

## *Ideology in Cuban Journalism*

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“I wonder what’s going on my mind when I decided to study journalism in Cuba,” L. said. “It was absurd.” Every year, some 2,000 young men and women have the same strange idea and apply for a place in the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana. Around 50 of them succeed. Most finish their degree and get a job as reporters in national or regional media. But how long they will remain in the job is another matter.

I conducted in-depth interviews with 47 young Cuban journalists who graduated from the University of Havana between 1991 and 2000. Some 25 of them still work for Cuban national media in Havana, and eight work in the city of Santa Clara, 300 kilometers east of the capital. The rest I found working in media in Spain, the Dominican Republic and the United States.

I wanted to describe the professional ideology of those young journalists, to register their values, ideals, models and prejudices. But it was difficult to find them. This generation of Cuban journalists is widely dispersed across the world. By my count, less than half of the graduates of the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana in the 1990s stay in Cuba and many of them have quit journalism. It is a terrible waste of talent. They had, of course, great expectations of their careers as journalists that now have turned into a feeling of unfulfilled potential.

“Do you mean which qualities they let me show,” asked M. when I inquired about best qualities of a journalist. “There are excellent professional journalists here,” R. said. “You would see how excellent they are if they were allowed to work.” All my interviewees seemed to believe that they deserve better, according to their talent and efforts. Those who remain in Cuban media have seen some of their classmates prosper in public relations or advertising, or abroad, while they endure all the difficulties of living in Cuba

and working for the State media. They admitted that the most likely reason to abandon journalism was material needs.

“The economy is a problem; you cannot do anything against the economy...And if you have to go, you have to go,” said M. But surely there are many other reasons, including a great deal of dissatisfaction with their professional performance. Since I conducted my research, two of my interviewees have left Cuba, and another two moved out of the profession. Graduates of more recent years have already begun to leave. The exodus is unstoppable.

Still, the commitment my interviewees declared to journalism is remarkable. In some, at least, that might be a defensive attitude: otherwise, remaining in Cuban journalism so many years after graduation might be judged as a personal and professional failure. Some insisted that they had had “opportunities,” “offers,” that could be real, or plain fiction. Others have achieved, I think, quite a lot, and it is natural that they want to remain in journalism: they live reasonably well, by Cuban standards, and have gained some public recognition, which is the highest reward for a journalist in the island. In my interviews, they overemphasised the importance of the public recognition and appreciation of their work. I noticed how some talked about mythical readers who send them “millions” of letters or call the newspaper “everyday.” Many told me anecdotes of common people identifying and greeting them. These are in sharp contrast with the sad experience, confessed by some, of being called “liars.” The young journalists working in Cuban media need to believe that the public recognises them, appreciates their work and differentiates them from the general “mediocrity” (their words) of the island’s journalists. Those who have gained some recognition are less likely to leave their job than those who remained practically unknown.

Of course, leaving the job or the country depends also on personal circumstances, like having fathered or mothered a family. Only 12 out of my 47 interviewees have children, though most of them are older than 30 years. This is a likely sign of personal and professional instability. Those who remain single and childless have a greater professional mobility and are most likely to shift jobs. Those who have created their own families depend more on the relative advantages of the job: the remote possibility of being allocated a house, the occasional trip abroad, a good salary (once again, by Cuban standards). But above all I want to remark that most of my interviewees still consider journalism a good job, for the same reasons they chose it in the first place. “I enjoy journalism”, said M. Yet others said that they did not know anything else to do.

The way these journalists relate to the public of the countries in which they are working now seems to be different of the way journalists working in the island relate to the Cuban public. Some of the journalists working abroad

sounded nostalgic. "After knowing the Dominican public, I appreciate Cuba more," said L. The journalists working in Cuba showed mixed feelings. They disagreed on the Cuban public's capacity to understand intellectually complex subjects and to accept diversity of opinions. But references to "the people" were constant throughout the interviews. "The people" is a fundamental notion of this journalists' professional ideology, as it is of the ideology of the Cuban Revolution. But "the people," who the people are, who are part of "the people" and who are not, and what "the people want," is very much a disputed discursive territory. The legitimacy of the Revolution itself depends on the answers to those questions. During the trial for the attacks to the Moncada Barracks, in 1953, Fidel Castro decisively defined "the people" as the exploited, the underpaid and the unemployed. Later, he made an ideological operation to equate the Revolution "of the poor, and for the poor" with the Fatherland, and ultimately, with Socialism.

