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## CUBA'S POST-CASTRO TRANSITION: DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

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**Preface**

**Table of Contents**

Preface ..... i

Introduction ..... 1

Assessment of the Impact of Less Restrictive Governmental Controls on the Internal  
Relocation of the Population, Especially into Urban Areas ..... 5

Demographic and Labor Issues That Might Have an Impact on Legal and Illegal  
Emigration from Cuba ..... 7

The Impact of Cuba’s Low Birth Rate and High-Proportion Elderly Population on  
Economic Competitiveness ..... 8

The Impact That a Less Authoritarian Government Might Have on the More  
Poverty-Stricken Parts of Cuba ..... 10

Outlook ..... 13

Bibliography ..... 17

## Introduction

Each of the questions posed by the issues discussed in this paper may be answered differently, depending on assumptions made regarding the nature of the type of political transition that will take place in Cuba. Instead of a comprehensive analysis of these issues, each of which would well merit extended treatment beyond the scope of this effort, this report provides concise accounts of particularly relevant matters. Moreover, the author makes the assumption that there *will not be* a rapid political transition in Cuba. It is also assumed that democracy, constitutional guarantees and liberties, and the rule of law will not be established over a short period of time. Instead, it is argued here that at the death of Fidel Castro the one-party political regime in place today will continue to govern the island for the foreseeable future. The author's cited articles on the reasons for the stability of Cuba's political system (Aguirre, 1999), the nature of the culture of opposition in the island (Aguirre, 1998; 2001), the effectiveness of social control systems (Aguirre, 2002), and the nature of the Cuban elite (Aguirre, 2002) provide the rationale for this perspective on political change in Cuba (see Outlook, below).

The validity and reliability of demographic information on Cuba are open to question. The most recent available demographic information on Cuba is old, dating from the census of 1981; the results of the national census held in September 2002 were not available at the time of writing. The statistics on Cuba published by the United Nations Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international agencies depend on Cuban official sources and thus share these same uncertainties. In addition, the validity and reliability of demographic information is open to question. The author's research on Cuban educational statistics (Aguirre and Vichot, 1998) showed a number of important inconsistencies; similar problems were shown in Carmelo Mesa Lago's recent analysis of Cuba's social well-being index. Earlier, Pérez (1984), showed how Cuban 1970 Census data on race and education was suppressed by the government for political reasons; Luxenburg (1984), using health statistics, exploited the often found exaggerations about the achievements of the communist government resulting from the inattention to and underestimation of the remarkable progress of pre-1959 Cuban society; Mesa Lago (1969; 1979) examined the lack of reliability and validity of economic statistics. Thus, all point estimates used in this report only indicate likely trends, and are used only if they do not

contradict the other information from many sources gathered by the author over many years of studying the post-1959 situation in Cuba.

Donate Armada (2001), on the basis of extensive analysis of Cuban vital statistics, estimates the 2000 population of Cuba at 11,187,673; it is growing so slowly that, by the year 2020, he estimates it to have increased only to 11,743,000. Cuba's rate of population growth was very low, estimated at less than 1 percent (0.7) during the 1980–99 period. The likelihood is that as the economic, social, and political situation continues to deteriorate, population growth will continue to drop to something close to 0.3 percent during the next two decades or so, and as a result the population will decline in absolute numbers. Among the many reasons for the low population growth is the nationwide widespread availability and use of very effective means of contraception as well as very high rates of induced abortion. In 1993—the latest year for which the information is available, but by no means the year showing the highest abortion rates during the 1968–1993 period—there were 57 induced abortions per 100 live births (Alvarez Vazquez, 1994, 7; 10). Fertility is also interrupted by high rates of divorce and marital separations. Severe housing difficulties faced by young couples contribute to both the high divorce rate and the difficulties of having children.

Donate Armada shows a gradual decline in the absolute number of births and an increase in the absolute number of deaths during the 1981–2000 period, corresponding to known increases in the aging of the population and decreases in its birth rates. Net migration fluctuates widely during the period, reaching maximums of –51,264 in 1994 and –52,018 in 1998 and settling at approximately –25,000 during 1999 and 2000.

Donate Armada estimates that since 1990 the population under age 15 has accounted for 22 percent of the total population and that since 1997 the population age 60 or older has accounted for 13 percent of the total population. Donate Armada's projections to 2010 show that both sub-populations will account for 17.3 percent each of the total population. Cubans are getting progressively older. Indeed, his estimates are that during the 2000–2020 period the retired population will increase from 16.2 to 25.2 percent while the economically active population will remain constant at approximately 50 percent of the total population. Unsurprisingly, total social expenditures per capita are also expected to rise in the next twenty years, from 5,098.6 to 6,023.0 pesos, placing added demands on the Cuban economy.

