitation of Latin America. Finally, as an event by itself, with multiple ramifications, the Pope’s visit. For a more elaborate description and analysis of the selected events, please refer to the next section. The event’s impact is determined by how it may affect the various sectors of public opinion, either when they find

about it or its consequences affect the interests of the groups involved.

During this period, the central force supporting the regime, which is Castro's charismatic appeal, was weakened by three events. The first is the failure of Castro's efforts overseas to consolidate the isolation of the United States on the Helms-Burton issue. On the contrary, the success of the Clinton Administration in making some progress in the negotiations with the Europeans has broadened the international questioning of Castro's rule. The second, is his failure to restore economic growth and the third the Pope's visit. The hesitation of Latin America provides him with some successes and some failures but, in the end, is still the most favorable international factor enhancing Castro's charisma.

Besides weakening his charismatic standing and, consequently, his personal authority internally, the events of the period have reduced the appeal of nationalism and fear of exile return to power. This encourages divisions and ambitions among his followers. This is particularly so as a result of the death of Jorge Mas Canosa. The immobility reflected in the Party Congress and the National Assembly of Popular Power is persuading the people and, according to some reports, even those within his inner circle, that Castro offers no hope of leading Cuba into the solution of its problems. That is why there seems to be some jockeying for his succession among the upper ranks of the regime and reformists' and dissidents' hopes are raised.

Of special interest in relation to the military and repressive forces is the impact of the bombings of tourist installations. First, it must be pointed that Castro did not get involved at all in this matter, as is his usual practice. On the contrary, he let lower ranking security officers handle this threatening event. Second, if the hypothesis of this being the work of disaffected former military and security staffers turns out to be true, the implications of this being the beginning of a potential split under Sector A, must be very worrisome for Castro. No wonder, he has remained silent on this event. On the other hand, this tactic is rejected by the dissidents.

In contrast, Castro furiously attacked the movie *Guantanamera*—a satire of life and death, including a funeral, in today's Cuba—during his marathon seven and one-half hour speech before the National Assembly of Popular Power. An attack that met a strong rejection among intellectual circles, not only of the dissidence, but also among regime loyalists hoping for an opening.

True, Concilio Cubano has been repressed but what it was doing is being continued by others. Dissidence survives, and, its support keeps growing as the ability to meet the most basic needs continues shrinking, the door of emigration remains closed definitively and pressure increases for an internal solution. And, although repression has intensified, the regime has been forced to act with restraint to avoid closing the door to any international support. That Castro is forced to rely on hesitant repression. Under this modality, the repressive monolith is less effective as a deterrent, as more and more people dare to defy the regime.

The failure to restore sugar production and the regression in economic reforms, particularly the slow elimination of self-employment, practically dooms any hope of economic recovery. The possibility of any success in reversing the U.S. embargo is remote. On the contrary, the European Union is pressuring for the kind of opening Castro cannot tolerate. Once the population realizes that with Castro there is no solution, the mood of public opinion is going to increasingly turn against the regime. More so, now that the door of leaving Cuba is very narrow due to the immigration agreement with the United States.

In the long run, the impact of the Pope's visit will depend on whether Castro is able to force the Church to maintain a discreet silence or make only moderate criticisms of human rights violations, as it has done so far, while taking at the same time an aggressive stance against Helms-Burton. The meeting called in the Vatican with the Cuban Bishops early in June 1998, indicates this option is not acceptable to the Pope. His Holiness realizes this is not the way to replicate the Poland experience.

The Pope's message during the visit—to say the truth and not to be afraid—must have worried Castro a lot, not to mention the demand that rights of freedom of expression, association and assembly be restored. Castro's regime is based on people being afraid and not saying the truth and their being unable to articulate an opposition to his regime. Now, the Pope is telling the Cuban hierarchy he really meant to replicate the Polish experience. The scene for a conflict between Castro and the Vatican is set.

**Actions that May be  
Required to Build a Civil Society**

The action side of this policy analysis is predicated on the nature of human behavior. Once a person starts losing fear in one realm, he is likely to start behaving without fear in other aspects of his life. Acting freely and without fear tends to become a universal style of behavior. True, the Catholic Church has made it clear that their actions are limited to the religious and spiritual sphere of life, although they are not indifferent to what happens in other realms of the life of its followers. It is this broadening base of people willing to assert their basic rights that opens the opportunity for developing a civil society movement inside Cuba. But in these matters nothing happens by accident, there is need for deliberate actions.

With the increase of dissidence in Cuba, the time has come for those overseas to take advantage of the new mood created by the Pope, and parallel to the efforts of the Church to expand the exercise of civil rights in the spiritual realm, promote and support civil society building efforts in other realms of social interaction.

Internally, it is more evident every day that Castro's charismatic hold on the Cuban population is fast losing ground. Although the residual magnitude of this charismatic hold should not be underestimated, there are many signals that his stubborn refusal to allow a transition, combined with his inability to produce workable solutions to the increasing daily life problems faced by the Cuban people, is weakening his hold over average Cubans.

There are reports that even many around Castro are convinced that he has no future solution to offer but feel trapped in the situation because they are also

convinced that, without Castro, the regime will collapse and their own positions will be imperiled. Externally, Castro is faced for the first time with not only the United States, but also the European Union, demanding that he open the system economically and politically. The Church is subtly supporting this demand. Only, Latin America continues to stubbornly support him through a misdirected anti-Americanism reinforced by the negative image that prevails of the exile community.

What the cause of Cuba's freedom needs now is a totally new approach, based on a movement and an organization that could overcome the present negative image of Castro's opposition that prevails, both internally as well as externally. It is urgent that overseas Cubans mobilize themselves for this dual goal: i) to promote the growth a civil society inside Cuba from overseas; and ii) to promote international support for a transition to a really free Cuba, based on a civil society as vibrant as the one that existed before Castro came to power. That civil society, under the banner of the Civic Resistance Movement, played a key role in overthrowing Batista.

**SUMMARY OF SELECTED 1997-98 EVENTS**

***La Patria es de Todos***

Two political events, the Party Congress and the first meeting of the new National Assembly of Popular Power, took place in October, 1997 and in February, 1998 respectively, with the Pope's visit in between. Since in Cuba the electoral system is rigged to ensure perpetuation of Castro and his chosen collaborators in power, neither changes in the party, nor changes in the legislature, have any great significance for Cuban public opinion. They are merely changes in the Castro's coterie of collaborators. Nevertheless, there are some significant issues related to these events worth commenting.

In terms of the emerging opposition, the most important development was the challenge by the Dissidence Working Group both to the electoral process and to the document submitted as a draft for consideration of the Party Congress. The Working Group included, among others, Marta Beatriz Roque, Vladimiro Roca, René Gómez Manzano and Félix

**Table 1. La Patria es de Todos**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Weakens sector cohesion, Vladimiro Roca is a former MIG pilot, reduces image opposition is threat to them, international response damaging to Castro's charismatic appeal	(->)
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above, Roca is the son of Blas Roca, who chaired the Communist Constitutional Convention in 1975	(->)
<b>Sector C:</b> Reinforces wisdom of staying neutral to avoid repression	(<=>)
<b>Sector D:</b> Threatened by repressive response, encouraged by courage of authors and reassured by persistence of international response	(-->)
<b>Sector E:</b> Highly encouraged by daring action and international response, motivated by articulation of ideological challenge and example of willingness to endure repression	(-->)

Bonné Carcassés. Their statement, entitled *La Patria es de Todos* (The Fatherland Belongs to All) constitutes the first formal ideological challenge, released internally during a press conference with foreign reporters accredited in Havana, against the official ideological position (see Table 1).

