



For the Purpose of a Transition in Cuba
February 24, 2002

Brief Historical Analysis

The Republic of Cuba emerged as a continuance and a development of 19th-century colonial society, and as a republic it had already readjusted during the better part of the 20th century when a great rupture occurred, of which the consequences have perpetuated into the beginning of the 21st century.

Although we analyze the present to decipher the future, it is unavoidable to talk about the past that brought us to the current moment, and it is the only thing that has experience to advise the future.

From 1940 to 1952 Cuba enjoyed democratic regimes, and during that period the Cuban people were able to demonstrate their capabilities due to their freedoms and rights. We think it is useful to create a brief examination of the results up to 1952.

In January, 1939, the Democratic and Pluralist Central Workers Union of Cuba was established, and while it was recognized along with the CTM of Mexico as being the most representative organizations, it also gained significant social conquests.

In 1940 the Constitution of Cuba, which was recognized as the most advanced politically and socially in Latin America, was approved.

- The country's population approached six million inhabitants, and the mortality rate was 7.5 per 1000.
- The gross national product was 2.031 billion pesos, which were on par with the American dollar.
- The reserves in gold, metallic coins, and dollars, which were controlled by the state, reached \$400 million.
- The external debt was only \$68 million.
- Solid economic institutions with Cuban capital existed, including the National Bank, the Bank of Agricultural and Industrial Fomentation (BANFAIC).
- The private banking sector operated with deposits that approached \$656 million.
- The national capital primarily owned the central sugar producers.
- The sugar production that year reached seven million tons without neglecting other industries, and it rewarded the internal market while making it the major exporter of sugar in the world.
- The tobacco industry was firmly established with the capacity to cover both, the internal market and quality exportation.
- The cattle industry had reached a high level of development that, without restraining the national consumption of meat and milk, constantly maintained herds with a ratio of almost one head of cattle per inhabitant.
- There were laws for which part of the unexpected earnings of a bartering market of sugar was distributed among the cultivators of the earth and the workers in the sugar-mills.
- In the last six years of that period 200,000 apartments and lodgings were constructed principally from rubble-work masonry and concrete.
- Asphalt roads spanned a total of 6,000 kilometers.
- 78% of the Cuban population could read and write.
- 880,000 children attended elementary schools.
- In addition to the University of Havana, three new universities were founded. (1)

Let us not assume that the republic was perfect, because there are always elements to improve, new things to initiate, and harmful

factors to combat. Economic-social contradictions, which needed to be overcome, existed between the city and the countryside. However, the balance illustrates a diligent society that had progressed notably on many levels. It contained a large middle class and social values that were expressed in progressive laws acquired in part by a working class organized at the beginning of the democratic revolution of 1933 led by Ramón Grau San Martín, Antonio Guiteras, and the Central Workers Union of Cuba (CTC) organized in 1939.

In 1952 the Cuban democratic rhythm was interrupted by Fulgencio Batista's coup d'état. This event occurred while the country was preparing to vote for its president. The two major candidates, Dr. Roberto Agramonte of the Orthodox Party and Carlos Hevia, an engineer, of the Authentic Party, were both qualified for their capabilities and honesty. Batista was also running as a candidate from a smaller party, but he had no hope of election.

Knowing that he had no possibility of being elected, and devoted to obtaining power, Batista initiated the coup d'état on March 10 with the support of a large part of the armed forces. This was possible because the rebellion of September 4, 1933, with a few exceptions, had left an army in place with little moral conviction about its function in a democratic society, and now Batista could newly benefit from it.

The civil government felt incapable of maintaining itself in power in the face of such hostile military forces, and it abandoned the country, thus leaving it open for the dictator. To strengthen his position even further, Batista proceeded to license hundreds of officials, sergeants, corporals, and soldiers, all of which had not supported the coup. He also proceeded to make new appointments and grant promotions to his partisans.

Opposition and reaction existed from the beginning of the dictatorship. The political parties, whose preparations for the democratic confrontation had been ridiculed, displayed their discontent in this manner from the beginning. The student body, which was faithful to its tradition of argument and struggle,

organized an opposition that was more active each subsequent time. The Central Workers Union of Cuba (CTC) called for a general strike, and during the seven-year dictatorship it organized many resistances and strikes against it. However, the economic prosperity that the country was enjoying and the capability of some public officials designated by the dictator tempered the critical and discrepant voices for the time being. Some syndicate leaders reached a pact with the dictator that would bring about recovery and personal benefits for the working class. Nevertheless, others suffered through repression and exile and contributed to organize a democratic resistance movement.