About two thirds of the population lives in cities (for a brief history of urbanization in Cuba, see Díaz Briquets, 1994). The largest cities are Havana (estimated population 2.2 million), Santiago de Cuba (est. pop. 440,000), Camagüey (est. pop. 293,000), Holguín (est. pop. 242,000), Guantánamo (est. pop. 208,000), Santa Clara (est. pop. 205,000), Bayamó (est. pop. 138,000), Cienfuegos (est. pop. 132,000), and Pinar del Rio (est. pop. 129,000). The migratory flow to Havana and its environs, particularly from the poorer eastern provinces, reportedly has restarted after the interruption caused by the migratory restrictions put in place in 1997. However, the continued decline in total population growth has meant a much slower positive rate of growth of population of urban areas and a negative rate of growth of population of rural areas.

Montiel Rodríguez (1996) estimates that in the 1990s, 60 to 70 percent of Cuban emigrants had resided in Havana and its environs, and it is likely that the link between emigration and Havana residence will continue into the future. Because Havana has not had any major differences in its death and fertility rates when compared to the rest of the country, it is fairly certain that there is a chain migration process taking place in which a large proportion of would-be emigrants move to Havana and later emigrate from it. Indeed, Sergio Díaz Briquets and Jorge Pérez López (2000) have recently shown that during periods of rapid emigration from Cuba the population of Havana and its environs declines temporarily only to be replenished by gains from internal net migration.

Two of the least reliable statistical series in Cuba are on education and mortality (on this point see Pérez, 1995, 59; 60). There is little doubt that Cubans, if compared to other nations in the developing world, are generally well educated and enjoy good health. However, whether the precise claims by the government of ever improving conditions in these two dimensions are valid must await independent confirmation. For example, Cuban researchers put the infant mortality rate at 7.2 per 1,000 live births, the maternal mortality rate at 21.6 per 100,000 live births, and the literacy rate at 97.1 percent—extremely favorable international comparative values. The temptation to exaggerate these statistics is very high because the government has used improvements in education and health for many years to justify its political legitimacy.

The precise ethnic and racial makeup of the Cuban population also is not known, partly because the Cuban state decreed years ago that race was no longer a relevant dimension of social life on the island and refused to publish information on the various ethnic and racial categories.<sup>1</sup>

It is fairly obvious, though, that the biggest and fastest growing category of people on the island are neither white nor black, but mixed races. The last census for which information is available put the proportions as follows: whites, 66 percent; mulattoes and mestizos, 21.9 percent; blacks, 12 percent; and Asians, 0.1 percent. However, these percentages are by now hopelessly outdated and inaccurate (similar—although very doubtful—percentages are reported by the National Survey on Fertility conducted in 1987). By way of contrast, the overwhelming majority of Cubans residing in the United States claims to be white. An important, albeit unknown, portion of the difference is a statistical artifact of the different ways racial information is collected in the two countries, as well as a mechanism of immigrant adaptation to the new setting, in which misrepresenting racial identity is seen as advantageous.

The increase in the proportion of mixed races will continue into the future, for they emigrate less than whites. There is little doubt that blacks do not tend to emigrate to the United States to the same extent that whites do. This unwillingness of blacks to emigrate to the United States may be caused by their lack of family connections in the United States. It may also be caused in part by the comparatively greater difficulties black would-be emigrants reportedly face from Cuban immigration authorities during the processing of emigration applications. Moreover, it is also possible that it is caused in part by black Cubans' fear of the racism and discrimination that exists in the United States, a fear aggravated by longstanding Cuban government propaganda, which exaggerates interracial tensions in the United States. Finally, the differences in migratory propensity between whites and blacks may also be the result of a greater generalized sense of satisfaction among black non-emigrants with the present-day political system in Cuba, and generalized support for the policies and programs of the government. It is presently not possible to ascertain the validity and relative importance of any of these explanations. Understanding the possible mechanisms generating the difference in demand for emigration among whites and blacks in Cuba awaits future systematic research in Cuba.

The Cuban government has very tightly restricted information on the comparative socioeconomic well being of different racial categories. Every bit of non-scientifically gathered information that slips out of Cuba, however, shows that blacks continue to suffer discrimination and that prejudice against them is widespread. The recent introduction of a dollar economy on the island has further aggravated their economic status. In addition, compared to whites, blacks

have, on average, many fewer relatives outside of Cuba who will send them dollars (on the importance of family remittances, see Díaz Briquets, 1997; Pérez López, 1998, p. 406). Family remittances to Cubans in general amount to more than 1 billion dollars annually.