"The Revolution includes the interests of the people, the Revolution means the interests of the whole Nation," said Castro (Castro, 1961: 11-12)

For my interviewees, these concepts are hardly synonymous. Socialism emerged when I asked about the advantages and disadvantages of working either in Cuba or in capitalist countries. But socialism is no longer a word designating a community of nations. Because China, Vietnam and Korea are such remote references, by socialism my interviewees meant Cuba. Socialism is still an unfinished, imprecise concept in political theory, not to mention for my interviewees. P., for instance, talked about the many blanks in the theory of socialism, like the role of the press. The exhaustion of the propaganda about the superiority of socialism was visible when so many interviewees said that journalism was very much the same everywhere regardless the political system.

The "Revolution," is another slippery concept. In 1961 Castro said that the interests of the Revolution were above the newspapers,' (Castro, 1961b: 6) and only a few weeks later he infamously proclaimed, "Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing." (Castro, 1961a: 11-12) But what the Revolution was, and what its legitimate interests were, remains obscure. I suspect that "the people" is overemphasised in the imagination and the discourse of my interviewees, precisely as a reaction against the conceptual dispersion, or emptiness, of words like Fatherland, Revolution and Socialism. "The people" seems to be real, the blood-and-flesh men and women my interviewees said they know well, those characters I called the Uneducated but Smart Typical Member of the Audience and the Man in the Street Who Appreciates the Journalist's Work. "The newsman believes that he knows what the public desires and thinks," Schlesinger says. (Schlesinger, 1992: 109-110) But "the people" or "the public" are mythical constructions, a

projection of the journalists' ideals and experiences, a rather arbitrary and reductive symbolic representation, not a material object. My interviewees elaborated a narrative in which "the people" or "the public" played a fundamental part opposite to "them," that vague third person of the plural that emerged once and again throughout the conversation. Some interviewees made clear this opposition. "Media are supposed to belong to the people, but that is not true, because I do not work for the people, but for the Party," said D.

"A politician will never understand the real problems of the people, of everyday life," M. said, caustically. "I have never seen a politician having a beer in a bar with the people, and I am sure I am not going to see one... Politicians do drink a lot of beers, but at their homes, alone." "They" (the politicians, the leaders, the Party) are often seen as antagonists of "the people." In M.'s words is visible the physical and political distance between those two poles, at least in these journalists' imagination.

My interviewees, without exception, took the side of "the people." That was not a surprise. The novelty here was that by standing with "the people," most of my interviewees took distance from the Party of which they are, supposedly, "ideological soldiers." This was never clearer than when F., asked what he would do to make Cuban journalism better, replied that he would cut the telephone line between his newspaper and the Central Committee of the Party, as if the line were an umbilical cord between the power and the civil society. "Aligning with the public is a stance that journalists invoke strategically to deal with certain occupational hazards that arise when confronting prestigious public figures in the glare of media spotlight," Clayman says. "At such moments, it can be extremely useful to present oneself as a tribune of the people." (Clayman, 2002: 213) "The people" might not exist, but they were repeatedly invoked by my interviewees to support their demand of authority over their work: they, the journalists, not the politicians, know what the people are, and what they want.

My interviewees often emphasized their modest origin or living conditions. They remarked that they live among the people: "I can see the people, what is happening in the street, because I ride a bicycle, I do not drive a car, I am not distant from people," D. explained to me. Because of both their social origin and professional disposition to the public service, they identify themselves with an entity that they do not really know, as the controversy on the public's qualities showed. However, that controversy showed the decomposition of the revolutionary myth of "the people." My interviewees might be on the side of "the people" against the politicians, but they were sceptical, sometimes derisive, of the people's merits. They were educated in an atmosphere of exaltation of the common man, bravery, intelligence and generosity. But

they are not common men, but part of the intelligentsia, and often expressed high-brow disdain. "They do not think a lot. And I say they do not think, because they do not do take any action", said A. In their everyday work, my interviewees adopt one of two attitudes described by Clayman (Clayman, 2002: 212): "the populist," when the journalist uses "the language of the people's wants, desires and concerns far more than their needs, requirements, or obligations as citizens;" or "the professional," never better defined than when D. talked about his Utopian reader, "someone who is searching for his very own truths, someone who is expecting me to give him views of reality that could complement, enrich or negate his." D. added: "I am interested in a reader who can understand that reality can be transformed." He was obviously talking about himself.

