

Number 16 January 1998

## **Cuba and Cuban Americans: An Irreconcilable Relationship?**

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On 18 October 1997, a young Cuban pitcher named Liván Hernández threw a strike to Cleveland Indians infielder Bip Roberts to start the opening game of the World Series. Hernández went on to win the game for the Florida Marlins to the cheers of more than sixty thousand fans (including many Cuban Americans waving Cuban flags) gathered at Pro Player Stadium, just north of Miami.

That same day in Havana crowds also gathered, but for a different purpose: the burial of the remains of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. The Cuban government made every effort to keep the population's attention focused on the event, which was intended to serve as a reminder of Che's socialist ideals and revolutionary sacrifices. But a New York Times correspondent reported from Havana that most Cubans seemed less interested in the funeral of the fallen guerrillero than on the exploits of the rising pelotero. Before defecting a couple of years ago, Hernández had been the pitching ace of the Cuban national baseball team, and word of his triumph in the World Series spread rapidly throughout the island. Although displeased with his defection, Cubans on the island seemed fascinated by and proud of his triumph in the U.S. major leagues. That ambivalent attitude toward the exiled pitcher typifies Cubans' view of their departed compatriots. The exiles have, officially, been both vilified and welcomed. Many ordinary Cubans probably view them with a mixture of disdain, admiration, hostility, and fascination.

But ambivalence and contradiction also exist on the other side of the Straits of Florida. An example is provided by another baseball story.

A few years ago, when Liván Hernández was still the ace of the Cuban national baseball team, the mayor of the small city of Homestead, Florida, just south of greater Miami, succeeded in attracting to his city a portion of the games scheduled for an international amateur baseball tournament being played in various cities throughout the United States. The mayor (who was not of Cuban origin) did not have a large Cuban American constituency. However, he knew that the largest concentration of Cubans in the United States was located just a short drive to the north and that they always seemed to be interested in their native country. As a gesture of neighborly goodwill, and no doubt with an interest in attracting large crowds to Homestead's brand-new baseball stadium, he arranged to have the Cuban national baseball team included among those scheduled to play in his city.

As soon as the news reached Miami's Cuban Americans that Homestead would be hosting the Cuban team, the mayor found himself vilified by the Spanish-language radio stations of southern Florida, and no less than a member of the U.S. Congress labeled his actions as

grossly insensitive and offensive to his Cuban American neighbors. Faced with such a reaction, the vexed and perplexed mayor quickly had the game schedule rearranged so that Homestead would not host the Cuban team. He was therefore disabused of what seemed a perfectly sensible, yet evidently mistaken, assumption: that a community of Cuban Americans would welcome the Cuban national baseball team.

The incident is one example among many of how the ambivalent and tumultuous relationship between Cuban Americans and Cuba may escape comprehension, and indeed even appear to defy reason. Moreover, in addition to being unreasonable, things are frequently not what they appear to be. Let's speculate, for example, on what might have happened if the mayor of Homestead had not changed his mind about hosting the Cuban team. He would have faced a crescendo of opposition from the Cuban American community, including threats of demonstrations and violence. However, he also would have been surprised to encounter some Cuban American support for the visit and to find that his original expectations regarding a good attendance at the games by Cuban Americans were not entirely off the mark. In other words, the mayor would have learned that the relationship between Cuban Americans and their homeland is a complex one, fraught with strong emotions, contradictions, and nuances that make it perplexing and difficult to understand and appreciate in all its dimensions. Or, to put it in the vernacular, he probably would have concluded that he can't figure out those Cubans.

That conclusion would have been further reinforced in the mayor's mind had he been one of the fans at Pro Player Stadium during Hernández's win over the Indians. He would probably have asked himself how it was possible that not too long ago Hernández and his teammates were not welcomed to Homestead by their compatriots, while here were all these Cuban Americans cheering wildly for Hernández in the World Series. Go figure.

Such seeming contradictions are not limited to baseball. Although many Cubans may disapprove of Cuban Americans for their departure and hostility, the island unofficially welcomes the money, goods, news, and music that flow from the diaspora. Meanwhile, there is a basic contradiction in the Cuban American relationship with the island. On the one hand, pressure and lobbying from Cuban American leaders and organizations have been a critical factor in maintaining a hostile U.S. policy toward Cuba of economic isolation. On the other hand, it is estimated that remittances and visits from Cuban Americans to the island may account for as much as one-fourth of Cuba's foreign exchange income, surpassing what the island earns from tourism and not too far behind its income from sales in the international sugar market. Go figure.

That is precisely what this paper attempts to do: "figure out," or try to make sense of, the contradictory, complex, and ambivalent relationship between Cuba and Cuban Americans, and examine prospects for future reconciliation.

## THE CUBAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, there are approximately 1.1 million persons in the United States who identify themselves as being of Cuban "origin or descent." About two-thirds of all Cuban Americans were born in Cuba, reflecting the fact that the largest waves of emigration from the island have taken place since 1959. In other words, even in the 1990s, most Cuban Americans are first-generation immigrants, a factor of some importance in understanding their political culture.

There have been four major waves of emigration to the United States from Cuba since the rise of the present Cuban government in 1959. More than any other factor, the availability of the means to leave Cuba determined the timing of these waves. The first wave spanned the period from 1959 to October 1962, the month of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Despite the severing of U.S.-Cuban diplomatic relations in January 1961, regular commercial air traffic continued, carrying most of the two hundred thousand persons who emigrated from Cuba to the United States during that period. The U.S. government facilitated their entry by granting them refugee status.

The Missile Crisis ended all direct communications and travel between the United States and Cuba. As a result, the pace of Cuban emigration slowed down considerably from 1963 to 1965. Persons leaving the island during those years did so clandestinely, in rafts or small boats, or through third countries, usually Spain or Mexico.

The second wave started in the autumn of 1965. In response to internal pressures for emigration, the Cuban government opened a port and allowed persons from the United States to go to Cuba to pick up relatives who wanted to leave the country. Some five thousand people left from the port of Camarioca before the United States and Cuba halted the boatlift and agreed to an orderly airlift. The airlift, also called the "freedom flights," started in December 1965 and lasted until 1973. The twice-daily flights brought 260,500 persons to the United States during those years.

The termination of the airlift brought another period of relatively low emigration from Cuba that lasted until the end of the 1970s. The third wave took place in 1980, when the pressures for emigration once again caused the Cuban government to open a port (this time Mariel) for unrestricted departure. Mariel became the launching point for a boatlift that lasted for six months and brought, in a manner uncontrolled by Washington, more than 125,000 Cubans into the United States.

The rest of the 1980s and the early 1990s saw a lull in emigration from Cuba, despite the activation in 1987 of an emigration agreement that provided for the admission into the United States of up to twenty thousand Cubans a year (in actuality, only some two thousand persons per year were admitted). Once again, pressures for emigration built up on the island, and the number of clandestine departures started climbing. On 11 August 1994, the Cuban government announced that it would not detain anyone trying to leave Cuba on a raft or other vessel. Between that date and 14 September, nearly thirty-seven thousand Cubans were rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard. Most of them were detained for more than a year in camps at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo before finally being admitted into the United States. As a result of the 1994 "rafter crisis," Washington agreed to admit at least

twenty thousand Cubans a year through the normal visa process. Thus far, that goal has been met.

