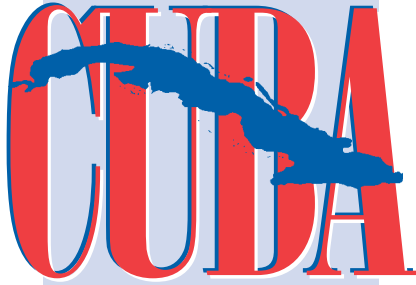


The Catholic Church and the Cuban Diaspora

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In December 1999, a statement released by the Cuban Catholic Bishops Conference argued that the custody dispute involving Elián González, a six-year-old Cuban boy who survived a shipwreck in which his mother died, must be settled according to the most basic and universally accepted right, namely that a minor who has lost one of his parents is left to the care of the surviving parent.¹ Elián's father in Cuba wanted the boy returned to him, while a great uncle in Miami wanted to keep the boy there. In a letter published on February 8, 2000, Cardinal Jaime Ortega reiterated the bishops' position that the boy should be returned to his father. The prelate appealed the basic Catholic teaching that the family, by natural right, takes precedence over the state, adding that "there is no reason to deprive the father of his *patria potestas*, or parental authority, because there is no physical, mental, or moral disability that prevents the father from exercising his right."²

The case opened a new episode in a long history of tensions between the Cuban Catholic Church and the predominantly Catholic Cuban diaspora. Several of Miami's more conservative Cuban American leaders angrily accused the Cardinal of siding with Fidel Castro's government. Many Cuban Americans reiterated their long-standing complaint that the Cuban bishops do not sufficiently denounce the Cuban government.³ The international custody dispute around Elián González stirred up these old resentments, and the Cuban Catholic Church once again found itself in the middle of a dilemma involving the homeland, the diaspora, and the harsh human consequences of more than four decades of hostilities between Cuba and the United States.

This paper outlines relations between the Cuban Catholic Church and the Cuban diaspora. It also reviews the Church's evolving position on emigration since the 1959 Revolution as well as the changing reactions of many Catholic exiles toward the Church in Cuba, particularly after Pope John Paul II's visit to the island in January 1998.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE REVOLUTION

For the most part, the Catholic Church in Cuba embraced the struggle against the Batista government in the late 1950s. Many Catholics participated in revolutionary activities in the cities, and others, including priests, joined the rebels in the Sierra Maestra mountains. Santiago de Cuba's Archbishop Enrique Pérez Serantes echoed the Church's approval of the revolutionary triumph:

[T]he first stage of this heroic enterprise is concluded. Many never had faith in its success...[but] there are no weapons that can strip the ideals that live in the minds and hearts of people...We have now entered the second stage, the most difficult, delicate, and laborious one, which demands robust arms and a right orientation of mind together with a healthy and powerful heart.⁴

During a period that some authors have described as one of harmony between the Church and the Revolution, the Cuban bishops supported various government measures, beginning with the Agrarian Reform, the first new law promulgated by



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the Council of Ministers in May 1959. The revolutionary government likewise expressed satisfaction with the Church's support, and in June 1959 during a television speech, Fidel Castro called the Catholic Church in Cuba "a revolutionary Church, the most revolutionary in Latin America."⁵

But the honeymoon did not last long. Even the Cuban bishops' early public pronouncements included a degree of caution. Already in January 1959, as he was voicing his support for the victorious rebels, Archbishop Pérez Serantes also advised, "[A] new order will be established over the ashes of the old one...[but] this new regime will have to be better, because if it were not, there would have been no reason to have toppled the old one."⁶ In July 1959, Pérez Serantes went further and clarified that, even though he had supported the Agrarian Reform in an earlier letter, he was concerned about some of the similarities between this law and the ideas of "the faithful and disciplined followers of Moscow [in Cuba]." He added, "Dr. Castro, probably unaware of Moscow's orientations, surely knows that this does not at all favor the success of the Revolution."⁷

During the first year of the Revolution, there was considerable institutional reflection on ways for Catholics to play a positive role in the process of profound national transformation that was taking place. The *Instituto Pío XII*, sponsored by the *Universidad de Villanueva*, included in its curriculum courses on Catholic social doctrine, economics, methods of social research, labor relations, and Marxism. The *Juventud Obrera Católica* (JOC, Young Catholic Workers) organized a week-long gathering for priests and laity focusing on issues of social and economic justice.

The most important concentration of Catholics during this period, however, was the *Congreso Nacional Católico* (National Catholic Congress), the largest event ever organized by the Cuban Church.⁸ The Congress revealed the polarization that was developing among Catholics. Some saw the meeting as a chance to challenge a growing leftist tendency in the government, while others viewed it as an opportunity to support the changes occurring in the country.

The government's response to the critical elements of the Congress was moderate, blaming external forces, rather than the Church, for attempting to divide revolutionary and religious sentiments, but antagonisms continued to grow nonetheless.⁹ Fears about communism loomed over many in the Catholic hierarchy as well as the laity. Marked frictions over summary trials and executions, the nationalization of Catholic schools, and growing distrust in the context of accelerating conflict between Cuba and the United States, finally led to a dramatic breach between Church and State.

In August 1960, the Cuban bishops released their first pastoral letter addressing the situation. The document began by praising the positive initiatives that

the Revolution had taken in the area of social justice, but it also expressed the bishops' "concerns and fears...about the growing influence of communism in Cuba."¹⁰ A second document was published in December of the same year, expanding on the same theme. Polarization between defenders and critics of the Revolution continued to grow. Groups of militant Catholic revolutionaries defended the government and rejected "any attempt to place the Church against the Revolution."¹¹ But the process of radical social and political change inevitably forced people to take sides. And, in time, the great majority of active Catholics came to oppose the new government.

The break in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, internal counterrevolutionary activity on the island, and the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961 were followed by Fidel Castro's declaration that the Revolution was socialist in nature. Castro also increased verbal attacks against the Church. In a March 1961 speech denouncing incidents of sabotage in the capital, Castro implicated the Church, asking "Has the government done anything to the Church?...[What] kind of war do these priests have against us?"¹²

"Catholic" gradually became synonymous with "counterrevolutionary," and being revolutionary increasingly implied atheism and automatic suspicion of anyone with religious beliefs, especially Catholics.

