

IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca

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Doctoral Thesis

Fascism and Nationalism in Cuba

A Case Study on the Global Projection of an European Ideology

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Le fascisme, il y a bien longtemps que nous avons pensé que c'était une poésie, et la poésie même du XXe siècle (avec le communisme, sans doute). Je me dis que cela ne peut pas mourir. Les petits enfants qui seront des garçons de vingt ans, plus tard, apprendront avec un sombre émerveillement l'existence de cette exaltation de millions d'hommes, les camps de jeunesse, la gloire du passé, les défilés, les cathédrales de lumière, les héros frappés au combat, l'amitié entre jeunes de toutes les nations réveillées, José Antonio, le fascisme immense et rouge. Et je sais bien que le communisme a lui aussi sa grandeur, pareillement exaltante. Peut-être même dans mille ans confondra-t-on les deux Révolutions du XXe siècle ; je ne sais pas. Dans la Révolution fasciste, on m'accordera que la nation a eu sa place plus violente, plus marquée, et c'est aussi une poésie que la nation. Tout cela peut être vaincu par le libéralisme apparent, le capitalisme anglo-saxon, cela ne mourra pas plus que la Révolution de 89 n'est morte au XIXe siècle malgré le retour des rois. Et moi qui ces derniers mois me suis si fortement méfié de tant d'erreurs du fascisme italien, du nationalisme allemand, du phalangisme espagnol, je ne puis dire que je pourrai jamais oublier le rayonnement merveilleux du fascisme universel de ma jeunesse, le fascisme, notre mal du siècle. (Robert Brasillach, *Lettre à un soldat de la classe 60*)

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the diffusion of fascism in Cuba and its relationship with local nationalism, since up to now this question has not been studied satisfactorily by historiography, as most works on the subject still resent of World War propaganda. The research makes mostly use of original sources, both archival and printed, with the help of press and previous studies, in order to reconstruct and discuss historical events and ideological standpoints in Cuba, in the time that goes from Machado's dictatorship to Castro's Revolution.

To this extent, a clarification on the too often mistaken concept of fascism, in the light of scientific literature, is necessary. Fascism as a modern 20th-century ideology, strongly opposed and reactive to liberalism and communism, advocated a radical inter-class mobilization and rebirth of the nation, in militaristic and organicistic sense, under a totalitarian revolutionary single party or movement headed by a charismatic leader. Inside fascism, four main trends can be distinguished, according to different conceptions of nation: classical Fascism, National Socialism, Integrism and Falangism.

In the '30s, due to the crisis of Liberalism and the advance of Communism, Fascism had become a viable ideological alternative in many undeveloped countries, even outside Europe. This was especially true in Latin America, where European fascist regimes created local sections of the ruling party to cater with the large immigrant communities (especially Italians, Germans and Spaniards). This fascist influence, with its revolutionary nationalism, was strong on local nationalist forces, which struggled for national sovereignty and economic independence from colonial powers. These founded native fascist and populist groups, with the support of lower and middle classes.

At the same time, the socioeconomic and political situation in Cuba was not exceptional in comparison with other Latin American countries. In 1933, Machado's dictatorship was brought to an end by a heterogeneous coalition of political forces. After a convulse phase of struggle, power was assumed by Fulgencio Batista who controlled Cuba, either

directly or indirectly, until 1944. This long period, marked by the emergence of social mass movements and the relative decline of the old political class of independence veterans, was crucial for the development of new Cuban nationalism, which had to cope with United States influence and Batista's strategy to preserve his personal authority.

In the core part of the thesis, nationalist people and groups in Cuba are examined and analysed to ascertain their ideological and political relationships with fascism. The Cuban conservative Right is explored through the study of three important figures: the authoritarian writer Alberto Lamar, apologist of Machado's rule, the aviation hero Agustín Parlá and the journalist José Ignacio Rivero, a great sponsor of Francoism in Cuba. It is also observed how, following the Second World War, the Cuban Right gradually lost its European influence, becoming more and more Americanized by the time of Castro's Revolution, despite Franco's attempt at maintaining cultural and political ties.

The period of the Spanish Civil War was the high-water mark of foreign Fascist influence in Cuba, because of the influence exercised by the wealthier sectors of the Spanish colony, organized in the Spanish Nationalist Committee, in favour of the Nationalist faction in order to collect money and obtain diplomatic recognition. Along with it, and not without some contrasts, the Foreign Service of the Spanish Falange had set up a branch in Cuba, which operated among Spanish immigrants, with a Social Aid section, which raised funds to finance assistance projects for poor Spaniards in Cuba and in the Fatherland. On the other hand, Italy and Germany were much less influential, due to the scarce size of their respective communities.

Nonetheless, the aforesaid organizations only catered for foreign minorities in Cuba, and were all illegalized, when Cuba entered war along with the United States. Their example, as well as the circumstance of the legalization of the hated Communist Party, inspired a few native fascist groups. Still, even the only one, which could actually be considered fully fascist, the National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion, still remained a minor actor in national politics, before being outlawed. For certain, they did not leave any lasting mark in Cuban society and history.

On the other hand, the study of the main Cuban nationalist forces disproves any actual connection with fascism,

despite the accusations made by contemporary political opponents. It is the case of the ABC Party, who shared with fascism some ideological features (corporatism, anti-Communism, nationalism), as well as means of political and economical mobilization (paramilitary parades, armed struggle). Another such example is Batista himself, with his corporatist three-year plan (1937-40), his support from the Army and his authoritarian leadership, well before the 1952 coup. Finally, Eduardo Chibás, in the post-war period, presented an anti-imperialist, anti-Communist, populist party, rooted in the Cuban nationalist tradition. Nevertheless, all of these projects declared to be antifascist and committed to the values of liberal democracy.

Last but not least, the accusations of “Red Fascism” levelled against Castroism, even in academic literature, cannot be ignored. In fact, there are a few elements who would support this hypothesis, namely Fidel Castro’s conservative upbringing, his good standing with Francoist Spain, and some aspects of his government and ideology, such as militarism, charismatic leadership, voluntarism, nationalism, which deviate from standard Marxism. However, these features have been typical of most real socialist States. Furthermore, Castroism is distinctly different from fascist ideology, since it embraced Marxist-Leninism and refused class collaboration between capitalists and workers.

In sum of all, this thesis demonstrates how Cuba constituted an exception among main Latin American countries, insofar as fascism did not hold sensible sway on local politics, despite the social and economical situation was comparable. The most immediate cause lies in the fact that the United States power was stronger in the Caribbean than in South American countries, so that it hampered any foreign ideological influence. A deeper root of Cuban antifascism lies in the process of development of Cuban nationalism, which took place before the independence and involved a political debate and reflection among Cuban intellectuals and activists. This explains the prominence of democratic and progressive thought in later Cuban nationalists, which engendered in Cuban public opinion a general loathing for fascism, that fascist police makers were not able to understand.

Keywords: Castroism, Cuba, Falange, Fascism, Francoism, Ideology, Latin America, Nationalism, Populism, Right.

Contents

1 Introduction

Fascism in Cuba?

A defining characteristic of the scientific method is the ability to compare and contrast preliminary hypothesis with experimental findings. In the case of history, the experimental moment consists with the collection and analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Whereas the importance of the former cannot be understated, the latter has always been nearly as much as relevant. On one hand, secondary literature provides the readers with a grounded reconstruction of the historical events, on the other it represents a moment of discussion among the scholars. In fact, the very existence of a historical debate warns us against the positivist belief that the fact alone matters, as historiography has instead showed that subjective factors are at work, both in the preliminary choice of relevant sources and in their criticism.

This is especially true in the first and foremost step of historical research, that is the definition of the historical problem to face and resolve. Though it could be reduced to a single question, it is however necessary to establish neatly its extension and depth. Not only, but the very process of research often forces the historian to retrospectively reconsider the original question. This had, in fact, been the case of the present thesis, whose main object has slightly changed from its first draft, dating back about five years ago.

Once the problem has been clearly expressed, the next step is going to examine whether and which answers the scientific community has contributed insofar to this matter. The extant historical literature on the subject is always the point of start to ascertain what has already been established and what still lacks to the comprehension of the problem. It

also constitutes a useful reference for the nature, collocation and extent of source and methods which are relevant to this question.

Finally, any historical work of scientific repute, as contrasted to simply "popular history", could not dispense with going back to the primary sources, with the stated goal of finding and presenting new materials, or at the very least new insight on the problem under discussion. Whereas said steps only represent the beginning of the historical research, their explanation is of paramount importance, and as such they are detailed in the following sections.

1.1

THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL QUESTION

The problem around which my research revolves concerns the presence of fascism in Cuba and its political-historical significance, as a case study to facilitate the comprehension of this ideology. My original question actually regarded the actual impact of fascism on Cuban nationalism, being the latter an important feature of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

However, a more thorough research showed how the fascist presence in Cuba in the late '30s and early '40s had been actually exaggerated by wartime propaganda to the extent that it was represented as a relevant threat, while it was more of a fringe movement. Furthermore, even those instances of sympathy or affinity for some aspects of European fascism, during the '20s and '30s, were not to last in face of the upcoming World War and the related political and social mobilization, which was ushered in Latin America by United States intervention. Whereas this last factor had continental scale, in most other American countries, fascist-inspired movements and personalities played a well more important role, unlike Cuba. Therefore, I shifted to explaining the reasons of this anomaly in the context of general interest for fascism in Latin America.

1.1.1 ON FASCISM IN LATIN AMERICA

In fact, it is well known that the Interwar period was marked by the crisis of liberalism, dramatically heralded by the Great Depression, and by the growth of the international communist movement, directed by the Soviet Union. As a consequence, the example of European fascist powers, that

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is Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, spread worldwide, inspiring a vast number of different political forces, mostly belonging to the Nationalist area. At the same time, Italy and Germany operated, through their Foreign Affairs, to promote their ideologies among emigrant colonies and foreign public opinion alike.

Latin America had a peculiar importance in this scenario, because of a number of factors, including an increased mistrust of U.S. hegemony and Western liberalism, as well as the emergence of lower classes and the political aspirations of the middle classes to modernization and national sovereignty. In Eric Hobsbawm's words¹:

It was in Latin America that European fascist influence was to be open and acknowledged, both on individual politicians, like Colombia's Jorge Eliezer Gaitán (1898–1948) and Argentina's Juan Domingo Perón (1895–1974), and on regimes, like Getulio Vargas' Estado Novo (New State) of 1937-45 in Brazil. In fact, and in spite of baseless US fears of Nazi encirclement from the south, the main effect of fascist influence in Latin America was domestic [. . .].

Fascist influence south of the Rio Grande is easily explained. Seen from the south, the US after 1914 no longer looked, as it had in the nineteenth century, like the ally of the domestic forces of progress and the diplomatic counterweight to the imperial or ex-imperial Spaniards, French and British. US imperial conquests from Spain in 1898, the Mexican revolution, not to mention the rise of the oil and banana industries, introduced an anti-Yankee anti-imperialism into Latin American politics, and one which the obvious taste of Washington in the first third of the century for gunboat diplomacy and landing marines did nothing to discourage [. . .].

Moreover, the USA of the 1930s, enfeebled by the Great Slump, did not look anything like as formidable and dominant as before. Franklin D. Roosevelt's abandonment of the gunboats and marines of his predecessors could be seen not only as a 'good neighbour policy' but also (mistakenly) as a sign of weakness. Latin America in the 1930s was not inclined to look north.

But, seen from across the Atlantic, fascism undoubtedly looked like the success story of the decade. If there was

¹ E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*, Michael Joseph, London 1994, pp. 133-135.

a model in the world to be imitated by up-and-coming politicians of a continent that had always taken its inspiration from the culturally hegemonic regions, such potential leaders of countries always on the look-out for the recipe to become modern, rich and great, it was surely to be found in Berlin and Rome, since London and Paris no longer provided much political inspiration and Washington was out of action. (Moscow was still seen essentially as a model for social revolution, which restricted its political appeal.)

The British historian's explanation is convincing and contributes to explain why fascism directly or indirectly enjoyed such an influence on local nationalist forces, including prominent statesmen, such as Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Jorge Eliezer Gaitán in Colombia — both of whom had been in Italy in the '30s —, or even Getulio Vargas in Brazil and Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico, notwithstanding their antifascist stance in international politics. At the same time, the American continent belonged to the same Western cultural sphere of Europe, differently than Asia and Africa. Moreover, German and Italian immigrants were present all over the region in sizable numbers, thus facilitating fascist penetration.

Finally, the emergence of Franco's nationalist regime in Spain, since the outbreak of Civil War in 1936, gave further strength to this kind of influence in the hemisphere, because of the strong historical and ethnocultural ties among Spain and Latin America. Though Franco himself was not a fascist and his government is more correctly described as a right-wing authoritarian nationalist dictatorship, the latter always had an actual fascist component — the Falange —, whose strength and influence varied in time. Not only Spanish fascism was strongest in the years before the end of World War II, when the *Caudillo* was strongly aligned with the Axis powers, but, in the same period, it also had a foremost role in managing Spanish foreign policy towards the former colonies, through its Servicio Exterior.

On the other hand, it cannot be forgotten that Hobsbawm's interpretation is grounded only if an important difference is taken into account, that is the different social role that nationalism and populism played in Latin America. As he wrote²:

² Ibidem.

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And yet, how different from their European models were the political activities and achievements of men who made no bones about their intellectual debt to Mussolini and Hitler! [. . .] What Latin American leaders took from European fascism was its deification of populist leaders with a reputation for action. But the masses they wanted to mobilize, and found themselves mobilizing, were not those who feared for what they might lose, but those who had nothing to lose. And the enemies against whom they mobilized them were not foreigners and outgroups [. . .], but ‘the oligarchy’ – the rich, the local ruling class.

Still, even following this *caveat*, the case of Cuba is noticeable to this regard, for the scarce influence fascism did enjoy in its political arena.

1.1.2 ON CUBAN GENERAL BACKGROUND

Now, in regard to this matter, the Republic of Cuba constituted a special case, which still has not been investigated properly from the point of view of political history. However, we must first take into account the background. In fact, though our focus is quite narrow and concerns a small part of Cuban politics, still it does not take place in a vacuum. Rather, the lay of Cuban society is of foremost importance to understand how fascisms fit in this picture. To this extent, we can quite easily define the period of time under investigation as between 1936, with the start of the Spanish Civil War and the first fascist activities in Cuba, and 1945, with the end of World War II.

1.1.2.1 *An age of revolutions*

The decade of the ‘30s opened in Cuba with the revolutionary struggle against the dictator Gerardo Machado, who kept the power with U.S. support from 1925 to 1933. He was the first to receive accusations of fascism, also because of his positive relations with Fascist Italy³, to the extent that he was named “*Mussolini tropical*”. Thriving corruption, coupled with the Great Depression and political repression had brought an ever larger share of Cubans to oppose him, until he was overthrown in August 1933.

Afterwards, no party or class was able to establish a stable hegemony. Therefore, a number of governments followed,

3 He was decorated with the Ordine dei SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro in 1929.

mostly backed or influenced by the new strong-man who had emerged in 1933-34, the Army sergeant Fulgencio Batista. At the same time, both nationalist and socialist movements went on opposing liberal governments, who did not refrain from resorting to violent repression (e.g. the murder of Antonio Guiteras Holmes, leader of the revolutionary Joven Cuba, in 1935).

Among these, the case of the ABC party is particularly interesting, as it was defined as fascist or fascistoid by left-wing forces and by later official historiography. Indeed, though these were largely exaggerations, it did have fascist elements, at least in the early '30s. However, it transitioned from terrorist organization, during the Machado, to a civic association, which took a clear liberal, democratic and antifascist stance in the wake of World War Two.

Only later, Batista engineered a gradual transition towards a new Constituency (1940), ushered in by a corporatist Three-Year Plan. This new political strategy included the legalization of the Communist Party in September 1938, in order to provide himself with a larger base of consensus. In 1940, with a new progressive Constitution, the cunning officer was then elected to the Presidency of the country, being supported by a coalition of forces ranging from the far right to the far left, Communists and Francoists⁴ alike.

Batista's strategy in this period, though far from being fascist, presented a number of similarities, such as presenting himself as a charismatic, lower-class⁵ political figure, with a transversal, inter-class electorate, as well as his corporatist policies and ambiguous sympathies for Franco, Salazar and Mussolini.

1.1.2.2 *The impact of the Spanish Civil War*

The other important factor in this picture is the weight of the Spanish immigrant colony in Cuba, amounting to 7% of the population in 1931, which played a key role in the economy of the country, especially in the commercial sector. This community included various clubs and institutions, many of them on regional basis, such as the Centro Gallego and the

⁴ Most notably, the Senator Elicio Argüelles (1885–1959), President of the Comité Nacionalista Español.

⁵ It should not be forgotten that he was a mulatto stenograph sergeant, and the only non-White to ever attain the highest office in Cuba.

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Centro Asturiano. The start of the Civil War in the Fatherland, with the uprising of the Nationalist forces, originated a parallel bloodless but heated clash among Cuba's Spaniards. Nationalist and Republican organizations opposed each other, gathering funds to be sent home and lobbying on the Cuban government and society to raise support.

In this struggle, they were joined by local sympathizers, since Cuban conservatives and progressives had divided on this issue⁶. The former, including the Catholic Church and much of the upper classes, regarded it as a defence of common Hispanic and Christian values from the threat of Bolshevik hordes. Among them, we must mention the journalist José Ignacio Rivero Alonso (1895–1944), director of the most important Conservative newspaper, the *Diario de la Marina*, and the aviator Agustín Parlá Orduña (1887–1946), pioneer of Cuban aeronautics. On the other hand, the latter, such as the students' and workers' unions and Freemasonry, saw it as a withstand of democracy and liberty against fascist and militaristic aggression. Hundreds of Cuban volunteers indeed fought on both sides, especially on the Republican one.

On the Nationalist side, there emerged two main organizations in Cuba: the Comité Nacionalista Español, which appealed to the Spanish and Cuban upper classes and mainly acted as a political and economical lobby in Cuba, and the official section of the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista, which only recruited Spaniards and constituted a mean of mobilisation inside the Spanish community. Moreover, the beneficial association Auxilio Social acted as part of the Falange to gather funds and provide food for indigent Spaniards in the island.

Only in the late 1938, just after the legalization of the Communist Party, Cuban sympathizers founded a few fascist groups, whose total membership hardly exceeded 500 affiliated. Most of them were members of the Legión Nacional Revolucionaria Sindicalista, which was accused to having operated as a flanking organization for the Falange, and later shared its fate.

6 A very telling example is the intellectual clash among Eduardo Chibás and José Ignacio Rivero in April 1937

1.1.2.3 *Aftermaths*

The final Nationalist victory in April 1939 was soon followed by the outbreak of World War II in Europe, which escalated tensions overseas. In fact, one should not forget that, as we have noted before, the United States were bent to recover from their position of relative weakness, both from the economic and diplomatic point of view. World War II was correctly seen by Roosevelt Presidency as a mean to defend their interests, boost the economy and reassert themselves as a global player. The campaign to present United States as the natural leader of the free world, especially in the Americas, had unsurprisingly an especially strong impact on a country as dependent on them as Cuba was.

Therefore, whereas U.S. President Roosevelt maneuvered to overcome neutralist stances and bring support to the Allies, anti-Axis and antifascist leanings grow in Cuba as well. Batista's executive took measures against those political forces, who opposed liberal democracy, until all fascist groups were forcibly dissolved, soon after Pearl Harbour and Cuba's entry in the war, and their leadership put on trial, though most sentences were mild. Never again they resurfaced, after the military defeat of the Axis, neither in the wake of a communist takeover in the early '60s.

Though some of them still sympathized for Franco, Cuban anti-Communists firmly remained in the liberal and conservative, yet democratic, field. Nor much heed is to be paid to the claims of a fascist strain in Castroism, mostly based on Fidel's education by Francoist Jesuits in the colleges of Dolores and Belén, since authoritarian, charismatic, nationalist and militaristic features have been common to Communist regimes worldwide.

On the other hand, the end of Falangist activities did not mean the end of relationships with the Spanish State. On the contrary, after the war, the Spanish diplomacy worked to amend and improve the relations among the two countries, promoting common historical and cultural ties, as well as economic interests. Ideology remained thus understated, at the point that such benevolence on Franco's part extended well after the 1959 Revolution, when the two countries remained in good standings, in spite of opposing ideological positions.

1.2

THE STATE OF LITERATURE

Unsurprisingly, the scientific literature about fascisms in Cuba is actually quite limited, due to the scarce importance attributed to the subject, both from local and foreign historiography. We should first of all distinguish between the various pamphlets and texts published in the years of the World War, which are still ripe with militant and partial spirit, and the few scientific studies, who had been written on this subject, decades later.

1.2.1 MILITANT LITERATURE

The first published works regarding this subject date back to the World War years and can be properly described as “militant literature”, because of their approach and nature. Not only they constitute historic documents on their own, being a witness to the intensity of the political clash, but they also gather useful information, though this should be handled with care and compared with other sources, where possible. Furthermore, the scarcity of literature forces any scholar to read these texts too.

1.2.1.1 *Cuban pamphlets*

In Cuba, there are a few pamphlets which were written to inform about Falangist “threat”. The first dates back to the end of 1940 and was published by the Republican Senator Agustín Cruz y Fernández with the title “*Una voz de alerta frente a la amenaza del falangismo en Cuba*”. It consists with different material, and it opens with a statement by the Senator, which claims that this work is a warning in regard to the Falangist threat, which was higher in Cuba, due to its presumed centrality in Franco’s strategy towards the Americas.

This is followed by a collection of quotes and facts to support this thesis; then a parlamentar interrogation presented by Cruz on November 15, asking for the refuse of Falangist leader Genaro Riestra’s credentials as Consul of Spain in Cuba; thereafter Cruz’s radiophonic conference at “*La voz del aire*” of November, 21; and, finally, a conference by Miguel Suárez Fernández at the same radiophonic program, on 6 December.

Though it must be admitted that Cruz's tones are calmer, his thesis insists on the tight connections between Spain and Germany, through the former's Foreign Minister Ramon Serrano Suñer, himself the Chief of Falange and in good standings with Heinrich Himmler. It must be also conceded that, at this time, the Axis-Spain relations were at its highest — Hitler had met Franco in Hendaye in October 1940 —, and Axis forces still seemed to be triumphant, after the conquest of continental Western Europe. However, dangers of effective Axis subversion in Cuba, through Falangist agents, still were as far-fetched as in earlier or later years.

On the evening of February 6, 1942, in the Sociedad Hispanocubana de Cultura, the Cuban jurist and modernist Catholic Domingo Villamil y Pérez gave a long conference, titled "*Cristianismo y Falangismo son incompatibles*", which aimed at demonstrating the incompatibility between Christianity and Falangism. Therefore, apart from the author's debatable thesis⁷ there is nothing in it specifically regarding Falangist activities in Cuba.

In 1945, after the end of the War, the main students' syndicate, the Federación Estudiantil Universitaria, then led by Manuel de Castro, along with the Comité Universitario Pro-República Española, published another pamphlet, with the title "*Criminales de guerra*". It opens with a short introduction, pleading for the expulsion of Spanish Falangists and the persecution of their Cuban sympathizers, who are also accused of having taken part in the black market. Falange is depicted as a "serious and permanent danger for Cuba and America" and, through the inclusion of a few out-of-context paragraphs, claimed to be tightly connected to fascism and national-socialism.

The main corpus of the work, however, consists with lists of the executive members and local chiefs of the Comité Nacionalista Español and the Falange, as well as Falangist businessmen. These lists seems to have been taken from the contemporary press and appear to be fairly reliable, as they largely coincide with the ones compiled by the historian Katia Figueredo, seventy years later.

⁷ In fact, though the Pope had criticized core aspects of Italian and German fascism, such as the ethical State ("*Non abbiamo bisogno*") and racism ("*Mit brennender Sorge*"), no way it was comparable to the utter condemn of Communism ("*Divini Redemptoris*"). Nor he had disproved the stance of the Spanish bishops on the Civil War.

A variant on this theme is constituted by the book *“El nazismo en Cuba”*, written by Salvador Díaz Verson, purportedly an agent of the Servicio de Inteligencia Militar, which states that both a fascist and a communist conspiracy were present in Cuba at the moment, including paramilitary activities. Rather than downplaying the “Red threat” in conformity with the wartime alliance, Díaz Verson seems eager to maintain a more conservative stance.

On the other side, it does not appear to have much at the moment, apart from the book *“El momento español. La intromisión comunista”*, published in 1945 by Enrique Gancedo Toca, a prominent Hispano-Cuban businessman and member of the Comité Nacionalista Español, and presumably of (auto-)apologetic content.

1.2.1.2 *Allan Chase*

Next, there is a prolific wartime literature, detailing real or presumed (more presumed than real) Nazi plans and plots in the western hemisphere. The most interesting of this book is Allan Chase’s *“Falange. The Secret Axis Army in Latin America”*, devoting two full chapters to Cuba. In the former (“Cuba: Pattern and Center of Falangist America”), the American journalist correctly describes the Falange as rooted in the upper class of the Spanish community in Cuba and traces the story of these groups in Cuba, from the outbreak of the Civil War up to the time of its publication.

It is obviously a revolting piece of propaganda, aimed at discrediting the adversaries without much care for reality, to the extent of celebrating the newspaper *Noticias de Hoy*, conveniently omitting its Communist nature, and praising Batista for its awareness of the dangers posed by the Axis, when the Cuban president had always strived to keep good standings with the influent Spanish community. Apart from that, Chase falsely states that Spain and Falange are just instruments in the hands of Germany, and exaggerates the Falangist presence to the point of describing it as «a membership of 30,000 fanatics organized into a military structure». Things do not change in the latter chapter (“Meet the Grey Shirts”), detailing the Legión Nacional Revolucionaria Sindicalista as a radical, thuggish, lower-class offshoot of the Falange.

Despite its flaws, Chase’s work still appears to be more

researched than others. He clearly states that most of his sources are Republican Spanish agents, and it is also possible that he had access to U.S. intelligence sources. This explains also why this book was translated in Spanish and published in Cuba the following year and quoted as a source by various Cuban journalists and politicians. Chase himself, in 1944, was welcome as a guest by the Casa de la Cultura y Asistencia Social, an important Republican exiles' institution.

1.2.1.3 *Juan Chongo*

In the same category, I am including the first Cuban study on the subject, published far later, in 1989. This is "*El Fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*" (Hitler's defeat in Cuba) by Juan Chongo Leiva⁸ Though it lacks a bibliography, it is the first book to make use of the Cuban files regarding these associations, yet complemented with information taken from the press of the time, and especially the Communist *Noticias de Hoy*.

Notwithstanding its usefulness as secondary source, due to its many quotations, and historic document, Chongo's book is devoid of scientific value. Apart from blatant mistakes (e.g. confusing the Reichswehr with the Wehrmacht), it is an unabashed piece of Communist antifascist propaganda. Its identification of postwar U.S. imperialism with Neofascism should be sufficient proof of its inconsistency, from this point of view.

In fact, Chongo, with brazen ignorance of decades of historical studies about Fascism, exhumes the old theory of Fascism as a device of reactionary bourgeoisie, used to divide and crush the working classes⁹. He essentially maintains for good Chase's wartime fairy-stories, though he changes them significantly to represent Communists as the vanguard of Cuban people in the heroic struggle against Cuban fascists and their puppeteers.

1.2.2 SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

The long absence of studies on fascist organizations in Cuba depends partly on the scarce relevance of the phenomenon and partly on political reasons: only in the '80s and in the

8 Born in Sancti Spiritus in 1937, author of "*La muerte viaja con pasaporte nazi*" (1984), about the case of the Axis spy Augusto Lunín.

9 It must be admitted that militant antifascism, even today, has rarely progressed further these crude COMINTERN-devised slogans

2000s, in Spain and Cuba respectively, it was possible to deal with these matters in a balanced way, without being influenced by State ideology.

1.2.2.1 *Consuelo Naranjo*

The first real study on the subject was written in 1988 by the Spanish historian Consuelo Naranjo Orovio, as part of her book *"Cuba, otro escenario de lucha. La guerra civil y el exilio republicano español"*, published by the Departamento de Historia de América in the Centro de Estudios Históricos of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. In the wider scenario of the impact of the Civil War on the Spanish community of Cuba, the Falange, along with related Spanish rightwing organizations, is described in the first and fourth chapter, whereas the third deals with the struggle inside the regional centres.

Naranjo, herself a specialist in Spanish emigration, mainly consulted Spanish archives: not only the most important Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores in Madrid and the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares, but also the Archivo Histórico Provincial de Pontevedra and the Archivo Histórico Municipal de La Coruña, in Galicia.¹⁰ She also worked with U.S. archives (the National Archives in Washington) and the Archivo Nacional de Cuba. Furthermore, since she had worked on oral history and sources, she resorted to a few hundred interviews, taken both in Spain (mainly Galicia) and Cuba.

This wide choice of sources and methods allowed her to publish a valid scientific work, far above anything that had been published before. Naranjo is openly aware of the bias present in the U.S. sources, and analyzes Falangist foreign expansion through original Spanish sources. She showed how the Falange exercised some influence on gathering consensus among Spanish emigrants, even crossing the class boundaries. She also detailed its activities of social welfare, media propaganda and financial collection, as well as the lobbying exercised by the Spanish embassy, through these organizations, both on the Spanish community and the Cuban government.

The only major flaws, which can be found in this work,

¹⁰ Such has been the relevance of Galicians in Spanish modern emigration to Cuba, that nowadays *gallego* is still a synonymous of "Spaniard".

are actually that she neglected the fundamental collections Registro de Asociaciones and Tribunal de Urgencia de la Habana and paid too much heed to U.S. sources, such as Chase, perpetuating the idea of a large Falangist impact in Cuba.

1.2.2.2 *Katia Figueredo*

A new light came only in the next century, with the researches by Katia Figueredo Cabrera, a young Cuban scholar. She had worked mostly on the relationship between Francoist Spain and Cuba before the Revolution, since her Master thesis on Franco and *Hispanidad* (2004). She has researched also in recent years about the interest shown by the *Caudillo* towards the Caribbean nation and his various strategies of cultural penetration (2007, 2009, 2013a), demonstrating how, well after the dissolution of the FET y de las JONS in Cuba, the Spanish State had looked forward to establish fraternal relations with its former colony, which had traditionally been called *la sempre fiel* (the “everfaithful”), due to its late independence.

However, the core of her works concerns fascist activities and groups in Cuba, which explains why I chose her to supervise the present research. In fact, her PhD thesis (2011b) was dedicated to this subject, and later expanded and published as a monograph (2014b), with the title “*Cuba y la Guerra Civil Española. Mitos y realidades de la derecha hispano-cubana (1936–1942)*”. Though this is her main work, she has also investigated lesser Fascist groups (2013b), as well as related historical problems, such as the ‘40s debate on teaching (2008) and the figure of José Ignacio Alonso Rivero (2014a).

As for sources, though she has thoroughly consulted the aforesaid collections of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, which had escaped Naranjo’s attention, her major merit, in my opinion, has been the devoted work of scanning through hundreds of periodical issues in order to reconstruct in details not only the activities, but also the composition of these groups and organizations. This emerges with blatant evidence in her monographic work, whose richness of annexes and appendixes is unrivalled.

Her major contribution, apart from her wide exploration of less known sources and aspects, lies in overthrowing the

previous theory about Falangist presence in Cuba. Basing herself on trustworthy records, she confutes the old idea of a persisting Falangist activity well after 1941, with thousand of members, as well as the presumed centrality of Cuba in the Axis' plans. For this reason, she refers to the Falange as a "myth", constructed by the propaganda.

At the same time, she devotes much attention to the complex interplay of foreign relations between the Cuban government and the Nationalist junta of Burgos, towards the recognition of the latter, soon after the end of the civil war. To this extent, she shows the ambiguities of Batista and the Cuban government, between the prosecution of business with the new Spain and the desire to avoid alienating the influent Spanish community on one hand, and the general sympathy and reception of the Republican exiles on the other.

The only shortcoming of Figueredo's research lies in her formation as a pure historian, as her works lack an actual reflexion on the ideological and political aspects of the subject. This appears quite clearly in "*Cuba y la Guerra Civil Española*", where a scarce 9 pages out of 465 deal with these ramifications. My research, in fact, aims at filling this void.

1.2.2.3 *On other phenomena*

Even other political phenomena, not devoid of fascist elements, who still had a much larger impact on Cuban history, were barely touched by later Cuban historiography.

For example, the prominent opinion on ABC, as expressed in Lionel Soto's (1977) and José Tabares del Real's (1973) works on the 1933-Revolution, was that it had fascist influences and fascist-like features, and therefore it had played a counter-revolutionary role, similarly to the European fascisms. A similar position features in the dedicated essay by Maricela Mateo, which still maintains that this party constituted a reformist option for the Cuban bourgeoisie, facing Machado's openly reactionary dictatorship. The main accusations, in fact, regarded its insufficient opposition to U.S. imperialism, as well as its cooperation with the Mendieta's and Batista's government, respectively, in 1933-34 and 1942-44.

This stance has only recently been disputed by Jorge

Domingo Cuadriello (2012), in an essay mostly based on the thorough examination of the Party's political literature. The scholar, noted for its studies on the Republican exile in Cuba, shortly reconstructs the history of the ABC and disproves the accusations of fascism, while at the same time stressing the importance of this movement in its times.

As for Batista's political strategy, especially corporatism, as far as I know, there is even less, though it had been recently researched by the aforesaid Tabares del Real, before his death. Outside Cuba, there is something more, such as the articles by Robert Whitney (2000) and Brendan M. Carbonell (2009), which focus on Batista's views and policies, especially among 1937 and 1944. However, I still have not examined in detail this kind of literature.

1.3

ON SOURCES

For what concerns sources, as I said, I had to make a distinction between primary and secondary sources, where the former mainly regard the activity of fascist groups in Cuba, while the latter have been used to discuss those more general subjects, which are still important for my research.

In fact, have included under the latter label, all the secondary literature, which allows to deal with related subjects, without having to consult pertinent primary sources, which would be far off the scope of the present work. Due to its sheer size, I preferred not to write an extensive compilation of works, which at the present stage of the research would necessarily be partial and dissatisfying, but to concentrate on the former, most important sources. However, a fair number of them have notwithstanding been included in the bibliography.

1.3.1 PRIMARY SOURCES

On the other hand, primary sources, and especially archival ones, have played a major role in my researches, despite their fragmentary state. Though large part, unsurprisingly, has been conducted in Cuba, this investigation would have hardly been complete, without the consultation of foreign archives.

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1.3.1.1 *Internal sources*

Most of the first-hand information about Fascist and similar associations in Cuba comes from the Fondo Registro de Asociaciones in the Archivo Nacional de Cuba, where there are files for most of them, save the Juntas de Ofensivas Nacional Sindicalista de la Falange Española and the Partido Nacional Fascista. A few other documents are located in the Fondo Especial of the same institution. These files hold the legal documentation regarding these associations: foundation, disband, location, transfers, statutes, officers, as well as other information transmitted to the provincial register of association by other public authorities.

Another important type of sources is constituted by the publications edited by these groups. A few issues of *Acción Legionaria*, published by the Legión Nacional Revolucionaria Sindicalista, are adjoined to the acts of the process (case n. 68/941). The official Cuban Falangist review *¡Arriba España!* – not to be confused with the homonymous, more important, Spanish review – is instead mostly found, though not in a complete collection, in Madrid, at the Biblioteca Nacional de España. As for the ABC, whose fascist nature is dubious, apart from the Party's daily newspaper *Acción* alone, there are rare foundational documents and manifestos, spanning from 1932 to 1943, conserved in the Reserva of the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí.

Then, there are the sources related to foreign Fascist powers in Cuba. The bulk, concerning the foreign activities of the Spanish Falange, is to be found in the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares, where both the files of the FET y de las JONS Cuba (and the correlated Auxilio Social) and of the Spanish Embassy in Cuba are preserved. Other important documents, though less complete, are held in the Iberoamerikanische Institut in Berlin.

Finally, I thoroughly investigated the virtually unexplored archival collection (Fondo Agustín Parlá) regarding the aviator Agustín Parlá Orduña, due to both his importance as a Cuban fascist sympathizer and the relevance of some documents herein included. It is located at the Instituto de Historia de Cuba.

1.3.1.2 *External sources*

On the other hand, there is a wide availability of external sources, which describe the activities of these groups. I have chosen to focus on Cuban State sources, since they are the most trustworthy. I am here mainly referring to judicial acts, collected in the Fondo Tribunal de Urgencia de la Habana of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba.

There are also military and policial sources, detailed in the Fondo Ejército de Cuba, the Fondo Policía Nacional, the Colección de documentos de la Junta Interamericana de Defensa and the Colección de documentos del Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, all preserved at the Instituto de Historia de Cuba. Unfortunately, the material directly concerning our investigation is scarce, since most of these files refer to the revolutionary struggle in the '50s. Moreover, this archive has been closed since April, due to ongoing works of restoration, which are due to finish next Autumn.

Other important sources, which I hope to be able to consult, are located in Washington, at the National Archives, under the section "Diplomatic Branch. Intelligence reports (Federal Bureau of Investigation)". However, these intelligence reports should be handled carefully, because of their excessive reliance on Republican Spanish and other antifascist informers, who clearly had a political interest in exaggerating the Fascist presence in the Americas.

This is reflected, with even more evidence, in the Cuban antifascist press, especially after the outbreak of World War II. The Communist newspaper *Noticias de Hoy* is a conspicuous example of a source whose richness of information should be treated with care. This is not to mean that they should be rejected at all, but that their trustworthiness is definitely lesser than that of judicial and policial sources.

Furthermore, I have also consulted various articles from the Cuban press of the period, especially *¡Alerta!*, *Bohemia*, *Diario de la Marina*, *El Avance Criollo*, *El Mediodía*, *La Discusión*, *Mañana*, *Noticias de Hoy*, though I have given foremost priority to the archival sources, since I lacked the time needed to thoroughly scan the press. Of all these, the Conservative *Diario de la Marina* is worthy of particular interests, since it defended the Nationalist faction and publicized Falangist activities in Cuba.

Last but not least, in a few cases, I have resorted to

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memoirs and interviews, such as Fidel Castro's long autobiographic conversations with Frei Betto and Ignacio Ramonet, or Franco's talks with his nephew. Moreover, in the '80s, Consuelo Naranjo had made hundreds of interviews, related to the impact of Spanish Civil War in Cuba, and these could also prove useful.

2 Figures of the Cuban Right

As we have seen in the previous introductory chapters, despite the syncretic and third-way nature of their ideology, fascist movements normally assumed a right-wing political stance, enjoying an uneasy relation with conservative forces. This is especially true for the Cuban setting. Therefore, it is important to extend our research to cover the Cuban Right, investigating its political and intellectual contiguity with fascist ideas and organizations. However, the mainstream Right in Cuba, being quite devoid of actual ideological debate, had a mostly pragmatic and conservative stance. Its political cultural references generally rested either abroad with the United States or with the Catholic Church. In fact, Cuban intellectuality was for the most part bent on criticizing and opposing the status quo from reformist or revolutionary perspectives.

For this reason, I have chosen to focus on three different figures whom I deem to be very representative of the Cuban Right in the first half of the 20th century, including its contradictions. All were born around the turn of the century and died in the '40s. The first one, the journalist Alberto Lamar Schweyer (1902 – 1942), was a prolific writer and thinker who provided cultural support for Machado's dictatorship. The second one, the pioneer of the Cuban aviation Agustín Parlá Orduña (1887 – 1946), though not an intellectual but rather a man of action, was nevertheless an important icon of the Cuban Right in the '30s. The third one, the journalist José Ignacio Rivero Alonso (1895 – 1944), had a major role as director of the most important Cuban conservative newspaper and acted as a true mogul of the Cuban press. Despite their differences, their comparative political biographies are very telling about the nature of the right-wing thought in

Cuba and its relationship with European Fascisms, especially through the cultural and ethnic ties with Spain.

The political trajectory of these three people is very revealing about the gradual shift in paradigms of the Cuban Right, from a postcolonial Conservatism tied to the Catholic Church and European ancestry, to a neocolonial Conservatism tied to the political and economical relationship with the United States, seen both as an ally and a model. In both cases, the Latin American or Panamerican vision remained on the background.

In fact, Alberto Lamar Schweyer was quite opposed to the United States, whom he saw as the main actor behind Machado's fall, while he always maintained a cultural relationship with Europe, especially France. He shared with the Left the defence of Latin American political independence, though in an anti-democratic and elitist perspective.

Agustín Parlá Orduña, who, on the other hand, actually had strong ties with the United States, since he was a Cuban American, born in Florida and trained by Curtiss school, eventually gave more support to Spain, through his activism in the Centro Gallego and his friendship to Spanish Nationalists, so that he was questionably regarded as anti-American at the end of his life.

Finally, José Ignacio Rivero, despite his strong stance in favour of Spain and Hispanism, including his work in favour of Franco and the Falange, had to partially back down, and espouse a pro-American line, in order to keep his press empire going. However, this choice was arguably due to the geopolitical circumstances.

As ascertained in this chapter, no one of them was really fascist, as they all defended the socio-economical and political status quo of the Republic of Cuba, so that they could be more properly described as "national conservatives", whose sympathies for authoritarianism were justified with the necessity to maintain order and fight Communist subversion.

2.1

BIOLOGY VS DEMOCRACY: ALBERTO LAMAR

La libertad es un sueño
irrealizable dentro del espíritu
de desorden.

A. Lamar Schweyer

The reception of Alberto Lamar Schweyer¹, which was already controversial in his times, due to his ties with Machado², definitely worsened with the Revolution, since it prevailed the view supported by the surviving Minorists, such as Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring and Alejo Carpentier, who saw him as the traitor of their group³. Its role was mostly considered in contrast to the progressive positions of his former fellows, such as in Alina López's short dissertation⁴. The same can be said of Miguel Rojas's essays⁵, which, though discussing in detail his philosophical positions, espouse a rigid dialectical materialism, reinforced by Lukács's⁶ condemn of irrationalism.

Nor the exiles filled this void, as the contributions on this

- 1 For biobibliographical datas, cfr. Academia de Ciencias de Cuba. Instituto de Lingüística, *Diccionario de la literatura cubana*, Letras Cubanas, La Habana 1980, "Alberto Lamar Schweyer"; Miguel Rojas Gómez, "Alberto Lamar Schweyer", in P. Guadarrama González – M. Rojas Gómez (ed.), "La condición humana en el pensamiento cubano del siglo XX", Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana 2010-2015, 3 voll; Aurelio Alonso, *Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, conference cycle "Escritores olvidados de la República", Fundación Alejo Carpentier, La Habana, 18th January 2011.
- 2 Cfr. Ramón Vasconcelos, *El gigante vencido*, in *El País* (La Habana), 6th August 1942; José María Chacón y Calvo, *Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, in "Revista Cubana" (La Habana), January-March 1943.
- 3 Alejo Carpentier, *Conferencias*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, La Habana 1987.
- 4 Alina López Hernández, *Moviendo la izquierda desde la derecha: el pensamiento conservador de Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, B.A. thesis, Universidad de Matanzas "Camilo Cienfuegos", 2006.
- 5 M. Rojas Gómez – Ramón Pérez, *La filosofía nietzscheana de Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, in "Islas. Revista de la Universidad Central de Las Villas", n. 92 (January-April 1989), pp. 45-54; Id., *El subjetivismo y el nietzscheanismo de Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, in P. Guadarrama González – M. Rojas Gómez, *El pensamiento filosófico en Cuba en el siglo XX. 1900-1960*, 2. ed., Editorial Félix Varela, La Habana 1998, pp. 115-124; Id., "Alberto Lamar Schweyer", op. cit.
- 6 György Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Aufbau Verlag, Berlin Ost 1954.

character, outside Cuba, were limited to a few web articles, despite the intelligent remark by Rafael Rojas Gutiérrez⁷.

Quienes hoy reclaman para sí el lugar de una derecha cubana anticastrista harían bien en leer a Alberto Lamar Schweyer. Tal vez algo de la buena prosa y del pensamiento fluido de aquel escritor cubano los ayude a perfilar mejor sus actuales argumentos y a comprender la derecha como algo más que un conjunto de reacciones viscerales contra ciertas actitudes templadas.

Only a few years later, he was partially rediscovered, with the new edition of some of his works⁸.

Most recent and important of all was the new edition of *Biología de la democracia*, published in January 2017 by the Instituto Cubano de Ciencias Culturales de la Diáspora, being edited by Ángel Velázquez Callejas⁹. The latter wrote a prologue which is interesting insofar as he revindicates Lamar as one of the intellectual fathers of the Cuban Right¹⁰:

«Biología de la democracia debe considerarse uno de los primeros documentos teóricos escritos por un intelectual cubano sobre el pensamiento de derecha. Lo importante de Lamar Schmeyer consiste en poner de relieve que el pensamiento de derecha [...] no constituye una fórmula y receta para partidos políticos con tendencias ideológicas. Al contrario, la democracia se subordina a principios y leyes de la vida y la naturaleza. Considerado por las generaciones de la época y las posteriores hasta nuestros días como un texto reaccionario, de tendencia fascista y antidemocrático, *Biología de la democracia*, no deja de sorprender por la elegancia del ensayo y la perspectiva epistemológica.»

Therefore, his political thought, though taking into account the historical context, is implicitly regarded as a potential

⁷ Rafael Rojas, *Tres sabios olvidados*, in *Cuba Encuentro*, 13 octubre 2004.

⁸ Alberto Lamar Schweyer, *Los contemporáneos. Ensayos sobre la cultura cubana del siglo*, BiblioLife, Charleston 2009; Id., *La roca de Patmos*, prologue by A. Barrio, Letras Cubanas, La Habana 2010; Id., *La palabra de Zarathustra*, prologue by M. Hernández Ureña, edited by M. D. Mena, Carro de Heno, Santo Domingo 2013; Id., *La crisis del patriotismo. Una teoría de las migraciones*, Cielo Naranja, Santo Domingo 2014.

⁹ A. Lamar, *Biología de la democracia. Ensayo de sociología americana*, introduction, corrections and critical annotations by A. Velázquez Callejas, Ediciones Exodus, Miami 2017.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

inspiration for a new Cuban conservatism, from part of the Cuban-American community.

