

CHAPTER 3

Epistemic Organic Intellectuals

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Abstract: An analysis of the language and concepts used by a group of Cuban scholars that Antonio Gramsci would call 'organic intellectuals', this study finds no use of Marxist or neo-Marxist approaches. Using contemporary socio-linguistic theory, the author hypothesises that Cuban organic intellectuals, while still revolutionary, were no longer following the official Marxist-Leninist line of the Cuban state.

«Dogma es lo que queda de una idea cuando la ha aplastado un martillo pilón». (José Ortega y Gasset, *Ideas y creencias*, 1940).

Introduction

It is paradoxical that one of the better ways of looking at Cuba today is through the theories of a Marxist theoretician-practitioner. Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was, in the words of two prominent Gramsci scholars, “the greatest Marxist writer on culture.”¹ He certainly was one of the first Marxists to use a sociology of knowledge conceptual framework which is why he was known as “the theoretician of the superstructure.” Contrary to the rest who followed a dogmatic interpretation of the primacy of the “the base” over the “superstructure,” Gramsci believed that ideas, language, and intellectual production (especially the written word) were not merely ancillary consequences of the factors of production, but had significant causal effects on their own. He was particularly interested in the role of intellectuals. All men, he argued, are, in a way, intellectuals but every society assigned, explicitly or implicitly, specific statuses and roles to those who either defend the ideational *status quo* or those who challenge

1. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Cultural Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p.14.

it. He called those who occupy those roles “organic intellectuals,” individuals who battle over the conception of the world.²

Along with this paradox there is an historical irony. Cuba today represents the reverse of what preoccupied Gramsci. Being a Marxist, he was particularly interested in the role of organic intellectuals in the challenge to the bourgeois political, cultural and ideological “hegemony.” How, he asked, could revolutionaries defeat the intellectual hegemony of the *status quo*, including very importantly in the Italian case, the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church? How to bring about the necessary ideological “crisis”? By crisis he meant the process by which “the great masses become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe.” It was the role of organic intellectuals to construct alternative concepts of life. “The philosophy of *praxis*,” said Gramsci, “does not aim to keep simple people confined to a primitive philosophy...but on the contrary to lead them to a higher concept of life...to build up an intellectual-moral bloc that makes intellectual progress politically possible for the masses and not just for small intellectual groups.” This tended to occur during periods Gramsci called “transformism” which consists “precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born.” Of course, according to the Marxist ontology, the one pushing to be born was the next stage, socialism. Today, it is decidedly just the reverse in Cuba. So that, if we dispense with the dogmas regarding “iron laws of change,” the fact is that Gramsci’s sociology of knowledge scheme tells us much about the role of organic intellectuals and the language of their discourse. Because he was both academically and politically interested in the role of language, he would have, for instance, been interested in the implications of the evident abandonment of Marxist, even radical dependency/world system language and paradigms, and the rise of common technical languages among skilled-based or epistemic communities in the global economy. Economists and political scientists, no less than petroleum engineers, “know,” and communicate this knowledge in fairly similar ways and, more and more, in English, directly or in

2. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, (ed.) *Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, (London, 1971), p. 8. Karl Mannheim called those who defended the *status quo* “ideologues” and those who strived to change it “utopians.” (See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York, 1936)).

translation. This is a global phenomenon of which Cuban intellectuals are part.

The Various Transitions

In CRI Report No. 3 (April 15, 2007), I argued that the emphasis on the “indispensable” charismatic authority of Fidel Castro in contemporary Cuba was misplaced. The political transition in Cuba has already occurred. It has been administered by Raúl Castro, in control of what Edward Shils called a “modernizing military oligarchy.” Where there has not been a full transition is in ideology, especially as regards the economic system. While no major groups on the island are calling for a full market (i.e., capitalist) economy, there is an evident, because open, debate over the nature of Cuba’s national economy and its necessary, even inevitable, insertion into the global market.