Shortly after, the four authors were arrested on July 16, 1997 and remain imprisoned as of the date of this writing. Their release has been requested by *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, among others. It has been also requested by prominent visitors, including His Holiness and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien. More recently, the European Union, to the annoyance of Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina, made their release one of the token actions to meet the standards of political openness expected before Cuba could attain full membership in the Lomé Convention.

Why is Castro so afraid of these dissidents? Their document challenges his interpretation of Cuban history, in particular the use of the writings of Martí to justify the single party system he has imposed on Cuban society, as well as of many other recent events. It reminds the people of many of the foolish Castro initiatives, like creating a new variety of cow, draining the Zapata Swamp or internationalist adventures, in which substantial national financial and human resources were wasted. It points that "the main purpose of the regime is not to serve the people but to be its dictator." After criticizing the official reaction to the January 28, 1997 message from President Clinton offering U.S. assistance for a transition, the document asks for a Constitutional Assembly and free

elections to allow an economic and political opening that will avoid the violent end towards which the present paralysis and stagnation is leading the nation.

This document has had a world-wide impact like no other statement issued by Castro's opposition and it has the legitimacy of its authors being willing to endure repression for their ideas. The more the regime delays their release, the higher the interest it generates.

### The Struggle for Succession

One of the frequently destabilizing issues in caudillista and communist governments is the matter of succession. Cuba has a government that incorporates the outer trappings of Communism, while being in essence another Caribbean dictatorship a la Trujillo. This comparison offends the leftist intellectuals who, out of their hostility to the United States, embraced Castro as their guru. But, the longer Castro stays in power, the more socialist ideological trappings continue falling, as in a dance of the seven veils, and we are exposed to the naked truth of a traditional Latin caudillista dictatorship.

At the Party Congress, Fidel anointed his brother Raúl with the mantle of succession, shall the Maximum Leader disappear. This is nothing new because Raúl is number two in all political positions and number one in the MINFAR, with his loyal henchman General Abelardo Colomé controlling the MININT since the Ochoa crisis in 1989. However, there is an interesting manifestation of two things: 1) the fact that the end of Castro's rule is within sight; and 2) that there is already a struggle for power within the Party (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Struggle for Succession**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics		Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b>	Sector cohesion weakened, encourages ambitions among middle level officers, raises specter of potential civil war	( --> )
<b>Sector B:</b>	Similar to above but with more emphasis on ambitions, closet reformers encouraged to push their agenda	( --> )
<b>Sector C:</b>	Little impact, they are out of the power game	( <= > )
<b>Sector D:</b>	Encouraged to be more active, expectation of potential opening due to division within regime increased	( --> )
<b>Sector E:</b>	Very encouraged, any regime division generates doubt and reduces legitimacy and willingness to repress	( --> )

There are many reports that Castro's health is failing. It is hard to verify them and we should not place too much hope on that solution, because there is contradictory evidence in front of our eyes all the time. Sometimes Castro seems to be worn out and slow and other times he is back to his long speaking feats. However, the fact is that he was the one who raised the issue of the succession at the Party Congress, not anyone in Miami or in the overseas Cuban community. Shortly after, Ricardo Alarcón, President of the Popular Power Assembly, an internationally well known former Foreign Minister, granted an interview to a reporter from the San Juan, Puerto Rico newspaper *El Nuevo Día*, during which he answered in the affirmative the question of whether he would accept an offer to be Castro's successor. This was a clear challenge to Fidel's appointment of his brother, Raúl, as the chosen successor.

This would have been a passing incident, subject to diverse interpretations, were it not for the fact that in his more than seven hours' speech to the new Popular Power Assembly after he was reelected President of the Council of State in February 1998, Castro reversed his position and made the surprising comment that Cuba was not a monarchy and wondered where people got the idea that Raúl was to inherit power automatically. Nobody dared tell him it was he in his October speech to the Party Congress. In this case, *Granma* never published Castro's long oratorical exercise as is the usual practice. There could be two explanations: 1) lack of paper to print the newspaper; and 2) that this reversal of Castro's support for his brother was a reflection of a power struggle that

could not be resolved, so it was better to remove the issue from any printed text.

**Bombs in Tourist Installations**

During this period, Cuba experienced for the first time in many years the type of terrorism to which it subjected the rest of the Americas during the years when exporting the revolution was a priority tool of Cuban foreign policy. Some links to support for kidnapping people and terrorism, revealed by isolated events, indicates that this type of actions are still in Castro's arsenal, although in a more discreet way.

When bombs started exploding in Cuban hotels in the Spring of 1997, there was some speculation as to the potential culprits. The speculation centered on Cuban exile community groups which from time to time organize pinprick actions against Castro's regime. Then, two bombs exploded within a short period of time at the hotels Nacional and Capri in the former Rampa section of Havana's Vedado neighborhood. And finally, there were four more bombs in early September at three hotels and the popular "Bodeguita del Medio" restaurant in Old Havana. Regime spokesmen accused the U.S. government without providing any evidence despite demands by the U.S. Department of State to provide proof. Then, out of the blue sky, appeared a young Salvadorean terrorist, Raúl Ernesto Cruz León, whom State Security accused of being the author of the bombings. The initial versions of the story disseminated by Cuban intelligence painted Cruz León as a kind of Central American Rambo from the Salvadoran military, trained at The School of the Americas in Georgia, who was part of a right-wing military

**Table 3. Bombings of Tourist Hotels**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Definitely weakens cohesion if it comes from their ranks, reinforces fears of potential internal conflict among them, increases pressure for concessions from hardliners	( --> )
<b>Sector B:</b> Most worrisome development, raises fear that comfortable position of peaceful political support is not tenable, likely to encourage support for stronger repression	( <- )
<b>Sector C:</b> Repudiates terrorism, likely to support increased repression	( <- )
<b>Sector D:</b> Ambivalent, encouraged by signal of repressive incompetence and increased opposition, repudiates terrorism, a draw	( <=> )
<b>Sector E:</b> Most determined may support, most idealistic repudiate terrorism as unacceptable instrument, fear it will be used by regime to justify increased repression	( <=> )

conclave motivated by revenge for Cuba's support of the Salvadorean guerrillas.

However, the Salvadorean's family pointed out that the young man had dropped out of the military academy, had never visited the United States, and his links to Cuba were the result of his work as a personal bodyguard for visiting artists. Not a very ideological chap, this Raúl. These clarifications weakened the most juicy aspects of U.S. involvement in the bombings. Nevertheless, State Security maintains the external link accusation, but focusing now on Cuban exiles. So far, only *The Miami Herald* seems to have given credibility to the version advanced by Cuban intelligence. That version has a great gap: Cruz León was not in Cuba in April, when the first three bombs exploded.

