

## CHAPTER 5

# Batalla de Ideas: Old Ideology in New Clothes?

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*Abstract: Rather than dismissing the post-2000 Batalla de Ideas as empty rhetoric or a desperate attempt to stave off the inevitable, we should understand the phenomenon within a wider historical context: of elements of continuity since 1959, of processes of ideological development and reinforcement, of patterns of internal “debate,” and of the continual and necessary alternation between participation through active mobilization and participation through structure. As a result, it may perhaps be too early to write off the campaign and the collective experience as meaningless and anachronistic.*

Cuba's *Batalla de Ideas* (officially dating from 5 December 1999, the first Elián González rally) has often been dismissed as empty rhetoric, desperation of a moribund regime, an example of idiosyncratic and irrational personalist rule or a nostalgic return to the 1960s. Indeed, even inside Cuba, it has occasionally been seen as a costly, chimerical, and pointless exercise.<sup>1</sup>

However, as is so often true, the reality is that it can be seen as both none of those things and all of those things; it is all of them, because there is an element of truth in all these images, but, more importantly, it is none of them, because what it represented was much more complex. Therefore, as Cuba takes stock of its future under a leader reputedly cautious about the *Batalla*, this is a moment to reassess it all, to assess its complex origins, nature and implications, and also to judge its success. For this purpose, we need to use two separate, but related, prisms: ideology and

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1. The purpose of this national exercise (required of all of Cuba's Mass Organizations, the ruling Communist Party and the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas) was to discuss the implications of Raúl Castro's speech on 26 July 2007, in which he had voiced criticisms of Cuba's failings and suggested issues for discussion.

methodology, within a historical reading of the Revolution's trajectory since 1959.

However, we first need to recall the context for the *Batalla* and its subsequently christening. In summer 2000, as the Elián campaign moved towards its conclusion, its significance became clear to leaders and participants alike, although not necessarily to outsiders. A year later, on 15 August 2001, Fidel Castro launched the “educational revolution,” which, within a month, was bearing fruit in the first emergency schools. The term *Batalla* then began to be used more systematically, although this retrospective christening persuaded many observers that the exercise was simply capitalizing on a popular issue to legitimize a new “phase” of the faltering Revolution. This interpretation was of course enhanced by the Revolution's long history of “phases,” seen variously as indicative of confusion and lack of direction, of irrationality and personalism, or of intrigue and factionalism (Mesa-Lago, 1974); according to this reading, Fidel was leading an exhausted Cuban people through yet another ambitious “phase” to evade declining credibility, economic crisis and advancing capitalism. Therefore, the *Batalla*, with its astonishing scale and scope, was simply the 1968 Revolutionary Offensive repeated, bound to have the same deleterious and demoralizing effects of that former campaign.<sup>2</sup> Since the *Batalla's* focus was always on “ideas,” and since Fidel had repeatedly called for ideological strengthening of Cuba's youth to resist the effects of the market and individualism, Fidel was depicted as Canute.

We should, therefore, first examine the ideological dimension of the *Batalla*. However, the question of “ideology” in Cuba inevitably raises several issues: what is meant by 'ideology', what were the 'strengthening' mechanisms used, and how did this all fit into the Revolution's whole trajectory? The first question is relevant because the dismissal of the *Batalla's* ideological purpose has generally arisen from a particular reading of ideology in Cuba, as a top-down imposition of a dogmatic Marxism-Leninism (Bunck, 1994). However, as many have observed,

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2. The March 1968 campaign saw the nationalization of around 56,000 small businesses, as part of two processes: the rapid drive towards a radical version of Communism and the build-up to the make-or-break 10-million ton 1970 sugar harvest. One immediate outcome was a noticeable increase in absenteeism at work.

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“ideology” in Cuba should never be dismissed in these terms, arguing instead that we should recognize the complex processes of ideological formation both before and after 1959 (Liss 1987; Fernández 2000; Kapcia, 2000; Gott 2004).<sup>3</sup> Besides recognizing the roots of this ideology, however, we should also examine the complex processes of negotiation, synthesis and organic growth of its emergence, and the parallel processes of ideological definition, redefinition and reinforcement which the Revolution has pursued over 50 years.