Should the highly centralized – even totalizing – socialist model so dear to President Fidel Castro and other top leaders be retained or should it move towards some form of market socialism or quasi-capitalism? “I despise capitalism,” said President Castro to the National Assembly in 1993, “it is excrement!” But, in a clear admission that there were challenges to the monolithic official ideology, he then lamented that, “It seems that we are afraid to shout: long live socialism, long live communism, long live Marxism-Leninism!”³

That was 1993 but he has repeated this sentiment many times since then. This Report looks at the state of intellectual ferment – challenge and response – in Cuba 14 years later from a sociology of knowledge perspective.⁴

3. Cited in Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Are Economic Reforms Propelling Cuba to the Market?* (Miami: North-South Center, 1994), p. 65.

4. Sociology of Knowledge studies the relationship between ideas (and groups of ideas called ideology) and objective social factors such as class, generation, organizational structures, power and authority. See Ann Swindler and Jorge Arditi, “The New Sociology of Knowledge,” *Annual Review of Sociology* – 1994.

The “Battle of Ideas”

In 1999, following the struggle to have Elian González, the boy saved in the Straights of Florida from a sea tragedy in which his mother drowned, Fidel Castro launched a “Battle of Ideas.” The purpose was to highlight the superiority of Cuban socialism as it faced two monumental challenges: the collapse of Soviet subsidies and Perestroika. The latter should never be minimized. It was a total negation of Cuban revolutionary internationalism. When Gorbachev announced that they were pragmatists, not “adventurers” and, as such, were not going to exploit anti-US attitudes “let alone fuel them,” nor were they going to “erode the traditional links between Latin America and the United States,” Cuba was left to confront the still aggressive US policies alone.⁵ The Battle of Ideas was now a matter of using “soft power” to break the island’s isolation. It was important enough to put a member of the Cuban Council of Ministers in charge of this initiative. And, certainly, the initiative has had some real successes: in medicine abroad,⁶ in cordial diplomatic relations with virtually all the nations of the world (perhaps especially in the Greater Caribbean) and with repeated UN General Assembly condemnations by solid majorities of the US Embargo against Cuba. Less clear have been the results of the battles over ideas and models of development which are roiling in Cuba.

To listen to officials of the state bureaucracies who have engaged this battle, they are confidently asserting the superiority of Cuban Marxist socialism, not only over capitalism but, indeed, over other forms of socialism which have existed elsewhere. Carlos Alzugaray, for instance, a high ranking intellectual in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argues that Cuba is making a secure transition because it is grounded in a Marxist vision of society:

No se trata de marxismo dogmático y anquilosado, como el que prevaleció en algunos países socialistas en el pasado, sino de una visión rica y diversa, que reconoce los aportes de otras corriente filosófico-políticas, pero que reafirma *la tesis de que la sociedad humana tiene leyes de*

5. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 188.

6. See Julie M. Feinsilver, “La diplomacia médica cubana,” *Foreign Affairs en Español* (oct.-dic., 2006); Pedro Margolles, “La cooperación cubana presente en 155 países,” *Digital Granma Internacional*, (22 de mayo, 2007).

desarrollo y que esas indican la caducidad del régimen de producción capitalista (la economía de libre mercado) y su sustitución por otro superior, más solidario y más orientado a satisfacer las necesidades del hombre.⁷

Similarly, Ricardo Alarcón, the articulate and experienced statesman who is now President of the Cuban National Assembly, engages in the “Battle of Ideas” by pressing Tom Hayden, an old American “progressive” and now member of *The Nation’s* editorial board, to fly down for a visit. The purpose, he said, was nothing more than “two old guys talking.”⁸ Hayden describes Alarcón as a “pragmatic” and there is some evidence of this in Alarcón’s discourse on “Marx after Marxism.” “Marxists,” he says, “should begin to see the world anew... [there is] need for self critical reflection in the ‘original spirit’ of Marx before the 20th Century.” This revisiting of Marx, according to Alarcón, has to begin by admitting that the earlier Marx never meant a science-based, inevitable march to socialism founded on some objective truth revealed through communist parties. Marx, he says, was “a practical revolutionary who himself famously declared with all naturalness ‘I am not a Marxist!’” As if to drive home the lesson to be learned, Alarcón adds, “Old dogmatists are incapable of new possibilities in the revolutionary movement” and that the best thing the “Latin American left” could do is to reelect President Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil. This explains why in his interview with the magazine *Cigar Aficionado* (June, 2007, p. 64), Alarcón describes Raúl Castro as a pragmatic: “...he has to be pragmatic.... You don’t want a person to lead by his imagination and fantasies in that position.”

