Strategic Calculation and Democratic Society:
The Cuban Democratic Resistance in the 1960s and 1990s

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Much has been written about the use of exodus by Cubans as the principal means for rejecting the revolutionary regime led by Fidel Castro. Although exit has provided the most popular means, it has not been the exclusive one. Direct challenge to Cuba=s regime has also occurred but was controlled by the mass roundup and subsequent imprisonment of political activists. This paper argues that the mass incarceration of activists in the early 1960s effectively silenced an organized, democratic, revolutionary voice, both on the island and in exile, until the late 1970s, when thousands of political prisoners were released and re-emerged in the late 1980s as political activists in exile. The intervening twenty years nourished political polarization. Both in international politics and within the Cuban diaspora, the center dropped out of political debate, not because Cuban civil society lacked a center, but because much of the leadership was in prison.

This paper examines the process and outcomes of political incarceration in Cuba in the context of Cuban political culture and the reconstruction of civil society in the Cuban diaspora. Strategic and cultural elements that contributed to the inability of the democratic revolutionary resistance to structure a viable political space in the post-insurrectionary period (1959-1965) are explored together with their manifestations in the 1990s. Appreciation of these cultural elements, their evolution, along with the present size, strategy and level of popular appeal of the political center are employed in an analysis of the process of transition in the divided Cuban nation.

Who are Cuba=s Ex-Political Prisoners?

For purposes of this paper a typology based on chronological entry into prison is offered to demonstrate the heterogeneity of the former political prisoners (Ackerman 1997) and to clarify misconceptions about their size and political orientation. Four broad categories of prisoners, with attitudes ranging from reactionary to revolutionary, can be distinguished between 1959 and 1965 (See Table 1). The values and beliefs of these groups were formed prior to the revolution. After 1965, a new generation of prisoners with significant life experience under the revolutionary government began to enter prison. Since the political culture of the post-1965 groups differs, they will not be discussed in this paper.[1]

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[1] For a discussion of the post-1965 groups see: Holly Ackerman. *Five Meanings of Cuba=s Political Prisoners*. Cuban Studies Association Occasional Paper Series, The University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, Vol. 3, #1. Also, Hidalgo 1996 and Valls 1986.

FOUR GROUPS IN PRISON 1959-1965		
Political Orientation	**_Major Year of Entry_**	**_Approximate #s_**
Reactionary Oppositionists	1959	Thousands
Democratic Revolutionary Resistance	1960-61	Tens of thousands
Counterrevolutionary Invasion Brigade 2506	1961	1,200
Girón Roundup	1961	Hundred(s) of thousands

The First Prisoners: Oppositionists

First to enter the political prisons were a group that I will call oppositionists. These individuals have been variously known as Batistianos (ICOSOVC 1982), Bastisteros (Hunt 1973, Lunt 1990), oppositionists (Ros 1994) or counterrevolutionaries (Castro 1960). This is actually a heterogeneous group that includes:

1. Batista supporters - persons actively involved in the regime and its repressive policies, including military officers and troops.
2. Government Abureaucrats@ - persons who held mid- to low-level jobs within the administration but were not active political allies of Batista.
3. Private citizens who allegedly conspired against the new revolutionary government. These oppositionists felt that upholding a continuous political order was more important than running the risk of revolutionary turmoil and they participated in or respected the outcome of the generally discredited 1958 elections.

The Democratic Revolutionary Resistance, Counterrevolutionary Invasion Brigade 2506 and The Girón Roundup

The three remaining groups of prisoners are separate but related. They are separate because they had different political organizations and strategies, played different political roles and were in different geographic locations during the 1959-1961 period. They are related because their entry into prison had a common, proximate cause - the failure of the CIA-controlled exile invasion of 1961.

The Democratic Revolutionary Resistance

As the new revolutionary government drifted toward a totalitarian form, many people who had been part of the several revolutionary groups that brought about the end of the Batista regime

renewed their clandestine political activism, this time in opposition to the Castro regime. Some had entered government service after the triumph of the revolution, others had resumed civilian life but now began to conspire again.