Even in Cuba, despite a generally negative opinion, he has been now recognised as a conservative author of foremost relevance, as proved by a monographic issue dedicated to his works and thoughts¹¹, as well as the inclusion in an anthology of contemporary Cuban philosophy¹²

2.1.1 LIFE AND WORKS

Alberto Lamar Schweyer was born in Matanzas on 6th July 1902, as the second and last son of Guillermo Lamar Lavalette and Isabel Schweyer Hernández. Both parents were great-grandchildren of Luis de Lamar y Govín (born 1753 in Havana), whose grandfather Blaise Lamar had been Capitaine des milices and military governor of Bordeaux in 1710. His father was part of the French colony in Matanzas, whereas his mother was granddaughter of Wilhelm Schweyer, born in Hamburg, and sister of the Colonel of the Army of Liberation and later Under Secretary of Agriculture, Guillermo Schweyer Hernández. He was probably named after his maternal great-uncle, also Colonel of the Army of Liberation¹³.

After a few years, his family moved to Camagüey, where he attended the primary school at the Pious School of the Scolopi Fathers, and then to Havana, where he obtained the bachillerate at the De La Salle College. Then, he began studying Arts and Law at the University of Havana, but soon dropped out in favour of journalism.

2.1.1.1 Early activities

In fact, he had already precociously undertaken this road, having written for "*El Heraldo Cubano*" in 1918, at the age of sixteen. The next year, he published his first work, the conference "*Amado Nervo*"¹⁴, dedicated to the recently-deceased

11 "*Matanzas. Revista Artística y Literaria*", n. 111, 2010: essays by Adis Barrio Tosar, Leidiecis Cruz, Alina López Hernández and Leymen Pérez.

12 Miguel Rojas Gómez, "*Alberto Lamar Schweyer*", op. cit.

13 Francisco Xavier de Santa Cruz y Mallen, *Historia de Familias Cubanas*, t. ii, Editorial Hércules, La Habana 1940, "*Lamar*"; Guillermo Jiménez Soler, *Los propietarios de Cuba*, 4. ed., Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana 2014, "*Lamar Roura, Justo*".

14 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Amado Nervo. Conferencia*, Imp. López Prado y Fernández, La Habana 1918.

pseudonymous Mexican modernist poet Juan Crisóstomo Ruiz de Nervo y Ordaz (1870 – 1919). It was followed by “René López” (1920)¹⁵, regarding the Cuban *poète maudit* René Fernández López (1881 – 1909)¹⁶, and “Los contemporáneos” (1921)¹⁷.

By 1920, he had started attending the literary meetings informally held at the Café Martí by the young writers and intellectuals who were later to form the Minorist Group (*Grupo Minorista*)¹⁸. He met, among the others, Rubén Martínez Villena, Juan Marinello, Jorge Mañach, and especially José Antonio Fernández de Castro, who worked in the magazine “El Fígaro” and introduced the young Lamar to it. He collaborated to this review from 1921 to 1929, contributing with thirty-five articles. There he printed his fourth book “*Las rutas paralelas*” (1922)¹⁹, which, though probably published at his own expenses, boasted a prologue by the authoritative pedagogue and politician Enrique José Varona. The fifth, as well, “*La palabra de Zarathustra*” (1923)²⁰, introducing Nietzsche’s thought to Cuba, was prefaced by the Dominican writer Maximiliano Adolfo Henríquez Ureña and reviewed by Varona²¹.

As for his character, sources and witnesses confirm his dislike towards criticism and an aloof attitude, which appeared in his writings²², despite his friend Fernando Carr Parruas wrote about him that²³:

[...] procedía de una familia rica, era de porte distinguido, en lo personal, agradable, simpático; amigo de estar

- 15 Id., *René López*, Imp. Sociedad Tipográfica Cubana, La Habana 1918.
- 16 Cfr. Leonardo Depestre Catony, *René López, soñador de versos y melancolías*, in “*La Jiribilla. Revista de Cultura Cubana*”, vol. 12, n. 799, 29 October-4 November 2016.
- 17 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Los contemporáneos. Ensayos sobre literatura cubana del siglo*, Imp. Los Rayos X, La Habana 1921.
- 18 Cfr. Miguel Rojas Gómez, *El Grupo Minorista y su ideal socio-filosófico*, in P. Guadarrama González – M. Rojas Gómez, *El pensamiento filosófico en Cuba en el siglo XX. 1900-1960*, op. cit., pp. 88-97.
- 19 Id., *Las rutas paralelas. Crítica y filosofía*, Imp. El Fígaro, La Habana 1922.
- 20 Id., *La palabra de Zarathustra. Federico Nietzsche y su influencia en el espíritu latino*, Imp. El Fígaro, La Habana 1923.
- 21 Enrique José Varona, “*Resucita Zarathustra*”, in “*El Fígaro*”, La Habana, vol. 41, n. 3, 20th January 1924, p. 42.
- 22 Cfr. A. Lamar, *El aspecto bifronte de la vida. Una aclaración a mis críticos.*, 1924, quoted by A. Barrio in “*Matanzas. Revista Artística y Literaria*”, n. 111, 2010.
- 23 Quoted in A. Alonso, *Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, op. cit., p. 5.

haciendo afilados chistes a costa de otros.

Probably around this age, he got married with Rosa de la Fuente y de la Fuente, daughter of Alfredo de la Fuente y Quinones, General Consul of Peru in Havana.

However, in this period, he began also working with other periodicals: "*Social*" (1921-27), "*Cuba Contemporánea*" (1922), "*El Mundo*" (1922-23). He even became editor-in-chief of "*Smart*" (1922), and one of the six editors of the "*Revista Parlamentaria Cubana*". His political engagement climaxed with his participation to the Protest of the Thirteen ("Protesta de los Treces") on 18th March 1923, when he was one of the signatories of the Manifiesto (fourth in order after Martínez Villena, Fernández de Castro and Lizaso). Henceforth, he took part in the activities of the Minorist Group, starting with the short-lived *Falange de Acción Cubana* (founded on 1st April 1923), and including being an editor of Rúben Martínez Villena's anti-imperialist publication "*Venezuela Libre*" (1925).

2.1.1.2 *The Machadato*

Lamar's first cooperation with President Gerardo Machado dates back to 1924, when the latter had acquired the newspaper "*El Sol*" to support his presidential campaign, and the former wrote ten articles, becoming vice director of the journal. However, only in 1927 he entered in conflict with the other Minorists, breaking with the group. This occurred when he published in the review "*El Fígaro*", on 6th February, a chapter of his latest book "*Biología de la democracia*", published later in the same year²⁴. Due to its contents, which provided justification for Machado's authoritarian leadership, the editorial board of the review "*Social*", in the May issue, published a note criticising his essay. He answered with a letter to the fellow Minorist Ramón Vasconcelos²⁵, distancing himself from the Minorist group:

[. . .] yo no soy "minorista". Creo en las minorías de selección pero no en los sabáticos²⁶. Ya el minorismo no existe. Es un nombre y nada más. [. . .] Marx decía yo no soy marxista. Yo, como él grito no soy minorista.

24 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Biología de la democracia. Ensayo de sociología americana*, Editorial Minerva, La Habana 1927.

25 "*El País*" (La Habana), 4th May 1927.

26 Here referring to the usual Saturday lunches among fellow intellectuals.

Furthermore, he harshly attacked one of the editors, his friend Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring:

el costumbrista [...] Habla siempre “en nombre de la minoría” pero esa minoría ya no se encuentra en ninguna parte. Emilito es un *souteneur* del comunismo y del ingenio de los demás. Como se convenció que no podía imitar a Larra, ahora imita a Pitigrelí²⁷.

The day after, Roig sent a letter to two friends, the journalists Ruy de Lugo Viña and Octavio Seigle, asking them to act as intermediaries to obtain either a public retreat or reparation through duel. On the 6th May, Lamar answered that it had never been his intention to offend Roig, to whom he had been joined by «lazos de compañerismo y amistad»²⁸. However, the episode spurred Roig and other Minorists on writing a Declaration (7th May 1927), which proclaimed the leftist and anti-imperialist stance of their group²⁹.

Still, the book gained a wide reputation, reaping both interest and criticism abroad³⁰. Notwithstanding, the main answer to Lamar’s work, published in the same year, was another pamphlet, written by Roberto Agramonte y Pichardo, in just 20 days, “*La biología contra la democracia*”³¹. This work constituted not only a passionate, though acrimonious, rebuttal of Lamar’s theses, but it also tried to provide a solution to the problems he had raised, supporting the education of the masses and the rule of competent representatives of the different social functions.

These events facilitated the full identification of this writer with Machado’s cause. In 1929, he published another political pamphlet “*La crisis del patriotismo*”, dealing with the apparent lack of national spirit in Cuba³². He even sustained a debate with Juan Marinello who answered that the real

27 He means the Spanish writer Mariano José de Larra (1809 – 1837) and the Italian Jewish writer Dino Segre (1893 – 1975), known as Pitigrilli, who both were journalists.

28 Published in “*Social*”, vol. 12, n. 5 (La Habana, June 1927), p. 2.

29 Published in “*Carteles*”, La Habana, 22nd May 1927.

30 E.g. Alberto Edwards, *La Fronda Aristocrática. Historia Política de Chile*, Imprenta Nacional, Santiago de Chile 1928, preliminary note.

31 Roberto Agramonte y Pichardo, *La biología contra la democracia. Ensayo de solución colectiva. Nuevos hechos dentro del Estado han decretado la necesidad de revisar una vieja fórmula política*, Editorial Minerva, La Habana 1927.

32 A. Lamar Schweyer, *La crisis del patriotismo. Una teoría de las inmigraciones*, Editorial Martí, La Habana 1929.

problems of Cuban nationhood laid in foreign imperialism and economic oppression³³. The year after, he published the decadent novel "*La roca de Patmos*", whose contents caused strong reactions, due to accusations of immorality.³⁴ Being the most important *machadista* intellectual, he had become a key figure in the regime, serving as press secretary for the dictator and conducting diplomatic missions.

2.1.1.3 *Last years*

As a consequence, by the time of Machado's fall, Lamar's fate was tightly tied to the dictator's, that he followed him in exile on 12th August 1933. He seemingly shared his peregrinations in exile, from Bahamas via Bermuda to Montreal (26th August), then again via Bermuda (11th November) to Ciudad Trujillo (18th November), New York (1934), and later again (1935) Ciudad Trujillo and Paris³⁵. In February 1936, he travelled back to Cuba, via Bermuda, but he was arrested and expelled, his luggage confiscated³⁶. Soon after, the Cuban government forbade the publication and circulation of any printed work defending former President Machado³⁷. This was not a coincidence, since Lamar had already published in Madrid a pamphlet telling his version of the 1933 Revolution, especially dealing with the U.S. influence of the events³⁸.

Notwithstanding, he kept going on writing. While in Paris, he received, edited and published the memoirs of the Spanish Princess Eulalia de Borbón, Isabel II's younger daughter³⁹. He plausibly was admitted again in Cuba in 1937, under Batista's protection. This would be confirmed by

- 33 J. Marinello, *El dedo en la llaga*, in "*El País*" (La Habana), 12th July 1931.
- 34 Id., *La roca de Patmos*, Carasa, La Habana 1932.
- 35 Cfr. Fritz Berggren, *Machado: An Historical Reinterpretation*, PhD thesis, University of Miami, 2001
- 36 H. Freeman Matthews to Secretary of State, 19th February 1936, Havana, 837.001 M 18/179 LH.
- 37 H. Freeman Matthews to Secretary of State, 5th March 1936, Havana, 837.001 M 18/182.
- 38 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Cómo cayó el presidente Machado, una página oscura de la diplomacia norteamericana*, Editorial Espasa-Calpe, Madrid 1934.
- 39 Id. (ed.), *Memoires de S.A.R. l'Infante Eulalie*, Chez Plon, Paris 1935; translated in English as *Memoirs of Her Royal Highness The Infanta Eulalia*, Hutchinson, London 1936 and *Memoirs of a Spanish Princess*, W. W. Norton Ex Company Inc., New York 1937; but only posthumously in Spanish, as *Memorias de Doña Eulalia de Borbón, Infanta de España*, Ediciones Juventud, Barcelona 1958

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the fact that his second novel "*Vendaval en los cañaverales*"⁴⁰, dealing with social issues, was prefaced by the Chief of the National Police Salvador Díaz Versón. Moreover, he was finally able to publish in Cuba his apology of Machado⁴¹.

His friend Enrique Labrador Ruiz recounts⁴² as his reinsertion in Cuban society was difficult and painful, but ultimately successful. His last book, "*Francia en la trinchera*"⁴³ consisted with a collection of articles written in France, during the *drôle de guerre* preceding the German invasion. He died a few years after, on 12th August 1942, in Havana, where he directed the evening edition of "*El País*", newspaper belonging to the billionaire Alfredo Hornedo.

40 Id. (ed.), *Vendaval en los cañaverales*, Tipografía La Universal, La Habana 1937.

41 Id., *Cómo cayó el presidente Machado, una página oscura de la diplomacia norteamericana*, 2nd Ed., Montalvo Cardenas, La Habana 1938; also in English: Id., *How President Machado Fell*, Montalvo Cardenas, La Habana 1938.

42 E. Labrador Ruiz, *El pan de los muertos*, Universidad Central de las Villas, Santa Clara 1958.

43 Id., *Francia en la trinchera*, Tipografía La Universal, Cárdenas 1940.

2.1.2 DECADENCE, MODERNISM AND
AUTHORITARIANISM

Alberto Lamar Schweyer's biography clearly identifies him as the leading intellectual of the Cuban Right in the first third of the twentieth century. In fact, his role as Machado's secretary and apologete is not the only factor in support of this thesis. The reasons behind this choice are deeply ingrained not only in his political thought, but in his very cultural mood. Sociology and literature, philosophy and life should therefore be taken into consideration jointly, to fully understand and explain this figure.

Being a son of the affluent creole bourgeoisie, with French and German ancestry, Lamar regarded himself as authentically Cuban and American, but at the same time he was influenced by European culture. He had a special relationship with France, but he also knew Italian and German authors, without neglecting the latest trends of Latin American cultural sphere. As he wrote in the Interwar period, he fully shared the atmosphere of *Kulturpessimismus*, which saturated Europe at that time. Whereas European countries faced the postwar crisis, Latin American elites became shockingly aware of their subordination and loss of power in front of United States imperialism and hegemony. This crisis of Modernity expressed itself artistically in the apparent contrast among Modernism and Decadence, who would contribute to the aestheticisation of politics, that is so typical of fascism.

In fact, Lamar's literary interests and works can be ascribed to Modernism, a wide cultural movement, whose members often shared a fascination for totalitarian or authoritarian politics, but he also showed interest for Decadent authors. Thus, Rafael Rojas correctly remarks.⁴⁴:

Lamar, al igual que Gastón Baquero, José Lezama Lima, José María Chacón y Calvo y tantos otros intelectuales republicanos, admiraba a escritores franceses con simpatías fascistas como Celine y Claudel, quienes, en buena medida, incentivaron su trunca aproximación a una derecha católica moderna

From the philosophical point of view, he was influenced by Nietzsche, as well as Neo-Positivist thought. This led him

44 Rafael Rojas, *Tres sabios olvidados*, op. cit.

to a sociology based on distrust of masses and democracy and support for elitism and dictatorship. Despite being a common position among Western bourgeoisie of that age, Lamar is the most representative Cuban author in this regard.

2.1.2.1 Literature

Lamar's first works already show a strong interest towards the literary trends of his times. His third book, "*Los contemporáneos*", published in July 1921, opens with a chapter on «the Modernist evolution»⁴⁵. According to the young critic, literary Modernism is not a proper school, but a general trend of its times, arising from the exhaustion of the Romanticism and the Realism⁴⁶:

Esta tendencia no es como muchos creen una escuela, será si quiere una orientación, una reunión de escuelas distintas [. . .] del decadentismo, el simbolismo, el parnasianismo y la escuela romana. Escuelas que teniendo bases y orientaciones distintas, tienen un mismo fin en el campo literario: la libertad en la idea y la expresión.

In fact, he detects four major Modernist poets in Latin America, followed by a flourishing of minor authors: the Nicaraguan Ruben Darío (1867 – 1916), the Mexican Manuel Gutiérrez Najera (1859 – 1895), and the Cuban Julián del Casal (1863 – 1893) and José Martí (1853 – 1895). As he speaks about the different tendencies and evolutions of Modernism, he briefly discusses two important literary forerunners of the Italian Fascism: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876 – 1944) and Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863 – 1938).

Regarding the former, he credits him with the birth of the "social poetry", expressing the ideas of whole classes and shifting its object from the rare and exotic to the common and vulgar, appreciating its «sano optimismo, fecundo en ideas puras y elevadas»⁴⁷. However, later in the same year, he conducts a stronger critique of Marinetti's Futurism, asserting that it does not constitute a real break, but it remains consistent with the Modern age, whose it is offspring, just as other Modernist schools and trends. Futurist dynamism

45 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Los contemporáneos*, op. cit., pp. 9-23.

46 Ibidem, p. 11

47 Ibidem, p. 17

does not promote new changes, but it is just a reflection of the changes taking already place in the society⁴⁸:

No será, ciertamente, la que sueña Marinetti, el loco de Milán; no será la poesía del movimiento, de las revoluciones, la poesía convulsiva. . . Será una poesía menos emotiva que la hasta hora han practicado clásicos, románticos y modernistas, habrá en ella una gran dosis de optimismo y mucha reflexión. La poesía "social" nacida con la muerte del decadentismo es un gran paso de avance. *En la poesía futura hablarán las grandes masas*; el sentimiento, más que personal, como en la poesía decadente, será colectivo, pues reflejará las aspiraciones de toda una clase.

In sum of all, despite recognising the optimistic and collectivist nature of Futurist poetry, he judges it not to be part of the future, but of the present, since it is still too subjective and emotional.

In a similar way, he classifies D'Annunzio as the foremost example of "Neopaganism", being «un glorificador de la vida, un discípulo de Epicuro»⁴⁹, who, following Nietzsche's philosophy, deems life to be beautiful in itself. However, according to Lamar, all these schools have been recently made obsolete by a new ultra-modernist tendency, arisen in France during the Great War. This new style «hay que ser sencillo [. . .]. Hay, pues, que volver a la naturaleza.»⁵⁰. Therefore, poets have to change, too, as he states closing the chapter with a quote by D'Annunzio: «"¡O rinovarse o morire!" (sic)»⁵¹.

D'Annunzio's influence is most evident in Lamar's first novel, "La Roca de Patmos", whose main character, Marcelo Pimentel, is a true heir of D'Annunzio's characters, such as Andrea Sperelli. He is a bored young man of the upper class, feeling not at ease in his environment, qualified as⁵²

sociedad advenediza, llena de orgullos necios, incapaz de realizar su papel de aristocracia, sin más patrón que el oro

48 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Los fundamentos lógicos del Futurismo*, in "El Fígaro", La Habana, 2nd October 1921, p. 480.

49 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Los contemporáneos*, op. cit., p. 19

50 Ibidem, p. 23

51 The exact quote «O rinnovarsi o morire!» comes from the preface to the novel *Giovanni Episcopo* (Pierro, Napoli 1892).

52 A. Lamar, *La Roca de Patmos*, op. cit.

He is also aware of living in a time of crisis, belonging to the “wrong” generation⁵³:

La juventud que nació en la República ha sido una juventud perdida, porque llegó demasiado tarde para ser heroica y demasiado pronto para ser cívica. [. . .] Pero si aquí no pensamos más que en el placer y en estilizar la sensualidad.

Then, Pimentel practices a «catecismo yoísta», mostly based on sensual pleasures. Its love triangle with Adriana and Lucrecia, whom he would respectively hold as a bride and as a lover is definitely reminiscent of “*Il Piacere*”.

It is therefore with reason that Adis Barrio, in her prologue to the second edition⁵⁴ speaks of:

un pensamiento decadente y cosmopolita que va dejando atrás las preocupaciones cívicas para poner en su lugar el nihilismo y los mitos donde anclar el pasado.

However, this already appeared clearly to his contemporaries, such as Jorge Mañach, who wrote in his review about⁵⁵

una actitud carente de ilusión y de criterio valorador frente a la vida, [. . .] la novela del derrotismo cubano.

These literary themes, so typical of his times, constitute the premise for this philosophical and political thought.

Even in the second novel⁵⁶, the main character Gonzalo Maret is a wealthy Cuban physician, who conducts a lavish lifestyle in the Côte d’Azur. When he comes back to Cuba, in 1933, he becomes involved in the meagre life of the sugar cane workers, described in realistic details. As the peasants are persuaded by a Communist agitator to strike against the owners and the government, Maret, who had never engaged in politics or society, decides to identify with their cause, but ends up losing his life.

The novel, according to the literary critic Alberto Garrandés, shows⁵⁷:

53 Ibidem

54 A. Lamar, *La Roca de Patmos*, 2010, op. cit.

55 Ibidem.

56 A. Lamar, *Vendaval en los cañaverales*, op. cit.

57 Alberto Garrandés, *La tendencia criollista: L. F. Rodríguez y otros autores*, in Enrique Saíenz (ed.), *Historia de la literatura cubana. La literatura cubana entre 1899 y 1958. La República*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, La Habana 2003, t. II, p. 534.

el punto de vista burgués escéptico ante la violencia de los reclamos de justicia.

In other words, the contrast among the bourgeoisie between the “unhappy consciousness” and skepticism or nihilism.

2.1.2.2 *Philosophy*

The same influence can be traced in Lamar’s philosophical works, which actually grow out of his literary interests, as proved by “*Las rutas paralelas*”, where both subjects are covered. The next book⁵⁸, dealing with Nietzsche’s philosophy and its reception in Latin countries, speaks at length about D’Annunzio, who also was a strong admirer of the German philosopher. The Italian poet gets recognition both as the “philosopher of egoism” and for having made real his political utopy in Fiume.

At the same time, he unsurprisingly mentions the French authors Henri-Louis Bergson (1859 – 1941) and Charles-Marie Gustave Le Bon (1841 – 1931). The former is most famed for his Vitalist and anti-Positivist theory of the *élan vitale*⁵⁹, while the latter for his sociological writings on the psychology of the masses⁶⁰ and the means to manipulate them, but both had an influence on Mussolini.

In his book, Lamar presents Nietzsche as the most important contemporary philosopher⁶¹:

Si exceptuamos a Emmanuel Kant, ningún filósofo antiguo o moderno, puede competir con Federico Nietzsche, en cuanto a comentario se refiere.

Moreover, he establishes that his philosophy has a primarily ethical focus⁶²:

Cada día más, se hablará, se comentará y se imitará la revolución ética que fijó Nietzsche en *Zaratustra* y en *Más allá del bien y del mal*. [. . .] fuera de la ética en que hay un sello de personalidad indiscutible, Nietzsche no aporta nada nuevo a la filosofía.

58 A. Lamar, *La palabra de Zaratustra*, op. cit.

59 H. Bergson, *L’Évolution créatrice*, Félix Alcan, Paris 1907.

60 G. Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, Félix Alcan, Paris 1895.

61 A. Lamar, *La palabra de Zaratustra*, op. cit., p. 11.

62 Ibidem, pp. 13-14.

the German philosopher had a great posthumous effect especially in a time of pessimism, crisis and reaction against Christianity and Positivism, as expressed by various authors, such as Max Scheler (1874 – 1928) and Leopold Ziegler (1881 – 1958). The Great War represents then the triumph of Nietzschean morality, in its cult of the superior men and of struggle, relativism and amorality, including the less edifying events, such as German war crimes.

Nevertheless – Lamar insists –, Nietzschean philosophy is fundamentally optimistic in his outline, as the purpose of creating new values is always achieving happiness, so that this goal guides the actions and the works of the *Übermensch*, that is “saying ‘yes’ to life”. In fact⁶³:

«Al optimismo y todos los medios de conseguirlo, tiende la obra de Nietzsche. Su moral es la persecución de un ideal humano: alcanzar la máxima felicidad en la vida.»

For this reason, he feels that, despite his strong impact on German society and culture, Nietzsche’s thought is essentially more suited to Latin spirit, for his style and themes⁶⁴:

«Creó una filosofía de la vida, inclinación que se nota en la mayoría de los filósofos latinos.»

Moreover, as Lamar acutely notices⁶⁵, Nietzsche’s formation was more influenced by French authors⁶⁶:

«[. . .] el espíritu de Nietzsche tiene más de latino que de germano. De origen eslavo, educóse el filósofo en contacto continuo con el espíritu francés.»

At the same time, French culture, then hegemonic among Latin countries, had an important role in the formation of Latin American elites, especially for those sectors of the bourgeoisie, who stayed apart from strict Spanish Catholicism and “vulgar” Anglo-Saxon pragmatism⁶⁷:

De ahí que los destinos de Francia se vinculen a nuestro destino y que América siga, a través de sus hombres de

63 A. Lamar, *La palabra de Zarathustra*, op. cit., prol.

64 Ibidem

65 Cfr. Giuliano Campioni, *Les lectures françaises de Nietzsche*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2001.

66 A. Lamar, *La palabra de Zarathustra*, op. cit., prol.

67 Ibidem, pp. 6-7

pensamiento [. . .]. Francia ha estado siempre vinculada al espíritu americano. A París iban a educarse los criollos privilegiados, cuando todavía el régimen borbónico mantenía todos sus fueros.

In this sense, Lamar actually proposes Nietzsche as a teacher and inspirator for the Latin American elites in the creation of new values for the masses. Religion itself is to be reduced to an *instrumentum regni*, rather than a mean for the weak to enslave the strong⁶⁸:

El cristianismo, el catolicismo más exactamente, es necesario en toda sociedad preparada al advenimiento de hombres superiores que la justifiquen. A él le corresponde orientar la vida moral de las agrupaciones, dictarles sus deberes y sus obligaciones, mientras el grupo superior, muy reducido, interpreta y actúa de acuerdo con sus intereses y siguiendo lo que el instinto dicta a la personalidad.

This specific egoism, proper of the superior men, would be the «base de todo progreso»⁶⁹ for the future.

In the epilogue, later published on a Chilean student review⁷⁰, the Cuban thinker then proceed to sketch the “philosophy of the future”, suggesting that from the crisis of the Positivist thought a new metaphysics, born from experience, will arise to investigate those fields, left alone by the positive scientists. This is interesting for what concerns his later approach to sociology, which shows a complex outlook, mixing rationalist (Neo-Positivism, Social Darwinism) and irrationalist (Cultural Pessimism, Skepticism) viewpoints.

In fact, the other important inspiration in Lamar’s complex thought, other than Nietzsche, is without doubt Charles Darwin⁷¹. More specifically, the Cuban writer shares the biologization of culture supported by many sociologists of this age, though always with a Vitalist approach, as exemplified by his conception of nation⁷²:

68 Ibidem, p. 114.

69 Ibidem, p. 41.

70 A. Lamar, *La filosofía del porvenir*, in “Claridad”, vol. 4, n. 111 (1923).

71 Cfr. Pedro M. Pruna, *La recepción de las ideas de Darwin en Cuba durante el siglo XIX*, in *Por Darwin. En el centenario de su muerte 1882-1982*, Editorial Científico-Técnica, La Habana 1985, pp. 5-33.

72 A. Lamar, *Al margen del monismo*, in Id., *Las rutas paralelas*, op. cit., pp. 186-187.

Se puede asegurar que existe un alma de las muchedumbres [...] y por esa misma razón algunos sociólogos [...] conceden a las naciones una individualidad formal resultante del espíritu de sus miembros.

In sum of all, the key to understand his social thought is correctly individuated and resumed by Miguel Rojas⁷³:

Con este *determinismo ético-abstracto* y vitalista intentó explicar la sociedad, llegando a marginar el factor económico y los intereses políticos de los grupos y clases sociales en relación con la época contemporánea, al ceñir esta a los ideales señalados.

On the other hand, Lamar's conception of human history and society, based on the clash between life forces of individuals and groups, where the stronger come to dominate the weaker, is not pessimistic as it would seem. His idealism and voluntarism bring him to give an optimistic interpretation of Nietzsche. Though will to power, Latin America, led by European-descended elites, ruling with iron fist, would be able to offset the current domination of Anglo-Germanic nations.

2.1.2.3 *Politics*

In the light of his worldview, Alberto Lamar Schweyer's decision to support Machado, though often perceived as a treason, was in fact coherent with his ideas. Not by chance, the scholar Alina López admits⁷⁴:

[...] la notable coherencia de un pensamiento, quien lo duda, profundamente conservador, pero muy lineal en las principales aristas conceptuales que profundizará en el futuro.

Its conservative and authoritarian outline was already evident from his early writings, where he opposed women's suffrage⁷⁵:

[...] hay algo más que oponer al feminismo en nuestra raza. La mujer latina, amante del hogar, de la paz doméstica, despreocupada de la política, no desea el voto.

73 M. Rojas, *Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

74 A. López, *Moviendo la izquierda desde la derecha.*, op. cit., p. 4.

75 A. Lamar, *El sufragio femenino*, in Id., *Las rutas paralelas*, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

Nevertheless, it is most important his elitism, as it can be seen in his critique to Carlos Loveira's novel *Generales y doctores*⁷⁶, whom accuse of being too harsh with Cuban upper classes⁷⁷.

Compartiendo las teorías del socialismo imperante, su pluma es cruda y amarga al criticar los defectos de las clases elevadas y directoras.

In another instance, in 1923, in the very same period in which he took part in the political activities of the Minorist group, he had praised Mussolini⁷⁸:

Hablan mas los hechos. Italia se doblega ante la voluntad de Mussolini, restaurador de la tiranía. Gracias a ello salvase del fracaso nacional.

Hence, it comes his *opus magnum*⁷⁹ which describes at length his sociological positions, justifying his support of the dictatorship. He had a recent example in the book "*Cesarismo democrático*"⁸⁰, written by Laureano Vallenilla Linz (1870 – 1936), the most prominent Venezuelan Positivist, to defend the dictatorship of President Juan Vicente Gómez. This author argues that in absence of an educated and politically conscious people, an authoritarian ruler is necessary to keep order and stability, and modernize the country.

A similar thesis is expressed by Lamar in his book, who was defined by Ana Cairo as⁸¹:

una de las obras más reaccionarias del período neocolonial republicano.

Lamar borrows Spengler's philosophy of history⁸² to describe the situation of Latin America. He regards it as a clear case of pseudomorphosis, in which the young Latin American *Kultur* assumes the trappings of aging European

76 C. Loveira, *Generales y doctores*, Sociedad Editorial Cuba Contemporánea, La Habana 1920

77 A. Lamar, *Al margen de mis contemporáneos*, ibidem, p. 111.

78 A. Lamar, *La palabra de Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 65

79 A. Lamar Schweyer, *Biología de la democracia*, op. cit.

80 L. Vallenilla, *Cesarismo democrático. Estudio sobre las bases sociológicas de la constitución efectiva de Venezuela*, 1. ed., Empresa El Cojo, Caracas 1919.

81 A. Cairo, *El grupo minorista y su tiempo*, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana 1978.

82 O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, C. H. Beck, München 1918-1922.

faustian *Zivilisation*. The colonialist legacy of Spanish absolutism and mysticism has favoured widespread ignorance, whereas most independentist figures, such as Bolívar and Martí, still were European types.

On the other hand, he underscores how Latin American peoples constitute a racial mixture of White, Black and Amerindian peoples, but he regards this as a factor of disunion and disorder, in accordance with Henry Spencer⁸³ and contrarily to Vasconcelos's theory of the *Raza Cósmica*⁸⁴. Miscegenation produces inferior races⁸⁵:

Experimentalmente es realizable la comprobación de que las razas impuras tienden más que a la perfección espiritual a la imperfección.

Since these biological conditions have immediate cultural consequences, they form the bases for social problems. Anarchy and sensualism have therefore favoured the lack of a political conscience, which brought to artificial States led by *caudillos*, with severe constitutional and political problems. In this context, there is no real place for liberty and democracy, as intended in the European countries⁸⁶:

La democracia es una palabra sin sentido, que deriva en una demagogia trascendente[. . .] La libertad es un sueño irrealizable dentro del espíritu de desorden.

An authoritarian rule («*paliativo crónico del desorden*»⁸⁷), based on plebiscitarian vote («*El deber de votar por el caudillo*»⁸⁸), is necessary to ensure that chaos and instability are overcome and development can ensue. In Lamar's words⁸⁹:

Solo el dominio de un hombre por la sugestión o el terror puede dotar de relativa unidad a estos grupos históricamente desorganizados y biológicamente anárquicos, anulando en ellos todo principio de libre determinación y toda facultad de discusión.

This model represents a «*nueva teoría del estado*»⁹⁰ valid not

83 H. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Williams and Norgate, London 1874–1875.

84 J. Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cósmica. Misión de la raza iberoamericana. Notas de viajes a la América del Sur*, Agencia Mundial de Librería, Madrid 1925.

85 A. Lamar, *Biología de la democracia*, op. cit., p. 98.

86 Ibidem, pp. 60–61.

87 Ibidem, p. 95.

88 Ibidem, p. 129.

89 Ibidem, p. 68.

90 Ibidem, p. 126.

only for Cuba but for all Latin American⁹¹.

La dictadura aun y cuando se convierta en bárbara tiranía, va a ser en determinados momentos un mal necesario. Ella ofrecerá a los *estados-conceptos* una organización fundamental que, inspirada en la fuerza, dará el punto de partida en la evolución política.

As it has been hinted at before, this political evolution would consist in strengthening the nation from a biological and a moral point of view.

In spite of the strong criticism, such as Agramonte's mentioned work⁹², Lamar published another sociological text along these lines⁹³. In it, he assumes that in three decades of independence, a true national conscience still has to be formed, due to the historical and racial problems⁹⁴:

Nuestra crisis de sentimiento patriótico se sintetiza teniendo en cuenta los factores que han intervenido en la precipitación de la nacionalidad: corrientes hispanizantes, ausencia de raza autóctona con sentido territorial, inmigración del capital de una sola fuente y ausencia de responsabilidad en la conservación del territorio

Therefore, according to him⁹⁵:

[. . .] La República solo podía afianzarse en la breve tradición revolucionaria, puesto que nos falta tiempo para que cristalice una tradición nueva y el espíritu republicano ha claudicado con toda la secuela de males políticos a ello consecuente.

For this reason, it is necessary to create a new Cuban sentiment, that is a new Cuban moral – he argued, referring to Nietzsche's creation of values.

At the same time, Lamar, who a few year before had collaborated to the anti-imperialist review "Venezuela Libre", maintained a souverainist stance in matter of international politics even during the *Machadato*. Despite his position

91 Ibidem, p. 90.

92 R. Agramonte, *La biología contra la democracia*, op. cit.

93 A. Lamar, *La crisis del patriotismo*, op. cit.

94 Ibidem, p. 179.

95 Ibidem, p. 106.

being apart from left-wing anti-imperialism⁹⁶, due to his scarce interest for economics, he opposed the United States interference in the affairs of Cuba and other Latin American countries, in the name of nationalism and common Latin civilization. Aurelio Alonso relates two short but important quotes, dating to 1923⁹⁷:

Artículos como el titulado «Latinoamericanismo», en que afirma: «[...] nos debemos unir contra cualquier peligro, no contra un peligro, y esta debe ser la base del latinoamericanismo», y en otro dice «Hagamos de la América Latina una sola nación fuerte de ideas en la que el derecho por ser respetado pueda ser reclamado ante el mundo entero».

As he lacks faith in Latin American *mestizo* masses, Lamar's reactionary anti-imperialism leaves to the elites of the continent, whose rule is endangered by foreign imperialism, to defend their independence and autonomy.

This appears clearly in his memory about Machado's fall⁹⁸, which is mainly attributed to the actions of the United States envoy Sumner Welles, following the position espoused by the Cuban dictator. According to this book, after the failure of the Rio Verde Expedition organised by the moderates, the opposition to Machado was mostly composed by radical forces, such as the ABC, the DEU and the PCC, who practiced terrorism. Welles started visiting various opposition leaders in order to open a mediation with the government, aimed at establishing a transitional government. Whereas the President tried to bide his time in order to defend himself against foreign intervention, the radicals refused the mediation and organized strikes, with Welles' consent. At last, Roosevelt's conducted direct pressure on the Cuban ambassador and the military deposed Machado, in favour of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, regarded as weak and manipulable.

The 1933 Revolution is already discussed in chapter 3, but here is interesting to examine Lamar's arguments. He emphasizes Welles' role, deconstructing the revolutionary narrative into a regime change promoted by a foreign power.

96 Cfr. Mely del R. González Aróstegui, *La cultura de la resistencia en el pensamiento político de la intelectualidad cubana en las dos primeras décadas del siglo xx en Cuba*, PhD thesis, Universidad Central de Las Villas (Departamento de Filosofía), Santa Clara 2000.

97 A. Alonso, *Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, op. cit., p. 7.

98 A. Lamar, *Como cayó el Presidente Machado*, op. cit.

Surprisingly, the Communists are not so much reviled as one could expect, since most charges, such as racism, terrorism, pillage and killings, are levelled against the ABC. In fact – apart from Lamar’s personal aversion to ABC leader and intellectual Jorge Mañach⁹⁹ –, this party played an ambiguous role not only during the mediation, but also in later events, such as the Sergeants’ Revolt, as well as for his greenshirts parades, which would lead to accusations of fascism. His focus on the ABC, which enjoyed a bad reputation even among the left parties, is therefore aimed at bringing discredit on all the 1933 Revolution

This aversion towards mass movements lead us to Lamar’s last political reflections, which, though less known, are of capital relevance to understand his actual stance against fascism, which is far from being, as Alina López says a «paradoja inexplicable»¹⁰⁰. In the articles written in France during the so-called *drôle de guerre*, he advocates for the necessity of a dictatorship in order to face the fascist threat. He makes therefore the following differentiation between dictatorship and tyranny¹⁰¹:

[. . .] la dictadura no es un mal. La dictadura es el único sistema de gobierno en momentos de peligro nacional, cuando no se pueden perder horas en polémicas porque el enemigo toca a la puerta. Además, la dictadura es un régimen de circunstancias. Dura mientras se mantenga las condiciones que la determinaron. Cuando se prologan fuera de ellas y sin una razón que la justifique, la tiranía es su secuela. Y por tanto, degenerado el principio y prolongado lo que fue bueno como pasajero, se establece un orden que es solo apariencia, exterioridad, y principio de desorden, en lugar de ser continuidad de lo ordenado.

According to this distinction, Lamar could support Machado’s conservative dictatorship and still oppose Hitler’s fascist tyranny. Mussolini himself, which, in his first years of government (1922 – 1926) actually could be compared to the former, later became more akin to the latter, as his rule shifted from authoritarianism to totalitarianism.

99 Who had described him as «jocundo epígono de Nietzsche, absurdamente alto y con espejuelos de concha, como una “l” alemana, que lleva diéresis» (quoted in A. Alonso, *Alberto Lamar Schweyer*, op. cit., p. 5.)

100 A. López, *Moviendo la izquierda desde la derecha.*, op. cit., p. 9.

101 A. Lamar, *Francia en las trincheras*, op. cit., p. 24.

2.2

THE CUBAN LINDBERGH: AGUSTÍN PARLÁ

[. . .] siendo un hombre de vergüenza y dignidad deseo someterme al juicio de los que derramaron su sangre por nuestra libertad [. . .]

Agustín Parlá

Despite his importance in Cuban aviation, no monography has ever been devoted to Agustín Parlá Orduña. Whereas a few publications¹⁰² and websites¹⁰³ exist, they only speak about Parlá's role in the birth of Cuban aviation, with no reference to his political activities. However, the Fondo Agustín Parlá, preserved in the Instituto de Historia in Havana, conserves several unpublished documents related to his life.

2.2.1 LIFE AND ACTIONS

Agustín Parlá was born on 11th October 1887 in Cayo Hueso (Key West), being son of Agustín Parlá Salineros¹⁰⁴. His father raised funds for the Cuban Independence, contributing with his own money. He was a close friend of Fermín Valdés Domingués, whose second marriage, with Asunción Castillo y Camus (26th December 1898), took place in Parlá's house. At the same time, the young Agustín was examined by José Martí himself in the small school set up in Fernando Figueredo's house¹⁰⁵.

His family returned to Cuba after the Independence. Here, he assisted to the first aviation events in Cuba, such as André Bellot's (7th May 1910) and John Douglas McCurdy's (5th February 1911) flights over Havana. As he worked as an interpreter in the Hotel Perla de Cuba, in Havana, he could met the pilots Charles F. Walsh and John McCurdy, both members of the Curtiss Circus. They invited him to enter the

¹⁰² Tomás Terry y García Montes, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba. Contribución a la Historia de la Aeronáutica y el Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, Ministerio de Comunicaciones, Museo Postal Cubano, La Habana 1971.

¹⁰³ *Aviación Cubana* (<http://www.geocities.ws/urrib2000/>); *The Early Birds of Aviation, Inc.* (<http://www.earlyaviators.com/>).

¹⁰⁴ T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 185.

¹⁰⁵ IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.1.5.

aviation career, sponsoring his efforts¹⁰⁶. In 1911, he visited the Curtiss School of Aviation at Hammondsport¹⁰⁷.

2.2.1.1 *Pioneer of Cuban Aviation*

On 2nd January 1912, Walsh carried him as a passenger, flying over Havana. The President of the Republic himself, General José Miguel Gómez, helped him to become the first Cuban aviator. In fact, while Major Arsenio Ortiz, later one of Machado's most feared henchmen, had matriculated before Parlá, he never concluded his training. On the other hand, Parlá entered the Curtiss School of Aviation of Miami, where, on 4th February, he conducted his first flight, under the direction of Charles C. Witner, who defined him «the best pupil in the group»¹⁰⁸. In March he conducted the first solo flight over Miami¹⁰⁹, until he finally graduated as pilot on 20th April¹¹⁰.

For this reason, he was decorated with a gold medal and a diploma by the City Council of Havana on 4th September, as the first Cuban aviator, and he was proposed for a future establishment of a Cuban air force section (4th November)¹¹¹. Thanks to the members of the Comité Acera del Louvre (Amigos de los Americanos)¹¹², a Circuito Parlá was constituted, selling 100 \$ subscriptions to raise the 5000 \$ necessary to the purchase of a Curtiss seaplane¹¹³.

With this plane, he concurred the next year in a competition to perform the first flight from Key West to Havana. The feat had already been attempted by James McCurdy on 31st January 1911, but he had to make a sea landing just in sight of destination¹¹⁴. The city council of Havana had offered 10,000 pesos for the winner and 5,000 for the runner up. It was actually won on 17th May 1913 by Domingo Rosillo del Toro, crossing with the help of three escort ships and landing in the Columbia encampment after 2 h 30' of flight with his

106 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 185.

107 "Chirp", 35 (April 1947).

108 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 187.

109 "Chirp", 35 (April 1947).

110 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 187.

111 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.1.18.

112 Including Pepe Strampes, Eugenio Leopoldo Azpiazo, Faustino de la Villa, Carlos Macía, Pepe Acosta.

113 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 187-188.

114 McCurdy's Crossing, in "Historic Wings", 31st January 2013.

Morane plane¹¹⁵.

As Parlá had to cancel the flight on the same day due to a breakout, he retried on the 19th, at 2.30 pm, with the only help of a compass. Before leaving, he informed the President Gómez with a cablegram:

«En el aniversario de la muerte de Martí partiré sin más auxilio que Dios, con la bandera del Apóstol, la cual llevaré a las costas cubanas o me sepultaré con ella en el golfo.»

Being diverted from the route, he landed after two hours in the bay of Mariel, west of Havana, having recognized his Fatherland, «by his palms», ¹¹⁶. When he arrived, he hoisted the flag he had brought, which had been used to receive Martí in West Tampa, on the town hall of Mariel¹¹⁷, then he left for the Capital by car¹¹⁸.

Since his plane had remained back in Mariel, to be repaired, he came back to the town on 20th July, and flew to Havana, landing from the north in the Caleta de San Lázaro. This was the first use of air mail in Cuba¹¹⁹, as well as the first flight between two Cuban provinces¹²⁰.

As a consequence of these feats, not only he was awarded the second prize, but also various other honours, such as a third medal by the City Council for the Mariel-Havana flight (6th August)¹²¹, a medal and cup by the city of Key West, a medal and a small obelisque in the central park by the city of Mariel, the 1913 Glenn Curtiss Medal for the best prowess in its aircraft and a medal by the Revolutionary Emigrés¹²². Finally, on the 5th July, he was enrolled, with the grade of Captain in the newborn Aviation Corps of the Republic of Cuba, and the next month was appointed Chief Instructor¹²³.

115 "Revista Sendas", II (1998), 10.

116 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 218.

117 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.5.1.1.5.

118 "Revista Sendas", II (1998), 10.

119 A letter by the Alcalde of Mariel to his homologue in Havana, General Freire de Andrade, and other letters sent by a local journalist. The addressee were Victor Muñoz, Rafael Conte, Camilo Pérez (editor of "La Discusión") and Marco Antonio Dolz, director of "La Noche".

120 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., pp. 201-202.

121 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.1.18.

122 Ibidem, 7.6.1.1.17.

123 Ruben Urribarres, *Birth of the Cuban Army Air Corp (1913-1924)*, in "Aviación Cubana".

The following year, gave other flight demonstrations in Marianao, Matanzas, Varadero, Cienfuegos¹²⁴, whose City Council awarded him¹²⁵, until he flew from Santiago to Havana, over the Sierra Maestra, on 20th May 1914¹²⁶.

After World War broke out, on 20th August 1916, he was sent by the Secretary of War, José Francisco Martí Zayas Bazán, to Curtiss in Buffalo (NY), to study the use and acquisition of seaplane¹²⁷. During his stay in the United States, he flight over the Niagara Falls, winning the John Lansing Callan Cup (24th September 1916. This feat was celebrated by Antonio M. Romeu's song "Parlá sobre el Niagara". In February 1917, he returned to offer his support to Menocal's government, against the Liberal revolt called the "*Chambelona*"¹²⁸.

Only on 14th September 1917, the Cuban government, having declared war on the Germany (7th April 1917) and Austria-Hungary (16th December 1917), finally decided to send a flight of volunteers to combat on the Western Front along with the Allies. The unit, called "Escuadrille Cubaine" was to be included in the French Army, in which the Cuban citizens Santiago Campuzano and Panchito Terry Sánchez had fought¹²⁹.

On 15th May, a law was passed to authorize the creation of a military school of aviation. Starting on 10th June, Parlá, together and the fellow aviator Jaime González Grocier conducted a serie of flights above the Cuban cities (Havana, then Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Camagüey) dropping leaflets encouraging to enlist. Nevertheless, on 12th August, Panchito Terry was preferred as commander of the unit, prompting Parlá to abandon the military.¹³⁰ At the end of the war (11th November), the Cuban flight was still training in Texas, and was then dissolved, with the men returning home in April 1919¹³¹.