For one characteristic since 1959 has been the continuity detectable between the basic tenets of 1959-60 and those evident since, despite apparent contradiction and change through all its bewildering “phases.” That continuity is detectable less in precise formulations or programs at particular moments than in the underlying principles (*valores*) or codes (Valdés 1992). We might, for example, take collectivism first, being the one most associated with the move towards Communism and apparently most undermined after 1990. Despite expectations that it only arose after 1961 under Soviet and Marxist influences, it was actually rooted in principles of community and solidarity inherited from the pre-revolutionary *cubanía*, reinforced in the collective experiences of 1959. Hence, as the post-1990 crisis fragmented social cohesion, it was this which ensured that something of the community principle survived; for, although individualism became increasingly evident, it did so within a wider context of family, social and local networks which created a shared response to the new challenges, a framework of social networks, ways of acting and attitudes which substituted for the state. In essence it was that Cuban civil society long overlooked and denied by those seeing “civil society” as necessarily opposed to, and negated by, the state, a counterweight to the monolith; it was a civil society which, now partly disengaged from its symbiotic relationship with the weakened state, stood in for it during the shortages and the forced localization of activity and focus.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, that *valor* was evidently shared by Cuba's Christian churches and *santería*, which, equally fearful about declining social cohe-

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3. Most of the following discussion of ideology, ideological codes and political-historical myths relies on the arguments laid out in Kapcia (2000).

4. For alternatives to the “civil society versus the state” paradigm, see Hernández (2007), Crahan and Armony (2007), and Gray and Kapcia (2008).

sion, joined the state and Party in seeking a way out of the crisis. It was this which essentially made the Pope's 1998 visit as much a celebration of that sharing as a demonstration of a pragmatic *modus vivendi*.

Of the other *valores* or codes remaining more or less constant, the most obvious is "struggle" (*lucha*), but others include the belief in the liberating and socializing potential of culture and education, "moralism," and the power and importance of youth. In each case, it is the underlying "storyline" (the narrative) of the code which remains detectable, regardless of the specific form at any given time.

The concept of "essence" is directly relevant here. After 1993, with the immediate economic strategies in place, leaders, activists and supporters embarked on a familiar process of "debate;" it was familiar because, rather than reading the Revolution as a series of 'phases', it may be more useful to interpret it as a recurrent cycle of crisis, debate and confident consolidation or mobilization. According to this alternative reading, each crisis; external or internal, contingent or structural; has generated a period of "debate" which, in turn, has resulted in a more confident and more consensual period of consolidation or mobilization, until the next crisis repeats the cycle again.

The concept of "debate" is of course a complex one in Cuba, since such periodic phenomena are often unrecognized by outsiders (because they are either held in camera or are disguised in some other form) or because they are rarely open, obvious and inclusive. Historically the most open was the "Great Debate" of 1962-5 (although somewhat limited in its participants and immediate relevance), while the most closed debates have been around the Escalante affair (1961-2) or the recriminations following the 1970 harvest. However, the more typical debates have been the post-1986 'Rectification' process, the current cultural *encuentros* or the most recent consultation to discuss Raúl's 26 July 2007 speech.<sup>5</sup>

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5. This refers to the series of semi-public debates between intellectuals and government leaders which, since February 2007, followed the furor over the apparent rehabilitation on television of Luis Pavón, whom many held responsible for the *quinquenio gris*, the period (1971-6) of cultural dogmatism, harassment and restriction. This debate rapidly moved beyond the past and literature, encompassing different groups, cultural and intellectual issues and the old vexed and contested question of the relationship between the Revolution and culture.