As the confrontations continued, "Catholic" gradually became synonymous with "counterrevolutionary," and being revolutionary increasingly implied atheism and automatic suspicion of anyone with religious beliefs, especially Catholics. The designations held a grain of truth. A number of Catholics, including priests, did become involved in insurgent activities, and many were among the exiles who participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion. Conversely, many revolutionaries began chanting slogans in front of churches during masses, and in some extreme cases, desecrated temples.¹³

Both priests and lay Catholics began leaving the country *en masse*. Some of those involved in counterrevolutionary activities asked for political asylum in foreign embassies. Religious orders arranged for their personnel, especially non-Cubans, to leave the island. Many of these had taught in Catholic schools, which had been confiscated by the government. But the clash between the Church and the government climaxed with the expulsion of 131 priests and laity in September 1961, following a religious procession that turned into an anti-government protest.¹⁴

THE CHURCH AND THE EARLY YEARS OF CUBAN EMIGRATION

Cuban society at the time of the Revolution was nominally Catholic, but the Church as an institution

was weak, especially in the rural and poor urban sectors of the population. Although most people were baptized into the Church and identified as Catholic, displays of popular religiosity were less tied to the institution than in other Latin American countries. Devotion to the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, the patroness saint of Cuba, was widespread even among those who never attended mass, and Catholic saints were venerated in tandem with African deities among large sectors of the population practicing *santería*, particularly poor black Cubans.

The social base of the Catholic Church in Cuba was predominantly urban, white, and upper or middle class. Outreach to other segments of the population was limited. One exception was *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action), which developed a catechesis for the countryside and the poor urban areas where contact with the Church was minimal.¹⁵ But in 1957, another Catholic association, the *Agrupación Católica*, conducted a survey revealing that only 52 percent of rural families interviewed identified themselves as Catholic. Of those, only 11 percent ever attended mass.¹⁶

The exodus of thousands of upper and middle class Cubans during the early years of the Revolution severely eroded Church membership. Priests also continued to leave the country in considerable numbers. Church authorities decided to close the seminary in Havana and send seminarians to study abroad. With the drastic drop in the number of clergy and parishioners, the Cuban Church experienced the most vulnerable moment in its history. During this period, the Church's efforts were directed primarily at surviving and strengthening its scant remaining membership.

Most Cubans who came to the United States throughout this first phase saw their stay as temporary. These were the real exiles whose hope, even after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, was for the overthrow of Fidel Castro's government. As that government consolidated power, the gulf between Catholics who stayed in Cuba and those who left grew wider. Those who left expected those in Cuba to continue voicing strong public condemnation of the government, while a decimated Church remained largely silent. Many in exile felt that with their silence the Cuban bishops had betrayed the Catholic Church and the Cuban people.¹⁷

In Cuba, there were signs of a *détente* between the Church and the government as early as 1961, when Msgr. Cesare Zacchi, who had extensive experience in Eastern Europe, came to Havana as the Vatican's diplomatic representative. His mission from the beginning was to ease Church-State pressures and to prevent the further exodus of priests from the island. To achieve his objectives, Msgr. Zacchi maintained open communication with government officials, and his strategy bore some fruit. A few Cuban priests who had left voluntarily came back in 1962. Seminarians studying abroad came back to the country after ordination. Even one of the expelled priests, Francisco Oves,

returned to the island (Oves later became Archbishop of Havana). European missionaries were allowed into the country, three Cuban bishops were allowed to attend the Second Vatican Council in October 1962, and some priests and lay Catholics were able to travel abroad to represent the Cuban Church at conferences and other events.¹⁸

[T]he Church in Cuba did not develop a clear position on emigration, but with the gradual abatement of tensions, the belief that staying in Cuba was more virtuous than leaving steadily gained strength.

In the early days of change and confusion, the Church, while not officially promoting emigration, approved of and even assisted in the exodus. Most of the clergy, as well as other exiles, viewed the flight from Cuba as temporary. One of the most controversial chapters of the migration in those years was Operation Pedro Pan. The program, which began in December 1960, brought 14,000 unaccompanied children to the United States. Designed and managed by the Catholic Archdiocese of Miami, the exodus of children from Cuba responded to the fears of middle class parents about their offspring's fate under communism.¹⁹ Rumors had begun circulating that the government was going to remove the *patria potestas* and send children to the Soviet Union.

Cuban Church officials maintain that the Catholic Church there did not directly participate in this program. Former Pedro Pan children confirm the indirect influence that the institution had in carrying out this program: "Members of the Catholic Church played an important role in the children's exodus, albeit not purposely arranged by the organization, but spontaneously. As most of the children attended Catholic schools, nuns and priests were trusted persons sought out by frantic parents."²⁰ Once in the United States, these children went to camps, orphanages, and foster homes. Most of their parents joined them later, but the trauma of being sent away at a very early age was not forgotten. Forty years later, some Pedro Pan children deeply appreciate what they see as their parents' sacrifice to send them to freedom, while others profoundly resent a separation that they feel caused them irreparable damage.

Following those tumultuous couple of years, the Church in Cuba did not develop a clear position on emigration but with the gradual abatement of tensions, the belief that staying in Cuba was more virtuous than leaving steadily gained strength.

After 1962, emigration also became more difficult. Commercial flights between the U.S. and Cuba were suspended as a result of the diplomatic break between the two countries and the escalation of tensions that culminated in the missile crisis of October 1962. Per-

sons who wanted to leave thus had to obtain visas to travel through third countries, most commonly Mexico and Spain.

Then, on September 28, 1965, Fidel Castro announced that all those who wanted to leave the country could do so. Shortly after the speech, Cubans in Miami flocked to the port of Camarioca in Matanzas, which had been designated as the place to pick up relatives. Later, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding in which the United States agreed to provide air transportation between the two countries, permitting the entry of 3,000 to 4,000 persons monthly. These “Freedom Flights” lasted until April 1973. Before 1965, 183,496 Cubans had registered with the Cuban Refugee Center in Miami. By the close of the aerial bridge in 1973, an additional 264,297 Cubans had registered.²¹

The second wave of the Cuban exodus represented another loss for the Church. Many of those who emigrated were pillars of their already weak Cuban parishes, helping to run them at the most basic level, from administering communion to the sick when there were no priests available to cleaning and maintaining the temples.

There were differences between these migrants and the early exiles. The new group had a high proportion of small entrepreneurs who had lost their small businesses as a result of a 1968 law, the *Ofensiva Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Offensive), which nationalized all remaining private property. There were also many working class families who left the country for both ideological and economic reasons. Even though they had not lost much materially, the new refugees were clearly anti-communist and had aspirations for a better life in the United States.