Even as it is still unclear whether what is presently transcending the orthodox discourse in Cuba is an intellectual debate or an intellectual pro-

7. Carlos Alzugaray, “El eventual levantamiento del bloqueo norteamericano y el interés nacional de Cuba,” in Alejandra Liriano de la Cruz (ed.), *Cuba y el Caribe en el Post-Embargo* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: FLACSO, 2005), pp. 33-34. Alzugaray has his own bilingual website where he argues fine points of US-Cuban history (<http://www.rprogreso.com>). He is also a frequent contributor to *Política Internacional*, the official journal of the Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales “Raúl Roa García.”

8. Tom Hayden, “A Top Cuban Leader Thinks Out Loud,” at <http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/20060829/>

test,⁹ in either case there is ample evidence that many Cuban intellectuals involved in the “Battle of Ideas” hew closer to Alarcón’s pragmatism than to Alzugaray’s emphasis on Marxist “laws of development.” This is not to say that it is evident that they are carrying the day but that there is well-founded evidence that at least they are holding their own in that battle. As in any intellectual battle, there is first a need for space, for the opportunity to expound. This they have achieved.

What should we conclude, for instance, from the knowledge that John Williamson of the liberal (not “neo-liberal”) Institute for International Economics in Washington had presented a paper on the “Washington Consensus” in Havana in early 2004,¹⁰ and that it had been summarized and critiqued by Fidel Castro himself? It is not evident that Castro’s critique was to the point, but for organic intellectuals it was the opportunity which mattered. Similarly, although one is accustomed to reading in the venerable *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (founded in 1831) little else than orthodox interpretations of Cuba’s present and past replete with quotes from Fidel Castro’s speeches, one is surprised by their absence in recent years. Each issue of the *Revista* has been carrying an editorial from the *The Economist* (London). Issue No. 24 (January-June, 2006) was dedicated to the “VIII Encuentro Internacional sobre Globalización y Problemas del Desarrollo.” Mario Fernández Font, Professor of Economics of the Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Internacional of the University of Havana, summed up the “principal debates” among the 1,500 participants and 157 formal presentations. These debates had as themes: “El comercio internacional, la integración económica, el mundo monetario y financiero, la empresa como actor del desarrollo, cooperativismo.” Judging from the papers selected for No. 24, the journal editor’s claim that the conference was characterized by political, academic and theoretical pluralism appears warranted. Not a one made reference to any ontological verities or economic “laws;” the language was the language of the global market place. “The general perception one derives from the major-

9. Alfredo Muñoz-Usain poses this question but also asserts that “fermenta el panel intelectual de la isla.” (“Debate cultural en la Habana,” *Contrapunto de América Latina*, No.9 (Julio-septiembre 2007), pp.102-106.

10. John Williamson, “A Short History of the Washington Consensus,” ms., for Conference on New Global Governance, Barcelona, September 24-25, 2004, p. 7, n. 4.

ity of the presentations,” noted the Editorial, “is that today there exist very few ‘indisputable truths.’”

The evident absence of references to “truths”—whether as quotes from Marx, Lenin or Ché Guevara—or citations from one or another speech of Fidel Castro, is notable and, we hypothesize, significant. And, this is not only true in economics. Part of the pleasure of reading Dick Cluster and Rafael Hernández’ book, *The History of Havana* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) is the total absence of any Marxist, neo-Marxist, dependency or other “theoretical” superimpositions. The life and times of that erstwhile seigniorial city comes to life in the evident sympathetic etchings of the authors. Arguing well within the parameters of the established political system, the authors persuade you that after what its residents have endured, you know these same denizens will eventually return their city to its past glory. This, of course, will be another “doubling back” or irony of history since that magnificent city was a product of Spanish-Cuban bourgeois architecture.