The political culture of Cuba was built around multiple, small, action groups that frequently differed only in their leadership, social location, generation or some strategic differences. Former prisoners report that dozens of groups existed but less than a dozen were nationally and internationally known. The best known included:

El Frente Nacional Democrático - AAA[2] (FND-AAA), El Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE), Movimiento Demócrata Cristiano (MDC), Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (MRP), Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria (MRR), Movimiento Revolucionario 30 de Noviembre Frank País (M-30-Nov), Organización Auténtica (OA), Movimiento de Rescate Democrático Revolucionario (RESCATE).

These groups can be conceptualized along a series of variables but the generation of leaders and their involvement in government and in government corruption will be used here to distinguish the major difference. Three groups arose from the ranks of political leaders originally within the Partido Revolucionario Cubano Auténtico (FND-AAA led by Aureliano Sánchez Arango, OA led by Carlos Prío Socorrás, and RESCATE led by Antonio Varona). These were organizations that began a revolutionary struggle after Batista≠s 1952 coup displaced them from office - Prío as President of the Republic, Sánchez Arango as the Minister of Education and then Foreign Minister under Prío, and Varona as Prío≠s Prime Minister. This group was tainted by the massive corruption that characterized the former administration.[3] For the generation that followed them, they were viewed as part of the problem that occasioned the revolution. As a group, they had chosen or permitted graft in favor of reform.

A second grouping (DRE, MDC, MRR) was led by a younger generation of Catholic intellectuals and students who had no direct experience in government. Theirs was a social Christian formation and they had participated in the revolutionary movement primarily in the urban underground. They adhered to the Cuban tradition of youth being called to national service during exceptional times - first by giving up work and education to fight Batista and then Castro.

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[2] The Frente Nacional Democrático, founded by Aureliano Sánchez Arango in 1952 following Bastista≠s takeover, was a clandestine organization. The initials AAA began to be used as a *nom de guerre* as they were well known in Cuba at the time both through the baseball league and the automobile association. They could be easily and safely mentioned and represented quality. The organization eventually became known popularly as simply the *Triple A* or *La Triple*. Detractors speculated that the letters stood for Asociación de Amigos de Aureliano. Alfredo Sánchez, Letter to author, December 20, 1997.

[3] Not all these individuals were directly involved in corruption, but the Prío government was generally regarded as massively corrupt and those who were politically aligned with it were denegrated by their association and failure to control misappropriation.

A third grouping (MRP and M-30-Nov) had their roots largely in the anti-communist, labor movement and in agriculture. During the 1959-1961 period, these two organizations resisted the taint of U.S. money and control longer than the others, with the MRP joining the U.S. led conspiracy only weeks before the invasion at Girón.

All of these groups favored revolutionary change in social conditions, within a democratic framework. Their basic plan was to incite a second insurrection using tactics of urban disruption, selected sabotage and bombing, work slowdown, and, to a lesser extent, by organizing rural guerrilla bands. Their representatives in the exterior sought solidarity from other governments in the hemisphere, obtained funds and arms, and publicized the political program of the movements. Each group published separate but remarkably similar manifestos and *idearios* giving their fundamental beliefs and programs for the post-revolutionary period.[4]

The Brigade 2506

The members of the Brigade were originally recruited in Miami through the Frente Democráctico Revolucionario which was organized by the CIA and composed of exile leaders including Manuel Artime from the MRR, Justo Carillo from the Agrupación Monticristi, Antonio Varona from RESCATE, Jose Ignacio Rasco from the MDC, Aureliano Sanchez Arango from AAA. Leaders associated with Batista were specifically prohibited from participation by the U.S. government as a means to avoid intergroup conflict.

The rank and file of the invasion brigade were trained in Guatemala and included members of all political persuasions, including former Batista supporters, in a tentative alliance. Like prior Cuban invasionary parties (Hernández 1997), this group suffered from an excess of optimism, poor security arrangements, and excessive reliance on the U.S. (Blight & Kornbluh 1997, Wyden 1979). During the April 1961 invasion, air strikes were canceled by President Kennedy and the ground forces of the Brigade were doomed (Haas 1994, Ros 1994, Wyden 1979). One hundred fourteen Brigade members died and approximately 1,200 prisoners were taken. On December 23, 1962, after twenty months of incarceration, the group returned to Miami following payment of a $53 million ransom of goods and equipment organized by the U.S. government.