These four waves of emigration are responsible for the bulk of the Cuban American population. Currently, more than 55 percent of the U.S. Cuban-origin population lives in southern Florida. This concentration has taken place despite an initial dispersion caused by the Cuban Refugee Resettlement Program of the U.S. government, which sought to alleviate the pressures of the Cuban influx on Miami through a relocation program. Between 1961 and 1978 more than three hundred thousand persons were resettled away from southern Florida. Almost from the beginning of the program, however, some immigrants were making their way back to Miami, which today is the undisputed Cuban American "capital" and a main stage for the processes described in this paper.

### THE DOMINANT TRADITION: DISTANCE AND HOSTILITY

During the past four decades, the relationship between Cubans and Cuban Americans has been marked by distance and hostility. Lack of communication and contact, isolation, mutual suspicion, distrust, intransigence, and conflict have been the features of that relationship. In both Havana and Miami, the respective leaderships have maintained and reinforced that distance and hostility, finding support for such a stance from significant sectors of their constituencies. Although, as we shall see, the past two decades have seen the development of considerable and diverse contacts between Cuba and Cuban Americans, these contacts are still viewed, regardless of their magnitude, as the exception rather than the norm. Those in power on both sides have tended to perpetuate the status quo, while those who have spearheaded change and promoted contact have generally been at the political margins.

To understand how distance and hostility came to dominate the Cuban-Cuban American relationship, one must go back to the early days of the Cuban Revolution, whose leaders projected themselves as trustees of a tradition of social justice, nationalism, and anti-imperialism that dated back at least to the country's independence in 1902. This tradition had manifested itself in various political movements that rose and fell throughout the first half of the twentieth century. During the decades prior to 1959, these movements had been frustrated in their attempts to implement the nationalist agenda of curtailing the growing and pervasive influence of the United States in Cuba and of assuring a better distribution of wealth, especially with regard to closing the wide gap in living conditions between urban and rural Cuba. The rise to power of the forces that opposed the Batista dictatorship was seen as a victory for this nationalist agenda, and the new government wasted little time in fulfilling these expectations.

From 1960 to 1962, Cuba underwent a radical transformation into a country with a centrally planned economy, no private industry, and a Marxist-Leninist government that had close ties to, and was largely dependent on, the Soviet Union. These developments--especially the measures taken against U.S. economic interests and the implementation of a

wealth redistribution program--put the new regime on a collision course with both Washington and Cuba's prerevolutionary upper class.

It should be noted that early internal opposition to the new leadership did not come exclusively from the elites. The establishment of a Soviet-allied socialist system by an increasingly authoritarian and personalistic government was seen by many Cubans as an intolerable overstepping of the traditional nationalist agenda. Consequently, the United States and the elites were joined in their opposition to the regime by other sectors of Cuban society (many of whom had been early supporters of the Revolution) such as students, the Catholic clergy and lay religious organizations, and anti-Communist and pro-democracy groups.

This conflict was most intense between 1960 and 1962, during which time the U.S. government and various sectors of Cuban society, especially the elites (virtually all of whom went into exile), cooperated in various attempts (including the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion) to overthrow the Cuban government. Now, nearly four decades later, the basic outlines of the conflict remain in place: a socialist government headed by Fidel Castro is still in power in Cuba, the U.S. government still seeks to topple that regime through a policy of hostility and isolation, and the exile leadership, in collusion with Washington, continues, for the most part, to oppose the Cuban government.

## FORCES SUSTAINING DISTANCE AND HOSTILITY

Although casual observers may marvel at how the basic outlines of the Cuban and Cuban American realities have remained "frozen" for so long, it is not so surprising once one examines the factors that have combined to keep these realities from changing.

## INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCES

There are three major institutional/organizational groupings involved in the relationship between Cuba and Cuban Americans: the Cuban government, the institutions and political organizations of the Cuban American community, and the U.S. government.

The Cuban Government. Although the details of Cuban decision making are kept out of the public eye, one may safely assume that Havana's relations with Cubans abroad have been a point of contention among the various individuals and factions that influence policy. A governmental "hard-line" faction sees contacts with Cuban Americans as threatening and therefore to be avoided or at least restricted. Those in the security and military sectors are probably most likely to share this perspective.

Others (especially some of those involved in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy) have viewed cautious relations with a limited number of Cuban Americans as a potentially beneficial strategy.

As we shall see later, the "soft-liners" have been able to implement at various times since 1978 a number of initiatives designed to improve relations with Cubans abroad. Even then, however, the government has limited itself to contacts with those Cuban Americans who do not emit even a whiff of opposition, with a focus on individuals who oppose U.S. policy. The government has refused to recognize organizations, rejecting institutional relations even with those exile groups advocating a lifting of the embargo.

One tool for supervising contacts between Cuba and Cuban Americans is strict control over which expatriates are allowed to visit the island. Until recently, the government, although willing to issue Cuban passports to persons born in Cuba who had subsequently become U.S. citizens (thus recognizing them as Cuban citizens), nevertheless required such persons to obtain a permit to enter the island. This bizarre arrangement has been modified, but there remains in place a system that bars physical access to Cuba by those considered to be opponents of the government.

An example of this occurred late in 1997 when the Cuban government issued a set of regulations for travel by Cuban Americans to the island on the occasion of the scheduled visit of Pope John Paul II to Havana in January 1998. Nearly one thousand persons residing in the United States, most of them Cuban Americans, were making plans to visit Cuba at that time aboard a cruise ship chartered by the Archdiocese of Miami. The cruise (subsequently canceled in response to criticism within the Cuban American community) was organized as a religious pilgrimage and passengers would have largely confined themselves to the ship, except to attend the papal ceremonies, so as not to violate the U.S. embargo, which severely limits spending money in Cuba. In its regulations, however, the Cuban government required that each person on the ship obtain a special visa through its consular office in Washington, indicating that this was necessary "for security reasons."

The Cuban government, therefore, has been one entity that has generally provided institutional support for sustaining a climate of distance and hostility between Cuba and Cuban Americans. Although it has launched some notable initiatives to improve those relations (discussed later), it has approached the Cuban American community in a very guarded, restrictive, and circumscribed way, discouraging a broad range of contacts. It has proceeded with an assumption of hostility, treating contacts with its diaspora only in an exceptional manner.

Cuban American Organizations. The bulk of Cuban American organizations, past and present, have been concerned in one way or another with the recovery of the homeland. They can therefore be regarded as "exile" organizations, focused on matters related to their place of origin. Only a minority of Cuban American organizations can be properly regarded as "immigrant" institutions focused on integrating Cuban Americans into U.S. society.

Apart from the exile organizations, discussed later, that have arisen since the end of the cold war and have advocated an end to the state of hostility, Cuban American organizations have been a paramount force in maintaining a belligerent posture toward Cuba. They have advocated policies intended to isolate the Cuban government and they have vigorously opposed increasing contacts with the island.

The strategies have varied from one organization to another and across time. There are still a number of paramilitary groups that train their members to carry out raids against facilities in Cuba. Some extremist groups have even practiced terrorism. Although the usual targets of violence have been Cuban governmental personnel or facilities outside the island, they have also included Cuban Americans who advocated more contacts with Cuba or a softening of U.S. policy toward the island.