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In the mid-1990s, this debate was both public (and inclusive) and enclosed, both formal and informal. It was more structured within the Party ranks (in preparation for the 1991 and 1996 Congresses), but less enclosed within the Mass Organizations, most obviously in the workplace *parlamentos obreros* or the CDRs.<sup>6</sup> However, it was also evident in religious groups, academic centers, and magazines (*Temas, Debates Americanos and Contracorriente*) and newspapers (notably *Trabajadores and Juventud Rebelde*), and informally in any number of ways and places: at bus stops, at workplaces, at home, and also in those plays and films that pushed out the boundaries of discussion. It went to the heart of the Revolution: if Cubans were being asked to “save” the revolution, there had to be a clear consensus on what to save and what to discard, as the cost of economic reform. Without that consensus, there was no guarantee of popular support. Hence, Cubans argued about what was now possible, desirable or necessary, about shortcomings and the need for immediate reform, about *jinetismo* and tourism, and so on. In all this, the debate followed the usual “rules:” those outlined by Fidel’s famous dictum, in his 1961 *Palabras a los Intelectuales*: “dentro de la Revolución, todo, contra la Revolución nada” (with the emphasis on *dentro*).<sup>7</sup>

By 1998, the results were clearer, with the basics of ‘the Revolution’ identified: a commitment to welfare, especially for the old and young (converting the old “mass” collectivism of action, shared struggle and improvement into *solidarismo*, a sense of social responsibility and concern for the welfare of the less fortunate); continuing state control of key economic sectors; a rejection of a multi-party system but a willingness to broaden participation and perhaps to redefine Party domination; a commitment to education (as an end and a means of modernization); and a key

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6. These were: Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC), Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC), Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (CDR), Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU), Federación de Estudiantes de Educación Media (FEEM) and Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (ANAP). After 1993, they were joined by the Asociación de Combatientes de la Revolución Cubana.

7. This raises the intriguing question of the usual interpretation of this phrase, since the conventional version outside Cuba has tended to include the word *fuera* (outside) rather than *contra*; while the former assumes an “either-or” dichotomy with the potential to define those not explicitly in favour (of the Revolution) as being *contra*, the latter, the actual version, implied a less exclusive message that, far from demanding explicit commitment in art, assumed commitment unless explicitly rejected.

role for the Armed Forces (FAR). Everything else was either desirable but not essential (public housing, full employment, or state-run agriculture) or dispensable.

Therefore, following the usual cycle, the Revolution was now ready for the next step, boosted by the “feel-good” factor of the Pope’s 1998 visit, which, in all but name, was greeted as a celebration of external recognition (and the end of the new siege) and the end of the worst. Indeed, that same “feel-good” factor was related to the question of “the Special Period;” Cubans had been asked for almost a decade to pin their declining hopes on economic recovery, make ends meet, and work collectively in the latest *lucha* (generating the street term *luchando*, expressing illegal means of survival), but the leaders knew that, with growth being trumpeted each year and with dollars circulating, either the imminent end of suffering had to be announced or expectations had to be dampened down. Hence, a way had to be found either of distracting, of implying the end of the Special Period without generating expectations, or of finding an alternative focus; it was ultimately in Miami that a new focus was found, within a matter of months, in the Elián González case.

Returning to the question of ideology, however, we also now need to consider another aspect: how exactly the processes of internalization have worked since 1959. For “ideology” is never a question of ideas alone; instead, an ideology’s development, inculcation and internalization is always a matter of belief-systems behind those ideas, the formal and the informal sentiments underlying them, and the amalgamated “world-view” emerging. For the most powerful means for inculcating an ideology are rarely those imposed from above, but rather those that are seen by the collective as genuinely organic, reflecting real collective experiences, values and beliefs, and given relevant and consensual meaning through collective action and shared collective struggle. For the point of a consensual ideology is that it provides the “belief cement” to enable people to belong to a larger reality which they simultaneously see as also enabling them to be themselves in some form or other.

Hence, the key issues about any ideology are not just its components but also the processes and mechanisms of its emergence and evolution, enabling it to become persuasively meaningful. In Cuba since 1959, these mechanisms have principally been: the shared experience of participation from 1960 (various organizations, campaigns and rallies); the growing

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sense and redefinition of active nationalism (firstly defensive and then more positive, through “internationalism” and sport); the sense of shared siege from 1961; the actual struggles (of 1961, the 1961-66 *lucha contra bandidos* and then Angola) and imagined “struggles” of repeated campaigns, defensive mobilizations and crises; the processes and materials of education (especially the 1961 Literacy Campaign, *Escuelas al Campo* and *Escuelas en el Campo*); the use of “banal nationalism” through banners, posters, hoardings, monuments, and so on (Billig 1995); and the continuous use and customization of political-historical myths, through public rhetoric, visual reinforcement and popular culture.