The next year, the aviator pioneered the commercial flight in Cuba (20th May 1919), bringing to the United States a

124 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 188.

125 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.1.17.

126 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 188.

127 Jesús del Valle, *Capitán Agustín Parlá Orduña (1887-1946). La no emisión de un sello de correo fue una de las causas de su muerte*, in "*El Ojo del Aguja*", I, 6, 31st May 2007, p. 6.

128 Ibidem.

129 Ruben Urribarres, *Birth of the Cuban Army Air Corp (1913-1924)*, op. cit.

130 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 223.

131 Ruben Urribarres, *Birth of the Cuban Army Air Corp (1913-1924)*, op. cit.

cargo of Sapolio soap in the plane “*Sunshine*” (29th May). From the same aircraft, the journalist Adolfo Regreni took the first aerial photos of the Cuban capital (29th June). On 15th October, when the businessman Anibal Mesa founded the Compañía Aerea Cubana, he was initially appointed director, though he left after a few days. The company will close, after a few years¹³².

2.2.1.2 *Later life and death*

Afterwards, he mostly made a living in business, setting up the Lariot, Parlá & Co. (Avenida República 180), importing and selling wines and spirits from Spain, France and Portugal, along with Ernesto Lariot and F. Furado Cubas¹³³, though he retired on 12th December 1925, for health reasons¹³⁴. Starting from this period, he married four times and had several children, including Orlando Parlá Órtiz (born in 1920)¹³⁵, the famous ballerina Margarita Parlá, and José Agustín, born in the '30s, from the last wife.

Nevertheless, he still took part in aeronautical activities, such as the first night flight over Havana (7th May 1920)¹³⁶. This ensured that his popularity never really waned, as proved by Eladio Secades' icastic comparison made in occasion of Charles Lindbergh's visit to Havana¹³⁷:

«Parlá fue el Lindbergh de su hora.»

In 1928, he was again contacted to establish an air field and a school for civil aviation¹³⁸. In the same year, he worked as an Instructor for the Latin American Department of the Watson Airport Inc. School of Aviation in Cincinnati¹³⁹.

Things changed again in 1935, when he helped to organize the First International Air Train (14th-19th May)¹⁴⁰, and was consequently made General Airport Inspector, by Secretary of Communications Pelayo Cuervo on 1st July¹⁴¹. On 13th

132 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., pp. 229-232.

133 Ibidem, 7.2.2.19.

134 Ibidem, 7.4.1.1.

135 Ibidem, 7.1.2.2.1-8.

136 “*Bohemia*”, a. 38, n. 32 (11th August 1946), p. 45.

137 Eladio Secades, *¡Parlá!*, in “*El Mundo*”, 10th February 1928, p. 7.

138 “*La Nación*”, Madrid, 30th October 1928, p. 3.

139 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.1.18.

140 T. Terry, *El Correo Aéreo en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 189.

141 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.1.3.

December, he served as technical advisor for the First Miami-Havana International Air Race Competition, representing the Republic of Cuba in the official celebrations¹⁴². His conduct in this affair was praised by Batista (18th January)¹⁴³ and was probably the main cause for the award of the rank of Knight of the National Order of Merit Carlos Manuel de Céspedes (24th February 1936)¹⁴⁴.

In the same period, he received many other awards and decorations, such as his inclusion in the "Early Birds" (Pioneers of Aviations) in 1935, Wings of Honour of the Cuban Army Air Corps (19th May 1936) and the Cuban Navy Aviation (22th January 1937), a public praise by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State R. Walton Moore (May 1938)¹⁴⁵, a silver cup for the victory in a competition of the Curtiss Academy, Buffalo (8th January 1937)¹⁴⁶.

Parlá went on serving in that office for all the length of the first *Batistato*, conducting various missions abroad (France, Portugal, Spain, United States, Mexico, Venezuela)¹⁴⁷. Doubtlessly, he was proud of it and of his past feats, as he did not refrain from recurring to arms to defend his honour, such as in the pistol duel fought on 17th May 1938, against the journalist Jesús González Escarpeta ("*El Mundo*"), who had claimed that the pioneer of Cuban aviation was Domingo Rosillo¹⁴⁸.

He had already received accusations of fascism in 1943, due to his relationship with Francoist Spain, and this had probably impeded the emission of a celebrative stamp for the 25th anniversary of the Key West-Mariel flight. However, the situation precipitated in 1945, with Ramón Grau's Presidency. The new government, led by the Partido Auténtico had little sympathy for him. According to him, he had been mobbed by the new Minister and the Secretary Carlos Maristany, so that he quarreled with his superiors. On the other hand, in

142 Jesús del Valle, *Capitán Agustín Parlá Orduña (1887-1946)*, op. cit., p. 6.

143 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.4.1.15-16.

144 Ibidem, 7.6.1.1.4.

145 Ibidem, 7.6.1.1.17.

146 Ibidem, 7.6.1.1.18.

147 Cfr. further.

148 The duel was fought in a *finca* in Santa Maria del Rosario ("*Bohemia*", a. 38, n. 32 (11th August 1946), p. 46.) at 9.30 am. The seconds were José Caminero y Ruiz and Enrique Ramos Izquierdo for Parlá, and Guillermo de Piña Mata and José M. Muzaurieta y Jiménez for González, while the field judge was Prof. José M. Rivas (IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.1.1.4.1.)

their opinion, Parlá had totalitarian sympathies and did not comply with his duties¹⁴⁹.

Even though the aviator had called for an enquiry to clear him from these charges, he was removed from his office and transferred to the Minister of Agriculture, with the task of promoting the export of tobacco products. However, this was not regarded as satisfactory by Parlá, who felt that only a role in aeronautics could fulfil his expectancies. Moreover, in this period, he suffered grievous family problems: his son Orlando's suicide in 1944 and the divorce from his wife, who impeded him to see his younger son José Agustín¹⁵⁰.

Despite having already publicly expressed suicide proposals, he was not heeded¹⁵¹ until he finally acted. On 31st July, he was found dead in his room of Hotel Lafayette, where he lived after the divorce, having ingested a lethal dose of barbiturates. In his last letter¹⁵², he accused both his wife and Maristany for having pushed him to put an end to his life.

He also left instructions to his sisters Nena, Beba y Zoila for the viewing to be held in the house of the Revolutionary Émigrés, the portrait of Martí and Fermín Valdés, as well as the propeller and flag of the flight Key West-Mariel, was to be bequeathed to the President of the Revolutionary Emigrés José García Baylles; the burial to be paid for by the Centro Gallego and the eulogy to be spoken by the General Enrique Loynaz del Castillo¹⁵³. In spite of being a mason and a suicide, he received Catholic funerals and was buried in the Pantheon of Revolutionary Émigrés in the Colón Cemetery.

His legacy was celebrated with the emission of two stamps and four sheets in honour of his Key West-Mariel flight on 22th July 1952, followed by a dedicated stamp in the series for the 50th anniversary of the international air mail on 27th October 1977¹⁵⁴. In Key West airport, a statue was inaugurated on 4th July 1957.

149 *Ibidem*, 7.7.7.2.57.

150 *Ibidem*.

151 "*Bohemia*", a. 37, n. 20 (20th May 1945), p. 31.

152 "*Mañana*", 1st August 1946.

153 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.4.2.1-3.

154 Jesús del Valle, *Capitán Agustín Parlá Orduña (1887-1946)*, op. cit., p. 6-7.

2.2.2 CUBAN PATRIOTISM AND SPANISH NATIONALISM

Despite Agustín Parlá was not a politician, still he conducted social and political activity in the course of years. Moreover, the analysis of his career belies the accusations of fascism. In fact, it proves that his support for Spanish Nationalists was not contradictory with his Cuban patriotism, nor with his loyalty to democracy.

An important element is constituted by his adherence to Freemasonry, which was consequent not only to Martí's democratic nationalism, but also to his good relations with the United States. Though certainly not a progressive, it reinforced in him the liberal conservative values of freedom, democracy and patriotism, and allowed him to cultivate his political connections.

Then, in the '30s, he came to be associated with middle-class nationalism, such as the ABC Party and Fulgencio Batista, yet keeping in touch with Martí's heritage, through the Independence Veterans' Association, whose judgement he always referred to, when he needed to defend his patriotism. Therefore, in spite of being accused of harbouring totalitarian sympathies, his backing of Franco was more properly defined in terms of defence of liberty from Communist totalitarianism, rather than an actual affinity for fascist ideology.

2.2.2.1 *Freemasonry and Revolution*

The first associative activity undertaken by Agustín Parlá was Freemasonry, coherently with the tradition established by Cuban independentists in the previous century. On 30th July 1913, he entered the Logia "Juventud y Progreso", belonging to the Gran Logia de la Isla de Cuba (Scottish Rite), proceeding himself from the Gran Oriente Nacional de Cuba (same Rite)¹⁵⁵, and being recognized with his rank of Master Mason (3rd Degree) on 21st August¹⁵⁶.

He took part in the works of the Lodge, from Second Deacon, up to First Warden (1916-1919). He was especially active in 1915, when he participated in the Direction (January-May), campaigned for a steadier assistance (9th May), held a confer-

¹⁵⁵ IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.5.1.1.282.

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem, 7.5.1.1.275.

ence on military aviation (2nd June), visited sick, proposed a ban on smoking (23rd June) and acted as interpreter¹⁵⁷. He therefore achieved the rank of Sovereign Prince of Rose Croix, Knight of the Eagle and Pelican (18th degree), entering the Soberano Capítulo de Rosa Crux "Claudio J. Vermay" Número 14¹⁵⁸.

On 3rd April 1919, he retired from active status¹⁵⁹, and he was later (15th December 1920) made Worshipful Master, with right of seat in the East¹⁶⁰.

«Por su actuación en la Fraternidad Masónica y por los múltiples servicios prestados a la Logia, y en sesiones posteriores, por otros meritos de orden masónico»

He seems to have been in contact with the Lodge at least until the Thirties, as he was in possess of a Masonic Code published in 1931¹⁶¹.

His first political activities date back to the same period, when he engaged in the struggle against Machado. According to Pelayo Cuervo, he had given his availability to support the Rio Verde insurrection, airlifting Mendieta and Menocal with a plane, though the plan never realized¹⁶². Afterwards, he joined the ABC Party (1st October 1933), with the number 56606, remaining in the Party at least until 12th September 1934¹⁶³.

On 23rd July 1934, he resigned from the office of Fifth-Class Officer of the Civil Service Commission, but his resignation was repelled on 15th August by the Secretary of Government Pelayo Cuervo who instead praised¹⁶⁴:

«... su actuación clara y decidida durante las luchas revolucionarias.»

On his part, the aviator later sponsored Pelayo Cuervo's candidacy to Mayor of the Havana¹⁶⁵.

His good political relationships also included Cuba's strongman, Colonel Fulgencio Batista, who, on 18th January

157 Ibidem, 7.5.1.1.282.

158 Ibidem, 7.5.1.1.276-277.

159 Ibidem, 7.5.1.1.278.

160 Ibidem, 7.5.1.1.279.

161 Ibidem, 7.5.1.1.1-262.

162 Ibidem, 7.4.1.11-14.

163 Ibidem, 7.5.2.1.1.

164 Ibidem, 7.4.1.11-14.

165 Ibidem, 7.2.2.1-2.

1936, wrote, thanking him for having represented Cuban aviation in Miami and promising him his full support, due to his activity in favour of the country¹⁶⁶. In these years, Parlá contributed to networking with other Latin countries, entering in contact, among others, with the Chief of Police of Mexico City General Othón León Lobato¹⁶⁷ and the Venezuelan Minister of War (and later President) Isaías Medina Angarita¹⁶⁸.

2.2.2.2 *In defense of Nationalist Spain*

However, his most important mission took place in Europe in Summer 1937. First, he travelled to Paris, to attend the Universal Exposition (between 18th June and 16th July)¹⁶⁹ and the Maison Cuba, the institution founded by Marta Abreu for Cuban students at the Sorbonne (between 28th June and 10th July)¹⁷⁰. Then, he moved to Portugal.

This official visit, commended by the Secretary of Communications Melanio Díaz, was detailed in a report written to Batista, on 15th September, by Francisco de Arce, the Cuban chargé d'affaires in Portugal, who accompanied Parlá in his visits¹⁷¹. The aviator arrived in Lisboa on 31st July, by the German liner "Iberia", coming from France. In the first days, he was introduced to the President of the Republic Óscar Carmona, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and the General Secretary to Foreign Affairs Luis Teixeira de Sampayo¹⁷².

Subsequently, on 10th August, he visited the Military School of Aeronautics and the International Airport located in Granja do Marquês, near Sintra, being received by Commander Alfredo Cintra and Captain Eugenio Pires. On 26th August, he visited the Centre of Naval Air Force in Doca do Bom Suceso, near Lisboa, where he was received by Captain-Lieutenant José Cabral and the Flight Lieutenant Mario Noronha¹⁷³.

In this period, he also met the Spanish liberal-conservative historian and politician Gabriel Gamazo, Duke of Maura

166 Ibidem, 7.4.1.15-16.

167 Ibidem, 7.1.1.3.1.

168 Ibidem, 7.1.1.3.4.

169 Ibidem, 7.1.1.2.5-16.

170 Ibidem, 7.1.1.2.21-22.

171 Ibidem, 7.4.3.1-2.

172 Ibidem.

173 Ibidem.

(29th August 1937)¹⁷⁴, the Vice Admiral Luis Constantino Lima, former Chief of Navy General Staff¹⁷⁵, the General João Baptista de Almeida Arez, member of the Parliament¹⁷⁶, and the journalist of the “*Diario de Noticias*” Mário José Augusto, war correspondent in Spain¹⁷⁷. It was here in Portugal that he entered in contact with representatives of Nationalist Spain, obtaining the permission to tour the area under Nationalist control. He flew from Lisboa to Salamanca on 7th September¹⁷⁸.

He stayed until the end of November, before going back from Salamanca to Lisboa and then to Havana¹⁷⁹. During this time, he also travelled to Pamplona, Toledo, where he met the Mayor Fernando Aguirre, Sevilla, where he met General Queipo de Llano and Manuel Halcón Villalón Daóiz, Director of the magazine “*Vértice*”¹⁸⁰, and Jérez de la Frontera, where he was hosted by Marquis Juan Pedro Domecq Núñez de Villavicencio¹⁸¹. He also visited General Juan Yagüe on the front of Madrid, and was received in Burgos by Francisco Franco with whom, he interceded in favour of two captured Republican pilots of American citizenship¹⁸².

In fact, Parlá had already shown sympathy for the Nationalists when, earlier in the year, he had received his fellow pilot Antonio Menéndez Peláez, at the “*Diario de la Marina*”, along with the director “Pepín” Rivero and the journalist and war correspondent José Sánchez Arcilla¹⁸³:

«El aviador Parlá, resumiendo la hazaña de Menéndez, entonó un fervoroso canto a España.»

It most probably refers to the “*Cara al Sol*”.

Parlá’s relations with Spain did not cease when he returned to Cuba, since he was received with all honours by the Nationalist Spanish Committee and the FET y de las

174 Ibidem, 7.1.1.3.8.

175 Ibidem, 7.1.1.3.7.

176 Ibidem, 7.1.1.3.10.

177 Ibidem, 7.1.1.3.9.

178 Ibidem, 7.4.3.1-2.

179 *El Capitan Parlá regresa a Cuba. Un cubano ilustre amigo de España*, in “*La Gaceta Regional. Diario Nacional de Salamanca*”, 25th November 1937, p. 4.

180 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.1.1.3.5.

181 *Suplemento diario en rotograbado*, in “*Diario de la Marina*”, 17th November 1937.

182 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.7.7.2.57.

183 Ibidem, 7.6.1.4.1.43.

JONS on the 29th March¹⁸⁴. The meeting took place in the local of Falange, in the presence of the representatives of Italy, Germany and Spain (both Espelius and Adriaenses), as well as “Pepín” Rivero, Argüelles, almost all members of the CNE, and 150 uniformed Falangists, led by Abelardo Carús¹⁸⁵. According to Gil Ramírez, it was a complete success¹⁸⁶:

«Yo presenté al Capitan Parlá y luego el estuvo como una hora hablando de España; estuvo formidable, contando todo lo que había visto en nuestra Patria. El Capitán Parlá nos está haciendo aquí una campaña colosal. No te puedes figurar cuanto se le aplaudió.»

Moreover, a public homage was organized in occasion of the 25th anniversary of his flight Key West – Mariel. In the invitation, the President of CNE Elicio Argüelles mentioned¹⁸⁷:

«[...] la campaña viril y veraz hecha por el insigne aviador cubano en favor del movimiento Nacional de España y [...] la campaña de difamación que estos comunoides están desarrollando contra quien tiene el civismo de decir y contar la verdad de cuanto vio en la España liberada.»

The manifestation took place on 20th May 1938 at 9 in the Teatro Nacional of Havana.

Even during the World War, he kept in contact with members of the Falange, such as Genaro Riestra¹⁸⁸, and of the CNE, being also part of the committee to attribute posthumous honours to José Ignacio Rivero¹⁸⁹. In 1943, he made an official visit to Spain on the part of Batista’s government, meeting General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano in Sevilla¹⁹⁰. Notwithstanding, as he mentioned in an autoapologetic letter¹⁹¹, it should be observed that he never travelled to fascist countries, such as Italy or Germany, in spite of their great progress in aviation.

184 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 27, exp. 4, f. 66.

185 Ibidem, f. 68.

186 Ibidem.

187 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.6.1.2.3.

188 *Suplemento diario en rotograbado*, in “*Diario de la Marina*”, 24th April 1940.

189 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.1.1.1.1.

190 Ibidem, 7.6.1.4.1.34.

191 Ibidem, 7.7.7.2.57.

2.2.2.3 *Democracy and Fatherland*

On the other hand, at the onset of the Cuba intervention in the World War, Parlá had no doubt in supporting the Allied war effort. Though he was not accepted as a volunteer, on 12th March 1942, he was made Honorary Fellow of the *Escuadrilla Interamericana*¹⁹², an association of aviators from Latin America focused on financing the training of Latin American pilots in the United States¹⁹³.

The extant documents related to his membership in the *Centro Gallego* clearly confirmed that the aviator fully embraced his mixed Hispano-Cuban identity. Specifically, he had been a member for 25 years, never giving much attention to the centre politics, until in 1943 he candidated as a representative (*apoderado*) in the right-wing list *Afirmación y Defensa Social*, being sponsored by the President of the centre *Juan Varela Grande*¹⁹⁴.

Since there were antifascist protests against Parlá's candidacy, he asked twelve members, including Varela, had to write a letter (dated 15th February 1943) to Jorge Fernández de Castro, director of the conservative newspaper "*Alerta*", in order to show public support for him¹⁹⁵:

«En todo momento el Sr. Agustín Parlá probó sobradamente su entrañable cariño al Centro Gallego y a la Colonia Española de Cuba [. . .] la conducta del Sr. Agustín Parlá ha sido de nuestro agrado y digna de nuestra gratitud, ya que en todo momento dio nuevas pruebas de amor a nuestra querida Institución.»

Nevertheless, the aviator insisted on defending himself, publishing a «*Manifiesto to the People of Cuba*», where he accused his enemies¹⁹⁶:

«Se me hace una campaña injusta en mi propia patria por elementos ajenos a ella. Unos pensando en ruso, otros extranjeros sin ningún nexo con Cuba.»

The kind of accusations is made clear by the answer he gave, defending his relationship with *Falange*¹⁹⁷:

192 Ibidem, 7.4.1.22.

193 Cfr. Dan Hagedorn, *Conquistadors of the Sky: A History of Aviation in Latin America*, University of Florida Press, Gainesville 2008, p. 300.

194 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.5.1.2.1.

195 Ibidem.

196 Ibidem, 7.5.1.2.2.

197 Ibidem.

Figures of the Cuban Right

«Fuí a España en el año 1937, se me tomó de pretexto para honrar a Cuba, no hubo honor ni agazaje que no se prodigara a mi querida patria. Que cubano no se hubiera sentido orgulloso y agradecido? A mí vuelta fuí también agazajado aquí, por los representantes de los que me agazajaron allá. Todo a puerta abierta, con la asistencia y consentimiento de las autoridades de mí país.»

Parlá declared then his unconditional love and loyalty to the Fatherland, in spite of never having actually engaged in politics¹⁹⁸:

«Después nada, no soy militante, no he hecho nunca política activa, soy hombre de hogar. Si ser patriota es amar entrañablemente a la tierra que nos vió nacer y exponer por su gloria la vida, YO SOY PATRIOTA.»

To this regard, he quoted Martí and appealed to the Independence veterans, as they only could clearly defend his honour of patriot from false accusations of being an agent of foreign totalitarian powers.

In this occasion (2nd February 1943), Pablo Luis Villegas Prado, President of the Independence Veterans' Association stated that there was no need of a court of honour, as requested by Parlá, such was the evidence of his merits¹⁹⁹:

«[...] sin que con posterioridad a la fecha del mismo se haya tenido conocimiento, ni exista constancia de acto alguno realizado por Ud. que desmerezca o ponga en tela de juicio su condición de persona correcta, honrada y de acrisolado patriotismo.»

Similarly (10th February), José García Baylles, President of the Cuban Revolutionary Emigrés' National Association, whose the aviator had been member of the National Board, vouched for his contribution to Cuban independence and his patriotism, mentioning²⁰⁰:

«su inmaculada historia de cubano amante de su patria y por la cual ha realizado toda clase de sacrificios»

As well as providing him with a documentation of his patriotic record.

198 Ibidem.

199 Ibidem, 7.5.1.3.1.

200 Ibidem, 7.5.1.4.1.

Nonetheless, and in spite of his long relationship with the American aviation, he was now considered an enemy of the United States. A U.S. Embassy report mentioned his visit to Nationalist Spain and his contacts with the Falange in Cuba²⁰¹:

«He is supposed to have reiterated his totalitarian ideas and his plan to work in Cuba for the cause of the Spanish Falange.»

For this reason, when in September 1943 was invited by the local government of Key West to receive a prize for the 30th anniversary of his famous flight, on 12th October, he was denied the visa to access the United States²⁰².

The same Embassy report, which details the people named by the Ministry of Communications to serve in various offices in the Cuban Civil Aeronautics, showed clearly how Parlá was actually proposed by the new government to be confirmed in his role of Airport Inspector, along with Manuel Jesús de la Cruz Bannatyne (1904-1978). The latter, an Air Force officer during the *Machadato*, had worked for the Pan American Airways, and had «strong pro-American sympathies»²⁰³. On the other hand, Parlá was accused of «anti-American sympathies»²⁰⁴. Therefore, in spite of no direct evidence of U.S. foul play in his termination, it is most probable that this report played a role.

Soon after Parlá's removal from office (16th May 1945), the General Enrique Loynaz del Castillo, reassured him²⁰⁵:

«Algo me dice que el pan de su hogar es un compromiso sentimental de Cuba, y Usted lo corresponderá con su trabajo siempre útil. Creo que nunca una cesantía responderá al laurel inmarcesible que ciñó Usted a la República, alcanzándolo en los cielos con las alas del valor.»

In that occasion, the Cuban Revolutionary Emigrés' National Association organized a toast in his honour on 18th May 1945, at 5.30 pm²⁰⁶.

201 U.S. Embassy Havana, n. 9154, 11th April 1945, p. 3.

202 Ibidem.

203 Ibidem, p. 2.

204 Ibidem, p.3.

205 IHC, Fondo Agustín Parlá, 7.4.1.24.

206 Ibidem, 7.5.1.4.3.

They were followed by another letter of solidarity (4th June 1945) by Villegas²⁰⁷:

«Si tus méritos personales, con ser muchos, y cuanto por honrar a tu país has realizado, no bastaran para que se te resolviera tu problema, espero, y hago votos por que así sea, que Cuba cumpla en tu persona, la deuda que tiene contraída con tu padre.»

Through his father, in fact, the aviator was directly connected to the generation of the fighters for independence, who had dominated Cuban political life in the first part of the century. It was followed (11th June), by a similar letter was sent by Luis Varona R. Parra, President of the Independence Veterans' Sons' National Association²⁰⁸.

Thereafter (23rd June), the foremost members of the associations of former combatants²⁰⁹ sent a letter to the President of the Republic in order to uphold Parlá's cause. According to the signatories²¹⁰:

«Agustín Parlá, hijo de patriota notable, y representativo él mismo de tantas virtudes y servicios, que ante ellos se oscurecen la práctica rutinaria y el formulismo administrativo [. . .] ha demostrado incansablemente su concepto de la responsabilidad y su disposición de servir a la Patria, en la paz, con el mismo entusiasmo y devoción con que sus mayores la defendieron en la guerra.»

Therefore they asked the President to intervene in his favour to restore him in his office, being also his only source of

207 Ibidem, 7.5.1.3.2.

208 Ibidem, 7.4.1.25.

209 It was signed by the Generals of the Independence War Enrique Loynaz del Castillo, Carlos García Veliz, Hugo Roberts, José Lara Miret, Manuel Piedra, Eugenio Molinet, Daniel Gispert; the Colonels Rafael Cañizares, Eliseo Figueroa, Leon Primelles, the Commander Miguel A. de Varona and the Captain E. San Pedro, all belonging to the Independence Veterans' Association; the President Dr. José García Baylles, Francisco Alpizar Poyo, Antonio Navarrete de Cordova, Enrique Campuzano, Ignacio Piñar, Gabriel Ferro, Dr. R. Seva, of the Cuban Revolutionary Émigrés' National Association; the President Luis Varona, Marcos del Rosario, Urbano Gomez Toro, M. Gomez Calás, Senator Dr. Emilio Nuñez Portuondo, for the Independence Veterans' Sons' National Association; the President Dr. José Banderas, Raúl Pla, Rafael de Zaldo, for the Liberators' Sons' Association; and Dr. Oscar Soto and the Councillor Angel Pelaez for the City Mayor.

210 Ibidem, 7.5.1.3.3-4.

income. Nonetheless, despite having received the letter (19th July)²¹¹, no measure was ever taken to avoid the tragic end of the aviator.

However, the ties he had with these associations remained steadfast until his death, when he wrote a last letter to the General Loynaz (31st July 1946), naming him his executor²¹²:

«Me tomo la libertad de hacer llegar a sus manos abundante prueba documental de mi cumplimiento en el puesto de Inspector General de Aeropuertos. Si alguien persiste en atacarme calumniándome, puede retarlo Ud. a que pruebe que yo no haya sido toda mi vida un hombre de bien, sin antecedentes de NINGUNA CLASE que puedan sonrojarme.»

His connections with Martí's political heritage was therefore an actual leitmotif of his life and career.

²¹¹ Ibidem, 7.5.1.3.8.

²¹² Ibidem, 7.4.2.2.

2.3

“PEPÍN” RIVERO AND HIS PRESS EMPIRE

Yo aparezco como reaccionario y
conservador a outrance desde
que [...] le salí al encuentro,
come a una bestia brava, a las
fuerzas deletéreas de la
revolución marxista

José I. Rivero

José Ignacio Rivero Alonso, better known as “Pepín” Rivero, though received a large number of homages in the fifteen years following his death²¹³, soon suffered a true *damnatio memoriae* in the Revolutionary period, due to his fierce anticommunism. For this reason, the scientific literature regarding him is virtually non-existent, apart from a short essay by Katia Figueredo Cabrera²¹⁴, and his inclusion in an anthology of pre-revolutionary Cuban journalism²¹⁵.

The same goes for the exile, apart from a few memoirs written by his son José Ignacio Rivero Hernández (1920 – 2011): an anthology of his father’s editorials²¹⁶ and two books about his own journalist activity²¹⁷. Since Rivero Hernández closed the “*Diario de la Marina*” in 1961, just one year after

- 213 Cfr. Arturo Alfonso Roselló, *José Ignacio Rivero. Pareceres*, in “*Carteles*”, 9th April 1944; P. José Rubinos S.J., *Oración pronunciada en las honras fúnebres ofrecidas en la iglesia del Sagrado Corazón al cumplirse el primer mes de la muerte de José Ignacio Rivero*, in “*Diario de la Marina*” (La Habana), 31st March 1946; Arturo Alfonso Roselló, *El tributo que aún le debemos a José Ignacio Rivero*, in “*Carteles*”, 10th July 1949; Manuel Braña, *José Ignacio Rivero. Perfil periodístico*, in “*El País*” (La Habana), 25th December 1954; Pablo Lavín, *Pepín Rivero: alma del periodismo nacional*, in “*Diario de la Marina*” (La Habana), 1st April 1956.
- 214 K. Figueredo, *Impresiones de un periodista olvidado*, in “*Espacio Laical*”, n. 4, 2014, pp. 48-53.
- 215 Ivet González – Aline Marie Rodríguez – Salvador Salazar (ed.), *Periodistas cubanos de la República. 1902-1958*, prol. by P. P. Rodríguez, Ediciones Temas, La Habana 2015, pp. 548-558.
- 216 J. I. Rivero Alonso, *El pensamiento de un gran orientador. Pepín Rivero. 1919-1944. Selección de las Impresiones publicadas en el Diario de la Marina de La Habana, Cuba desde 1919 hasta 1944*, Service Offset Printers, Miami 1964.
- 217 J. I. Rivero Hernández, *Prado y Teniente Rey*, Ediciones Páginas Cubanas, Miami 1986; Id., *Contra viento y marea. Memorias de un periodista. Periodismo y mucho más. 1920-1944.*, Ediciones Universal, Miami 2004.

having left Cuba, he did not play much role in the Cuban American community, and “Pepín” Rivero was mostly known as his son’s predecessor as director of the venerable newspaper.

2.3.1 LIFE AND ACTIVITIES

José Ignacio Rivero Alonso was born on 3rd February 1895 in Havana. He studied at the Jesuit Belén College, then at the University of Havana, where he graduated in Civil Law in 1916. He soon started working in his father’s newspaper, the “*Diario de la Marina*”, as an assistant director (1914) and vice director (1917), writing the editorials “Impresiones”. In the same years, he married Silvia Hernández del Lovio, who gave him five children: Silvia, José Ignacio, Oscar, Nicolas, Alberto. Despite his father’s humble origins, he was a socialite, member of different clubs (*Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, Club de Abogados, Unión Club, Havana Yacht Club and Country Club*)²¹⁸, who befriended and supported various artists, such as José Pinazo Martínez²¹⁹ and Fernando Tarazona.

2.3.1.1 Family

Rivero’s family had a major role in both his profession and ideas. In fact, his father was an important figure of the Spanish colony in Cuba²²⁰. Nicolas Lino del Rivero Fernández y del Muñiz Cueli, son of peasants, was born in Las Callejas, fraction of Villaviciosa, Asturias on 23rd September 1849. He began his studies in the minor seminary of Villaviciosa, and then in the seminary of Oviedo, but in 1872 he left them to join the Carlist forces in the Third Carlist War. He was captured, jailed, deported to Canarias and then Cuba (1873), but returned to Spain to take part in the war. He fought valiantly, including at the historical battle of Montejurra, reaching the grade of Commander, until he fled to France,

²¹⁸ Percy Alvin, *Who’s who in Latin America. A biographical dictionary of the outstanding living men and women of Spanish America and Brazil*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1940, p. 343.

²¹⁹ Xesqui Castañer, *José Pinazo Martínez (1879-1933). Un pintor ecléctico entre la tradición y la modernidad*, Punto Rojo, Sevilla 2011, pp. 95-96.

²²⁰ Cfr. Constantino Cabal, *Nombres de España: Nicolás Rivero*, Real Instituto De Estudios Asturianos, Oviedo 1950; Jorge Domingo Cuadriello, *Diccionario Biobibliográfico de escritores españoles en Cuba. Siglo XX*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, La Habana 2010.

at the end of the war. He came back in 1876, thanks to the general amnesty, and studied in the Notary School of Oviedo, graduating in 1878. In 1880, he went to Cuba, to work as a secretary in the Ayuntamiento de Bauta.

There, he founded the weekly newspaper "*El Relámpago*" (1881), but it was suspended he was shortly deported to Spain, for his attacks on the General Captain. He returned in 1882 and founded "*El Rayo*", and then other short-lived publications, such as "*La Centella*", "*El General Tacón*" (1884-1885), "*El Español*" (1889), and "*El Pensamiento Español*" (1889). He also directed "*El Eco de los Voluntarios*" and "*El Eco de Covadonga*", until he began working for the "*Diario de la Marina*" (1891). He eventually became editor (1894) and then director (1895), starting his famed editorials "*Actualidades*". His political positions, which both opposed the independence movement and criticized the centralized government of Spanish authorities, as well as his participation in duels, often costed him problems with the law, from the closure of his publications to a short reclusion in the Castillo del Morro.

In 1898, he was shortly President of the Provincial Deputation, for the new autonomist government. After the independence, he remained in Cuba, and founded the Asociación de la Prensa de Cuba (1902). In the following years, the "*Diario de la Marina*" became the most important Cuban newspaper, with a strongly hispanophile and conservative stance. This was mainly due to Rivero's pen²²¹:

Nicolás Rivero, simbolizaba a tal extremo el Diario de la Marina que, sin sus temibles Actualidades, el periódico perdía todo su atractivo y valor, quedaba desinflado.

For this reason, he was awarded the Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de Alfonso XII by the King of Spain (1905) and the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great by the Pope. He died on 3rd June 1919, being awarded posthumously (18th August) the hereditary title of Conde del Rivero. The title was inherited by his first son, Nicolas Rivero Alonso, a diplomat who was the first Cuban ambassador at the Holy See in 1935²²².

221 Gerardo Castellano García, *Panorama histórico. Ensayo de cronología cubana. Desde 1492 hasta 1933. Tomo II*, Ucar, García y Cía, La Habana 1934, pp. 1054-1055.

222 Cfr. Percy Alvin, *Who's who in Latin America*, op. cit., pp. 343-344.

2.3.1.2 *Journalism*

José Ignacio Rivero Alonso, instead, inherited the ownership and direction of the "*Decano de la Prensa*" (Decan of the Press), as it was styled for its venerable age, dating back to 1844. Despite his young age, he showed the same energy and ability of his father²²³:

Pepín Rivero es el heredero inconfundible de su periodista padre en la técnica del sencillo, sintético, hondo, fluido, cáustico, mordaz y satírico manejar de la idea con la pluma. Las Impresiones, de Pepín, son hijas mellizas de las líneas catapúlticas del fundador. Por eso ahora, en esta remozada y evolucionista era, siguen siendo la médula del Diario; las más buscadas, las más leídas, las más temidas [. . .].

As a consequence, at a young age, he was awarded the rank of Commander of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great (26th September 1921), together with his brother, and the Orden de Isabela la Católica (2nd March 1925).

His brilliance and social skills, along with his staunch political positions, soon made him one of the most important Cuban journalists, earning him the esteem of his enemies²²⁴:

Pepín Rivero [. . .] culto, escéptico, gozador de la vida, experimentado conocedor de los hombres, que dirige la poderosa empresa periodístico-comercial llamada Diario de la Marina, resulta el periodista cubano de más fuste y mayor rotunda influencia por la medularidad de su pluma, aunque, a la vez, sea el más frecuentemente amenazado.

In fact, despite his conservative positions, he conceded space to many progressive writers.

In 1926, he nominates the Minorist journalist José Antonio Fernández de Castro director of the "*Suplemento Literario Dominical*". In the following years, this weekly review hosts national and foreign writers, such as José Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier, Raúl Roa, Gastón Baquero, Ramiro Guerra Sánchez, Rubén Martínez Villena, Jorge Luis Borges, José Carlos Mariategui, including Soviet authors, such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Boris Pasternak and Sergei Yesenin. The review included the column "*Ideales de una raza*", dedicated to the

223 G. Castellano, *Panorama histórico*, op. cit, p. 1055.

224 Ibidem.

discussion of the Afro-Cuban problems. As Ángel Augier recognized²²⁵:

Por primera vez en Cuba, se planteaban en un diario importante e influyente, los problemas del negro sin eufemismos, con franqueza.

After the fall of Machado, Rivero expanded his press empire, founding two other publications. "*El Avance Criollo*" was founded in October 1934, with the cooperation of Oscar Zayas, Alfredo Zayas' nephew, who was vicedirector, whereas Rivero directed the newspaper. One year later (25th September 1935), "*Alerta*", directed by Jorge Fernández de Castro, began publications. Both acted as evening editions of the "*Diario de la Marina*".

In the later years of his life, he received important international decorations, such as the rank of Commander of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of Saint Sylvester Pope and Martyr (1940) and the rank of Commander of the Order of Honour and Merit of the International Red Cross (1941)²²⁶.

Nevertheless, the most prestigious honour was receiving the Maria Moors Cabot Prize, awarded by the Graduate School of Journalism of the Columbia University, on 10th November 1941, being the oldest international award in journalism and recognizes contributions «to Inter-American understanding»²²⁷. He shared the prize with the Brazilian Paulo and Sylvia Bittencourt and the Chilean Carlos Dávila.

After his death, some of his articles were published in two collections: a selection of quotes²²⁸ the next year, and the aforesaid anthology²²⁹, in occasion of the twentieth anniversary.

2.3.1.3 *Death and legacy*

He died, probably of cancer, in the early morning of Saturday 1st April 1944 in his residence of Loma del Mazo (Calles

225 Academia de Ciencias de Cuba. Instituto de Lingüística, *Diccionario de la literatura cubana. Tomo II*, Letras Cubanas, La Habana 1984, pp. 991-992.

226 K. Figueredo, *Impresiones de un periodista olvidado*, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

227 *Maria Moors Cabot Prize*, Columbia Journalism School (<https://journalism.columbia.edu/cabot>).

228 J. I. Rivero Alonso, *El pensamiento vivo de José Ignacio Rivero (ochenta páginas de pensamientos, frases y párrafos del connotado periodista, totalmente leídos y aprobados por él)*, Ediciones Antología, La Habana 1945.

229 Id., *El pensamiento de un gran orientador*, op. cit.

Luis Caballero y Patrocinio). His funeral was most plausibly celebrated in the Jesuit parish of the Sagrado Corazón by Padre José Rubinos Ramos²³⁰.

Soon after, a “Comité Pro-Memoria José Ignacio Alonso”²³¹ o “Comité Gestor del Monumento al Dr. José Ignacio Rivero”²³² was founded, counting among the best names of the Cuban Right²³³ Its goals included creating a Panamerican journalist prize, erecting a monument and founding a library specialized in Hispanoamerican subjects.

Moreover the Conjunto de Calles y Asociaciones Comerciales de Cuba (Cuban Ensemble of Streets and Commercial Associations) instituted a national journalism prize in his name, consisting with 1000 pesos and a diploma²³⁴, while the Patronato Escolar de la Habana (School Board of Havana) had created a yearly journalism prize for school pupils in April 1944. The next year, a bronze plaque was placed on his birthplace (Calle Salud 205, entre Lealtad y Campanario)²³⁵.

230 As it happened for the Trigesimo Mass: P. José Rubinos S.J., *Oración pronunciada en las honras fúnebres ofrecidas en la iglesia del Sagrado Corazón al cumplirse el primer mes de la muerte de José Ignacio Rivero*, op. cit.

231 K. Figueredo, *Impresiones de un periodista olvidado*, op. cit., p. 51

232 IHC, *Fundo Agustín Parlá*, 7.1.1.1.1

233 Honorary Presidents: Fulgencio Batista, Ramón Grau, Carlos Saladriga; President: Gen. Rafael Montalvo; Vicepresidents: Carlos Miguel de Céspedes, Gustavo Cuervo Rubio, Segundo Casteleiro, Anselmo Alliegro, Cosme de la Torriente; Treasurer: Juan Gelats; Accountant: Teodoro Johnson; Secretary: Miguel Ángel Cisneros; Director of Collection: Rafael Palacios; Directors of Publicity: Victor Bilbao, José Gasch, Manuel Sánchez Maspóns, Humberto Solfs; Speakers: Gen. Manuel Benítez Valdés, Raúl de Cárdenas, José Manuel Cortina, P. Antonio J. Galán, P. José Rubinos, José Manuel Casanova, José Gómez Mena, Elicio Argüelles, Antonio María Souto, Secundino Baños, Enrique Gancedo Toca, Benjamín Menéndez, Francisco Saralegui, Vicente Fernández Riaño, Cayetano García Lago, Frank Bartés Marsal, Évelio Govantes, Teodoro Santiesteban, Jesús María Bouza, Julio Blanco Herrera, Rafael Armada, Valentín Arenas, José Pérez Benitoa, Benigno Souza, Ignacio del Valle, Eduardo Espinosa Pérez, Edel Farrés, Juan Joaquín Otero, Pedro Entenza, Carlos Govea, Alberto Blanco, Agustín Parlá.

234 The winners were Ramón Vasconcelos Maragliano (1945), Francisco Ichaso (1948), Arturo Alfonso Roselló (1949), Rafael Suárez Solís (1950), César Rodríguez Expósito (1951), Jorge Mañach Robato (1953), José Hernández Figueroa (1957) y P. José Rubinos Ramos SJ (1958).

235 The plaque, removed after the Revolution, stated: «Nació en esta casa, 13 de febrero de 1895, José I. Rivero y Alonso. La Asociación de la Prensa de Cuba rinde homenaje a la memoria del insigne periodista que fue presidente de la institución y falleció siendo su Presidente de Honor, el día primero de abril de 1944».

and the city councillor Justo González del Pozo proposed to change the name of Calle Patrocinio in his honour. In 1947, Rivero's name was given to a cultural centre, directed by María Amalia Corrales, and, in 1949, P. Ángel Arias SJ proposed to name the pavillon of Graphic Arts of the Workers' University of Belén after him. Public libraries were given his name in Santa Fe (Playa, Havana) and Los Palos (Nueva Paz)²³⁶. Finally, in 1958, a postage stamp dedicated to "Pepín" Rivero was issued²³⁷.

Nor were Rivero's efforts in favour of the Nationalist cause in Spain forgotten. In the peninsula, he received several honours, starting in 1944 with the proposal of dedicating two streets in Oviedo for him and his father. Eventually, a single street was named after both (Calle Nicolás y Pepín Rivero). Another street was dedicated in La Coruña (Calle Pepín Rivero²³⁸). In 1951, his friend, the Valencian painter Fernando Tarazona, who had debuted in Cuba with an exposition organized by the "*Diario de la Marina*", dedicated to him an exposition in the Museo de Arte Moderno in Madrid.

Furthermore, the Spanish journalist Víctor de la Serna proposed a monument in honour of the Cuban journalist, and possibly a college in the University City. A Junta Nacional Española "Pro Monumento Pepín Rivero" was established with the goal of gathering funds²³⁹ and choosing a draft²⁴⁰. The monument, designed by the architect Julio Cano Lasso, is erected in the Parque del Oeste, near the Triumphal Arch of the Moncloa, on 23rd October 1954, at the presence of Rivero's widow Silvia and Rivero's heir José Ignacio²⁴¹.

236 K. Figueredo, *Impresiones de un periodista olvidado*, op. cit., p. 52

237 *Honrando a un periodista*, in "*ABC*", Madrid, 31st May 1958, pp. 121-122.

238 In 2016, it was renamed Rúa da Educación, following the Ley de Memoria Histórica.

239 *El proyectado homenaje a Pepín Rivero*, in "*La Vanguardia*", 10th October 1948, p. 4.

240 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *Impresiones de un periodista olvidado*, op. cit., p. 53

241 *El Director del «Diario de la Marina» en Madrid*, in "*ABC*", Madrid, 22nd October 1954, p. 36.

2.3.2 POLITICS, PRESS & PROPAGANDA

In spite of being considered as an outright Fascist or Falangist, Pepín Rivero's political positions were actually more complex. In fact, for most of the time he spent as Director of the "*Diario de la Marina*", he had been considered almost a liberal, also due to his tolerance towards his staff. In Franciscan priest Ignacio Biaín's words²⁴²:

«Navegó entre las viejas ideas liberales y la devastadora revolución. Esos dos extremos aclaran y explican toda su vida. Inmerso desde su juventud en la corriente liberal del pensamiento, su pluma se resintió en ocasiones de esa des-teñida ideología; por eso mismo, por su conservadurismo, se enfrentó como un Quijote con la revolución política y social que aquí ha resultado a veces puro mimetismo y ganga personal. No ha habido en Cuba pluma que haya zarandeado como la suya los vicios de la revolución. Fue un contrapeso necesario para el equilibrio cubano.»

In a less admiring manner, the Falangist Rafael Piñero referred with scorn to²⁴³:

«nuestro común amigo Dr. José I. Rivero (que tiene el *Diario de la Marina* lleno de rojos)»

In fact, his political parable cannot be easily classified as conservative, at least until the 1933 Revolution.

Even though, according to Chase, he had already manifested sympathies towards the Central Powers (1917) and Mussolini²⁴⁴, he did oppose Machado's dictatorship²⁴⁵:

«a causa de su actividad periodística, Rivero fue secuestrado en dos ocasiones. La primera, por su lucha contra el dictador Gerardo Machado, y la segunda, durante la huelga sindical de Artes Gráficas, de 1933.»

In fact, one of his relatives, Ms. Barbarrosa, had been killed by the dictatorship on 13th December 1930²⁴⁶.

Furthermore, he had little admiration for fascism or national socialism, as he wrote in 1933²⁴⁷:

242 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *Impresiones de un periodista olvidado*, op. cit., p. 51.

243 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 153, exp. 11, f. 12.

244 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 56.

245 *Periodistas cubanos de la República. 1902-1958*, op. cit., p. 550.

246 *Los horrores de la tiranía machadista en Cuba*, in "*La Voz*", Madrid, 23rd January 1933, p. 4.

247 "*Impresiones*", por Pepín Rivero, in "*ABC*", Madrid, 19th June 1964, p. 75.

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«Para que nos sentiéramos hitleristas o fascistas tendría que ocurrir lo que para sentirnos stalinistas, esto es, que hubiésemos perdido el sentido común.»

At the same time, the ascent of the workers' movement and the Communist party, could not meet his approvation, and prompted him to assume a more right-wing stance, since now the threat to freedom, in his eyes, came from the left. In his words²⁴⁸:

«La dictadura política siempre es un poco abstracta. La sindical no. La sindical es un tiro al corazón o al estómago del que se le opone.»

In fact, he supported the Presidency of Carlos M. de Céspedes, then opposed Ramón Grau, fiercely attacking the Left and welcoming the restoration by Carlos Mendieta²⁴⁹.