The opposition repeatedly initiated dialogues with the purpose of finding peaceful alternatives to return to the constitutional order. However, Batista was stubborn and intent on maintaining power. He arrogantly scorned the attempts to initiate constructive dialogues and only organized some fixed elections to impose his candidate. These elections stunned the national climate further and simply accelerated the conditions for the triumph of a popular insurrection.

In addition, different groups from diverse places on the Cuban political map developed as secret organizations that began with propaganda and proclamation and expanded to frontal military action: the conspiracy involving García Bárcena, the events of November 30 in Santiago, the assaults on the barracks of Moncada and Goicuría in Santiago and Matanzas, the expedition to Corinth, the Granma's arrival, the attack on the Presidential Palace with the capture of Radio Reloj, the military insurrection of Cienfuegos, the assault on the Haitian embassy, the creation of the 2nd Front of Escambray, the transgression on Colonel Blanco Rico, and the appearance of the 2nd Eastern Front. The strikes of the workers, bankers, and electricians, the general strikes in Camaguey and Oriente, the strike in April, and the events of Humboldt 7 all serve as testimony to the Cuban people's courageous struggle, finally including the popular rising tied to the general strike of January 1, 1959 that permitted the guerrilla group led by Castro to assume central power. The people who had approved of the Constitution of 1940 refused to conform to life under the Statute of "Viernes de

Dolores", and Batista moved from the bloodless coup to crime as a way of maintaining himself in power at all costs.

The aim of the struggle for which many brave Cubans died was the fall of Fulgencio Batista so that the country could return to a democratic constitutional order and continue its development. According to public opinion, an establishment, which was not different from before, appeared. The "revolution" for the Cuban people was just that, and it was not the ideological realignment with Soviet Marxism. Certainly, no one desired the total demolition of the country's economic, political, and social orders that had already demonstrated its efficiency. The renovation of the republic was desired, which would bring about the reformation of those negative aspects that were evident but could not be tolerated, as in the case of administrative corruption. Likewise, people wanted the continuation of the country's industrialization and diversification along with the extension of educational, medical, and all types of services to rural areas that were difficult to access. In the democratic apparatus, as was mentioned earlier, Cuba had already demonstrated unrest for promoting to the classes more necessities with progressive legislation, and whatever a particular administration fell short of doing was the homework of the following administration.

When the downfall materialized, however, the events took another course. In this moment of total institutional crisis the population felt victorious, but in reality it felt helpless in the eventuality of an organized group that would want to reestablish a new dictator. Public institutions, which were appointed to preserve liberty and the system of rights, which acted as the army, and which also represented the political parties, were not in any condition to carry out these functions. Its own defeat, along with corruption in the higher ranks, demoralized the army, and the political parties lost confidence due to their inability to overthrow Batista.

Fidel Castro emerged as leader, along with a plan for absolute power and his group of unconditional followers, and he began to eliminate all who opposed him or had different opinions while also

adopting the ideas and organizational methodology of the Pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist system as the structure for Cuban society.

The economic and political support from the U.S.S.R. during the Cold War and Fidel Castro's guided exaltation of the process, including his ignorance of the other insurrectional and revolutionary expressions, contributed to the perturbation of the Cuban people and the confusion of global public opinion.

After a huge, bloody, and painful effort was carried out to overthrow Batista, the population expected the best. The Cuban people observed with passivity the development of the government's actions, granting it credit considering the suspiciousness it provoked. Understanding that all its past efforts could have been amenable to a necessity of a major struggle, it was something their emotions rejected. There was always a false argument at hand or a rationalization for maintaining another small piece of hope. A global perspective of the events of those first months and years, however, undoubtedly demonstrate an evident concatenation in accord with a preconceived plan to gain the final result of communizing Cuba.

Fidel Castro proceeded to insult the Cuban past as a perverse time, abominable and guilty of how much frustration each Cuban could have. The coined phrase at that time was very clear: "They married us with a lie and obligated us to live with it, but now it appears that the world ends when we hear the truth." With this therapy of multitudes, he incited and stimulated social angers in order to launch them against his opponents.

From the beginning foundational violence was established, and the people were persuaded to oppose their values and to favor a psychology of internal and external hostility that destroyed their best capabilities. Due to the actions of the government's leaders and the unconditional communists, the new regime acquired a superhuman rank to dissolve all social and private aspects of life. "With the revolution everything, without the revolution nothing" became the supreme and lone command. With this order the solidarity that the Cuban people had as a population, and needed in order to mature as

a nation, was destroyed. The destruction was so profound; it reached the basic level of society, which is the family.

The external hostility began with a disproportionate sermon against the United States that quickly became a visceral tirade.