How, though, did these mechanisms fare after 1990 and especially during the *Batalla*? To answer that, we must first consider a further dimension to the whole context: the alternating methodologies of participation since 1959. This refers to the detectable alternation between participation through mobilization and “passion” (Fernández 2000) and participation through structure and system. At its simplest, this was visible in the “radicalism” of 1965-70 and the post-1975 “institutionalization,” which, rather than being seen in terms of competing factions, panic management or personalist strategies, might more usefully be seen as two sides of the same coin, as differences in style and form rather than in belief or policy, with Cuba's leaders having recourse to one or the other according to changing circumstances, awareness of the limits of each, and responses to pressure from below.

Hence, until 1968, those leaders almost certainly read the popular mood correctly when continuing to develop mechanisms of active and continuous mobilization, building on the early enthusiasm, the sense of empowerment, and the shared sense of siege and defensive nationalism. Given the accompanying awareness of “crisis,” this approach made sense, worked successfully in keeping the collective adrenalin running, and also prevented the bureaucratization of a growing state-run system from slowing down, from distancing and from weakening the active processes of belonging and involvement.

However, as many have observed, by 1968 the strains were obvious; nine years of constant mobilization had exhausted even the most committed (on whom the Revolution depended), nine years of austerity had frustrated and exhausted tolerance, and specific errors, together with general structural problems and “the bureaucratization of anarchy” (Dumont,

1970: 58) all led to the impending stagnation an effective system of participation and social welfare. Hence, once the disastrous *zafra* became the final straw, the new approach was adopted easily, enabling less a frenetic and more stable participation through structures (especially through the post-1975 Party and the post-1976 Poder Popular) and much less through collective action. The fact that morale—and of course the economy—recovered so quickly perhaps indicated a greater popular willingness to support and a crisis less deep than imagined, but also that “institutionalization” was simply the other side of the same coin, a strategy, regardless of the specific crisis, always likely to be adopted, as the investments of the first decade began to bear fruit.

By the mid-1980s, however, the different strains generated by that process also began to show. Material benefits might have improved (giving Cubans their best standard of living since 1959 and creating a myth of a golden age), but the resulting downgrading of the CDRs and collective campaigning, and the rise of a bureaucratic inertia and even of relative privilege within the increased Party, conspired to create a disjuncture between the ethos of “revolution” and the daily grass-roots experience. Therefore the specific challenges facing the system after 1980 (the Mariel affair, Gorbachev, the stresses within the UJC) were all partly attributable to these strains.

What followed was “Rectification,” resurrecting some of the mechanisms, ideas and people of the 1960s. Although seemingly another confident mobilization, this experience was actually more a post-crisis “debate,” whose following period of certainty was prevented by the even greater 1989-91 crisis and the Special Period, making the *Batalla* the postponed outcome of “Rectification.”

Without going into the detail of the Special Period, the important point here is its deleterious effects on morale, active support and ideological commitment, all weakened by the rise of a corrosive individualism and the decline of the effectiveness and credibility of the benefactor state (Eckstein, 1994) and the divisive effects of hard-currency and tourism. Few of the familiar ideological mechanisms remained active in the face of the pressures, shortages and lack of transportation, leading to a decline in the opportunities for shared participation through organizations, campaigns and rallies. All that remained, therefore, was education (crucially maintained), the less active presence of “banal nationalism,” and the folk

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memory of customized myths (Kapcia 2000). Many Cubans sustained faith through the belief that the “Special Period in Peacetime” (contrarily implying a “war economy”) was the latest struggle to be endured, a belief reinforced by US tightening of the embargo (the Cuba Democracy and Helms-Burton Acts). This partly echoed the 1960s “siege mentality” of a Cuba seemingly abandoned by allies and battling alone against imperialism; however, unlike the 1960s, there was now little hope to sustain that faith, although loyalists—demoralized by the evidence of capitalism, rising crime, prostitution and their own recourse to the black market, raised their spirits by referring hopefully to *pasando por el Período Especial*.