De la Fuente's study (1998) is the most compelling analysis to date of the evidence of racism in Cuba. It documents the substandard housing of many non-whites, their overrepresentation in the prison population, their exclusion from the tourist industry, their relative inability to access dollars through family remittances from abroad, and the increasing income gap between whites and non-whites. De la Fuente reports that 75 percent of his respondents in a recent survey done in Havana and Santiago de Cuba indicated that race prejudice is rampant in Cuba. Pérez Sarduy (1998) has suggested that economic inequality among the races has increased based on the new importance given by the regime to the tourism industry. This industry discriminates against blacks because of the emphasis on buena presencia (good looks). Another reason for the increase in racial inequality is the transfer of remittances from Cubans outside Cuba to their family members in Cuba. Such transfers increase racial inequities because the majority of Cubans outside Cuba are white. Unfortunately, there are no available valid nationwide surveys to indicate the extent of the problem.<sup>2</sup>

The Cuban government has consistently denied the presence of racism and racial discrimination in the island. Nevertheless, I very much doubt this claim. In fact, the growing income disparities among racial categories and the exclusion of non whites from the tourism industry would make racial identity an important factor in any future labor regime in Cuba.

### **Assessment of the Impact of Less Restrictive Governmental Controls on the Internal Relocation of the Population, Especially into Urban Areas**

The present-day economic system does three things that virtually guarantee the continuation of positive net migration flows to selected urban areas:

- ?? it creates a dual currency economic system in which the dollar reigns supreme, reflected in highly unfavorable exchange rates for the national currency, approximately 23:1 at present.
- ?? it prohibits private property and land ownership, preserving the well-known inefficiencies of centrally planned economic systems.

?? it places an extraordinary emphasis on the development of the state-controlled tourism industry.

The emphasis on tourism comes as the sugar industry continues to decline in importance as a source of earnings for the Cuban people, with sugar production dropping 48 percent during 1989-1997, from 8,121,000 to 3,200,000 metric tons (Mesa Lago, 1998, p. 2). Espino (2000) estimated very robust growth of tourism in Cuba during 1993–99, with total arrivals increasing from 544,000 to 1,602,800 and an increase in tourist rooms from 22,561 to 32,260 during this most recent period. Tourism net revenues increased 539 percent during 1989-1998, from 101 to 545 million dollars (Mesa Lago, 1998, p. 2).

Under this economic regime, proximity to tourists, i.e., to dollars, is a blessing that everyone seeks, and areas developed for tourism will attract internal migrants. In this sense then, less restrictive governmental controls on the internal relocation of the population in the absence of changes in the present day political-economic regime will ensure population growth of these tourism areas: Varadero, Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and Trinidad. The first three areas are already large tourist destinations and will soon be joined by Trinidad, in the south coast of Central Cuba. Five thousand hotel rooms are slated to be built along the beach of Ancón (Scarpaci, 2002).

In the author's view, the often-repeated claim that the Cuban government's development policy has favored rural areas and small towns instead of large cities, so people would prefer to live in them, is vastly exaggerated. However, the author does not know of systematic empirical comparative studies of place quality and preference throughout Cuba that could begin to provide grounds to evaluate this or any other assertion on the topic. In general, Cubans, as are people elsewhere throughout the world, for a variety of reasons are attracted to large cities—in Cuba they are attracted to provincial capitals and to metropolitan Havana. It is plausible to assume that present-day migratory restrictions minimize positive net migration to these larger cities and that in their absence net migration to such areas would increase. The pressure to migrate to Havana is very strong because the capital city is perceived as the exit point for emigrants, and the desire to emigrate from Cuba is very widespread in the population. Most often, emigration is the end result of an internal chain migration process that ensures the continuation of the growth of the population of large cities and especially of Havana and its environs.

It is also plausible to assume that present-day economic difficulties make obtaining food more difficult than in the past for the average Cuban. This food scarcity renders more attractive places near farm areas that are food-producing areas. Improvements in the economic situation of the country and the elimination of the food scarcity, in conjunction with a lifting of internal migratory restrictions, would increase net migration to these larger cities.