The sovereignty of the country supposedly was in danger, and the Cuban people had to defend it, and this was the reason for arming themselves. Simultaneously, they praised Soviet Russia, which was sending them weapons with which to fight.

There was no peaceful ear for dialogue. For fear of falling into the center of the anger, the people suppressed their conviction: "de que no debía cambiarse camino por vereda," which expressed their desire not to change the established system. The individual was not allowed to think, because that obstructed the system; instead, the individual was obligated to obey. Cuba's new socialist friends, in a "fraternal" move, armed Cuba to its teeth so that it could defend its sovereignty. Years later we read these words spoken over 150 years ago by the priest Father Felix Varela, "el que nos enseñó a pensar" (2), ("the one who taught us to think"), and they appear to be just right:

"The people lose their freedom either through oppression by a tyrant or through the evil and ambition of some group of individuals who take advantage of their own people in order to enslave them, while in passing proclaiming their sovereignty. The first measure is well known, and even the most ignorant individuals protest against the injustices of a tyrant; the second is less noticeable and usually eludes even from the most expert politicians" (3).

without allowing the workers to exercise the fundamental principles of the right to labor: "Libertad sindical", (unionized freedom), "contratación colectiva", (collective contracting), and the We believed then and presume now that that "tour de force" was a mistake against our geography, our history, our idiosyncrasy, our interests, and even our future, as present Cuban reality demonstrates.

The Country's Present Situation

We prefer to comment on some outcomes. Considering the incredible effort and sacrifice imposed on the Cuban people during the last 42 years, it has even been difficult to eliminate the book of provisions. Not even the chronic housing deficit has been diminished. Health services, which were admitted as an achievement of the revolution, have suffered a great deterioration after the disappearance of the socialist blockade of Eastern Europe, and they have worsened even more with the creation and priority given to the so-called tourism of health that follows foreign exchange capture. Education also has deteriorated with the disappearance of Soviet assistance; it is not possible to provide numbers because the regime does not disclose information and conceals its mistakes or failures in a cloud of mystery. Cubans who visit their relatives on the island report of numerous scholastic institutions in the countryside which were the pride of the regime and that today are deserted because of lack of means to operate them. They have also been vandalized by citizens that were searching for materials and pieces to fix their houses. All of this occurred, because the regime has not been capable of creating a solid economy that permits it to meet the country's needs. In another order of things, the sugar harvest is an annual agony, and its results always remain below expectations.

At the beginning of the revolution it was discussed that Cuba should belong to the Cubans, but that result was never realized, because the nationals have prohibited private investment while the foreign capitalists have all the ease of investing in the country. Additionally, the nationals have prohibited access to countless tourist locations and installations. As a matter of fact, due to the shortage of dollars, the government has also prohibited Cubans from buying products in the country's assorted shopping stores.

The workers have lost their social conquests, and they make the lowest salaries of any country in Latin America. Their work is sold by a state enterprise at the lowest price to the capitalist

enterprises right to "huelga y movilización social", (strikes and industrial action).

In 1959 a prominent discussion dealt with the preservation of the dignity of all Cubans, men and women alike, including the elimination of the sex tourism that plagued Havana, like any other big city. This fact became irresponsibly exaggerated in order to contrast the revolutionary present with the corrupt past, and even today some hostile or misinformed presses repeats it.

Nevertheless, the island today is the center of a global attraction for scandalous and degrading sex tourism, which is even advertised. To all this we can say that where ever the state has an absolute monopoly in all aspects, it cannot deny its responsibility for the bad results.

Citations

- 1- Portell Vila, Herminio/La Nueva Historia de la Republica de Cuba
- 2- José Martí
- 3- Pbro. Félix Varela/Cita de M. Maza en Seminario Miami, 25 de Julio del 2001

Preamble for a Transition

The Necessary Demythologization.

We have given this testament, our vision of the revolutionary process in Cuba, as a backdrop of our conscience, which we cannot renounce. The opposition has also committed errors and has failures, all of which could be shown, because the Cuban process has not been easy for anyone. In our purpose of achieving the happiness of the Cuban population we have all failed: the supporters of power and us from the opposition. We reach out to believe with much

optimism that this sentiment could reunite the divided nation and be the entryway of something fortunate for the Cuban people, if we accept being the two halves of the same failure. If not, there will be no transition!