Even the artistic community ponders on the changed atmosphere. In the vital area of film, the recent appearance on Cuban T.V.—fourteen years after its debut—of “*Fresa y chocolate*” and “*Suite Habana*”, might be harbingers that the official censoring of many truly outstanding, and mostly critical, films is starting to weaken. Similarly, Frank Delgado, a younger member of the “Nueva Trova,” talks about his predecessor *trovadores*, all caught up in the period of “revolutionary enthusiasm.” “I come from a generation which did not experience that revolutionary enthusiasm but rather the institutionalization of the country.” His concern, and that of other artistes, he says, is not to abandon the system but to sing about the problems of every day existence and the need to *resolver* and *inventar para vivir*, in other words, intellectualizing through songs of protest.¹¹

While all this is revealing of an unfolding transformation, it is arguably the economists who have been the most important organic intellectuals of this search for reform. In their very comprehensive and revealing 2005 book, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform*, Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge Pérez-López review the work of those they identify as some of Cuba’s most recognized economists. They chose: Julio Carranza, Alfredo González

11. Interview with EFE in *El Nuevo Herald*, (May 21, 2007), p. 21.

Gutiérrez, Hiram Marguetti, Pedro Monreal, Juan Triana, Anicia García Alvarez, Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva, and Viviana Togores García.¹²

Mesa Lago and Perez-Lopez note that every one of these scholars were loyal adherents of the revolutionary regime, evident by their rejection of neo-liberalism and support of the socialist system. However, while there were differences among them in interpretation and emphasis, “their identification of current problems, is markedly similar.”¹³ Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López analyze 17 areas of substantial agreement. We chose to highlight six of the problems the Cuban economists cite as explanations as to why Cuba still confronts a “failed” or stalled recovery:

[1]Cuba has been unable to generate sufficient internal resources to invest for a sustained recovery.

[2]Cuba’s international credit-worthiness is poor; there is limited access to external credits and loans.

[3]It is “impossible” to restrict consumption further to divert resources to investment as consumption is already depressed.

[4]The only way out is to increase domestic efficiency and enterprise competitiveness.

[5]The enterprise management reform process (*perfeccionamiento empresarial*) is new and very slow in implementation; “verticalism” and enterprise centralization and concentration continued its deleterious effects.

[6]Finally, and critically, there were the political, social structural impacts: a decline in real wages, increase in disguised unemployment, steeper income stratification and concentration of bank deposits by, and prebends for, the elite.

Not surprisingly, all the Cuban economists recommend changing property relations, decentralizing economic decision-making and promoting domestic competition.¹⁴ As is well known, few, if any, of these recommendations have been followed. The reason, according to Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López is defensive: the fear that economic decentralization will cause a political weakening of the regime. As plausible as this explana-

12. Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge Pérez-López, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005), pp. 61, 164.

13. Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform*, p. 61.

14. Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López, *Cuba’s Aborted Reform*, pp. 164-167.

tion is, there might be another: the belief that Cuba can achieve what most Cubans want, i.e. retaining the social gains of the revolution even as they enter the global market. Note the arguments that Cuba can sustain its socialist policies even as it actively seeks out new foreign investments, new markets and adopts new technologies.¹⁵ Especially interesting is the essay of the economist Tania García which in terms of diagnosis of the current deficiencies in the situation differs little from the reformist economists cited, yet concludes that even after a lifting of the embargo and Cuba's reinsertion into the global market, state property would continue dominant, the "social programs" would continue intact, and the market would not play the role of determiner and assignor of domestic economic activities.¹⁶ Of course, the crux of the debate is whether any of these goals, no matter how admirable, are realistic. There is a growing consensus among the organic intellectuals that they are not.

Prominent social scientist and historian Rafael Hernández, known for his firm defense of the regime in domestic and international forums, is nevertheless brutally candid in admitting that "The hothouse in which the system and the culture of socialism could flourish, was shattered more than ten years ago."¹⁷ The negative impact of the growth of tourism, the growing gap in social equality, the presence of fashion and behavior foreign to socialism in everyday life is already sufficient, he says, to consider that challenges associated with a reencounter with capitalism do not belong to a faraway and improbable future. Even so, Hernández believes the "new" Cuba will retain the major gains of the revolution but not without serious challenges. Hernandez argues that the fundamental question is not even if Cuba can resist the cultural onslaught of capitalism, but rather "what a system (or the project of a system) is worth that cannot endure the merciless blast from the elements outside of its hothouse and flourish on its own?" The system, the culture and the values of a possible socialism, he argues, cannot be protected by "an ideological condom," only through

15. See the essays by Cuban scholars, Tania García, Juan Valdez and Carlos Alzugaray in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba, el Caribe*.