These young journalists are colonising a symbolic space between the public and the state (the Party, the revolutionary leadership), in a hypothetical public sphere that does not exist in Cuba but in the imagination. This is a fundamental ideological change that leaves them close to the ideology of liberal journalism. But because such a public sphere does not exist, and they are employees of state media, my interviewees are visibly confused about the role they must play in this situation. "If I am loyal to the Revolution, I cannot be loyal to my profession, and if I am loyal to my profession, I cannot be loyal to the Revolution. I do not know how to make the two of them compatible," said M. They all agreed that bringing accurate information to the public is the primordial duty of all journalists. That is exactly what the Code of Ethics of the Union of Cuban Journalists reads: "The journalist has the duty to inform and express his opinions with accuracy, agility and precision" and "the journalist has the right to obtain any information of public interest and to do any action necessary for that aim." (Union of Cuban Journalists, 1999: 4) Journalists of 14 countries included in David Weaver's *The Global Journalist* said the same. (Weaver, 1998: 466) But my interviewees said that only after I rephrased my original question about the roles and responsibilities of journalists. First, many were hesitant and incoherent. They often talked about the "truth," as in, "People want the journalists to tell the truth", said Y., which is, of course, a central notion of the liberal philosophy. They believe journalists are responsible for "the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth," as John Stuart Mill put it. (Mill, 1989: 20) But truth is nowhere as elusive as in Cuba. "We have the truth, life has demonstrated that we have the truth; our Party has the truth, our people has the truth, our work has the truth," said Carlos Aldana, chief ideologue of the Party, only months before being sacked for corruption. (Aldana, 1992: 5)

My interviewees belong to a generation that has seen the trust broken and the truth compromised. Truth has been overstretched, manipulated, negated

and hidden by both sides in the Cuban political wars. Both sides are widely discredited now. "Truth does not exist, there is not truth, nobody has the truth," said D. A., who lives in Miami, said that the worst defect of Cuban media was "to hide the truth, to bury opinion," while Miami's was "the demonization of Cuba and the idealisation of the exile." Propaganda has substitute truth (or indeed, information) in the absence of alternative, really independent sources. Truth can only be revealed en el momento adecuado, at the right time, when the journalists receive *la orientación*, the command, to do so. *El momento adecuado y la orientación* are rhetorical tricks of the Party bureaucracy to justify the rigid administration of information and prevent spontaneous, non-controlled, potentially damaging, even subversive discourses. There are vast zones of the social reality in which the hegemonic discourse have collapsed, its authority and prestige practically annulled by widespread disbelief. "There is a public that...because of the way they live...we do not have anything to tell them," said F. "We do not have anything to say to that people because they live in other world and have other ways to get information."

The space left by the retreating discourses of the politicians or the media is colonised by unverified, unverifiable information: leaks, gossip, rumours, prejudices and myths. The Cuban government has successfully prevented the emergence of internal independent media, but not the relative influence of the radio stations of South Florida, and other foreign media. But these media are not the norm of objectivity, either. T. told me of his father in law, who listened to both Radio Martí and the Cuban Television, and found both of them "lying." Objectivity, in a symbolic universe of thick opaqueness, seems an attractive ideal to most of my interviewees. But it is an ideal my interviewees know is impossible to achieve. In 1974, Armando Hart, then member of the Politburo, called on the Cuban press to be "objective as the so-called 'objective' press of the imperialism has never been." (Hart, 1974: 34) "Objectivity in journalism is a fiction," said N. thirty years later. My interviewees are not innocent or ingenuous with regard to journalistic objectivity. They recognised the distance between ideal and reality. A journalist must "inform without lying and without omitting anything, as far as you can," said M., in Spain. "In an as objective and transparent way as possible," said N. "As honestly as possible," said A. "As objectively as possible and from the various sides of the news," said I. The hegemonic discourse no longer functions as the norm of objectivity, but my interviewees seem to be looking for a new norm, which many of them allegedly find in their direct experience of social reality, in Radio Bemba, as D. put it, in the voice of the street, not in *Granma*. Y said that a journalist "must be a very humble person to listen to different points of

view, a very receptive person...and although not impartial, he must try to be objective...as objective as possible..."