For this to occur it is necessary to proceed with openness, because there is no other point of meeting other than the "truth". This element permits all sides to walk on firm ground. It is especially necessary to say this, because the Cuban regime has been a great manipulator. It has created many myths. It has manipulated Cuba's history. It manipulates the language when it pretends that "liberty", "democracy", and "free elections" do not exclusively mean what the entire world believes and accepts; instead they also designate a Cuban version that blesses everything that occurs on the island. It was a manipulation to call those who rose up in arms in the Cuban civil war during the first six years "bandidos", (bandits), and the member of the 2506 Brigade "mercenarios", (mercenaries). The individuals who were imprisoned for fighting against communism are not "delincuentes contrarrevolucionarios", (counterrevolutionary delinquents); instead they are political prisoners. One cannot label the Cubans who reside outside of the island "emigrados", (emigrants), because the majority of them left as political exiles. The organization of meetings of the "Nación y la Emigración", (Nation and Emigration) also engages in manipulation when it detracts from the notion of a Cuban exile community. Pretending to designate the representatives of the opposition is also manipulation, as is blackballing others. Manipulation exists when the government ignores and does not recognize the internal opposers and dissidents on the island. And of course, those who do not sympathize with the system have never been "gusanos", (traitors).

A change in mentality must occur now to prepare the country for the necessary transition. The Cubans on the island must understand that we and they are "un solo pueblo" (one people). They should distinguish between the opposition and internal dissidence, and this recognition of who is at the mercy of the regime is the best guarantee that the government can give regarding its real disposition for the necessary change. It should move, with political

intention, towards the decriminalization of the criminal figures along with the liberation, without exception, of all the political prisoners.

This change in mentality should extend up to the approval of private property, which requires giving tenancy of the land to those who work it and make it productive, thus permitting them to create independent cooperatives and the commercialization of their production. The workers' right to organize themselves in independent syndicates should be recognized. As it occurs in foreign investment enterprises, the state should eliminate its exploitation of the workers, where it sells Cuban labor for dollars and only pays the workers a part of the value of their labor with the impoverished national currency. The Cuban citizens should be allowed to create all sorts of businesses. The practice of controlling the existence of enterprises or services should be abandoned by means of a domineering sternness that would eliminate it. In addition, liberty of association should be permitted, so that from the bottom a vigorous process of the growth of civil society can be initiated. The procedure of nominating candidates must also change so that any citizen can aspire to serve the country. The government should bring about legislation to allow private education. Furthermore, the Cuban people should be allowed to enter and exit the country according to their desires and without having to show any more documentation than what is normally used internationally.

Possessing control over a country does not demonstrate legitimacy for a regime. Moreover, having proclaimed a constitution designed according to the continuing interests of a dictator, one who does respect the freedom or human rights of the citizens, is also not legitimacy. Legitimacy must be born from the freedom of each citizen to express his/her will, and it must be proclaimed a social result of the society that concedes it. The interests of the state cannot be considered valid reasons for not correcting the errors or abuses; they should be corrected immediately because perpetuating them is a social crime.

Evidence appears to indicate that today in Cuba there is no crisis of controlled power, because it has been consolidated for 40

years in totalitarianism. But there is a huge crisis for the population on all levels, a dilemma that acquired truly dramatic trimmings at the beginning of the collapse of the socialist blockade. It is neither honest nor moral to permit this situation to continue indefinitely. It is also not honorable for the defenders of existing socialism to utilize their position to empower themselves in the means of production and to convert themselves in that manner into the capitalists of tomorrow. We believe that the necessary economic transition should be realized with justice, and not with opportunism.

It is certain that the youth has a right to a future. But Cuba's youth grew up in a limited setting and lacks experience in democratic practice. This is valid for the members of the armed forces and the PCC. In addition, a democracy cannot be created from above; instead, it must grow from below.

Proposals for Solutions to the Crisis and Obstacles to Overcoming It

We have already described how, in the search for power by power, the Cuban government has demanded countless sacrifices of the nation, the problems of which have not been resolved.

The centralized socialist system has implicated high social and human costs and has generated an economic crisis that has placed the nation's own survival in danger. The common citizen feels each time more anguish for an increasingly difficult environment.

The present demands solutions. The conceptions, institutions, and political inadequacies have produced an increase of the gap between the sustenance levels of other countries, which before were behind, and the Cuban population. Without a doubt, changes in funds that allow Cuba to survive the existing crisis are needed.

We can not ask the people on the island to sacrifice more for an uncertain future that never arrives.

Today, the Cold War has ended for the rest of the world, but it has given Castro the intact benefit of his structure of totalitarian domination. Meanwhile, the Cuban democrats are politically weak as they were in the past, and maintain the same attitude they had during the Cold War.

The actual Cuban stagnation is due in part to the disposition of the international community towards Cuba. It has not changed, and maintains the same attitudes it had during the Cold War. This is the reason Cuba is still treated as a marginal subject in world politics.