16. Tania García, "Cuba, Estados Unidos y el Caribe en un escenario Post Bloqueo: criterios para el debate," in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba, el Caribe*, pp.49-91.

17. Rafael Hernández, "On Hearing the Right Questions," *Revista* (Harvard Review of Latin America (Spring – Summer 2005), pp. 16-17.

acquired immunities that permit it to survive even in the face of the virus coming from contact with the outside. "This vaccination, this acquired immunity," he concludes, "has been taking place for 12 years now, not without cost, but still without showing signs of fatal illness."

Not nearly as optimistic is Haroldo Dilla, one of the victims of the 1996 purge of the most internationally-recognized think tank on the island, the Centro de Estudio Sobre América (CEA). Now in exile in the Dominican Republic, Dilla argues that the idea that Cuba can open up to global capitalism without internal changes is an illusion.¹⁸ He visualizes three major structural changes.

[1]The State will have necessarily to modify the strident nationalist discourse, basic component of its legitimacy;

[2]A reinsertion into the global market will intensify the cultural/ideological links between domestic and exiled communities;

[3]It can be assumed that a distention will erode the standing of the "hard liners" (*sectores duros*) and open spaces for more moderate figures.

In a brilliant piece of sociology of knowledge, Dilla addresses the origins of the intellectual challenges which the present system will face.¹⁹ Aside from the reformist economists now freed from debunked Marxist dogma but always susceptible to being stymied by the political elite, Dilla argues that that elite will not have such intellectual veto power over the new "technocratic-business" sector brought about by foreign investments. It is, he says, "the only actor capable of ideological production with no political authorization other than that permitting its existence."²⁰ One institution which will not disappear, says Dilla, is the military, "the most coherent and efficient of the Cuban system." They will continue to operate in the world of business and "en cualquier circunstancia de transición hacia un régimen liberal, aspirarán a jugar un rol protagónico."²¹

18. Haroldo Dilla, "El fin del bloqueo, la fiesta por la Victoria y la política en Cuba: notas para un debate," in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba en el Caribe*, pp. 226-227.

19. Haroldo Dilla Alfonso, "Larval Actors, Uncertain Scenarios, and Cryptic Scripts: Where is Cuban Society Headed?", in Joseph Tulchin *et al.* (ed.), *Changes in Cuban Society Since the Nineties* (Wash., D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, 2005), pp. 35-49. Dilla extends this analysis in "La reestructuración espacial en Cuba," Paper, LASA-2007, Montreal, Canada.

20. *Ibid.*, p.42.

The historical record since the beginning of the reforms in the 1990s tends to support the Dilla thesis. There is considerable evidence that even the modest openings of the early 1900s had significant impact on Cuban social mobility and stratification. Recording these impacts has become a task for Cuban social scientists. Their studies are now part of the established literature. Very compelling, and widely shared by the “new” social scientists, is Mayra P. Espina Prieto’s concept of the “patterns of inequality” argument of what she calls the “*mobilidad ascendente selectiva*.”²² Espina Prieto has elaborated further her understanding of the consequences of the reforms:

Regardless of the intent or whether this was an anticipated or relatively spontaneous outcome, these reforms led to a reconfiguration of the social class structure, specifically the emergence of a pattern of social stratification that ... generated increasing inequality.²³

Noting the rise of a new “technocratic-entrepreneurial bloc” engendered by **market forces**, she noted the connection between empowerment and the formation of a new “hegemonic bloc” that excludes grass-roots sectors.

One who has accepted Espina Prieto’s analysis but goes further in describing the highly deleterious consequences of the opening to market forces is Juan Valdéz Paz:

The first, and most serious change has been growing social disorder – crime, corruption, prostitution, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and so forth – which has reached levels unheard of before the nineties.²⁴

Far from forming a sort of *lumpen proletariat*, he says, these groups gained advantages “and exercise a certain degree of influence over their social milieus.” No “ideological condom” evident here.