Many of my interviewees said that the people's appreciation was the greatest reward of the job. "The main reward in Cuba was to know that the public listened to you, and recognised your voice, and sometimes you hit target with your work," said K, who is now in Madrid. "Hit target" means basically finding that new norm of objectivity which has moved away from the discourse of the politicians. Objectivity, or the appearance of it, works as a symbolic circle separating the journalist from a culture polluted by propaganda. "What saves me is that I tried to do my things with the greatest possible dignity..." said P. "And I do not do everything, I have established limits." "It appears the word 'objectivity' is used defensively as a strategic ritual," wrote Gaye Tuchman. (Tuchman, 1972: 678) My interviewees provided evidence of their little feats of insubordination against the tyranny of media bosses and Party officials. They were probably exaggerated, but they made for the frequent occasions in which these journalists have had to take the most undignified assignments. I remember P. telling me, "You should not jump before the train everyday because someday the train will crush you and afterwards no one will remember you. 'Oh, yes, him, he was such a nice fellow!' That's crap, the train already crushed you." "People need to eat, and they know what a bad political record means," said D. They all need to believe that they are not part of the mechanism of propaganda, but rather serious journalists who take every opportunity to do their job in the most dignified way. But the answers to my question about ethics revealed in many a guilty conscience. Their ethical ambivalence was never better expressed than by A. "My work is not 100 percent ethical..." he started, and then stopped. "Well, you are either ethical or not, there is not such thing as half ethical...My work is not ethical. It is not ethical because I cannot satisfy my reader's demands. It is not ethical because I cannot give my reader what I would like to give him, or what he demands from me. It is not ethical because I have to hide information from him. It is not ethical because many times I have to keep silence. It is not ethical because it is not full. Because my work is not full, it cannot be ethical."

"That is demoralising," added F.

When I asked my interviewees to compare media in socialist Cuba with media in capitalism, the former always lost. They strove to find advantages in Cuban media, but most of them only returned with hypotheses. The Cuban media "do not try to make money, they try to educate people, and give them a voice..." said S. "But I tell you, there is a contradiction, because that is a purpose, not an achievement." D. said that "looking down on the problem from very high, from the stratosphere, I think that there can be freedom of the

press in socialism, and even that the freedom of the press could be more effective in socialism than in capitalism.” I have proved the huge gap between my interviewees’ professional ideology and the practices in Cuban media. Previously, Segura, Barreda and Nápoles (1991) and Estrada (1994) had shown the difference between the Cuban journalists’ preferred subjects and those the island’s media favor. But I can show that between the young Cuban journalists’ professional ideologies and the island’s media practices there is more than disadjustment: rather a vast and already insurmountable opposition. This proves how autonomous and dynamic professional ideologies are, and how they can move away from work practices and advance the possibility of a change in these latter long before any transformation actually happens. In the socialist states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the ideological change anticipated the structural transformation of the media system. “There was more conformism than deep-seated conviction...in journalists’ attitudes and definitions of their occupational role,” comments Jakubowicz (Jukubowicz, 1992: 67) My interviewees did not attempt to defend whatsoever the model of public communication running in Cuba. The lists of defects in Cuban journalism, in my interviewees’ words, seemed endless: intellectual mediocrity, cowardice, self-censorship, laziness, indifference and opportunism. Media, particularly the national newspapers, *Radio Rebelde*, the Cuban Television and the agency *Prensa Latina*, are apparently plagued with conflicts between journalists competing for privileges (either a trip abroad or complete control over a story). Those media were often compared with the jungle: “many predators and very few harmless animals.” My interviewees often remarked their detachment from their colleagues. Once again, the ideological separation had a physical expression. T. told me that she spent no more than 15 minutes a night in the newsroom, and talked only to the cameraman and the image editor. Another T. said that he had some kind of odor that kept away his colleagues. My interviewees said their colleagues lacked many of the best qualities of a journalist that they had listed in answering my earlier question. According to the descriptions of my interviewees, Cuban journalists (and my interviewees themselves) might very well be classified in the four categories described by Lauk among Estonian journalists: “cynical conformists” who do not oppose the official ideology but make fun of it; the “cultural responsible” journalists who use metaphorical language, allusions and allegories to challenge the constraints of the media discourses; those who just do their work without problematising it; and the directors and senior editors. (Lauk, 1996: 97)