The end of the Cold War has given birth to a new era where economics reigns. With this new vision of the world the Cuban crisis is being rationalized.

The insurmountable deficiencies of the Cuban system are never mentioned, as the total government centralism, the improvisations, and the exaggerated ideology that dominates the political, economic and social life of the country. Some speculate that the solution could come as a result of simple economic occurrences that international capitalism could produce. This solution, we think, is inspired by that old faith original capitalism had for the "laissez fair, laissez passer", but it has been proven wrong. It is imperative to condition Cuba for political changes.

Cuban opposition, internal and external, has the right to ask international activism for a political change in Cuba. We have the "people's right" to solicit the protection of the Cuban people from the economic and social misery that are now destroying the country.

We believe that economic investments in Cuba are needed to remedy the incompetent subsidized economic policies from the U.S.S.R. that Castro sponsored for decades; as well as the needed ideological changes, denied to the Cuban people by Castro's political blindness. But to naively believe that any investment would benefit the Cuban people is not acceptable.

What is happening in Cuba with the foreign investments shows that this is not the right path. The investments are not bettering the population's standard of living; on the contrary, they are exploiting the natural resources of the country for the benefit of external markets. All this is done with the consent of the Cuban government. The foreign investors are only using the logic of the capitalists: to obtain great profits, exploiting the people. The Cuban government is facilitating this exploitation of the Cubans in order to obtain hard currency to keep in power and impose its official policies on the people. It is shameful that the benefit of the investors and the government is accomplished with the exploitation of the Cubans, who are kept as prisoners of the internal political system, and are badly paid for the richness they produce. With their attitude, the foreign investors have become accomplices of a government which has lost its prestige and makes them part of this exploitation.

Any proposal to end the Cuban crisis and the strategy used to obtain the needed changes has to detect the basic problems. Economic problems are not the only ones to be considered, but political, social, and also moral problems. In many instances, our people do not think, or are not aware of the following fact: "or a conscience reappears in Cuba, or Cuba dies."

THE PARADOX OF CUBA TODAY

1. Without a doubt, the revolutionary regime has experienced its most serious crisis ever in recent times.
2. At first sight, the regime faces circumstances, which should have provoked its demise.

Said circumstances include: a loss of ideological foundations; a loss of its place in the international political economy; a domestic economy of survival; a rupture of the social revolutionary contract; a breakdown in its original legitimacy for the new generations; a lack of

consensus in the political elite; an almost complete uncertainty about the future; and the vanishing of its international reference.

In spite of the above, a paradox arises. Said regime:

- (a) has not lost its capacity for repression; the tools of terror remain intact;
 - (b) Its leadership has not lost its will for power;
 - (c) yet, the means to and the opportunity of implementing a convincing alternative project, within the daily scenario of Cubans, have not materialized.
3. In short, the deep national crisis the country suffers has not apparently had political consequences of equal magnitude.

4. It is possible to point to some factors contributing to the gap between the crisis of the regime and its political consequences, among others:

- (a) the Stalinist structure attempting to eliminate very precarious political spaces which have been budding and choking any efforts to resurrect civil society;
- (b) it still enjoys a residual legitimacy allowing it to mobilize its most stubborn supporters;
- (c) although progress has been achieved, there is yet a big lack of alternatives in (spokespeople, projects, organizations) and concrete policies;
- (d) a fear of retaliation;
- (e) a preference for escapism at the individual level (literally, to escape from hell, to continue pretending, to resolve any way one may be able to);
- (f) an inability to look after anything but to secure the daily survival;
- (g) a proven official will to use the level of repression necessary;

- (h) a concern that post-totalitarian experiences in the old Soviet Union and Central Europe might be repeated in Cuba.

5. It is also possible to profile some new modalities suggesting some political consequences of the crisis:

- * the inability of the top leadership to fully control the PCC – in its electoral processes as well as in the deliberations of its last three congresses;
- * the negative voting registered in December 1992, February 24th 1993 and in 1995;
- * the appearance and growth of *aperturistas* (those favoring change) in all layers of government, younger generations with recognized capability to rule and separated from the violent past of the regime;
- * a more openly critical attitude by the citizenry, and lastly...
- * the "*Malecón Crisis*" (Havana's Seaside Walk's Disturbances in 1994);

6. At present, neither "from the top", starting from within the PCC and "trickling down" to the grassroots, nor "from below" as a current of cohesion and massification of many of these elements within the populace; there has been a decisive challenge to the regime forcing it to apply a strong dosage of repression in its re-alignment policy at present.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PARADOX

1. With no challenge from below and by keeping any internal dissent within the PCC, under control, the leadership is not compelled to negotiate a political change.
2. Thus, it has developed a survival strategy based on keeping the political and economic spheres separate from each other, somewhat similar to the process led by geriatric officials in The People's Republic of China but with eminently distinct traits within the traditional behavior of the regime in political

and economic affairs. This includes improvisation; hypercentralization and nonsensical plans.