In May 1934 he was shot between the heart and the aorta, coming near to death²⁵⁰. In that occasion, he was even erroneously thought dead, and his shooting was attributed to those left-wing forces who had been excited by his fascistic propaganda²⁵¹:

«Acaso la rabia en la lucha le cegó hasta querer hacerle seguir modelos fascistas y se dedicó a organizar un fascismo cubano.»

It is probable, though not proven, that Rivero supported the ABC Party, regarded as "fascist" by its enemies. For certain, he expanded his activities, with the support of the Right, and always refused to adhere to strikes²⁵². However, this explains why he came to judge positively the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler, not necessarily because he shared a totalitarian worldview, but insofar as they constituted a bulwark against Communism.

248 Ibidem.

249 *Rivero o el mal comienzo del fascismo en Cuba*, in "El Heraldo de Madrid", 24th May 1934, p. 3.

250 *Don José Ignacio Rivero en Madrid*, in "La Vanguardia", Madrid, 4th March 1962, p. 5.

251 *Rivero o el mal comienzo del fascismo en Cuba*, op. cit.

252 Cfr. the statement signed by the Press manager of the *Círculo Tradicionalista Español de La Habana* (Spanish Traditionalist Club of Havana) Luis López, on 16th March 1935 (*Círculo Tradicionalista Español de La Habana*, in "El Siglo futuro", n. 8489, 4th April 1935, p. 6.)

2.3.2.1 *Political commitment during the Spanish Civil War*

At the breaking out of the Civil War in Spain, Pepín Rivero found himself already in Europe, as he already had did in past summers (e.g. 1925 and 1927), establishing himself as an important figure for the relationships between the two countries.

In Summer 1936, he travelled to Spain from France, crossing into Navarra²⁵³. He was accompanied by Jacques Dugé de Bernonville, of the *Action Française*²⁵⁴, who probably was to establish ties between the Nationalist insurgents and the Cagoule. He spent at least one day in Burgos and two in Pamplona²⁵⁵, where he visited the barracks of the Requetés, wearing their uniform with the *boina roja* (red beret), and giving a speech, together with the Carlist leader José Luis Oriol²⁵⁶.

Afterwards, in August, he travelled to Berlin, where he spoke at the radio, praising Hitler²⁵⁷:

«[. . .] al auténtico caudillo, al orientador, al Führer que Dios guarde por muchos años para la tranquilidad del mundo y bien de la patria alemana [. . .]»

He later reported in the "*Diario de la Marina*" the²⁵⁸:

«inmensa popularidad del Nacismo y del hombre que es guía de su gran espíritu.»

stating also that Hitler had raised the standard of living of the German people²⁵⁹:

«sin la necesidad de empobrecerlos espiritualmente y sin divorciarlos del eterno principio de moralidad con el fin de jemerarlos económicamente»

He came back from Europe in September, stopping in New York.

253 *Rienda suelta a una gran pena*, in "*ABC*", Madrid, 22nd November 1975, p. 46.

254 *Impresiones*, in "*Diario de la Marina*", 25th September 1936, p. 1.

255 *Impresiones*, in "*Diario de la Marina*", 26th September 1936, p. 1.

256 *Impresiones*, in "*Diario de la Marina*", 29th September 1936, p. 1.

257 Diego González Martín, *¿No es cierto que Pepín Rivero y Raúl Maestri son y han sido activo agentes de los nazis?*. in "*Noticias de Hoy*", IV, 260, 30 de octubre de 1941, p. 5.

258 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 153, exp. 11, f. 4/3.

259 *Ibidem*.

As soon as he returned to Havana, he mobilized his influence in the press and in the society to support the Nationalist cause in Spain, being named as Honorary President of the *Comité Nacionalista Español* (Spanish Nationalist Committee), to the extent that the National Delegate of the Foreign Service of Falange, commented during Agustín Parlá's visit to Salamanca²⁶⁰:

«*Diario de la Marina*, ese gran periódico cubano que fundara un español ilustre y que sigue teniendo a través de los años, bajo la égida de usted, la prestancia de un claro sentido españolista, ha sabido comprender la grandeza de nuestra Causa y día tras día a través de la pluma y del temperamento de usted, nos alienta y conforta en esta lucha progresivamente triunfal, como alienta y conforta a aquellos españoles que viven en Cuba y que nos miran desde lejos y nos hacen el regalo de su exaltada emoción patriótica.»

Even the Spanish Ambassador in Havana in a report on the political situation of the country (28th March 1938), spoke with high praise of Rivero²⁶¹:

«a quien tanto debe España, que sería recibidos con los abrazos abiertos y que, después, cualquiera que el Dr. Rivero propusiera, sería admitido también con verdadero agrado»

On the other hand, though he never was a member, he generously aided the Falange as well, supporting the proposal to join it with the CNE²⁶², and offering to organize a meeting with Batista²⁶³ (which never took place).

Later, in the year (30th May), the Inspector of Falange Alejandro Villanueva del Plata, reported that²⁶⁴:

«Ya sabes por mi frecuentes comunicaciones en este sentido y por los recortes que del "*Diario de la Marina*" te he mandado con frecuencia y regularidad, la gran labor que en favor de nuestra España y de nuestra Falange está haciendo en este país el Dtor. José Ignacio Rivero. No pasa un día sin que en sus periódicos vengan abundantes

260 *Impresiones*, in "*Diario de la Marina*", 19th September 1937, p. 1.

261 AGA, sec. 10, fdo 17, caja 54, exp. II A/b-1.

262 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 27, exp. 4, f. 138.

263 *Ibidem*, f. 51

264 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 27, exp. 5, f. 132.

informaciones y artículos encomiásticos de nuestra Causa Nacional, haciendo resaltar siempre con grandes titulares cualquier triunfo que nuestro glorioso Ejército consigue, por insignificante que sea; también, desde mi llegada a este país, el Dtor. Rivero ha publicado en sus periódicos todos cuantos trabajos le he enviado y, siempre que se presente la ocasión, me dice que las columnas de todos ellos estarán siempre a mi disposición para la propaganda y difusión de nuestras Doctrinas Nacionalsindicalistas y para cuanto quiera decir en favor de nuestra Patria. En el Plato Unico que acabamos de celebrar, ya sabes que ha cooperado leyendo en el mismo unas maravillosas cuartillas, y sus periódicos han estado a mi disposición para hacer cuanta propaganda he querido del mismo.»

As a consequence, he proposed that Rivero, along with the Senator Elicio Argüelles, President of the CNE, were invited to Spain, at the expenses of the FET y de las JONS. The visit would have lasted about a month, in August, with visits to the battle front. Nevertheless, since he could not move from Havana, he sent his collaborator José Sánchez-Arcilla y García, who was received as guest of honour by the Delegado Nacional José del Castaño. He later (26th October) wrote to the Director²⁶⁵:

«[. . .] nos prestan desde el gran Diario de la Marina una ayuda a la Causa Española tan intensa y eficaz que sobrepasa cuanto en este sentido nuestro propio deseo pudiera haber imaginado.»

In the last year of war, the CNE, the Spanish Embassy and the FET y de las JONS cooperated closely, despite past differences, thanks to Rivero, who, according to the Inspector of Falange, had detached from CNE²⁶⁶:

«para darnos a nosotros importancia y prestigio»

In fact, he also participated as speaker in all public events organized by the Falange and Auxilio Social, such as in 30th April 1938 and 19th February 1939.

Only after the end of the war, while the events in Europe precipitated towards the World War and the antifascist propaganda in the Americas intensified, Rivero began to

265 Ibidem, f. 209.

266 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 27, exp. 6, f. 85.

distance himself from Falangism, as the Chief of Falange in Cuba Genaro Riestra, on the 20th July 1940, wrote to the Delegado Nacional²⁶⁷:

«El Embajador de España es Pepín Rivero, a quien Espelius consulta las cosas mas ridículas, y Pepin se rie de el y de todos los españoles que aquí viven.»

Actually, Riestra went as far as defining him «the great scam of Cuba (*la gran estafa de Cuba*)²⁶⁸», because of his perceived treason, that is his lack of support in front of the wave of protests against his nomination to General Consul of Spain.

At the same time, however, Pepín Rivero had maintained excellent relationships with Spanish authorities. For this reason, he had been awarded the Cruz Blanca de Mérito Naval – being the first Latin American civilian to receive this military decoration –, the rank of Comendador de la Orden de Mehdauí in Spanish Morocco (30th October 1937), the Golden Medal of the Spanish Red Cross (18th March 1940), and the Medalla Oficial conmemorativa del Glorioso Alzamiento Nacional y de la Victoria (19th April 1940)²⁶⁹.

Nor his efforts went unrecognized by the Axis countries, since he also received the Verdienstkreuz des Ordens vom Deutschen Adler (1. Stufe) (1938), and the rank of Officer in the Ordine dei Santi Maurizio e Lazzaro (1939), bestowed by the House of Savoy. The latter was awarded on 6th April in occasion of the farewell party for German Ambassador Hans Hermann Völckers²⁷⁰, in the presence of the representatives of Spain (Miguel Espinos) and Italy (Giovanni Persico). The Italian Ambassador commended Rivero's contribution to the fascist cause²⁷¹:

«Con gran placer, hago esto en presencia del representante del Führer, creador de la Nueva y más Grande Alemania [. . .] Ud., mi querido e ilustre amigo, ha comprendido que un nuevo idealismo, nacionalista, revolucionario y tradicional, está levantándose en diferentes naciones Europeas y que una lucha dramática se estaba desarrollando entre [. . .] un nuevo mundo, basado en el orden, en la autoridad y la disciplina [. . .] y [uno] basado en la antigua y gastada

267 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 153, exp. 12, f. 47.

268 Francisco Blanco Morales, *Las Falanges del Exterior*, s.n., s.l., 2011, p. 85.

269 K. Figueredo, *Impresiones de un periodista olvidado*, op. cit., passim.

270 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 153, exp. 11, f. 4/3.

271 Ibidem, f. 4.

y humanitaria teoría internacionalista del siglo XIX. A pesar de todos los peligros, ha sabido Ud. encontrar el verdadero camino [...] los hechos han demostrado su elevado sentir político, han confirmado sus profecías y asegurado el triunfo de los principios que ha defendido. Me alegro al saber que el eco de sus progresos triunfales ha llegado a Roma, donde el Duce, Jefe del Gobierno [...] supo combatir con el mismo espíritu y el mismo fervor [...] la gran batalla que libra con su pluma [...].»

To whom the journalist gratefully answered²⁷²:

«Le ruego transmita a S. Majestad, el Rey-Emperador de Italia y Ethiopia, la expresión de mi más sincera gratitud por haberme otorgado la condecoración más alta de su casa y le diga a su Duce y al pueblo italiano que sabré honrar la Orden de San Mauricio y Lázaro... sirviendo, como hasta ahora, por la causa de la verdad y la justicia»

The end of the Civil War in Spain corresponded therefore to the high-water mark of Rivero's honeymoon with Fascism.

2.3.2.2 *The use of press in the War*

The role Pepín Rivero had in the Spanish Civil War involved not only his support to pro-Francoist organizations in terms of public relations, but also, and most importantly, the organization of a press campaign in favour of the Nationalist faction and in marked contrast with the progressive and socialist Left, in Spain and in Cuba. Through his newspapers he reached an important part of the public opinion, which was not necessarily leaning to the Right.

Starting in September 1936, he insisted on his first-hand knowledge of the war, through his sojourn in Spain²⁷³:

«En Cuba contaré todo lo que ví en España de los españoles [...] A mi nadie lo ha contado, yo lo he visto.»

At the same time, he contrasted his experience with Communist propaganda. In fact, he attacked the whole Left, denouncing progressive intellectuals and the labour movement as useful idiots manipulated by the Communist politicians²⁷⁴:

272 Ibidem.

273 *Impresiones*, in "Diario de la Marina", 25th September 1936, p. 1.

274 Ibidem.

«En Cuba existe el comunismo, como en todas partes, entre dos clases de gente: los infelices analfabetos, que se dejan embaucar, y cierto tipo de pillete politicastro que sólo espera que se enturbie el río para pescar mejor.»

Therefore, all the support to the Spanish Republic was, in his opinion, in service of International Communism, which was the foremost responsible of the civil war in Spain, due to its crimes²⁷⁵.

«Lo cierto es que, sin el movimiento militar, España hubiese dado en el más hondo abismo a que descendió jamás nación alguna. Parodia del infierno moscovita, ese pueblo de sangre caliente y temperamento fogoso hubiera perecido tras terribles y truculentos estertores.»

On the other hand, the military insurrection enjoyed the support of masses and truly represented a struggle of good versus evil.

An noteworthy example was the controversy between “Pepín Rivero” and Eduardo Chibás in April 1937. The latter (more on him in chapter 7) had answered to the question “What do you think about the War of Spain” on the review “*Bohemia*”²⁷⁶, stating that he supported the Spanish nation against the fascist foreign aggression and distinguishing between two Spains: a progressive and Republican one against a clerical and militaristic one.

Rivero, soon before, had referred to Chibás, and other Republican supporters as lackeys of Communism²⁷⁷:

«¿Quiénes hacían el comunismo en un país? [...] Los agitadores, los adalides enfermos de la fiebre colorada suelen ser pocos. Pocos y malos. Malos como agitadores. Y por lo común, bastante obtusos.»

Some days later, he attacked him explicitly, defining him a rich, megalomaniac, extremist. He also discredited Chibás’ sources²⁷⁸:

«las opiniones de unos cuantos tráfugas y de otros cuantos infelices que no se han sentido con fuerzas espirituales para ganar en Madrid o en Barcelona las palmas del martirio.»

275 Ibidem, 30th September 1936, p. 1.

276 *Qué opina usted sobre la guerra de España?*, in “*Bohemia*”, 4th April 1937.

277 *Impresiones*, in “*Diario de la Marina*”, 2nd April 1937, p. 1.

278 Ibidem, 14th April 1937, p. 1.

and, in contrast, he quoted vast parts of a manifesto being edited in Paris by various Spanish intellectuals in support of the Nationalist cause, which stated²⁷⁹:

«La sublevación militar de España es una resistencia perfectamente lícita a la opresión y a la tiranía anarco-marxista, una guerra de defensa de la vida nacional española.»

And went on, describing the crimes supposedly committed by the Popular Front before the military insurge²⁸⁰:

«[. . .] había quemado 84 iglesias, 4 redacciones de periódicos, 56 círculos políticos y 96 casas particulares de personas de derecha. Y había asesinado a 256 ciudadanos y causado daños físicos a más de mil. Y había robado, sin indemnizaciones de ningún género, 300 propiedades privadas. Y cerrado 800 centros católicos de enseñanza. Y dejado sin trabajo, en la calle, a quantos no estuvieran afiliados a las organizaciones izquierdistas. E introducido en los cuarteles, aeródromos y arsenales el virus bolchevique. Y depuesto a centenares de funcionarios de toda categoría. Y permitido que se atacase e insultase a la Magistratura, la Iglesia y el Ejército. Y desoído las advertencias y despreciado los testimonios de los diputados que denunciaban estos hechos atroces; este cúmulo de iniquidades, desde la tribuna de la Cámara; coronando la serie de sus crímenes anteriores al alzamiento militar – y causa del mismo – con el asesinato del exministro de la Monarquía y eximio orador Calvo Sotelo.»

In this way, the Republic was portrayed as the aggressor, overturning Chibás' narrative.

Two days later, Rivero extended his attack to the AANPE (Asociación de Auxilio al Niño del Pueblo Español), an organization devoted to raise funds for children in Republican Spain, denouncing the evacuation of children to other countries, especially Soviet Union²⁸¹:

«[. . .] donde puedan recibir una educación anti-religiosa y donde aprendan, junto con la cartilla (u omitiendo ésta si es necesario), el odio a todo lo creado, a las instituciones y a sus semejantes que no levanten el puño en los momentos solemnes.»

279 Ibidem.

280 Ibidem.

281 Ibidem, 16th April 1937, p. 1.

He also ironizes their claim to protect Spanish civilians, contrasting it with the atrocities committed by the Republicans. To this regard, he published the photos of the notorious massacre of the family Gala y Llera committed in Granja de Villahermosa (Badajoz) on 24th September 1936²⁸², remarking the case of a 2-years-old child with smashed head and a 11-years-old girl who was raped before being killed²⁸³:

«Este es, sin duda, uno de los casos a que se refieren los organizadores de la «Asociación para la defensa del niño del pueblo español», algo de lo que precisa impedir a toda costa en nombre de la civilización y de los principios de humanidad»

In this way, he aims at shocking the moderate opinion in order to completely delegitimize his opponent and the Republican side.

On 17th April, he published a letter written by Chibás, who rejected any personal accusations and confirmed his opposition to Communism, while, at the same time, insisting on condemning the Nationalist crimes, as denounced also by right-wing observers, such as David Lloyd George, Miguel de Unamuno and Ángel Ossorio y Gallardo²⁸⁴.

In the same number, Rivero's reply was even harsher. He accused his interlocutor to be naive and ignorant of Spanish reality, and of relying on untrustworthy informers²⁸⁵:

«Ni a mí ni a ninguna persona enterada pueden impresionar los testimonios de traidores como [José] Bergamín y [Ángel] Ossorio y Gallardo y de cuatro curas que han conservado su pellejo a cambio de hacer el elogio de los asesinos de dieciséis mil sacerdotes y de más de cien mil laicos no combatientes.»

At the same time, he insisted on his personal experience to confirm that far from being a foreign aggression against the Spanish nation, the military insurgence enjoyed a wide

282 Though the Republican propaganda affirmed that photographic documentation was staged (Cfr. Antonio Bahamonde y Sánchez de Castro, *Un año con Queipo, Memorias de un nacionalista*, Ediciones Españolas, Barcelona 1938, pp. 142-143), it was later confirmed (Cfr. Nicolás Salas, *La otra memoria histórica. 500 testimonios gráficos y documentales de la represión marxista en España (1931-1939)*, Almuzara, Cordoba 2006, pp. 109-122.).

283 *Impresiones*, in "Diario de la Marina", 16th April 1937, op. cit.

284 *Carta del Dr. Chibás*, in "Diario de la Marina", 16th April 1937, op. cit.

285 *Impresiones*, in "Diario de la Marina", 17th April 1937, p. 1.

popular support. Nor it could have actually gained the upper hand, in lack of it²⁸⁶:

«¿Conque unos oficiales y tres mil soldados han podido con veinticuatro millones de habitantes? Porque no me negará usted que los combatientes de oficio nacionalistas, a los diez días de estallada la guerra podían contarse con los dedos.

Yo, excelente amiguito, estuve en esa España victima de los espadones, y ví con mis ojos como las multitudes en una resurrección de inflamado españolismo, cantaban la guerra santa contra los simios sin Dios, sus aliados y sus secuaces. Y entonces comprobé lo que dos meses antes sospechaba: que en la guerra que se acababa de desatar entre la materia y el espíritu, éste saldría triunfador.»

On the other hand, according to the journalist, the support on part of the upper classes to the Nationalist side had been quite lukewarm, despite their interest in defending the status quo from Communist revolution²⁸⁷:

«Los ricos, y usted debe de saberlo, non dan absolutamente nada, salvo disgustos y sorpresas. Los ricos no ayudan ni a desmontar la guillotina que los locos furiosos y los criminales de los movimientos extremistas arman de vez en vez para cercenarles la cabeza. [. . .] esto es, del orden, de la civilización, de la decencia, de la familia, de la cultura occidental, de la moral de Cristo y de las rentas del señor Chibas.»

Chibas himself, then, as a member of wealthy family, was a potential target of the social subversives he supported, in Rivero's words.

In the same days, since the controversy had awaken the public's attention towards the subject, the newspaper intensified its campaign in favour of the Nationalist side, publishing a number of articles, to discredit the witnesses mentioned by Chibás, such as an anonymous piece against Ossorio y Gallardo, defined as²⁸⁸:

«El católico sin Dios. . . El monárquico sin rey. . . El español sin España. . . El hombre que parece que lo es todo, sin

286 Ibidem.

287 Ibidem.

288 X.X., *Los nombres de la tragedia*. Angel Ossorio y Gallardo, ibidem, 17th April 1937, p. 13.

contenido ninguno. Ahora no es otra cosa que lacayo de un gobierno de Soviets.»

Others insisted on the atrocities committed by the “Reds”²⁸⁹ and remarked the international condemn of Republican crimes²⁹⁰

Another point of debate regarded foreign volunteers: in order to deflect attacks on Italian presence in Spain, recently brought to foreground by the controversial draw in Guadalajara²⁹¹, it was remarked that Republican pilots were being trained in France²⁹² and that the presence of international volunteers in the Republican ranks was relevant enough to prolong the war²⁹³.

A preminent part in this operation was played by the former Vice Director León Ichaso Díaz (1869-1938). He was born in Bilbao, and, after having obtained a PhD in Philosophy and Letters at the University of Salamanca, migrated to Cuba, where he fought in the colonial army. After the war, he lived in Cienfuegos, directing the newspapers “*La correspondencia*” and “*Revista masónica*”, before moving to Havana to work in the *Diario* in 1911, becoming Vice Director between 1922 and 1926²⁹⁴. Being a freemason and a conservative, he supported the CEDA, directing its review in Cuba “*Patria*”²⁹⁵.

In the occasion of the Pan American Day, he wrote²⁹⁶:

«Esa España de sus poetas, de sus pintores y de sus escultores; esa España de sus grandes hombres y de sus eximios

289 Cfr. *Ametrallan a unas mujeres catalanas porque protestaron*, *ibidem*, 15th April 1937, p. 1.; *Niños de España*, *ibidem*, 17th April 1937, p. 3.

290 AP, *El comunismo es la causa de la guerra que padece España. El Gobierno español ha degenerado en una Liga contra Iglesia y Clero*, *ibidem*, 16th April, p. 13.

291 Manuel Aznar, *Vuelve Europa a una situación internacional muy delicada*, *ibidem*, 14th April 1937, p. 13; René Richard, *El contra-ataque de los Marxistas despejo Madrid hacia el noroeste*, *ibidem*, 15th April 1937, p. 14.

292 *Franco tiene pruebas de que en las escuelas francesas de aviación se adiestran los pilotos para los rojos*, *ibidem*, 14th April 1937, p. 13.

293 Manuel Aznar, *La comedia de la no-intervención, el problema de los voluntarios y la guerra de España*, *ibidem*, 15th April 1937, 15.

294 Cecilia Arrozarena, *El roble y la ceiba: historia de los vascos en Cuba*, Txalaparta, Tafalla 2003, pp. 284-285.

295 Jorge Domingo Cuadriello, *Los españoles en las letras cubanas durante el siglo XX*, Editorial Renacimiento, Valencina de la Concepción 2002, p. 222.

296 León Ichaso, *España en el Día de las Américas*, *ibidem*, 16th April 1937, p. 13.

valores; esa España de sus gigantes empresas y proezas, es la que defienden sus reconquistadores. Y esa es, también, la España a la que racialmente y secularmente están ligadas Cuba y los demás pueblos hispano-americanos. La otra España, la falsa, la comunista, la atea, la anárquica, la destructora de la familia, del hogar y de la sociedad, la rusa, no puede tener relación ninguna con las Américas españolas hidalgas, nobles, heroicas, soberanas e independientes, cristianas y civilizadas»

Another noteworthy article attacked the Basque nationalists for their defence of the Republic, accusing them of preferring the regional autonomies to the salvation of Spain, showing a «pagan-political conception»²⁹⁷.

Rivero's paper crusade against Communism was not only focused on atrocities committed by the Republican side but also defended a new social model based on cooperation between classes and social promotion of workers, since liberal democracy was regarded to be insufficient to resist against the Communist danger²⁹⁸. The gap between the employer and the worker had to be filled²⁹⁹:

«Es necesario oponer a la proletarización sistemática de las multitudes el aburguesamiento sistemático de las mismas [...] uniendo la suerte del obrero y del empleado a la del negocio del que vive.»

On the other hand, he considered capitalism to be source of real benefits for workers³⁰⁰:

«El capitalismo puede ofrecer a los trabajadores ventajas inmediatas, positivas, tangibles. El comunismo, y los sucedáneos que forman el izquierdismo rabioso, solo pueden tallar a base de promesas de cumplimiento remoto y de fantásticos y fermentados edenes.»

From this point of view, his positions were much more coherent with conservative apology of capitalist economy, than with fascist critique of plutocracy and bourgeoisie.

297 León Ichaso, *Porqué los nacionalistas vascos luchan con los rojos*, ibidem, 17th April 1937, p. 13.

298 *Impresiones*, in "Diario de la Marina", 16th June 1937, p. 1.

299 Ibidem, 11th June 1937, p. 1.

300 Ibidem, 10th June 1937, p. 1.

2.3.2.3 *The "Victory Speech"*

Another important testament to Rivero's political ideas consists in the speech delivered on 19th February 1939, during the celebration of "*Plato Único*", which could be considered, an actually fascist discourse. Even taking into account the particularity of this occasion, the lecture includes a number of quotes from past editorials, which demonstrate that it was artfully prepared by his author.

He started proclaiming the impending victory of the Nationalist forces³⁰¹:

«La gran guerra social de España, prólogo o epílogo de la tragedia social del mundo, está a punto de terminar con la victoria aplastante, absoluta del cristianismo sobre el ateísmo, de la hispanidad sobre el asiaticismo, de la civilización sobre los instintos primarios del hombre.»

He went then as far as saying that the failure of the military coup and the subsequent devolution in civil war had the advantage of allowing a more thorough elimination of the deadly viruses of anarchism and communism.

According to Pepín Rivero, the war had been a struggle between good and evil («Ormuz y Arimán»³⁰²), where the creative genius of Spanish people fought against its darkest, nihilistic side. For this reason, a Republican victory would have signified a full scale Bolshevik Revolution destroying, along with the rest of Spain, the very democratic forces who had founded the Republic, whereas the Nationalist victory would not be a mere return to pre-war or pre-republican status quo³⁰³:

«Pero si bien es cierto que la República liberal es cosa tan del pasado como los reyes visigodos, al mismo pasado pertenecen muchas peculiaridades de la vida nacional española. Así, los obstáculos tradicionales han sido barridos para siempre, y ni en lo político ni en lo social habrá españoles provistos de derechos sin sus correspondientes deberes.»

³⁰¹ *Discurso pronunciado antes 12 mil personas, por José I. Rivero, director del "Diario de la Marina", en la fiesta del "Plato Único" celebrada por Falange Española, el domingo 19 de febrero de 1939, en el Campo Armada, La Habana 1939, p. 3.*

³⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 5.

³⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 7. For the phrase in italic, cfr. *Impresiones*, in "*Diario de la Marina*", 16th June 1937, p. 1.

These passages, advocating the creation of a new order, show a fascist, rather than simply conservative, worldview. Instead of a restoration, he called for a palingenetic renovation of the whole nation, with apocalyptic tones. Furthermore, the use of metaphors related to the medical or religious language is utterly consistent with fascist political lexicon.

By the way, apart from the recurring rants against bolshevism, it is interesting how, when he went on exalting the «New Spain», he followed the same rhetoric of Falange³⁰⁴:

«En España se creará la riqueza al través del trabajador dignificado. Y trabajadores lo serán todos [. . .].

Al español ricachón o simplemente de bien pasar, que concebía la patria como fuente pródiga de privilegios, para verlo habrá que ir al teatro [. . .].

Y así los logreros del régimen y los caciques y los señoritos tontos y los negociantes sin consciencia. . .

La España del futuro no se parecerá en nada a la que sucumbió con la Monarquía ni a la que advino con la República ni a la que fraguaban los sumisos servidores de la Tercera Internacional.»

This was the National Syndicalist model of a workers' nation, opposed to both Communists and bourgeois, without vain privileges. To this extent, José Antonio is explicitly mentioned as the preacher of the new State³⁰⁵:

«La riqueza española, la producida y la por producir, estará al servicio de la nación española [. . .] para ello sólo es necesario poner en vigor los puntos fundamentales de la excelsa doctrina predicada por la mente limpia de José Antonio Primo de Rivera.»

The negation and obsolescence of class struggle in favour of inter-class unity, cemented by hierarchy and duty to the Fatherland, is another mainstay of fascist doctrine, being especially convenient in practice for the nationalist bourgeoisie.

The main architect of this new nation was to be Francisco Franco, here presented with all the characteristics of the rightful King, combining the role of victorious general and miraculous economist («a thaumaturgist's work»)³⁰⁶:

304 Ibidem, pp. 7-8. For the phrase in italic, cfr. *Impresiones*, in "Diario de la Marina", 16th June 1937, p. 1.

305 Ibidem, p. 9.

306 Ibidem, p. 8.

«Franco [. . .] venció al hambre, redujo la miseria, suprimió la holganza, combatió al desorden, persiguió la grosería y entabla combate contra la injusticia social.»

This insistence on the Caudillo's actions is coherent with the rhetoric of action opposed to inane words. The New Spain did not flaunted his future victory, accomplished it. At the same time, it did not care about the propaganda of «Jewry and universal Communism», being sure of its superiority³⁰⁷. However, activism and anti-intellectualism, as well as conflation of Judaism and Communism (Judeo-Bolshevism), were not exclusive to fascism, but rampant in most far Right currents.

Lastly, as a homage to the the Italian and German Ambassadors, he celebrated³⁰⁸:

«los dos estadistas de más enjundia del presente siglo, los gloriosos Mussolini y Hitler [. . .] los dos adalides del nacionalismo alemán e italiano.»

proclaiming that they did not intend to take possess of Spain, since they knew that³⁰⁹:

«la colaboración española la tienen asegurada, no sólo por razones de gratitud [y] [. . .] las esencias del movimiento liberador de España son puramente hispánicas.»

so that the toll of death caused by communism would have ensured the Spain's loyalty to the anti-Communist front. On the other hand, their ideology remains on the background: Mussolini and Hitler are mentioned as nationalist and anti-Communist leaders, with no reference to their anti-liberal or antisemite stance.

The main focus, therefore, still lies on Franco and Spain. So it can be most properly stated that Pepín Rivero's harengue fully expresses the values of early Francoism, rather than the original Falangism.

2.3.2.4 *Repositioning: from Madrid to Washington*

No matter his preminence and evidence in the eyes of his contemporaries, Rivero's relationship with fascist ideology between 1936 and 1939 could be considered at best flirtation.

307 Ibidem, p. 10.

308 Ibidem, pp. 10-11.

309 Ibidem.

In fact, it would soon correct his positions, in the forty-two months which go from Franco's Victory to Pearl Harbour.

To this extent, it is of utmost importance that President Roosevelt had sent as a new Ambassador to Cuba, after the death of Joshua Butler Wright at his post on 4th December 1939, his Assistant Secretary of State George Strausser Messersmith, who was appointed on 12th January 1940 and presented his credentials on 8th March. The diplomat, who had been Consul in Berlin (1930-1934) and Ambassador to Austria (1934-1937), had probably been chosen for his past contrast to National Socialist activities.

Messersmith's goal was to ensure the full cooperation of Cuba in the upcoming war against the Axis. For this reason, he also met José Ignacio Rivero, due to his importance in Cuban press and his moral authority among Cuban conservatives. The meeting took place on 5th November 1940, when the journalist had just come back from New York, where he had acquired the oldest Spanish-language newspaper in the United States, "*La Prensa*"³¹⁰. The same days saw an increase in anti-fascist mobilization due to the nomination of Falangist leader Genaro Riestra to the position of General Consul of Spain.

Rivero had dinner at his villa³¹¹ with Messersmith and the British Minister George Ogilvie-Forbes, previously a diplomat to Republican Spain (1936-1937) and Germany (1937-1939). According to the American diplomat³¹²:

«Rivero was quite under the spell of his trip north, and I think there is no doubt that he has taken a definite position. I am hopeful that this new position will translate itself also into his restraining Falange activities here.»

In fact, his business travel in the United States, though it is unconfirmed whether he actually bought "*La Prensa*", strongly hints at a reconciliation with democratic powers, though it is worth to notice that he never espoused explicitly anti-American positions.

A week later, Messersmith gave to the Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles a more detailed analysis³¹³:

310 UDL, MSS 0109, 1411-00, p. 5.

311 As a note of colour, Messersmith observed that a pillar of the veranda had been vandalized with a large swastika.

312 Ibidem.

313 UDL, MSS 0109, 1417-00, p. 1.

«It is my personal conviction that Pepin Rivero has made his decision as to where he stands, difficult as it was to make for him. I believe he is going to support close cooperation with us, inter-American cooperation, and will not support interference from Spain. I think he realizes the futility of the present program of the Spanish Government, and the futility of any idea of Spain exercising any control over any part of this hemisphere. On the other hand, he has these close connections with the Falange here, and the Spanish element looks up to him as its principal support and for certain guidance. I do not believe that he himself is really active in the Falange, and he may even exercise a good influence at this time through his connection with it.»

Though, thereafter he went on reporting that Rivero had secretly booked a suite at the Hotel Nacional in coincidence with the arrival in Cuba of Riestra, his judgement is clearly in favour of the director of the "*Diario de la Marina*".

In fact, there was a mutual convenience in this sense. Whereas Pepín Rivero had better to keep good relationships with the United States, to preserve his social standing and economic interests, on the other hand, the Allies needed his support to their cause, due to his influence in Cuba.

The new narration he adopted to defend his choices and past is expressed clearly in the autoapologetic speech he gave on 13th July 1941³¹⁴, during a public meeting in the newsroom of his main newspaper. He presented himself as a victim of a climate of tension, caused by Communist agitation, to the extent that he had to travel in an armoured car. He such describes the main charges he had received³¹⁵:

«Mucha gente estima, de buena fe, que soy reaccionario, que soy extranjero, que soy un turiferario del capitalismo opresor y que soy fascista. Son los cuatros cargos principales que la tenaz propaganda de mis enemigos me espeta día tras día.»

To them he answered in detail, defending his *Cubanidad*³¹⁶:

«Yo soy cubano no porque haya nacido en Cuba y aquí me haya criado y me haya educado aquí, ni tampoco porque sea hijo de una cubana. Yo soy cubano porque mi amor a mi patria lo tengo más que probado con mi actuación.»

314 "*El Avance Criollo*", 14th July 1941, pp. 1, 6.

315 Ibidem.

316 Ibidem.

As a proof, he pointed at the fact that he had no foreign investments.

Furthermore, he attributed his hardline conservative stance to the demagogy and the disorder created by the Communists, who instigated the workers to make impossible requests and conspired to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat³¹⁷:

«Yo aparezco como reaccionario y conservador a outrance desde que en 1933 y años sucesivos le salí al encuentro, come a una bestia brava, a las fuerzas deletéreas de la revolucion marxista.»

In his opinion, it was only as a reaction against these crimes that people became conservative and went as far as sympathizing with fascism, even when they did not share fascist ideas³¹⁸:

«A mi no me importa en lo absoluto que se me llame fascista, porque no por ello, dado mi hábito de asimilar adjetivos, me voy a sentir partidario del Nuevo Orden.»

In this way, the accusation of fascism was turned back on his opponents.

In the same way, he apologetically reviewed his past commitment, starting from his support to Franco³¹⁹:

«Yo defendí a Franco en uso de mi perfecto derecho, y, por cierto, mucho antes de que Franco consubstanciase el Estado español con Falange Española. Yo defendí a Franco porque lo que viene a decirnos ahora, mucho después de terminada la guerra, D. Indalecio Preto, yo lo vi bien claro desde antes de la guerra: en le fondo aquello era una batalla contra el marxismo.»

and his travel to Nationalist Spain became an homage to his father³²⁰:

«Me retraté en Pamplona vestido de requeté porque tuve y sigo teniendo a orgullo verme por unas horas con el uniforme que vistiera mi padre en las montañas del Maestrazgo sesenta años atrás.»

Even the decorations received from fascist governments were to be exclusively seen as an award for his anti-Communism³²¹:

317 Ibidem.

318 Ibidem.

319 Ibidem.

320 Ibidem.

321 Ibidem.

«Le repuse que lo difícil para mí sería explicarle, en el caso de que no las tuviera, por que no las tenía, pues tratándose del combatiente más tenaz del comunismo en Hispanoamérica, era lógico suponer que se acordaran de mí los gobiernos anticomunistas.»

This was not certainly not false, but constituted an easy way to overshadow less acceptable aspects, such as the praises to Mussolini and Hitler and the collaboration with Falange.

Another important speech was the one Rivero held at the radio station CMQ on 29th July 1941³²², when he stated that the danger of a fifth column did not exist in Cuba, since this phenomenon was related to the presence of near hostile power. The only power close enough to Cuba were the United States, but they did not intend to subvert Cuban democracy. On the contrary, had a real threat existed, they would have supported and defended Cuba. Therefore, the campaign against the fifth column was anti-patriotic, since it created a climate of suspicion. He also warned against the totalitarian propaganda of the Communists, who had been pro-German until Germany and Soviet Union had a treaty.

The triumphal conclusion of this process of repositioning was the aforementioned award of the Maria Moors Cabot Prize on 10th November 1941, consisting in a medal and a parchment, as well as 1000 \$ for travel expenses. The President of Columbia University, Nicholas Murray Butler, defined him³²³:

«[...] un poderoso intercesor de amistad y cooperación entre todas las naciones Americanas.»

Rivero himself, as he received from the hands of the physician William H. McCastline the medal, bearing engraved «*Medalla de Amistad Internacional por Distinguido Servicio Periodístico*», proclaimed³²⁴:

«Por todo el mundo durante los últimos veinte años se han verificado furiosos ataques a la democracia. Estos ataques han sido hechos por aquellos teóricos extremados de amplia igualdad entre los hombres que son paradójicamente los enemigos de los hombres. El Diario de la Marina no ha dudado por un momento en oponerse a ellos y sobre todo, a su sistema.»

322 “*El Avance Criollo*”, 30th July 1941, pp. 1, 6.

323 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 153, exp. 11, f. 4/2.

324 Ibidem.

In this way, his whole political commitment was resumed under the flag of anti-Communism, a popular view for the American public, especially, since the United States and Soviet Union were still not allied.

Unsurprisingly, there were demonstrations against him. An editorial of the "*Columbia Spectator*", the university magazine, lamented³²⁵:

«Como el Dr. José Ignacio Rivero, bajo base de sus antecedentes, pudo de modo conceptible haber sido "considerado" para un premio Maria Moors Cabot [. . .] está fuera de nuestra inteligencia [. . .] claramente el prestigio llevado por el premio Cabot no debiera de haber ido a glorificar a una persona que ha apoyado todo cuanto ha existido hostil a la actual política anti-Facista de nuestra nación [. . .]»

Moreover, about 40 people, belonging to the United American Spanish Aid Committee and the Social Action Committee of the Union Theological Seminary, rallied in Broadway until 116th Street, holding billboards on the presumed connection between Hitler and Rivero, before being dispersed by police.

The Decan of the Journalism School, Carl Ackerman, commented to their regard³²⁶:

«Poseo todo cuanto tiene PM sobre el. Pasé un mes en Cuba el pasado marzo, investigando la situación. Rivero es uno de los amigos mas fieles de America, y le apuesto a PM que el futuro ha de probarlo. En realidad, ha sido uno de nuestros amigos mas fieles durante los dos últimos años [. . .]. No me interesa lo que pasó en 1936. Este hombre está bien.»

The redemption of José Ignacio Rivero Alonso, in the eyes of the imperialist power dominating Cuba, was complete. It is little surprise, therefore, that after the attack on Pearl Harbour he publicly devolved the decorations received from Italy and Germany.

325 Ibidem.

326 Ibidem.

3 Cuban Fascist Associations

Es en legiones de exaltado nacionalismo, revolucionario y sindicalista [. . .], como nuestra juventud a la cabeza del pueblo ha de escalar las altas cumbres de la permanente conquista del Estado para realizar la obra fecunda y fervorosamente consagrada a la grandeza de la Patria, en el colectivo impulso de asir el logro victorioso de una Cuba LIBRE, INDEPENDIENTE Y SOBERANA.

*Estatutos de la Legión Nacional
Revolucionaria Sindicalista*

The presence in Cuba of foreign fascist organizations constituted an example for the founding of similar-minded autochthonous parties. However, their emergence was quite late, especially if compared to most other Latin American countries. In fact, all three Cuban fascist groups were founded in October 1938, closely following the legalization of the Communist Party. Doubtlessly, it was this event that triggered a reaction on the part of Cuban Anti-Communist milieu. It can therefore be easily surmised that what scarce fascination Fascist ideology could have on Cubans mostly regarded its anti-Communism, that is a prominent but not exhaustive characteristic.

This is also evident in the fact that two of these parties (the National Fascist Party and the Cuban Nazi Party) did

not actually go further than these petite-bourgeois, law-and-order, anti-subversive stances. However, the same positions could be supported by more mainstream parties, without suffering the stigma associated with fascism by progressive and democratic propaganda. This explains why these always remained fringe groups, hardly mentioned by antifascist press.

On the other hand, the most successful one, though always in a limited way, was also the most radical one (the National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion), which was the only Cuban party, which can be described as fully fascist, both from the ideological and practical point of view. In fact, due to the influence from the Spanish Falange, it espoused nationalism and anti-Communism as well as syndicalism and anti-liberalism. At the same time, it was organized on the model of the contemporary European fascist parties, with uniformed militarily-styled members and the constitution of student and syndical branches. Furthermore, despite the similarity with the others in terms of social class, its membership was definitely younger.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the development and demise of these groups, with especial attention to their limits and shortcomings, rather than just describing the outline of fascism in Cuba, probates the near absence of fascism from Cuban political life.

3.1

THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALIST LEGION

The foremost example of Cuban fascism was, without shade of doubt, the Legión Nacional Revolucionaria Sindicalista (National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion). Despite being less influent and relevant than the Falange, it still received some attacks from antifascist press. Most conspicuously, Allan Chase dedicated a whole chapter to the Legion¹, though it should be taken with utmost care and skepticism, as the rest of his book.

Furthermore, this organization was also put on trial, along with the Falange, in 1941. This fact both proves its relative importance and contributes to give more information about it. Even keeping into account the need to check the various sources and the inherent limitations due to the historical and social context, it emerges that this single group had all the basic characteristics of fascist theory and praxis.

3.1.1 THE BEGINNINGS

Though the National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion was also founded in Autumn 1938, as a reaction to the legalization of the Communist Party, it actually had grown out of a pre-existent organization, which was the first Cuban fascist group, and it doubtlessly had been inspired by the model constituted by the FET y de las JONS. In fact, some of its leading members were close to the Falange. It soon showed to be more numerous and active than other similar groups, at the point that it would attract the attention of the judicial authority.

3.1.1.1 *The Students' Legion of Cuba*

The Legion was originally born as the Legión Estudiantil de Cuba (Students' Legion of Cuba), which had been founded on 28th February 1938, as a cultural association, in the offices of San Miguel 11 (bajos), by a provisional directory composed by Jesús Manuel Marinas Álvarez (President), Manuel Luis del Riego (Vice President), Conrado Almiñanaque

¹ A. Chase, *Falange. The Axis Secret Army in America*, G. B. Putnam & Sons, New York 1943, pp. 79-92.

Agudo (Secretary), Juan Mas (Vice Secretary), Manuel García Suarez (Treasurer), Guillermo Folla (Vice Treasurer), Juan Grana (Flag Bearer), Alfredo Formoso (Vice Flag Bearer), and the Board Members Herminia Menéndez, Jaime López, Claudio Lorenzo Balsa, José Angel Pando Rivero, Carlos Saldaña, Eulalia Trueba².

The statutes³ were approved by the Provincial government on 7th March⁴, and a new directory, largely coinciding with the former, met on 18th March to write down the act of constitution⁵. The only changes in the directory were the nomination of Antonio Díaz Calafell as Vice Secretary and the elimination of the positions of Flag Bearer and Vice Flag Bearer⁶. After the solution of minor bureaucratic problems⁷, the association was eventually approved and registered in tome 20, folio 581, number 10139 of the Registro de Asociaciones on 23rd May⁸.

According to the regulation⁹:

«Artículo 1: La asociación tiene por objeto unir estrechamente a los distintos estudiantes que aisladamente y en todo el territorio nacional laboran por la restauración de la moral cristiana, infundiendo en la consciencias el amor al estudio y a la Patria [. .].

Artículo 2: La asociación persigue tres fines: de carácter patriótico, cultural y de protección.»

It was also stated that the members were to be called «compañeros» and local branches were to be founded all over the country. The goal of “protection” hinted from the beginning at paramilitary activities. Its flag was similar to the national one, with the blue letters “L E C”, while the motto was «Por la Patria y la Cultura».

On 22nd June, the association moved its offices to the number 356 of Manzana de Gómez, a modern office block and shopping arcade in the Parque Central¹⁰. Here Jesús

2 ANC, FRA, leg. 331, exp. 9779, ff. 1-2.

3 Ibidem, ff. 3-13.

4 Ibidem, f. 14.

5 Ibidem, ff. 15-17.

6 Ibidem, f. 19.

7 Ibidem, ff. 20-22.

8 Ibidem, ff. 23-24.

9 Ibidem, ff. 3-13.

10 Ibidem, f. 25.

Marinas, along with other members, later founded the National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion. Henceforth, the Students' Legion would continue to exist as the students' branch of the latter organization, with its leadership largely overlapping.

Updating about the Student's Legion ceases in June 1939, when it is reported its change of offices¹¹. This explains why it was not taken into account, as a separate organization, in the course of later judiciary investigations and actions against its mother branch. He was therefore only dissolved on 17th December 1952, along with other no longer existing or operating associations¹².

3.1.1.2 *The founding of the Legion*

The National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion was founded on 7th October, when its leaders wrote to the Provincial governor, presenting him with the statutes of the new¹³:

«[...] organización creada con fines exclusivamente patrióticos y anti-internacionales»

This regulation was approved on 13th October¹⁴ and the act of constitution on the part of the Provisional Chief, Arturo Esteban de Carricarte García, soon followed on 21st October: the National Legionnaire Chief Jesús Marinas and the General Secretary Conrado Almiñanaque were assisted by four commissioners: Manuel García (Economic Interests), Arturo de Carricarte (Press & Propaganda), Claudio Lorenzo (Information), Juan Alberto Formoso y Prieto (General Interests)¹⁵.

As soon as its constitution was authorized, a delegation of legionnaires, most probably the Commission for Press & Propaganda, visited the redaction of the "*Diario de la Marina*" to communicate this fact, which apparently had already been preannounced in a recent manifesto of the Students' Legion¹⁶.