A hypothesis which could provide a potential explanation is that the bombs—which used Cuban training explosives aimed at not causing injuries—were actually placed by demobilized members of the armed forces and the security services. There are thousands of these individuals, many of whom were sympathizers of Generals Arnaldo Ochoa (executed), Patricio de la Guardia (imprisoned) and Minister of Interior General José Abrantes (died in prison). It is these followers of disgraced leaders of the military and security services who are most likely to have access to the explosive materials and intelligence information required to undertake such terrorists actions in the face of the effective Cuban repressive system.

As to motivation, besides revenge for the fate of people with whom they shared many military operations overseas, many of these individuals are surviving on

the income they get from self-employment, mostly related to tourism, such as room renting and paladares restaurants. When Castro taxed many of these people out of their profitable dollar activities (as will be discussed under the next event) they may have decided: if we cannot get the tourist dollars neither will you. Once the regime discovered the real culprits, they could not afford to make this public. Instead, they decided to railroad the young Salvadorean, who most likely was a “mule” using television sets to smuggle drugs into Cuba, as a scapegoat. Instead of drugs, Cuban intelligence services said he was using the TV sets to smuggle explosives to make the bombs he allegedly placed in the hotels. This is only a hypothesis. It certainly meets the usual police criteria in crime investigations of opportunity, means and motivation better than the official Cuban version (see Table 3).

#### **The Death of Jorge Mas Canosa**

With the passing of Jorge Mas Canosa, fear has been expressed among Castro's opponents that U.S. policy will revert to a possible accommodation with Castro. The notion is that, without his dynamic and effective leadership, the exile community will lose its influence over U.S. policy. This is not an imaginary fear, but a real possibility. Shortly after Mr. Mas passed away, Castro's friends among the U.S. liberal community and some sympathizers within the exile community mounted a full-fledged offensive to lift the embargo. These efforts have been based on a total distortion of the meaning of the Pope's visit to Cuba.

Castro used Jorge Mas as the symbol of a two-fold threat: 1) against Cuban nationalism as a leader to be imposed by an American invasion; and 2) against his

**Table 4. Death of Jorge Mas Canosa**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Weaken cohesion due to less fear of a U.S. invasion and a threat to their personal positions and interests, reduces need to coalesce around Fidel	( ---> )
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above	( ---> )
<b>Sector C:</b> Does not care one way or the other	( <=> )
<b>Sector D:</b> Will be encouraged because opposition is freed from stigma successfully planted by Fidel but may be discouraged by fear U.S. opposition to Castro may weaken	( <=> )
<b>Sector E:</b> Likely to be encouraged by disappearance of negative force used by Castro to give cohesion to his followers, as well as a potential political rival force in post-Castro's Cuba, may be less concerned than Sector D with U.S. reaction	( --> )

collaborators as the leader of a movement to restore the past and deprive them of their positions and houses, if not their freedom and lives. Castro also tagged the exile community, particularly in Europe and Latin America, with the image of a reactionary ideology based on revenge and restoration of the old Batista regime. That negative image has been exploited by those whose motivation is really anti-Americanism to mount impressive campaigns against U.S. policy, in particular the Helms-Burton Law and the embargo.

Internationally, such an image has been a great obstacle to gain support for the anti-Castro cause, as well as to focus attention on the repressive nature of the Castro regime, not to mention its colossal failure. Internally, this image of the exile community has allowed Castro to rally his followers around his leadership. So, contrary to what many people in the exile community think, the passing of Jorge Mas is a setback for Castro (see Table 4).

### The Slow Reversal of the Economic Opening

The economic opening advanced by Castro sympathizers all over the world has been predicated mostly on allowing people to engage in self-employment. True, there are other initiatives, particularly the opening of the country to foreign investors in the export sector. But the focus on internal sector reform has been on self-employment. Thousands of words and even substantial studies have been written on this issue. In fact, at one time, one of the spokesmen for the economic reformers predicted that the 800,000 to 1,000,000 subsidized Cuban workers in non-productive enterprises were going to be ab-

sorbed by this expanding private sector of the Cuban economy.

The fact that Cubans are not allowed to hire other Cubans to do any paid work, except members of their families, and that the *paladares* restaurants were limited to twelve chairs reveal the weak economic grounds for the claims of those researchers who were telling us that these moves represented the beginnings of economic reform in Cuba. To absorb such large numbers of workers would have required that the internal economy be allowed to work under free market rules and Castro has reiterated time and again his adamant opposition to accept such an opening.

For all practical purposes, the push for even these meager reforms came to an end sometime late in 1996. And the Castro brothers wiped it out, through taxes and repressive measures, in the Spring of 1997, not to mention Raúl's ominous criticism of those who advocated these modest measures in the think tanks attached to the Central Committee. This occurred around the same time that Castro ordered the downing over international waters of U.S. civilian planes piloted by members of *Hermanos al Rescate*, triggering the approval of the Helms-Burton Law. We have now additional evidence of this slow demise of the economic reform movement.

The classification of the economically active population in Table A-28 of the Statistical Annex to the recent report by the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, *La economía cubana: Reformas estructurales y desempeño en los noventa* reveals that the total number of self-employed workers grew from only 25,200 in 1989, the year the Soviet system start-

**Table 5. Reversal of Economic Reforms**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Probably weakens cohesion. Hardliners support austerity and resent corruption and privileges, while opportunist beneficiaries within this sector resent being deprived of access to dollars	( <=> )
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above	( <=> )
<b>Sector C:</b> This group is likely to be greatly irritated since these measures reduce their profiteering opportunities, may move to D	( --> )
<b>Sector D:</b> Since group is against regime, it is likely to join critics of lack of opening and may also be beneficiaries of private sector activities	( --> )
<b>Sector E:</b> Similar to sector D	( --> )

ed imploding, to 225,000 in 1995 and 340,000 in 1996, the years Cuba claimed it was recovering. This is the data used by those who claim that the economic reform is represented by this growing number of self-employed Cubans. However, Table A-35 of the same report states that in February 1997, there were only 171,861 persons authorized for self-employed work by the Labor Ministry. That is almost exactly 50 percent of the statistic reported at the end of 1996 in Table A-28.

In a June 22, 1998 Agence France Presse dispatch from Havana, it is reported that the Labor Ministry official responsible for registering the self-employed reports that their number is decreasing at the rate of three to four thousand per month. The official added that “nobody who works legally can enrich himself.” Thus reiterating Fidel Castro’s contribution to improve economic thought by amending the thinking of great economists, such as Adam Smith, Maynard Keynes, Joseph Schumpeter or Milton Friedman, with the oxymoron concept of “not-for-profit capitalism” (see Table 5).

### **The Failure to Restore Economic Growth**

The most serious setback the regime has suffered in the economic arena has been the double hit of a decrease in the sugar crop, combined with the decline in the price of sugar. This is offset to some extent by the decline in oil prices. As a symptom of the disarray in the upper echelons of the regime, there were diverse estimates given by different ministers and Carlos Lage, the Vice-President and economic czar.