### **Demographic and Labor Issues That Might Have an Impact on Legal and Illegal Emigration from Cuba**

The author's best estimate is that approximately 20 percent of Cuba's population wishes to emigrate (Aguirre and Bonilla Silva, 2002). Although the precise size of the present-day population of would-be immigrants in Cuba is unknown, it is certainly a very large number of people.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the lottery system in 1994, approximately 189,000 Cubans applied. In the second lottery, in 1996, there were approximately 435,000 applications. During the last lottery, in 1998, more than 525,000 applied. Even if one assumes a somewhat smaller rate of growth, the next lottery may include approximately 800,000 to 1,000,000 applicants from a population of 11 million. Moreover, this relatively large number would need to be doubled to roughly two million to include the segment of the would-be population that does not apply to the lottery but still wishes to leave Cuba. This excluded segment is large, although perhaps diminishing in importance as a result of the recent migratory accords. Rodríguez Chavez (1997) estimates that of the 47,500 Cubans who arrived in the United States during 1990–93, only 10 percent had obtained immigrant United States visas before leaving Cuba. Instead, 20 percent came as refugees, 17 percent came from third countries, 20 percent came in rafts or through the United States base in Guantánamo, and 30 percent came as visitors who then decided to stay. Indeed, Urrieta Barroso (1997) estimates that in 1994, there were 11,222 legal and 13,270 illegal immigrants from Cuba to the United States, or about half of the total, again furnishing grounds to double the estimate of the size of the population of would-be emigrants.

Recent research on immigration to the United States from Cuba (Aguirre and Bonilla Silva 2002) indicated the presence of different migratory paths for white and nonwhite Cubans. The black path uses legal migration mechanisms that depend on lottery visas and Havana residence. The white path uses illegal migration and is much more diffused throughout the

territory of the island. This distinction explains why white immigrants in this study tended to have memberships in official organizations prior to their emigration and blacks did not. Because they more often use illegal means, whites can keep up their officially approved identities until the very end of their stay in Cuba without incurring the official disfavor that follows the announcement of the desire to emigrate. Note that according to the findings of the study the two races are not significantly different in their integration to the state. This summary interpretation also explains why white immigrants are younger than blacks. Illegal emigration, involving the use of rafts (balsas), is inherently fraught with risks and requires vigorous physical stamina associated with youth and being male.

Demographic and labor issues now existing in Cuba will ensure the continuation of this desire for emigration even after a political transition on the island. As the Cuban population continues to age, it can be expected that, with or without a political regime change taking place, as is the case in other places and times elderly people will tend to emigrate less frequently compared to younger persons of working age. The author expects that during the next two decades, Cuban immigrants to the United States will be much younger than they were prior to the 1980s. In the future, once a transition to a less authoritarian and less restrictive government is in place and the emigration option is facilitated by the US government, it can be expected that younger people will continue to predominate in the immigration from Cuba, and that Cubans will develop the return migration patterns and the transnational community patterns typical of the migratory experiences of other Latin American sub-nationalities in the United States, such as the Puerto Rican, the Dominican, and the post-World War II Mexican. That the beginning of this transformation is already taking place is indicated by the increasing number of Cubans in the United States who go back to Cuba to visit their families, a practice that was not accepted among the earlier political exiles. An important although until now unexplored consequence of this pattern is the economic investments that these new transnational immigrants make during their return visits to their towns of origin in Cuba.

### **The Impact of Cuba's Low Birth Rate and High-Proportion Elderly Population on Economic Competitiveness**

At the present time, Cuba's economic competitiveness is very low, as indicated by a plethora of economic indicators, such as its low economic productivity, its lack of exports, and

its dependence on family remittances. Detailed documentation is available in the studies published by the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (available at <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/asce>). Perhaps one of the best analyses to date of this matter is Madrid-Aris' (1998; 1997) research program on factor productivity growth (TFP) in Cuba, which documents both the high level of capital investment in its economy before the disappearance of the USSR and the lack of economic growth:

In sum, the Cuban government's interventionist policies during 1975-1988 was accompanied by very low TFP performance, especially in agriculture. The creation by governments of institutional mechanisms to deal with inefficiencies may not always be an efficient way to force technological change. It seems very difficult to understand why the massive investments in physical and human capital led to such a low TFP in the 1970s and 1980s, but it seems a common pattern of centrally planned economies (1998, p. 474). ...(this pattern) could be partially explained by several factors, principal among them is the extreme inefficiency of the centrally planned investment policy in allocating resources....(1998, p. 478).

The weight of evidence for this line of reasoning seems incontrovertible. Thus, despite the distortions created by governmental meddling in all aspects of agriculture, studies comparing state and non-state agricultural sectors consistently show higher productivity in the non-state sector (Alvarez, 2000, and literature cited therein). Alvarez's hypothesis that "as state intervention over agricultural production units decreases, the quantity and quality of output increases despite a decreasing access to factors of production and other resources" (99) is amply supported by the evidence. In sum, the consensus among professional economists is that the economic policy of the Castro regime is the main cause of this lack of competitiveness, rather than the low birth rate of the population or the proportion of the elderly population.