Unlike the earlier group, Catholics who left during this period were convinced that their trip abroad was not going to be temporary. They knew that the Revolution would not be overthrown, and perhaps because they experienced the institutional weakness of the Church more directly, they could appreciate the bishops’ non-confrontational position towards the government. They understood the Church’s mission to evangelize, regardless of the difficulties encountered in doing so. Ultimately, however, their empathy with the Church in Cuba could not overcome the individual and family concerns that persuaded them to leave.

Meanwhile, the sweeping changes taking place in the Catholic Church outside Cuba, especially in Latin America, had a direct bearing on the pastoral orientation taken by the Cuban bishops. In 1969, two documents by the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Cuba addressed to the clergy and laity clearly stated the essence of the new direction taken by the Church regionally. Citing accords from the Latin American Bishops’ meeting at Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, the Cuban bishops wrote, “[A new morality requires]...a

universal human solidarity...The attitude of the Christian person implies a reawakening, ...especially when s/he is immersed in a reality such as ours, whose fundamental driving force is the problem of development. [The basis] for a renewed social morality is part of the social teachings of the Church, ...in particular the acclaimed encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* by Pope Paul VI.”²²

The same letter openly condemned the U.S. embargo against Cuba: “How many excesses are due to the isolation that we have been living in recent years! Who among us could ignore all kinds of difficulties that circumvent development ... ? Isn’t this the case with the economic blockade that our country has been subjected to...which brings grave inconveniences to our motherland, ...especially to our children, youth, workers, the sick, ...[and] separated families. Considering the best interests of our people, and motivated by our faithful commitment to serve the poor, according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the commitment newly proclaimed at Medellín, we denounce this unjust situation of economic blockade which adds unnecessary suffering and makes the achievement of development more difficult.”²³

Sharing more reflections on the Medellín documents, the bishops’ second message to the clergy and laity, dated September 3, 1969, clearly encouraged the Church membership to “give living testimony of Christ in the concrete conditions of our national community, new in the Latin American context”²⁴ (Author’s emphasis). This was probably the most open statement that the Cuban bishops had made so far about the obligation of Catholics to stay in Cuba.

Since the bishops’ documents emphasized the issue of development rather than political oppression, many exiles saw their statements as an affront. For many Cuban Americans, the idea that the prelates had become the government’s spokespersons, was finally confirmed.²⁵

FROM DISAFFECTION TO DIALOGUE

The first wave of Cuban exiles had had the strongest links with the institutional Church. Having left during the early years of social and political struggle at the beginning of the Revolution, their attitudes about Cuba and the Cuban Church largely remained fixed in the experiences of those early years.

Amid extraordinary controversy in the Cuban American community, many, including Catholics, accepted the invitation and went to Havana.

Most Catholic exiles of the early 1960s became very active in their local parishes wherever they settled. Particularly in Miami, Cuban Catholics influenced both worship styles and administrative practices within their parishes. In Miami, New Jersey, and New York,

Cuban Americans have reached high positions in Church's bureaucratic structures.²⁶ The same can be said for refugees of the late 1960s and 1970s. Aware that a quick return to Cuba was unlikely, the realities of the Catholic Church they left on the island became increasingly distant from their daily lives abroad.

For many years, contacts between Cuban Catholics living in the United States and Catholics in Cuba were few and mostly made on an individual basis. The different realities lived by the two groups led to the development of increasingly different perspectives. Yet by the 1970s, a series of events had led to a diversification of views within the Cuban diaspora, and in 1978 the Cuban government invited some exiles to engage in a discussion known as *El Diálogo* (The Dialogue) on issues such as family reunification, visits by Cuban Americans to the island, and freedom for political prisoners. Amid extraordinary controversy in the Cuban American community, many, including Catholics, accepted the invitation and went to Havana.

After 1979, visits to Cuba became more feasible, and despite considerable fluctuations, contacts between Cubans in Cuba and Cubans in the United States have been fairly constant. In addition to family visits, there has been a significant amount of academic, artistic, and religious exchange.²⁷

In 1979, the *Asociación Católica Padre Félix Varela*, a group of Cuban American Catholics from the Cuban community of Union City, New Jersey, organized a series of religious pilgrimages to reach out to the Church and the people of Cuba. The group made several trips during which members made donations to local parishes and visited with bishops, priests, and laity. The Northeast Hispanic Catholic Center of the Archdiocese of New York took a leadership role in the distribution of donations of money and medicines to Cuba. Other Cuban American groups, such as the *Unión de Cubanos en el Exilio* (UCE, Union of Cubans in Exile) worked directly with the Center to help in this kind of work.

Visits to Cuba by Cuban-born clergy living abroad also began to take place. Bishop Boza Masvidal, who had been expelled from Cuba in 1961, and the late Msgr. del Valle, who worked with the New York Hispanic Apostolate, returned to Cuba in 1988 for a visit at the invitation of the Cuban bishops.²⁸ This new openness was slower to take root in Miami. Not until a 1996 hurricane devastated much of Cuba did the Archdiocese of Miami publicly send help to the Cuban Church. Even then, many exiles strongly criticized the effort.²⁹

Increasing contact with Cubans in the diaspora created an opportunity for the Church on the island to call for reconciliation. The Cuban bishops praised *El Diálogo* between Cuban authorities and Cubans residing abroad. A pastoral letter issued on November 21, 1978, explicitly supported these conversations

and reminded "[our] dear faithful that their baptismal vocation is linked, by Divine Providence, to the nation where they were born. To this land they owe the best of themselves, because of their unquestionable Christian identity."³⁰ This letter clearly encouraged a new, positive involvement by Cubans abroad in the affairs of their country of birth.

In 1991, it was decided that believers could become members of the Communist Party, which had not previously been permitted, and in 1992, a constitutional amendment changed Cuba from an atheist to a secular state.

At the same time that a diversity of positions was developing in the diaspora, the Church in Cuba was gradually gaining more space as well. Attendance at Catholic masses increased, the number of baptisms rose dramatically, parishes experienced modest but sustained growth, and cases of religious discrimination decreased. Greater openness on the part of the government created a better atmosphere for believers to practice their religion.