The Girón Roundup

In the days prior to and during the invasion, at least 100,000 persons were detained inside Cuba.[5] Sports stadiums, movie theaters, jails, prisons and other public buildings throughout the

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[4] See for example: *Movimiento Democrata Cristiano de Cuba*. 1961. Un folleto de documentos de MDC. La Habana, 1961 from the Cuban Collection of the Richter Library, University of Miami (CCRLUM).; Movimiento Revolucionario 30 de Noviembre Frank Pais. *Ideario.* 1960. CCRLUM.; *A Brief History of the MRR*. 1964. CCRLUM.; DRE Internacional. *Que Es El DRE*? Julio 1964 #1: 2-3. From CCRLUM.

[5] I have chosen the lowest estimate given by sources reporting these events. Estimates are impossible to verify without access to Cuban government records and vary between 100,000 and 900,000. See Cuba: Exodo y Lucha. *Trinchera*. July 14, 1963: 4. From CCRLUM and OAS 1961-1963.

island held the detainees. Through interrogation and intelligence data the group was sorted, additional arrests were made throughout the next year and, by year=s end, the group was reduced to several tens of thousands who were brought before revolutionary tribunals and sentenced. Prisoners relate that they were often tried for conspiracy with persons they did not know. Some were not politically involved and others were part of the previously mentioned revolutionary resistance groups.[6] In 1959 and 1960, political prisoners had been held initially in local facilities and then transferred to the Isle of Pines Prison. As this facility reached a maximum capacity, additional political prison units were built and political prisoners were kept throughout the island in a series of segregated units. As late as 1964 over 46,000 political prisoners were still being held and over 7,000 had been executed by firing squads.[7] These were largely the men and women of the democratic revolutionary resistance groups who had taken activist roles in the society based on social Christian philosophy. They would likely have elaborated centrist positions in civil society had they not been imprisoned.

Political Culture and Resistance Strategy: The Politics of Individuals, Illusions and Idealism

Distinctive political ways of being, or political cultures, characterize nations. In the late fifties, the idea of modernity was popular in the social sciences and the study of political culture was substantially reduced by the belief that more uniform, Amodern@ ways of being would come to characterize collective political action much as they did industrial production. For this reason the Cuban revolution was most frequently analyzed in terms of structures rather than cultural patterns. In the post-Cold War era there has been renewed interest in political culture as distinctive populations and ways of contesting power have surged (Huntington 1993, Stack 1995, Lapid & Kratochwil 1996).

In the case of Cuba during the 1959-1960 period, the revolutionary resistance obeyed cultural themes that had characterized Cuban politics since the struggle for independence from Spain. Further, the resistance groups contesting power did so using local strategies and tactics. The evolution and limits of these cultural practices are vital to an understanding of the strategy they selected, to their evolution and to assessment of transitional possibilities.

Prominent among the themes were the appreciation of national autonomy, the role of leaders, the distribution of power in political groups and conceptualization of virtue in public life. Strategy focused on inciting insurrection, a general uprising of a cross-section of the population, by using tactics of strategic bombing to paralyze the cities and isolated bands in the mountains and countryside to burn crops and destroy infrastructure. The objective was to show that the government lacked control and to call upon the citizenry to withdraw its support. This was the same strategy that had defeated the Spanish and Batista. It was intimately linked with Cuban beliefs about the nature of civic responsibility, and a moral obligation to work individually based

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[6] Data from focus group of former political prisoners. Conducted by author and Miguel Torres Calero, Miami, August 30, 1997.

[7] For data on executions see: Cuba: Exodo y Lucha. *Trinchera*. July 14, 1963: 4. For data on those incarcerated see: The Plight of Cuban Political Prisoners. *The Cuban Report*. November 16, 1964. CCRLUM

on fundamental values of liberty, family and mutual aid. It was a call to citizen activism rather than a plan to defeat Castro=s forces through direct military contest.

The soldiers of this insurrectionary effort were recruited one-by-one through small networks of friendship. Since colonial times, repression in Cuba required clandestine activity and the concept of conspiracy carried both a personal and a structural meaning. Inviting someone to conspire was not only a recruitment to activism, it was a sign of personal respect for the abilities and character of the inductee. As a consequence, resistance groups were small but their structures were complex.[8] The revolutionary resistance groups were led by a national coordinator and had regional organizations corresponding to the national provinces. They were further subdivided using two variables. First, members belonged to functional units such as sabotage and action, international relations, communications and propaganda. Second, the militants were divided into corporate groups, corresponding to their role in society, being comprised of workers, farmers, youth, women and professionals. The need for secrecy dictated that cell members use *nombres de guerra*. Members often did not know who their national or provincial leaders were but they trusted that they were of ability equal or superior to those who recruited them to local conspiracy.