“Journalism in our socialist countries,” Castro said, “countries that have more discipline, has a content and a responsibility. The journalist has to work seriously; he does not work as a mercenary...Journalism in socialism has

serious, important responsibilities.” (Castro, 1972: 448) “Rather than journalists, we are spokespersons of the official policies,” replied M. in Santa Clara. However, my interviewees were not ingenuous with regard to capitalist media. They listed defects of liberal journalism: commercialisation, banality, the concentration of media in the hands of a few mega corporations. They have been clearly influenced by their Marxist education and by Castro’s denunciation of the liberal concept of freedom of the press. “The bourgeois freedom of the press...is the freedom of the rich to be the owners of most of the means of thinking, which they use to defend their interests as a class against the exploited” (Castro 1966: 50). Castro was paraphrasing Lenin, who had said that the freedom of the press was “the freedom of the rich to everyday deceive, corrupt and fool, in a systematic and continuous way, with millions of newspaper copies, the exploited and oppressed masses of the people, the poor.” (Lenin, 1979: 239) A. said exactly the opposite: “The main difference between media here and abroad, which explains any other difference we could see...is the freedom of information, which is not complete, of course...the freedom of movement and the freedom of expression journalism has outside Cuba...”

But freedom of expression and freedom of the press were concepts my interviewees seldom used. I can only guess that those concepts have been worn off by propaganda, their meaning dried out by continuous controversy in both the political and academic fields. “I ask why we should use an alien concept like that for a reality that is essentially different,” said P. In general, they were very cynical about the role of journalists in both capitalism and socialism. “All journalists have the same disadvantage...they have to adjust their work to the interests of the owner,” said T. “You know, here and everywhere else, the one who pays, is the one who commands. Everywhere in the world. Here as well, the one who pays, commands. OK?” A. told me. “Censorship,” M. told me, “there is censorship everywhere, because censorship is nothing else but the control someone has over the news, according to his interests.” “Big media are always organised in the same way, aligned with power,” said T.

Disappointed by Cuban media, but suspicious of media in capitalism (of which some have first hand knowledge) my interviewees seemed desperately confused, sometimes incoherent. According to their answers, they seemed to be closer to the principles of the liberal journalism. M. told me that in capitalist media “there was more plurality, more possibilities...they are less totalitarian because there is more diversity, and you have greater possibility to choose.” The possibility of alternative media captured their imagination. “It is very likely that those media are tied to special interests...maybe most of them are tied to the same interest...” T. said. “But beyond that, in capitalism I

would still have the possibility to create a little magazine read only by my mother, my father and me, saying what I think of the world...and nobody would get mad because of it.”

I noticed how many of the young Cuban journalists I found in foreign media were very critical of their new professional environment. Most of them complained of the commercialism of the media they now work for, though none remotely insinuated that Cuban media were better. They still possess a solid critical thinking, like my interviewees living in the island. “You could think that because there are so many newspapers in a capitalist country, with so many different owners and political orientation, it is possible to find in one what you do not find in the other,” said J. “But we are in a period in which most newspapers are concentrating; the owner of a newspaper is not the owner of just one newspaper, but of 10. They are increasingly uniform; the space to find something different is increasingly reduced. Each time there is greater manipulation of the public, and media represent the interest of fewer people.” “The worst [in capitalist media] is that major economic groups have increasing control of media and they force all the multiple sides of truth to merge in a single version,” said K. in Spain. Those calls of the Union of Cuban Journalists for its members to study the experience of their socialist colleagues in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe have long ago vanished in the wind of history, but Lenin’s criticism of the liberal journalism, repeated by Castro and his propagandists, and the lecturers of the Faculty of Journalism/Communication of the University of Havana, still have great resonance.

I asked my interviewees which changes they would make in Cuban media if they had the power to do so. According to their answers I divided them into three categories: moderates, reformists and radicals. Moderates were those who most wanted to get rid of mediocre journalists “who obstruct their colleagues’ work,” as M. said. The reformists pointed towards a change in the Party’s policies of media and information. They demanded greater freedom, an “opening to the world...a true opening, without fear,” as another M. put it. A typical radical was yet a third M., who said: “The first thing you have to change to make the Cuban press work well is the system, brother.” The radicals were those that suspected that an opening would not be enough and a major structural change in the political system was needed. These three Ms are, I think, representative of roughly as many positions in today’s Cuban politics: those who support continuity, those who demand a reform within socialism, and everyone who wants a fundamental change of the political system. This depends on where each individual locates the main source of problems: in the character or competence of the persons running the system, in their policies, or in the political and economic structures. The radicals do not necessarily advocate a capitalist restoration, but imagine that policy