21. Tania Garcia in Liriano (ed.), *Cuba, el Caribe*, p. 231.

22. Mayra P. Espina Prieto, “Reajuste y movilidad social en Cuba,” in *La sociedad cubana: retos y transformaciones* (La Habana: CIPS, 2003).

23. Mayra P. Espina Prieto, “Structural Changes Since the Nineties and New Research Topics on Cuban Society,” in Tulchin, *et. al* (ed.), *Changes in Cuba*, p. 89.

24. Juan Valdés Paz, “Cuba in the ‘Special Period:’ From Equality to Equity,” in Tulchin, *et.al.* (ed.), *Cuba*, p. 109.

Further Empirical Evidence

Table A lists nineteen of the most internationally recognized Cuban economists. The emphasis on economists is in keeping with Gramsci's ideas on their role. He was of the opinion that while all social tasks require a degree of skills, economists require more. "In the first instance," he noted, "these occupations are associated with the particular technical requirements of the economic system."²⁵ We note their sources and references to illustrate why we call them part of the epistemic community of scholars studying the global economy. Their language and principal economic arguments are strikingly similar to those found in any report from, for instance, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), while their criticisms of "neo-liberalism" do not sound much different from those of a Joseph E. Stiglitz in his 2002 book, *Globalization and its Discontents*. Table B demonstrates Cuban intellectual performance in a broader and more international context, i.e. a LASA conference.

The data in the two Tables bolster the central argument of this paper: Cuba is experiencing an *apertura* which, at least on its surface, would indicate a much greater tolerance for dissent on the part of the authorities. There is candid discussion of the hardships of the *periodo especial* and very detailed analyses of what it will take for the island to reverse the deterioration and reinsert itself into the global economy. Marxist or other radical paradigms appear to have little space in these efforts. On this score, it is important to note that even if, as is widely assumed, the papers delivered at LASA-2007 (Table B) were screened and vetted beforehand in Cuba, the fact that the officials "allowed" so many critical presentations is itself evidence of a new dispensation.

This paper makes no claim that because increasing numbers of intellectuals are challenging the existing orthodoxies of the system and are being given greater freedom and space, that this necessarily and immediately affects the way the top political elites operate. Nor do we argue that it is certain that the reforms the organic intellectuals are pushing for are

25. See the discussion in Paul Ransome, *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction*. (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 198 ff.

irreversible. There were reverses in the mid-1980s, the mid-1990s and even today.²⁶ Our arguments are four.

First, just as it is important to note that Cuban communism was not imposed by Soviet bayonets, it is important to note that the communists were never at the original “vanguard” of that revolution. They were asked to join out of geopolitical necessity and did so opportunistically. The Cuban revolution was the result of a nationalist movement, only part of which was the July 26 group. Gramsci would insist on making such a different historical path to power an integral part of the analysis. Just as Martí has replaced Marx as the leading light of the revolution, so a nationalist interpretation of events is displacing the hegemony of the Marxist-Leninist ideological explanation.

Secondly, the only domestic poll taken by a professional polling organization that I know of, demonstrates that being a “communist” or even a “socialist” is a minority position in Cuba.²⁷ Note the self descriptions:

“Hablando de Ud. Mismo, como se describe?”

Revolucionario – 48%

No integrado – 24%

Comunista – 11%

Socialista – 10%

The poll understood *revolucionario* to imply nationalist, an appellation 88% would apply to themselves. But the dominant attitude was found to be apathy and /or inertia. The director of the poll, the Costa Rican Carlos Denton, concluded that “People go about their lives in every society without making transcendental decisions about themselves and their families...and the Cubans are no exceptions.” The ones who are concerned with such transcendental matters are the organic intellectuals. This brings us to our third point.

26. It is important to note that even an experienced Cuba-watching economist as Carmelo Mesa-Lago has had to change his opinion. In 1994 he concluded that “Castroism is gradually losing power to market forces, and the reform process appears irreversible.” Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Are Economic Reforms Propelling Cuba to the Market?*, p. 71.

27. See the CID/Gallup poll done in November 1994 by the Costa Rican agency of Carlos Denton, *The Miami Herald*, December 12, 1994, pp.1, 18, 19.