Paradoxically, despite the elaborate structure of the revolutionary organizations, there was very little trust in institutions and tremendous emphasis on the value, virtue and ability of known individuals. The elaborate organizational structure served more as a vehicle to distribute power among conspirators than as functional units in a plausible strategy. Top resistance leaders were invested with tremendous decisional latitude by the group while ordinary group members held nominal, positional power through the elaborate structure of the organizations. Leaders were expected to set an individual example by taking direct action. This choice of leadership style made the upper eschelon vulnerable to capture. Leaders had constantly to be replaced, resulting in needless duplication of effort, periods of leaderless confusion and strategic disadvantages for the movement as a whole.

During the insurrectionary period of 1957-1959, Fidel Castro had broken with tradition in matters of strategy and tactic while simultaneously manipulating traditional themes in his public discourse. Departing from traditional patterns of leadership, he had successfully used his mountain headquarters as a mechanism to centralize control, disband the national coordinating committee of revolutionary groups and to focus national public attention directly on himself as the charismatic, maximum leader. At the same time, contrary to myth, during the insurrectionary phase, he maintained himself physically apart from his troops, punished indiscipline and disloyalty with execution and did not lead his men into battle, as traditional Cuban leaders did.[9] Additionally, following victory, he spread the spoils of war among the general population as well as his closest followers through free housing, rent reduction, and land reform. These populist measures

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[8] See for example: *Ante-Proyecto de Estatutos de La Dirección del Moviemiento Revolucionario del Pueblo,* Cuba, Octubre de 1960. From the Centro de Documentación e Información, Solidaridad de Trabajadores Cubanos, Caracas, Venezuela. And, Juan Manuel Salvat. *Estrategia de Lucha y de Victoria*. 1963. From the uncatalogued collection of the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil, CCRLUM.

[9] See Llovio Menéndez 1988, Moran Arce 1980, and Alarcon Rodríguez 1996.

combined with his charismatic image, skillful manipulation of the media, the presence of a battle-trained revolutionary army and the fact that he systematically preserved his own safety, gave him enormous strategic advantage.

These tactics were buttressed by a pattern of intelligence gathering followed by arrest, interrogation, a subsequent widened sweep based on new intelligence revelations and eventual staging of public drama and show trials which solidified public identity with the revolution. Citizens were drawn into the spectacle both as observers and as participants in vigilance groups in their own neighborhoods.

By contrast, in the post-1959 period, the diverse revolutionary groups were handicapped by the lack of a central figure. Ironically, their objection to the totalitarian nature of the new regime prevented them from coordinating power among their own leaders and they were slowed by the cumbersome nature of their organizations, the need for consultation, constant attrition of top leaders and the lack of supplies, arms and safehouses. Additionally, by being clandestine, they could not publicly proclaim their goals and actions through the media. Although idearios and periodic newsletters circulated as samizdat publications, they did not have wide circulation. Moreover, public opinion surveys of the era show that a return to peaceful conditions of daily life was the number one goal of most Cubans. They were both weary of violence and pleased with their recent liberation.

The resistance groups were further divided, among themselves and from many Cuban people, by the traditional dilemma of their relationship to the United States. Most groups recognized a need for international solidarity and saw the U.S. as the natural, and traditional source of moral and material support. As one former prisoner put it. AWe wanted solidarity, or that is to say, recognition of our struggle for democracy and we needed material assistance. The U.S. should naturally be concerned to give us the materials to free ourselves but not to control us. This policy of control was a mistaken policy and, unfortunately, it continues@[10] Ironically, it was the resistance groups in exile that provided support for a U.S. plan without having decisional control.

As exile offices opened in Miami, it became clear that disinterested solidarity would not be offered. The U.S. conditioned its support on military control. This produced a split within the revolutionary groups with the MRP and M-30-Nov refusing U.S. assistance and the other major groups accepting aid and control in Miami while trying to operate independently inside Cuba.[11] Although Castro himself had been supplied primarily from Miami, he was now able to take the high road of national independence from U.S. interference and cast the resistance groups as Batistianos and agents of U.S. domination.

