Bert Hoffmann

The Cuban Transformation as a Conflict Issue in the Americas

The Callenges for
Brazil's Foreign Policy

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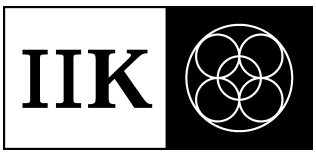
Institut für Iberoamerika-Kunde



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The Cuban Transformation as a Conflict Issue in the Americas: The Challenges for Brazil's Foreign Policy

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Introduction

Speaking on Latin American-Cuban relations, José Augusto Guilhon Albuquerque (1998, p. 47) told an anecdote about the 1958 Soccer World Championship in Stockholm when the Brazilian coach called Garrincha, Brazil's legendary soccer star, and explained to him the strategy and tactics that would secure victory over the Swedish team: where he should move to distract the opponents' defense, how he should pass the ball to find a free player from his own side, and finally, how he would come to score. Garrincha listened to his coach patiently, thought for a while, and then answered: "tudo bem! mas já combinaram com o *back* sueco?".

Indeed, thinking about Latin American or Brazilian foreign policy towards Cuba, many plans and projects can be drawn up, but the outcome will depend largely not only on the strategy adopted, but as much on the reactions of the *back sueco*. The difficulty of foreign policy making in the case of Cuba now lies not only in the fact that the *back sueco* in Havana has in the past proved to have reactions that are hard to predict, but also in the fact that in the case of Cuba one has to deal with not one, but two *backs suecos* – the second being the United States.

Today, there persists in Cuba the only political system in the western hemisphere that has not at least formally adopted the model of multi-party representative democracy. At the same time the Cold War confrontation between Cuba and the United States has survived the end of the Cold War between East and West, with the USA pursuing an aggressive strategy of economic pressure and political isolation of Cuba. Thus Brazil's relations with Cuba not only have to cope with the existence of a different political system on the island, but are also in the shadow of the ambitions of a hegemonial power obsessed with the goal not of ending, but of winning the cold war that has reigned between the two countries since the Cuban Revolution almost 40 years ago.

As long as the confrontation between the United States and Cuba persists, Cuba will be a thorny issue in the Americas. And until Cuba has been reincorporated into the Latin American or Inter-American organizations, Cuba will be on the political agenda of the countries of

the hemisphere. Moreover, to the degree in which Latin American countries have increasingly committed themselves to pluralist democracy and its promotion, the Cuban government's decision against its adoption will be an issue that will make itself felt in one way or the other in bilateral and multilateral relations.

In November 1999 Cuba's diplomatic rapprochement with Latin America will be highlighted when the Ninth Ibero-American Summit is held in Havana. However, recent developments in Cuba have led to a severe strain in Cuba's relations with the other countries of the continent – to the extent that some Latin American governments have been "thinking aloud" of boycotting the Havana summit or changing its modalities. Thus, the Ibero-American summit meeting in Havana will also highlight the problems and conflicts involved in this process.

* * *

When presenting the plan for this study in Brazil's Instituto Rio Branco[1] in March 1998, I was asked: "Isn't this question much more interesting for Cuba than it is for Brazil?" Perhaps it is. In many ways, Cuba seems insignificant for Brazil; trade with the island, for instance, has in the last 10 years never exceeded 0.35% of total Brazilian trade. However, it is not only on account of the historic significance of the Cuban Revolution or the emotions "Cuba" may stir in some, but due to the international constellation of the conflict and to its implications, that the political dimension of the Cuban issue is, for any country of the continent, disproportionately greater than the island's actual size.

The present study asks about the challenges the process of crisis and transformation in Cuba poses for Brazil's foreign policy. This will be done in three steps. In the first part, the historic background of Cuba as a foreign policy issue in the Americas and the bilateral relations between Cuba and Brazil are outlined. This part encompasses

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[1] A first draft of this paper was presented at the Instituto Rio Branco, Brasilia, on 20 Nov 1998; the present version has been revised and was last updated in April 1999. To Paul Bewicke and Mary Tyler my sincere thanks for the revision of the English version.

relations up until 1986, the year in which Brazil re-established diplomatic relations with Cuba.

The year 1986 also marks, as will be described, the beginning of the long and profound crisis Cuba is facing today. Since the collapse of Cuba's socialist allies and trading partners in 1989/90 the economic crisis has taken on dramatic forms and has forced substantial changes; however, the political system has – contrary to many predictions – remained in place.