However, due to mistakes in the provincial administration, it was apparently not registered. Only in occasion of the enquiry by the Tribunal of Havana, related to the cause

¹¹ Ibidem, f. 27

¹² Ibidem, f. 30.

¹³ ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 20.

¹⁴ Ibidem, f. 13.

¹⁵ Ibidem, f. 22.

¹⁶ "*Diario de la Marina*", 16th October 1938.

72/939 for the crime of public disorder¹⁷, the question resurfaced, and the Legion had to send again the documentation proving its legalization¹⁸. Therefore, only on 24th June 1939, the Legion was registered in tome 20, folio 771, number 10516 of the Registro de Asociaciones¹⁹.

In the same period, the offices were moved from number 356 to number 311 of Manzana de Gómez (6th June 1939)²⁰, former seat of the JONS de la FE, and a few positions were changed. The National Supreme Council removed Juan Foroso from its office (30th April) and nominated Florentino Fernández (30th May)²¹. Later, Almiñaque resigned from its position (22nd June), maybe because of the aforementioned legal problems, and was relieved by Abelardo Vila González (23rd July)²². This appointment was celebrated the day after with another political meeting in the Parque Central²³.

The latter in turn resigned in January, after having denounced having been threatened by his comrades for having sown dissent²⁴. He was replaced *ad interim* by Florentino Fernández (General Interests), who exchanged positions with Arturo de Carricarte (Press & Propaganda). In the same occasion, a new Syndical Commission was created, with Miguel Vázquez Artesor at its head²⁵. This could indicate the birth of the syndical branch, called Frente Obrero Nacionalista (Nationalist Worker's Front)²⁶, who was not registered as independent association. In July, the offices moved again, this time in Misión 311 (altos).

Nevertheless, according to Chase, the debut of the Legionnaires took place with a political meeting in the Parque Central. He dated this event on Saturday 7th October 1937, at 8 p.m., as announced by coloured leaflets propagated the

17 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 16.

18 Ibidem, f. 21

19 Ibidem, f. 23. This led detective Ovidio Ramos to mistake the date of foundation with 24th June 1938 (cfr. Ibidem, ff. 67-69.)

20 Ibidem, f. 15.

21 Ibidem

22 Ibidem, f. 34.

23 "Diario de la Marina", 25th July 1939.

24 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 36.

25 Ibidem, f. 38.

26 Chongo (*El Fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 45) call it Frente Nacional Obrero and dates its foundation to 22nd April 1941, though at that time the Legion had already ceased its activities.

day before²⁷:

«CUBANO:

¡Asiste al primer mitin de la Legión Nacional Revolucionaria Sindicalista! Lugar: Parque Central el sábado 7 de octubre a las 8 pm.

¡Nacionalismo exaltado! ¡Absoluta cubanidad!

Desde la plataforma legionaria denunciaremos todas las injusticias ante ti que las sufres. Y todos los males causados por el Comunismo, el Judaismo y los políticos charlatanes y los falsos revolucionarios. Y diremos cómo la Legión Nacional Revolucionaria Sindicalista, con su credo, pondrá fin a tanta perfidia.

Oradores: F[llorentino] Fernández, Blas Hernández, Elicio García, Arturo E. de Carricarte, Abelardo González y Jesús M. Marinas.

¡No más charlatanerías de políticos! ¡No más hambre! ¡No más traiciones! ¡No más judíos! ¡No más racismo entre cubanos! ¡Pan y protección a todos los cubanos! ¡Por una Cuba libre, independiente y soberana!

¡CUBA, LEVÁNTATE!

Comisión de Prensa y Propaganda.»

The most evident problem, apart from Chase's intrinsic unreliability, is that the very date is mistaken, since 7th October 1938 was a Friday. On the other hand, most slogans were actually used by the Legion, whereas the focus on Communism, Judaism and social justice is coherent with its ideology. Consequently, it can be deemed to be likely that such an act of propaganda accompanied the legal constitution of the association, though it is doubtful that at that time, the legionnaires were already in uniform, as Chase states²⁸.

27 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 79. The Spanish text is from the Spanish edition.

28 Ibidem, pp. 79-80.

Chapter 3

3.1.2 POLITICAL OUTLINE

As for the actual size and activities of the National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion, there is no doubt that these have been exaggerated by its enemies, that is exactly what happened in the case of the Falange. The comparison between the antifascist press and the policial sources is very telling in this regard.

For example, Chase falsely claims²⁹:

«By July 1939 they still stood at the three-thousand mark, with possibly another thousand in their Student Legion [. . .]. Under Marinas's leadership, the Gray Shirts had developed into the proper nucleus of a Fascist terror corps.»

On the contrary, the Cuban police detective Ovidio Ramos reveals a far lower figure and danger³⁰:

«Que los repetidos Legionarios, no exceden de quinientos en toda la República, siendo los mismos hombres demasiado jóvenes y faltos de coraje necesario para llevar a cabo una campaña de esta indole, no teniendo persona alguna de solvencia moral que los respalde.»

More plausible was the claim that their presence was concentrated in the West, and specifically in Havana, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Camagüey and Caibarien³¹, though the main focus of their activities must have been in the capital.

3.1.2.1 *Structure and composition*

The Statutes of the Legion made clear that its organization was strongly hierarchical, with the Jefe Nacional, whose three-years last in charge was only inserted in formal compliance with the Cuban laws, had full powers. Chapter II specified³²:

«En la persona del Jefe Legionario Nacional, recaerá la máxima responsabilidad en la dirección ideológica y material del Movimiento, así como también la mayor autoridad en la conducta interior y exterior de los legionarios que constituyen en su totalidad la fuerza política de la Legión. En las facultades de opción absoluta que corresponden

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 83.

³⁰ ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 67-69.

³¹ A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 83.

³² ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 3-12., artt. 2-3.

al Jefe Legionario Nacional y de acuerdo con lo especificado en el Artículo precedente, aunque de modo leve, intervienen todas las probabilidades de modificación en materia ideológica, forma o estilo del desarrollo político del Movimiento Legionario, así como también los individuos designados para la ejecución de dichas actividades [. . .]»

In this way, the leader of the movement was not accountable in any way to his underlings.

This kind of organization was perfectly coherent not only with the fascist concept of *Führerprinzip*, according to which the leader of the national party or movement, by his charisma and will, embodied the very spirit of the people (*Volksggeist*), but also with the portrait of the Jefe Nacional we have. As summarized by Chongo³³:

«Marinas era un individuo muy activo. Y muy ambicioso. Usaba una especie de bigote “a lo Hitler”; en los actos públicos asumía posas artísticas, gesticulaba mucho, y pretendía hacer de cada frase un pensamiento inmortal; como Hitler, casi quería hipnotizar a los oyentes y en ocasiones, adquiría una especie de histerismo [. . .].»

Though such sources should be taken with care, they actually convey a description of Marinas' protagonism, which is compatible with available information.

At the same time, most actual work was done by the Commissioners (chapter IV), under supervision by the General Secretary (chapter III), who also coordinated the Provincial Chiefs. All the aforementioned formed then a National Supreme Council of 12 members, headed by the Jefe (chapter V), whose stated mission was³⁴:

«[. . .] trazar las normas políticas, sociales, jurídicas y éticas de la Legión Nacional Revolucionaria Sindicalista que han de servir de base para la conducta mantenida por los Legionarios.»

The same pyramidal model was replicated on smaller scale at provincial and local level (chapters VI-IX of the Statutes). Provincial Legions all had their Jefe Provincial, their Provincial Secretary and their four Provincial Commissioners, and it was established that³⁵:

33 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 37.

34 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 3-12., art. 23.

35 Ibidem, art. 29.

«Los Jefes Legionarios Provinciales ejercerán una absoluta autoridad ante las Legiones Locales, pero las determinaciones que ellos adopten deberán ser sometidas a la aprobación del Consejo Supremo Nacional, a través del Secretario General.»

The Local Legions, organized in any judicial district or municipal territory, with at least three members, only counted with the Jefe Local, the Local Secretary and the Local Commissioner for Economic Interests. Actually, not much is known about any activities having taken place in other provinces, but it must have been relevant enough to provoke legal actions from the Provincial courts (Cienfuegos 339/941 and Sancti Spíritus 429/941), as described afterwards. It is also quite doubtful that the Legion ever existed in the Province of Oriente.

Members were accepted regardless of age, sex, race and social class, as long as they were Cubans and they swore loyalty to the Fatherland (art. 40). Furthermore, there was no different categories among Legionnaires (art. 42). However, they could be expelled for the following causes³⁶:

«[. . .] el delito de indisciplina, desamor a la Patria, comunicar alientos a pretensiones internacionales de cualquier orden, la práctica de hábitos en la narcomanía, disminución en la dignidad varonil [homosexuality], la inmoralidad en los juegos de azar y todo acto que reduzca la elevación espiritual ciudadana.»

Finally, they were obliged to contribute with a 20 cents monthly quota, and to obey the hierarchies of the Legion.

As for its social composition of the, Chase was right, when he wrote³⁷:

Marinas started to draw his membership largely from the ranks of the petty middle class.

This is wholly confirmed by the available information. According to the judicial records³⁸, out of the nine defendants in case 68/941 constituting the leadership of the Legion, there were three employees, one shopkeeper, one student, one radio speaker. At least six were educated. They were

³⁶ Ibidem, art. 43.

³⁷ A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 82.

³⁸ ANC, FTUH, leg. 164, exp. 16, ff. 270-273.

from 18 to 24 years old, apart from Jesús Marinas (28), Jeronimo Cruz (35) and José Villa (38). The last one was the only Spanish-born, whereas the others were all born in Havana, save for Cruz and Marinas, hailing respectively from Santa Clara and Matanzas. Among the six *habaneros*, four lived in Centro Habana and two in Vibora.

Though these data are statistically limited and tell nothing about the rest of the organization, especially the rank-and-file members, further analysis provided by Chase is unsupportable. In fact, the American journalist asserts that³⁹:

«they had attracted to their rank those elements of Cuban life which form the storm-trooper armies of fascism everywhere.»

and that they were regarded very lowly by the very Falangists which provided them with employment, through Auxilio Social⁴⁰. However, their social standing, as far as it is actually known, though certainly far lower than the typical members of the CNE, was not so different from the average Falangist. The very fact that a good number of them were students points at a lower middle class environ, rather than the working class. Nevertheless, the most conspicuous antifascist misrepresentation is the one regarding the actual role played by the Legion in Cuba, especially in relations to other fascist organizations.

3.1.2.2 *Public Relations*

In Chase's narration, the Legion had been founded according Francisco Álvarez's orders as a subsidiary organization for the Falange, following a plan established by Wilhelm von Faupel in order to have native group which could legally operate on behalf of the Axis nations (Spain included), in the War to come. Even the Japanese would have had a hand in their creation, sending a Cuban agent to suggest them to avoid any racial strife between Cubans in their platform. The Legion was purposely aimed at attracting the attention and stirring dissension⁴¹:

«By beclouding as many issues as they possibly could, by stirring up all sorts of national troubles, the Gray Shirts

39 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 88.

40 Ibidem, p. 89.

41 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 81.

would theoretically keep many anti-Fascist Cubans from worrying too much about the Falange. In time, as the Gray Shirts grew in numbers, their whole membership would make excellent whipping boys to absorb blows aimed at the Falange.»

However, Legionnaires and Falangists soon would have found to be in competition for the support of the same political area, as well as for funding from the Axis, though this would have not impeded the continuing collaboration between the two organizations. The Grey Shirts would have acted as thugs for the Falange and as employees for Auxilio Social.

Nevertheless, the reality was quite different, as no mention of the Legion has been found in the files of the Cuban section of FET y de las JONS. The main link between them was of ideological nature, since they were too different in role and scope. In fact, the Falange was the local branch of a foreign Party, whose goal was to organize the emigrant community, to raise funding and to act as a lobby in favour of the Fatherland, while the Legion was a native political movement, inspired by the ideas of the former, whose declared purpose was establishing a revolutionary national-syndicalist State in Cuba.

However, it is true that in the beginning of 1938, the leaders of the local Falange, along with José Ignacio Rivero, had taken into consideration the creation of a Cuban fascist party, as reported by Villanueva to Del Castaño⁴²:

«Con la ayuda y la colaboración de Pepín Rivero estoy estudiando la posibilidad de que se funde un Movimiento cubano de ideología similar a nuestra Falange; llevamos ya cerca de un mes estudiando este asunto, pero no queremos profundizar hasta que no hayamos hablado sobre el particular con el Coronel Batista. Ya debíamos haber ido a ver al Coronel Batista, pero Pepín Rivero no quiere que le veamos hasta que no vayamos a invitarle para inaugurar el primer comedor de "Auxilio Social". Desde luego han venido a verme bastantes cubanos para pedirme que ayude a constituir aquí un Partido Fascista, especialmente estudiantes de esta Universidad; pero yo a todos les digo que Falange no se mete en la política de Cuba y que no podemos patrocinar moral ni materialmente ningún Partido cubano.»

42 AGA, sec. 9, fdo 17.12, caja 27, exp. 4, f. 33.

Nevertheless, no meeting ever took place with Batista and preoccupations about the possible repercussions kept Villanueva from actually lending his hand with supporting such a Party.

Unsurprisingly, then, as the former repeatedly claimed to be a Spaniards-only organization, disinterested in local politics, the aforementioned Cubans with Fascist sympathies, founded the Legion. To this regard, Ovidio Ramos states⁴³:

«fundada [. . .] por elementos cubanos desprendidos de la Falange Española»

For example, the Commissioner Arturo de Carricarte was formally the director of the Falangist magazine “*¡Arriba España!*”, with a monthly salary of 50 pesos, until he was replaced in February 1939⁴⁴. Another Commissioner, Claudio Lorenzo, had been the Secretary of the Propaganda Section of the JONS de la FE⁴⁵. Both must have left their positions in the course of 1940.

Jesús Marinas himself was reported to be a former member of the Falange⁴⁶, as he had claimed to be «honored in coming from the Blue ranks» in a letter he would have sent to Francisco Álvarez on 23rd September 1940⁴⁷.

Most importantly, though, the fact that the leaders of the two organizations enjoyed decent relations did not necessarily indicate that they were connected or even part of some greater plan, probably only existing in the fantasies of the antifascist journalists. Quoting once again O. Ramos⁴⁸:

«También en diferentes ocasiones el señor Marinas trató de obtener alguna ayuda para su propaganda del señor Genaro Riestra [. . .], sin que lograra entonces sus deseos.»

The same can be said about other entities, with whom, the Legion had been in contact, according to various private letters leaked by the Communist press. Actually, none of them goes further than being available to concede a meeting.

43 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 67-69.

44 AGA, sec. 10, fdo 17.12, caja 153, exp. 11, f. 60.

45 K. Figueredo Cabrera, *Cuba y la Guerra Civil española*, op. cit., p. 237.

46 Cfr. “*Diario de la Marina*”, 19th August 1939, in J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 37.

47 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 89.

48 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 67-69.

Going into details, they were reported to have made contact with German sportsman “Bubi Rugchi”⁴⁹ in July 1939⁵⁰, as well as the German Embassy (24th June 1940), expressing their congratulations for the recent victory in France, but they only received a ⁵¹, but they only received a formal reply. In Ramos’ words⁵²:

«[Marinas] trató de entrevistarse con el señor Consul de Alemania en la Habana a cuyo efecto le pidió una audiencia por escrito, sin que este se la concediera y dicha visita tenía por objeto dejar asentado las simpatías de la Legión por el Gobierno Alemán.»

In the same year, the Legion had contacted Prince Camillo Ruspoli, which answered on 6th January 1940, promising to send publications about Fascist Italy⁵³. Similarly, they had expressed their solidarity to Finland, through the Honorary Consul Guillermo Evert, regarding the Soviet aggression, though the “Committee for Aid to Finland” mentioned by Chase was apparently not Marinas’ work (Cfr. section 2.2.1 in this chapter)⁵⁴.

The situation did not change on the home front, as no development is known about the contacts with the Archdiocese, between February and March 1940, ostensibly to receive a spiritual advisor⁵⁵. The warmest relations were probably with the “*Diario de la Marina*”, though its director preferred to defer them to his collaborators, such as Oscar Cicero (18th March 1940)⁵⁶ and Raúl Maestri (5th October 1940)⁵⁷, the latter through Miguel Baguer’s interest⁵⁸. This contact alone proved to be somewhat fruitful⁵⁹:

«La única ayuda monetaria que la Legión que se menciona recibe, es el cincuenta por ciento de rebaja que le hacen algunas casas comerciales en los impresos de propaganda,

49 Probably the amateur heavyweight boxer Herbert Runge, gold medalist at the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin.

50 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 83.

51 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 47.

52 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 67-69.

53 “*Noticias de Hoy*, 30th November 1940.

54 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

55 Ibidem, pp. 86-87; “*Noticias de Hoy*, 30th November 1940.

56 “*Noticias de Hoy*, 5th September 1941.

57 “*Noticias de Hoy*, 2nd December 1941.

58 Cfr. A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

59 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 67-69.

también el Director del Diario de la Marina le hace una bonificación en los anuncios que insertan en su periódico.

It is however worth to observe that Rivero's discount was more akin to a commercial offer than political funding. Therefore, the Legionnaires had to support their activity through the monthly 20-cts quotas.

In fact, the police reports made clear that the political and ideological influence on the Cuban Legionnaires on the part of fascist countries and parties never translated into actual political and financial support⁶⁰:

«Que en el curso de las investigaciones he logrado saber que la Legión Revolucionaria Sindicalista no recibe ayuda monetaria ni de ninguna otra forma de potencias extranjeras, ni trabajan de acuerdo con estas, sino simpatizan con aquellas que se gobiernan en forma parecida a las doctrinas que ellos sustentan y son conocidos por países totalitarios»

Moreover, this should not surprise, given that the political strategies of Spain, Italy and Germany regarding Cuba were far less ambitious than how they were misrepresented.

3.1.2.3 *Political activities*

These problems with the confiability of the sources increase, when looking into the political activities of the Legion. For certain, they were less relevant than what their enemies denounced and what the Legionnaires themselves hoped. For certain their project was quite ambitious, having established, aside from the main organization, a students branch (the older Students' Legion of Cuba), a labour union (Nationalist Workers' Front), a feminine branch, as well as conducting or planning paramilitaries activities.

However, there is not much information about the former initiatives. Chase accuses the Nationalist Workers' Front of having unsuccessfully tried to serve as strikebreakers⁶¹. The last news about the Students' Legion, ill-defined as a branch of Falange itself, claims⁶²:

«Al filo de las 11 pm, de ayer, un nutrido grupo de componentes [...] comandados por un tal Jesús Marinas [...] se

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 83.

⁶² Cfr. "*Diario de la Marina*", 19th August 1939, op. cit.

apareció en el periódico ABC para solidarizarse con los atacantes de la Convención Juvenil Constituyente.»

It refers to an important event organized from the 29th August to the 3rd September 1939 by various left-wing and progressive youth organizations, in which the Communists played a relevant role.

Regarding the feminine branch, even less is known, though the board of the Students' Legion included two women: Eulalia Trueba and Herminia Menéndez. Later, Chongo remarks the presence of «feminist speakers» during the meeting on the 24th July⁶³. Finally, the feminine branch organized a special distribution of toys and sweets for indigent children in occasion of the Día de los Reyes⁶⁴. This initiative is strikingly similar to the "Befana Fascista" annually held by the Fascist Party in Italy.

In fact, they mostly concentrated on propaganda activities⁶⁵:

«[...] hacen una propaganda activa en toda la Nación, utilizando primeramente el radio, y en estos momentos la prensa así como mítines públicos, y en todas aquellas formas lícitas para difundir sus doctrinas al objeto de sumarse prosélitos cuyo numero sea suficiente para intentar destruir el sistema democrático, gobierno actual de nuestro país.

Nothing is known about the radio stations used by the Legionnaires, but it is probable that they were hosted by the same who were sympathetic to the CNE and FET y de las JONS. Arturo de Carricarte must have been a key figure to this regard, due to the fact that he was decorated for his engagement in the radio press campaigns⁶⁶.

On the other hand, they published the monthly magazine "Acción Legionaria" (Legionnaire Action), whose six issues were printed in Havana from late 1940 to early 1941, and then sold by vendors in the capital and other cities, including minor centres such as Cabaiguán, as shown later.

However, they also organized political meetings in public places, in order to gain new adherents. Apart from the

63 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 50.

64 "Diario de la Marina", 3rd January 1940.

65 Ibidem, ff. 67-69.

66 Cfr. K. Figueredo Cabrera, *Cuba y la Guerra Civil española*, op. cit., p. 127.

aforementioned having taken place in the Parque Central on 8th October 1938 and 24th July 1939, another important demonstration was organized by the Legion on 8th April 1939. The uniformed Legionnaires marched for the Calzada de Zapata with the Spanish Nationalist flag, before honouring, in the adjacent Necrópolis de Colón, Juan Antonio Pozuelo, former Cuban law student, who had died on the front of Jarama fighting with the rank of captain of the Spanish Nationalist Army. They had also sent a cablegram to General Franco, thanking him for having saved the world «from the jewish-Muscovite barbarity» and asking for the recognition of the Spanish State on part of the Republic of Cuba⁶⁷.

All these public activities took place with the Legionnaires being fully uniformed, as they wore grey shirts, dark trousers, black boots, cross belts and an armband with the symbol of the Legion: a sword on an open book⁶⁸. They also followed a military discipline and used the fascist salute⁶⁹. According to Figueredo⁷⁰, every member had to take a military oath, standing at attention, with the raised right arm, declamating:

«Cuba libre, Cuba independiente, Cuba soberana y Cuba, levántate!»

Unsurprisingly, these slogan closely resembled the Falangist ones.

The paramilitary image and organization of the Legion was purposely reinforced by the Legionnaires' claim to be a real revolutionary army, headed by the Marinas (Chief of Armed Militias) and Armando Valdés Zorrilla (General Adjutant)⁷¹:

«Camaradas soldados del ejército gris que en la noche del 27 [...] no faltéis ninguno de vosotros, honrando así el futuro movimiento revolucionario que marcha victorioso hacia la meta magnífica de Cuba totalitaria. . .

In another case, José Pando (Commissioner of Press & Propaganda) and José Maestri (Chief of the Vigilance Section) order that the member⁷²:

67 *La Legión Nacional felicita al Caudillo*, in "*Diario de la Marina*", CVII, 85, La Habana, 9th April 1939, p. 17.

68 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 40.

69 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 67-69.

70 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *Tres ismos en la historia de Cuba*, op. cit., p. 115.

71 "*Noticias de Hoy*", 25th November 1941.

72 *Ibidem*

«[. . .] adquirieran uniformes, corbatas, camisas, distintivos, etc., alemanes y fascistas, gorras tipo alemán, correaes y black-jack reglamentarios.»

According to Abelardo Vila's witness, only at the beginning of 1940, a military structure was created⁷³. Moreover, Chase states that many of them, including students, used to carry knives and guns⁷⁴, though this was not unusual in times of *gangsterismo*.

Nevertheless, it should be discounted his claim that, since 1940, the Legionnaires, along with Falangists, undertook real military training, under the direction of the Axis agent Andrei Golowchenko, former Imperial Russian Navy officer and leader of the Ukrainian Nationalists in Cuba⁷⁵. Even less credible is Maximino Gómez' suggestion that these drills took places in Prince Ruspoli's orange groves in Ceballos, near Ciego de Avila, hundreds kilometres from Havana⁷⁶.

3.1.2.4 Ideology

The ideological outline of the Legion was clearly fascist, as the nationalist and revolutionary nature of the movement was proclaimed from the first lines of the Statutes⁷⁷:

«[. . .] es una organización política con fines patrióticos en un sentido revolucionario come [*sic*] alude en el sengundo [*sic*] término de su denominación, pero limitada siempre esa modalidad, esa inclinación a la novedad en el estilo y en los conceptos por un vigoroso sentimiento nacionalista, ya que su constitución en unos momentos de histórica transcendencia por la incesante lucha desarrollada en la consecución de una Cuba mejor, dá buena fe del carácter profundamente nacionalista, intensamente cubano en que piensa debatir su fuerza política exclusivamente PARA LA PATRIA Y POR LA PATRIA.»

And again its stated goal was⁷⁸:

«[. . .] la grandeza de la Patria, en el colectivo impulso de asir el logro victorioso de una Cuba LIBRE, INDEPENDIENTE Y SOBERANA.»

73 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 36.

74 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 83.

75 Ibidem, pp. 83-84.

76 M. Gómez, *U-Boats del III Reich en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 54.

77 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 3-12., art. 1.

78 Ibidem.

This nationalist creed was similar to other Cuban bourgeois parties in the same period (e.g. ABC, Partido del Pueblo Cubano). They were in favour of Catholic Church, as proved by the contacts with the Archdiocese, but not overtly confessional.

In fact, its Cuban nationalism reclaimed the heritage of the 19th-century independentists who fought against Spain – a major point of divergence with the Falange⁷⁹:

«Cuba debe su independencia a ella misma, por tanto si la cubanidad legionaria es puesta en duda, porque no admitimos ingerencia [sic] americana, sépase que estamos practicando la cubanidad de Martí, de Céspedes y Maceo, que solo confiaban el futuro de Cuba al sacrificio y a la honradez de los cubanos.»

In fact, its stress on the role of Cuban independentists was also meant to deny any debt to the United States and to refuse their hegemony and intervention in Cuba. In fact, the Legionnaires did not hesitate to attack them, as in the case of this article by Armando Valdés, which refused any solidarity to the North American government in name of Cuban people⁸⁰:

«[...] we feel deeply the [...] oppression of the Philippines, the slavery of the small peoples of the Continent, and all the other provocations of the President-Dictator [F. D. Roosevelt] to the peoples who are friends of Europe. When one speaks of the people one has to be very careful, señors parrots of the fostered American democracy and of the hypocritical manifestations of the INHABITANT OF THE WHITE HOUSE.»

In the same page, Valdés criticised the commercial support that Cuba lent to the United Kingdom⁸¹.

On the other hand, the Legion was also xenophile, due to his strong sympathies for other fascist movements and regimes. Not only Primo de Rivera, Franco and Hitler were object of the Legionnaire's admiration, but also Ledesma Ramos⁸², Mussolini and Codreanu, as well as the Finnish

79 *Cubanidad legionaria*, in "Acción Legionaria", 15th December 1940, p. 8, in ANC, FTUH, leg. 164, exp. 16.

80 "Acción Legionaria", 15th December 1940, in A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 88

81 *Ibidem*, p. 87.

82 The Statutes (art. 1) spoke of «conquest of the State».

resistance against the «Moscow's beasts»⁸³. Even though such attitude is typical in small movements, which lack actual strength and look after foreign models, it however led the Secretary Abelardo Vila to protest and call for a «cubanization of the Legion»⁸⁴:

«como yo viera que el presidente y demás jefes de esas organización, venían desarrollando una labor francamente anti-cubana a espaldas mías, opté por pedirles en varias ocasiones que tenían que cubanizar la institución»

Despite Vila's violent expulsion, the Legion made efforts to strengthen its appeal as an authentic Cuban force, including more references to Cuban historical figures, from Martí to Hatuey⁸⁵:

«Nuestro saludo, además, es cubano, no es importado [. . .], todos sabemos que su origen se remonta a los tiempos del indómito Hatuey, al tiempo de los primeros moradores de nuestra querida patria, al tiempo en que este saludo quería decir bienvenida, en que expresaba amistad, paz.»

This indigenization of the Roman salute, made popular by Italian Fascism, occurred in various other cases, most conspicuously in Brazil, where the Integrists called it «Anauê» («you are my brother») and traced it back to the indigenous Tupis.

As a consequence of this integral nationalism, with no class or race distinctions among Cubans, the whole nation had to be mobilized, as Marinas stated during the trial, justifying the military structure of his movement⁸⁶:

«Porqué tenemos entendido que hay que militarizar al pueblo para que pueda vencer la crisis y se «adecente» la vida nacional.»

This required a stronger role for the State in order to promote the common good and allow the masses to take part in the national political life. Therefore, the Statutes asserted⁸⁷:

83 *"Acción Legionaria"*, 15th December 1940, in ANC, FTUH, leg. 164, exp. 16.

84 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 36.

85 Víctor Manuel Fernández Sardina, *Nuestro saludo*, in *"Acción Legionaria"*, II, 6, 15th January 1941, p. 8, in ANC, FTUH, leg. 164, exp. 16.

86 *"Noticias de Hoy"*, 29th November 1941.

87 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 3-12., art. 1.

«Aspiramos a fortalecer al Estado con el ímpetu de nuestro sentido hondamente revolucionario, para que su máxima autoridad le convierta, de ficción jurídica atribuida por las doctrinas democrático-liberales, en institución de vitales funciones para el común interés.

Es en el tipo de Estado que concebimos donde el pueblo verifica la penetración auténticamente democrática en el supremo organismo estatal, ya que la verticalidad que mantenemos en la jerarquía revolucionaria facilita sin escamoteos demagógicos, la intervención legítima de las masas populares a la obra nacional que desarrolla el Estado.»

It was not a mere authoritarian stiffening of the State structures, but a true rehaul of society, aiming at establishing a totalitarian State, after the fascist model.

This statism directly reflected in the economic and social policies supported by the Legionnaires, as resumed by Figueredo⁸⁸:

«supresión del latifundio, emancipación del campesinado, protección al pequeño propietario, creación de cooperativas agrícolas, confiscación de tierras a los dueños que no la trabajaran, abolición de los trust y nacionalización de los servicios públicos y de las industrias básicas [. . .] eliminar el desempleo y las huelgas, elevar el nivel moral y material de los trabajadores, y expulsar a los inmigrantes que «en lo político perjudicaban la economía de la nación». [. . .] declarar como obligatorios los primeros niveles de la enseñanza, propugnar el incremento y mejora de las escuelas de arte y oficios, y la creación de bibliotecas y campos de deporte en todos los pueblos para desarrollar la excelencia física y artística de los jóvenes.»

This ambitious program, reminiscent of the San Sepolcro Manifesto, sanctioned the role of the State as overall manager of the national economy and planned an extensive modernization of economy and society, in order to make Cuba independent from foreign capitalism.

Therefore, in the Legion's political conception, the syndicates were eventually subordinated to the State, explicitly contrarily to Sorel's concept of Syndicalism⁸⁹:

«nuestra concepción nacional revolucionaria escoge la solución sindicalista como la fórmula más acertada para

88 K. Figueredo, *Tres ismos en la historia de Cuba*, op. cit., p. 115.

89 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 3-12., art. 1.

organizar la producción en sus diversas manifestaciones, pero entendiéndose bien esta identificación sindicalista con una proyección nacional de nosotros, revolucionarios sindicalistas y no la propia de los sindicalistas revolucionarios que concibiera el genio político de Sorel en una quimérica extensión internacional.»

In fact, internationalism remained the main accusation moved against Communism, along with general charges of social struggle and disorder.

At the same time, the other main enemy of Cuban nation was regarded to be Judaism. The Legion espoused Antisemitism, though it was rather based on political and economical grounds, rather than racial ones. In fact, they opposed Jewish immigration and blamed Jews for their part in foreign capitalism and international communism, but actual racism did not belong to them, due to their acceptance of Cuban miscegenation. It was however well present in its propaganda, such as in the cover of the December 1940 issue of "*Acción Legionaria*", representing an Antisemite cartoon, accompanied by the slogan «¡Fuera Judíos! (Out the Jews)⁹⁰.

In sum of all, the ideology of the National Revolutionary Syndicalist Legion can be described as integrally fascist, as it was an anti-Liberal, anti-Communist, revolutionary nationalist movement. Though it never really achieved a mass dimension, its goal and organization were geared towards a mass party in a totalitarian State. Most specifically, the Legion can be ascribed to the Falangist (or National Syndicalist) current of fascism, since it was inspired by the Falange and shared its syndicalist stance in the organization of economy and society. Its Antisemitism, lacking an actual racist connotation, can be compared to similar positions held by the Falangist theorist Onesimo Redondo.

⁹⁰ "*Acción Legionaria*", 15th December 1940, in ANC, FTUH, leg. 164, exp. 16.

3.1.3 PROSECUTION AND DEMISE

Such an organization could not long escape the attention of the courts. In fact, the first legal cases date back to the June 1939, when the case 72/939 for «public disorder» and acting «against the national integrity» was brought forward against the Legion and its students' branch⁹¹, though it did not go along.

Moreover single members were prosecuted for having harassed and threatened former members, are reported in at least two occasions, such as in the said case of Abelardo Vila⁹² and in another one, Fernando Sánchez Gómez, said by Chase to have joined the Legion in November 1938⁹³.

However, only towards the end of 1940, this kind of investigation would finally evolve in a full trial and bring to the demise of the movement. The Tribunal of Sancti Spíritus indicted the Legion for «crime against the national stability and integrity and illegal meeting», and contacted the Provincial government of Havana for information⁹⁴. Most importantly, on 22nd February 1941, the Minister of Governance Juan Rodríguez Pintado pronounced himself in favour of the prosecution and cancellation of the organization⁹⁵:

«[...] dicha Asociación contraviene lo dispuesto en el Decreto de Defensa Nacional últimamente dictado por el Gobierno, ya que su acción se encamina a favorecer francamente las ideas totalitarias»

Furthermore, while the investigations were still taking place, new legal actions were taken in other provinces, such as the 339/941 in Cienfuegos⁹⁶ and the 429/941 in Sancti Spíritus⁹⁷

3.1.3.1 Case 429/941

The latter, for crime «against the State institutions» was initiated by the municipal court of Cabaiguán, where, on the past 23rd December, Salti Benmuhar, a Turkish citizen of probable Jewish descent, had denounced Luis Crespo

91 Cfr. ANC, FTUH, leg. 153, exp. 11.

92 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 36.

93 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

94 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, ff. 40-44.

95 Ibidem, f. 64.

96 Ibidem, ff. 45-46.

97 ANC, FTUH, leg. 164, exp. 16, f. 205.

Calderón, residing in Calle Valle 12, for spreading antidemocratic propaganda, as he went around selling the Legion's magazine⁹⁸:

«hubo de llevar para su venta un Periodiquito nombrado Accion Legionaria sin pié de imprenta en el cual se hace campaña nazi-fascista, haciendo campaña contraria al régimen Republicano Democrático de la Republica de Cuba y abogando por la desaparición del Congreso de la Republica, atentando contra la honra y reputación de las personas, fomentando el odio entre las clases sociales con peligro para la tranquilidad publica, haciéndose constar las manifestaciones que voluntariamente hiciere»

Luis Crespo, a 18-years old student, without a criminal record, declared that he had never taken part in political activities, and that he only sold the magazine, on behalf of its director⁹⁹:

«niega los cargos que se le imputan por no ser ciertos [. . .] le fue remitida la revista Accion Legionaria por el señor Armando Valdes Zorrilla [. . .] a fin que la repartiera, siendo el dicente un simple vendedor. Que dicha revista tenía pie de imprenta, o sea que decía en ella "Talleres y Administracion, Mision 311, altos, Habana. Que en ningún momento ha hecho propaganda contraria al Regime Republicano Democrático, ni se ha dedicado a hacer propaganda de ninguna clase»

This means that the case is probably moved to the capital, where the National Secret Police investigated about the magazine "*Acción Legionaria*". Valdes was, according to the detective Carlos M. Báez y Díaz¹⁰⁰:

«[. . .] director de un periódico titulado Accion Legionaria, el cual se confeccionaba de manera clandestina; que en el aludido periódico se hacia propaganda en favor de los Países totalitarios, y se abogaba por la desaparición del actual Congreso de la Republica, siendo el principal objetivo la campaña en contra de los Judios; que el repetido periódico era el órgano oficial del nucleo conocido por "Legion Revolucionaria Sindicalista", los que se dedicaban a la propaganda en contra de los poderes democráticos; que el acusado Luis Crespo Calderon, era la persona utilizada

98 Ibidem.

99 Ibidem, f. 211.

100 Ibidem, f. 221.

por el Valdés Zorrilla, para la distribución del tanta veces mencionado periódico, en el pueblo de Cabaiguán»

However, the offices in Calle Misión 311 were found to be empty.

Only later, in August, the police ascertained that the board was composed by Armando Valdés (Responsible Editor), Jesús Marinas (Director), Roberto Nosti Luis (Administrator) and José Pando (Chief Editor), that were immediately prosecuted, despite having not been possible to individuate other authors nor to find any copy. On the other hand, Luis Crespo was just a sales agent, who received 50 copies of the magazine, every fortnight, until in January 1941, the publication ceased, since the landlord (Raul Navarrete García, residing in Calle Martí 25, Marianao) evicted them for missed payment¹⁰¹. Having been convoked before the court on 11th August¹⁰², the four defendant denied the accusations, stating that the magazine had regular franking and that its publication ceased when it was outlawed and the frank was revoked¹⁰³. Finally, on 6th October, this case (number 112/941 of the Tribunal of Havana) was merged with case 68/941¹⁰⁴.

3.1.3.2 Case 147/941

Another legale case arose, because of the investigations conducted by the National Secret Police, under Marino Faget Díaz's orders. During a perquisition of José Pando's domicile in Calle Aramburu 352, the police officers found not only conspicuous propaganda material (various writings in German language, copies of "*Acción Legionaria*", Pro-Nazi and anti-democratic leaflets, flyers against F. D. Roosevelt), but also a hand grenade and explosive cartridges¹⁰⁵. Nevertheless, five leaders of the organization (Marinas, Pando, Jerónimo Cruz Portela, Armando Valdes and Miguel Vázquez) were arrested at the end of November¹⁰⁶, and a new lawsuit based on the presence of illegal explosive substances and plans to subvert the institutions took place, starting on 28th November 1941¹⁰⁷.

101 Ibidem, ff. 238-239.

102 Ibidem, f. 240.

103 Ibidem, f. 242

104 Ibidem, p. 257.

105 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *Tres ismos en la historia de Cuba*, op. cit., p. 117.

106 "*Noticias de Hoy*", 25th November 1941.

107 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 53.

This cause had far wider press coverage, especially because of the explosives, seen as a clear sign of pro-Axis military activity. The Legionnaires were accused of¹⁰⁸:

«[. . .] desarrollar la política nazi-falangista en todo el territorio nacional, mientras prepara un Ejército que pondrá a la disposición de Hitler y Franco tan pronto como sea ordenado.»

Similarly, the judge Freyre de Andrade remarked that¹⁰⁹

«[. . .] se trata de una organización puramente nazi y quinta columnista, cuya peligrosidad es enorme, no sólo para nuestra República, sino también para todos los países libres.»

The Communist newspaper “*Noticias de Hoy*” was the most eager in publishing a lot of documents pertaining to the Legion, trying to expose its supposed ties with the Axis powers. However, the actual archives of the organization were never found or recovered, as reported¹¹⁰:

«Que cuantas investigaciones he practicado a fin de ocupar las documentaciones y enseres de las asociaciones que se mencionan no me han dado resultado favorable, motivos por el cual no he procedido a lo ordenado, teniendo noticias de que las mismas fueron destruidas por medio del fuego hace algún tiempo, y que los enseres fueron vendidos a distintos comerciantes de esta Ciudad, tampoco lo cual he logrado comprobar, no obstante continuaré realizando gestiones a fin de ocupar las mismas si no es cierto de que estas fueron destruidas.»

This clearly belies Chongo’s statement about the seizure of the archives¹¹¹, while Chase’s stance that these copies files were kept in the Spanish Consulate or the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut is highly unlikely¹¹².

According to Chongo, in this trial, Marinas and Pando were assisted by Gerardo de Villiers, while the others were defended by José Manuel Quintana, member of Parliament for the ABC Party¹¹³. Marinas defended himself, attacking the hostile journalists, and threatening to sue them¹¹⁴:

108 Cfr. ANC, FTUH, exp. 168, leg. 5.

109 “*Noticias de Hoy*”, 29th November 1941.

110 Cfr. ANC, FTUH, exp. 164, leg. 16, f. 339.

111 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 53.

112 A. Chase, *Falange*, op. cit., p. 92.

113 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 55.

114 “*Noticias de Hoy*”, 29th November 1941.

«[...] todo lo que se ha publicado sobre las actividades de la Legión es pura falsedad.»

However, at the end, the trial concluded on 10th December, with five convictions of scarce entity: three years of prison for José Pando, found guilty of «detention of explosive substances and propaganda to replace the current form of government», two for Jesús Marinas, guilty only of the latter, and six months to Jerónimo Cruz, Miguel Vázquez and Armando Valdés for minor charges¹¹⁵.

3.1.3.3 Case 68/941

The same leniency was applied in the main case regarding the Legion, even though the trial took place in the months soon after the attack on Pearl Harbour. Case 68, started in June 1941, called for the criminalization and dissolution of all Fascist organizations in Cuba, including also the FET y de las JONS and Auxilio Social¹¹⁶.

According to policial reports, its executive board had been quite changed, in the course of the last year. Jesús Marinas was still at the head, with the title of Jefe Nacional (National Chief), assisted by the Sub-Secretary Juan Mas López, and five Commissioners: Press & Propaganda (José Pando), Syndical (Miguel Vázquez), Communications (Jerónimo Cruz), Interior (Manuel García), Foreign Relations (José Villa Barros)¹¹⁷. Their activities had been severely reduced, but not ended¹¹⁸:

«[...] han retirado de sus oficinas [...] cuanta banderas, estandartes e insignias, así como los uniformes de carácter militar de hechura extranjera que veían usando hasta la fecha, no obstante continúan en la propaganda de sus doctrinas.»

At the end of June, the police officer Celso Fernández interrogated Jesús Marinas, who answered that the organization had been dissolved after the Presidential Decree 168/41 and the subsequent annulment of the franking for the magazine in February¹¹⁹. As the report stated¹²⁰:

115 Cfr. ANC, FTUH, exp. 168, leg. 5.

116 ANC, FRA, leg. 126, exp. 1693, f. 47.

117 Ibidem, ff. 67-69.

118 Ibidem.

119 Ibidem, f. 72.

120 Ibidem, f. 80.

«Al declarares ilícita dicha Institucion por Decreto Presidencial, se vieron en la necesidad de liquidar, todas las deudas contraídas por dicha Asociacion, teniendo necesidad de vender los muebles, no habiendo aun podido liquidar todas las cuentas. En cuanto haberse dado de baja en el Registro de Asociaciones me manifestó que como se había declarado ilícita por Decreto, habían estimado que de oficio había quedado cancelada dicha Asociacion, pero que no obstante en estos días presentaría un escrito dándose de baja del Registro de la Asociaciones.»

Notwithstanding Marinas' declarations, the enquiry went on, bringing before the court all the members of the executive boards of both the Legion and its magazine, along with the other defendants belonging to the Falange and Auxilio Social.

As described in ch. 5, the final sentence was proclaimed on 9th February 1942. The defendants were assisted by the defence lawyers Juan Sánchez (Marinas, Pando, Cruz, Valdés), M. Valdés Herrera (López), José M. López (Villa, Nosti) and Eduardo Ciro Betancourt (Vázquez, García). All of them, except for Villa and García, exercised their right to speak, though Pando and Marinas were expelled from the courtroom for having interrupted the witness Porfirio Romero, a Spanish Republican journalist¹²¹.

Exactly as it happened for the Falangist organizations, the Legion was also proclaimed illegal, whereas on the other hand, its member were acquitted¹²². The cancellation of the Legion from the Registro de Asociaciones was ordered on 18th February¹²³ and publicly announced on 23rd¹²⁴.

121 Ibidem, ff. 55-58.

122 Ibidem.

123 Ibidem, ff. 59-60.

124 Ibidem, ff. 61-63, 80.

3.2

MINOR FASCIST GROUPS

Other fascist groups in Cuba had a minimal membership and their presence was limited to the capital city. Any scarce information is known shows them to be the spontaneous initiative of a few people, generally belonging to the urban middle-class, worried about the increasing legitimization of the Communist forces. Their interest in foreign models sets them apart from the indigenous conservative parties, whom they probably distrusted, though their ideological conscience was not enough mature to regard them as fully fascist, as they concentrated on right-wing issues, such as public order, national security and defence of private property.

3.2.1 THE CUBAN NAZI PARTY

The first group to be founded was the Partido Nazi Cubano (Cuban Nazi Party), whose regulation was first presented by Manuel Montoto on 20th September 1938¹²⁵, and then, having been conformed to legal requirements, on 24th September¹²⁶. Its constitution took place at 3 pm on 8th October in its offices of Calle 10 n. 406 (between 17 and 19), being present Juan Prohías Figueredo (President and Treasurer), Antonio María Fraga y Gómez (Vice President), Manuel Montoto (General and Records Secretary), Roberto Fernández, Jorge Alberto Morales, Armando Parets (Full Board Members), Gregorio Alonso, Dario Prohías Bello, Manuel Rodríguez (Deputy Board Members), Antonio Fernández, José Horta, Antonio Torres, and others¹²⁷.

Few days after (13th October), the association was registered in tome 20, folio 643, number 10222 of the Registro de Asociaciones¹²⁸, despite the complaint raised by the attorney Arturo Miró Barnet¹²⁹, who claimed that, since Communist ideology was admitted by the Constitution, therefore it could not be allowed an association whose goal was fighting against it, due to his incompatibility with the laws preserving political liberties. In Miró's opinion, allowing communist and

125 ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23427, ff. 1-2.

126 Ibidem, ff. 3-5.

127 Ibidem, ff. 16-17.

128 Ibidem, ff. 18-19.

129 Probably a conservative, since he travelled to Madrid in 1953 as part of a delegation of Cuban journalists (Cfr. "ABC, 10th October 1953, p. 24.)

fascist organizations to fight each other would have brought public disorder¹³⁰. However, the Governor dismissed him, replying that political struggle was licit, as long as it took place with legal means¹³¹.

By this time, the Cuban Nazi Party had started using headed paper, with a blue left-facing swastika. No more is reported about it until 10th April 1939, when the statute was modified, and the name changed in Asociación “Quinta Columna” (Fifth Column Association). By the beginning of the month, they had moved to Calzada 511, corner with D, still in Vedado neighbourhood¹³², in the radio station CMBS, where Juan Prohías transmitted¹³³. This station “Radio Artalejo” (call name CMBS), had been founded in 1929 by Enrique Artalejo Fernández¹³⁴ and it was utilized by the Nationalist Spanish Committee, according to the FBI¹³⁵, to the extent that it was closed by Decree n. 1363 on 24th May 1940¹³⁶.