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[10] Pedro Pérez Castro and Heriberto Fernández. Interview with author, January 7 & 8, 1997, Caracas, Venezuela. Author=s notes.

[11] Just prior to the 1961 invasion the MRP joined the U.S. controlled coalition and the organization split based on disagreement over the issue of national versus exile control of the movement. See letters between Manuel Ray and National Committee of the MRP in Cuba, July 1961. From the Centro de Documentación e Información, Solidaridad de Trabajadores Cubanos, Caracas, Venezuela.

Less discussed but equally important in the political culture of Cuba, is the parallel question of Cuban subjectivism or excessive optimism (Hernandez 1997). During the 1960-1961 period, the revolutionary resistance groups not only accepted aid, they ceded power without receiving information. That is, they simply trusted that a plan existed that would result in victory. How this error of judgment could take place is best understood within the political culture as an expression of their strong trust in leaders and an excessive emphasis on the character and intent of individuals. Essentially, they trusted that optimism and subjective belief would conquer. The resistance strategy relied on the U.S. and the Cuban public to join them and to Ado the right thing.@ The ordinary Cuban citizen, weary of civil strife, would have had to Aread@ the situation and rise to direct action. It was a complex demand that required both the resistance members and the civilian population to have deep political conviction, historical knowledge and the willingness to take risks. Castro=s strategy, on the other hand, was triumphal and held the promise of material reward for individuals, as well as national pride and independence.

The 1959-1961 phase is a clear case of strategic disequilibrium. The democratic forces were unprepared for the aggressive and imaginative strategy that Fidel Castro played out. Further, they were unrealistic about their own capabilities, their allied support, and the requirements of sustaining popular insurrection. These miscalculations cost many of them up to thirty years of imprisonment.

Political reorganization in exile

During that interval, the more conservative forces of the Miami exile reorganized their lives both economically and politically. During the 1960s, armed guerrilla action continued as the predominant exile strategy along with efforts to insure U.S. support for property claims in Cuba (Travieso Diaz 1996). In the 1970s a strategy of terrorist strikes evolved on the right. At the same time, the democratic resistance groups in exile advocated release of political prisoners and improvement in their conditions. Inevitably the two tendencies clashed with right wing groups attacking those who advocated negotiation with the Castro regime.[12] This clash has been interpreted, both in journalistic and academic accounts, as evidence that the entire exile was intractably reactionary and violent. The evolution of a center has been underreported and understudied.

The 1980s saw the rise of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) with its strategy of taking control of U.S. foreign policy through aggressive lobbying and political contributions. The CANF lobby assured maintenance of preferential status for Cuban immigrants until 1994, continuation of the U.S. embargo, and the eventual passage of the Helms-Burton Law which toughened the embargo and limited the terms under which the U.S. can resume normal relations with Cuba. The CANF position is one of absolute rejection of any dealings with the present regime and of conditioned negotiation with any successor regime. It is a position that has dominated media images and led public opinion until the mid-1990s. Since then, there has been a reduction in support as well as renewed allegations of covert Foundation support for terrorist activity. Popular support was first reduced following the 1994 rafter crisis when CANF agreed to a policy of non-admission for the flood of rafters and changes in immigration preferences. The

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[12] Cite Herald articles on bombings.

subsequent death of Jorge Mas Canosa, the foundational leader, caused further erosion of support.

While the right wing elements were gaining media prominence, economic security and political control in the 1960s and 1970s, exiled members of the revolutionary resistance and the family members of political prisoners worked to secure the release of their compatriots and relatives. International non-governmental organizations advocating for political prisoners were not well known or well organized until the 1980s (Americas Watch 1989; Amnesty International 1987, 1996) and much of what was done to help the prisoners initially had to be exclusively the work of concerned individuals in Cuba and in exile (Cuban Report 1964; Ramirez et al. 1964; Ruiz 1961-1965). Until the Vietnam era, when there was increased knowledge and popular rejection of covert action, the U.S. responsibility for the abandonment of the Cuban political prisoners was largely denied or ignored. Size of the revolutionary resistance organizations, now headquartered in Latin America, dwindled from thousands to dozens.[13] In 1978, the political climate changed.