In a 1977 speech to the Jamaican Council of Churches, Fidel Castro stated that "there were no contradictions between the aims of religion and the aims of socialism."³¹ In 1985, he openly talked about these issues in an interview with Frei Betto, a Brazilian friar, which was later published in Cuba as *Fidel and Religion*. In 1991, it was decided that believers could become members of the Communist Party, which had not previously been permitted, and in 1992, a constitutional amendment changed Cuba from an atheist to a secular state.³²

This changing atmosphere encouraged Catholics to ponder their role in Cuban society. In 1986, the *Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano* (ENEC, Cuban National Church Gathering) summarized an unprecedented four-year process of national reflection that involved the clergy and laity of every Cuban parish. ENEC's final document referred to the Church's concern for those outside of Cuba. "[The Church] must reach out to those Cubans living abroad permanently, in a mutual and respectful acceptance of the different realities in which every group lives. Reaching out must go beyond family reencounters and material interests. We must aim at a moral and spiritual communion, which is supported by a common cultural heritage, including the Catholic influence."

THE CHURCH, MARIEL, AND THE *BALSEROS*

In the Spring of 1980, the third wave of Cuban migrants began to arrive in the United States. On March 28, 1980, a bus full of Cubans wanting to leave the country crashed into the Peruvian embassy in Havana and the occupants requested political asylum.

A Cuban guard was killed during the incident. On April 4, the Cuban government withdrew the guards surrounding the embassy and announced that those seeking asylum would be allowed to leave Cuba. Within 48 hours, more than 10,000 Cubans had taken refuge on the embassy grounds. The Cuban government announced that the port of Mariel would be opened for all Cubans wanting to leave. Cubans in Florida immediately began sailing boats of all sizes to Cuba and ferrying Cubans from Mariel across the Florida Straits to Key West.³³

As a group, the Mariel refugees were more representative of the Cuban population than earlier waves of emigration. They were poorer and darker than earlier refugees. The number of blacks in this group was significantly higher than that of the previous waves—approximately 20 percent compared with three percent previously. Males outnumbered females by a ratio of two to one, at least at the beginning of the migration.³⁴ Although some of the refugees from Mariel were relatives of Cubans already residing in the United States who had been waiting for years to rejoin their families, a large segment had actively supported the Revolution and was discouraged mainly by increasing economic difficulties in Cuba.

After Mariel, the U.S. government agreed to authorize 20,000 visas annually to Cubans who wanted to leave the country. But in practice, legal migration between 1980 and 1992 was more limited, and even the allotment of 20,000 would not have satisfied demand. As a result, a steady flow of refugees also continued reaching the coasts of Florida illegally.

The fourth massive wave of refugees came in the Summer of 1994, almost exclusively in small boats and homemade rafts. The *balseros*, or rafters, came from the most modest socioeconomic sectors of Cuban society and were far less likely to have relatives in Miami than previous waves of immigrants.

The Cuban government openly encouraged those who wanted to leave to do so, perhaps because of its unwillingness to use scarce resources to patrol its borders and the perceived need to provide a safety valve for growing social tensions. The decision came at a time when Cuba was experiencing the deepest economic crisis in its history, following the 1989 collapse of the Soviet bloc. Thousands risked their lives on flimsy rafts, and many perished during the journey.

The U.S. government ordered all picked up at sea to be placed in the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo, Cuba.³⁵ The decision was highly controversial. Cubans had enjoyed automatic asylum up to that time, but economic conditions in South Florida, the influx of other immigrant groups in Miami, pressures from the Cuban government, and growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States caused the United States to end that privilege.

As a result of this latest crisis, the Cuban and U.S. governments engaged in a new round of migration talks. The United States promised 20,000 visas a year for Cubans to come to the United States. In May 1995, the refugees in Guantánamo were also allowed to come to the United States.³⁶

Growing up during a period of government hostility toward religion, many had never had any contact with the Church at all.

Few of the Cubans who left during the 1980s and 1990s were practicing Catholics. Growing up during a period of government hostility toward religion, many had never had any contact with the Church at all. Instead, a great number had espoused atheism as former Marxist revolutionaries.

The Church in Cuba took a moderate position on the new exodus: “We must encourage all [Christian] communities, as we face this exodus, to redouble their missionary concerns, as the Lord expects from us...The Church exhorts its members to make a personal decision that is illuminated by the Gospel...and by their commitment to their faith and their homeland...not only by human criteria.”³⁷

Msgr. Pedro Meurice, Havana’s Apostolic Administrator at the time and signer of this statement, outlined what has become the consistent stand of the Cuban Church on migration: the Church encourages its members to stay in Cuba, although it will respect individual decisions to do the contrary.

The Cuban Catholic Church also reacted to the refugee exodus of the Summer of 1994 by questioning the conditions that would drive people to commit such desperate acts and to take such great risks to leave the country. It also challenged incidents of government violence in response to their departure.

Archbishop of Havana Jaime Ortega elaborated on both matters. “Even when points of view are different, isn’t there room for prudence? Are we incapable of having a merciful heart, even when we all experience the same difficulties? Where can this dangerous, violent path take us?”³⁸ The statement ended with an exhortation for prayer and reconciliation among all Cubans as the only alternative.

The statement echoed a 1993 pastoral letter, *El amor todo lo espera* (Love hopes all things), in which the Church had called for an urgent dialogue among all Cubans, including the diaspora, to seek solutions to the nation’s crisis. The government expressed its dissatisfaction with the pastoral letter, arguing that it promoted divisions by favoring U.S. influence in national affairs. The bishops responded by reiterating their desire to engage in dialogue about issues of national concern and asserting that the government did not want to talk about anything outside purely religious matters.³⁹ Although this period brought

renewed tensions between Church and State, the Church's expanding voice and the government's softening stance toward the institution converged to make continuing conversations possible.