In fact, the leader Juan Prohías (1894 – 1941), born in Cienfuegos, was an established journalist, being chief information officer of the local “*La Correspondencia*”, the second-oldest Cuban newspaper. He had then moved to Habana, working as correspondent with his column “*Postales Habaneras*, which continued after he started working for “*El Comercio*”. He also was chief information officer for the “*Heraldo de Cuba*” and directed the radio program “*Hora Liberal*”¹³⁷.

The stated objective was creating a real Party in order to compete at the near constituent elections, either independently or in other rolls¹³⁸, while later, it aimed at supporting candidates agreeing with its point of view, though not renouncing to converting the association in a national political party¹³⁹. Moreover, it was planned to conduct¹⁴⁰:

«actos de divulgación y propaganda de las doctrinas opues-

130 ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23427, ff. 20-21.

131 Ibidem, f. 22.

132 Ibidem, ff. 24-26.

133 ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23428, f. 2. León Blanco’s police report (Ibidem, f. 11.) lists him mistakenly as owner.

134 Cfr. Enrique Artalejo, *Radio Artalejo. Para mantener el record. . . en orden*, in “*El Nuevo Acción*”, 16th October 2007.

135 J. E. Hoover, March 1943, N.A. 852.20237/203.

136 George S. Messersmith, 28th May 1940, N.A. 837.00 N/46 LH.

137 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 23.

138 ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23427, ff. 6-11.

139 Ibidem, f. 26.

140 Ibidem, ff. 6-11.

tas a las tendencias extremistas.»

Nevertheless, it is doubtful that any actions were conducted by this group.

However, as far as it is known, Juan Prohías and Manuel Montoto must have cooperated in the radio campaign in favour of Nationalist Spain, as proved by the Medalla Oficial Conmemorativa del Glorioso Alzamiento Nacional y de la Victoria, that they received from Franco's government on 19th April 1940, along with other Cuban journalists¹⁴¹.

Prohías also suffered an aggression in May 1939, when the *santaclareño* José Julian Abreus Pedroso attacked him with a stick in the Parque Central, while he was waiting for some friends, causing him some bruises. According to him, the assault was caused by the hate campaign conducted by the «reactionary press», i.e. the antifascists¹⁴².

The association hit the headlines again in Summer 1940, when the perceived danger of National Socialism was far higher. Unsurprisingly, various citizens, worried about the presence of a Nazi group in Cuba, wrote to the Provincial administration, asking for its closure. Julio Fernández, for example, director of the “*Ilustración Cubana*”, wrote several letters from June to September, advocating for the prohibition of any such activities¹⁴³. Only on 21st September, the Provincial government, having considered the risk of subversive activities supported by foreign governments – in special reference to the collaborationist movements in German-occupied Europe – and the decision to act against them on the part of American and Cuban governments, took measures against the Fifth Column Association, invalidating its change of name and investigating its activities¹⁴⁴.

On the same day (26th September), both Prohías and Montoto wrote a letter to the Provincial governor, explaining their situation. They replied that the change of name had been approved on 12th April 1939, well before the start of the World War and following Franco's victorious example, which gave notoriety to the expression “Fifth Column”. Furthermore, the association had been inactive for eighteen months, due to the fact that it had been *de facto* dissolved

141 K. Figueredo Cabrera, *Cuba y la Guerra Civil española*, op. cit., p. 127.

142 *Noticias de Hoy*, 16th May 1939.

143 ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23427, ff. 29-34, 37.

144 *Ibidem*, ff. 39-40.

in August 1939, as it counted just twenty members. Books, archives and other documentation had been delivered to Delfin Yebra in his office of Manzana de Gómez n. 414, but he had died soon after, without having been able to reorganize or revive the association¹⁴⁵.

For these reasons, the Provincial government decided to close the matter, disposing the closure of the association¹⁴⁶, without taking into excessive consideration the police report signed by León Blanco, Supervisor of the Judiciary Police. The report, rife with confusion about the various Cuban and Spanish groups and organisations, harshly denounced the two journalists¹⁴⁷:

«recalcitrantes y fanáticos partidarios de las ideas fascistas y nazistas [. . .] continúan sus actividades escudándose bajo nombres ficticios de organizaciones inexistentes [. . .] y de quienes [los Argüelles] son agentes directos y responsables»

However, no formal accusation was ever made against the members of the short-lived Cuban Nazi Party, and his former President died the year after of natural causes.

3.2.1.1 *Ideology*

The statutes of the association, despite their concision, are very clear about the main concern of this group, that is the defence of the middle class – actually meaning the employees, both in public offices and private business, in opposition to the working class –, considered to be threatened by Communism and foreign immigration. In their words¹⁴⁸:

«La Asociación Partido Nazi Cubano asumirá la defensa de la clase media cubana, sosteniendo que “es la clase olvidada”, supuesto que todas las concesiones y contemplaciones son para la clase trabajadora, cuando la Republica cubana no es una Republica de trabajadores, por ser muy limitada su vida industrial, sino una Republica de empleados, los máximos representativos de la clase media, ya que aquí el Presupuesto o la nomina oficial y privada lo es todo para el nativo.»

¹⁴⁵ ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23428, ff. 8-10; *ibidem*, f. 11

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 12.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, ff. 20-22.

¹⁴⁸ ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23427, ff. 6-11.

For this reason, their anti-Communism is conspicuously economic-based, to the extent that the revision of the statutes added an explicit mention to “private property”¹⁴⁹:

«Combatir el comunismo en cuanto pretenda modificar el régimen institucional y los principios inmanentes que regulan vidas y haciendas, y muy especialmente la propiedad privada.»

This stance is also reflected in the foreign policy, which is staunchly in favour of the United States of America, Cuba’s major economic partner, whereas at the same time putting Mexico and Spanish Republic together with the Soviet Union as loathful Communist countries¹⁵⁰:

«Iniciar vigoroso movimiento de opinión en el pueblo de Cuba, a favor de las más íntimas y cordiales relaciones con los Estados Unidos de América, bajo el lema de que “nuestro meridiano económico radica en Washington, y no en México, Moscú y Barcelona.”.»

This explains why the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, when National Socialists and Communists sat at a table «as good friends», came to them as a shock and had an important impact on the decision to dissolve the party¹⁵¹.

In fact, the commitment of the association to those racial policies, which were a main tenet of German National Socialism, had always been nearly absent on the part of its Cuban admirers. Unsurprisingly for a multiracial country, no kind of discrimination was set among the potential members, as long as they opposed Communism¹⁵²:

«Esta Asociación admitirá en su seno a todos los cubanos y extranjeros, sin distinción de raza y sexo, que sean personas de moralidad y buena conducta, y sean contrarias al comunismo o cualquier tendencia extremista, dañina al orden, el crédito y el bienestar de la República.»

At the same time, their antisemitism was more properly tied to the problem of Jewish immigration, as it was stated by Prohías himself¹⁵³:

149 Ibidem, f. 26

150 Ibidem, ff. 6-11.

151 K. Figueredo, *Tres ismos en la historia de Cuba*, op. cit., p. 118.

152 ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23427, ff. 6-11.

153 ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23428, f. 10.

«nuestra Asociación, exclusivamente, fue organización contra los judíos, contra el “racket” de la inmigración judía. Se acabó la inmigración judía, en agosto se veía clara la guerra, vino el pacto ruso-alemán, y se convino en disolver la Asociación.»

On the other hand, the migratory question was approached not from a racial, but from an economic point of view, pointing at the correlation between immigrant workforce and concurrence, and local unemployment and poverty. The association supported the measures taken by the Cuban government against Caribbean immigration, but favoured a stricter enforcement¹⁵⁴:

«Coadyuvar a los esfuerzos de los Poderes Públicos de Cuba en lo que respecta al reembarque de los inmigrantes antillanos, pero haciéndolos extensivos a que el mismo sistema se adopte con otras inmigraciones indeseables [. . .]. Gestionar de los Poderes Públicos una legislación sobre restricción de licencias comerciales e industriales, así como una nueva ley de inmigración más drástica e inflexible, habida cuenta que en Cuba, en estos momentos, hay más de seiscientos mil cubanos sin trabajo y se está operando un éxodo o emigración de familias campesinas cubanas hacia Venezuela y otros países.»

At the same time, the restriction to the entry of foreign labourers was to be accompanied by stricter laws on the concession of business licences, in order to protect Cuban workers and small businessmen:

In sum of all, this so-called Nazi Party fell short of many standard ideological features of Fascism, let alone German National Socialism. Apart from the lack of a racial doctrine, it lacked a strong anti-liberal, anti-democratic and revolutionary stance, whereas its social and economical policies consisted in a timid protectionism. Nevertheless, its goal of protecting the lower middle class from the risks of class struggle and foreign competition, through anti-Communist, anti-immigration and nationalist positions, was consistent with European fascism.

¹⁵⁴ ANC, FRA, leg. 1120, exp. 23427, f. 26.

3.2.2 THE NATIONAL FASCIST PARTY

No file has been found in the Cuban archives, regarding the Partido Fascista Nacional (National Fascist Party), but it is reported that it was founded on 20th October 1938 by Eugenio Novoa Díaz and Pedro Sánchez Ortiz¹⁵⁵, and legalized by the provincial governor¹⁵⁶. Chongo states in regards to it¹⁵⁷:

«El Partido Fascista Nacional no tuvo ningún arraigo en las masas populares, su actividad política fue insignificante y se disolvió paulatinamente al afiliarse a otras corrientes políticas su escasa membresía.»

In fact, no more is known, apart from a letter addressed to Novoa by “Pepín” Rivero, who denied being a member of said Party¹⁵⁸, as well as a telegram sent on 24th July 1940 in favour of Spanish Falange, on the part of Eugenio Novoa, self-proclaimed *Líder* of the Partido Fascista Nacional Camisas Azules Puramente Cubano (National Fascist Party – Blue Shirts – Pure Cuban), based in Empedrado 252¹⁵⁹.

Nevertheless, it can be supposed that the same people were involved in the constitution of another organization, the Comité Nacionalista de Ayuda a Finlandia (National Committee for Aid to Finland), whose General Director was actually Eugenio Novoa.

3.2.2.1 *The National Committee for Aid to Finland*

It was founded on 9th January 1940, with Manuel García Alfaro as Secretary¹⁶⁰, and the day after it was presented to the provincial administration by Juan Estrada Llovet and René Droeshout Díaz., with the following words by Estrada¹⁶¹:

«El propósito de recabar fondos con el fin de enviar varios productos cubanos al expresado país, habida cuenta de estar necesitada esa Nación de la ayuda eficaz de los pueblos y gobiernos civilizados del mundo, contra la barbara invasión que sufre el país citado, y para contener, a la vez,

155 Cfr. “*La Discusión*”, 21st October 1938.

156 Ibidem, 22nd October 1938

157 J. Chongo, *El fracaso de Hitler en Cuba*, op. cit., p. 26.

158 K. Figueredo, *Tres ismos en la historia de Cuba*, op. cit., p. 120.

159 ANC, FRA, leg. 357, exp. 10768, f. 80.

160 ANC, FRA, leg. 1208, exp. 25299, f. 1.

161 Ibidem, f. 5.

las fuerzas que pretenden destruir la civilización de las demás naciones.

Como quiera que en varias naciones – de América y de Europa existen comités de auxilio a Finlandia, creemos justo que en Cuba lo haya también, y es, por ello, que nos imponemos esta labor filantrópica y humanitaria, porque creemos, que así, contribuimos a mantener incólume la independencia de los pueblos y la grandeza de la civilización y de las naciones.»

The registration was originally refused because of a legal flaw¹⁶², but a new regulation was prepared soon after. Despite the negative letter sent by the Institución Cubana de Vigilantes Patriotas, remarking that there was more need for help in Cuba than abroad¹⁶³, its constitution was authorised¹⁶⁴ and took place on 29th January at 8 pm in its offices of Calle Cuba n. 219. Its board was composed by Juan Estrada (President), Eugenio Novoa (General Director), René Droeshout (General Secretary), Joaquín Rodes Muñoz, José N. Ramos (Treasurer) and Dario Vigil Juey (Vice Treasurer)¹⁶⁵. It was officially registered on 8th February in tome 20, folio 898, number 10766 of the Registro de Asociaciones¹⁶⁶.

On the 4th March, Novoa lamented with the Governor about the formation of another similar committee, which was being discussed in the Lonja de Comercio, under the presidency of Cosme de la Torriente, resenting their unwillingness to cooperate¹⁶⁷:

«nunca se ha dirigido al nuestro para prestar su cooperación ni aceptaron la documentación que del nuestro puse en sus manos en la tarde de hoy y en la asamblea que para constituirse realizaban en la Lonja del Comercio»

However, no other such association was registered¹⁶⁸, since the war was coming to an end. On 9th March, the Finns accepted the Soviet conditions, and the Committee changed its name in Comité Nacionalista de Ayuda a la Cruz Roja de Finlandia (National Committee for Help to the Red Cross of

162 Ibidem, ff. 4, 6.

163 Ibidem, ff. 7-8.

164 Ibidem, f. 9.

165 Ibidem, ff. 10-12.

166 Ibidem, ff. 13-14.

167 Ibidem, f. 18.

168 Ibidem, f. 19.

Cuban Fascist Associations

Finland)¹⁶⁹. Five days later, the change of name was accepted by the provincial administration¹⁷⁰. The very day before, the Moscow Treaty of Peace was signed between Finland and the Soviet Union.

The association was likely forsaken, since it was still formally existent in December 1952, when its cancellation was ordered¹⁷¹.

169 Ibidem, ff. 15-16.

170 Ibidem, f. 17.

171 Ibidem, f. 20.

4 Right and Left After the War

Comandante, compartimos
sueño, enemigo y orígenes; no
partido, ni sistema, ni amigos

Gustavo Morales

As we had anticipated in the first chapter, even after the World War, the word “fascism” has increasingly been used as a political or generic slander, rather than in scientifically proper way. It has been no exception for Cuba, where this term has been used not only for Batista’s right-wing dictatorship in the ’50s, but also for left-wing Revolutionary Cuba, whose government, leadership and ideology¹ have been repeatedly accused of being “fascist”.

Since these accusations have come not only by uneducated journalists and opinion makers, but also by academics², it would be therefore impossible to avoid examining and discussing these charges, concerning the political history of Cuba during the Cold War.

As for Batista, it goes without saying that this kind of authoritarian regime in Latin America usually had little to do with fascism. In the specific case, though his dictatorship was mostly supported by the Right and the relationship with Francoist regime did improve, the Cuban strongman always remained a committed antifascist, from an ideological point of view.

- ¹ The term “Castroism” must be intended as a *vox media* to describe the peculiar reality and ideology of Cuban Revolution, as it was significantly shaped and defined by Fidel (and Raúl) Castro.
- ² As a noteworthy personal example, the author was told by a Cuban-American Professor of Cuban Studies that the only two fascists in Cuban history had been Fulgencio Batista and Fidel Castro.

What is interesting to observe, instead, is the change that the Cuban Right undertook in this period, shifting its cultural model and geopolitical orientation from the *Hispanidad* to the West. Whereas the former, despite being more properly conservative, had indeed flirted with European fascism, the latter was firmly in the pro-American liberal and democratic, though anti-Communist and tendentiously authoritarian, camp. This transition took place in the twenty years which go from Pearl Harbor (1941) to Playa Girón (1961), though the actual break happened only as a consequence of the Revolution.

This explains how even the Cuban Anti-Communist movement usually kept distance from Neofascism, in contrast to other similar movements and regimes in Latin America, especially in the Southern Cone. In this sense, we can speak of a “Old Right” and a “New Right”, despite the presence of common motifs, which are intrinsically linked to Cuban political history and context and contribute to explain the scarce influence of Fascist ideas.

On the other hand, there are indeed specific elements in Castro’s upbringing and political outline, which can be put in contact with the characteristics of fascism, though they have been exaggerated by hostile propaganda. Moreover, the Cuban Revolution did have a rather positive impact on Neofascist imaginary, e.g. in Italy and Spain, especially in comparison with other Communist experiences.

However, this hypothesis bases itself on a shallow and generic definition of fascism, partly akin to the debatable theory of totalitarianism, which does not account for core differences in terms of political philosophy and class analysis between fascism and communism. In fact, despite historical communism having often assumed integral nationalist features, these aspects did not change its ideological core.

It should be concluded that the ideas discussed in this chapter have more to do with political propaganda, i.e. the vilification of an opponent through its *reductio ad Hitlerum*, than with real historiography, as they lack actual consistence. Nevertheless, their discussion offers the possibility to put the subject of this thesis inside the wider context of Cuban contemporary history.

4.1

THE TRANSITION FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW RIGHT.

In fact, the relationship between Cuba, Spain and the United States had entered an amicable period due to Batista's golpe in Cuba and the Pact of Madrid, which put an end to the international isolation of Franco's Spain, which had coincided with the Authentic governments in Cuba, who were more hostile to Francoism. At the same time, the Spanish Right still kept its footholds in Cuban society, such as the traditional College of Belén and "*Diario de la Marina*", as well as the newly founded Instituto Cultural Cubano-Español.

The Revolution made the Cuban Right largely powerless. On one side, the Communist takeover of Cuban society expropriated its own socio-economic bases of power, on the other, its involvement with Batista's dictatorship delegitimized it in front of Cuban liberal and democratic forces.

Even worse, since Franco's government chose not to break relationships with Cuba and repressed any independent political activity, Spain ceased to represent a major political patron for Cuban exiles. Unsurprisingly, most Cubans who emigrated there only used the Iberian country as a way to the United States.

The Cuban-American community, on the other hand, found in Washington's government a powerful ally, with a concurring agenda of contrasting Cuban government. This ensured that Cuban exile politics espoused a strongly pro-American position, lending their support to the staunchest anti-Communists.

4.1.1 THE SPANISH RIGHT IN CUBA

Half a century after the independence, the Spanish community in Cuba still played a major role in the local economy and society. While an important part of it was composed by Republican exiles, the most influential part was constituted by Catholic conservative upper-class Spaniards or Hispano-Cubans, who did have their own associations and media, and had already lobbied, during the Spanish Civil War, to obtain support and funding for the Nationalist faction.

Two fundamental pillars of the Hispano-Cuban Right were the Catholic Church, whose clergy in Cuba was mostly

Spanish-born, and the media empire directed by the Rivero family, most conspicuously including the "*Diario de la Marina* newspaper. Whereas the two afore-detailed elements had always been part of the Spanish community in Cuba, since the independence, Franco's conquest of power would involve a third layer of influence.

The end of the Second World War had found Spain in a state of international isolation, because of its former association with the defeated Axis powers. This situation contributed to stifle the weak Spanish economy, which still resented from the widespread Civil War destructions, and urged new diplomatic strategies in order to restore international legitimacy and recognition.

Therefore, the failure of Falangist diplomacy in the early '40s was followed by a change of strategy to ensure the maintenance of good relationships with other countries, and especially the Latin American ones. Among them, Cuba still played a central role, due to the length of Spanish domination and the presence of a consistent number of Spaniards or Cubans with near Spanish ancestry who willingly cooperated.

The election of Carlos Prío Socarras as President gave way to an improvement in the relationships between the two countries³. In spite of Prío's political continuity with Ramón Grau, being both of the Authentic Party, his anti-Communist stance, justified by the evolution of the international situation and the end of the alliance between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, seemed promising to Madrid. In fact, when the nomination in March 1949 of the Falangist leader José Manuel del Castaño y Cardona as *chargé d'affaires* in Cuba was met with fierce opposition from the Cuban Left, to the extent that the Spanish authorities deemed better to remove him, Prío's government refused to expel him and insisted on keeping good relationships with Spain⁴.

Similarly, in May 1949, the government ordered its U.N. representative to abstain in the U.N. vote on the Brazilian proposal to re-establish relations with Franco's Spain, instead of voting against, as it was presumed⁵. Even the commercial

3 K. Figueredo, *Carlos Prío Socarrás, Fulgencio Batista, Francisco Franco: La Escalada hacia una consolidación "fraterna", 1948-1958*, in "*Illes i imperis*", n. 12, 2009, pp. 49-71.

4 *Ibidem*, pp. 53-54.

5 *Ibidem*, p. 56.

conflict between the countries, between 1949 and 1950, was concluded soon after with a new agreement (27th June 1949), which granted lower tariffs for Cuban export in Spain (especially tobacco products and sugar)⁶.

Following this trend, Batista's coup constituted still another occasion for the Spanish diplomacy to strengthen the ties with Cuba⁷. In fact, the Spanish government immediately recognized the new Cuban government, which reciprocated establishing full relations. A few months after the coup, Juan Pablo de Lojendio was received in Havana as Spanish ambassador, while Antonio de Iraizoz was sent to represent Cuba in Madrid.

This rapprochement was also related with the fact that both dictators needed U.S. support and they hoped to ingratiate Washington with their anti-Communist policies. As expectable, the Cuban Communists of the Partido Social Popular strongly and vocally resented the event⁸, till they were forced underground the year after, following the attack on Moncada barracks. At the same time, the Spanish Republican milieu in Cuba started to meet with obstacles and repression from the new government⁹.

The renewed friendship between the two dictators also had various practical outcomes, starting with the conclusion of a new trade agreement, which expanded on the provisions made in 1950. Furthermore, Cuba supported the international recognition of Spain, first as a member of the UNESCO (1952), then as a full member of the United Nations (1955). These ties would not be ended by the fall of Batista's regime, as they were maintained in the decades to come, in spite of the ideological contrast with the revolutionary regime. Even from the personal point of view, Batista himself was to spend his exile in Spain, where he had invested a large part of his ill-gotten wealth. He died in Marbella in 1973 and was buried in Madrid.

6 Ibidem, pp. 60-61.

7 K. Figueredo, *Francisco Franco y Fulgencio Batista: complicidad de dos dictadores en el poder (1952-1958)*, in "Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos", Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo (Morelia, Mexico), n. 64 (July-December 2016), pp. 296-325.

8 Cfr. *El nombramiento de un embajador en España*, in "Noticias de Hoy", XV, 98, 23rd April 1952, p. 2.

9 K. Figueredo, *Carlos Prío Socarrás, Fulgencio Batista, Francisco Franco: La Escalada hacia una consolidación "fraterna"*, 1948-1958, op. cit., pp. 66-68.

4.1.1.1 *The Spanish Cuban Cultural Institute*

In this new historical framework, the cultural policy of the Spanish State was redesigned along the same guidelines¹⁰. The now discredited concepts of *raza* and *imperio* were substituted by an idea of *Hispanidad* based on a common, supranational citizenship and the self-determination of the different nations belonging to the same cultural family.

Following this model, unlike old Falangist groups, these new institutions acted independently from the Spanish government and diplomacy and kept a neutral, autonomous outlook, aiming at cultural cooperation with Hispanic countries. Their members were not political activists, but representatives of the local elites (politicians, businessmen, academicians), who maintained ties with Spanish society¹¹.

For this reason, in October 1946, the Consejo de la Hispanidad was replaced by the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica (ICH). It was an independent organization, which cooperated both with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Education, inside Spain, and with Regional Societies and similar institutions abroad¹².

The same happened soon after in Cuba, where the Instituto Cultural Cubano-Español (ICCE)¹³ was founded on 15th July 1948, in the locals of the Comité France-Amérique and the Automóvil y Aéreo Club de Cuba (Malecón 255, e/ Galiano y Blanco). Its President, the jurist José Agustín Martínez Viademonte stated to this regard¹⁴:

«... el nuevo Instituto a diferencia de otros no se mezclará para nada en el problema político de ninguno de los dos pueblos cuyos lazos culturales, de mutuo amor y respeto, intenta fomentar»

In fact, the people involved in the project were quite different from the previous associative experiences, and revolved around three main spheres: culture and university, business

10 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *Cuba en la estrategia cultural de la España franquista (1945-1958)*, in "Pensamiento y Cultura", Universidad de la Sabana (Colombia), 10 (November 2007), pp. 191-207.

11 Ibidem, pp. 192-193.

12 *Instituto de Cultura Hispánica (Normas y Reglamentos)*, [s.e], Madrid 1948.

13 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *El Instituto Cultural Cubano-Español (1948-1967)*, in "Espacio Laical", n. 4, 2013, pp. 107-111.

14 Miguel Roldán Viñas, *El Instituto Cultural Cubano-Español*, en "Raíz. España en América", n. 4, vol. I, La Habana, August-September 1948, p. 10.

and trade, jurisprudence and politics. If we take into examination the organization chart of the Institute, from the Directive Board¹⁵ to the various Commissions¹⁶, out of 26 people, there were eight lawyers, seven journalists, four academicians and teachers, four businessmen, three librarians and archivists.

A durable and exemplar legacy of the ICH's work was its contribution in raising the funds for the erection of the Basílica Hispanoamericana de Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes. In Cuba, the committee in charge was headed by Cardenal Manuel Arteaga Betancourt, Archbishop of the Havana and a donation of 1 million pesos was made by Batista's wife Martha Fernández¹⁷ – two clear proofs of the good reception that this cultural strategy enjoyed among the highest echelons of the Cuban society.

However, it still met the mistrust and opposition of antifascist forces, in spite of its apolitical stance. For example, the Communist Sergio Alpízar warned that¹⁸:

«Los falangistas ya no arriban con el brazo en alto y el Heil Hitler en los labios como otrora. Ahora se disfrazan de inofensivos misioneros de cultura. . . »

And then insisted¹⁹:

- 15 President José Agustín Martínez Viademonte, First Vice President José Manuel Cortina, Second Vice President José María Chacón y Calvo, Secretary Manuel Pérez Picot, Vice Secretary Antonio do Campo de la Fuente, Treasurer Marcelino García Rubiera, Vice Treasurer José Justo Martínez, Comptroller Enrique Gancedo Toca, Vice Comptroller Félix Chediak Ahuayda, other Board Members José Rubinos Ramos, Gastón Baquero, Lorenzo Rodríguez Fuentes, José Ignacio Lasaga Travieso, Estrella Terren.
- 16 Propaganda: José Ignacio Rivero Hernández and Roberto Santos Díaz-Varela, Cultural Extension: Arturo Alfonso Roselló and Miguel Roldán Viñas, Cultural Actions: Ernesto Fernández Arrondo and José Rubinos Ramos, Reviews: Gastón Baquero and José Ignacio Lasaga, Collection: Manuel Dorta Duque and Ángel Fernández Varela, Resources: Pedro Abascal Berenguer and Juan Joaquín Otero, Libraries Office: Lorenzo Rodríguez Fuentes and Manuel Álvarez González, Relations with Similar Societies: Estrella Terren and Jesús Gancedo Ruiz.
- 17 K. Figueredo, *Cuba en la estrategia cultural de la España franquista (1945-1958)*, op. cit., p. 196.
- 18 Sergio Alpízar, *La penetración falangista es una amenaza para la cultura cubana*, in "Noticias de Hoy", n. 217, a. XI, La Habana, 7th September 1948, p. 5.
- 19 Sergio Alpízar, *Falangistas con sotana*, in "Noticias de Hoy", 11th September 1948, p. 2.

«Ya han instalado su cenáculo conspirativo con el eufemismo de Instituto Kultural Kubanoespañol, rama colateral de la Falange y el FBI yanqui. . . ».

In fact, though the ICH was formally apolitical, it must be admitted that its work answered to the political exigences of the Spanish State, constituting a veritable case of soft power. For example, a Falangist leader who played an important role in such initiatives was José Antonio's sister, Pilar Primo de Rivera.

On the other hand, the accusations of complicity between Spain and the United States were blatant lies, even more than the former portrayal of Franco as Hitler's lackey. Not only, in fact, political cooperation among the two countries will resume only in 1953, but the cultural perspective of Hispanism was actually in opposition to American influence, as it was grounded on virulently anti-liberal ideologies, such as National Syndicalism and Traditionalist Catholicism. As an example, the General Director of the ICH between 1957 and 1962 was the National-Catholic writer Blas Piñar López, veteran of the Siege of the Alcazar, deputy in the Cortes and a leading figure of Spanish neofascism after Franco's death. Piñar had to resign, soon after a tour of Latin America and Philippines, for having written a vitriolic article against the United States and Americanism²⁰.

By the way, Cuba's cooperation with Spanish organizations and events, in the framework of the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica was intense²¹. For example, the President Martínez Viadelmonte and Juan José Remos, former Ambassador in Spain and Minister of Education and of Foreign Affairs, as well as distinguished historian, took part in the works of the First Congress of Intellectual Cooperation (Madrid, 1-12 October 1950)²². Six years later, Chacón y Calvo, who had long worked in the Cuban Embassy in Madrid, took part in the second edition, who took place in Santander (2-29 July 1956), for the first centenary of Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo²³, giving various conferences on the subject.

20 B. Piñar, *Hipócritas*, in "ABC", 19th January 1962, p. 3.

21 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *Cuba, la siempre fiel. Impronta cubana en el Instituto de Cultura Hispánica de Madrid, 1947-1958*, *Illes i Imperis*, 19, 2017, pp. 169-191.

22 Cfr. Rafael Gil Serrano, *El Congreso de Cooperación Intelectual*, in "Revista Española de Pedagogía", 9, 33 (Jan-March 1951), pp. 125-130.

23 Cfr. Eloy Benito Ruano, *El II Congreso de Cooperación Intelectual (Santander, 2-29 julio 1956)*, in "Revista de literatura", 10, 19-20, 1956, pp. 180-183.

The Spanish authorities, on their account, were not parsimonious in honours and recognition towards their Cuban correspondent and collaborators. Apart from the concession of scholarships to Cuban students, they also granted decorations and honours to Cuban personalities who had distinguished in their support of Hispanic cultural ties, as well as diplomatic cooperation between the two countries. Still others were honoured with invitations to take part in the activities in the Motherland, as members of the ICH²⁴.

Furthermore, these cultural exchanges were reciprocated by visits of Spanish cultural personalities who travelled to Cuba, mostly en route to other Latin American countries. They generally enjoyed a good reception, such as the President of the ICH Joaquín Ruiz Jiménez, who was received by the President Grau San Martín (August 1948). He was followed by his successor Alfredo Sánchez Bella (1949, 1953 and 1956), Eugenio Montes and Ernesto Gímenez Caballero, José María Pemán, and, in 1958, José Luis Punche, Fernando de la Presa and Gerardo Diego²⁵. Nonetheless, they were addressed with the usual lamentations and insults from the antifascist milieu. Not only the Communists "Noticias de Hoy"²⁶, but also the moderate Bohemia²⁷ proclaimed their contrariety to these visits.

For example, a fierce polemic was excited by the poetic mission of the Spanish poets Luis Rosales Camacho, Leopoldo Panero, Antonio Zubiaurre and the Count Agustín de Foxá, who stayed in Havana at the end of December 1949, as a part of their tour of Latin America²⁸. They had been received in the Academia Nacional de Artes y Letras directed by Miguel Ángel Carbonell, in the presence, among others, of José Agustín Martínez, José María Chacón y Calvo and Dulce María Loynaz. The violent and outrageous attacks from the

24 Honorary Members: José Agustín Martínez and Father José Rubinos Ramos; Titular Members: Andrés María Lazcano y Mazón, Dulce María Loynaz; Francisco Ichaso, Ángel Fernández Varela; Correspondent Members: Father Alberto de Castro Tagle and Father Ángel Aparicio Laurecio.

25 K. Figueredo, *Cuba en la estrategia cultural de la España franquista (1945-1958)*, op. cit., pp. 201-202.

26 S. Alpízar, *Un misionero de Falange*, "Noticias de Hoy", XI, 209, La Habana, 2nd September 1948, p. 2.

27 El máximo jerarca de la Hispanidad, in "Bohemia", XL, 36, La Habana, 5th September 1948, p. 56.

28 K. Figueredo, *Cuba en la estrategia cultural de la España franquista (1945-1958)*, op. cit., pp. 202-205.

Communist press focused on the presumed complicity of Rosales in the assassination of Federico García Lorca²⁹, who had been Loynaz' guest in Havana in 1930, and went as far as asking the Ministry of State to expel the Spanish envoys and condemn their reception.

The poetess would also lead, along with Martínez Viademonte, the Cuban delegation at the First Hispanoamerican Feminine Congress held in Madrid in the fourth centenary of the Catholic Monarchs (1-13 May 1951)³⁰. Other members were the painter María Teresa de la Campa, the pianist Adela Téllez and the music professor Hilda Ruiz Castaneda, who was invited again in 1957 to give presentations of Cuban music. She also had proposed, in April 1952, the creation of an Institute of Cuban Culture in Madrid³¹. Following this event, in 1954 a Feminine Section³² was opened.

Nevertheless, the political and economical independence of the Institute meant that it had to finance itself, and this resulted in a persistent lack of money, which hampered its ambitious plans. Neither a weekly bulletin, nor proper premises for a library could be established. The sporadic cultural manifestations never exceeded the boundaries of Havana. Therefore, the Institute entered in a state of crisis during Batista's dictatorship, with the gradual defection of the Treasurer, Secretary and President³³. Only in 1958, after an extraordinary congress, a new President, José María Chacón y Calvo, was elected and a new Directive Board³⁴ formed.

- 29 The Spanish poet had been hiding in Rosales' house in Granada, despite the Falangist allegiance of Rosales' family, when he was arrested and executed by the Nationalist authorities. It was later revealed that Luis' elder brother Antonio had denounced García Lorca. Cfr. G. Rosales, *El silencio de los Rosales*, Planeta, Barcelona 2002; M. Caballero Pérez, P. Góngora Ayala, *Historia de una familia: la verdad sobre el asesinato de García Lorca*, Grupo Ibersaf, Madrid 2007.
- 30 Cfr. María Raquel Payá, *I Congreso Feminino Hispanoamericano*, in "Revista Española de Pedagogía", 9, 35 (July-September 1951), pp. 475-478.
- 31 K. Figueredo, *Cuba en la estrategia cultural de la España franquista (1945-1958)*, op. cit., p. 196.
- 32 Headed by Hilda Ruiz Castañeda, Adela Téllez, and Adela Jaume, as well as Isis Bermúdez, Begonia López, Mercedita Sigarroat y Conchita Sierra.
- 33 K. Figueredo, *El Instituto Cultural Cubano-Español (1948-1967)*, op. cit., pp. 108-109.
- 34 First Vice President Gastón Baquero, Second Vice President Dulce María Loynaz, Secretary Ángel Aparicio Laurencio, Treasurer Juan Joaquín Otero, Vice Treasurer Rosaura García Tudurí; Advisory Board: José

The very name was changed into Instituto Cubano de Cultura Hispánica. Though the economic condition remained bleak, the new President managed to achieve a wider recognition and even to create eventually a library³⁵.

Nevertheless, this period was soon ended by greater political changes. After the Revolution, the ICCH resumed its activities (March 1959), but the new social and political context revealed to be prohibitive for its existence. Although, the Institute never suffered restrictions or repression from the revolutionary authorities, the continuous exodus of its members and the closure of friendly newspapers such as the "*Diario de la Marina*" brought him to a slow demise. In 1962, its members were reduced to 15. Five years later, when the ICCH ceased to exist, the only remaining personalities were Dulce María Loynaz and José María Chacón y Calvo.

4.1.1.2 *The College of Belén*

Notwithstanding the difficulties faced by the ICCE in his short story, other cultural institutions had a longer and deeper impact on the Hispano-Cuban society.

As in other Catholic countries, the importance of the Society of Jesus' educational centres was paramount in the context of Cuban upper class society. The most important schools were the Colegio Dolores founded in Santiago de Cuba in 1913, and the Colegio de Belén, which had opened in Old Havana in 1854, before moving to Marianao (Calle 45 y 66) in a new magnificent building designed by architect Leonardo Morales y Pedroso (1925).

Both male boarding schools were expensive but offered an excellent and strict education based on integral formation of the personality and a curriculum including humanities and sciences, as well as beaux arts and sports. Due to their cost and quality, they were attended by the children of the Cuban elite, especially the ones most tied to their Spanish ancestry and heritage. For example, all three Castro brothers (Ramón, Fidel, Raúl) attended the Colegio Dolores, as well as Eduardo

Rubinos Ramos, José Ignacio Rivero Hernández, José Agustín Martínez, Ángel Fernández Varela, Miguel Ángel Carbonell Rivero, Félix Lizaso, Agustín Acosta, Juan Fonseca Martínez, Nena Benítez, José López Vilaboy, Miguel Ángel D'Estéfano Pisani, Manuel Villaverde Álvarez, Juan José Remos Rubio, José Gash Prieto and Francisco Calderón Cabrera.

35 K. Figueredo, *El Instituto Cultural Cubano-Español (1948-1967)*, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

René Chibás Rivas, José Antonio Portuondo Valdor, Felipe Martínez Arango, and many other distinguished *santiagueros*.

Fidel, Raúl and Eddy Chibás went on to continue their studies at the Colegio de Belén. This institution prepared other revolutionaries, such as José Luis Tassende de las Muñecas, Enrique Capote Rodríguez, as well as most “reactionaries”, such as José Ignacio Rivero Alonso and his sons, and three Presidents (the two aforementioned and Carlos Prío Socarras). In fact, the ideal *cursus honorum* expected the graduation in Belén to be followed by the study of Law at the University of Havana.

In 1926, a small group was founded by Father Felipe Rey de Castro to maintain a Catholic influence on the new graduates. This gave birth to the Agrupación Católica Universitaria, which constituted an ideal prolongation of the College community, still based on Ignatian spirituality and formation. The ultimate goal was to uphold Catholicism among Cuban élites, in face of a gradual secularization of the society.

The College of Belén had strongly supported the Nationalist side during the Civil War, through both donations³⁶ and liturgical acts (e.g. on 12th October, 18th July, and other significant dates). There is extant photographic documentation showing raised arm salutes made during commemorative Masses³⁷ and during the Oath to the Flag (*Juramento a la Bandera*)³⁸.

A main role was played by the Galician Father José Rubinos Ramos (1898 – 1963), teacher of Spanish language and literature in the College, director of the school review “*Ecos de Belén*”, founder of the Academia Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and an important figure of modern Galician literature. Fr. Rubinos wrote several articles for the “*Diario de la Marina*” and “*¡Arriba España!*” and spoke at the radio, in support of Nationalist Spain³⁹

As Fidel Castro recounted later⁴⁰:

«... su ideología era derechista, franquista, reaccionaria.

36 Cfr. AMAE, R. 2501, exp. 1, Havana, 2th February 1939.

37 K. Figueredo, *Cuba y la Guerra Civil española*, op. cit., p. 385 (fig. 12).

38 www.juanperez.com/belen/belen.html.

39 Cfr. Jorge Domingo Cuadriello, *Diccionario Biobibliográfico de escritores españoles en Cuba. Siglo XX*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, Havana 2010.

40 Fidel Castro, *Fidel y la Religión. Conversaciones con Frei Betto*, Editorial Verde Olivo, La Habana 1985, p. 145.

Eso te lo digo sin una sola excepción. Ahí sí es verdad que no cabe hablar de que había en Cuba un jesuita de izquierda en aquella época.»

The Fathers also spoke at length against Communism and of the crimes committed by the Spanish Republicans⁴¹.

An interesting showcase is represented by the textbook *Rudimentos de Geografía General y de Cuba y de la provincia de La Habana*, by Fr. Alberto Martínez SJ, that was attacked by the Communist press for its contents. The coursebook represented Spain as the original Motherland, whose colonization had civilized the people of America, bringing «peace, progress and justice»⁴². This meant that Cuban patriotic traditions, born of the struggle for independence, were quite neglected. At the same time, Catholicism was exalted, while Martin Luther was disparaged. The recent Civil War in Spain was seen as a righteous crusade against Communism, Liberalism and Freemasonry⁴³.

Likewise, French Revolution was criticized for having spread subversive ideas, causing for example the slave revolt in Haiti⁴⁴. On the other hand, the Axis countries and their leaders (including Hitler) were praised for their social and political feats, such as Mussolini's conciliation with the Church and colonization of Ethiopia. Even Japanese imperialism was implicitly justified through geopolitical reasons (lack of "vital space")⁴⁵.

This explains why the College of Belén was at the centre of the debate on public and private education held in Cuba in the early '40s, when the Communist intellectual Juan Marinello was appointed President of the Commission on private education, in the National Council for Education and Culture⁴⁶. In fact, the Jesuits were a main actor in establishing an opinion movement in defence of private education, the committee "Por la Patria y por la escuela", founded on 25th May 1941 in an act, which gathered up to 50,000 people, ac-

41 Ibidem.

42 *¡Cuide la educación de sus hijos! ¡Lea esto!*, in "Noticias de Hoy, VIII, 121, 23rd May 1945, p. 1.

43 Ibidem.

44 *No se deje engañar por los fascistas. ¡Lea esto!*, in "Noticias de Hoy, VIII, 126, 29th May 1945, p. 1.

45 Ibidem.

46 K. Figueredo, *La polémica educacional de los años 40 en Cuba*, in "Temas, 56 (October-December 2008), pp. 184-195.

ording to the Right-wing press⁴⁷. This campaign allowed the Cuban Right to maintain a strong political engagement and mobilization, even when the international situation made difficult to continue openly supporting Franco's government. In fact, its positions still were National-Catholicism, Hispanism and Anti-Communism, all major tenets of Franco's ideology.

There is no wonder that they were attacked by the contemporary Left⁴⁸:

«Los más fieles representantes de la política pro-imperio en América del franquismo están precisamente entre los jesuitas y componentes de otras órdenes que, desparramadas por América y teniendo en sus manos importantes centros llamados de enseñanza, se convertirán en portavoces de las propagandas falangistas»

In fact, their enemies, organized in the committee "Por la escuela cubana en Cuba libre", founded on 31st May in the Gran Logia de la Isla de Cuba⁴⁹, viewed this struggle as part of the antifascist war on the Axis and its allies. In Leuchsenring's words⁵⁰:

«Esa fue la respuesta de la Cuba que aún no ha muerto a los que pretenden entregarla a Franco para que este la ofrezca como precioso obsequio a Hitler, que todos sabemos manda en España.»

Though, on the other hand, Marinello was careful to avoid any attack to Catholic religion in itself, as they would have been counterproductive⁵¹. Only after the Revolution, the Jesuit schools were closed and nationalised, along with the rest of private education structures, following the *Ley de Nacionalización de la Enseñanza* of 6th June 1961⁵².

47 *Un Comité permanente ha de seguir luchando por la Patria y por la Escuela*, in "¡Alerta!", VII, 124, 26th May 1941, p. 10; *El mitin por la Patria y por la escuela*, in "Carteles, XXII, 22, 1st June 1941, p. 48.

48 *Los representantes del franquismo en América, "Nosotros"*, IV, 43, 10th June 1941, p. 5.

49 Cfr. Juan Marinello, *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba libre. Declaraciones y finalidades*, in BNJM, Fondo Manuscrito Juan Marinello.

50 Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *Por la escuela cubana en Cuba libre, s/e*, La Habana 1941, p. 16.

51 Cfr. Juan Marinello, *Carta del Dr. Marinello al obispo Dalmau*, in Carmen Gómez García – Humberto Ramos Valdés, *Un hombre de todos los tiempos: Juan Marinello*, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana 1988, p. 109.

52 "Gaceta oficial de la República de Cuba", LIX, 109 (7th June 1961), pp. 10657-10658.

4.1.1.3 *The "Diario de la Marina"*

As we have seen, all the political campaigns in favour of Nationalist Spain, during and after the Civil War, as well as Catholic institutions, were staunchly supported by the press group tied to the Rivero family, including the "*Diario de la Marina*", "*El Avance*", which actually belonged to Oscar Zayas, and "*¡Alerta!*", who was sold in 1949 to Ramón Vasconcelos. The same newspapers would go along to be the main vocal defenders of Batista's dictatorship.

In fact, the decade of the '50s would be one of the most interesting ones for the Cuban press, due to the contrast among the growing number of publications and the censorship imposed by the regime. The country counted with half hundred daily papers, as well as half a dozen important weekly papers, and each province had 2-3 local newspapers⁵³. Three factors influenced the state of the press to this extent: a consistent urban population, the increasing role of the press agencies and the conception of newspapers as business company, whose owner often coincided with the director⁵⁴.

It is also interesting to observe that Fulgencio Batista, on one hand, intervened to censor the press, as it suited his interests (e.g. through the Ley Constitucional de la República on 4th April 1952 and the Ley-Decreto 997 de Orden Público in late 1953), on the other, he actually supported and financed newspapers in order to maintain and spread consensus for his regime, as to achieve a wider legitimacy in the eyes of foreign (especially North American) public opinion, than the one granted by his military power. In this way, almost all Cuban newspapers became dependent on government subsidies or deliberate handouts, amounting to about 450,000 \$ monthly⁵⁵. This granted the government a further leverage on the press.

This meant that ideological differences were perfectly tolerated as long as the paper bowed to the regime consensus. Through prebends, Batista ensured the support of left-wing figures, such as the former Communist Rolando Masferrer Rojas, owner and director of "*Libertad*", and the

53 A. Checa Godoy, *Historia de la prensa en Iberoamérica*, Alfar, Sevilla 1993.

54 J. Álvarez Timoteo ; A. Martínez Riaza, *Historia de la prensa iberoamericana*, Mapfre, Madrid 1992.

55 J. Spicer, *Cuba: brazo derecho de la Revolución*, in R. N. Pierce, *Libertad de expresión en América Latina*, Mitre, Barcelona 1982, pp. 123-142.

former Orthodox Ramón Vasconcelos Maragliano⁵⁶, owner and director of “*¡Alerta!*”. In 1954, the former was elected to the Senate, whereas the latter was named Minister of the Communications, presiding Batista’s hegemony and control over the media. Other such examples were “*Prensa Libre*” directed by the former Authentic Sergio Carbó Morena⁵⁷ and Eduardo Abril Amores’ “*Diario de Cuba*”⁵⁸.

Therefore, despite the censorship, journalism remained an area of political engagement, both for apology and veiled criticism of the dictatorship, with Rivero’s newspaper being the most important of the first kind. According to Patricia Calvo’s analysis⁵⁹, though the *Diario* did cover the revolutionary guerrilla in 1956-58 – from an average of about ten cover pages in uncensored months down to three in censored ones –, it generally (64%) reported on Army sources. Its portrayal of the conflict described it as a minor nuisance in an otherwise stable and growing country, though warning against the dangers of social upheaval⁶⁰. The same stance was held in foreign politics⁶¹.