In the late 1970s the financial needs of the revolutionary government were acute and, simultaneously, political prisoners who had served ten year terms were being released into Cuban society. President Castro wanted to rid himself of possible conspirators and saw an opportunity to simultaneously gain financial support by allowing return visits to the island by exiles. As a result, he arranged a release of prisoners and an Aopening@ of the island to visits by exiles with non-political histories.[14] Between 1978 and 1980, thousands of prisoners were released to the United States and Venezuela. Journalistic accounts of the era emphasize the rejection of dialogue by right wing leaders and subsequent violent retaliation and social ostracism of Adialogueros.@ With time, however, the release of political prisoners also expanded the base of civil society in exile following a period of social and economic readjustment.

Following the release of the prisoners, there was a reformulation of the political center in exile during the late 1980s, with prominent participation by those with prison experience or with histories of participation in the revolutionary resistance groups. The former political prisoners arrived in a very different context of reception than exiles in the 1960's. Subsidized programs of education and training were no longer available and, in some fields (e.g., medicine) there was affirmative resistance to the acceptance of the ex- prisoners through organized, exile professional groups. The issue of economic resettlement slowed the process of recreation of political action groups. Nonetheless, a center, with substantial participation of ex-prisoners as well as members of the revolutionary resistance groups who had avoided prison, was formed during the late 1980s. It included the Partido Democrata Cristiano (PDC), Coordinadora Social Democrata (CSD), and Solidaridad de Trabajadores Cubanos as well as academic organizations. Three ideal types can be defined to draw out the political continuum within the center. These include: (1) exile support for internally led gradualism; (2) joint internal/exile-led strategies for peaceful change; and, (3) external demands for peaceful change without respect for internal leadership. The first position holds that leadership must come from within the island and that a peaceful dialogue with the

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[13] Cite minutes of Annual Meeting of MRP with headcount 196? - STC archives

[14] For additional histories of the 1978 Adialogue@ see: Reinol Gonzalez 1987.

regime, that acknowledges the accomplishments of the revolution, is a necessary ingredient. The second holds that pressure for peaceful change can come from Latin American and European political parties, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the like and that this pressure should be coordinated and led by dissidents on the island who advocate an eventual democratic contest via plebiscite. The third contends that external pressures can eventually cause the nonviolent collapse of the regime with a post-collapse negotiation leading to democractic structure. For purposes of analysis, a specific instance of these centrist types can be seen in the Democratic Platform.

The Platform is made up of three groups formed in 1990-91, El Partido Demócrata Cristiano, La Coordinadora Social Demócrata and La Unión Liberal. The first group is descended from the MDC of the 1960s and both the first and second contain former members of the MRR, DRE and MRP. Each group is affiliated with or active in the political internationals associated with the three respective political philosophies. The Platform is a single issue alliance whose purpose is to achieve a peaceful transition in Cuba through the conduct of internationally observed free elections.

Each group within the Platform contains the three tendencies described above, it is not a stable or a unanimous group. Each time that Cuban politics heats up (the recent summit in Margarita, the 1994 flood of balseros, the shoot-down of planes by the Cuban government) the alliance is challenged. But, it illustrates the evolution of centrist, exile political culture in general and the thinking of former political prisoners from the democratic revolutionary resistance in particular. Overall, it offers one model of a politically mature solution to Cuban transition that simultaneously promotes democracy and national reconciliation. Three of the most difficult problems of Cuban political culture are constructively and innovatively addressed within the Platform including: violent vs nonviolent struggle; U.S. control; exile/island splits.

First, the project is peaceful. The violence that was endemic to Cuban political organizations is clearly renounced. More importantly, it is replaced with a strategically sophisticated understanding of the value of nonviolent struggle. Violent struggle within Cuba can lead only to civil war and/or U.S. intervention, both, undesirable alternatives. The unequivocal call for nonviolent action by the Platform was a controversial step when first taken but other groups have since adopted the approach. In this sense, the Platform has been a raft in the turbulent sea of Cuban politics. It has provided central ideas that other groups can adhere to - not only the acceptance of peaceful transition but the model of a sincere and lasting coalition within the usually fractious and opportunistic history of Cuban alliances. Power is distributed more democratically, altering some of the mistrust of organizations and beginning to minimize the control of charismatic leaders and the tendency for the exile tail to wag the island situation. Clearly, this is an incomplete process. During the recent summit in Margarita, for example, (when Platform leaders were arrested and ejected from the island by Venezuelan security forces and then permitted to return through intervention of the Venezuelan President) Platform leaders planned to call a press conference and turn the focus to island dissidents who would speak by phone connection from Cuba. Individual leaders became so involved in denouncing their treatment by security forces and seizing the moment to issue their own challenge to President Castro that they literally left their island counterparts hanging on the line. The competition for leadership and the balance of control

between island and exile continues to be an unstable dynamic despite organizational resolve to support island leadership.