This, then, was the context for the Elián campaign, which, along with the genuinely shared sense of involvement, anger, and even nationalism, had the clear effect of convincing the Cuban leaders, and Fidel in particular, of the continuing benefits, power and possibilities of the old mechanisms of “passionate” mobilization, as well as of the possibilities of renewal offered by youth, now seen more as 'the solution' than 'the problem' of old. August 1994 had, of course, reminded those leaders of the potential of mobilization, as the rally of 5 August palpably reinforced the morale of those supporters who had despondently watched the unfolding events with no real response from the beleaguered system. As Fidel intervened crucially in the tumult and then led the rally on the Malecón, thousands of the hitherto demoralized strove to gather with like-minded Cubans, relieved that so many still shared their faith.

Since then, however, there had been few opportunities to re-express that faith. Hence, the Elián campaign, demonstrating a remarkable capacity to be sustained for six months, offered the perfect opportunity. What followed was, therefore, firstly the regeneration of the youth organizations, capitalizing on willing youth involvement in the campaign and the prominence of the two main leaders, Otto Rivero (UJC) and Hassan Pérez Casabona (FEU), the latter being especially outstanding in his oratory and his visible association with Fidel. Not only were these two organizations given much greater media coverage but their leaders were now evidently being involved more in decision-making than had ever been true.

The focus on youth had two advantages, of course. Firstly, it highlighted to young Cubans the possibility that they and their views were suddenly at the forefront of the Revolution’s considerations. After decades when the system had found it difficult to develop a consistent

attitude to the growing manifestations of youth discontent and even alienation (from an increasingly ageing leadership and a frustrating structure which educated them but then denied them a separate voice), this new attention was significant. Hence, Hassan's brief popularity was less a reflection of his abilities than the FEU members' recognition that, once "problematic," they might now be taken seriously. This focus (with an almost millennial meaning of regeneration in 2000) therefore promised to enroll a new generation in a perhaps revived 'Revolution.'

This leads on to the second advantage of the youth focus: its boost to morale among older generations, especially those (aged over 45) who had borne the brunt of the previous collective efforts, marching in much-reduced rallies, volunteering in much-reduced campaigns, and keeping the faith loyally. Now the promise of a new generation to take their place, implying long-term survival, brought much relief.

The second sequel to the Elián campaign, however, was the emergence of the (retroactive) *Batalla* from 2001, a campaign which immediately took advantage of the new potential for militancy to return to a *guerrillista* discourse, repeating the ethos of the early Revolution; it was, of course, a batalla because it responded to the threat from the newly elected Bush Administration, now committed to hardening the somewhat frayed Cuba policy and repaying political debts to the émigré lobby. Moreover, after September 2001, with the new discourse of the "axis of evil," the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq (the latter demonstrating to Cuba a worrying US willingness to defy world opinion and the UN), and the 2004 US measures to squeeze the Cuban economy even further, the "siege" became more real, reinforced in even more. Thus *batalla* responded to a new sense of vulnerability and a new mood of defensiveness.

The *Batalla* took shape principally through three mechanisms, all directly associated with "ideas" and all intended to capitalize on the recently witnessed collective enthusiasm in order to strengthen the ideological commitment of both young and old, and to mend some of the preceding decade's damage. The first were new political vehicles for mobilization, especially the regular *Tribunas Abiertas* (from January 2000), but also including the daily *Mesa Redonda* TV programs, which, although eventually stultifying and ritualized, initially offered new parameters for debate.

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The *Batalla's* second manifestation was the characteristically fidelista explosion of activity and investment focused on the new “educational revolution:” the construction of a network of *escuelas emergentes* and the graduation of thousands of young “professionals” to fill gaps and enlist them in the Revolution; the new opportunities for older Cubans through the televised Universidad para Todos; and, after 2003, the emergency retraining of laid-off sugar workers.