Most of the exile organizations, however, do not practice violence, but have devoted themselves to political activism, keeping alive in their respective U.S. communities the cause of overthrowing the Cuban government. They organize demonstrations, boycotts, and letter-writing campaigns and even establish media outlets (e.g., radio stations and tabloid newspapers).

The most successful of the Cuban exile organizations has been the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF). During the Reagan and Bush administrations, it was the undisputed leader among these groups and to this day remains one of the most important. In many ways, it epitomizes the institutionalization among Cuban Americans of the agenda of hostility and isolation toward Cuba.

The founding of the CANF in 1980 coincided (not accidentally) with the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency. More than any previous U.S. president, Reagan represented the hope of many Cuban exiles for an end to the Cuban government. He came across as an ideologically committed anti-Communist, someone who would be "tough on Castro," and a welcome change from the "soft and accommodating" Carter. Moreover, a successful entrepreneurial class with accumulated capital had emerged within the Cuban American community. This new prosperity could be tapped to create a presence in Washington to further the anti-Castro agenda, and the election of a "friendly" president seemed a favorable moment for such a step. Out of this convergence of economic and political opportunities was born the CANF.

Prior to the founding of the CANF, the mainstream exile organizations had engaged in strategies that can best be described as parochial, marginal, or even shadowy: covert activities, terrorism, street demonstrations, boycotts, and so forth. The traditional way for U.S. interest groups to effect change, however, is through such techniques as campaign contributions, pressure politics, lobbying, information dissemination, fund raising, and effective media relations. The CANF has come to typify that approach. With offices in Washington and Miami, the CANF occupied during the 1980s the center stage in the Cuban American community's struggle against the Cuban government.

CANF members are typically successful businesspeople and entrepreneurs who have made their wealth in the United States and give thousands of dollars annually to further the organization's work. Although most arrived from Cuba in the 1960s, they are for the most part not from the prerevolutionary economic elite. This explains, for example, why the CANF's platform does not place much emphasis on the issue of compensation or restitution for property confiscated by the Cuban government. Consistent with their socioeconomic

position, however, the CANF's members envision the future Cuba as a country with an open market economy. Furthermore, their focus on lobbying in Washington places their strategy within the context of U.S.-Cuban relations. In this regard, they have a cold war perspective. Their opposition to the Revolution is cast in terms of competing systems and their goal is the overthrow of the Castro government through a policy of hostility and isolation spearheaded by the United States.

The CANF played a role in the passage of both the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act (the "Torricelli Act") and the 1996 Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act (the "Helms-Burton Act"), both of which tightened the U.S. embargo on Cuba. It was largely responsible for the establishment by the U.S. government of Radio and TV Martí, which transmit broadcasts to Cuba. It has acted as a clearinghouse of anti-Castro information and publications.

The U.S. Government. The official U.S. policy of hostility and isolation toward Cuba dates back to the administration of President Eisenhower, one of whose final acts in office (in January 1961) was to sever diplomatic relations. In February 1962, President Kennedy imposed an embargo on all trade with the island. The Bay of Pigs incident and the Missile Crisis heightened tensions, as did Havana's later involvement in Latin America and Africa.

The Reagan and Bush administrations and the CANF combined to produce the Cuban Democracy Act and establish Radio and TV Martí. Under the Clinton administration, the embargo was strengthened with the Helms-Burton Act. The only concessions the U.S. government has made toward reducing hostility are in the areas of family visits, academic and journalistic contacts, and humanitarian assistance. Even these activities are heavily regulated, however, and securing the necessary licenses from the U.S. Department of the Treasury can be a fairly daunting task.

The continuing insistence on isolating Cuba has baffled many observers, especially now that the cold war is over. Even former President Richard Nixon, who maintained the status quo on Cuba policy while in office, argued shortly before his death that the United States should take a more pragmatic approach and abandon its hostile stance. Many influential Americans, both in the government and in the private sector, would probably agree that a substantial change in Cuba policy is overdue.

The influence of the anti-Castro lobby in Washington, as well as the impact of the Cuban American vote in the key electoral state of Florida, are frequently cited as the major factors sustaining the policy of hostility. Although these are indeed significant immediate considerations, there is a more fundamental factor: an indifference in the United States about Cuba. Unlike China, which represents a major U.S. market, Cuba is simply not perceived as important enough in economic or national security terms for major U.S. interest groups to expend political capital to bring about a change in policy. Given this vacuum, policy can be determined by relatively minor electoral considerations or by special-interest groups such as the CANF.

## LACK OF CONTACT AND THE RISE OF STEREOTYPES

Lack of contact is both a consequence of the hostility and distance between Cuba and the United States and a factor that serves to sustain that climate. Prior to 1977, there were no direct flights between the United States and Cuba (with the exception of the "freedom flights"), no direct diplomatic contact between the two countries, no Cuban governmental permission for Cuban Americans to visit the island, almost no U.S. visitors there (because of travel restrictions imposed by the U.S. government), and no commercial relations. As a result, there was virtually no contact between Cuban Americans and the island, with the exception of family letters (which could take weeks to reach their destinations) and telephone calls (which were nearly impossible to place).

The importance of this lack of direct communication between Cuba and its diaspora during the first two decades of the Cuban Revolution cannot be overstated, for it led to the development on each side of stereotypes about the other. Those on the island developed an image of the world of exiles that was either grossly positive or grossly negative. The Cuban government encouraged the latter, never passing up the opportunity to highlight any incident that showed the perils of living in the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism or to depict the exiles as allies of the United States in its efforts to impose policies intended to bring economic hardship on the Cuban population. Actual or alleged acts of exile antigovernment terrorism were given tremendous publicity. In addition, the Cuban government sought to portray the exiles as a prerevolutionary white elite eager to rule the island once again and do the bidding of Washington--returning Cuba to capitalism, rolling back the Revolution's redistribution programs that benefited the poor and nonwhites, and reinstating the previous social class system. Cubans also got the idea that the exiles had all made it big and were fully enjoying the benefits of a consumer society. This notion both generated a degree of resentment in a population subject to great austerity and created pressures for emigration.

Meanwhile, the exiles were developing a distorted view of Cuba. They came to believe that the Revolution had totally ruined the island, turning it into a grotesque, unlivable nightmare. Such an image reinforced the convictions that leaving Cuba had been the appropriate decision and that a hostile stance toward the Cuban government was justified. It also encouraged a tendency to idealize prerevolutionary Cuba as a lost mythical paradise vandalized by Castro and his fellow revolutionaries.

The restoration of limited contacts with the island in the late 1970s was perceived by most Cuban Americans as an extraordinary, almost unthinkable, development, one that challenged a decades-old mind-set. Cuba once again became a real place for its diaspora, a change that evoked deep and varied emotional reactions. Although some exiles viewed contact as an exhilarating opportunity full of possibilities, most regarded it as a threat that would help keep the Cuban government in power. One thing was clear: contact would spawn controversy, both within the diaspora and in all strata of Cuban society.