The analysis of this process of crisis, transformation and continuity will be done in a theoretically deduced interpretation that focuses on the political logic of the economic reform process and on the implications of the confrontation with the USA on the political dynamic and democratic perspective of Cuba[2].

In the light of this analysis, the third part of this study will return to the question of Brazil's foreign policy towards Cuba in these "tempos de mudança" (Cardoso 1994). In the 1990s, and largely associated with the rise of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, first as Minister of Foreign Relations, and then as President of the Republic, Brazil's foreign policy has strongly underscored the international interests of Brazil beyond its borders. Not only has Brazil proven to be the driving force within the Mercosul, but it has also gained much international weight and is increasingly being seen as the leading voice of Latin America. In this, Brazil can play an important role in the continent's relations with Cuba. Against this background, the development of bilateral relations on the political, economic and social level since the resumption of diplomatic relations in 1986 is outlined, the possibilities and

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[2] This part is based on the author's article "Transformation und Kontinuität in Kuba", in: Hopfmann, Arndt / Wolf, Michael (ed.): Transformation und Interdependenz; Münster: Lit-Verlag 1998, p. 261-286. The focus here is on the theoretical interpretation and the political implications of the Cuban transformation process, not so much on the description of events or economic figures. For the most comprehensive descriptive account of Cuba's economic performance and economic reform process, CEPAL (1997) is the essential reference, having been published in close cooperation with the Cuban Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning (including 60 tables with central economic statistics and a more than 200 page strong legal annex). Additional data can be found in Banco Nacional de Cuba (1995). For insight into the reform debate see Dirmoser and Estay (1997), Carranza / Gutiérrez / Monreal (1995) and the contributions in Hoffmann (1994/1996) and Hoffmann (1997a).

dilemmas of Cuba's reintegration into regional or hemispheric institutions are examined and Brazil's approach towards promoting a process of democratization in Cuba is discussed.

This study has relied not only on research in the academic literature and political documents, but also on a number of personal conversations and interviews conducted with diplomats and officials of the Itamaraty (the Brazilian foreign ministry) and with Brazilian academics, as well as with a senior diplomat of the Cuban embassy in Brazil; for informative contacts with Brazilian businessmen involved in trade with Cuba, participation in the business seminar organized by the Confederação Nacional da Industria in Rio de Janeiro in March 1998 was most helpful. A research visit to Cuba in February 1998 made possible interviews with the Brazilian ambassador to Cuba as well as with a number of Cuban academics residing on the island.

My sincere thanks to the people I interviewed and to all those who have in one way or another accompanied this study project. And, of course, I want to thank the Instituto Rio Branco, whose generous scholarship made this project possible.

1. Cuba as a foreign policy issue for Brazil – the historical background (1959 to 1986)

1.1 The impact of the Cuban Revolution on the Americas

The Cuban Revolution was the biggest and most lasting upset in Inter-American political relations in the period since WW II. With the entry of the "barbudos" into Havana and Fidel Castro's radical speeches at mass rallies, "the spectre haunting Europe" that Karl Marx had described a century earlier, had acquired a Latin American face – a spectre that spurred fear in some, stirred hope in others, but left very few indifferent.

Albeit in varying forms, this upheaval significantly affected each and every country of the hemisphere. In this, the Cuban Revolution combined what for analytical purposes might be identified as a threefold political momentum. First, its *internal* aspect of social, nationalist revolution: the example of successful armed struggle leading not only to a speedy overthrow of government but to a genuine and complete change of power, the establishing of a socialist political and economic order, including the expropriation of the former elite, of national and foreign business proprietors and landowners.

The second, though of course closely related momentum was the *international* aspect of the Cuban Revolution: the full-scale entry of Cold-War logic onto the American political scene. The radicalization of revolutionary politics after the triumph of January 1, 1959, and the increasing hostility of the USA towards the revolutionary government led Fidel Castro soon to turn to a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union. After having declared the "socialist character" of the Cuban Revolution on the eve of the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, the "Cold War in the Carribbean" very soon reached its dramatic climax in the so-called "missile crisis" in 1962.

In the reality of Latin American countries, both internal and international factors combined. In many countries guerilla groups emerged, some explicitly, others implicitly inspired by the success of the Cuban Revolution; many Latin American governments feared some sort of internal social upheaval or the extension of armed insurgency; and in most countries, for shorter or for longer periods of time, military re-

gimes took over, making civilian democratic governments rather the exception than the rule in the continent.