Secondly, by building the coalition around the institutional base of political internationals the Platform avoids the traditional quagmire of U.S. involvement. Simultaneously, it builds relationships within Europe and Latin America in a way that strengthens and respects Cuban national autonomy. It does not, of course, eliminate the involvement of the U.S. but it opens a discourse that steps outside the traditional debate about whether and how to deal with the U.S./Cuba relationship with all its attendant neo-colonial baggage..

Thirdly, the Platform addresses the split between the island and exile populations by calling for a plebiscite within the Cuban diaspora and by working with island dissidents. The success of the Castro regime in creating a myth of exiles as wealthy Batistianos who wish only to regain control of the island=s housing stock, land and businesses has been impressive in forestalling the processes of transition and reunification. The Platform has begun to bridge this gap by building alliances with dissident leaders in Cuba. Again, this is a model that other groups have followed.

What the Center of Cuban politics has not achieved is a cross-generational coalition, a significant level of mass support and participation, or a continuing media presence. When one reads the list of activists in the centrist groups, it is evident that they are made up almost entirely of people in their 70s, 60s, and 50s. Cubans born after the mid-1950s are clearly missing. This is true despite the existence of political organizations of Cubans and Cuban-Americans composed primarily of people born after 1960 who reject the mistrust of their elders for institutions.[15] Additionally, recent surveys of the exile community show that the post-1960 age groups more frequently hold attitudes consistent with the centrist position.[16] Nonetheless, the Aold@ cultural patterns of individual recruitment to activism among same-generation friends continues among centrist groups. To the extent that these organizations limit their membership, they also reduce their potential influence.

In like manner, traditional patterns of finance continue to dominate. Selected, trusted individual donations, member dues, and international party foundations are the financial mainstay for the Platform. Leaders resist soliciting funds through mechanisms common to organized civil society such as targeted expansion of party membership, organized fund drives, and telethons.

In summary, the democratic revolutionary resistance of the 1960s has regrouped in exile around a position that is nonviolent, anti-imperial, democratic and conciliatory. This position reveals both the evolution and maintenence of political culture among Cubans. Attitudes to violence have evolved as have naive assumptions about altruistic foreign aid and its divisive potential. A geographic alliance within Latin America and European international parties avoids

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[15] A recent example is the coalition of young Cuban-Americans working in solidarity with the new generation of political prisoners in Cuba. Focus group with representatives of young cuban group. August 14, 1997, Miami, Conducted by author.

[16] See: Guillermo J. Grenier and Hugh Gladwin. *FIU 1997 Cuba Poll: Executive Summary*. Florida International University, Miami, 1997.

the taint of U.S. aid/control organizationally even as it reveals residual support for the Cuban government within allied factions.

To the extent that the center avoids active expansion of its membership in successive generations and exposure of its views within the wider exile community, it limits its potential to provide an anchor for strategies of democratic transition within the diaspora. Moreover, the post-1980 arrivals and the generation born in exile are the most open to reconciliation. The center is essentially ignoring its most likely constituency in favor of traditions of generational leadership and social network recruitment. They seem to be betting that transitional arrangements between the exile and island will be conducted and imposed by the elders - an approach that ignores the demography of the island as well as the post-transition need for institutional continuity in civil society.

Some centrist leaders fear a renewal of violent retribution from right-wing exile groups if they were to engage in traditional recruitment activities to expand their membership and to expound their values - e.g., public recruitment of members, fund-raising, media events, etc. Others distain the methods of political recruitment, seeing political fundraising as Apolitiqueria@ or political opportunism that they associate with right wing groups rather than democratic process. The inability to secure cooperation from media venues is also cited as a reason for maintaining old patterns of association. Essentially the centrist groups doubt that they can overcome media blackout of centrist views in Miami. They cite the recent withdrawl of plans by the Catholic church to send a shipload of exiles to the Papal visit as an example of the continuing power of rightwing Miami to restrict action. (The church withdrew its plans after receiving a strident protest letter from rightwing leaders.) As a result, systematic, alternative expressions of political belief and recruitment to activism in the wider exile community in Miami remain untested. It seems that more is known about the real consequences of dissident, grassroots organizing in Cuba than in Miami. Until centrist groups test the waters, the lack of cross generational alliances will remain a major weakness.