## A CRUCIAL FACTOR: EMOTION

Distance and hostility have been reinforced by deep-seated emotions in an all but unbreakable cycle constantly refueled by the antagonisms, resentment, and even hatred that the suffering and trials of the past four decades have engendered in Cuba and in the diaspora. The mutual attribution of blame for all that has gone wrong has created a huge emotional baggage that at times seems to bar any move toward reconciliation far more than any other factor.

The relationship between Cuba and Cuban Americans does not just appear irrational. It is irrational, and many Cubans on both sides of the Straits of Florida will readily and even proudly admit to not being rational in matters that have touched them so deeply. They will acknowledge that they can neither view their adversaries objectively nor embrace them and forgive. Instead of being denied, intolerance is often justified or even flaunted. One participant in a recent Miami demonstration carried a sign that proclaimed: *Intransigente. . . y qué?* (*Intransigent. . . so what?*).

In Havana and in Miami, those in power have created the means to keep these emotions stoked. In Cuba, a key technique for maintaining a state-of-siege mentality in the population is to remind everyone constantly through the media about the supposed hostility of many Cuban American organizations. A good example is a gripping, highly emotional, 1978 documentary on the "Crime of Barbados," a 1976 incident blamed on Cuban exiles in which a bomb exploded aboard a Cubana Airlines plane as it was taking off from Barbados, killing all seventy-four passengers, including the Cuban national fencing team.

Similarly emotion-laden productions circulate in the diaspora. Recently, for example, a great deal of attention has been given in the media of Cuban Miami to the tragedy of a tugboat full of would-be clandestine emigrants that sank in 1994 when the Cuban authorities attempted to prevent it from leaving Cuban waters. More than forty persons drowned, many of them children.

Since the early 1960s, Miami's Spanish-language AM radio stations have been characterized by a highly emotional discourse. As a result, these radio stations, relatively important instruments of mass communication in the community, function not as a forum for the rational exchange of views but rather as a means of reinforcing hatred.

The power of emotion in the exile-community media is exemplified by a 1990 remark made to the Miami Herald by a political consultant to an African American candidate who had just lost a local election in Miami to another African American. In a successful effort to attract the votes of Miami's Cubans, the winning candidate had stressed in the Spanish-language media his outstanding Vietnam War record "fighting against communism." The consultant, a Cuban American, noted that his candidate lost partly because she did not follow his advice: ". . . she was very disappointed with the Hispanic vote. She expected them to favor her because she felt she had served them well. We kept telling her that in the Spanish media it's not going to work with reason and your record, you've got to move these people emotionally." (Jacquee Petchel, "Teele Strategy Conceded Black Vote," Miami Herald, 6 September 1990.)

## PERSONALISM AND THE ENDURING PRESENCE OF FIDEL CASTRO

In October 1997, President Jiang Zemin of China visited the United States for a summit with President Clinton. Some thirty influential Chinese Americans hosted a reception and meeting with the visitor in Washington. Kung-Lee Wang, a business consultant who attended the reception, was quoted as expressing his concern over human rights, but he indicated that he nevertheless welcomed Jiang because he yearned to see "a fuller opening of China's vast economic and cultural marketplace to America." (Francis X. Clines, "Pride and Censure Mix with a Dash of Apathy," *New York Times*, 29 October 1997.)

It is difficult to imagine that such a welcome would have been extended to Mao Zedong. It is even more difficult to imagine the scene duplicated in a Cuban context with Fidel Castro as the visiting president.

The enduring presence in Cuba of the historical leader of its socialist revolution is a key factor in maintaining distance and hostility between Cuban Americans and the island. Energizing the emotionalism previously discussed is the highly personalistic nature of the antagonism between the mainstream of the Cuban American community and the Cuban government. If one were to interview a representative sample of Cubans living in the United States about their views regarding Cuba, the words "Fidel Castro" would probably be mentioned with greater frequency than the words "revolution," "socialism," "communism," or "Cuban government." It is safe to say that, for most Cuban Americans, the culprit responsible for their exile is not a political movement, not a revolution, not a government, but a person.

Given the political traditions inherited from the pre-Castro era, none of this is surprising. In the decades prior to the Revolution, there was a penchant for placing the personal over the institutional, as powerful political leaders manipulated the institutions to accommodate their ambitions. For Cuban Americans, Fidel Castro represents a continuation of that tradition in which authority has primarily a personal, not institutional, base. In that model, power is exerted directly by individuals, not through institutions. Such a perception is not, of course, divorced from reality. Most objective observers of the development of the Cuban Revolution since 1959 would be hard pressed to dispute the view that the personal leadership exerted by Fidel Castro has been a decisive factor in determining the course of events during the past four decades.

Thus, the "personalization" of the conflict, combined with Castro's continuing presence, is a key stumbling block to improved relations. One could imagine a Cuban leader, even a leader of a "Communist" Cuba, being welcomed in Washington by the government and by influential Cuban Americans in a manner similar to the way in which President Jiang, a "second-generation" Communist leader, was welcomed--as long as that leader was not Fidel Castro or his brother. This is not just speculation. It is the law. Because of the influence of Cuban Americans in the drafting and passage of the Helms-Burton Act, that law specifically prohibits the U.S. government from rescinding the embargo or from

considering a Cuban government a "transition government" as long as Fidel or Raúl Castro (both cited by name) remain in power.

### FORCES WORKING AGAINST DISTANCE AND HOSTILITY

Despite the strong forces maintaining distance and hostility, other influences have arisen, especially within this decade, that have (both intentionally and unintentionally) worked to ameliorate tensions between Cuba and the diaspora. In so doing, they have added to the complex and paradoxical nature of the Cuban-Cuban American relationship.

### NEW GENERATIONS AND NEW ARRIVALS

As noted earlier, the tradition of distance and hostility had its origins in the class and international conflict of 1960-62. The disproportionately upper-class emigrants who arrived in the United States during this period maintained a relentless opposition to the revolutionary regime that had dispossessed them.

The past four decades, however, have seen the rise of new generations of exile offspring and the arrival of new emigrants from the island. Although the orientation of these more recent additions to exile ranks is not entirely at odds with that of the original group, they have tended to infuse the Cuban American community with a greater pluralism and heterogeneity that has manifested itself in social, cultural, economic, and political terms. It is the last that most challenges the tradition of distance and hostility.

The "Generation-And-A-Half". Generational differences began to emerge fairly early in the history of the Cuban exile community. The first wave of emigrants contained a relatively large number of families with school-age children. Alienated by the Revolution's program to nationalize all private schools, these mostly upper-class families had feared that their children might soon be "brainwashed" in Communist classrooms or even shipped off to schools in the Soviet Union. Thus, many families with children were quick to flee Cuba, and many parents who could not leave sent their children out of the country. "Operation Peter Pan," functioning under the auspices of the Catholic Church, received and cared for more than fourteen thousand unaccompanied children who arrived in the United States.

Therefore, the school-age children of the early 1960s represented an especially significant cohort of the Cuban American population. They are known as the "generation-and-a-half" because they were not adults when they arrived in the United States (in that sense, their parents were the "first generation"), yet they are not "second generation" because they were born in Cuba and retain vivid memories of their childhood there.