Beyond the question of concepts and frames of reference, there is the importance of the wider influence of the language, just as Gramsci would have had it. To him, language was “a totality” of determined notions and concepts. “If it is true,” he theorized, “that language contains the elements of a conception of the world and of a culture, it will also be true that the greater or lesser complexity of a person’s conception of the world can be judged from his language.”²⁸ Gramsci was ahead of his times not only in sociolinguistics but also in his understanding of the role of language (national and foreign) in creating epistemic communities. As he put it, the capacity to be in touch with “the great currents of thought which dominate world history.”

To those who would argue that the content analysis in the Appendices and other analyses of ideas is a mere impressionistic approach which tells us nothing “objective,” one should keep in mind just how closely Gramsci’s ideas fit with well-established modern theories of socio-linguistics. A transition in language necessarily means a transition in ideas. I say “necessarily” because, as the widely accepted Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in linguistics tells us:

[1] New words and language are invented to reflect new realities.

[2] Language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but is itself a shaper of ideas. It is, in the language of Edward Sapir, “the programme and guide for the individual’s meaningful activity.” In other words, language shapes our perception of reality.²⁹

This brings us to the work of the most recognized contemporary scholar on cognitive linguistics, Georg Lakoff.³⁰ Lakoff speaks of “frames”, those mental structures that shape the way we look at the world and, as such, shape the goals we seek, the plans we make and our judgment as to what counts as a good or a bad outcome. In politics, says

28. Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1957), p. 60.

29. See Edward Sapir, “Communication,” *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, (New York: Macmillan, 1931), Vol. 4, pp. 78-81; Benjamin L. Whorf, “The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language,” in Leslie Spier, *et. al* (ed.), *Language, Culture, and Personality*, (Menasha, 1941), pp. 75-93.

30. See Georg Lakoff, *Metaphors we Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Lakoff, our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out these policies. “To change our frames,” he concludes, “is to change all of this. Reframing is social change.”³¹

Gramsci quite evidently was ahead of his time and most assuredly right on target regarding his ideas on the role of language and images.

Conclusion

There is ample evidence that, to use Gramsci’s term, the “hegemony” of the orthodox Marxist ideology of the Cuban revolution is being challenged by a numerous group of organic intellectuals gathered in a number of important think tanks and at the University of Havana. They are presenting their ideas in a much more eclectic and non-dogmatic fashion, utilizing frames of reference widely accepted in the international community of scholars. While it is true that as of now they are only challenging ideas about economic arrangements in a reformist, rather than in a “total opposition” way, the sociology of knowledge informs us that beyond the manifest functions of ideas are the latent, non-intended consequences. One would have to conclude that it will be the unintended consequences which will challenge the hegemony of the Marxist state. They will define the outcome of the real “Battle of Ideas” in Cuba’s transformism.”

Finally, and as we have argued in all three previous Reports for the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University, this battle will unfold in Cuba among Cubans and within the transition which they themselves are constructing managing. What our evidence reveals is a debate—even a protest—regarding economic policies, not what the literature on revolution has called “the abandonment of the intellectuals.”³² What is being abandoned are Marxist frameworks and language and the hypothesis is that policies will also eventually change. This should tell us that attempts from outside to determine the course of the Cuban transition will fail just as they have failed for the past five decades. It is illusory to believe that now that Cuba has produced its own home-bred organic intel-

31. Georg Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), p.xv.

32. The concept was first developed by Lyford P. Edwards (*The Natural History of Revolution*, 1927) and became central in Crane Brinton’s *The Anatomy of Revolution*, 1936.

lectuals they will be ready to cede to outsiders the directions they should take. Nationalism and the desire for self-determination continue to be the operational impulses in this long-lasting drama.

TABLE 3-1. Scholarly Sources Used by the Reformist Economists, Number of References

Scholar Year of Publication	Total Number	Marxist ^a	World System/Dependency Theory	Global Development Theory	In English ^b
Omar E. Pérez Villanueva					
2003	31	0	0	31	1
2004	38	0	0	38	10
2005	11	0	0	11	3
Pedro Monreal					
2004	21	0	0	19	9
José M. Sánchez Egozcue					
2004	63	0	0	63	61
Mayra Espina Prieto					
2004	39	3	0	36	2
Viviana Togores González/ Anicia García Alvarez					
2004	52	1	0	51	1
Juan Triana Cordoví					
2005	27	1	0	26	16
Mariana Martín Fernández					
2005	5	0	0	5	2
Anicia García Alvarez/ Hiram Marquetti Nodarse					
2005	32	0	0	32	13

Sources of Essay:

(1) Jorge I. Domínguez, Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva and Lorena Barbería (ed.), *The Cuban Economy at the Start of the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); (2) *Cuba: Crecer desde el conocimiento* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2005). Most of the authors in this volume are members of Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana.