Many Scandinavian countries, for example, combine low birth rates and a high-proportion elderly population with high economic competitiveness. This situation could also be true of Cuba. Indeed, with a change in political regime the following factors, all of which are present today, could be mobilized to improve Cuba's economic competitiveness:

?? Cubans are, on average, well educated and would provide a highly trained and trainable labor force. There are, as Pérez (1995) acknowledges, plenty of qualified workers on the island who are very willing to work and work hard, if the opportunities would be made available to them.

- ?? In comparative terms, despite the aging of the population, Cuba has a relatively low age-dependency ratio, with the four workers per retiree (Perez, 1998, p. 526).
- ?? Cubans in the diaspora, both in Europe and the United States, have intellectual, social, cultural, and economic resources, and a wealth of international connections and experiences that would become available for the task of national reconstruction.
- ?? Cuba has an enviable geographical position in the Caribbean, close to the United States mainland; it would continue to attract tourists and foreign investment.
- ?? Apart from its traditional industries in fisheries (on the growth of the Cuban fishing industry see Adams, 2000, 126), agriculture, and mineral extraction, Cuba has an emerging oil industry and has developed strong new industries in pharmaceuticals and medical and health services that could be integrated advantageously into Medicare and health industry practices in the United States (Díaz Briquets, 2001). For example, Werlau (1998) documents the growth of crude oil extraction during 1985-1996 from .9 to 1.6 million tons, so that 17 percent of total oil consumption was produced domestically.
- ?? There is an increasing use of renewable energy sources, which accounted for 30 percent of national energy production in 1997 and are expected to grow in importance.

For these reasons, the future of Cuba looks promising once a regime change has taken place.

As mentioned above, Donate Armada estimates that Cuba's economically active population (persons employed or looking for work) is about 50 percent of the total population. However, this figure masks important differences in the labor force participation of men and women. Pérez (1995, 60, 61) estimates that more than 70 percent of men older than 14 years of age are in the labor force but less than a third of their female counterparts are employed. Instead, the majority of the women are household workers. During the present crisis, they have suffered higher levels of unemployment than men (Bunck, 1997, p. 33).

### **The Impact That a Less Authoritarian Government Might Have on the More Poverty-Stricken Parts of Cuba**

The economic crisis in Cuba is a national crisis rather than a provincial or a regional economic crisis, although some areas of the country are suffering more than others as a result of present-day policies. For example, important environmental problems impact some communities more severely than others (Portela and Aguirre, 2000), such as the town of Nuevitas and the Cauto River region in Oriente Province. In Nuevitas, a recent comprehensive assessment performed by a group of twenty specialists from Cuban state agencies found a poor environmental situation by any standard. For example, the failure to chlorinate drinking water, along with the poor condition of the treatment plant and the absence of systematic water quality analysis, were directly linked to the alarming level of parasitism and diarrhea among the population. They found that in the first four months of 1996, one of every four inhabitants went to the doctor suffering from acute diarrhea. In some neighborhoods, domestic sewage was directly discharged into the streets and ran freely to Nuevitas Bay, where the runoff joined other untreated domestic, commercial and industrial sewer discharges. Some existing oxidation ponds were in fact out of service, including two in the local hospital. Solid wastes could be observed elsewhere in the town; the municipal dumpsite is located within the boundary of the city. Open disposal and burning of solid waste in dumpsites were the most common methods of dealing with trash. The situation in Nuevitas is probably typical of what takes place in the other three areas selected for industrial and port improvements as part of the Cuban government strategy of development: the Mariel-Havana-Matanzas belt in western Cuba, the huge Cienfuegos node on the south-central coast and the bi-polar hub Santiago de Cuba-Moa on the eastern end of the island.

Poverty is widespread on the island, and, if the literature on the social science of protest is any guide, the poor, to the extent that they are not organized and mobilized, are not political actors. Thus, it is not poverty per se but the social organization of aggrieved populations that allows us to guess about the nature of post-transitional political dynamics. This is the reason that the author would prefer to address a reality that will face any democratic government in a new Cuban Republic, namely the political mobilization of aggrieved communities. What sectors of the public will likely be important political actors in a future democracy or, expressed differently, what groups likely will become mobilized and place demands on the political system?