In this context, it is worth to notice two important Conservative journalists in this newspaper, both maintaining strong Hispanist ties, to the point that they chose Spain as a destination for their exile. The former was José Gastón Eduardo Baquero Díaz, born in 1914 in Banes in a mixed-race working class family, and member of the poets group *Orígenes*. In 1945, he became chief editor of the “*Diario*”, editing the cultural columns “*Panorama*” and “*Aguja de marear*”. In 1952, Batista made him a Senator in his Consultive Council, so that he had to leave Cuba after the Revolution. He travelled to Spain, where he was well received and started working in the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica and in Radio Exterior de España. He resumed poetry and won a number of awards,

56 Ivet González – Aline Marie Rodríguez – Salvador Salazar (ed.), *Periodistas cubanos de la República. 1902-1958*, prol. by P. P. Rodríguez, Ediciones Temas, La Habana 2015, pp. 548-558.

57 I. González – A. M. Rodríguez – S. Salazar (ed.), *Periodistas cubanos de la República. 1902-1958*, op. cit., pp. 117-138.

58 *Ibidem*, pp. 29-50.

59 Patricia Calvo González, *Visiones desde dentro. La insurrección cubana a través del Diario de la Marina y Bohemia (1956-1958)*, “*História*”, 33, 2, 2014, pp. 346-379.

60 *Ibidem*.

61 Ramón Chong Lin, *¿Cómo reflejó el Diario de la Marina la Guerra Fría?*, Facultad de Comunicación, Universidad de La Habana, 1981, BA thesis

until he died in 1997⁶².

The latter was Manuel Luis del Riego González-Mata⁶³, born in 1918 in Gijón, and emigrated in Cuba with his family in 1934. As a Jesuit schools student, he entered the College of Belén, and then proceeded to study Law at the University of Havana and joined the Agrupación Católica Universitaria. In 1938, he had been Vice President of the Students' Legion of Cuba. After the graduation, he entered the "*Diario de la Marina*" (1943) and became its chief information officer. In 1961, he exiled to Spain, where he took part in dissident Falangism⁶⁴, especially in the years of the Transition, when he was one of the candidates of FE y de las JONS (Auténtica) to the Provincial elections in Madrid (1977)⁶⁵.

Unsurprisingly, the "*Diario de la Marina*" would soon be at odds with the new revolutionary government. Though it was not the only newspaper to be outlawed, its demise was particularly choreographic. Its premises were taken over and closed by the typographical staff, most of them having joined the worker militias, with the help of State security agents. That very night⁶⁶:

«[...] both worker and student militias at the University of Havana organized a mass funeral procession down San Lázaro Street in which 100,000 Cubans participated. Once they arrived at the Malecón, or sea wall, a group of students, serving as pallbearers, dumped "the body" of *Diario de la Marina* into the sea. Around them, signs read, "128 years of betraying a noble people. Not one more."»

At the same time, Fidel himself, in a television speech celebrated the end of the *Diario*, saying that he should have closed earlier those newspapers who had received money from Batista, and assimilating its defenders to its 19th-century editors, who had denounced Cuban independences and slandered Cuban martyrs⁶⁷.

62 I. González – A. M. Rodríguez – S. Salazar (ed.), *Periodistas cubanos de la República. 1902-1958*, op. cit., pp. 71-103.

63 Biographical information given by his daughter, Mariella del Riego.

64 He was included among the «veteran Falangist fighters» (*El grupo hedillista se considera depositario de la legitimidad falangista*, in "*El País*", 1st September 1976.)

65 "*Vanguardia Española*", 10th May 1977, p. 12.

66 L. Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2012, p. 132.

67 *Ibidem*.

4.1.2 THE CUBAN COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The Counter-Revolution, that is the politically organized active resistance against the Cuban Revolution, has indeed played a relevant important in the recent history of the Cuban people. In fact, a new, different Cuba has formed on the other side of the Strait of Florida, though, since the '90s, the political emigration has been overtaken in numbers by the economical emigration.

However, an important aspect of the Cuban case is the fact that not only the majority of Counter-revolutionaries actually agreed with the struggle against Batista, but also many of them had took part into the early stages of the Revolution. Even today, the narrative of a Revolution betrayed by a power-hungry Fidel Castro in league with Communists is prevalent.

It goes therefore without saying that right-wing Cubans, who had mostly supported Batista and had lost much of their power and wealth, were somewhat marginalized in their attempts at hegemonizing the anti-Castro scene. This explains why most of them shifted their allegiance and referents from Spanish National-Catholicism to the American Republicanism, though another important reason was the increasing generation distance between Spanish-born Cubans and their children and grandchildren.

4.1.2.1 *Batistianos and Revolutionaries*

The Cuban exile has always been characterized also by its division in a number of groups, on the base of both ideological and personal reasons. Nevertheless, its primary separation was between Batista supporters, the first to went into exile, and former revolutionaries, who were directly or indirectly forced out of the island.

A CIA report describing the state of Cuban opposition at the end of 1960, probably in prevision of the Bay of Pigs⁶⁸ individuated two such groups. The former was the Union Cubana de Liberación, led by José Eleuterio Pedraza and the industrialist Francisco Cajigas, and claiming to count on the support of 5,000 men, as well as the former Ejército de Cuba, though it was doubtful that it would engage in any action.

68 Central Intelligence Agency, *Current Intelligence Weekly Review*, 22nd December 1960

The latter (Milicia Anticomunista de Obreros y Campesinos) was led by Rolando Masferrer and therefore regarded as a little more than a gang of criminals by other exiles, in light of Masferrer's crimes during Batista's dictatorship.

As the said report states⁶⁹:

«Such groups usually have formed around one man and consist primarily of mercenaries, opportunists, and supporters of the former dictator. Their effectiveness has been limited by their past association with Batista; they are discredited among other anti-Castro exile groups and have little appeal to Cubans at home.»

Unsurprisingly, some of them, e.g. Esteban Novo Ventura and Masferrer himself, would be murdered in Miami, probably at the hand of other exiles.

A partial exception was constituted by the most famous and better organized of these groups, La Rosa Blanca, founded in 1959 by Rafael Díaz-Balart, Fidel Castro's brother-in-law and Majority Leader in the House of Representatives during Batista's dictatorship. His sons, Lincoln and Mario were elected to the U.S. Congress in later years. Later, other groups were founded, such as Jorge Mas Canosa's Fundación Nacional Cubana Americana in 1981.

Anyway, they simply could not expect sympathy nor cooperation from groups founded and led by «former Castro associates»⁷⁰. Among these, the report mentions Antonio de Varona's Frente Revolucionario Democrático as the largest, being a coalition of different groups: Prío's *Auténticos*, the Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria, the Montecristi, the Movimiento Democrático Cristiano and Arango's Asociación Auténtica Anticomunista. It also names Manuel Ray Rivero's Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo and David Salvador's Movimiento 30 de Noviembre.

Yet they suffered however similar problems to the *batis-tianos*⁷¹:

«... all have found their efforts greatly limited by lack of coordination, a shortage of money and military equipment, a lack of suitable staging bases, and a failure to come up with a leader possessing a measure of Fidel Castro's appeal.

69 Ibidem, p. 1.

70 CIA, *Current Intelligence Weekly Review*, 22nd December 1960, p. 2

71 CIA, *Current Intelligence Weekly Review*, 22nd December 1960, p. 2

A further handicap has been the failure of much of the opposition to come up with well defined political and economic programs which would have sufficient appeal to win support among Castro's present backers.»

Furthermore⁷²:

«Efforts to unify the opposition have generally been unsuccessful because of ideological differences, personal feuds, and the desire of many individuals to be the star performer.»

This is still true in present days, as the exile groups have not been able to exploit the huge crisis of consensus generated in Cuba by the hardships of the Special Period.

However, the Cuban-Americans, both because of the fact they were mostly of upper and middle-class origin and well educated, and of the support they had received from the U.S. government for political reasons, soon integrated in the North American society. As they constitute the second most over-represented minority in the U.S. Federal Government. At the moment, they have expressed three Senators and five Representatives in office, as well as five other former Congressmen.

Their inability to influence the Cuban internal politics has therefore been compensated by their influence on the U.S. foreign policy in regards to Cuba. This means that they have always shunned political extremes, in favour of integration and lobbying in the political mainstream.

4.1.2.2 *The Counter-Revolution in Arms*

This pattern does not change, if military resistance against the Revolution is taken into account. In fact, in many instances, during the Cold War, fascist and far Right elements had often played a role in military struggle, be it covert or open, against Communist regimes or guerrillas. This is true of various countries in Eastern Europe, where many former collaborationists or foreign SS volunteers went on fighting against Soviet occupation, as well as in Latin America, such as in Argentina's Dirty War. Patriotism and anti-Communism were the common denominator between more conservative and moderate political forces on one hand and violent Neofascist groups on the other.

⁷² Ibidem, p. 3

There is simply no evidence that similar connections existed among Cuban exiles, even among the *batistianos*, also because it would have played into the hands of Castro's government. Violent and even terrorist methods have always been accompanied by the call for freedom and democracy.

Naturally, the *batistianos* were the first to try armed actions to subvert and depose the revolutionary government, as already in August 1959, the Legión Anticomunista del Caribe, supported by Dominican dictator Trujillo and led by Pedraza, unsuccessfully attempted to plant an insurrection near Trinidad.

It is also worth to notice that, despite the mutual diffidence in Miami between the two kind of exile organizations, inside Cuba many armed groups had actually a mixed composition, with former Army members fighting alongside former rebels⁷³. At the same time, the Brigade 2506, who took part in the Bay of Pigs Invasion, though being largely composed by former soldiers and pilots of Batista's Army (e.g. Ricardo Montero Duque, Erneido Oliva), had in his ranks many former anti-Batista fighters (e.g. the leaders José San Román and Manuel Artime).

The same is true of armed groups outside Cuba, such as Alpha 66, founded by former revolutionary Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, and Omega 7, later subsumed in the Coordinación de Organizaciones Revolucionarias Unidas. Even the most notorious personalities such as Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, both having initially taken part in the overthrown of Batista, had nothing to do with fascist ideology, despite their cooperation with far Right anti-Communist groups in other Latin American countries.

Even in Cuba, the official historiography is clear about the distance between historic fascism and counter-revolutionary groups⁷⁴, to the extent that their anti-Communist stance was regarded by the official narration as lacking actual ideological commitment. In fact, the bulk of the Counter-revolutionary groups, especially after their abandonment by United States, was formed by poor peasants opposing collectivization policies⁷⁵.

73 José Suárez Amador, *De Las Villas a Oriente. Combatiendo el bandidismo (1959-1965)*, Editorial Oriente, Santiago de Cuba 2014.

74 Interview with José Suárez Amador, La Habana, 14th February 2015.

75 Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba. Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill

Moreover, an examination of the names used by 65 Counter-revolutionary armed organizations⁷⁶ shows the following recurrences:

Anti-Communist	22
Revolutionary	14
National	13
Catholic, Christian, God, Cross	11
Cuban, Cuba	10
Liberation, Liberty, Liberator	9
Democratic, Democracy	8
Workers	5
Civic	5
Students	4
Patriotic, People, Fatherland	4

Though right-wing terms such as «Anti-Communist» and «National» were prominent, the same can be said for more progressive words, like «Revolutionary», «Liberation» and «Democratic».

Only a small number made explicit reference to the religious sphere, but still they were on Christian Democratic or Christian Social positions. The most important was the aforementioned *Movimiento Democrático Cristiano*, who promoted a Third Way between capitalism and communism. In spokesman Rafael Caldero's words⁷⁷:

«We are anti-Communists just as we are anticapitalists, but we don't make anti-Communism a central objective of our work, because we think that a program of social justice is the best antidote for Communism.»

This stance was in line with similar parties in Latin America, such as the COPEI in Venezuela and the *Federación Social Cristiana* in Chile, both of which actually had mildly Falangist inspiration in the '30s⁷⁸, but anyway opposed totalitarianism and advocated peaceful, democratic means.

Accusations and comparisons with fascism were actually widely used in revolutionary propaganda, such as in the

2012, pp. 183-185.

76 J. Suárez Amador, *De Las Villas a Oriente*, op. cit., pp. 209-211.

77 Gervasio G. Ruíz, *Nace una organización: Movimiento Demócrata Cristiano*, in "Carteles", 10th January 1960, pp. 48, 68.

78 The Social Christian Party in Chile still uses a symbol of Falangist derivation: a red arrow on a white and blue field.

case of staff members of the humour magazine "El Pitirre" mockingly dressed as Nazi during the aforesaid "funeral" of the "Diario de la Marina"⁷⁹ or, 15 years later, or of the consistent use in the press of a swastika in place of the "x" in Nixon. However, it was hardly used as an actual political category.

4.1.2.3 Counter-Revolutionaries against Franco

Despite a fair number of Spanish religious who resisted the Revolution, including taking part in the armed insurrections⁸⁰, were Francoists, the Revolution brought to an end the good relations between the Cuban Right and Spain. Obviously, most of the exiles were democratic and so they already condemned Franco's regime, but the Caudillo's policy in face of the new Cuban government certainly did not help.

As we have seen, Anti-Communism had played an important role in gaining international recognition and support for the isolated Spanish State. In the words of the *Diario*⁸¹:

«Ya es hora de que las naciones que tienen a su cargo la suprema responsabilidad de esta lucha a muerte contra el comunismo, reconozcan el primer rango estratégico de la península ibérica en esa campaña defensiva. No nos hemos cansado de protestar contra esta reiterada discriminación del mundo occidental en agravio a España. Porque nada podía ser más grato al imperialismo soviético, y nada podía ser más injusto y torpe que esa exclusión.»

It went without saying that such support faltered when Spain failed in adopting a truly staunch opposition in front of Cuban communist revolutionaries.

In fact, since the beginning, the Spanish Ambassador did his best to ensure that the revolutionary government did not break with Spain and recognize instead the Spanish Republic in exile, since important Republican figures such as Alberto Bayo, who had trained the members of the Movimiento 26 de Julio in Mexico, Enrique Lister (in 1961) and Dolores Ibarruri (in 1963) were received in Havana. Unfortunately, the incident of January 1960, when Lojendio broke into the television studio where Fidel was accusing the Spanish

79 *Ratificó el pueblo su apoyo a la denuncia de la FEU. Cien mil personas en la escalinata*, in "Revolución", 13th May 1960, pp. 1, 13, 17.

80 J. Suárez Amador, *De Las Villas a Oriente*, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

81 *Un pacto militar necesario: Estados Unidos y España*, in "Diario de la Marina", CXIX, 170, La Habana, 18th July 1951, p. 4.

Embassy of supporting Counter-revolutionary clergy and asked vehemently for a rectification, risked to ruin relations.

Nevertheless, despite the expulsion of the Ambassador, Franco urged his Minister to Foreign Affairs, Fernando María Castiella, to do «anything, but breaking»⁸². Not only relations were maintained, but Spain took advantage of the embargo imposed by the United States to promote trade relations with its former colony. In fact, in the '60s, Cuba was Spain's 12th commercial partner, exporting sugar and tobacco products, and importing Spanish manufactured goods⁸³. At the same time, Iberia airlines kept the connections between Cuba and Europe, never completely stopping the direct flights, even after the 1962 Missiles Crisis.

Despite Spain had been dependent on his anti-Communist stance for receiving economical support and diplomatic recognition by the United States and was now about to renew its agreement on military bases, Franco always refused to break relationships with Cuba. The *Doctrina Estrada*, that is the principle of non-intervention in other countries' domestic policy, was still regarded as the guideline for Spain's international relations. This was especially true, considering the cultural and ancestral ties between the two countries. Therefore, despite the ideological differences, it was important to maintain relations, as Castiella said to U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk⁸⁴.

At the same time, even in 1959 there were still 7,000-8,000 Spanish citizens in Cuba, as well as 300,000 Cubans with recent Spanish ancestry⁸⁵. The Spanish government acted to protect these people, asking for the release of Spanish political prisoners and the permission for Spanish-Cubans to emigrate in Spain, and extending its unofficial protection to the Catholic Church in Cuba. The two countries even came close to agree on the indemnification of Spanish citizens

82 Francisco Franco Salgado-Araujo, *Mis conversaciones privadas con Franco*, Planeta, Barcelona 1976, p. 278.

83 George Lambie, *Franco's Spain and the Cuban Revolution in The Fractured Blockade: West European-Cuban Relations During the Revolution*, edited by Alistair Hennessy and George Lambie, MacMillan Press, London 1993, pp. 234-275.

84 Department of States, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 7th October 1965, Declassified Documents Reference System.

85 Embajada Española en La Habana, *Carta al Ministro*, 5th August 1969, box 10665, file 8-9, Archivo del Ministerio de Affaires Extranjeros.

whose properties had been nationalized⁸⁶.

This policy of support to Cuba, grounded not only in pragmatic but also in ideal reasons, such as Hispanism and anti-American revanchism, was generally reflected inside Spain, as shown in the following example⁸⁷:

«At the same time, Spain allowed Cubans into the country, but Franco's government did not permit any political campaigning related to Cuba. For these reasons, during the 1960s and '70s, Cubans in Spain did not find much sympathy for their plight among ordinary Spaniards [. . .]. Sergio, a middle-aged man who arrived in Spain in 1971 after nineteen months of forced labor in Cuba, complained the lack of understanding for his situation by Spaniards. He was frustrated by prevailing images of Cuba and the Cuban revolution in Spain and often felt misunderstood by those Spaniards who supported the revolution in Cuba, particularly during his first years in Spain: "The only thing people saw was that Fidel Castro was a man who had 'raised his voice against the North American giant'".»

This gained Spain the hatred of many exiles, with the same Caudillo, who a quarter of century before had ordered tens of thousands "Reds" shot dead, being now paradoxically accused of collaboration with Communism.

The apex of this tension was reached in September 1964, when Counter-revolutionary armed boats discharged on the Spanish merchant ship "*Sierra de Aránzazu*", en route to Havana, some 1,500 shots, killing three sailors and wounding six others. After this act of piracy, Spanish ships were escorted by the U.S. Navy.

However, the most conspicuous example of such a change was José Ignacio Rivero Hernández, who returned the decorations he had received from the Spanish government in occasion of the inauguration of the monument to his father, explicitly because of the persisting relations between Spain and revolutionary Cuba⁸⁸. This act was the death knell of Spanish-Cuban Old Right.

86 Ministerio de Affaires Extranjeros, *Proyecto de Acuerdo hispano-cubano sobre indemnizaciones*, 8th February 1967, n. 6381, Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco.

87 Louis Berg Mette, *Memory, Politics and Diaspora. Cubans in Spain*, in *Cuba. Idea of a Nation displaced*, edited by Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, State University of New York Press, Albany 2006, p. 20.

88 Cfr. J. I. Rivero Hernández, *Contra viento y marea*, op. cit.

4.2

CASTROISM AS A "RED FASCISM"?

This regime thus seems indeed to have been more than anything the first fascist left regime – by which I mean it is a regime with totalitarian leftwing goals established and sustained by methods of fascism.

Hugh Thomas

The popularity of the notion that Castroism is actually a kind of fascism can be revealed by a simple Google search, showing that the words "Fidel Castro" and "fascism" give more than 500,000 results, including a large number of news articles and columns. It would be therefore be impossible to avoid examining and discussing this charge.

Revolutionary Cuba has indeed enjoyed some appreciation, actually more than it could be expected, among left-wing fringes of Neofascism. Moreover, a number of authors have pointed out at fascist characteristics both in Fidel Castro's leadership and in the system of government he implemented in Cuba. Moreover, Nonetheless, this idea arise from confusion on the ideologies of Communism and Fascism, whose external similarities do not change their deep differences.

4.2.1 CUBAN REVOLUTION AND NEOFASCISM

An interesting element to take into consideration in this kind of debate is the impact that the Cuban Revolution had on Neofascist milieu, which revealed to be more sympathetic than it could be expected. As a consequence of the Soviet victory in the Second World War, Neofascism escalated its anti-Communism, a feature which was often exploited by the Western intelligence services, in the framework of Cold War. Moreover, the opposition to Communist regimes and parties was an important part of Neofascist rhetoric and propaganda, also because it allowed to expand its reach to more moderate sectors of the Right. Even left-wing tendencies inside Neofascism were still eager to distinguish between "true" national socialism and "false" Marxist socialism.

Therefore, most of them still had a negative opinion of Cuban Revolution and supported U.S. action against it. However, there were important exceptions, especially in Latin countries, such as Spain, Italy and France, where the point of view towards this topic was more nuanced. Most of these examples can actually be related either to the admiration for the character of Che Guevara or to the appreciation for the Nationalist aspects of the Revolution. However, it was still quite unique for a Communist country to attract such interest in the Neofascist area, though some far left fringes, inspired by National Bolshevism, praised the Soviet Union, or Mao's Cultural Revolution, or the Vietnamese resistance⁸⁹.

4.2.1.1 *Spain and Cuba between Franco and Falange*

In this context, Spain constituted an important exception, for two reasons. The former concerns the historical ties between the two countries, which translated into good standings between the two governments. The latter lies in the fact that Spain was still ruled by a nationalist dictatorship with a strong fascist presence, which extended for more than 30 years after the end of World War. In spite of having somewhat distanced from the defeated Axis powers, Francoist Spain still engaged in relationships with Neofascist parties, such as the Italian Social Movement⁹⁰, and acted as a refuge for Fascist exiles, including important characters like Ante Pavelic and Léon Degrelle.

At the same time, this did not impede the arise of Neofascist-like groups under Franco's regime, especially among the youth branch of the National Movement, who were not at ease with the official politics. The appeal to original fascism or Falangism was in itself a call to a new revolutionary approach, criticizing both external and internal enemies. According to Rodríguez Tejada⁹¹:

89 Cfr. the phenomenon of *nazimaoismo* in Italy, as exemplified by Franco Giorgio Freda, *La disintegrazione del sistema*, Ar, Padova 1969.

90 Matteo Antonio Albanese – Pablo del Hierro, *Un red transnacional. La "network" de extrema derecha entre España e Italia después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, 1945-1968*, in Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer (ed.), *Falange. Las culturas políticas del fascismo en la España de Franco (1936-1975)*, Institución "Fernando el Católico" (CSIC), Zaragoza 2013, pp. 6-24.

91 Sergio Rodríguez Tejada, *Los últimos fascistas. Juventud, política y dictadura franquista en los años cincuenta*, in Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer (ed.), *Falange*, op. cit., pp. 542-563 (ivi, p. 551).

La retórica fascista, que había servido para combatir la democracia y para justificar la violencia franquista, y que continuaba siendo útil como instrumento de poder en la confrontación interna, podía llegar a tornarse subversiva al confrontarse con el incumplimiento sistemático de sus promesas.

They later were joined by the hard-line Francoists (the so-called "Búnker") in the aftermath of the Transition, though these were generally more conservative. The following decades witnessed the spread of other Far Right political cultures, bringing Spain in line with the rest of European Neofascism, though with its own peculiarities.

Young Falangists tended to appreciate most the revolutionary aspect of the new Cuba, since it stood in opposition to the United States and the Western democracies, whereas at the same time, in 1960, it was still not firmly in the Soviet camp. This explains the statements in favour of anti-colonial struggles such as in Cuba and in Algeria, in the publications of SEU (Sindicado Estudiantil Universitario)⁹². In the '60s, Third World liberation movements and students' Contestation were both seen as a crisis of the old postwar world order dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, as an actual socialist revolutionary Third Position between liberalism and communism. Some (e.g. Martin Villa) even compared Latinoamerican guerrillas with the early militants of the Falange⁹³.

Nevertheless, despite the previously good relations entertained with Batista, the Spanish government itself had not an unfavourable view of the Revolution, at least in its beginnings. A newsreel of the Spanish Television, dating to the first days of January 1959, showed a manifestation in favour of the triumphant Revolution held in Madrid, accompanied by the following commentary:

«Los cubanos partidarios de Fidel Castro residentes en Madrid celebran el triunfo de su movimiento y Agustina, la hermana menor del Jefe de la Revolución victoriosa, se suma a sus compatriotas que depositan flores ante el monumento erigido en el Parque del Retiro en honor de

⁹² S. Rodríguez Tejada, *Los últimos fascistas*, op. cit., p. 552.

⁹³ M. A. Ruiz Carnicer, *Falange y el cambio político y social en la España del desarrollismo. Materiales para explicar una socialización compleja*, in Id. (ed.), *Falange*, op. cit., pp. 381-400 (ivi, p. 382).

la República de Cuba. En el acto pronunció un discurso de carácter patriótico el nuevo consul Don Manuel Payán, para congratularse del éxito alcanzado por el Movimiento 26 de Julio y del Directorio Revolucionario, así como de la victoria de Fidel Castro y sus seguidores. En la Iglesia de las Descalzas Reales se celebra finalmente una misa organizada por la Asociación de Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre en honor de la Patrona de Cuba como acción de gracias por la terminación de la guerra civil.»

It is worth to observe that the Communists of the Partido Socialista Popular are not mentioned, and especially the use of words and expressions ("*Jefe*", "*patriótico*", "*Revolución victoriosa*") typical of Francoist narrative, which implicitly suggests similarities. It obviously goes without saying that such a public manifestation implied full support on the part of the government.

In this cultural context, there is no surprise in the good reception that Ernesto Guevara enjoyed during his short unofficial visits to Spain. Apart from an incognito transit in October 1966, as Ramón Benitez, on the way to Bolivia, he passed through Madrid in two occasions in 1959, beginning and ending a long series of official visits around the world (Egypt, Syria, India, Burma, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, Ceylon, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Sudan, Italy, Morocco). Both times, he was well received and had freedom of movement, the only condition asked by the Spanish government being the avoidance of any contact with the opposition.

He landed in Madrid in the afternoon of Saturday 13th June and left the following day⁹⁴. In this first stay, he was chaperoned by the journalist Antonio Domínguez Olano⁹⁵, who he had already met in the Sierra Maestra, and the young journalist César Lucas⁹⁶. He stayed at a hotel on the Plaza de España and visited the Ciudad Universitaria, the Preciados shopping mall⁹⁷, the Feria de Campo and the *plaza de toros*

94 He was accompanied by his assistant Francisco García Valls, the sugar industry technician Alfredo Menéndez and Captain Omar Fernández Cañizares and First Lieutenant José Mendoza Argudín as bodyguards. All dressed in olive-green military uniform. Cfr. Omar F. Cañizares, *Primer viaje del Che al exterior*.

95 Cfr. Antonio D. Olano, *La gran Vía se ríe*, VisionNet, Madrid 2010.

96 Cfr. Carlos Fuentes, *El día que el Che Guevara hizo turismo en Madrid*, in "*ZoomNews*", 11th March 2013.

97 As it was Sunday, it was opened for him, out of admiration on the part of the proprietary Pepín Fernández.

of Vista Alegre. In this occasion, Olano must have gifted him a full collection of José Antonio's works, dedicated to Fidel, who later was seen by Gustavo Morales in Guevara's museum house in Havana⁹⁸.

The next time, he arrived in Madrid on 28th August, coming from Rome. After a short visit to Morocco in the following days, he stayed in the Spanish capital until 8th September, due to technical problems with the aircraft⁹⁹. This time, he stayed in the Hotel Suecia, as a guest of the Movimiento Nacional¹⁰⁰, and held a meeting with the press. He visited the Prado, Toledo and the Escorial, and assisted to a *novillada* in Las Ventas at the *barrera* (3rd September), probably a courtesy of his host.

As the Revolution steadily turned left, the Anti-Communist stance prevailed, especially among the hard-line Francoists, though it always coexisted with the pragmatism in international relations, described in the previous section. In his notorious article, which costed him his position as Director of the ICH Blas Piñar accused the United States of having helped the Cuban rebels¹⁰¹:

«[. . .] los que facilitaron armas, brindaron aliento y proporcionaron la mayor propaganda gratuita a Fidel Castro, y se estremecen ante los horrores del sistema y, lo que es más grave, ante su enorme fuerza de contagio.»

Nonetheless, a more favourable approach towards Cuban Revolution persisted in the following years, as it was showed in various media, particularly "*Diario SP*", the most important independent Falangist review. One of its authors, José Miguel Ortí Bordás, National Chief of the SEU (1964-1965) and later Vice-Secretary of the National Movement (1969-1971), was thought to have relations with Cuba¹⁰².

After Franco's death, a delegation of Authentic Falangists took part in XI World Festival Youth and Students, held in Havana in Summer 1978. Out of about 20,000 youth from all

98 Gustavo Morales, *Del azul al rojo*, in "*DespiertaInfo.com*", 26th November 2016.

99 Isabelo Herreros, *El año en que el Che Guevara vino a Toledo*, in "*El Digital CLM*", 8th February 2017.

100 M. A. Ruiz Carnicer, *Falange y el cambio político y social en la España del desarrollismo*, op. cit., p. 382.

101 B. Piñar, *Hipócritas*, op. cit.

102 M. A. Ruiz Carnicer, *Falange y el cambio político y social en la España del desarrollismo*, op. cit., p. 398.

over the world, there were 153 Spaniards. Seventy of them belonged to the youth branches of PSOE and PCE, but there were also delegations from minor left-wing and regionalist parties¹⁰³. Among them, half a dozen militants of the FE y de las JONS (Auténtica), whose revolutionary and anti-Francoist stance put them at odds with other Far Right groups.

They wore blue shirts and sung "Cara al sol", raising the left fist. Their youth leader, the 19-years-old Gustavo Morales relates their meeting with Fidel with these words¹⁰⁴:

«El Comandante vino a saludarnos y se paró sorprendido al vernos a media docena de camisa azul. Le saludé brazo en alto y me estrechó la mano cordialmente: "Sé lo que sois".»

Recently, Morales commented Castro's demise with these words¹⁰⁵:

«Comandante, compartimos sueño, enemigo y orígenes; no partido, ni sistema, ni amigos.»

In fact, he stressed positively the Falangist origins of the Cuban leader and his revolutionary struggle, though judging negatively his turn to Communism and his alliance with the Soviet Union.

4.2.1.2 *The romantic myth of Che Guevara*

In other Latin countries, such as France and Italy, the interest for the Cuban Revolution was in large part mediated by the admiration for the figure of Ernesto Guevara. As in Spain, the Che model, though extrapolated from his Marxist theory, served as a way for young radical national-revolutionary militants to detach themselves from traditional Neofascist parties and movements.

The first group to embrace Che as an icon was probably Jeune Europe, founded in 1962 by the Belgian Jean Thiriart. Its ideology was Pan-European Nationalism, in opposition to both Atlantic and Soviet blocs. Despite its origin in anti-decolonization groups, such as the French OAS and the

103 *Cuba recibirá a 20.000 jóvenes de todo todo el mundo*, in "El País", 15th July 1978.

104 Gustavo Morales, *Del azul al rojo*, op. cit.; cfr. also Id., *Falangistas contra el Caudillo*, Sepha, Málaga 2007, ch. 5.

105 Gustavo Morales, *Del azul al rojo*, op. cit.

Belgian Mouvement d'Action Civique, Jeune Europe soon established relations with Non-Aligned countries and organizations, such as China, Iraq, Syria, the Organization for Liberation of Palestine, the exiled Perón, and Ceausescu's Romania. This focus on the liberation of the Third World was consonant with Guevara's speech of Algiers (24th February 1965), in which he denounced not only U.S. imperialism, but also the complicity of socialist countries (i.e. the Soviet bloc) with imperialist exploitation.

The myth of Che soon spread to foreign sections of Jeune Europe, such as the Italian one, which was quite relevant in the '60s. Thiriart himself, during a conference of Giovane Europa in Ferrara in 1968, stated¹⁰⁶:

«Qui in Europa, la sola leva antiamericana è e resterà un nazionalismo europeo "di sinistra" [. . .] Quello che voglio dire è che all'Europa sarà necessario un nazionalismo di carattere popolare [. . .] Un nazionalcomunismo europeo avrebbe sollevato un'ondata enorme di entusiasmo. [. . .] Guevara ha detto che sono necessari molti Vietnam; e aveva ragione. Bisogna trasformare la Palestina in un nuovo Vietnam.»

In fact, Thiriart's appeal for the creation of guerrilla foci to free Europe from the U.S. military occupation, his continental patriotism and his National-Communism doubtlessly evoked the same ideas of Ernesto Guevara, though far from the Marxism-Leninism of the Argentine leader.

His speech would not fall on deaf ears, though the more ideological aspects would remain on the background. The Florentine section of the Italian MSI, who would have a strong role in the Italian reception of both the Jeune Europe and the Nouvelle Droite, had given honours to the Che already in 1961. Others positive mentions came from the review "L'Orologio" and the Federazione Nazionale Combattenti della Repubblica Sociale Italiana (FNCRSI)¹⁰⁷.

A similar fascination involved also Fidel Castro, already in the late '50s. In the words of the historian Franco Cardini, a former militant of MSI and Giovane Europa and self-declared Castroist¹⁰⁸:

106 C. Mutti, *Jean Thiriart: l'impero che verrà*, in *Imperium. Epifanie dell'idea di impero*, Effepi, Genova 2005.

107 Cfr. Mario La Ferla, *L'altro Che. Ernesto Guevara mito e simbolo della destra militante*, Stampa Alternativa, Roma 2009.

108 F. Cardini, *Fidel Castro tragica illusione*, in "Il Mattino", 16th April 2003.

«In un modo o nell'altro, lo abbiamo amato tutti, Fidel. Posso testimoniare appieno, personalmente, perché allora io ero un ragazzo che militava nelle formazioni dell'estrema destra: e, contro il parere dei nostri padri e dei nostri fratelli maggiori per i quali era solo un "comunista", anche noi andavamo pazzi per lui. Era l'uomo della politica tradotta nelle dimensioni della generosità e dell'avventura. Era un po' Robin Hood, un po' Garibaldi, un po' un personaggio uscito dai libri di Conrad e di Melville. Era un restauratore della giustizia, un riparatore dei torti, uno che rubava ai ricchi per dare ai poveri.»

However, this did not stop him from deploring death penalty and other presumed violations of the human rights few lines after¹⁰⁹. In fact, the fascist heretics, with their mystique of the Defeat, always cherished more a dead revolutionary than a living dictator. An exception is constituted by Federico Goglio's book on the nationalist roots of the Cuban Revolution, whose author, a popular Nationalist songwriter, shows more appreciation for the latter than the former¹¹⁰.

In fact, just after Guevara's death in Bolivia, the songwriter Pier Francesco Pingitore wrote the song "*Addio Che*", while the reporter Adriano Bolzoni wrote the book "*El Che Guevara*" which was soon made into a film, directed by Paul Heusch (1968). This fascination went on through the participation of Neofascists in the '68 student movements¹¹¹, in the next decade, especially with the armed group *Terza Posizione*, whose founder Gabriele Adinolfi has written several articles in praise of Guevara in the anniversaries of his death, and then later. The admiration for the Che (and in lesser measure for the Cuban Revolution) has been quite widespread in the more militant and revolutionary-styled fringes of the Italian far right, to the extent that Pino Rauti's followers inside MSI were often called "Castroist" by their opponents¹¹².

Nevertheless, the most exemplar homage to Ernesto Che Guevara from the European Right has probably been Jean Cau's book "*Une passion pour Che Guevara*"¹¹³, which consti-

Cfr. also Id., *Quando noi fascisti eretici incontrammo Castro nel 1956*, in "*Barbadillo*", 30th November 2016.

109 Cfr also F. Cardini, *Gesù, la falce, il martello*, La Vela, Viareggio 2017.

110 F. Goglio, *Patria o muerte. Le origini nazionaliste della Rivoluzione Cubana*, Ritter, Milano 2014.

111 Lorenzo Rossi, *Il "fascista" Che Guevara*, in "*La Sfida*", I, 1, May 1968.

112 Mario La Ferla, *L'altro Che*, op. cit.

113 J. Cau, *Une passion pour Che Guevara*, Julliard, Paris 1979.

tutes a veritable declaration of love for the Argentine guerilla leader, on part of the French writer. In *Cau*, as in other similar portrayals, there is an aesthetic take on politics, so typical of fascist literature, that leaves nothing about Guevara's ideological work. In fact, the book is a two-hundred-pages Romantic monologue addressed to Guevara's ghost, in which the author relates his story, focusing on his passion and death, conferring him an almost Christlike status.

In fact, the widespread admiration described in this section actually disproves, rather than proving, any ideological affinity, between Castroism and Fascism. The reasons for the Neofascist interest in the Cuban Revolution and its heroes are either of aesthetic and romantic nature or based on a common nationalist and revolutionary world-view. Both elements, as well as a natural tendency to political syncretism, are recurrent aspects of fascism. Still, even the strongest admirers are conscious of the ideological distance as both Guevarism and Castroism are rooted in a Marxist-Leninist perspective. This would be discussed in detail in the following section.

4.2.2 CASTRO AND CASTROISM

The first question that emerges from such a topic is whether one can speak of Castroism as an ideological phenomenon which is actually distinct from its namesake figure.

In fact, both Stalin and Mao Zedong had further elaborated on Leninist legacy, giving birth to specific ideological development, that went beyond their rule, coming to be espoused by various Communist groups all over the world, though the terms "Stalinism" and "Maoism" have been more often attributed from the outside, as both Stalinists and Maoists just claimed to be "Marxist-Leninist". In the same way, there is Guevarism, a defined theory of revolutionary guerilla, which was adopted by a number of guerilla movements, especially in Latin America. Even *Juche*, despite being historically and geographically limited to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, has a clear set of ideological features, which put it apart from other strains of historical Communism.

At first sight, Castroism does not seem to have left a similar ideological legacy, despite its historical influence in Latin America, the Caribbeans and Southern Africa, as friendly governments generally adopted other ideological patterns. Nonetheless, its resilience as the only Marxist-Leninist regime in the Western Hemisphere and its wider influence cannot be explained without admitting the formation of a determined political and ideological model, which seems to be able to survive the illness and death of its namesake founder.

For example, the role of the military, headed by his brother Raúl over the course of six decades, has been as important as Fidel's charismatic leadership for the shaping of Castroism. In this sense, one can distinguish between the political character of the *Líder Máximo* on one side and its political creation on the other one, in the same way that Italian Fascism cannot be reduced to Mussolini, in spite of the capital importance of the Duce.

4.2.2.1 *The Líder Máximo*

On the other hand, one neither can leave the overbearing figure of Fidel Castro out of consideration, as his charismatic presence and leadership has always dominated and somewhat defined the Cuban Revolution, though his contribution has always been more practical than theoretical. The eclectic-

cism of his political thought in comparison with orthodox Marxism-Leninism has often brought observers to compare him with fascist leaders, such as Mussolini.

For example, Sir Hugh Thomas states that he was remembered as a student to take «a marked copy of *Mein Kampf* about with him» and to have «José Antonio Primo de Rivera's works in the Sierra Maestra», going as far to compare his famous speech "*La historia me absolverá*" with Hitler's at his trial in 1923¹¹⁴. Similar tales have circulated in Cuba, too.

In this kind of literature, Castro's education plays a prominent role. In fact, as we have seen in previous section, the Jesuit schools he attended had an important role not only in preparing the Cuban elite, but especially to uphold the values of Hispanism, which put them in consonance with the Spanish-Cuban Right and Franco's Spanish State, both during the Civil War and after the World War.

In fact, the Spanish Father Armando Llorente S.J., who had been his favoured teacher in Belén (as confirmed by Fidel himself¹¹⁵) revealed in a recent interview¹¹⁶ that the young Fidel was fascinated by the Spanish conquistadors and the fascist leaders, and that he read with interest the works by Hitler, Mussolini and Primo de Rivera. In fact, these sympathies were quite encouraged in the general environment of the school. In Llorente's words: «*Conmigo cantó el Cara al sol veinte mil veces y con el brazo en alto*»¹¹⁷. Even years later, when the Jesuit came to visit him in the Sierra Maestra, in December 1958, to ascertain if its revolutionary movement was Communist, his former pupil answered jokingly: «*Padre, de dónde voy a sacar el comunismo si mi padre es más franquista que usted*»¹¹⁸.

Although no such admission is openly made by Fidel himself in his autobiographical works, such as the interview-book with Frei Betto¹¹⁹ and with Ignacio Ramonet¹²⁰, neither he denies it. On the other hand, Fidel's narrative of his own

114 Hugh Thomas, *The Revolution on Balance*, The Cuban American National Foundation, Miami 1983, p. 19.

115 Cfr. Ignacio Ramonet, *Cien horas con Fidel: conversaciones con Ignacio Ramonet*, Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, La Habana 2006, pp. 92-93.

116 6th June 2007, *Agencia EFE*.

117 *Ibidem*.

118 *Ibidem*.

119 Fidel Castro, *Fidel y la Religión*, op. cit.

120 Ignacio Ramonet, *Cien horas con Fidel*, op. cit.

political formation, though keeping into account its auto-apologetic character, does indirectly confirm part of these claims. For example, he admits his strong admiration, as a boy, for the great warrior leaders of the past, from Leonidas and Alexander to Hannibal and Napoleon¹²¹.

He also relates how he came into contact with the international events of that time, especially the Spanish Civil War, as it had a strong impact on his own Hispano-Cuban household. His father, the Galician immigrant Ángel Castro Argiz (1875-1956), who had gone all the way from a humble labourer to a wealthy landowner, was a long-time member of the Centro Gallego (inscription n. 1261, in 1909)¹²². According to Fructuoso José Pirez Ugalde¹²³, son of Fructuoso Pirez García, President of the Caibarién section of the Nationalist Spanish Committee¹²⁴, Ángel Castro was also a member of said organization. Though not confirmed by written sources, this is indeed very probable, as Fidel's father read the "*Diario de la Marina*" and was openly anti-Republican¹²⁵.

At the same time, the Cuban leader confirms that the Jesuit Fathers who educated him were staunch supporters of the Nationalist forces¹²⁶:

«En esa época, los profesores españoles de mi escuela, en Santiago, hablaban de esa guerra. Desde el punto de vista político eran nacionalistas, digamos más sinceramente eran franquistas, todos, sin excepción.»

In fact, – with the exception of the aforementioned Father Llorente – they only spoke about Republican atrocities, without mentioning either Francoist war crimes or Catholic participation on the Republican side¹²⁷.

Nonetheless, Castro retrospectively praised the education received, for the moral values the Jesuits had instilled in him¹²⁸:

«Saben formar el carácter de los muchachos [. . .]. El jesuita español sabe inculcar un gran sentido de la dignidad

121 Ibidem, p. 63.

122 *Carné de asociado del Centro Gallego de la Habana*, Museo Conjunto Histórico de Birán.

123 Second-hand oral source received in Madrid in 2016.

124 Cfr. K. Figueredo, *Cuba y la Guerra Civil española*, op. cit., pp. 277-279.

125 I. Ramonet, *Cien horas con Fidel*, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

126 Ibidem, p. 60.

127 Ibidem.

128 Ibidem, p. 92.

personal, el sentido del honor personal, sabe apreciar el carácter, la franqueza, la rectitud, la valentía de la persona, la capacidad de soportar un sacrificio [. . .]. Y yo creo que mi temperamento, que en parte es de nacimiento, se forjó también allí con los jesuitas.»

This influence acted, in fact, on a pre-political level, earlier and deeper than subsequent ideological developments.

In fact, his political activity in the university years did not take place in Marxist, but in populist organizations, such as the Orthodox Party, even though, at the same time, he was acquiring a Marxist theoretical formation. In his words¹²⁹:

«Estaba desde los primeros años de mi carrera vinculado a partidarios universitarios de ese Partido Ortodoxo que había fundado Chibás. Yo era desde los inicios fuerte simpatizante de ese movimiento. Más adelante comencé a ver algunas cosas que no me gustaban, adquirí una conciencia política más radical y sabía cada vez más sobre Marx y Lenin.»

Though the Orthodox Party was only founded on 15th May 1947, the young Fidel was already part of that political milieu, and grew to be one of the leaders of the left-wing of the Party. Only after Chibás' suicide, he left the party and planned to run autonomously for the 1952-elections¹³⁰, before starting to organize the revolutionary group, who would attack the Moncada barracks.

The same is true if Castro's international activities in this period are taken into consideration. In 1947, he took part in the Cayo Confites expedition, which had been organized by Dominican exiles, with Cuban and Venezuelan support, to overthrow Trujillo's dictatorship. The year after, he travelled to Venezuela, being President Rómulo Betancourt, to Colombia, where he survived the Bogotazo (9th April 1948), and to Panama¹³¹:

«[. . .] cuando estábamos allí tratando de crear una Federación de Estudiantes Latinoamericanos, entre otras cosas apoyábamos a los argentinos en su lucha por las Malvinas, y también la independencia de Puerto Rico, el derrocamiento de Trujillo, la devolución del Canal de Panamá y la independencia de las colonias europeas en el hemisferio. . . »

129 Ibidem, p. 114.

130 Ibidem, p. 113.

131 Ibidem, pp. 120-121.

According to the Argentinian journalist Rogelio García Lupo¹³², these travels had been sponsored and financed by Perón's government, who was trying to establish a network of anti-imperialist and nationalist political forces in other Latin American countries. Following this reconstruction, Fidel Castro, who was put on record as a «young Peronist agitator», had been saved from the riot in Bogotá through the intervention of Argentinian diplomatic personnel. It is worth to notice that two decades after, this relationship had sort of inverted, with the aged Perón now looking at Fidel as leader of the anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America¹³³.

In the early '50s, he probably had already matured a sort of synthesis between Martíán and Marxist ideas¹³⁴:

«Mi primer pensamiento político fue el martiano; pero ya cuando el ataque al Moncada, en 1953, había leído lo suficiente sobre el socialismo, tenía un pensamiento martiano desarrollado y además ideas socialistas radicales.»

Nevertheless, he never adhered to the Communist PSP and he did not make an agreement with them until 1958. There are probably various reasons, from a disagreement on methods and praxis, to his personal unwillingness to resign leadership and submit to Party discipline, as well as the widespread distrust of Communists for their earlier support of Batista. Still in May 1959, he criticized the PSP for pursuing its particular interests and not cooperating with the Revolution¹³⁵.

Even later, he showed sympathy and admiration for Right-wing statesmen, characterized, in his eyes, by patriotism, courage, coherence and sense of honour, though still not denying the ideological differences. For example, he praised the figures of Juan Domingo Perón and Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, he remarked how they had been influenced by the mass politics of Italian fascism, though applying it to progressive policies¹³⁶.

This was true also of European leaders, such as Charles De Gaulle¹³⁷, Manuel Fraga¹³⁸ and Francisco Franco him-

132 Rogelio García Lupo, *Últimas noticias de Fidel Castro y el Che*, Ediciones B, Buenos Aires 2012.

133 Cfr. Juan D. Perón, *La hora de los pueblos*, Editorial Norte, Madrid 1968.

134 I. Ramonet, *Cien horas con Fidel*, op. cit., p. 46.

135 *No es la hora de perturbar*, in "Revolución", 23rd May 1959, pp. 1, 9.