As Cubans continued to leave in the 1990s, legally and illegally, the Church restated its position on the matter. In a poignant article published in *Aquí la Iglesia* in March 1994, then Bishop Jaime Ortega lamented the separation of Cuban families due to migration. Msgr. Ortega regretted the pain endured by both those who leave and those who stay behind. "Strong feelings have always surrounded the exodus of Cubans," he observed. "There are those who indiscriminately condemn all who leave the country...[and] those who are happy about leaving or to see their relatives leave...[But] could there not be a deeper feeling that could be shared by all Cubans? [And] that is sorrow. Sorrow among those who leave for abandoning their motherland, and sorrow among those who stay, because the nation is poorer as it loses its children."⁴⁰

The article ended by calling on those who would risk their lives at sea, especially the young, to fight the yearning to do so. "Life is a gift of God and it should not be endangered unless there are powerful reasons, such as saving somebody else's life. Do not cause irreparable suffering to the hearts of your mothers, fathers, siblings, and friends. Let there be no mother who risks the life of her child in such dangerous action. Let us learn to think and to feel in those human terms capable of transforming the best in ourselves."⁴¹

POPE JOHN PAUL II'S VISIT TO CUBA⁴²

Negotiations for a Papal visit to Cuba had been taking place for years, but a more concrete agreement did not come until Fidel Castro visited the Vatican in November 1996. Many Catholics in exile welcomed the news with great joy.⁴³ Some thought that the Pontiff's visit would cause significant political change in Cuba. Many expected the Pope to encourage dialogue among all parties concerned. But others, including prominent Cuban business and political figures in Miami, expressed great dissatisfaction and even contempt.⁴⁴ And these were the dominant voices. Radio stations such as Miami's Radio Mambi erupted in disapproval of the trip. From their point of view, agreement between the Cuban government and the Vatican for the visit could only lead to greater legitimacy for Fidel Castro.

Controversy over the Papal visit also appeared in Catholic circles. Miami's Auxiliary Bishop Agustín Román made strong statements against the journey and claimed that, as someone who had been expelled from the island in the early 1960s, he could not join the trip. The Archbishop of Miami, John Clement Favalora, acceded to the pressures of Cuban American community leaders when he agreed to suspend plans for a cruise ship that was to carry 1,000 people from Miami to Cuba for the event. In its place he arranged a one-day flight from Miami for travelers to attend the

Pope's last mass in Havana.⁴⁵ These pressures persuaded many Cubans in Miami, including some of the clergy, to cancel their plans to participate. Other Miamians joined pilgrimages leaving from New York, Tampa, and Boston, where opposition to the trip was not as strong.

Who were the Cuban Americans who traveled to Cuba for the Pope's visit? What were their feelings, given that many had not had contact with their church of origin for many years? Did some of the critics of the Church in Cuba change their minds about dialogue, or were they just curious? Were the efforts of some Catholic exile groups to reach out to the Cuban Church bearing fruit? To answer all these questions would require a comprehensive survey of the participants. While such a study has not been made, some useful observations can be drawn from the author's own participation in the pilgrimage organized by the New York Archdiocese and from some post-visit opinions expressed by other travelers.

The New York group flew in a chartered plane directly to José Martí International Airport in Havana the day before the Pope's arrival. The delegation comprised 400 persons, two thirds of whom were Cuban American, and included clergy and members of the press. Cuban Americans in the group tended to be middle-aged individuals born in Cuba who had migrated to the United States shortly after the Revolution as part of the first wave of exiles. Many had never returned. A disproportionately high number came from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds in pre-revolutionary Cuba. Several did not have any known relatives left in the country, but as practicing Catholics wanted to participate in the Papal visit. Others had wanted to return for other reasons, and the event made their journey more politically defensible.

The outpouring of warmth and emotion experienced by all in the group was completely unexpected. People from all backgrounds—Catholics, non-Catholics, Communists—expressed great excitement about the Pope's visit. As a taxi driver in Havana told the author, "It is so important for Cuba that John Paul II come to visit. That means that he supports the Cuban people and that he is a friend of Cuba. You know, it is good for the Americans and others to know that." In a different tone, a hotel chef who was standing in the crowd waiting for the Pope remarked, "For the first time we Cubans can be true to ourselves and others. No more masks. No more fear about having our religious beliefs."

The Cuban American visitors interviewed by the author were particularly impressed by the vitality of a Catholic Church that many had assumed to be weak and compromising. They were deeply moved by the daily difficulties that Cubans experience and inspired by the amount of help being provided by the Church. Many Cuban Americans visited their old neighbor-

hoods, schools, and in many cases, friends and relatives. Their experiences put to the test the conventional exile wisdom about how to relate to Cuba and Cubans. Most came to believe that isolation has not helped the Cuban people and subscribe the Pope's call for the world to open up to Cuba. A great number now oppose the 40-year-old U.S. embargo.

The Pope's visit was thus an important moment for the Cuban Catholic diaspora. Once back in the United States, many of these pilgrims found themselves permanently changed. Upon their return, many committed themselves to continuing contacts with the Church in Cuba and promoting humanitarian aid efforts for their Cuban compatriots. Through their parishes many have been forging new bonds with Cubans on the island by sending medicines, school supplies, and other basic items. Collections are often taken to rebuild churches in Cuba, and a sister parish system has developed in Miami and New York, where specific parishes in the United States help specific parishes in Cuba. General assistance to the different dioceses in the island is also increasing. Those who participated in the trip have also been talking to relatives, friends, church, business, and political leaders about their experience.

Few in Cuba or the United States expected the overwhelming display of love, appreciation, and respect that the Cuban people showed John Paul II.

The enthusiasm of the returning travelers generated surprisingly little controversy in the Cuban American community. This was perhaps due to the extraordinary success of the Papal visit. Few in Cuba or the United States expected the overwhelming display of love, appreciation, and respect that the Cuban people showed John Paul II.

Reactions from church leaders quickly followed in the trip's aftermath. Exiled Cuban Bishop Eduardo Boza Masvidal, a longtime resident of Venezuela, had long favored reconciliation and had in fact returned to Cuba once since 1961, but the Pontiff's visit had a profound emotional effect on him. "The Cuban bishops showed me great friendship, and in all celebrations and activities they wanted me to share a place with them as a Cuban bishop," observed Boza Masvidal.⁴⁶ Regarding the repercussions of the Pope's visit on Cubans in the diaspora, he expressed, "I think all Cubans in exile, to whom the Pope referred on various occasions, should feel very happy about this [visit] and about the fact that a group of us were there, representative of various countries...I was saddened to read a press release that appeared here in Venezuela saying that some in the Miami media called the mural of the Sacred Heart and other things [displayed in the Plaza of the Revolution] a part of the show. For the Cuban people this was not a show, it was an intense and

profound experience lived with joy and happiness. If we maintain such negative attitudes and foment hatred and division, we can expect little."⁴⁷