Unofficial estimates place this year’s sugar output at the level of 2.7 million tons. The most optimistic of-

ficial figures reach only 3.2 million tons. In any case, these are sugar output volumes attained by Cuba after the First World War, when it had one fourth the present population. Combined with prices hovering below ten cents per pound and even down to eight cents, Cuba is going to suffer a severe decrease in its financial capability to import. This could be offset by declines in oil prices and the growth in other exports and in tourism revenues. However, prices of other exports, such as nickel, have also been affected by the Asian crisis. As to tourism, the problem is that the value added in Cuba is very low due to the lack of production of tourist-quality goods. The recently released ECLAC report on the Cuban economy provides the example of Cuban chickens and eggs being of such poor quality that hotels have to import them. As a consequence, the tourist industry is reported to have fallen to only 29 cents out of every dollar in value added.

The analysis of the economy as a whole is outside the scope of this paper. Besides, there will be many papers at this ASCE meeting discussing various aspects of the Cuban economy. Therefore, the topic is relevant only in terms of its impact on the dynamics of public opinion. There are already warnings of further electric power cuts and shortages of all kinds. As a result, there is already an increase in the flow of illegal immigrants to the United States. Young people are reported to be convinced that there is no hope of any future in Cuba and, therefore, it is increasingly more attractive to apply for the U.S. visa lottery or to take any risks in order to escape an island that is seen as a big prison (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Failure to Restore Growth**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Seriously weakens cohesion, undermines Fidel's charismatic leadership, raises specter of having to recur to more repression, brings material adversities that affect even the middle and lower ranks, thus making upper echelon privileges more offensive, may encourage support for reformist positions, legitimacy of repression seriously reduced	( ----> )
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above	( ----> )
<b>Sector C:</b> Increased shortages and discomforts reduces benefit of indifference, may shift to Sector D	( ----> )
<b>Sector D:</b> Increased shortages and discomforts reduces attractiveness of passivity, may shift to Sector E	( ----> )
<b>Sector E:</b> Feels vindicated in frontal opposition, determination to endure repression is reinforced, may perceive possibility of end of regime intransigence, reform if not outright collapse becomes feasible	( ----> )

### The Failure to Prevent Agreement between Europe and the United States

During this period Castro continued his campaign of trying to isolate the United States internationally on the issue of Helms-Burton and the embargo. The last such ostentatious effort was his May 1998, visit to Geneva to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Health Organization and the meeting of the World Trade Organization. A secondary benefit to Castro of these travels is that he is the object of protocol attentions from his hosts and, as a celebrity, receives enormous media attention. This helps maintain his charismatic image in Cuba. However, in this case the results were extremely negative.

In the first place, Pablo Alfonso, the *Nuevo Herald* reporter sent to Geneva to cover his visit was able to obtain a scoop that the real purpose of the visit was for treatment of a rare heart condition at the Genolier Clinic. This explained his long stay and the secrecy surrounding his official activities while in Geneva. Poor health is never associated with charismatic leadership, since followers expect their charismatic leaders to have superhuman traits and being sick is proof of human frailty. To further damage his image while there, the official session at the Legislative Palace had to be moved to a private residence because the legislators considered hosting a notorious dictator a blemish on their democratic image.

Moving to the goal of isolating the United States in relation to the embargo, during Castro's visit the European Union and the United States reached an agreement by which in exchange for offering to request some changes in Helms-Burton, which are un-

likely to be approved by the U.S. Congress, the Europeans agreed to multilateral restrictions on investments in confiscated properties. Castro realized immediately that this was a setback for his propaganda efforts, voicing his concern that an agreement was being made at Cuba's expense, and Ricardo Alarcón, the President of the Cuban legislature, who was attending an Ibero-American Parliaments meeting in Montevideo, also expressed his disapproval of the US-EU agreement. The Europeans have agreed to withdraw any credit or insurance support for investments by their companies in confiscated properties subject to claims from their previous owners. This will further discourage investors to go to Cuba.

To crown the negatives of this trip, the Cubans were trying to be admitted as observers to the Lomé Convention, a system of special treatment regarding customs and financing the Europeans offer to their former colonies. Cuba sought this door as a way to bypass the European Union Common Position on Cuba that was agreed on December 2, 1996. This Common Position requires Cuba to open politically and economically before it can sign a Cooperative Agreement to provide a framework for granting economic assistance to the island. Eventually, the observer status was granted but, in response to objections from Germany and Sweden, full status was made formally contingent on Cuba meeting the criteria of the Common Position and among other actions freeing the jailed members of the Working Group of the Dissidence. Conditions that irritated Mr. Robaina, who said "that Cuba placed no conditions for joining." Mr. Robaina does not seem to

**Table 7. Failure to Prevent US-EU Agreement**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Those familiar with the situation realize that Cuba is losing the isolation battle against the U.S. Despite the posturing of Latin leaders and the overt cordiality and politeness shown to their leader, Cuba continues to be a financial and economic pariah, with no solution in sight. This weakens cohesion and reduces patience with Castro's intransigence, thus giving legitimacy to the opposition and the reformists	( --> )
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above	( --> )
<b>Sector C:</b> Most are not even aware of these events, so it is a draw. However, once they become aware, are likely to shift to D	( <=> )
<b>Sector D:</b> The failure to isolate the U.S. moderately encourages this group	( -> )
<b>Sector E:</b> Same as Sector D	( -> )

**Table 8. Congressional Findings and U.S. Initiatives**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Offer of humanitarian aid weakens cohesion, rejection on national dignity grounds has high acceptance in this group, facing more shortages middle and lower ranks are likely to be more receptive	( <=> )
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above	( <=> )
<b>Sector C:</b> Very receptive, will resent assistance refusal, likely to drift to D	( --> )
<b>Sector D:</b> Similar to C, but more likely to increase opposition	( --> )
<b>Sector E:</b> Likely to exploit against regime, will reinforce commitment to resist, sector most receptive to a U.S. initiative on this matter	( ---> )

understand that, when one wants to join a club or an organization, the organization, and not the aspiring member, has the right to set conditions for admission (see Table 7).

### **Congressional Findings and New U.S. Initiatives**

One of the most damaging consequences for Castro of the Pope's visit is the opportunity it offered to U.S. Congressional staffers to visit Cuba and travel at length throughout the island. Up to this time, most staffers of the Republican controlled U.S. Congress were at a disadvantage when dealing with pro-Castro advocates who claimed first-hand knowledge of the situation and viewpoints of the Cuban people. Three key Republican staffers visited Cuba for ten days during and after the Pope's visit: Roger Noriega and Marc Thiessen of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Caleb McCarry of the House International Relations Committee.

Among the many findings in their report, perhaps the most outstanding one is that while they were in the Plaza de la Revolución during the last Papal mass, the audience kept their hands in their pockets rather

than applaud Fidel Castro. They report that the same happened in Santiago de Cuba in response to the presence of Raúl Castro at the Papal mass there. Quite correctly, they interpret this hand passivity as a discreet "acto de repudio" against Castro and his brother. Since they were able to get an in-depth view of the real situation, beyond tame foreign press coverage, they now have a solid basis of facts to oppose any accommodation with Castro.