Not surprisingly, "generation-and-a-halfers" were well represented among those who in the 1970s started defying the traditional canon and sought contacts with the island. Having departed Cuba as children, many were spared the negative experiences that left their

parents' generation permanently embittered against the Cuban government. Furthermore, not having made the decision to leave the island, they (unlike their parents) did not bear the burden of needing to reassure themselves that they had made the right choice. They were intellectually shaped in U.S. universities at the time of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, in a liberal, even "leftist," political climate that tended to glorify the Cuban Revolution. Although most in that generation did not go so far as to idealize the Revolution, a liberal education in the United States generally predisposed them to an attitude of objectivity, tolerance, and open-mindedness toward Cuba. In addition, for the generation-and-a-half, the usual nostalgia of exiles for a lost place was intertwined with nostalgia for their own childhoods. Thus, reestablishing contact with Cuba was for them associated with reconnecting to, and coming to terms with, the childhood years.

One of the most notable of these 1970s-era "halver" efforts at reconnecting with Cuba was the founding of the magazine *Areíto* by academics and students located primarily in Gainesville, Florida, and in the New York City area. The magazine sought to recast the relationship between "halvers" and Cuba in a manner that distanced its creators from (and even opposed) the hostility that had become entrenched on both sides. Another group exhibiting a disposition to consider alternatives in the relationship was the Instituto de Estudios Cubanos, an organization composed primarily of U.S.-trained "halver" academics.

Although these initiatives were strictly at the margins of exile politics, their message was heard in Cuba and sparked there the beginning of a perception that indeed there were some cracks in the seemingly monolithic political culture of Cuban Americans.

Although the Cuban government reacted only slowly to the signs of political diversity among the exiles, it did allow, in 1973, a visit by Rutgers University psychologist Lourdes Casal, a Cuban American academic associated with *Areíto* and the Instituto de Estudios Cubanos--one of the first contacts between Cuba and Cuban Americans.

The generation-and-a-half has risen to prominence in the academic, cultural, professional, business, and even political circles of the Cuban American community. Although it has tended to share with the first generation a rejection of the Cuban government, many of its members have shown a disposition to argue for greater contacts with the island or at least for tolerance of those who engage in such contacts.

Recently, one prominent member of the generation-and-a-half was criticized in much of Cuban Miami's media for advocating greater tolerance of contacts with artists who reside on the island. Gloria Estefan, a popular singer, reacted to the criticism in generational terms: "It's time our generation makes itself known. It's time to get rid of the phantom. Tolerance is a lovely word, but people turn it around to make it sound subversive." (Liz Balmaseda, "Singer Makes Her Speaking Voice Heard," *Miami Herald*, 8 October 1997.)

**New Arrivals.** The layers of new arrivals from Cuba have presented their own challenge to the political culture of the original exile cohort. The persons who left Cuba during the Mariel boatlift in 1980 and thereafter (and especially those who departed during the 1994 emigration crisis) bring a set of experiences different from those of the group that arrived

decades earlier. Their socioeconomic and racial composition is also different. Afro-Cubans, for example, were well represented among those arriving in 1980. Unlike the original cohort of exiles, who left at the very onset of socialism, the newer arrivals often reflect, and have effective ties with, the culture of socialist Cuba.

This phenomenon has been evident in the ongoing controversy in which Gloria Estefan became involved: contacts with artists on the island. During a recent tour of the United States, a popular Cuban musical group, Los Van Van, stopped off in Miami for an informal visit before returning to Cuba. They had not been invited to give a concert in that city because of the controversy that such an event would have caused. The group did, however, give an informal and impromptu performance in a restaurant located in a relatively poor section of Miami frequented by recent arrivals from Cuba, most of them Afro-Cubans. The group was warmly received there. For these new arrivals, Los Van Van (which had burst onto the Cuban musical scene in the 1970s) was part of the culture and music they loved and remembered from their youth. However, the group is all but unknown by the exiles who left in the early 1960s.

In describing the scene at the restaurant where Los Van Van held their makeshift concert, a reporter for the Miami Herald noted the almost defiant attitude of those in attendance toward the intolerance and opposition of others in the community toward any appearance by the group. One participant asserted that "no one is going to come here and tell us we cannot listen to Los Van Van."

## FAMILY CONTACTS

It has been estimated that an average of one hundred thousand Cubans living in the United States visited Cuba each year from 1988 to 1994--a silent stream of people whose principal motivation is simply to see family and relatives. These visits represent the main cutting edge of all contacts between Cuban Americans and the island. They are also an important economic, and therefore political, factor. There are claims that remittances and family visits provide Cuba with more foreign exchange than its tourism industry (estimates have ranged from \$400 million to \$800 million annually).

Until 1978, family-oriented visits to Cuba were almost impossible. In that year, as a result of an event known as El Diálogo (the dialogue)--an exchange of views between the Cuban government and members of the Cuban American community--Havana announced that it would allow visits to the island by Cubans living abroad. The ostensible purpose of the new policy was to allow separated family members to see each other. The U.S. government acted to facilitate these visits by exempting Cuban Americans from the restrictions on travel by Americans to the island and permitting the operation of charter flights between the United States and Cuba. Working in conjunction with private travel agencies established in the United States primarily for such visits, the Cuban government set up a system to grant travel permits to would-be visitors, usually for stays of one to two weeks. Probably nobody had any idea of the social forces that would be unleashed by these family visits. Two decades of separation and distance had accumulated an unfulfilled need for family contacts and for a reunification with the homeland beyond what anyone had

imagined. Those Cuban Americans who had long argued against any contact with the island, and who condemned El Diálogo and the visits as a ploy of Fidel Castro, were shocked to find that so many of their fellow exiles were willing to defy the tenet that Cuba must be kept isolated. The reaction on the part of adherents of the status quo ushered in a period of increased conflict, and even violence and terrorism, within the community.

The Cuban government too was probably taken aback by the volume of the émigré visits—more than 125,000 in 1979 alone. The contrast between the economic situation of the visitors (who often arrived with a generous assortment of consumer goods for their relatives) and that of the Cuban people was clear; the difference was especially noticeable to younger Cubans who had grown up entirely under socialism. In addition, those loyal to the government resented the official welcome and deferential treatment accorded to the visitors as a result of their spending power, seeing this as an undeserved reward for the "disloyalty" of the exiles.

All of this created an unprecedented political crisis for the Cuban government, involving dissent within its most loyal ranks and restlessness in the population, especially the young. The crisis led to a government purge in January 1980 and also fueled the pressures for emigration that culminated in the Mariel boatlift, which began the following May.

The Mariel exodus heightened U.S.-Cuban tensions and created a climate inhospitable to further contacts. Indeed, by the time of the boatlift the Cuban government had already imposed a low ceiling on the annual number of Cuban American travelers who would henceforth be allowed into the country. Despite its pressing need for foreign exchange, the government had apparently decided that the political costs of the visits outweighed their economic benefit. This experience is one reason why some within the Cuban government have to this day maintained an unrelenting opposition to expanding contacts with the Cuban American community.

Interestingly, the hard-liners in the Cuban American community, instead of embracing the contacts as a promising means of needling the Cuban status quo, have continued to express their disapproval of the family visits and the remittances. Despite the chill emanating both from Havana and sectors of their own community, Cuban Americans continued visiting the island well after the Mariel crisis. In fact, a long-term consequence of Mariel was an increase in the pressure for facilitating family visits. More than any other wave of emigration from Cuba, the Mariel boatlift separated families. The irony of Mariel is that although it contributed in 1980 to the creation of a climate unfavorable to family visits, it planted the seeds for sustaining and even expanding their number in the decades that followed.