changes that are not accompanied by a vast reorganisation of the political and economic system would, at the end, being easily reversed, as the failure of the moderate opening of the late 1980s proved. In 1990, Julio García Luis, then Chairman of the Union of Cuban Journalists, declared: "In a country like ours the press does not change but as a part of a transformation of the society." (Borges Triana, 1990: 8) Two years later, Carlos Aldana, the Party's chief ideologue, declared that "the improvement of the socialist democracy will always remain incomplete and will lack a fundamental support if it does not include the improvement of the press." (Aldana, 1992: 5) And in 1994, shortly before leaving the country, Wilfredo Cancio, lecturer in Journalism at the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana, wrote: "It is unthinkable a change of the communicative model without transformations in the Cuban politics and society." (Cancio, 2003) After the political backlash of 1991-1992, a radical socialist stance probably lost any viability, but remains a theoretical possibility, certainly in the imagination of some of my interviewees. I do not know how many Cubans could be labelled moderates, reformists or radicals, but among my interviewees, none of these groups significantly outnumbered the others.

Somewhat surprisingly, even among the young journalists working abroad, I found moderates and reformists. But I found none that in the first instance justified the restrictions to public information in Cuba with the US hostility. And that is one of the biggest results of my work, because it seems to demolish the main argument of the Cuban leadership to limit journalists and media's autonomy and directly control their work. Forty years before the triumph of the Cuban revolution, Lenin replied to those Bolsheviks who wanted to restore freedom of the press in Russia: "If we march towards the social revolution, we cannot add to the bombs of Kaledin bombs of lies." (Lenin, 1979: 246) Cuban leaders would repeat ad nauseam Lenin's words: "Freedom of the press in the RSFSR, surrounded by bourgeois enemies of the whole world, is freedom of political organization of the bourgeoisie and its loyal servants..." (Hopkins 1970: 72). In 1961, Castro emphatically declared: "The counterrevolutionaries, the enemies of the Revolution, do not have rights against the Revolution, because the Revolution has a right, the right to exist, the right to develop and the right to win." (Castro, 1961: 11-12) Cuba has faced the stubborn enmity of 10 US Administrations. None of my interviewees would say that is not true. "This country works in circumstances no other country does, nobody can deny it," said A. However, I have every reason to suspect that the conflict between the two countries has lost some visibility and urgency for the common citizen. American efforts to force a change in Cuba are nowadays mostly concentrated in the economic, political, diplomatic and propagandistic fields. The younger generation, born years

after the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Missile Crisis, feel and understand the relationship with Cuba's "historical enemy" in a very different way of their seniors. My interviewees' attention is not focused in Washington, but in Havana. They rarely mentioned the US embargo (or *bloqueo*, blockade, a word that was not used in all 47 in-depth interviews), which is often used by the Cuban leaders to explain the economic difficulties of the country. Only three vaguely alluded to the American hostility. There has been a very significant political shift: my interviewees mostly blamed the incompetence and/or authoritarianism of the Cuban leaders (Fidel Castro, Party officials, media bosses) for the problems of the island's journalists. "I do not want *Granma* to be the best newspaper in the world," Castro allegedly said to Gabriel García Márquez, when the Nobel Prize winner asked el Comandante to give him the reigns of that newspaper for a week. The story might be not true, but F. delighted in its symbolism. Whether in the people, in the policies, or in the system, journalists located the source of problems and the possibility for change in Cuba.

Tragically, this movement does not mean that my interviewees see change any closer. In fact, it seems to make positive change even more unlikely. A passive, cynical attitude was very common. "Waiting, waiting, waiting. Everybody is waiting," F. said. "Well, I am one of those who think that this is never going to change. Too many things are needed for this to change." My interviewees often showed disdain for power, which appeared in their answers as both corruptive and conservative. They do not see themselves as the agents of a change. Their early experiences, often traumatic, have made them cautious. "There is resignation, Orlando. It's like accepting our destiny, like 'This is our fate, there is no choice but doing this.'" T. told me. Many of my interviewees have opted for keeping a strict separation between their personal lives and their work. Moral duplicity is apparently a typical pathology in Cuban newsrooms. My interviewees often criticised their colleagues for being hypocritical and opportunist. "They do not even deceive themselves, because they do not believe what they are doing. They know that they are not deceiving the people, because the people do not believe them," said M. In that atmosphere, my interviewees appear increasingly isolated and apathetic. M. told me that she never say anything at the staff meetings. "I do not get involved...I would like to think this is a dignified attitude, but I know this is not, this is not dignified...but what else can I do?" Political disaffiliation is common. Only a few of my interviewees are members of the Party, though that does not necessarily mean conformity or acceptance.