The findings of the staffers not only made it less likely they will accept any weakening changes in the Helms-Burton legislation, this visit also encouraged them to come out with a series of additional ideas to provide direct humanitarian support to Cubans and to the growing civil society that is emerging. Castro's rejected humanitarian aid as offensive to national dignity (see Table 8).

### **The Hesitation of Latin America**

Latin America and the Caribbean continue their contradictory policies of advocating the strengthening of democracy in the Hemisphere while sending ambiguous messages on their position towards Castro and

his regime. There are two basic factors determining this ambiguity: one, confusing the interests of Cuba and its people with those of Castro and his regime; the other, using the Cuba issue as a proxy for their anti-Americanism. A position which, a recent survey financed by the *Wall Street Journal* and sixteen Latin newspapers shows, is not shared by the people of the region, only 27 per cent of whom have a good opinion of Castro, with only 18 percent of Mexicans sharing their government's admiration for Castro.

The Mexican government is the most outspoken in its support of Cuba against the United States. At the recently held meeting of the OAS General Assembly in Caracas, the Mexican Foreign Minister, Mrs. Rosario Green, spoke in favor of creating a Group of Friends of the Secretary General to start conversations on the reintegration of Cuba to the OAS. This is extremely important because Cuba cannot have access to any financing from the Inter-American Development Bank unless it is a member of the OAS. The proposal was not on the agenda and was dropped when the U.S. objected to it. Several governments agreed that this was premature in view that Cuba had not expressed any interest in meeting the democratic standards that have been agreed by the OAS at the suggestion of Canada, precisely one of the countries that now wants to look the other way in relation to Cuba's undemocratic behavior.

One disappointing experience, very favorable to Castro, was the rejection of the resolution of the UN Human Rights Commission on Cuba at its last session in Geneva. This rejection was caused by the abstention of six Latin American delegations, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Uruguay and Venezuela. Did these governments realize that their diplomatic game of showing their displeasure with the United States was being played at the expense of the most helpless participants in this matter: the oppressed, the mistreated and the imprisoned by Castro? No doubt Castro and his hardline followers must have been extremely pleased, while the dissidents and other regime opponents must have been dismayed by this callous vote.

Interestingly, upon his return from a visit to Cuba, the Foreign Minister of Brazil restated Brazilian for-

eign policy on Cuba as conditioned on expressions of willingness by Cuba to meet some minimal conditions of democratic opening and human rights respect. As an indication of the seriousness with which Castro and his friends see this change in policy, shortly after, a group of prominent Brazilian left-wing Castro sympathizers, led by Celso Furtado and Oscar Niemeyer, issued a statement criticizing this shift in Brazilian foreign policy.

Finally, comes the election of Daniel Pastrana in Colombia. One would think that a Conservative and democrat faced with a guerrilla insurrection supported by Castro for decades, would be an ally of democracy and freedom for Cuba. But a June 25, 1998 dispatch by Andrés Oppenheimer in *The Miami Herald*, based on conversations with President-elect Pastrana, reveals such hopes perhaps are unfounded. According to Oppenheimer, Pastrana is anxious to negotiate with the guerrillas to bring peace to his country. A most worthy goal.

However, this requires making concessions to the Cuban supported guerrillas. Already, departing and discredited President Samper, in a visit to Havana, announced Castro's willingness to mediate the Colombian conflict. Of course, the price for such a mediation will be paid at the expense of Cuba's freedom. Oppenheimer's report hints that the United States will be pressured in exchange to loosen up its position on Castro.

Is Pastrana ready to join Mexico in sacrificing the victims of Castro's tyranny for the sake of getting his cooperation in solving internal problems and posturing against the United States? The fact that writer Gabriel García Márquez, a rabid Castro supporter, was one of those who campaigned for Pastrana, despite his conservative ideological orientation, gives Castro another card to play. And, to those who wish Cuba to be free, this gives another reason for concern.

There are some recent examples of events in which Castro used his terrorist connections to gain diplomatic influence. One is the kidnapping of the brother of OAS Secretary General, César Gaviria, by pro-Castro guerrillas in Colombia. The guerrillas stated

**Table 9. Latin American Hesitation**

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> In the short run, success in getting support reinforces Castro's charismatic image and his stranglehold over the sector, it also legitimizes human rights violations, lack of tangible economic results in the end reduces its impact	( <-- )
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above	( <-- )
<b>Sector C:</b> Does not care one way or the other due to lack of visible results	( <=> )
<b>Sector D:</b> Discouraged by diplomatic support given to Castro, particularly in matters such as the vote on human rights in Geneva	( <-- )
<b>Sector E:</b> Very demoralized by loss of international support on human rights; this is a serious betrayal, international support is the only source of protection this sector can count on against regime repression	( <--- )

that they would release Gaviria's brother only at Castro's request. He made the request and gained a spokesman, who even refuses to call him a dictator, while pretending to use his OAS position as a mediator. During the hijacking of the Japanese embassy in Lima by the Castro supported MRTA, Castro played the role of the reluctant mediator with his followers, thus enhancing his standing with the governments involved, in particular, the Japanese from whom he expected financial concessions. In this case, however, President Fujimori fooled Castro and wiped out his sympathizers without giving even a hint to Castro of what he was about to do. Nevertheless, Japan agreed to refinance its debt of more than 700 million dollars (see Table 9).

### Impact of the Pope's Visit

The ultimate step in Castro's efforts to gain international support against the U.S. and the Helms-Burton Law was the Pope's visit to Cuba. This visit was a reluctant concession to exploit photo opportunities to boost his charismatic image and call attention to the Pope's rejection of embargoes in general and the Cuban one in particular.

Castro's agreement to accept the Pope's visit to Cuba ended a negotiation that went for a decade. Having attained his goal of being invited to the Vatican, Castro started hedging on the conditions set by the Vatican. The main reason for his hedging is that Castro did not want to strengthen the Cuban Catholic Church. It is the only independent national organization parallel to his government, it has its own ideology based on a religion that is basically consistent

with the spiritual needs of many Cubans and it can mobilize worldwide support through the Vatican.

Besides, Castro is very aware of the impact of the Pope's visit to Poland. When the Pope undertook that visit to his native land and unleashed the Solidarity movement, Castro ordered that country out of bounds for training Cubans within the Soviet Bloc. Not only that, any Cuban official or student stationed in other Soviet Bloc countries had to obtain a special authorization from Cuban security services before visiting Poland on vacation.

The initial negotiations over a Papal visit in 1987 stalled over Castro's refusal to allow the Pope to move from one end of the island to the other over land holding public masses, as well as other conditions loosening limitations to the Church in access to mass media, publication capabilities and immigration of priests. The Castro regime wanted a mere stopover in Rancho Boyeros airport or at the most holding masses in Havana and Santiago within the limited spaces of churches.