TABLE 3-1. Scholarly Sources Used by the Reformist Economists, Number of References

Scholar Year of Publication	Total Number	Marxist ^a	World System/Dependency Theory	Global Development Theory	In English ^b
Anicia García Alvarez/ Eislen Guerra Boza 2005	27	0	0	27	5
Gabriela Dutrenit/ Alexandre O. Vera-Cruz/ Argenis Arias Navarro 2005	53	1	0	52	38
Humberto Blanco Rosales 2005	22	0	0	22	7
Jorge Ricardo Ramirez Silvia García García 2005	21	0	0	21	2
Dayma Echeverría León 2005	14	0	0	14	2

Sources of Essay:

(1) Jorge I. Domínguez, Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva and Lorena Barbería (ed.), *The Cuban Economy at the Start of the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); (2) *Cuba: Crecer desde el conocimiento* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2005). Most of the authors in this volume are members of Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana.

a. Includes reference to Fidel Castro's speeches.

b. Includes translations.

TABLE 3-2. Cuban Scholars with Written Papers. Latin American Studies Association Congress 2007. Montreal, Canada^a

Scholar Title of Paper^b	Marxist Framework	Reference to Marxist Literature
Hilaria Suarez León "Dinámica de la escritura martiana"	No	None
Yoel Cordovi Nuñez Hostos y Martí por el equilibrio continental"	No	None
Guillermo Galvez Rodriguez "Manejo de la investigación...proceso de reestructuración agroindustria azucarera"	No	None
Lazaro Peña Castellanos "Globalización, inserción internacio- nal...Experiencias para Cuba"	No	None
Luis R. Fernández Tabío "EE.UU. y la Revolución Cubana: La renovación de una política fracasada"	No	None
Concepción Nieves Ayús "Continuidad...renovación...mecanismos de consenso en la sociedad civil"	No	None
Lourdes Pérez Montalvo "Protagonismos social y vida cotidiana...Estudio de caso en San Isidro...."	No	None
Mario Coyla Cowley "La Habana: reaparición de la ciudad Blanca"	No	None
Omar E. Pérez Villanueva "Desarrollo Humano de los Municipios de la Provincia...Habana"	No	None
Blanca R. Pampin Balado "Consumo, producción / comercialización de alimentos"	No	None

TABLE 3-2. Cuban Scholars with Written Papers. Latin American Studies Association Congress 2007. Montreal, Canada^a

Scholar Title of Paper^b	Marxist Framework	Reference to Marxist Literature
Cristina Díaz López "Papel de La Mujer en la educación superior cubana"	No	None
Juan A. Cordero Martinez "Democracia Electoral v. Democracia de Ciudadania..."	No	2 ^c
Lourdes M. Tabares Neyra "Justicia Social y Formación de Directivos...Habana"	No	None
M. T. Montes de Oca Choy "Reanimación y Participación...Barrio Chino..."	No	None
Victor M. Betancourt Estrada "Papel de la Familia religiosa afro-cubana...."	No	None
Rodrigo Espina Prieto "La relaciones raciales en Cuba...un estudio de familias...."	No	4 ^d

- a. There were 65 Cuban scholars listed in the official program. Sixteen papers (i.e., 24%) were available on the Congress' CD-ROM. The availability of papers for the Congress as a whole was 27%.
- b. Many papers list more than one author and titles often differ from those listed in LASA's official Program. They are listed here as they appear in the official Program.
- c. One citation to Rosa Luxemboug and one to Marx-Engels, more as illustration than part of an evident Marxist analysis of subject.
- d. Two references to speeches by Fidel Castro, one to an essay by Ché Guevara and one to a PCC document on race relations.