To somewhat follow the Chinese model: an external privatization; a state – foreign investors co-management-; a new state capitalism; a treacherous way of making changes so that nothing is changed; a “wishywashiness” to perpetuate the totalitarian state. **This is vintage continuism!**

The Cuban government knows that the state model of production is the real cause of the misery suffered by the population today. To maintain it is to preserve the economic crisis and its consequences, but it fears true privatization among the citizenry. Hence, a deep discrimination has been established.

The depenalization of hard currency, the system’s way of alleviating present economic hardships is bringing about unacceptable social changes, worsening the prostitution problem, making the people obsessed in the dollar search around the Spanish hotel industry at whatever costs; the pleasure and fun places to which Cuban youth can only access via-prostitution to gain the favors of the tourists.

A Desirable Economic Transition

The democratization of the economy, the generalization of private property, to make people producers would be a desirable economic transition capable of making men and women forever independent of the State. It is for this very reason that the Cuban government avoids it. The total lack of incentives for the individual producer leads to the failure of a state-managed economy. Without radical change in this sphere a takeoff will not be possible to guarantee an economy allowing Cuba to compete at the world level. So far, there are no indications of a search for the only viable path to overcome the present crisis already running for several years. Since the real

reason is to perpetuate their power, they fear the probable costs of deep changes.

There are two possible ways of viewing the transition towards democracy in Cuba. Either all civil liberties are reinstated to bring about a change in the economic system or the system evolves from within as a product of a realistic pragmatism which might produce the thrusts, the necessary change undercurrents -a product of acknowledged failures- capable of fulfilling the need to produce effectively while resolving the social and political crises as well.

Generally, the *aperturistas* do not wish to code change with a name. They've guessing about the future, but they subordinate politics to economics rather than vice versa. They do not want to label the political regime nor propose which path the economy should take. Much less do they want to know which political regime or economic system will result out of the necessary changes required by objective realities encountered nationwide and which are now under scrutiny.

They do not say what is desirable and it must be said! If wealth is to be produced and what has arrested the incentive to produce has been the state-controlled system, in this or that sector, and centralized planning has failed, then this ought to be changed.

Which social and political regime is brought by change? They cannot and do not even pretend to predict it!

We should underline here that lukewarm economic reforms carried out to-date have not resolved the immediate economic crisis and much less have they set the grounds of a new model of accumulation which might create long term wealth.

The restricted impact of the dollar liberalization and of the presence of foreign enclaves; the narrowness of the law of free

hiring; the limited benefits from increased tourism and new investments do not point to a takeoff extricating the country from its present quagmire. Lacking a leadership consensus and a solid scheme towards a new global model, we fail to see a dynamics of renewal.

Neither do we see how the government is going to be able to neutralize the effects of black market operations and of the informal economy that rules it and reaps its benefits. A situation of illegal *de facto* privatization is the outcome of this official economic narrowness, in which the State is being literally cannibalized by the informal sector.

This erodes the legitimacy of the regime and, even worse, is fostering a mentality of scorn for legality, a lack of solidarity and a fast decline in the ethical patterns of behavior. It is not only a question of theft and prostitution but rather one of generalized corruption and of a state capitalism which is truly savage, primitive and ruled by the mob.

Thus, we are in the midst of a reluctant, official transition that does not manage to unblock the economic crisis for lack of a sensible political offer by the regime while this common sense has been solidly shown by the political opposition for quite some time.

3. Stagnant officialdom is convinced that by means of "political work" it can keep both circuits separate, gain time, take advantage of a more favorable juncture, introduce economic changes with foreign assistance and change the political structure at its own rhythm and without losing control. In spite of the fact that changes, both in the economic -where more has been done- as well as in the political -where the minimum possible has been allowed- fields are geared to safeguarding the continuity of the leadership -even in a different regime-; the scope of said changes is not completely predictable nor controllable by the Cuban government.

4. The regime does not feel obligated to negotiate with anyone from the Cuban opposition as it does not bear any direct pressure from within and there is almost complete economic stagnation.

5. The U. S. government, on the other hand, seems to believe that change vectors are active in Cuba but that the necessary time has not yet passed for these to bear on the structure of the regime. So, there is nothing fundamental to negotiate with Mr. Castro, whom should be the one making any offer and time will force him to change his attitude.
6. All of the above makes the agenda of peaceful opposition more difficult but it does not make it invalid or illegitimate.