It must be pointed that at that time there was a serious division inside the Cuban Church between the so-called "collaborationist" hierarchy, who advocated a passive stance merely to be allowed to survive, and some more defiant members of the hierarchy who advocated a more aggressive stance. This last group had the support of Catholic lay members who were being persecuted by the regime. Among this group of laymen, one of the most prominent figures was Oswaldo Payá, who is now a dissident leader.

Much of the hope being placed on the impact of the Pope's visit stems from comparisons with the impact of the Pope's visits to Poland. But it is important to consider the differences. In the first place, Castro is more a Stalinist style ruler than either Gierek or Jaruzelski. It is doubtful that a Pope visit to Moscow under Stalin would have been allowed the space the Pope enjoyed in Poland or even that it would have taken place. Furthermore, while the Polish Catholic Church is closely identified with the nation, the Cuban Church has been historically identified with support of Spain in the War of Independence.

The Spanish Church hierarchy during the last century clashed with Martí and other leaders of independence who were Free Masons. It also persecuted Cuban priests who sympathized with independence. The best known being Father Félix Varela, who is considered the intellectual father of Cuban nationality, although he was forced to live most of his life as a parish priest in the United States and died in Saint Augustine, Florida. After independence, the Church continued to be dominated by the Spanish provinces of the various religious orders. It also had little presence in the countryside or among the poorest segments of society.

By the time Castro reached power, the Church was rapidly broadening its appeal to Cubans and Catholic leaders were very active in the opposition to Batista. When Castro turned to Communism, Catholics were among the earliest opponents. However, the Church had too weak a hold on the masses and Castro dealt with their challenge by expelling several hundred priests and nuns to Spain. At that point, the Vatican very wisely decided to keep a low profile and quietly attempt to build the bases for a rebirth of the Church in spite of tremendous limitations and outright regime persecution.

The fact is that, despite those efforts, in today's Cuba, Santería is the religion with the largest following. The Catholic Church has the second largest following. The regime has encouraged some Protestant denominations which have supported it, not only in Cuba but also abroad. The exception being the Jehovah Witnesses, which is the most persecuted religious denomination in Cuba today.

Therefore, it is understandable, and beneficial in the long run for the ethical reconstruction of Cuba, for the Catholic Church to try to gain more space for its purely religious and humanitarian activities. However, the hierarchy will have to balance that goal with the danger of use of the Church by Castro for his own ends. This is not easy when the Church hierarchy itself is divided. The most outspoken member of the collaborationist faction is Monsignor Carlos Manuel de Céspedes. The most outspoken member of the rebellious hierarchy is the Bishop of Santiago de Cuba, Pedro Meurice. If the collaborationists prevail, the Church will pay the same price it paid for the behavior of the Spanish hierarchy in colonial times.

So far, the price for strengthening the Church in the spiritual realm has been to make meek protests against Castro's repression while providing arguments to effectively support him in opposing the Helms-Burton law. This means that building the Church is being done at the expense of the rights and freedoms of the Cuban people at large, the majority of whom are not practicing Catholics at present. Most Cubans will consider this as too big a price to pay and may resent the Church as a discreet collaborating agent of Castro's repression. The Vatican and the Cuban hierarchy will have to ponder very carefully the course to follow.

Castro agreed to provide the support required to facilitate the visit but, as he always does in these situations, he tried to wear out the Vatican in the details. Initially, Cuba refused to provide support for the events related to the visit unless the Church paid for them to the tune of US\$10 million. In addition, there were all kinds of logistical questions that a Vatican delegation had to settle well in advance of the visit. Even the provision of cars for Church officials was a point of contention, with Cuban authorities refusing to allow the importation of cars and forcing the Church to buy them locally for dollars in a Cuban Government dealership.

And there were more serious obstacles. Castro had abolished Christmas as an official holiday in 1969. One would expect the restoration of such a holiday to be a prerequisite for a Pope's visit. This was an ele-

mentary friendly gesture to the head of the Church. To make the point more offensive, in 1996, right after Castro returned from his visit to the Vatican, the Cuban legislature scheduled its two-day session for December 24 and 25. To make matters even more offensive to the Church and all Christians, among its decisions during that session, the Legislature gave Cubans an extended holiday over New Year's day. This issue was not settled until mid-December 1997 when there were leaks from the Vatican on this matter being a stumbling block and Castro finally relented. But, the restoration of Christmas as a holiday was granted for only one year. In view of this behavior, on a matter so central to the Church, it is hard to understand the basis for Cardinal Law, of Boston, claiming that Fidel has never persecuted the Church.

Regardless of all these obstacles, which were finally overcome, the fact is that the Pope's visit has been a turning point in the Cuban situation. To the surprise of Castro, it revealed that there are millions of Cubans who crave the spiritual guidance and comfort offered by religion. When Castro realized the mistake he had made, it was too late to cancel the visit. With three thousand journalists already accredited, he could not afford the negative image of a cancellation.

Instead, he shifted gears. That is why, in his speech the weekend before the visit, he encouraged Party cadres to attend the various events and tried to claim credit for the visit by allowing television coverage and all the other logistical requests made by the Vatican delegation during the long and tortuous negotiating period. Alarmed by this attempt to hijack the Pope's visit, Cardinal Ortega immediately challenged Castro's assertions and clarified that the Pope was coming as a guest of the Church and the Cuban people and not of the regime.

Furthermore, that explains Castro's very discourteous welcoming speech upon the Pope's arrival. The Pope has nothing to do with Spanish colonization, during which, according to Castro, 70 million Indians and 12 million Africans had been killed. Neither could the Pope or the Catholic Church be blamed for the 300 hundred thousand Cubans who died during the last decade of the Spanish colonial administration or

the fact that at Belén, the Jesuit school he attended, there were no black students.

Castro raised those issues as a warning to the Pope that he was prepared to unleash Cuban nationalism against the Catholic Church. This was not too subtle a reminder that all he needed to do was to call attention to the role, commented above, of the Catholic hierarchy, at the time dominated by Spaniards, in supporting the Spanish colonial system. That was his way of threatening the Pope to stay away from mobilizing the population in any way against the regime.

Ignoring Castro's threatening remarks, during the visit, the Pope raised the issue of losing *fear* and saying the *truth*, of the need to *strengthen the family* and allow *religious education*, of the need to respect the *rights of organization, assembly and free speech*, as well as of *reconciliation among all Cubans* no matter where they lived. He even told Cubans, restating a Martí phrase, that "*rights are demanded, not begged.*" In all, a most subversive message to a long passive and submissive population. True, as he has done previously, His Holiness also expressed his opposition to embargoes of all kinds. But only once. He refused to provide Castro the unconditional support Castro was expecting against the United States. On balance, the positions taken by the Pope challenged the roots of Castro's system of holding power.

That is why, in his farewell speech to the Pope, being again discourteous although respectful, Castro said that "in Cuba nobody was afraid." A week later, he went back to TV again and tried to coopt the Pope's position to his view of the world and international relations, while ignoring all other issues raised by the Pope during his visit. On that occasion, as was to be expected, Castro also rejected the initiative advanced by the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), later on proposed as legislation by Senator Helms, for the United States to finance provision of humanitarian food and medical supplies to Cuba. Castro labeled such assistance as offensive to Cuba's national dignity. Unfortunately, Cardinal Ortega supported him.