The political beliefs of my interviewees are, anyway, an intricate emotional territory. In their answers I noticed residues of certain revolutionary idealism, and also the early signs of middle-class conservatism. J. and M., for

instance, work in the same newspaper in Havana and have the best relations. J. declared that a journalist has an “inexcusable duty” to the Revolution, which was “to educate the people.” M., meanwhile, said that newspapers must “entertain” their readers. He harshly criticised his colleagues for ignoring the writers of modern classics like Aldous Huxley. “I do not have those problems. I was always concerned with increasing my knowledge. I was interested in literature, art, languages...mostly English and French,” he said. J. said that it was necessary for his newspaper to negotiate with the Party a coherent editorial policy. He emphatically told me that Cuban media should show “all the beautiful things this Revolution has brought, but also the problems.” M., a typical radical, said that “the first thing you have to change to make the Cuban press work well is the system.” He added: “The Cuban press will never work with this system. There could be whatever kind of opening, that will never be enough...” J., who does not have a home in Havana and lives in a Party dormitory, seems happy searching the Internet late at night, when the newsroom is empty. M. owns a laptop and has applied for an Internet service, but told me that he was last in the queue, because he was not member of the Party. He showed disdain for the Cuban public. “They do not think with their brains, but with their hearts, they are too passionate to understand certain things, and they are intolerant,” he said. J. criticised those journalists “who write certain things only they can understand.” He sighed: “The public is not fool, but we should not drive them crazy with complicated words they would not understand.” J. also criticised the concentration of capitalist media in a few mega corporations. M. declared: “I do not know how media were in the USSR or the GDR, but the Cuban media are lost, because they are not oriented towards the market.” But neither of these two very different young men were as ingenuous as they may sound. J. said that it was difficult for him to find any advantage of working in Cuban media. At last, he found one: “A journalist here does not work for money,” he said, but immediately added: “At the same time, that is a disadvantage, because journalists lack motivation.” M. said: “All media misinform. Why? Because media are always subordinated to someone’s interests.” He said that he couldn’t stand either *Radio Rebelde* or *Radio Martí*. “They both lie.” Without hesitation, J. said that death would be the only reason why he would leave journalism. M., who apparently does not believe he has any “inexcusable duty” with the Revolution, confessed that he has been examining the possibility of moving abroad. “I know for sure that I can go wherever in the world and I can write professionally and do it well. Wherever, I can tell.”

Not even these two, one the antipode of the other, are ideologically pure. Very often they are in opposite sides of the argument, but they work out their differences in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance that their

seniors never knew. There is a feeling of togetherness, of a new community that is far wider and inclusive of that of the “revolutionaries” of the 1960s. National, generational or professional identities are becoming more relevant than political ideology. The proof is that my interviewees have managed to remain friends with classmates of different beliefs, and that leaving the country no longer necessarily means breaking up with colleagues and friends living in Cuba. In this I find the embryo of a new public sphere, which will acquire institutional forms once a political transition begins in the island. That attitude was probably cultivated in the Faculty of Journalism/Communication of the University of Havana, a place my interviewees praised for its openness to debate and political plurality. “You could talk with entire freedom,” remembered D. “There was a famous occasion, when we form two sides, one in favour of the government, the other against...And the side against the government won the debate.”

I had suspected, during my preliminary research, that the transformation of the Faculty’s curriculum in 1990 had had a greater influence in the professional ideology of young Cuban journalists. But now I think that the technical and theoretical education provided by the Faculty was at the end less influential than the atmosphere of relative freedom, political tolerance and ideological diversity of the University of Havana in the early 1990s. There is evidence (Kovats, 1998; Gross, 1996; Lauk, 1996; and Splichal, 2003) that the schools of journalism in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe were nests of dissent and unrest. The Faculty of Havana was hardly a refuge for dissenters, but it was certainly more liberal and free-spirited than *Granma*.