For many decades, interest group politics have been suppressed very effectively by the Castro-led government even as it created a sense of entitlement in the population. This seemingly contradictory process typifies the regime: it cannot provide for the most elemental needs of the people and yet it portrays itself as their champion and benefactor, always blaming the United States' government for every problem it cannot solve. The future effects of this system can be forecasted, namely, that people who have been socialized to think that the state should provide them with services and ensure their welfare will demand those services and probably will have unrealistic expectations regarding the limits of state actions once a less restrictive and less authoritarian government is in place. Just because a regime change occurs does not mean that the collective mentality and habitus of a people automatically change to reflect the new reality. Instead, the shadows of the past continue into the present, impacting collective behavior. The fear of capitalism, its presumed inhumanity, the rapacity of the Miami Cuban exiles and "mafia," the imperialism of the United States' government, and other conceptions that have reigned unchallenged in Cuba may, at some point, provide the fodder for collective interpretations of events and the political mobilization of segments of the Cuban public during the post-Castro period.

For these and other reasons, it should be assumed that old and new political claimants will become active very quickly under a democratic system. Many of these constituencies were active in the pre-1959 Republican period and will become active once again. Others are products of the Revolution. Probable candidates for active public participation are: university students, the labor movement (Grenier (1996) writes that in the future we can expect many independent labor unions rather than one major labor union such as the Cuban Workers' Federation (Confederacion de Trabajadores Cubanos—CTC), agricultural cooperatives, environmentalists, ethnic and racial minorities, women, homosexual and bisexual minorities, and professional associations.

Before Castro took power in 1959, active social movements of university students and a powerful labor union movement existed in Cuba (Magnusen and Rodríguez, 1998). A number of very effective voluntary organizations in the black community (Aguirre, 1976), as well as professional organizations of lawyers, doctors, architects, newspaper writers, and other occupational groups also were active in defending the interests of their members. Since 1959,

other groups, particularly small agriculturists, private agricultural cooperatives (Alvarez, 1999), independent women's organizations, and environmentalists, have emerged in Cuba and suffered varying degrees of repression. Nevertheless, they are part of civil society and can be expected to participate vigorously in the future life of the country.

Among the new potential challengers is the military. The Castro government has created an important military caste, unprecedented in the history of Cuba; and, depending on how post-transition governments structure the military institution—a matter too complex to address here—it is very possible that police and military personnel will become unionized and potentially formidable political actors in a democratic context.

### **Outlook**

As mentioned earlier, it is the author's view is that there *will not be* a rapid political transition in Cuba immediately after the death of Fidel Castro. Instead, the present-day one-party political regime and the absence of constitutional guarantees will continue during the first five years following his death. This forecast is based on the following reasons:

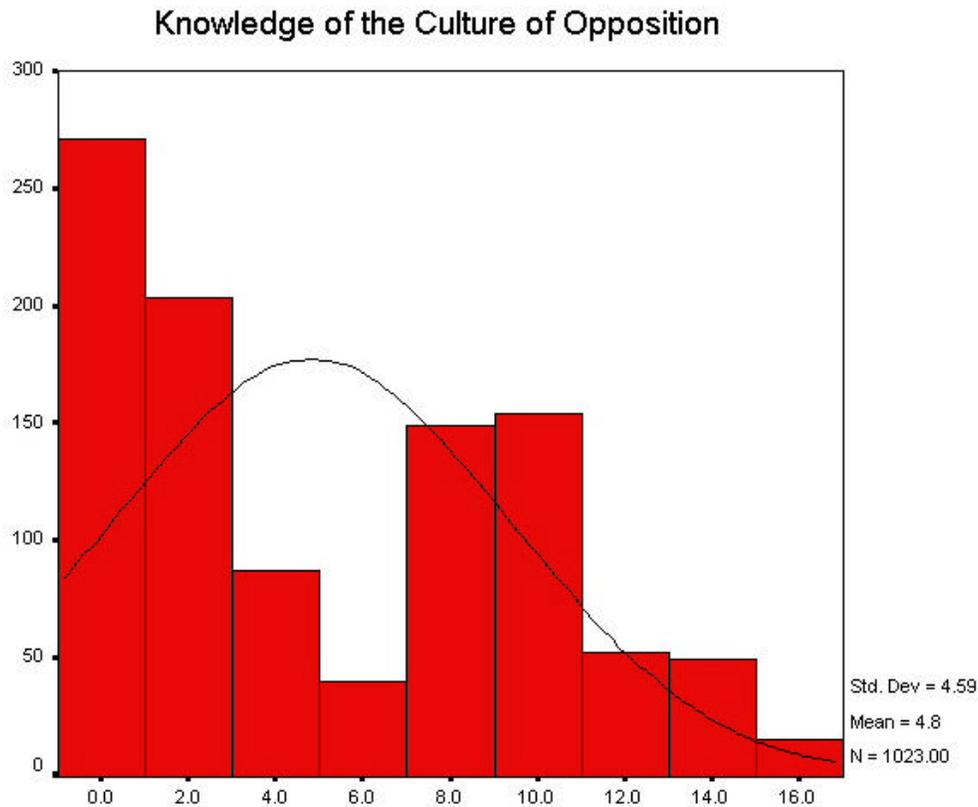
*First Reason:* The legitimacy of the Castro-led government, if legitimacy is understood not as agreement with the government but as hegemonic control by the government of the interpretative schemes people use to make sense of their worlds (Aguirre, 2000), is based in large part on the presence of a cultural system rather than primarily on sheer force and terror. As I have written elsewhere (Aguirre, 2002), the basic quality of the system is its combination of both formal and informal systems of control that simultaneously emphasize openness and rigidity. Both formal and informal systems are guided by an ideology, a reigning political culture, and the operations of a centrally planned society. Elements of the informal system are propaganda, education, residential patterns, humor, myths and rituals, and charismatic authority. The formal system is one geared to block all anti-hegemonic acts of individuals and organizations, particularly those acts that if left unchecked could become symbolic acts encouraging similar patterns of behaviors perceived as undesirable by the authorities. Comparatively greater importance is given nowadays to reactive rather than proactive formal social control mechanisms--as exemplified by the rapid action brigades.