In conclusion, the Pope surprised Castro and, once back in the Vatican, stated publicly his hope that the

Table 10. Pope's Visit

Event impact on public opinion dynamics	Direction/Intensity
<b>Sector A:</b> Weakens Castro's charismatic hold and ideological monopoly, encourages many closet Catholics within the sector, increases support for opening and reforms, rather than more repression, appeal for religious rights likely to increase resistance to regime	( ----> )
<b>Sector B:</b> Same as above, more outspoken in resenting Castro' decision to invite Pope because it encouraged opponents at their level	( ----> )
<b>Sector C:</b> Encouragement to lose fear and speak the truth likely to cause drift towards opposition, particularly among those repressing their spiritual needs, legitimizes dissenting with the regime	( ----> )
<b>Sector D:</b> Great encouragement to dissenting views, particularly to lay Catholics feeling legitimized by regime's acceptance of the Pope, despite posterior regime efforts to dissuade them, more likely to move to sector E	( ----> )
<b>Sector E:</b> Got a boost in their morale despite timid position of hierarchy in refusing to let the Pope even give Communion to dissidents like Oswaldo Payá, Pope's message will reinforce willingness to endure repression and legitimizes their position, in the end, they, more than the timid members of the hierarchy, are likely to make true the Pope's hope of this visit leading to another Poland.	( ----> )

visit would trigger in the long run an outcome similar to that of his visit to Poland. Naturally, Castro has other ideas. The question now is how the visit impacts on the attitude of many Cubans who, encouraged and inspired by the Pope's message, will be determined to cross the threshold of fear that has ruled their life and assert their rights. When they do so in the religious realm, Castro is likely to make albeit reluctant concessions. At this point, he does not want, or can afford, worldwide hostility from the Catholic Church. But, beyond the religious realm, no way.

To nip such a possibility in the bud, Castro started what Pax Christy, a Dutch Catholic NGO which has been denouncing human rights violations in Cuba all over Europe, has properly labeled a campaign of "depopofication." That is, an increased repressive campaign to dispel any hopes among Cuban citizens that the Pope visit was going to lead to any opening. Castro and his friends were emboldened further by the already commented unfortunate vote at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. A vote, incidentally, that pro-Castro advocates interpreted as a response to the Pope's hope that "the world open itself to Cuba."

Obviously displeased with this turn of events, the Pope convoked the Cuban bishops to the Vatican for a full week session starting on June 8. The session expressed the Church's displeasure with lack of progress in "opening Cuba to the world," the other

hope expressed by the Pope. What is really needed is for Castro to open Cuba to the Cuban people.

In his speech to the bishops, the Pope expressed his confidence that Cuba will evolve peacefully towards development of all rights, advocating the promotion of freedom of expression, association and assembly "without arbitrary limitations." Bishop Meurice of Santiago de Cuba informed the Italian press that "although the Church requires some space to be able to satisfy the spiritual needs of the people inside and outside Cuba," those spaces should be open to all. Finally, the Pope exhorted the bishops, upon their return to Cuba, to be prepared to "face all the challenges" derived from his pastoral visit to Cuba.

The threat this represents for Castro is predicated on the nature of human behavior. Once a person starts losing fear in one realm, he is likely to start behaving without fear in other aspects of his life. Acting freely and without fear tends to become a universal style of behavior. True, the Catholic Church has made it clear that their actions are limited to the religious and spiritual sphere of life, although they are not indifferent to what happens in other realms of the life of its followers. This broadening base of people willing to assert their basic rights opens the opportunity for developing a civil society movement inside Cuba. Precisely what Castro is determined to prevent. The clash of wills between the Pope and Castro has just started (see Table 10).

## Appendix

### DEFINITION OF SECTORS GROUPING THE POPULATION

Under the methodology developed to analyze revolutionary propensity, the population is grouped according to the degree of support or opposition they are prepared to offer the status quo. Although many will disagree with this decision, for our purposes the population to be grouped will include those in the island and in exile. Regardless of the traditional division between those living in a country and the overseas communities from the same nation, the irreversible fact is that as a result of the Cuban revolution, Cuba has now a permanent overseas population. The majority of these people, spread throughout the world, are unlikely to ever return to Cuba, but are also an integral part of Cuban society with many economic, emotional, affective and cultural links that impact internal political dynamics in many ways. Even the Castro regime has recognized this fact and tries to infiltrate and manipulate the overseas community to serve its purposes.

On the extreme right side are those under *Group A* who are committed to resort to violence in order to support the status quo, either because it is their duty as members of the army or police or because their ideological commitment makes them willing to do so as paramilitary forces. In the current situation in Cuba, Group A includes MINFAR and MININT members, as well as the brigades of "Patria o Muerte" civilian hoodlums the regime unleashes at will, with guaranteed impunity, against any opponent. Most members of these brigades are also members of the Party and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.

In terms of age, at the senior officer level this group includes a heavy proportion of those who shared the initial period of revolutionary success and/or uplifted their class status. Despite the end of "internationalism" and the resulting shrinking career opportunities it entails, members of this group are offered access to privileges and employment, upon retirement, in joint enterprises dealing in the dollar market. Younger middle and junior level officers do not necessarily share the privileges and interests of the leadership

and their careers opportunities are very limited. However, for all of them a return of exiles to power is a dreadful threat to their interests and nationalism is a powerful motivating force.

Despite the apparent loyalty of this group, it is not a monolith and there are serious divisions within their ranks. The armed forces are unwilling to face a popular revolt and have pressed Castro to make concessions to avoid such a situation. Draftees do not necessarily share the interests of the professionals and in a crisis are likely to share the feelings of the average citizen and not those of the institution.

MINFAR members pride themselves on being military professionals and not a repressive force and share popular contempt for MININT members. Within the MININT there is resentment of the MINFAR takeover in 1989 and the massive purge of its senior and middle ranks that followed the arrest of its Minister, General José Abrantes, at the time of the Ochoa trial.

During General Ochoa's trial, more than twenty of the Generals forced to make public statements supporting his sentence praised him while stating that, if the accusation was true, he deserved the death sentence. Today, few believe that the accusation was true. There are more than forty prisons for members of the military and before Castro visits a garrison all side weapons are removed. Obviously, there are some cracks in the monolith.

Those in *Group B*, who are willing to support the regime only peacefully, act out of ideological sympathy or in response to some economic or status interest. In the present situation in Cuba, this group includes a hard core of members of the Party and the so-called mass organizations who are still committed to the revolution and its leadership. It also includes the so-called reformists, who advocate moderate reforms to facilitate a peaceful transition, as well as those who are pretending to be committed just in order to protect their positions or to avoid retribution for disaffection.

In terms of age, this group includes many older people who shared the initial period of revolutionary successes. The level of commitment is weaker among many who became adults after Castro reached power who, although sharing the initial benefits of the revolution, do not necessarily feel their future is irrevocably linked to Castro. And, finally, this group includes a minority of younger people who although not sharing the initial period of revolutionary euphoria are still sympathetic to the revolution for a variety of reasons. Nationalism ranks high among this group, as does fear of the return of the exiles to power.