It was, however, the *escuelas* that most represented the *Batalla*. The concept arose from three “discoveries” by both the UJC’s and FEU’s foot-soldiers during the Elián campaign. The first was the existence of a potential “lost” generation of Cuban youth, who, denied a university education by the highly selective system, threatened to drift into delinquency, alienation and even perhaps dissent. The second was a serious labor migration from the public service sector to the hard-currency tourist-related sectors, creating shortages of personnel. The third was the evidence of the genuine social problems which, in the inner-city slums, the Special Period had created, with no easily available skills to deal with them. The new *escuelas* therefore targeted all three problems; by emergency training to fill the identified labor gaps, they also addressed the new social problems and promised a university education to the potentially “neglected” generation.

Within weeks the first schools, largely under the UJC, were producing somewhat raw graduates in social work, nursing, primary teaching and (much overlooked) cultural education; within years, thousands had graduated from the schools, flooding a university system which now had to expand urgently (through the emergency program of “municipalization”), and then filling schools and hospitals. However, it was the *trabajadores sociales* who were the real protagonists of the experiment, becoming the “shock troops” of the *Batalla* (or the “Red Guards” or *talibanes* as many called them). The third manifestation (less relevant here) was the rebirth of the pre-1989 phenomenon of “internationalism,” especially focused on medical aid and Venezuela.

How effective was this whole experience of “ideological reinforcement”? It is, of course, too early to say, since the products of those *escuelas* have not yet been tested beyond the organized tasks, and popular suspicion of these young “militants” could deter their willingness to remain committed, especially with the slight marginalization of the *Batalla* since August 2006. However, a potential longer-term commit-

ment is perhaps identifiable, not least in the *Batalla's* use of the old familiar mechanisms of ideological socialization.

For example, the new experience of shared collective campaigning clearly repeated the first flush of popular involvement of 1959-61, increasingly recalled by older Cubans as the time when young Cubans were massively radicalized through responsibility and mobilization in defense, social and labor tasks. Equally, the *Batalla* experience has reactivated nationalism and a sense of shared siege, and has been based on a shared experience of a new "educational revolution," with the young as both educators and newly "liberated," as in 1961. As for myths, the continually reinforced association with Martí (not least at every rally at the Tribuna Antimperialista, which, crowned by a statue of Martí holding a child, faces "imperialism" head-on) has also explicitly been adapted to identify this generation with Che Guevara, through teaching materials and the schools' discourse (Kapcia 2005).

Meanwhile, of course, the last few years have seen these new "troops" manning "the front line" in various mobilizations, highlighting to them and the Cuban public the special value attributed to their role, possibly giving them a sense of their collective importance in defending both Cuba and the Revolution. Even the recent controversial use of the *trabajadores sociales* as emergency gas-station attendants had the potential to build some sort of *esprit de corps*, as the popular criticism of them for closing off opportunities for pilfering could easily have the converse effect of strengthening their sense of righteous importance, as a generation unsullied by *metal vil*. In this respect, they again have the potential to echo the youth experience of the early years, where adolescents' experience of being seen as the first line of defense of national sovereignty and the first line of attack against underdevelopment ensured an enduring loyalty.

So the potential for a longer-term success clearly exists. The critical test, however, is about to come, and may have started in 2005-6. For that was when the *Batalla's* deleterious effects began to be felt. Firstly, despite the benefits of the increasing support from Chávez's Venezuela (bringing hope and relief to those who had felt besieged), more and more Cubans began to complain informally about the costs of Cuba's renewed "internationalism," including the scale of the investment in international solidarity rather than in much-needed repairs for Cubans' immediate benefit.

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While many felt pride that, despite shortage and crisis, Cuba was aiding fellow Latin Americans, some resented this generosity, occasionally publicly.

Secondly, it also became clear then that the repeated demands on the loyal activists were beginning to exhaust; as the implied end of the Special Period transmogrified into the *Batalla* and then into repeated mobilizations to help Venezuela or Bolivia, to protest against the imprisonment of the “Five Prisoners of Imperialism,” or to express anger or support in other causes, the wearing effect of it all evidently took sapped the levels of active hope and commitment. In other words, the “1968 effect” was beginning to repeat itself, with significant implications, since the exhausted were the life-blood of the active commitment on which it all relied.