There are too many empirically verifiable examples of the effectiveness of this system of domination to give an inclusive account here. One is the near absence of knowledge among the

Cuban people of actors and actions and events that reflect a culture of opposition to the present-day regime. In an earlier paper (Aguirre, unpublished), the author created a culture of opposition (CO) scale based on information collected during December 1998 to April 1999 from 1,023 recently arrived Cuban immigrants who had been in the United States for 90 days or less (for the methodology used in the original survey, see Roberts et al., 1999, 11ff.; Roberts, 1999; Betancourt and Grenier, 1999). *The Measuring Public Opinion Project* (MPOP) used a convenience sample of Cuban émigrés to describe their perceptions of the Cuban government and their experiences in Cuba.

*Knowledge of culture of opposition* (0-15,  $\alpha=.78$ ) is a seven-item scale that includes information on explicit acts of dissent and on leaders and organizations of the dissidence:

- ?? a. whether respondents had knowledge of independent union leaders;
- ?? b. personally knew Cuban dissidents;
- ?? c. knew about the “Support for a Democratic Transition in Cuba” document released by the Clinton administration in 1994;
- ?? d. knew the substance of “The Fatherland Belongs to All” declaration by four prominent Cuban dissidents;
- ?? e. knew about the 1998 street demonstration in support of dissident Reinaldo Alfaro;
- ?? f. could identify eight major leaders of the dissident movement in the island; and
- ?? g. knew of the existence of the “Cuban Council,” an organized, peaceful, important effort to bring about political and social change.



**Figure 1**

As shown in Figure 1, the distribution of the Cuban respondents in the scale is negatively skewed. The vast majority of respondents had a rather incomplete knowledge of the CO; 26.5 percent had no knowledge whatsoever of the CO, while 50 percent scored 3. Only 87 respondents scored 12 or more in this scale. This state of generalized ignorance of the culture of opposition can be hypothesized to be partly the result of the great effectiveness of the systems of social control in Cuba as well as of a generalized sense of disinterestedness in public affairs and distrust of public institutions in the population. This generalized state of ignorance would continue to be an important contributor to the political stability and continuity of the regime at the death of Castro.

*Second Reason:* A second matter is the absence of splits and severe conflicts among members of the Cuban political elite (del Aguila, 1999). It is an elite that has been in power more than forty years, which gives it a great deal of cultural and political coherence. This longevity

makes possible and implies similarities among elite members of experiences of socialization, styles of living, expectations, and sense of responsibility in the exercise of public office. It is an elite united by:

- ?? endogamy;
- ?? racial homogeneity;
- ?? the economic interdependence of its members and their recognition that their privileges are tied to the economic and political system established during the Castro regimen;
- ?? the widespread complicity of the elite in the multiple and variegated crimes of the regime.

Much can be understood about this process if we study the sentencing to death of General Arnaldo Ochoa in 1989 and the participation in this crime of the most important members of the Cuban elite.