In Miami, some of the critical voices that were heard before the Papal visit became more understanding afterward. Bishop Román celebrated masses at the Ermita de la Caridad (the Miami shrine of the Virgin of La Caridad del Cobre) while the Pope was in Cuba to pray for the visit's success. Later, Msgr. Román praised the Pope's trip and invited all to reflect. In an emotional statement, he wrote, "Beyond any interpretation, there are the words that we have heard, the expressions that we have seen, and the spirit that has made itself palpable between the Pastor and his flock. These have been blessed days with the presence of the Pope in our motherland...and above all else we must give thanks to God, Our Lord, who has allowed this to happen...Now, after these lived emotions, the challenge is to increase our solidarity with our Church in Cuba in prayer, in help, and availability."⁴⁸

Cuban American priest Father Pedro Nuñez, editor of the Spanish-language Catholic magazine *Mensaje*, wrote, "Who could have imagined only a few years ago that the Pope would travel to Cuba, especially because, for 35 years this country has been under an atheist regime? Tears came to my eyes when I saw the Holy Father kiss Cuban soil...but, as the Scriptures say, nothing is impossible for God...This is the beginning of a new era of hope for all Cubans."⁴⁹

Cuban American parishioners who made the trip expressed similar sentiments. José Andreas Rionda, a corporate executive from Forest Hills, New Jersey, conveyed his feelings about the trip. "The Cuban people are the same today as they were when I was there. They suffer. But they struggle, the same as we do. They treated us like brothers and sisters, without resentment or anger. That made me think that the solution to Cuba's problems has to be peaceful, not violent."⁵⁰

Clara Baloyra from Miami also expressed how moved she had been during her trip to Cuba. Since her return, she has been involved in a number of projects with other Catholics in Miami to help the Church and the Cuban people. Some of these projects include material assistance (medicine, food, and money) to the Sisters of Charity for the leprosy and for disabled children.⁵¹

José Manuel Hernández, Professor Emeritus at Georgetown University, believes that the Pope's visit to Cuba will have a lasting influence in Cuba and among Cuban Americans. He believes that, as happened in Poland, the Papal trip will bring gradual but enduring change. "Many in Miami thought that Fidel tricked the Pope and used this visit for his own advantage. First of all, the Pope is a very intelligent man and he knows what he is doing. Also, we cannot forget that his main purpose in going to Cuba was

pastoral. By going there he helped open a wider space for the Church. Catholicism in Cuba was a middle-class thing before the Revolution, but now we are seeing a new phase where it is becoming more popular. The Church in Cuba has worked hard for this and the Pope's visit helped a great deal."⁵²

Other visitors have questioned U.S. policy toward Cuba. Returning to Cuba after 37 years of exile, Elena Freyre from Miami returned convinced that the U.S. embargo contributes to the difficulties of daily life in Cuba. She organized the Florida chapter of the *American Humanitarian Trade Council*, AHTC, headed by the United States Chamber of Commerce. AHTC is a bipartisan coalition of Americans and Cuban Americans in business, politics, medicine, religion, and labor. Its objective is to modify the embargo so as to allow the unrestricted sale of food and medicines.⁵³

Days after her return from Cuba, María Werlau shared her views with a Miami audience. Although skeptical of the Church's lasting influence in the visit's aftermath, she considered the Pontiff's journey to have made an authentically powerful and highly symbolic impact at the level of the individual. She took issue with the Pope's implication that the U.S. embargo was mainly responsible for Cuba's economic ills, but also concluded that it was time to review U.S. policy toward Cuba. In her own words, "In the aftermath of the Pope's visit, I would engage in some serious reflection concerning the adequacy of existing U.S. policy. Time has run its course. The Torricelli Law of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Law of 1996—both of which I've generally and actively supported—have not brought about the demise of the Castro regime. To my disappointment, I doubt they will...For this reason, I am more convinced now than before my trip that we need to look carefully at loosening trade aspects of the embargo."⁵⁴

This change in views among much of the diaspora stimulated political action. On March 31, 1998, hundreds of Cuban Americans, including about 150 from Miami, traveled to Washington to lobby for legislation authorizing the sale of food and medicine to Cuba. Dozens visited the offices of the three Cuban Americans and various other legislators who oppose any alteration of the embargo.

The Papal visit also generated changes among many who did not attend. On two occasions, at a parish in New York and another one in New Jersey, the author gave a slide presentation of the visit to predominantly Cuban American audiences, showing pictures of the masses and other activities. Emotional comments and questions followed the presentations. Many asked how Cuban Americans could help the Church and the people of Cuba. Also remarkable was the high attendance in Cuban American parishes for the feast of the Virgin of La Caridad del Cobre on September 8, 1998. For the first time at the Newark Cathedral, a mass was celebrated to honor the Virgin of La Caridad; this

was previously done in individual churches throughout the Archdiocese. The Newark Archbishop, who attended the Papal visit in Cuba, has supported the Cuban Church since his return. The temple was full, despite the concentration of politically active, conservative Cuban American groups in the area.

Individual Cuban Americans have returned to Cuba after the Pope's visit to establish contacts with parish groups there. Sammy Díaz, a former member of *Juventud Católica* in Cuba, returned with a delegation of Caritas, the world-wide Catholic humanitarian aid organization. During his trip, Díaz viewed the Church in Cuba as vibrant and immersed in the reality of the country. He had traveled to the island during the Pope's visit a year earlier. In his second trip, Díaz was very impressed with "the professional level, the dedication, and the commitment of Catholics in the different dioceses and parishes in the distribution of food to people."⁵⁵ Father José Espino, a Cuban American priest in Miami, decided to return to serve the Church in his homeland. Since his ordination, Espino's dream was to go back to the diocese in Oriente where he was born. Despite the harsh realities that he found upon arrival in his new diocese, he felt that "this was a call from God."⁵⁶

But dissenting voices are strong as well. A long letter from a Cuban American in New Jersey, addressed to Archbishop Theodore McCarrick shortly after the Pope's trip to Cuba, describes the efforts at reconciliation as a "repugnant campaign in favor of Castro." The author accuses Archbishop McCarrick and other U.S. prelates advocating the end of the embargo of insensitivity toward the Cuban diaspora. "I hope that in the future," the writer states, "Cuban exiles receive the respect we deserve from our Church's leadership."⁵⁷

At the same time that the bishops have stated their predilection for Catholics and other citizens to remain in Cuba, they have also argued that dialogue with those who live abroad is a legitimate part of the Church's apostolic mission.