Finally, it is important to note unique elements in the Cuban transition. Where Southern Cone countries had to collectively arrange a transition between the people and an authoritarian power elite, the Cubans must reconcile divisions of family, friends and neighborhoods as well. The number and force of divisions in the early revolutionary years and the involvement of ordinary citizens in revolutionary vigilance, or in revolutionary resistance, has meant that relations must be healed at every level, between and within the halves of the divided nation. Much conciliatory activity is presently occurring and is initiated at an individual and family level. Exile relatives and neighbors are visiting and/or assisting those on the island and beginning reconciliation at a community level. Still, the possibility of violence remains a concern. Avoiding possible incidents of violent retribution in Cuba was a major motivation for exit from Cuba for many recent arrivals in Miami during the 1990s (Ackerman 1996). To the extent that organized political groups can recognize, facilitate and expand the individual level conciliatory phenomenon, they will promote nonviolent transition and moral support for a political center, if not actual participation. There is presently no organized leadership in this area, reinforcing pre-revolutionary patterns of small, social networks as the action units of Cuban civil society.

Overall, the political center has evolved to be more innovative strategically but clings to beliefs about small action groups organized by generation and fears of violent right-wing retaliation that limit the size and scope of its activity and influence.

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Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus Group Participants - August 30, 1997

Name	**Revolutionary Group Association**
Sr. Raoul Alfonso	Unidad Revolucionaria (UR)
Sr. Pedro Guerra	Movimiento Demócrata Cristiano (MDC)
Sr. Rene Hernández	Movimientp Revolucionario del Pueblo (MRP)
Sr. Luis Menéndez-Aponte	Oganización Autentico
Sr. Byron Miguel	Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE)
Sr. Alberto Müller	DRE
Sr. Arnoldo Müller	Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria (MRR)
Sr. Eduardo Ojeda	RESCATE, MRR
Sr. Alfredo Sánchez-Echeverria	Frente Nacional Democrático(AAA)
Sr. Miguel Torres-Calero	MRR
Sr. Juan Valdés	RESCATE, DRE

Invited but not Attending

Representative of Moviemiento Revolucionario 30 de Noviembre Frank Pais

Participants in Focus Group - August 14, 1997

Ana Carbonell	Alianza de Jovenes Cubanos
Pia Cosculluela	Madres Ante La Represion por Cuba Joven (MAR por Cuba Joven)
Orlando Gutiérrez	Directorio Revolucionario Democratico Cubano
Janiset Rivero	Directorio Revolucionario Democratico Cubano
Juan Súarez	Free Cuba Foundation
Ana Tamargo	Alianza de Jovenes Cubanos

Invited but not attending:

Representative of Balseros Unidos por la Democracia

Individual Interviews

Eduardo Arango, July 22, 1997, Miami, Florida.
Enrique Baloyra, July 17, 1997, Coral Gables, Florida.
Siro del Castillo, Various dates, July 1997, Coral Gables, Florida.
Reinaldo Cruz, October 10, 1995, Coral Gables, Florida.
Enrique Encinosa, July 29, 1997, Coral Gables, Florida.
Lino Bernabé Fernández, July 18, 1997, Coral Gables, Florida.
Virginia Finaly, July 23, 1997, Miami, Florida.
Former Political Prisoners at Refugee Resettlement Program, three newly-arrived families, CWS,
        Miami*, July 23, 1997, Miami, Florida.
Heriberto Fernández, January 7 & 8, 1998, Caracas, Venezuela.
Hiram González, July 25, 1997, Miami, Florida.

D. Huergo, Various dates, 1994 and 1995, Hialeah, Miami, and Coral Gables, Florida.
Roberto Martín Pérez, August 8, 1997, Miami, Florida.
Pedro Pérez Castro, January 7 & 8, 1998, Caracas, Venezuela
Miguel Torres-Calero, July 21, 1997, Miami, Florida.
Jorge Valls, December 1996 and August 7, 1997, Coral Gables, Florida.

*Names are not used to protect client anonymity.