In the past few years, the Cuban government has shown greater willingness to facilitate visits than the U.S. government, which has tended to hold the visits hostage to the vagaries of its relations with Havana. In August 1994, for example, in the midst of the rafter crisis and at the urging of Cuban American hard-liners, President Clinton prohibited all direct flights and remittances to Cuba as a way of "punishing Castro" for the exodus. The flights were slowly reinstated a few months later, but the number of persons traveling directly

from Miami to Havana fell to thirty thousand in the year immediately following the prohibition. Undaunted by the restrictions, an additional sixty eight thousand persons circumvented the rules by flying surreptitiously through a third country, usually Mexico or the Bahamas.

The use of third countries is currently the only way to fly to Cuba from the United States, because direct flights were once again prohibited by the United States in the aftermath of the Cuban military's February 1996 downing of two unarmed private planes piloted by Cuban Americans. Washington is also applying regulations intended to control the flow of dollars to Cuba. Implemented by the Department of the Treasury, these regulations not only limit what one may take to Cuba, but also the number of visits one can make per year. The United States, therefore, is allowing fewer visits than the Cuban government would be willing to permit (although in practice the U.S. restrictions are probably being widely circumvented).

#### ACADEMIC/ARTISTIC/JOURNALISTIC CONTACTS

Artistic and cultural exchanges have proliferated. One reason for this is the willingness of the Cuban government in recent years to permit intellectuals, writers, artists, and performers to work abroad without breaking their ties to Cuba and, generally, with the right to travel to and from the island. Presumably, the reasons for this step were to gain access to at least part of these persons' foreign-currency income and to avoid whatever antigovernment opposition they might have fomented if they had remained in Cuba.

Academic contacts have also flourished, although not without difficulties. The obstacles imposed by the U.S. embargo are frequently insurmountable. On the Cuban side, there has been a tendency to exclude certain Cuban American scholars from academic meetings on the island and to be selective about the Cuban scholars allowed to participate in academic activities outside of the country.

Of all these areas, journalistic exchanges are thorniest, given the power and visibility of the press. Requests from journalists, especially Cuban American journalists, to go to Cuba are viewed with great suspicion and usually denied by the Cuban government. One interesting development in the other direction has been the willingness, within the past year, of *El Nuevo Herald*, Miami's leading Spanish-language daily, published by Knight-Ridder, to print in its opinion pages pieces written by journalists in Cuba who work independently of the government.

#### POST-COLD WAR INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES

The changes that swept through eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 influenced the political context of the Cuban-Cuban American relationship. They did so primarily by creating an opportunity for limited institutional initiatives on the part of both Havana and the Cuban American community. These initiatives have tended to soften the traditional institutional support for maintaining distance and hostility.

The discussion in this section focuses on the institutional initiatives that arose in the Cuban American community and in the Cuban government as a result of the end of the cold war. It is difficult to find comparable initiatives within the U.S. government, whose policies in recent years have reflected the increasing pressure from the traditional exile groups.

Anticipating that the disappearance of the Soviet Union would have disastrous economic, political, and military consequences for Cuba, the hard-line exiles reacted to the events of 1989-91 by arguing that the end of the Castro regime was at hand and that it was important to hasten that end by stepping up the pressure.

Cuban American Initiatives. Of special significance for Cuban exiles are the following characteristics of the radical changes in central and eastern Europe: (1) the changes came from within the system; (2) the reforms were spearheaded in most cases by card-carrying Communist Party members, cadres who were products of the system; (3) the changes were the culmination of a development process that was marked by Western influence rather than attempted isolation, with the catalyst being the policy of a Soviet leader to open up even more to that influence; and (4) external economic and political pressures played a secondary role, if any, in instigating the reforms.

Those Cuban exiles who had long struggled to do what had never been done before-- overthrow an entrenched Communist regime--were now faced with an operational alternative model of how this might be accomplished, one that implicitly challenged the traditional exile approach. Rather than an overnight process, the new model involved an evolution that might be led by elements from within the system--a process that could be helped by Western openness rather than hostility.

Thus, some exile leaders, including some traditional hard-liners, began to espouse a strategy of engaging in talks with government insiders. They reasoned that if Cuba were to follow the eastern European model of change, an exile community lacking contacts with potential new centers of power inside the island would have no hope (if it had ever had any) of being a player in the process.

The rise of this new orientation within the Cuban American community led in the 1990s to the establishment of several organizations that, in different ways, conceptualized anti-Castro activism in more moderate terms, with an elimination of hostility and an emphasis on constructive engagement with the Cuban government. Their leaders argued that the best course for Cuba was a peaceful transition to democracy, one that would not be based upon hostility and isolation. These groups included the Cuban Democratic Platform (and its affiliated organizations), Cambio Cubano, and the Cuban Committee for Democracy. The Cuban Democratic Platform was founded in Madrid in August 1990. Although the original declaration was signed by twelve individuals, the Platform very soon became a coordinating effort of the Cuban Liberal Union (headed by essayist and journalist Carlos Alberto Montaner), the Christian Democratic Party of Cuba (presided over by José Ignacio Rasco, founder and first president of the Cuban Christian Democratic Movement on the island in 1959), and the Coordinador Social Demócrata (which was then headed by Professor Enrique Baloyra). The Madrid Declaration called for negotiations with the Cuban government. It asked for the release of

political prisoners, the recognition of the internal opposition, and elections supervised by international observers.

The two main continuing goals of the Cuban Democratic Platform have been (1) to seek support from European prime ministers, Latin American presidents, parliaments, and other powerful political organizations in pressuring the Cuban government to carry out negotiations for a peaceful transition; and (2) to advocate on behalf of Cuban dissidents. The Platform's work, purposely not focused in Washington, met with widespread criticism from hard-liners during its first year. However, it also received considerable support from a growing number of exiles who hoped for a peaceful transition on the island. As a significant number of important European and Latin American political figures visited Cuba in an effort to convince the Cuban leadership to negotiate a peaceful transition and were faced with the government's inflexible position regarding substantial political reform, the Platform's momentum began to fade. However, in spite of strategic differences among the three groups and their inability to attract a conservative group into the Platform, as called for in the original plan, the Platform has remained united and continues to operate, although its visibility within the exile community has declined considerably.

One of the most significant initiatives to emerge among moderates in Miami was the Cambio Cubano organization established in 1993. Although it does some lobbying in Washington, Europe, and Latin America, its principal strategy (an unusual one among exile groups) is to become an opposition party within Cuba's current political system. Cambio Cubano has had a significant impact on broadening the limits of exile political discourse. It revolves largely around its leader, Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo. Unlike many moderates whose origins are in academia or in the generation-and-a-half, he is a veteran activist with unimpeachable credentials in the anti-Castro struggle, which gives him a certain legitimacy that had not previously characterized many Cuban American moderates. After participating in the struggle against Batista and holding office in the early revolutionary government, he rebelled against Castro in the early 1960s and was imprisoned for nearly twenty-five years. Upon his release a few years ago, he argued in favor of engaging in dialogue with the Cuban government in an effort to bring about democracy. He has traveled to Cuba on various occasions in recent years and has held discussions with top government officials.