In sum, the Cuban elite is a political elite unified by traditions, similarities in life experiences, family relations, economic interests, and odious political acts. These various elements strengthen each other and form a strong community of interests: the elite will not disappear at the death of its leader. How it would change depends on national and international dynamics too complex to discuss at length here but which, at any rate, would take time to develop after the death of Castro. The elite itself will change after his death, most probably to a Chinese-type system in which there is the emergence of a state-sponsored capitalist elite, but this process will not be immediate after his death. It will probably take five years or more for new patterns to come into being.

*Third Reason:* The third matter to consider is that the Cuban government limits very effectively the growth of civil society. Relatedly, the dissident movements and the isolated opposition to Castro's government are ineffective and weak and suffer extensive persecution by government social control systems. The opposition lacks political opportunities at present and does not have the resources, such as access to the mass media, the right to assemble and to organize and petition the authorities, and other tactical matters necessary to advance programmatic alternatives that would have a chance of gaining a degree of acceptance by the

Cuban people at the death of Castro. It will take time and an opening of the political system for the opposition to begin to transform the political landscape in the island.

The author's intent is not to dismiss the great courage and unremitting effort of the many patriots in Cuba who at great personal costs carry peaceful opposition to the regime. Instead, we can expedite change in Cuba not only by supporting the opposition, one can argue, but also by helping diminish the cultural domination of the regime and the unity of the reigning elite. To paraphrase Doug McAdam's argument, we need to foster the cognitive liberation of the Cuban people. We also need to foster divisions within the political elite. In my view, neither of these preconditions exist in Cuba today to the extent that they would bring about a rapid change of the political system at the death of Mr. Castro.

A number of analysts of Cuba argue for a quick political transition in Cuba in the aftermath of Mr. Castro's death. I concede that this is probably the majority opinion. Partly supporting their reasoning is the experience of former USSR countries, countries like East Germany and Czechoslovakia. There is also the perception among many Cuba watchers that the political regime is much less in control of events in Cuba than I have portrayed it and that its domination is undermined by corruption and cynicism. I do not agree with either of these lines of reasoning. Cuba is not Eastern Europe. The links of the Cuban revolution to nationalist feelings and resentment towards the USA is very different from the domination of the communist parties in Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War II and their dependence on the threat of invasion by the Russian Army. Mr. Castro's regime has much greater legitimacy. I also do not agree with the perception that his regime is a paper tiger, waiting to collapse on its own weight. Obviously unexpected events could change the outcome I outline. These can be either internal or external events. Internally, there could be a military putch. Externally, there could be an invasion by United States military. Both scenarios would mean a great deal of bloodshed with very uncertain outcomes. I do not believe that either present viable, much less desirable, political alternatives at this time.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> An early account of race relations and its impact on migration during the first decade of the revolution is found in B. E. Aguirre, "Differential Migration of Cuban Social Races," *Latin American Research Review*, 12 (1976): 103–24. For a well-known analysis of the race question in Cuba, see Carlos Moore, *Castro, The Blacks, and Africa* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1998); Ronald Segal gives a broader comparative perspective in *The Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1995). Examples of the new scholarship is Jesus Guanche Pérez, "La cuestión 'racial' en Cuba actual: Algunas consideraciones," Papers, *Revista de Sociología*, 52 (1997): 57–65; Juan A. Alvarado Ramos, "Estereotipos y prejuicios raciales (estudio en tres barrios habaneros)," Paper, LASA Conference (Washington, D.C., 1995), and "Relaciones raciales en Cuba. Notas de investigación," *Temas*, 7 (1996): 37–43; Alejandro De la Fuente, "Recreating Racism: Race and Discrimination in Cuba's Special Period," Georgetown University Cuba Briefing Paper Series, 18 (1998); Alejandro De la Fuente and L. Glasco, "Are Blacks 'Getting Out of Control'? Racial Attitudes, Revolution and Political Transition in Cuba," in M. A. Centeno and M. Font, eds., *Towards a New Cuba? Legacies of a Revolution*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 53–72; Fernández, N. T., "The Color of Love: Young Interracial Couples in Cuba," *Latin American Perspectives*, 23, no. 1 (1996): 99–117; V. C. Bobes, "Cuba y la cuestión racial," *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*, 5, no. 8 (1996): 115–39; Maria del Carmen Cano Secade, "Relaciones raciales, proceso de ajuste, y política social," *Temas*, 7 (1996): 58–65; Manuel Moreno Frajinals, "Transition to What?," in M. A. Centeno and M. Font, eds., *Towards a New Cuba? Legacies of a Revolution* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 211–16.

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