The analysis we make of the crisis is, therefore, fundamentally political and political is also the change methodology proposed. Our strategy is neither voluntaristic nor triumphalistic. It focuses on a dynamics and not on the expedient convenience of power. It very much takes into account the proposed operational rationality and tries to become rooted in Cuban reality to project our political offer.

"This offer is clear: it is based in the search of coincidences of those working for a real change in Cuba, making efforts to nourish them with alternatives and options, to add to them and for them support from the international community while denying continuity options to the dictatorship, by means of a conscious and mature performance. We propose a gradual political change."

Besides this offer, we also present a commitment and another proposal which Castro does not like at all, but it is not directed at him. The offer says that there is a place under the sun in post-Castro Cuba for all the people, including those in the government machinery.

VISION OF A STRATEGY FOR TRANSITION

1. We believe that the most important change *aperturistas* must bring about in Cuba –to free themselves and resolve

the crisis- is to **deamericanize** their strategy and internationalize, multilateralize their solutions U. S. Cuba policy has been disastrous in the past, it is so at present and in the future it remains to be seen. But Castro must be told that U. S. mistakes throughout Cuban history do not justify him.

Cubans shall never be able to ever change an iota in the U. S. policy neither will they be able to influence it in a decisive fashion regarding any significant issue. The *aperturistas* cannot decide what the U. S. might do about the embargo. If the liberation strategy of our homeland is shaped now, maybe the embargo will never be lifted. What will happen to Cuba then?

That dependence and conditioning of our political strategy, in terms of what others may or may not do, paralyze and limit us. The national destiny and responsibility shall never be in Cuban hands, as long as our problems are brought to the U. S. Senate for their resolution. It is up to Cubans themselves inside the island, it is up to all Cubans, not only to some of them. We believe the best solution shall come if the very government chooses to carry forward the Transition. We believe it will gravely miscalculate if it would not take into account Cubans at home and would only consider those abroad or vice versa.

When we say that the government alone cannot carry out the transition we wish to emphasize that it needs to reintegrate all Cubans who were left out or excluded to attain it. Otherwise, the problem would remain untouched. This is so, because the country pains for more than economic problems. The country also suffers political and social problems. This change in mentality may thaw the country from the government throughout the entire nation, thus bringing about the rebuilding and flowering of the foundations of civil society islandwide.

Castro has reaped benefits from the wrongly called external blockade. First, because of its inefficiency during 38 years; but also because it has been the excuse of the tyranny and has faithfully justified it.

We have opposed Torricelli and Helms-Burton legislations from their start for similar reasons. But we shall never forget that neither we imposed the embargo nor we will be able to lift it. We also wish to say that we will always refuse to limit or subordinate our strategy to whichever may be the decision of the U. S. government in power concerning Cuba.

2. When our trauma about the 90 miles vanishes, we will better able to see that the internal blockade should also cease. It has done the most harm to Cuba. It is the strongest change stopper. Cuba has been isolated from the world by Castroism. Some expressions of individuality, creativity and freedom have been choked, thus, weakening the very life of the delicate fabric of civil society.

Some day not very far off, the political paralysis and icing shall cease. On the island, a new political way of thinking, based in "allowing people the freedom to choose" will emerge. There is no better democracy than that.

On the basis of the foregoing and absent a severe contingency now unforeseen we assume that:

- A. The possibilities of the embargo lifting, as well as those of an uprising of the Cuban people are equally remote in the immediate future.
- B. Enemies of change will try to maintain today's strategy against all odds; their arrogance and self-sufficiency join hands

with a deep concern over their physical survival and their role in history.

- C. It shall continue to be very rough and difficult to maintain organic and functional ties with more than 100 dissident groups in Cuba, as they share with *aperturistas* the desire and the right to work for change in Cuba with the negative burden of lacking the necessary space to channel other obvious alternatives for a society aiming at being pluralistic. The international activism in defense of human rights in Cuba will be catapulted as long as internal conditions warrant it.
- D. We shall sustain, with our presence and attitude the premise that there is a serious and patriotic opposition willing to negotiate, both inside as well as outside Cuba.
- E. The *aperturistas* ought to give many more efforts and resources to the task of directly penetrating Cuban reality and to making themselves more visible and relevant within it.
- F. We should carefully calibrate joint efforts.
- G. We shall have to study how to deviate changes by the stagnant leadership into the path of a genuine democratization.
- H. Work will have to proceed to establish the indispensable difference distinguishing between the governments of Cuba and the U. S. and the paradox dictatorship-democracy in Cuba which is, finally, the most relevant for Cubans.