None of my interviewee is a “counterrevolutionary.” Not even those who work in Miami would confess being against the “Revolution.” The Revolution is, for these young men and women, like a mythical animal described in very different manners by everyone who claims to have seen it. They have a conflictive, ambivalent attitude towards the Revolution, its ideals and its legacy. A. said that he “still” is a “revolutionary, a supporter of this social project,” but in his native Santa Clara he was considered hypercritical. “I was a Bolshevik and they made me a Menshevik.” He talked about the “essence of the Revolution.” “I always say that I work for the essence of the Revolution, not for any leader.” Not many of my interviewees talked about the Revolution, with capitals, which they probably thought might have sounded pompous and ridiculous. The word “revolution,” with or without capitals, appeared only 34 times in 47 interviews. In approximately 70 hours of conversation with 34 journalists in Cuba, the word “revolution” was registered only 29 times. Only three interviewees used it more than twice: A. used it seven times; M., five. The vast majority of interviewees—39—did not use it at all. I can conclude that “the Revolution” is a concept that has greatly lost its deno-

tative quality. It used to mean everything: the guerrilla war in Sierra Maestra, the people, the government, the ideals, the projects, the changes, the infinite possibilities, Fidel Castro. Now, as far as I can see, means almost nothing.

Those journalists who have left their job in Cuba mostly fit the description of Nicholson's first category and the first subgroup of the fourth. Those who remain in Cuban media, have either adapted to the circumstances, or continue fighting a solitary war, as M., in Santa Clara, said he was. I do not know how each of these 47 stories will end. I do not know even what is going to happen in Cuba next week. Bantz anticipated three outcomes for cultural conflicts in media organisations: first, "workers leave the workplace, seeking work in organizations that seem to have developed norms more consistent with their training;" second, "workers may alter their meanings and expectations to become more consistent with the workplace they currently are in;" third, "workers may make the conflict between professional norms and existent organisational norms...itself an expected occurrence," meaning that conflict becomes a norm. (Bantz, 1999: 134) These are three typical solutions of which I could find numerous examples among my interviewees. Most of the graduates of the Faculty of Journalism/Communication of 1991-2000 do not work in journalism, and a very significant part of them do not live in Cuba. Nicholson identifies four categories of career change:

"First are the young...whose change is exploration among fitness landscapes to choose where to invest their Motivation. Second are the lifelong explorers—individuals whose personality is restless, entrepreneurial, and driven by high openness...Third are people whose fitness landscapes change abruptly, as the forces of Selection expel them from settled employment...The fourth and largest group are those in more gradually changing environments, where many perceive a potential progressive degrading of the fitness landscape." (Nicholson, 2000)

Two subgroups are identifiable: those who perceive a climate of instability and threat and jump ship before they are pushed, and those who enact a strategy of moving regularly between employers to stay ahead of change waves and to avoid the risks of dependence on a single long-term employer. (Nicholson, 2000)

I can imagine that some of those young Cuban journalists working in the island's media will quit journalism and/or leave the country in the near future, if a political change in the country does not find them still in their current positions. Those whom the transition will find still in Cuban media, will very likely play a leading role in the transformation of the system of public communication. A sudden liberalisation of the press market will be upset by the shortage of professional journalists in the country. I suspect that most of my interviewees would easily adapt to the change and will take important

positions in the new media industry. They might not be entirely prepared in terms of skills, but they are certainly close to complete the ideological transition towards the liberal journalism. They are young enough to re-invent themselves in a completely different political and professional environment, as the experience of the young Cuban journalists working abroad definitively proves. With regard to the country, there is not much I can say, but I do not foresee any possibility of adopting any form of democratic journalism, certainly not Lenin's, or Raymond Williams', or James Curran's. Capitalist radicals will likely defeat socialist radicals, reformists and moderates. A capitalist restoration and the aggressive liberalisation of media are at arm's length, in historical terms. But when, exactly, and how that will happen, is the most carefully hidden secret in Cuba. Not even Fidel Castro knows it. In the days I was conducting my research, Fidel, now 79, spoke for hours from a wheelchair to a congress of the Young Communist League. He said the word "Revolution" (always with capitals 20 times. The word "truth" 10 times. The word "ideas" 47 times. The word "future" only three times. "Our Revolution is born everyday," he said. One thousand five hundred delegates applauded. But nobody was actually listening.

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