Within overseas communities, the most recent addition to this group is that of the so-called “quedaditos” or “ni-nis”—neither against nor in favor—who live and work abroad as medical doctors, artists, professors, writers or performers, while paying ideological and financial tribute to the regime in exchange for being allowed to visit Cuba. Close to the “ni-nis,” and preceding them by several years, are those associated with the regime in businesses which profit overseas from travel to Cuba and remittances of food, medicines and money. Despite the lip service they pay to the regime, neither nationalism nor fear of the exiles return to power are seriously felt by this people. They are opportunists willing to make the best out of an unpleasant situation.

Then there are those under *Group C*, who are in the center unwilling to take sides either because their interests are not affected or because they believe whatever they do is irrelevant or out of fear of an even worse future in a post revolutionary Cuba. This is perhaps the largest group within today's Cuba and continues growing after each promise of a turnaround turns to be only a mirage, while Cuba's standard of living continues to sink into Haiti's level.

This group today includes perhaps the largest proportion of young people who did not enjoy the glorious initial moments of the revolutionary experience and have lived only the period of adversities and shortages, having a much higher level of educational attainment than previous generations. It also includes many among the first revolutionary generation who are disenchanted and some of the older pre-Castro revolutionaries who disagree with Castro but

think the odds make any attempt at opposition unrealistic.

In the face of little hope for any change, the frustration of Group C in some cases leads to escape or anomie. In the case of escape, even in facing the risks and dangers involved in “rafting”. The escape option has been closed by the US/Cuba migration agreements. In its most dramatic manifestation, the hopelessness of anomie is reflected in those youngsters who injected themselves with the HIV virus in order to at least have access to a shorter but better life in the hospitals for HIV infected.

On the other hand, many of the profiteers from the dollar trade, whether from agricultural cooperatives, joint enterprises with foreign investors, self-employment, prostitution, overseas remittances, etc. are members of this group. Although they have given up hope of any change in the regime, to the extent they are allowed a way to improve their personal situation, the profiteers are unwilling to take any risks to oppose the regime in any way. This is the essence of the “resolver” attitude: to survive. These are very pragmatic and cynical people who have decided to take care of themselves and nothing else.

The more successful among them, including privileged members of the *nomenklatura*, generate strong resentment among “Patria o Muerte” Party cadres under groups A and B, that is those who are totally committed to Castro and the Revolution. That leads to Castro's occasional verbal outbursts of hostility and even harassment of some of them through taxation and control measures. True, he is doing it to placate the hardliners in Groups A and B but, as long as they can “resolver”, they are no threat to his rule. And, may even pay lip service to it. Nationalism and fear of exile return is less of a motivation for them, wheeler dealers are confident they can “resolver” under any post-Castro regime.

*Group D* gathers those who are openly in disagreement with the regime and for a variety of reasons stay in the island as well as many in the exile community who still have close family links with them. Over the years, starting with listening to Radio Martí in 1985 to legalizing the holding of dollars in 1993, as well as

verbalizing frustration by openly criticizing the regime and even its leadership, the regime has been forced to reluctantly grant some space to this group. Under present circumstances, however, this group is unable to articulate itself into an effective opposition force due to the severe limitations on the exercise of the rights of association and assembly that prevail in today's Cuba.

With the closing of the migration option, this group is likely to increase as a potential source for members of a formal opposition. While the annual 20,000 U.S. visas, including the lottery for 5,000, makes hundreds of thousands of them abstain from any activity that may clash with the regime and could jeopardize their exit permits. One perverse twist is that fake dissidence is resorted to by some in this group as a means to be expelled from Cuba and obtain U.S. visas.

Agewise, this group includes many young people and those who were adolescents at the time of the revolution, as well as a minority among the older people who shared the initial revolutionary experience and are now disenchanted. Most of the latter group who rejected the regime earlier constitute the bulk of the overseas community. Up to now Castro has been able to export his opposition, but not any longer. Since they are free to express themselves, meet and organize, those in the exile community are the most vocal and articulate manifestation of opposition to Castro, although highly ineffective internally and even counterproductive due to their impact on other groups, in particular A and B, who see them as threats to their interests. Nationalism fluctuates widely as a motivational force among group D.

Finally, *Group E* includes those who are willing to endure or resort to violence in opposing the status quo. In the present Cuba situation, this group is constituted by diverse dissident organizations, based on human rights defense, on professional associations such as lawyers, journalists, doctors, economists, etc. and political affiliations such as Social democrats or Christian democrats. The first dissident organization emerged in 1976 to defend human rights and the process has accelerated in the last few years in response to two factors: the collapse of communism

with its traumatic economic and ideological impact and the availability of Radio Martí as a national means of public opinion awareness.

Agewise, this group includes old revolutionaries associated with Castro, children of old Communist Party leaders, former military officers and younger professionals from many fields. A common characteristic is that these dissidents were supportive of and associated with the Revolution in its initial phase but became disenchanted along the way for a variety of reasons. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the abysmal failure of Communism as a system has encouraged them to come out into the open with misgivings they had on the basis of their diverse personal experiences and even risking regime repression.

Nationalism is a strong motivational force among these groups. In contrast with the cynical and pragmatic approach of those in the center or the passivity of those in the peaceful opposition, those who cross the threshold of enduring violent repression do so out of deeply felt principles and for them nationalism is as central a motivational force as it is with many in groups A and B. As to the exile community, these groups have ambivalent feelings. They fear the revenge that may accompany the access to power of exile leaders, or even the competition for power with them in a post-Castro era. At the same time, their comments on overseas Cubans are usually conciliatory and inclusive, which indicates that besides the open arms and forgiving philosophy that guides them, they realize that an effective opposition to Castro, their survival and the reconstruction of Cuba requires the support of the exile community.

Ideologically, they represent the whole range of positions in the political spectrum. That is one of the reasons they are so fragmented, the other being that small closely knit groups are the only possible organizational level that can be attained without being infiltrated by repressive forces. The patterns of behavior developed by these groups to cope with the extremely effective regime repressive apparatus, have been discussed at great length by Dr. Benigno Aguirre in an excellent paper entitled, "The Culture of Political Opposition in Cuba.

Open resort to violence has been an unworkable and futile alternative for internal dissenters throughout the years and is still a futile undertaking today. Isolated incidents take place from time to time but it is unlikely that there will be a repetition of the revolutionary process against Batista. The case of the bombs that exploded in several hotels in Varadero and Havana during 1997 provided a good lesson. Although the explanation provided by the government is not internally consistent and lacks credibility, the fact is

that the bombings stopped. Overseas Cubans try to mimic revolutionary historical experiences from time to time, in some cases out of sheer ignorance not realizing they are doomed to failure, in other cases for ego or even monetary reasons. At the extreme of resorting to violence in the overseas community there are those who think violence can be used to provoke a U.S./Cuba conflict, thus escalating to the final outcome or intervention option.