The Cuban Committee for Democracy (CCD), another organization advocating moderation in relations with Cuba, was established in 1993. The CCD is formed along the same strategic lines as the Cuban American National Foundation, namely as a lobbying operation in Washington, but one with a markedly different message. Founded by the sociologist Alejandro Portes and composed primarily of academics and professionals, the CCD seeks to counter the message of the CANF by proposing a policy of dialogue and open communications with the Cuban government as the best avenue for bringing about democracy on the island. It has attempted to achieve fundamental change in U.S. policy, advocating the lifting of the embargo and lobbying (unsuccessfully) against the passage of the Helms-Burton Act.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, therefore, served to bring forth organizations that espoused moderate approaches, thereby broadening the ideological spectrum of Cuban exile politics. At the same time, however, the hard-liners were strengthened with the expectation of a downfall of the Castro government. The result, therefore, was both greater pluralism and polarization within the Cuban American political landscape.

Cuban Governmental Initiatives. Dubbed the "Special Period," the early 1990s were marked by incredible austerity in Cuba as the loss of support and subsidized trade from the former Soviet bloc pushed the country's chronically troubled economy to new lows.

Faced with such a crisis, and despite the defiance expressed through its newest slogan, "Socialism or Death," the Cuban government could not afford to neglect any opportunities to break out of its isolation. It created, for example, a favorable climate for foreign investors, especially in tourism (see "Trading With the 'Enemy': Canadian-Cuban Relations in the 1990s" by Gillian McGillivray, Cuba Briefing Paper Series no. 15, December 1997). It also took notice of the changes within the Cuban American community. The rise in the number and visibility of moderate elements within that community was viewed as an opportunity to improve relations with the United States. That possibility seemed enhanced in 1992 with the end of a series of Republican administrations that had maintained close ties, and had acted in concert, with the exile hard-liners.

In the early 1990s, the Cuban government started limited and personal contacts with exiles considered favorable to communications with Cuba and who were not adherents of a policy of hostility toward the regime. Following a pattern reminiscent of the late 1970s, these contacts culminated in a new version of *El Diálogo*. In 1994, with Minister of Foreign Affairs Roberto Robaina as host, the Cuban government convened a meeting of émigrés in Havana entitled "The Nation and Emigration." Two results of that meeting were of special significance for the relationship between Cuba and the diaspora.

The first of these results was the creation of an office of "Matters Related to Cubans Residing Abroad" within the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A career diplomat, reporting to the vice minister for the North American region, was named to head that office. In addition to institutionalizing the relations with the diaspora within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thereby providing the basis for channeling and perpetuating these contacts, the office started publishing in January 1995 a glossy magazine, *Correo de Cuba*, geared toward an audience outside of Cuba. The other major result of the meeting was a pledge by the government to ease restrictions on travel to Cuba. Following up on that commitment, the government, in the second issue of *Correo de Cuba*, announced the implementation of a procedure whereby Cubans living outside the island could obtain a multiple-entry permit. Persons who met certain requirements (including an absence of "hostile attitudes" toward Cuba) would be allowed to enter Cuba an unlimited number of times for stays of up to ninety days at a time.

The most interesting aspect of this 1990s version of the 1978 *Diálogo* was that this time the Cuban government took care to separate its relations with the Cuban American community from its relations with Washington. To be sure, Havana still perceived its contacts with the

diaspora mainly as a means of pursuing the broader goal of warming relations with the United States. However, Cuban officials were apparently determined not to let these contacts suffer if relations with Washington deteriorated, as had happened in 1980.

This determination to maintain the contacts with the diaspora was tested almost immediately after the first Nation and Emigration conference. The 1994 rafter crisis placed a great strain on U.S.-Cuban relations, as Washington once again had to deal with a massive and unregulated wave of emigration from the island. Nevertheless, the Cuban government went on to hold a second Nation and Emigration meeting and to maintain its commitment to family visits. The most severe trial, however, came in the wake of the February 1996 downing of the two Brothers to the Rescue planes and the subsequent passage of the Helms-Burton Act. U.S.-Cuban relations reached a low not seen since the period from 1960 to 1962. Nevertheless, the office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to operate, *Correo de Cuba* is still being published, and the family visits continue.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has obviously cemented relations on an ongoing basis with moderates in the Cuban American community. It has been leery, however, of organizational contacts. Although some members of *Cambio Cubano* and the Cuban Committee for Democracy participated in the Nation and Emigration meetings and have had numerous other contacts with Cuban officials, they have always been invited as individuals rather than as representatives of their organizations. The new openness of the Cuban government toward contacts with Cuban Americans still takes place on an extremely limited basis and within a broader context that is undeniably hostile. Caution and suspicion continue to permeate these contacts.

## CHANGES IN PUBLIC OPINION

Perhaps as a result of the transformations in the world order and the rise of moderate organizations and of pluralism in the exile discourse, public opinion among Cuban Americans appears somewhat more ambivalent than in years past. Surveys taken in the mid-1990s reveal an ideological landscape that is far more complex, heterogeneous, and equivocal than the formal positions of organized groups might suggest. The hard-line position (including military options) is still favored, but its supporters do not completely reject soft-line alternatives.

For example, the Fourth Florida International University Cuba Poll, conducted in March 1995 under the auspices of FIU's Cuban Research Institute, surveyed the attitudes of Cuban Americans in southern Florida and Union City, New Jersey, regarding U.S. policy options toward Cuba. As much as 57 percent of the sample of Cubans in greater Miami favored a U.S. invasion of Cuba. Additional evidence of support for the hard-line position included the following:

74 percent favored U.S. support of armed internal rebellion.

84 percent favored increasing international economic pressure on Cuba.

73 percent favored the current policy of no diplomatic relations and no trade with Cuba.

82 percent favored the tightening of the trade embargo.

Yet that same sample yielded the following results when asked about what could be regarded as soft-line options:

69 percent favored starting negotiations with the Cuban government to facilitate peaceful democratic change in Cuba by means of free elections or public referendum.

83 percent favored starting negotiations to allow family members living in Cuba to come to the United States to join their relatives living here.

82 percent favored starting negotiations on improving the condition of human rights in Cuba.

68 percent favored starting negotiations with the Cuban government to allow regular phone communications with the island.

One question included the controversial word "dialogue": "Would you favor negotiations to establish a national dialogue between Cuban exiles, Cuban dissidents, representatives of the Cuban government?" Given the perception that hard-liners predominate in the Cuban community, it was surprising to find that as much as 46 percent of the sample favored such an option.

The general pattern that consistently emerges from this and other opinion surveys of the Cuban community in the post-cold war period is that the overwhelming support for hard-line measures does not exclude substantial support for approaches that can be regarded as consistent with a "soft" line. Another way of looking at the results of the surveys is that in the 1990s Cubans in the United States strongly favor changes in Cuba and are relatively open and tolerant of a wide range of strategies designed to promote these changes, although there is clearly a preference for hard-line approaches.