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

In the early years of the Cuban Revolution, the Church not only condoned but also participated in the mass exodus. A great number of priests, laity, and nuns were among those leaving the country for what they thought would be a brief absence. The socioeconomic background of the migrants at that time—mainly upper and middle class—was not different from those of most Church leaders. All left the island expecting to return immediately after the overthrow of the government, which they saw as imminent. When that did not happen, the Cuban Church, virtually depleted of both leadership and membership,

entered a long and difficult phase of survival.

As the government consolidated power and the post-Vatican II Catholic Church became more active in world affairs, the Cuban Church gradually reinserted itself into the broader Cuban society. As a result of reflections on their evangelical mission and Church teachings, the Cuban bishops took a clear position against the U.S. embargo and discouraged migration. Since 1969 they have expressed their preference for Cubans to stay in Cuba and to live the Gospel in their specific circumstances.

The visit by John Paul II to Cuba in early 1998 broadened the mass of Cuban American Catholics who openly favored closer relations with their native church.

The bishops' concerns with the exodus increased as the means of escape became more dangerous and many lives were lost on flimsy homemade rafts. On this particular point, the Cuban bishops have long expressed their desire to engage in a dialogue with the government and the diaspora to find solutions to the conditions that generate migration and divide Cuban families.

At the same time that the bishops have stated their predilection for Catholics and other citizens to remain in Cuba, they have also argued that dialogue with those who live abroad is a legitimate part of the Church's apostolic mission. This is not a new development. According to some Cuban Catholic leaders, many Cuban parishes kept records of the families that emigrated from the very beginning onward. At Christmas and Easter, priests sent cards to those families. In addition, when Cuban clergy visited other countries, they usually communicated with Cubans residing there.⁵⁸ These contacts intensified in the late 1970s when the Cuban government began permitting family travel to Cuba by Cuban Americans. As Cuban bishops and priests traveled to the United States more frequently, they received the support of many in the Cuban American community.⁵⁹

The visit by John Paul II to Cuba in early 1998 broadened the mass of Cuban American Catholics who openly favored closer relations with their native church. The visit led to changes on the Cuban side as well. The Conference of Cuban Catholic Bishops specifically appointed Msgr. Dionisio García, Bishop of Bayamo-Manzanillo, to handle relations with the diaspora. Since that time, Msgr. García has coordinated meetings between Cuban clergy from the island and their Cuban counterparts in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Miami, and New York. The most recent gathering in February 2000 was held in West Palm Beach, Florida, and was the first to bring together lay Catholics from Cuba and the diaspora.

Efforts at reconciliation seem to be gradually

bearing fruit. Further improvement in the relationship between the Church in Cuba and the diaspora will ultimately depend on two factors. The first is the relationship between Church and State, which will affect the ability to establish and maintain solid channels of communication, material assistance, and frequent contact between Cuban Catholics on the island and abroad.⁶⁰ These can only continue in an atmosphere of continued distension and understanding. The second is the relationship between Cuba and the United States. A lessening of hostilities between the two countries would greatly facilitate a process of reunification, dialogue, reconciliation, and healing between Cubans living in each.

Yolanda Prieto is a Professor of Sociology at Ramapo College of New Jersey. She specializes in the study of migration, in particular the post-1959 Cuban exodus to the United States. She has written extensively on the experiences of Cuban immigrant women in this country. Dr. Prieto has widely researched the role of religion in U.S. Latino communities as well as the relations between Cuban Catholics in the island and those abroad. At present, she is writing a book on Cubans in Union City, New Jersey.

NOTES

¹Cuban Catholic Bishops Conference. Press statement released on December 8, 1999, published in *Granma*, La Habana, Cuba, December 18, 1999.

²Ortega Alamino, Jaime, Cardinal. *Aquila Iglesia*, Archdiocese of Havana's monthly journal, February 8, 2000. Translated and published by *The Miami Herald*, February 11, 2000.

³Interview with Dr. María Cristina Herrera, Professor of Social Sciences at Miami-Dade Community College, February 13, 2000. The Church's position, especially the Cardinal's statement, was bitterly criticized in the Cuban American radio stations and newspapers.

⁴Fernández, Manuel. *Religión y Revolución en Cuba*, Saeta Ediciones, Miami, Florida, 1984, p. 36.

⁵Ibid. pp. 38-41.

⁶Ibid. p. 37.

⁷Ibid. pp. 40-41.

⁸Crahan, Margaret E. Chapter on Cuba, in Sigmund, Paul E. ed., *Religious Freedom and Evangelization in Latin America: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1999, pp. 93-94.

⁹Fernández, *Religión y Revolución en Cuba*, p. 59.

¹⁰Ibid. pp. 88-89.

¹¹Ibid. pp. 80-81, 102-103. One of these organizations was known as *Con la Cruz y Por la Patria*, With the Cross and For the Motherland.

¹²Ibid. p. 104.

¹³Crahan, p. 93.

¹⁴Ibid. pp. 94-96.

¹⁵Interview with María de los Ángeles García, Former Associate Director of the Newark Archdiocese, Catechism for Hispanics, March 1, 2000. As diocesan president of *Acción Católica* during that period in Cuba, Ms. García participated in the design and implementation of these programs.

¹⁶Crahan, p. 89.

¹⁷Alfonso, Pablo. *Cuba, Castro y los Católicos*, Hispamerican Books, Miami, Florida, 1985, pp. 172-179.

¹⁸Ibid. pp. 172-173, Fernández, *Religión y Revolución en Cuba*, pp. 124-125. Many authors are critical of the Vatican policy at the time. Some in exile emphasize the fact that Msgr. Zacchi "imposed the Roman line," which overrode the bishops' authority and was only partially sensitive to Cuban reality. A letter from one group, *Cuban Priests in the Diaspora*, meeting in Venezuela in 1969, urged the Vatican not to forget "those who suffer the rigors of Marxism-Leninism, that is, many in jail, or those who, harassed by the government, were forced to flee the country." The reality, however, is that Msgr. Zacchi's tenure in Cuba resulted in wider channels of communication and improved relations between Church and State.

¹⁹Conde, Yvonne M. *Operation Pedro Pan: The Untold Exodus of 14,048 Cuban Children*, Routledge Press, New York, 1999, p. 98. (Some observers have pointed out the irony that the recent case of Elián González was also based on the notion of the patria potestas; only that this time it was the exiles who challenged the rights of the father who lives in Cuba.)

²⁰Ibid. p. 66.