Because of the above:

We reject the position of the stagnant officialdom which insists that there cannot be negotiations among Cubans nor democratization for Cubans as long as the U. S. keeps its hostility. Both things are related but obviously one is not subordinated to the other.

DIALOGUE - NEGOTIATION AND TRANSITION

Dialogue – between the Cuban government and a group of participants, yet to be determined - is again on the front burner. Apparently, on both sides, there are people interested in making this a serious effort which may render something positive. Precisely, because of this there is room for some specifications about basic issues which may derail the attempt. As part of the moderate opposition, we believe a dialogue is always positive but, in the present juncture, a dialogue is insufficient if it does not lead to a negotiation between adversaries.

A dialogue may not go beyond the civic on to the political, the friendly to the conflictive, the personal to the institutional. And from the perspective of the democratic opposition to the regime, we would only be interested in dialogue if it is a stepping stone towards a negotiation. Said negotiation would only be legitimate if it adopts the agenda of a transition to democracy.

To go from dialogue to negotiation, the distinction between good and bad Cubans must be avoided. Little is gained in demonizing or exorcizing anyone. In the past few decades, nothing has hurt us worst than stupidly accepting labels imposed by armed prophets, seudopatriots and irate opinion guides. The moment we begin to separate the wheat from the bread we are joining the discourse of the no-change crowd. Likewise, pity those who accept praise and the singing of mermaids bloating them as one of the few reasonable Cubans with whom one may be able to speak, contrasting with “other (bad) Cubans” with whom one may not!

As a matter of principle, any project which excludes others is unacceptable. But it is not legitimate to propose, that in order to produce a sensible solution one must negotiate behind Cubans

themselves. We should not fear a transparency of purposes and methods on this or any other issue at hand.

Let's keep in mind that we are dealing with an encounter between adversaries.

By the same token, we are **not** seeking forgiveness on the part of the regime. We are not going to bind negotiations to the favorable resolution of the beatification cause of the dictator. We know full well with whom we would be negotiating and so do they!

This brings us to a conclusion. Generally, dictatorships do not enter into negotiations to surrender power. This has to be crystal clear. Wherever a dictatorial government has entered into a negotiation it has done so to keep itself in power, not to return sovereignty to the people. At best, to return it in a slow dripping manner.

From the standpoint of the requirements of a transition, the selfish rationality of the dictator has been enough, namely, I negotiate to save my neck. We negotiate for him to save his neck... while giving up his power. Is there not a contradiction here? But of course! This is the challenge. It so happens that transitions are not crisscrossed, they are not even a war through other means. Transitions are processes in which two adversary groups decide that there is more to lose maintaining the status quo (life itself; the homeland; history's scorn) than risking (power; prestige; life) by negotiating. The dictator will negotiate when he feels he has no other choice. The challenge is how to come to that point.

We cannot burn stages nor improvise solutions!

To manage to start an effort towards dialogue at present and with a future there is a need to pinpoint, as we have done above, points of agreement and disagreement, what is and what is not negotiable. Likewise, failures and achievements of past dialogues –1978, 1994, 1995- must be evaluated in order to nourish and improve any immediate and mediate effort.

Both parties would have to agree on agendas and participants in any joint venture with representatives of power in Cuba, Cubans from Diaspora and from inside the Island itself.

We can agree on objectives with different strategies. For example:

1. We all want to travel together towards that inevitable tomorrow in which all Cubans may be able to share the Common Home while working in-the-making of a more participatory, just and free society.
2. The ruling principle of the national task –in every front- must be inclusive and democratic... No Cuban who is capable and good willing should be kept out: neither PC militants nor peaceful opponents...
Let only those who exclude themselves stay out!
3. The power of the powerless... is more ethical than political... They have felt in their physical and emotional flesh the weight of those who do have the power... and they have maintained their commitment to the future from within the Island.
4. It seems that the nation's crisis has been mitigated but it has not been resolved... Those in power in Cuba ought to know that they cannot, on their own, seek a viable and sustainable solution to the Nation's and the people's problems. It is good and necessary to lower the pitch of rhetoric to be able to begin to walk the shortcuts, twists and turns of national reconciliation.

The Catholic Church in Cuba, since 1993, ["Love Awaits All"] has offered to be a Mediator in an effort towards a National Dialogue. For her 2000 year experience at a planetary level; her extra-national resources; her renewed pastoral, social, cultural and missionary prestige –within Cuban society- and for so much more..., much could be achieved –with short and long term positive results- by this national, ecclesial cooperation.