Therefore, when Fidel handed power temporarily to Raúl in July 2006, this allowed the system to make the necessary adjustment of approach. By the autumn, it was becoming clear that Raúl's preferences for system and structure over mobilization were being expressed in the Party (in a general strengthening and in changes to personnel in the middle ranks) and in a quiet downplaying of the *Batalla*. When encouragement was given formally, in September 2007, to discuss the implications of the 26 July speech, it became clear that this new process, besides allowing Cubans to let off steam, also provided Raúl with evidence for his plans for reform and change.

Therefore the new generation brought into “the Revolution” after 2002 runs the risk of being marginalized as “Fidel's children” and thus anachronistic, especially if any reforms move towards a low-level privatization, unless a way is found to capitalize on their new loyalty to use them in politically productive ways; in other words, to balance structure with mobilization. However, ordinary Cubans' expectations are now such that the pressure for rapid, if small-scale, economic improvement is sufficient for Cuba's leaders to be unable to ignore it, knowing that, in the absence of Fidel's charisma and of the old personal loyalties, continuing credibility depends on delivering the economic goods sooner rather than later.

Finally, therefore, we come back to the question of ideological continuity, to see what remains of the “old” ideology as a result of the *Batalla* and what, if anything, has been added. Certainly, the old *valor* of collec-

tivism has been strengthened since 1999, but has probably not returned to its former active force, still weakened by the effects of crisis and reform since 1990. Among the new young activists, it seems to have gained some 'corporate' strength, although that is still to be tested, but, more generally, it has continued to transmogrify into the post-1990 sense of *solidarismo*, itself a new spirit in a formerly egalitarian political culture. However, collectivism has also undergone another change, replacing the national by the local, a process clearly shaped by the effects of the crisis and the localized collective responses to it; hence the emphasis on the *comunitario* reflects both the recognition of the possible during the worst of the Special Period but also the recognition that the old collectivism worked at one level (the national) or another (the block), but had ignored the median level of the *barrio* and the sub-*barrio*.

The second element of the old ideology's continuity is of course the emphasis on culture and education, expressed so clearly since 2001, in a campaign which, as in 1961, focuses on the benefits (opportunities for both the forgotten young and the neglected old) and the processes of involvement. Moreover, this educational campaign has focused less on elementary liberation than fulfillment of potential, as befits the new century as opposed to the 1960s. Equally, "youthism" has been revived as an ideological code, not only in a new focus that suggests Cuba's youth as the subjects of change rather than the objects of mobilization (or vigilance), but also in its implicit message that 'the Revolution' has a future in their hands, albeit a "revolution" that, ultimately, may be somewhat changed from its 1960s imagery. Likewise, the emphasis on "moralism" has been reinforced by the recent anti-corruption campaigns, cleverly associating corruption with inequality (and the same kind of "naked" capitalism presented as seeking to end Cubans' social welfare), while, on the other hand, associating efficiency with effective social protection.

So how "new" is this? The first point to make here is, of course, that it does not need to be, and indeed should not be, really new. For the strength and persuasiveness of any ideology lies in its continuity, its balance between "the good" of the old and the need to adapt without changing the essence. Hence "renewal" is precisely that: the renovation of the known to adapt it to newly relevant issues and concerns, the reinterpretation of the old in accordance with new realities, ideas and pressures. Thus, for example, the 1980s might have seen the emergence of the new code of

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“internationalism,” but in fact this was not at all new but, rather, a fusion of two or more existing values, namely solidarity (or even collectivism), *lucha* and nationalism, to respond to the new confidence and opportunities, much as collectivism has now evolved into *solidarismo* or into localism.

The point of all this is not that we are witnessing the emergence of the next generation to take the Revolution forward for another 20 or even 50 years; anything can yet happen to derail the effects of the *Batalla* project and only time will tell if it has borne long-term fruit and gone beyond mere rhetoric. Instead, the point is that it is also too early to dismiss it out of hand, not least if we remember that over the last 49 years, the survival of the Cuban system has depended on a good deal more than the personality of, or coercion by, Fidel Castro, part of which has been the system's ability to adjust, adapt and even reinvent not just its policies and strategies but also even its underlying thinking.

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