²¹Prieto, Yolanda. *Reinterpreting an Immigration Success Story: Cuban Women, Work, and Change in a New Jersey Community*, Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1984. pp. 59-60.

²²Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, Secretariado General, *La Voz de la Iglesia: 100 Documentos Episcopales*, Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, Mexico, D.F., 1995.

²³Ibid. Letter published on April 10, 1969. p. 175.

²⁴Ibid. Letter published on September 3, 1969. pp. 185-186. Italics mine.

²⁵Alfonso, p. 177. In Cuba there was also discontent in many quarters about the bishops' position. Some priests did not even read the letters in their Sunday homily, and some who did expressed their opposition after they read them.

²⁶Wenski, Thomas G. Msgr. "Ties Between the Cuban Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Miami," paper delivered at the XXII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Miami, March 16-18, 2000. pp. 11-12. Also, interview with María de los Ángeles García, March 1, 2000. Both Wenski and García asserted that Cubans in the United States had a higher level of church participation than they did in Cuba. In the case of immigrants, religion often serves as a vehicle for integration into the new society. Cubans in particular may have sought help in religion to offset the dislocations of exile.

²⁷As a result of the dialogue, 3,000 political prisoners were released and thousands of Cuban Americans began to travel to the island every year. Cuban American academics participated regularly at conferences in Cuba. Groups like *Areito*, which produced a magazine, and the Antonio Maceo Brigade, both supportive of the Revolution were also important in helping to establish bridges between Cuba and the Cuban American community.

²⁸Msgr. Del Valle worked with the poor in the South Bronx, New York. His work reminds one of Father Félix Varela, who also came to New York as an exile and worked among immigrants. Varela was an inspiration for Del Valle, who died shortly after returning from his trip to Cuba. He created the Félix Varela Foundation, an organization intended to award scholarships to Hispanic Youth.

²⁹Wenski, pp. 14-15.

³⁰Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, *La Voz de la Iglesia*,

p. 212.

³¹Castro, Fidel. Transcripts, November 20, 1977, p. 5, in Crahan, Cuba, *Religious Freedom and Evangelization*, p. 104.

³²Crahan, p. 107.

³³Prieto, p. 66.

³⁴Ibid. p. 67.

³⁵Pedraza, Silvia, "Cuban Refugees: Manifold Migrations," in Pedraza, Silvia and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, New York, 1996, pp. 272-273.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, *La Voz de la Iglesia*, p. 218.

³⁸Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, *La Voz de la Iglesia*, p. 446.

³⁹Ibid. pp. 424-425.

⁴⁰Ibid. p. 432.

⁴¹Ibid. p. 433.

⁴²The discussion on the Pope's trip to Cuba is largely based on the author's participation in the event. The author conducted 12 interviews by telephone or in person with visitors from Miami, Washington, New Jersey, and New York, and informally had conversations with as many as 25 persons, including travelers and non-travelers, during and after the visit. References from interviews, conversations, magazines, and the author's own observations reflect the general mood among Cuban American Catholics and other Cubans at the time, concerning John Paul II's visit to the island.

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⁴³Some sectors of the Cuban diaspora supported the internal dialogue between Church and State and between Cubans on the island and those abroad. Many Cuban Americans were looking forward to the Pope's visit. As mentioned earlier, there had been numerous contacts since the 1970s. In 1994, three Cuban bishops met in Mexico with three Cuban-born bishops living outside of Cuba to talk about humanitarian help to Cubans through Caritas, the international, humanitarian aid, Catholic organization, and to promote relations between the Cuban Church and Cuban exiles. Also, a movement within Catholic Cuban Americans, *Comunidades de Reflexión Eclesial Cubana en la Diáspora*, CRECED, began working on establishing closer relations with the Church on the island. This group followed events in the Cuban Church, and though it focused mainly on strengthening the institution in a post-communist Cuba, the CRECED movement supported the positions of the Church in its present reality. (See CRECED, *Documento Final*, Ramallo Bros Printing, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, 1996).

⁴⁴See Ramírez, Lyng-Hou, "Visita del Papa crea contradicciones entre fe y política," InterPress Third World News Agency, Montevideo, Uruguay, January 19, 1998.

⁴⁵Wenski, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁶Boza Masvidal, Eduardo, Bishop Msgr., *Revista Ideal*, No. 283, Año 1998, np.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Román, Agustín, Msgr. *Revista Ideal*, No. 283, Año 1998, np.

⁴⁹Nuñez, Rev. Pedro, "La visita del Papa ha dejado una marca irreversible," *Mensaje*, February/March, 1998, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁰*Revista Maryknoll*, "Nuevos caminos y viejos andares," Testimony of José Andreas Rionda, May 1998, p. 25.

⁵¹Telephone interview with Clara Baloyra, September 22, 1998.

⁵²Telephone interview with José Manuel Hernández, June 23, 1999.

⁵³Telephone interview with Elena Freyre, September 18, 1998.

⁵⁴Werlau, María, "Impressions on the Visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba," Paper presented at the panel *The Transition from Socialism to Capitalism in Poland: A Case Study for Cuba's Freedom*, a forum sponsored by the American Institute for Polish Culture and Universidad Latinoamericana de la Libertad Friederick Hayek, Miami, Florida, February 6, 1998.

⁵⁵Cantero, Araceli, "Vio una iglesia vibrante y encarnada durante un recorrido de varias diócesis y encuentro con laicos y obispos," *La Voz Católica*, Miami, Florida, March 11, 1999.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Cuban exile letter to Msgr. Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, February 20, 1998.

⁵⁸Telephone interview with Msgr. Dionisio García, Bishop of the Bayamo-Manzanillo diocese, February 13, 2000.

⁵⁹Wenski, "Ties Between the Cuban Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Miami." One conspicuous example of intolerance toward the Cuban clergy was the criticism hurled at Cardinal Jaime Ortega when he visited Miami and New Jersey in 1994. In both places there were demonstrations against him outside the churches where he was appearing. But the number who welcomed him inside the temples was much higher.

⁶⁰Periodic tensions reappear in Church State relations, though there is an apparent commitment on both sides to maintain the dialogue. These recurring disagreements, probably an anticipated part of the process, unfortunately delay progress. For example, at the time of this writing, the official newspaper *Granma* has accused some in the Church of conspiring with the Polish government to accelerate the downfall of the Revolution. The Catholic Church denied the accusations. Associated Press, published in *The Miami Herald*, May 19, 2000.

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