136 I. Ramonet, *Cien horas con Fidel*, op. cit., p. 528.

137 *Ibidem*, pp. 596-597.

138 *Ibidem*, pp. 516-517.

self¹³⁹, contrasting Cuban anti-Francoist propaganda with the *Caudillo's* refusal to break ties with Cuba¹⁴⁰:

«Fue una actitud meritoria que merece nuestro respeto e incluso merece, en ese punto, nuestro agradecimiento. No quiso ceder a la presión norteamericana. Actuó con testarudez gallega. No rompió relaciones con Cuba. Su actitud fue firmísima.»

This attitude was reflected by the Cuban press, which remained quite forgiving towards Franco, despite the ideological contrasts. The same newspapers which called Nixon and Pinochet "fascist", avoided this word for General Franco. When he died, the press coverage in Cuba had neutral tones, and an informal official three-days mourning was decreed for the benefit of the Spanish ambassador¹⁴¹.

Therefore, it is unclear when the Marxist ideology became actually decisive and overrode his earlier Martían orientation, as in later years Castro had all the interest to stress his adherence to Marxism-Leninism since his early youth, whereas at that same time, at least until the first years of Revolution, he had better to underscore his Marxist leanings in order to avoid anti-Communist backfire.

In sum of all, there is scarce doubt that, in mainstream political language, Fidel Castro's moral formation has clear right-wing connotations, such patriotism, discipline, honour, hierarchy. On the other hand, it must be stressed that both his ideological models, Marx' and Martí's, unequivocally belong to the leftist, democratic, progressive political tradition.

4.2.2.2 *Castroism as a Left Fascism*

On the other hand, there are various elements in Castro's policies which have been compared with fascism by his critics, on the basis of their presumed divergence from Marxist-Leninism. Due to the amount of literature, its generally scarce quality and the fact that it tends to overlap, a synthesis of this criticism will be first given, paying special attention to actual historians, and then discussed, in order to explain why

139 Ibidem, pp. 505-510

140 Ibidem, p. 506.

141 Cfr. the witness of the EFE journalist Francisco Rubiales (Id., *Cuba: el día que murió Franco*, 1st October 2007, <https://www.votoenblanco.com/>), and my comment (A. Virga, *Cuba*, op. cit., pp. 194-197).

this narration fails at providing with a scientific explanation of Castroist ideology and praxis.

Some of these authors boast an authoritative academic profile. This is the case of Hugh Thomas, whose history of Cuba has established itself as a classic in this field. On the other hand, his long militancy in the Conservative Party, working as a spin doctor for Thatcher's government¹⁴², should be taken into account insofar as his objectivity is concerned.

In the aforementioned pamphlet "*The Revolution of Balance*", he concludes that Castroism is the «first fascist left regime», that is «a regime with totalitarian leftwing goals established and sustained by methods of fascism»¹⁴³. This judgement stems from his discussion of the political consensus enjoyed by the revolutionary government. The English historian makes a direct comparison with Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, stating that consensus is either forced by political and social pressure or manipulated by propaganda¹⁴⁴:

More and more when thinking of Cuba, indeed, parallels with fascism come to mind. The attention paid to propaganda, the cult of leadership, the doctrine of endless struggle, the exaltation of nationalism and violence, the emphasis on carefully staged oratory, the deliberate exacerbation of tension before the leader speaks, the rhythmic responses from the crowd, the banners and the ferocious 'opinions' in arms supported by mob intimidation, the mass rallies and the outrageous prisons»

These are the methods and techniques employed by Revolutionary Cuba and ascribed to fascism by Hugh Thomas.

Another historian who has discussed the relationships between Castroism and fascism, though in a far more serious and interesting way, is A. James Gregor. According to him¹⁴⁵, generic fascism can be described as developmental dictatorship, characterised by the centrality of a single-Party, the preminence of the State and a radical, reactive nationalism.

142 His note on historical background of Argentina (Thatcher MSS, THCR 1/13/26 f32), written in the context of the Falklands War, provides with interesting insight on the relationship between history and politics in his work.

143 H. Thomas, *The Revolution on Balance*, op. cit., p. 19.

144 Ibidem, pp. 18-19.

145 A. J. Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2014.

He has also stressed the influence that Marxism had on the birth of fascism: «Fascists were almost all Marxists—serious theorists who had long been identified with Italy’s intelligentsia of the Left.»¹⁴⁶.

For this reason, he has also pointed at similarities between historical fascism and later Third-World regimes, such as some African nationalist dictatorships, but also Maoism and Castroism, in spite of their ties to Marxist-Leninism. In all these cases, there are commonalities in the social and political situation. According to Gregor¹⁴⁷:

«Given the nature of the political and social crises that afflict Latin America, Brzezinski has suggested that “In Latin America the more extreme reforms may be more reminiscent of Peronism and fascism than of communism.”¹⁴⁸ Countries beset by delayed industrialization, stressful population pressures, an irrepressible anti-imperialist (anti-North American) animus, enflamed by nationalism, and suffering collective status deprivation, will tend to adopt and adapt some variant of classical Fascism. The problems facing Latin America are those that Fascism attempted to resolve. They are not Marxist problems. Classical Marxism was a system that developed in response to the real or fancied problems of the industrial nations of the nineteenth century. Fascism, on the other hand, was the first systematic and radical attempt to resolve the problems of status-deprived nations of the twentieth century.»

For these reasons, Latin American revolutionary movements were to be more akin to Fascism than Marxism, as it was the case for Vargas and Perón, which Gregor mentions¹⁴⁹:

«While such movements will probably employ Marxist locutions, it is reasonably clear that their programmatic commitments will be more fascist than Marxist. Ché Guevara’s formal allies in Argentina were Peronistas. As has been indicated, theoreticians of Latin American revolutionary movements have indicated an intimate affinity between the “new” radicalism and the fascist movements of Vargas and Perón.»

146 Id., *The Faces of Janus: Marxism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2004, p. 20.

147 Id., *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1974, p. 411.

148 Z. Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages. America’s Role in the Technetronic Era*, The Viking Press, New York 1970, p. 279.

149 A. J. Gregor, *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics*, op. cit., p. 410.

This seems to be a clear reference to Castroism, with its alliance with Peronism and its Marxist vocabulary.

In fact, Gregor states that Castroism does have fascist elements in its political style¹⁵⁰:

«[...] the emphasis on youth, generational conflict, action as antecedent to thought, on the transforming function of military conflict, on the invocation of nationalist sentiment, are all instances of Fascist style.»

Furthermore, part of its very content is fascist¹⁵¹:

«The Fidelistas emphasize the sovereign independence, economic development, and grandeur of the nation. They insist upon the necessity of breaking out of the confines of foreign domination; their enemy is imperialism. They have committed themselves to the effort to create a substantial degree of economic autarchy – economic self-sufficiency – and to create an intercontinental unity of “anti-imperialist nations”. To achieve these ends they must mobilize all human and material resources. The population is conceived as “elemental,” as material to be molded, into which a “new consciousness” is “instilled” through monopoly control of the means of communication. All of which is essentially Fascist and non-Marxist in content.»

In sum of all, Gregor’s analysis distances itself from ideologically-motivated bickering. His arguments, in spite of being problematic, are nonetheless sound and worthy of a serious debate.

For sake of completeness, it is useful to mention how the idea of a "Fascist" nature of the Cuban regime has had a relevant diffusion in political literature and pamphlets. Among Counter-revolutionary Cubans, this concept does have some appeal, also because it serves the goal of distancing it from the North American Left and eroding the sympathies it enjoys in this political environment. An example is constituted by Cuban-American writer Servando González, who has devoted a fair part of his book *The Secret Fidel Castro*¹⁵² to demonstrate the fascist nature of Castroism.

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 309.

¹⁵¹ Ibidem.

¹⁵² S. González, *The Secret Fidel Castro: Deconstructing the Symbol*, Intelibooks, Oakland 2001, especially pp. 233-305. Cfr. also Id., *Historia herética de la revolución fidelista*, Ediciones El Gato Tuerto, 1986; Id., *La CIA, Fidel Castro, el Bogotazo y el Nuevo Orden Mundial. La guerra psicológica contra América Latina*, Ediciones El Gato Tuerto, 2016.

González is noteworthy for his thorough attempt to collect evidence in order to depict the Cuban leader as a power-hungry tyrant leading a fascistic regime. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that these efforts reveal to be quite unsuccessful, from a scientific point of view. Antoni Kapcia's review describes it perfectly in a few lines¹⁵³:

«Apart from the suspect methodology (to amass anecdotes and innuendos until some might have a chance at passing for fact), its structural flaws weaken it considerably: it tends to be repetitive (sometimes the same story will appear three times), contradictory and rambling in its delivery. However, the main flaw lies in its deliberate and open partiality.»

Still, at the same time, it attests the wide circulation of such opinions, as unsound as they could appear.

4.2.2.3 *Castroism as Social-Fascism*

Finally, it is worth to observe that similar pretensions are made from the opposite part of the political spectrum, too, as a part of the ideological debate inside Marxism-Leninism. Whereas Trotskists attacked the bureaucratisation of the Cuban revolution¹⁵⁴ and Left-Communists described it as a sort of bourgeois Bonapartism bent on establishing State capitalism¹⁵⁵, a few minor groups, characterized by a strong anti-revisionism, went as far as decrying Cuba as fascist.

The ideological bases for these accusations lies in the use of two important doctrines in Marxism Leninism. The former is "social fascism", a definition introduced at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern meaning that social democracy was just a variant of fascism, with whom it shared a corporatist economic model and a staunch anti-Communism. Coherently with this concept, the Communist parties ruled out any alliance with the Social Democrats and fought against them until 1935, thus indirectly contributing to Hitler's victory in Germany.

153 A. Kapcia, *The Secret Fidel Castro: Deconstructing the Symbol (review)*, in "Cuban Studies", 36 (2005), pp. 165-167.

154 Cfr. A. Moscato, *Breve storia di Cuba*, 3. ed., Datanews, Roma 2006; Id., *Fidel e il Che – Affinità e divergenze tra i due leader della rivoluzione cubana*, Edizioni Alegre, Roma 2013.

155 Cfr. A. Bordiga, *Le lotte di classi e di stati nel mondo dei popoli non bianchi. Storico campo vitale per la critica rivoluzionaria marxista*, La Vecchia Talpa, Roma 1972.

The latter is "social imperialism", as it was defined by Mao Zedong to describe the fact that, under Khrushchov, Soviet Union had become an imperialist power, though maintaining a socialist façade, since it now advocated for "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist world¹⁵⁶.

Anti-revisionist Marxist Leninists, who opposed Khrushchov's de-Stalinization, divided along three lines, depending on their inspiration: (Neo-)Stalinists, Maoists and Hoxhaists. Unsurprisingly, each of these currents tended to define itself just "Marxist-Leninist" and charged the others with "revisionism". Whereas the first ones upheld the Cuban regime as substantially in accord with Soviet ideology, the other ones condemned it for basically the same reasons, well before the market reforms implemented after the fall of the Soviet Union. Most specifically, the political and economic relations between the two countries was regarded as a continuation of previous colonial dependence.

As to Maoism, although relations with the People's Republic of China improved greatly after Deng Xiaoping's tenure¹⁵⁷, Cuban influence in Latin America was still challenged by local Maoist groups¹⁵⁸. For instance, in Peru, the Communist Party of Peru (better known as "Sendero Luminoso") bloodily clashed with the Cuban-sponsored Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. Similarly, later Gonzaloists have levelled charge of "fascism" against pro-Cuban socialists Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales, denouncing their policies as "corporatist" and "fascist"¹⁵⁹.

At the same time, neither the meagre Hoxhaist splinter

156 Mao Zedong, *On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World: Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU (IX)*, Foreign Language Press, Beijing 1964.

157 The nadir was in 1979, with Cuban support to Vietnam in the short Sino-Vietnamese War. Years later, Fidel commented to this regard:

«Presumía de hombre sabio y, sin duda, lo era. Pero incurrió en un pequeño error. "Hay que castigar a Cuba", dijo un día. Nuestro país nunca pronunció siquiera su nombre. Fue una ofensa absolutamente gratuita.»

Cfr. *Reflexiones de Fidel Castro*, 14th June 2012.

158 Cfr. A. Guzmán Reynoso, *Guerra popular en el Perú: el pensamiento Gonzalo*, ed. by L. Arce Borja, 1989.

159 Cfr. Comité de Reconstrucción Partido Comunista del Ecuador, *Combatir o defender al chavismo. Lucha entre marxismo y revisionismo*, 11th March 2013.

groups shied from condemning the Cuban revolutionaries as revisionist, though in this case their verbosity was inversely proportional to their political weight. For example, Bob Avakian's Revolutionary Communist Party, USA denied the socialist nature of Cuban Revolution. Not so surprisingly, its arguments came to resemble and reprise most of those upheld by the anti-Communist exiles¹⁶⁰.

More recently, the Communist International Stalinist-Hoxhaists (whose real life existence is debatable), devoted a long pamphlet to "Cuban revisionism", going all the way, from the rise to power, «replacing one social-imperialist, neo-colonialist and exploitative domination by another», through the intervention in Africa «at the service of [. . .] Soviet social-imperialism», to nowadays «capitalist-revisionist" stance¹⁶¹.

4.2.2.4 *What actually is Castroism*

In sum of all, the arguments in favour of the thesis herein discussed tend to converge on a common central point: the Cuban Revolution against Batista and the consequent Castro's regime were not accomplished by the working class led by a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party, but by the nationalist, radical middle-class, who then established a totalitarianism with Communist trappings and welfare State, but no real change to neither the mode of production nor the neocolonial status, and actually with militarism and political repression of the working masses.

There can be no doubt that this description, taken at face value, would fit much more with the concept of "fascism", rather than "communism". At the same time, its sharing by historians and ideologues, holding the most varied political stances, constitutes a further point in support of its exactness. In fact, the historical elements in which it is grounded are not actually false. Nonetheless, there are mistakes and confusion in their interpretation, as well as in the correct definition of fascism and communism, which need to be discussed and disproved.

In fact, although a thorough study and definition of Castroism would require far more time, it is possible to

160 *Cuba: the Evaporation of a Myth – From Anti-Imperialist Revolution to Pawn of Social-Imperialism*, in "Revolution", 15th February 1976.

161 *Down with Cuban Revisionism!*, february 2013, <http://ciml.250x.com/index1.html>.

individuate its main ideological coordinates, which show a strong continuity through the early Revolutionary years (1959-1961), the Soviet phases (1961-1991) and the post-Soviet period (since 1991), including Raúl's reforms and the recent apparent thaw. The key to understanding it is to analyse the various social and ideological contributions to the Cuban model.

This is exemplified by the founding of the *Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas* in July 1961, joining together three different revolutionary parties: the *Partido Comunista Socialista Popular*, the *Directorio Revolucionario 13 de Marzo*, rooted in the student movement *Federación Estudiantil Universitaria*, and the *Movimiento 26 de Julio*, whose origins lied in the *Juventud Ortodoxa*, *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* and *Acción Nacional Revolucionaria*.

Whereas the first was pro-Soviet, Marxist-Leninist and could count on the support of the organized working class (through the *Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba*), which enjoyed privileged conditions in respect to the rural masses, and on contacts with the Soviet Union, the others were expression of the left-wing bourgeois nationalism, with a fair Christian influence (Rafael Barcena, Frank País, José Antonio Echevarría) and a mostly middle-class membership, but they controlled the victorious rebel forces, holding thus military power.

Notwithstanding the evolution of the ORI in the Communist Party of Cuba, and the adoption of Marxism-Leninism, this dualism persisted as the fundamental contradiction inside Castroism. It was not a painless process, as many Anti-Communist revolutionary fighters defected or joined Counter-revolutionary forces, already in the first year of the Revolution. On the other hand, the hard-line pro-Soviet fraction, led by Aníbal Escalante, who pushed for a stricter adherence to Moscow's ideology and praxis, was purged twice in 1962 and 1967. Similarly, the Cuban military supported the purges taking place in Angola (1977-79), against Nito Alves' pro-Soviet "Fraction" of the MPLA. However, only the constitutional reforms of 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, brought to light the ideological duality of Castroism¹⁶².

162 Cfr. my analysis in A. Virga, *Cuba. Dio Patria Socialismo*, NovaEuropa, Milano 2017, pp. 39-45.

Thus, it is true that Castroism is ideologically quite eclectic, due to the strong presence of non-Marxist content. This has been admitted also by its ideologues, as shown by the widespread official expression «*marxista y martiana*», as well as Régis Debray's analysis. Debray, who could be described in the '60s as a European-born Castroist, wrote at length on the subject of guerilla and revolution in Latin America¹⁶³.

His advocacy for the primacy of tactics above strategy and action above theory in the establishment of a guerilla *foco*, stems from the Cuban experience and it also applies to the political aspects of a Revolution. Castroism indeed (like Mussolini's Fascism) lacks an actual corpus of theoretical writings preceding the revolutionary praxis. In opposition to the Leninist strategy upheld by the Partido Socialista Popular, Castroist actions struggled to create rather than acting on the awareness of the masses¹⁶⁴.

This primacy of action, in itself not so unlike Gentile's actualism and Gramsci's philosophy of the praxis, explains Castroist eclecticism¹⁶⁵:

«There is a [. . .] a reason why Fidelism lays a greater stress on revolutionary practice, when it is honest and sincere, than on ideological labels: this is the belief that, in the special conditions of South America, the dynamism of nationalist struggles brings them to a conscious adoption of Marxism.»

In fact, according to the French ideologue¹⁶⁶:

«[. . .] a genuine nationalism in Latin America implies the final overthrow of the semi-colonial State, the destruction of its army, and the installation of Socialism.»

Fidelism is thus conceptualized as a synonym of "revolutionary nationalism".

Nationalism has not only been present since the inception of the revolutionary process, but it has gained more pre-eminence with the world crisis of Marxism, following the

163 Cfr. R. Debray, *Révolution dans la révolution ? et autres essais*, Maspero, Paris 1969.

164 Cfr. the coverage of the attacks on the Moncada barracks by the Communist newspaper "Noticias de Hoy".

165 Régis Debray, *Latin America: The Long March*, in "New Left Review", I, 33 (Sep-Oct 1965), p. 54.

166 Ibidem.

collapse of the Soviet bloc. Here, the crucial point lies in the conception of the State, defined in the Cuban Constitution as amended in 1992. The Marxist idea of class has been gradually subsumed in the idea of nation, so that the Communist Party is no more the vanguard of the working class, but of a whole nation of workers (art. 5). This is a clear shift from the political primacy of factory workers in the Soviet Union and of peasants in Mao's China. In practical terms, the nationalist narrative plays into the hands of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, whose power, in a besieged country, is stronger than the Party and include a major role in the ownership and management of the means of production.

Nevertheless, in Debray's view, nationalism has a circumstantial value, tied to the specific situation of Latin America, but the true focus remains socialism, to the point that it can be surmised that «Debray's nationalism is in effect, anti-nationalism»¹⁶⁷. In Debray's words, revolutionary nationalism in Latin America¹⁶⁸:

«[...] is organically linked to a socialist programme and it aims at the transformation of State power by means of its conquest and the destruction of the bourgeois form[. . .] It thus considers as illusory and ineffectual the partial demands, the transactions or the conciliations of an eventual 'national government' which works for a revolution which would advance in small steps.»

It is consequently quite different from previous forms of nationalist opposition to imperialism, such as populism or bonapartism, which lacked the awareness and participation of proletarian masses.

The latter has doubtlessly been a feature of Cuban Revolution from the beginnings, due to the necessity for Castro to mobilize the masses outside the already existing party and union structures led to the creation of several mass organizations, from the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, to the Federation of Cuban Women. These mass organizations, being formally distinct from the Party and the State, represent specific sectors of the society and their interests, and concur to the same socialist goals, as stated

167 Salvatore J. Ferrera, *Regis Debray and Revolution*, Loyola University Chicago, 1969, MA thesis (paper 2387), p. 64.

168 R. Debray, *Latin America: the Long March*, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

by the Constitution (art. 7). In this way part of the management of the society, including political repression, has been outsourced to citizens. This social organization partly differs from other models of really existing socialism, and could maybe be described with the definitions of "totalitarian democracy"¹⁶⁹ or "organic democracy".

To Debray, the ideological collocation of Fidelism is clear¹⁷⁰:

«We should not overlook the debt of revolutionary nationalism to the action and propaganda of Communist Parties, which were the pioneers of reasoned anti-imperialism [. . .]»

Therefore, in spite of its eclectic doctrine, Castroism is still part of the Marxist-Leninist tradition¹⁷¹:

«Fidelism is only the concrete process of the regeneration of Marxism and Leninism in Latin American conditions and according to the historical tradition of each country.»

This is also true if the political effects of the Cuban Revolution are taken into consideration. Cuba corresponded, and still corresponds, to the model of a one-party State, led by a vanguard Communist Party, representing the workers, with the goal of developing socialism, and eventually communism. Central economic planning, universal social welfare, internationalism, anti-colonialism and secularism are other main features common to both the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Cuban State.

Leninism is here a key word, as Lenin's ideological and political legacy seems to be absent from Gregor's analysis. When he describes sovereign independence, economic development and self-sufficiency, intercontinental unity and mobilization of the masses as «Fascist and non-Marxist»¹⁷², he forgets how Lenin elaborated on Marxist theory purposely in order to deal with «status-deprived nations of the twentieth century»¹⁷³, such as Russia. In fact, every historical instance of actual-existing socialism in 20th century lies in the footpath of both Marx and Lenin. The latter's policies

169 Cfr. Jacob Leib Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1952-1960, 2 voll.

170 R. Debray, *Latin America: the Long March*, op. cit., p. 57.

171 Ibidem, p. 58.

172 Ivi, p. 173.

173 Ibidem, p. 172.

were based on the establishment of a modern, developed, sovereign State, including through mass mobilization and international cooperation, as a mean to defend socialism from external and internal enemies.

In this sense, it is doubtlessly true that communist Russia had in common with fascist Axis powers, a collectivist world-view, the necessity of modernization and the will to revise the existing international order. However, there are key differences between the two ideological models, that seems to be too-easily forgotten by some observers. Firstly, Marxist-Leninism establishes the collective ownership, under the State, of the means of production, with the possible exception of family business and cooperatives, whereas Fascism heavily regulates but does not suppress private property. Secondly, the former conducts international relations in the perspective of global cooperation between workers, represented by socialist States and Communist parties, while the latter aims at restoring the imperial hegemony of its nation above the others.

Now, Castroism virtually eliminated private property in 1968 and, despite the reforms in the last decade¹⁷⁴, State-run enterprises still dominate the economy in a way which far exceeds fascist Italy and Germany. At the same time, Cuba boasts a long history of political and military intervention in support of revolutionary movements in Latin America and Africa, even to its own diplomatic and material disadvantage¹⁷⁵, as well as more peaceful medical and educational missions conducted still nowadays in Third World countries. These features, which had a major impact on Cuban economy and society, definitely collide with the idea of Castroism as an essentially fascist movement. Rather, it would be a gross ingenuity to think that nationalism, militarism, totalitarian propaganda and political repression could only belong to fascism.

Last but not least, another important point is to be made as to the ideological content of Castroism. It is the complex of ideas (*ideário*) of José Martí, regarded as the apex of Cuban progressive nationalism, which constitutes the other pole of Cuban ideology. In fact, the special attention given in Cuba

¹⁷⁴ Cfr. A. Virga, *Cuba*, op. cit., pp. 211-264.

¹⁷⁵ Cfr. P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2002.

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to the education of the masses and to the struggle for the liberation of Latin America is a legacy of Martí's thought. Similarly, the influence of Martí's deism and humanism have brought to the gradual abandonment of scientific atheism and a relative mildness in political repression, compared to other Communist regimes. It follows therefore that the non-Marxist roots of Castroism still come from the Left, that is from a socially radical, interclass movement, which is nevertheless engendered by progressive and democratic values, which are clearly at odd with Fascism.

5 Conclusion

The Cuban Exception

In sum of all, it appears clearly that fascism in Cuba did have a presence, but that it belonged more to the realm of speech than of actual facts.

The only important group was the FET y de las JONS, lasting about four years, from mid 1937 to early 1942. It did have country-wide activities, such as the welfare organization "Auxilio Social" and managed to organize even large events attracting thousands of people. However, not only its reach was limited to the Spanish community, but it was directed from abroad as it was no more than the local section of a foreign political party. All other Fascist organizations, from the local sections of the Italian and German parties, to the LNRS, never enjoyed proper real political weight. In fact, Italian and German diplomats witnessed and resented a climate of refuse towards the ideologies they intended to promote.

On the other hand, there were political groups and characters who had either sympathies for fascism or other common aspects in theory or praxis. These had been thoroughly investigated and discussed in the previous chapters, and any actual identification with fascist ideology has been disproved. Generally, they either belong to nationalist conservatism or nationalist populism.

The former actually involved sympathies and support for Nationalist Spain during the Civil War, and an important part of Cuban society was engaged to this extent. Nonetheless, this did not automatically mean support to Fascism as an ideology. Rather, the common points were typical right-wing values, such as anti-communism and political stability. Their

models were more properly in Lisbon and Salamanca, rather than in Rome and Berlin. The case of two foremost Cuban “fascists” shows clear evidence in this direction. Both José Ignacio Rivero and Agustín Parlá justified their support for Franco as a defence of civilization and freedom against communism and anarchy, both regarded themselves as true Cuban patriots and both took position in favour of the Allies and against the Axis, after Pearl Harbour.

The latter stance played a social and political role akin to European fascism. Cuban nationalists generally belonged to the middle class and promoted an inter-class, revolutionary, social-progressive nationalism, which refused both Marxism and unregulated free market, as well as U.S. imperialist influence. However, neither the ABC did qualify as a fascist party, despite common features and widespread accusations. In fact, it had always ascribed to the tradition of liberal democracy, to which it added a strong commitment to social justice. This anti-totalitarian stance became more evident with the Spanish Civil War and World War II, though single members became fascist or communist. In fact, it is worth noticing that later anti-Axis propaganda did not mention at all this party.

Antifascism was even more evident in the cases of other nationalist movements, such as Guiteras’ Joven Cuba and Chibás’ Partido del Pueblo Cubano (Ortodoxo), as nationalism, in the Cuban context, maintained a strong left-wing revolutionary content. In fact, the core of later Castro’s Movimiento 26 de Julio came from this milieu, and Castroism itself, despite its eclecticism and heterodoxy, still had more in common with historical Communism than with Latin American populisms. As a matter of fact, Castroite nationalism, though different from Marxist proletarian internationalism, was rooted in Martí’s democratic nationalism.

5.1

CUBA AND LATIN AMERICA

The Cuban case, therefore, represented an exception in comparison to most other Latin American countries, especially the ones, like Mexico and Brazil, that had a similar social structure, that is the presence, alongside the traditional division between elite and peasants, of a small but vocal and growing urban proletarian and middle-class, fueled by the

onset of modernization.

5.1.1 FASCISM IN LATIN AMERICA: SOME EXAMPLES

Every country had at least fringe fascist groups or movements, similar to the ones present in Cuba, but in various cases, there were mass parties which, although a minority, actually played a role in domestic politics.

A blatant case is the Movimiento Nacional Socialista de Chile founded in 1932 by the lawyer Jorge González von Marées and Professor Carlos Keller, both having German ancestry. This movement had about 20,000 militants and gained 3 deputies in the 1937 general elections. The following year, they unsuccessfully attempted a coup in support of General Carlos Ibañez del Campo, who had been President from 1927 to 1931 and later from 1952 to 1958. Despite the bloody repression of the coup (the massacre of Seguro Obrero), the Vanguardia Popular Socialista went on from 1939 to 1942, winning two seats in 1941 elections. After the war, Keller cooperated with President Ibañez.

In Bolivia, the Falange Socialista Boliviana had all the features of a fascist movement, both in style and ideas, though it openly rejected and attacked German, Italian and Spanish counterparts, since it regarded “fascism” as a foreign, expansionist, and therefore anti-nationalist, ideology. It had a long history, going all the way from 1937 to 2003, being at its strongest in the ‘50s and ‘60s, when it reached 27 parliamentary seats in 1966 general elections. Though it had both right-wing and left-wing splits, some of the latter ending up in Evo Morales’ Movimiento al Socialismo, as a general rule, the FSB opposed both the right-wing dictatorships and the left-wing Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, suffering persecutions.

In Brazil, the Integralist movement (Ação Integralista Brasileira) was founded by Plínio Salgado in 1932. Despite his ideological inspiration lied more in French and Portuguese integrism, it was the only Latin American party to be recognized as “fascist” by Italian authorities, who were often quite disdainful of their foreign imitators¹. As a mass movement, it initially supported President Getúlio Vargas, before turning against him and being banned, after a coup

¹ Cfr. F. Savarino, *Fascismo en América Latina: la perspectiva italiana (1922-1943)*, in “Diálogos”, DHI/PPH/UEM, 14, 1, 2010, pp. 59-63.

attempt in 1938. Integralist activities continued after the war and Vargas' ousting. Most of its members joined forces with the military dictatorship in 1965, but there were many former Integralists on the left, such as the nationalist politician Leonel Brizola and the liberation theologian Dom Helder Camara.

A case could also be made for Argentina. In spite of a small size and influence of fascist parties during the Interwar period, peronism had a long lasting nation-wide influence, which shaped Argentine politics and society on the long term. Whereas its relations with fascism from the ideological and politological point of view have been long discussed, it cannot be denied that fascist elements and models have been part of this phenomenon.

Drawing nearer to Cuba, in Mexico, as observed by Franco Savarino², Fascism had a relevant influence, not only in the Italian immigrant community, but also in the intellectual milieu and in the government itself, which, despite his official antifascism — in fact, Mexico supported the Spanish Republic and joined Allies in World War II —, had a «structural tendency towards fascism»³:

«Esta se expresa en el Estado fuerte, el nacionalismo radical, el anti-yanquismo [. . .], el corporativismo [. . .], el partido único, el liderazgo carismático de Obregón, Elías Calles y Cárdenas, el apoyo oficial a las vanguardias culturales»

In fact, he points at a stronger dissatisfaction with the liberal democracy, than the one found in Cuban populisms. Whereas the government took after the most revolutionary aspects of fascism, its right-wing components were still present in the Synarchist movement (Unión Nacional Sinarchista), a Catholic mass movement which stood in staunch opposition to the government, and whose ideological outline was akin to the integrist school of fascism. Finally, in contrast with Cuban intellectual elites⁴:

«Entre los mexicanos, el fascismo tuvo cierta difusión aunque a través de un “filtro” ibérico y al lado de las fuertes influencias hispanistas, que deformaban el f. en sentido conservador. Aun así, la difusión de ideas y tendencias

2 F. Savarino, *Fascismo en América Latina*, op. cit..

3 Ibidem, p. 75.

4 Ibidem, p. 73.

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fascistas fue notable especialmente entre los estudiantes universitarios [. . .] y entre algunos periodistas e intelectuales»

It is noteworthy that José Vasconcelos, the most important of these authors, went as far as supporting the Axis during the war, in sharp contrast to the Cuban “fascist” Pepín Rivero.

5.1.2 THE WEIGHT OF SOCIAL FACTORS

On the other hand, from the socio-economic point of view, the differences between Cuba and other Latin American countries are not sufficient to explain this exception on these grounds.

In fact, fascist groups in Cuba were rooted in the urban middle class, in the same way it happened in the rest of Latin America. Different political groups often corresponded to different sectors of this general social group. For example, Falangist militants, had a lower standing (e.g. Spanish shop owners, small businessmen, accountants, etc.) than members of the *Comité Nacionalista Español*, which mostly represented the Spanish-descended middle-upper class of landowners and businessmen and, as a result, was more conservative than actually fascist. Members of the Legion, on the other side, were reported to be of still lower standing than the Falangists, as they generally were students or employees. This is consistent with the fact that fascist movements generally represented the middle class, which felt threatened by both working class revolution and international capitalism, and as a consequence it promoted class cooperation in the framework of a strong State.

Nevertheless, only a minority of the Cuban middle class ever showed sympathies for Fascism. In fact, the Falangist themselves admitted in their private correspondence with the Motherland, that most of the Spanish colony and of Cuban society showed hostility towards them. The nationalist and populist leanings of the middle class were directed to other political expressions, such as, more on the right, the ABC and Batista’s corporatism, or, more on the left, the Authentic and then the Orthodox Party. All of them, lacked a crucial aspect of the fascist ideology: the revolutionary idea to overthrow the bourgeois liberal democracy in order to regenerate the nation. From this point of view, even the so-called 1933 Revolution aimed at reforming, not destroy-

ing Cuban democracy. In fact, the new socially progressive Constitution, approved in 1940, did not actually change the fundamentals of Cuban Republic, first of all its dependence on U.S. economy and politics. They refused to establish a National-Syndicalist State, as well as a Soviet republic.

5.2

THE REASONS OF AN EXCEPTION

So far, it has been proved that Cuba has been an exception in the general pattern of a relevant fascist influence on Latin America. Whereas it could seem foolhardy to explain its causes as an objective matter of fact, there are in my opinion two important reasons, which should be taken into consideration, and would motivate this exception convincingly, barring future more in-depth social studies. The former is related to the strong presence of the United States, whose influence cannot be denied. The latter could appear more subtle and less grounded, but it has probably greater influence, as depends on the evolution of Cuban ideological thought.

5.2.1 THE GEOPOLITICS OF FREEDOM

Such was the extent of U.S. domination over Cuba, that the revolutionary historiography named «Pseudo-Republic» the period between 1898 and 1958. It is superfluous to detail the various aspects of U.S. imperialism in Cuba, from politics to military, from economics to society. Its very history went along following the rhythms of its northern neighbour and overlord, as Machado's free-market dictatorship gave way, with the consent of U.S. diplomat Sumner Welles, to reform-minded governments, which imitated Roosevelt's New Deal and welfare State in the late '30s and early '40s, before changing to an anti-Communist dictatorship in the '50s, at the times of McCarthy and the Cold War. To this regards, the ultimate opportunist Fulgencio Batista was an instructive example of a Cuban politician whose positions changed according to who was living in the White House.

Whereas, as a consequence of the Monroe Doctrine, U.S. imperialism extended all over Latin America, its influence was nowhere as strong as in Cuba (and in Puerto Rico, of course). Not only these Caribbean countries were small and close to the continental States, but their very independence

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had come late, at the end of the 19th century, as a result of direct U.S. military intervention. The very Cuban independentists had long spent their exile in North American cities, campaigning for their cause. As a result, the Cuban elites were closer to the U.S. than their counterparts in the rest of Latin America, to the point that the first President, Tomás Estrada Palma, was a U.S. citizen. Only in the '20s, anti-imperialism started spreading in the middle and lower classes.

On the other hand, other Latin American countries both were larger and more difficult to control, and had a longer history as independent States, dating to the early 19th century, when their northern neighbour itself was still completing its process of nationbuilding. German, French and British investments and connections were still strong and alive in the first third of the 20th century. This was especially true for the Southern Cone, but even Mexico, due to his large area and population, as well as his secular resentment against U.S. encroaching and aggressions, was less U.S.-influenced than Cuba.

Now, fascism was essentially in open contrast with U.S. democracy and values, as it stressed the importance of the State and of the nation as a collective, not as a sum of free individuals, such as in American patriotism. Despite a few exceptions, such as Italo Balbo, who praised their modernism, the United States were seen by the fascists as a degenerated society governed by a small elite of rich (plutocracy), whose luxurious (in respect to poorer Europe) lifestyle stood in contrast to the masses of unemployed and poor ushered in by the Great Depression, and crime thrived, thanks also to prohibitionism, gangsterism and race mixing. On the other hand, the U.S. had built their ideology of freedom and manifest destiny in stark opposition to the European tyranny, from the British King in the Independence War to the German Kaiser, they had faced in the last World War. Whereas some could appreciate Fascist crackdown on Communists and Jews, they still thought it was a model fitter for Europe than for America.

Therefore, in Cuban society, the resentment for U.S. imperialism could not cancel neither the admiration for the American way of life nor the prestige of its institutions and political culture, especially since Franklin D. Roosevelt had been promoting a "good neighbour" policy and canceled

the infamous Platt Amendment. North American soft power indeed played a role in supporting Cuban antifascism, which by far preceded any direct intervention. Furthermore, as the World War began and the White House strived for entering the war in support of the Allies, the antifascist campaign would increase and become a keystone of Cuban politics. As a matter of fact, while in 1938-39, Pedraza and Batista could still show sympathies for Nationalist Spain, since 1940-41, even the Rivero was forced to insist on his pro-Allies and pro-democracy credentials.

In the previous chapters, we have seen how the U.S. Embassy intervened, e.g. suggesting the Parlá was a *persona non grata* or pressuring Rivero to put his press empire at the service of democracy and freedom, but the antifascist campaign involved all political sectors, both in the government and among the opposition. The Communists, by then following Stalin's orders to fully cooperate with the democratic forces, had been particularly vocal in denouncing the Cuban "fascists" or "falangists" as a "Fifth Column" of the Axis, war profiteers and enemy of the democracy. Still, they were not the only ones. The enquiries by the Christian democratic senator Agustín de la Cruz in 1942 and by Allan Chase in 1944, in cooperation with the Spanish Republican exiles, were published when the fascist organizations in Cuba had already been outlawed and their leadership trialed and sentenced.

Nevertheless, it was important to keep the Cuban society in alarm about Axis and fascist activities, in order to ensure full support to the U.S. war and full control of such a strategical location (since German submarine operations did reach the Caribbean Sea). To this extent, the war allowed the United States to regain the regional hegemony that they had partly let slip during the Great Depression. The contacts and relations with the local militaries and intelligence services that were established during the war, were later brought forward and developed to ensure U.S. dominance over the Western Hemisphere, during the Cold War, keeping in check the infiltrations by foreign powers, such as Soviet-sponsored Communists. In the Cuban case, this meant a continued support of Batista, both during his wartime elected tenure and his later open dictatorship. A key figure to this extent was the intelligence officer Mariano Faget, who was responsible for the capture and execution of the German spy in Havana, Heinz Lüning.

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5.2.2 A DIFFERENT POLITICAL CULTURE

On the other hand, U.S. ideological influence alone could not maybe explain the absolute preminence of antifascism in Cuba. Mexico, in fact, also shared a close relationship with the United States of America, which there enjoyed a widespread economical and political influence, notwithstanding Cárdenas' nationalist policy. Still, its situation was different from the Cuban one, as it has been explained. The probable reason, in my opinion, lies in a crucial aspect which put Cuba apart from most other Latin American states, that is having gained its independence only at the turn of the 20th century.

The Independence Wars spanning Latin America from 1808 to 1824 achieved the end of Spanish rule but could not bring a true liberal revolution, nor a continental unity, despite the plans of the most progressive independentist leaders. The new countries remained in a situation of economic subordination to British and North American capitalism, while their inner politics was dominated by the struggle between the pre-capitalist agrarian Conservatives and the pro-capitalist urban mercantile Liberals, acting as an intermediate class (so-called *burguesía compradora*) between foreign investors and local working class. An important role, due to the large spaces and difficulties in communications, was played by the regional leaders (*caudillos*).

Therefore, for the rest of the century, the Spanish colonial investments were concentrated on Cuba. With the modernization of the sugarcane production a limited industrialization began (e.g. the first railways in Latin America), but with scarce change in the social structure, as slavery was maintained until 1886 and the Catholic Church was still uncontested. In this context, the first Cuban independence war took place between 1868 and 1878, with minor conflict until 1880, while at the same moment Spain was experiencing a period of political and social upheaval and instability, including the First Republic (1873-1874). However, only in 1898, after a three-years war, concluded by the U.S. military intervention and marked by modern war techniques (e.g. the use of rail tactical movement and mass internment camps), Spanish rule ended.

This 70-years delay meant that, when independence came, Cuban national ideology was very different in comparison

with its continental homologues, at the same time in their history. It had been influenced by decades of social, economical and political progress in Europe and the Americas. José Martí wrote his works after the 1848 democratic Revolutions, after Marx' Manifesto and after the Commune of Paris. Moreover, whereas other countries first achieved their independence and then developed their nationalist doctrines, Cuban nationalists developed their ideas in the decades preceding political independence. These factor cannot be understated.

To this regard, Pitaluga's study on the establishment of a new cultural hegemony in the course of the 1895 revolution, with a gradual abandonment of Martian radicalism in favour of a socially moderate approach, is of capital importance⁵ to follow the development of such ideological construction in a crucial period of Cuban history. More specifically, he remarks on the political progresses made between 1868 and 1895⁶:

«Sin embargo, a pesar de esos elementos modernos dentro del 68, el 95 mostró muchos más, tanto en lo cuantitativo como en lo cualitativo. En el 68 se promulgaron dos constituciones, un reglamento, una cartilla y siete leyes (estas por la Cámara); el ejecutivo de mayor tiempo en el cargo, es decir, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, con cuatro años y seis meses, dictó nueve circulares y cinco decretos. El 68 tuvo cuarenta y dos legisladores y siete presidentes en casi nueve años y medio de duración, mientras que el 95 promulgó dos constituciones, dos circulares, cuatro proyectos, un decreto, una disposición, dos cartillas, siete manifiestos, ocho reglamentos y veintitrés leyes con solo doce legisladores en apenas tres años y veinticuatro días. Como se puede observar, la producción jurídica del 95 fue superior. Esta amplitud significó un control más efectivo y abarcador de la revolución ya que se articuló desde una mayor proyección burguesa. Esa racionalidad jurídica evidenció la propia complejidad social que diferenciaron a los años 1868 y 1895 en Cuba.»

According to Pitaluga, this political maturity was a consequence of a more advanced social and ideological perspec-

5 A. N. Álvarez Pitaluga, *Revolución, hegemonía y poder. Cuba 1895-1898*, Fundación Fernando Ortiz, La Habana 2012.

6 *Ibidem*, p. 50.

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tive⁷:

«El 95 contuvo un destacado desarrollo de la burocracia mambisa, una producción y circulación de la prensa seriada, discordias por el poder sustentadas en un mayor basamento jurídico de corte burgués así como dinámicas sociales que el 68 posiblemente haya generado a menor escala de su entramado social. Y era lógico si nos atenemos al contexto: 1895 marcó una sociedad diferente y más adelantada que 1868 por los cambios y transformaciones del período entreguerras. El hombre del 68 aspiró a superar la sociedad esclavista; el del 95, a insertarse con más ímpetu en la sociedad capitalista que se generó en Cuba desde los últimos veinticinco años del XIX.»

This contrast is even starker if one takes into account the fact that coeval Spain was instead backwards in respect to other Western powers. Though the Borbonic Restoration under Alfonso XII had brought a constitutional monarchy, political power was alternately shared (*turnismo*) by Conservatives and Liberals, to the exclusion of all other emerging forces (mostly Left parties and regionalist movements). Moreover, the former, following First Vatican Council and the Carlist wars, had mostly embraced Donoso Cortés and Elías de Tejada's traditionalist doctrine.

The Cuban nationalists fighting against this Spain had before their eyes the United States as a model of modern liberal democracy, where the defence of the market economy and private property was fully compatible with the values of Enlightenment. Unsurprisingly, then, most of them were Freemasons, and shared the secular principles of liberty, fraternity and equality as the pillars of the new Cuban State. Then, obviously, as in all other liberal democracies, there were strong practical contradictions, exemplified by social inequalities, ingrained racism, colonial dependence, exploitation, etc., but the ideological framework was rooted in the British, American and French Revolutions.

The prevalence of a democratic and progressive ideology in Cuban nationalism, would later play his role during Castroist revolution, contributing to the establishment and survival of a socialist State, despite the relatively minor presence of the actual Communist party. In fact, Cuban middle class would gave a strong support to revolutionary

⁷ Ibidem, p. 51.

policies in the early '60s, even as these soon brought to its ultimate demise⁸.

5.2.3 THE FAILURE OF FASCISM

Now, as conservatives and reactionaries were firmly entrenched in defence of Spanish colonialism, or at very least, autonomous rule under the Spanish Crown, Cuba never grew a strong conservative or reactionary nationalism, unlike other American countries. Therefore, fascism struggled hard to spread any influence on Cuban middle class, which always upheld a liberal and democratic stance, in spite of being anti-Communist and, sometimes, corporatist.

With the aforementioned premises, Cuban public opinion maintained therefore a general loathing for European fascisms. This was increased by some features. An example was Italian colonialism in Abyssinia, which especially enraged the coloured Cubans, who sympathized for the last free Black country. The same could be said for Spanish militarism, which was a cornerstone of the Nationalist faction. Spanish generals were quite correctly seen as the same class of people who had hanged and jailed Cuban patriots in the previous century.

As for fascist diplomacy, it apparently recognized the existence of this particularity, but it showed little comprehension or understanding. The Italian Ambassador's comments on the «Soviet-styled... extremist» Ramón Grau and on the «liberal-democratic-masonic» government⁹ are a clear indication. Similar content can be found in the reports from the Spanish Embassy, where Grau San Martín is described as the leader of the «extreme Left» and Batista's ideas are «frankly on the Left»¹⁰.

To this extent, Franco's attitude was an exception, in which emerged a fair deal of an-ideological pragmatism, but that cannot be regarded as "fascist". This serious liability of fascist foreign policy is confirmed by other cases of similar incomprehension¹¹ of the common points between fascist's own

8 Cfr. L. Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, op. cit.

9 F. Tamburrini, *I rapporti diplomatici tra Italia e Cuba: 1935-1947. Dall'ostilità all'amicizia ritrovata*, in "Africana. Rivista di Studi extraeuropei", 11, 2005.

10 Archivo General de la Administración, sec. 10, fdo 17 (Embajada de España en Cuba), 54/5347 (II A/b-1 Política Interior Cubana. Años 1937 al 1941).

11 F. Savarino, *Fascismo en América Latina*, op. cit.

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socialismo nazionale and nationalist, anti-imperialist movements in Latin America.

This inability of fascism to understand and overcome these differences points at one of its paradoxes: its aspirations to expansion and foreign influence coexisting with a strongly nationalist and exclusivist stance. In fact, the diplomatic shortcomings of fascist regimes, which doubtlessly depend also on their extreme nationalism, have been sometimes understated, but played a major role in their defeat (e.g. getting into war with the three greatest Powers in the world). The Cuban case, especially in comparison to the rest of Latin America, gives interesting insights on the reasons and ways through which a strongly European ideology as Fascism was accepted or rejected in a non-European context.

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