Knowledge of attitudes in the Cuban American community is important insofar as it establishes a basic benchmark with which to view the statements of those leaders and organizations who claim to represent the views of the community as a whole. Public opinion is not, however, the most influential factor shaping the political activism of Cuban exiles. Organizations and opinion makers are critical in setting the political agenda of the community. Exile organizations and their leaders appear increasingly divided over what constitutes the appropriate way to deal with the Cuban government given the new post-cold war realities. To a large extent, public opinion among Cuban Americans reflects these divisions.

The ambivalence found among Cuban Americans has its counterpart among Cubans on the island. Although we do not have the benefits of reliable public opinion polls of the Cuban population, it would appear that the island's situation within the post-cold war context, as

well as years of contact with Cuban Americans, have helped to develop a greater acceptance of a sustained relationship with the diaspora. Many in Cuba greeted the first Cuban American visitors in 1978 with some trepidation and even hostility. But after years of such contact and becoming personally familiar with many Cuban Americans, those on the island view such visits as commonplace and have established good relations with Cuban Americans they have met. The presence of Cubans from abroad no longer raises any eyebrows in Cuba. Families that were once separated and distant have reconnected. In Cuba, therefore, some lingering leeriness is combined with a greater acceptance of Cuban Americans.

## HUMAN RIGHTS/HUMANITARIAN CONTACTS

The proliferation of human rights groups in Cuba has taken place with the support of a number of individuals and organizations in the Cuban American community who have made this area their priority in terms of activism. The splintering of human rights groups in Cuba into different ideological factions has, of course, its mirror image in the Cuban American community.

Overall, groups in the diaspora affiliated with human rights groups in Cuba tend to view their role as purely supportive, but they represent an important lifeline for their partners on the island. Given the realities of the Cuban political system, the rights groups there largely become known only through their links with Cuban American partners. A fairly recent development, and one that occurs almost entirely outside of official circles, is the increasing number of contacts, usually through the Catholic Church, for providing humanitarian aid to Cuba. The Church has established in Cuba a distribution system for such assistance, especially medical supplies. Cuban American individuals and organizations who assist the Church in that mission are subject to criticism in their own community from those who argue that such assistance ends up in the hands of the government, which then acquires foreign currency by selling it to tourists. Although U.S. regulations supposedly allow for such assistance, those engaged in it have complained that it is difficult to send humanitarian supplies to Cuba. The Cuban government must also cooperate, because the distribution of these supplies frequently depends on an infrastructure it controls.

The planned January 1998 visit to Havana by Pope John Paul II has raised once again among Cuban Americans the issue of contacts with the island and of the role of the Catholic Church in such contacts. Seeking to organize a pilgrimage to the Pope's mass in Havana, the Archdiocese of Miami chartered a cruise ship that would have docked at Havana's harbor. The cruise was canceled on December 19, however, in the wake of intense criticism from some Cuban Americans. The Archdiocese is attempting to work out alternative transportation (by air) for the would-be pilgrims. Many Cuban Americans who have never returned to Cuba for a visit hope to do so during this occasion.

## CONCLUSION: AN IRRECONCILABLE RELATIONSHIP?

During the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, no other country came close to Cuba in terms of the volume of its passenger traffic with the United States. Several times a week, a ferry made the trip with passengers, their cars, and goods. One of the world's first air passenger routes went from New York City through Miami and on to Havana. Tourism, geography, and the "special" relationship between the United States and Cuba during the first half of this century had everything to do with developing this exceptional traffic.

This large flow of people and goods across the Straits of Florida occurred before the jet airplane, before Miami had developed into a hemispheric commercial center, and before there were more than 1 million persons of Cuban origin living in the United States (with more than half of them in southern Florida). It is easy to envisage the resumption of this traffic once relations between the United States and Cuba are normalized and restrictions are abolished on the flow of people and goods. Miami is closer to Havana than it is to Disney World.

Cuban Americans will almost certainly take part in this new boom in traffic between the United States and Cuba. In fact, they will probably be spearheading it, playing a crucial part in establishing the contacts and the mechanisms for its development. As Cuban Americans have already demonstrated through their political activism, nobody in the United States is more interested in Cuba.

Precisely how the necessary degree of contact between the United States and Cuba will be reestablished is difficult to predict, but somewhere in the process of getting to that stage, and certainly thereafter, a reconciliation between Cuba and its exiles would clearly have to be under way. Given present realities, it is safe to say that the road to such a reconciliation will be a long and difficult one. Those who have already walked its first few miles know this. But the process is an inexorable one.

Geography, mutual interest, and a strong sense of a common national identity will not have it otherwise.

The analysis presented here, although detailing what has been a troubled relationship between Cuba and its diaspora, provides a basis for optimism. Given a change in the broader political or ideological context, almost all of the forces (e.g., institutional barriers, the lack of contact, and the enduring presence of Fidel Castro) that have sustained distance and hostility can be surmounted. In fact, countervailing forces have already begun to erode the traditional impediments to better relations, and time is on their side. Since the 1980s, family visits, as well as contacts in the academic/artistic/journalistic and human rights/humanitarian assistance areas, have been chipping away at the consequences of the previous two decades' lack of interaction. The critical generational changes and the impact of new arrivals from Cuba are factors whose influence will strengthen with the passage of time. Fidel Castro will not be the only one who eventually will not be present. Also absent will be his entire generation, both in Cuba and in the diaspora--the generation that sustained the conflict that has persisted to this day. The recent death of the influential head of the CANF, Jorge Mas Canosa, served to make this point clear to Cuban Americans. The

obstacle to reconciliation that will probably prove most formidable is the emotional factor. The emotions generated by the scars of death, imprisonment, separation, deprivation, and exile may well survive a generation. The mutual attribution of guilt and responsibility and the desire for retribution may haunt reconciliation. It will take longer to deal with this problem.

Cuban culture may provide the ingredient that will permit healing. One of the great strengths of that culture is that it provides Cubans with a talent for interpersonal relations. Cuban culture places an extraordinary value on reducing distance and hostilities in face to-face interaction. One of the worst sins for a Cuban is to be pesado (literally, heavy). To be heavy is to be arrogant, haughty, unapproachable, aloof, callous, and uncaring in dealing with people face to face. Cubans immediately seek to break the barriers of formality with people they have just met. In choosing between the two Spanish words for "you," for example, they readily use the informal tú and tend to avoid the formal usted.

Therefore, when many of the institutional (especially governmental) limitations on face to-face contact between Cubans and Cuban Americans are minimized or eliminated, and travel to and from Cuba becomes more widespread, the opportunity will be created for Cuban interpersonal culture to do its work. This is not just speculation. The recent history of limited contacts (especially those between formerly estranged family members) points in that direction. It will be a difficult process, and reconciliation may be impossible in some individual cases, but there are grounds for optimism.

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### The WQBA Incident

Generational change and the influence of the new arrivals from Cuba are taking their toll on the political activism of even the most traditional of the anti-Castro institutions of Cuban Miami: the AM radio station. The Miami Herald recently reported on two popular radio commentators employed by WQBA ("La Cubanísima") who resigned in protest over its "decubanization," alleging that the station was abandoning its commitment to the anti-Castro struggle. Station spokespersons, while assuring the public that WQBA will remain at the "forefront of the Cuban cause," explained that their audience surveys revealed the

need "to attract young Cuban Americans born in the United States or those young Cubans recently arrived from the island." The surveys, they said, revealed that "we have a very diverse community."