Against this background, the so-called „doctrine of national security“ promoted by the U.S. government allowed the Cold War interpretation of social conflict to become the dominant rule in Latin American countries; internal unrest or left-wing organisations were generally seen as part of the overall East-West-struggle, a widely used standard accusation becoming that they were Cuban- or Soviet-backed. The strategic alliance with the USA as the dominant hemispheric power was reinforced; Cuba was expelled from hemispheric institutions and all Latin American governments – with the notable exception of Mexico – broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba.

For Latin American countries, the Cuban Revolution was thus a foreign policy issue that posed both an internal challenge – calls for radical political change in their own countries – and an international challenge, namely their position in the Cold-War confrontation, which in the Americas had resulted in the unequal polarization of “Washington vs. Havana”. For all practical purposes, for most Latin American governments the international challenge largely translated into the question of the character and terms of their alliance with the USA.

However, a third, additional point should be identified. This could be specified as the issue of *bilateral relations* between Cuba and the countries of the hemisphere. However much determined or influenced by the “Cold-War-ization” of Inter-American relations, significant differences in bilateral relations with Cuba can be noticed. These result from a variety of factors: historic ties, trade and economic interests, geo-strategic role, specific political circumstances etc. etc. Nevertheless, a very central element determining the bilateral relations between Cuba and the Latin American countries since the Revolution was the (real or perceived) Cuban support for opposition or armed insurgency groups operating in the respective country[3].

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[3] This should not be merely subsumed under the “US-Soviet Cold War”, since it strongly involved decisions made not in Moscow, but by and on behalf of the Cuban government. For an analysis of the foreign policy of revolutionary Cuba cf. Domínguez 1989; see also Mesa-Lago/Blasier 1979 and Weinstein 1979; for a comprehensive presentation published in Cuba itself cf. López Segrera 1988; for a more recent analysis of Cuban foreign policy towards Cuba and Latin America in the 1990s see Valdés Paz 1992. For a case study

1.2 The political relations between Brazil and Cuba from 1959 to 1986

In this general Latin American panorama, Brazil represents a special case. The years after the Cuban Revolution coincided in Brazil with the proclamation of an "independent foreign policy" by the government of President Quadros from 1961[4]. This especially called into question relations with the USA, which were seen in their present form as an obstacle to Brazil's development efforts. The new policy under Quadros favored a diversification of economic as well as political relations that led to a broadening of contacts to Eastern Europe, China and Latin American countries, and it also quite intentionally led to somewhat more distanced relations to the USA. Cuba quite naturally began to play an important symbolic role for this new foreign policy, precisely because during this time the conflict between Cuba and the USA escalated. The policy towards Cuba became a kind of litmus test for the proclaimed "independence" of Brazilian foreign policy from U.S. dominance. In this time, writes Vasconcelos, "poder-se-ia dizer que as autoridades brasileiras se escudavam com Cuba – assim valha a imagem – para demonstrar seus propósitos de autonomia política vis-á-vis outros países, em particular os Estados Unidos." (Vasconcelos 1991, p. 188)

In 1961, when the USA had already broken off diplomatic relations with Cuba and established an economic embargo against the island, the Quadros government resisted pressures from Washington to join ranks in implementing this policy and instead repeatedly gave demonstrations of its good relations with the revolutionary Cuban government. Highlights of this were certainly the very warm welcome given to the Cuban delegation at the conference of the World Food Organization (FAO) in Rio, and – even more famous – the "Cruzeiro do Sul" decoration awarded to the "heroic guerillero" and Cuban government official Ernesto "Che" Guevara by President Jânio Quadros in August 1961, a few days before he resigned from office. Indeed,

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on the process of decision-making in Cuban foreign policy see Fernández 1992.

4 For a discussion of Brazil's development model and foreign policy see Grabendorff/Nitsch 1977 and Schirm 1990.

the decoration given to Che Guevara was one of the most prominent targets for the attacks against Quadros that eventually ended with his resignation[5].

The succeeding government of João Goulart maintained relations with Cuba, although in a less emphatic style, and it was not until the military coup of March 1964 and the ensuing military dictatorship that Brazil broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba and adopted the "doctrine of national security", thus internally as well as in foreign policy joining ranks with the U.S. government against the threats of "communist expansionism" in the hemisphere. As to the third point mentioned above, the Brazilian military government explained its policy of confrontation with Cuba first and foremost with the "Cuban support" to armed insurgency groups in Brazil[6].

After that bilateral relations remained tense and, in all official terms, very low-profile. However it should be noted that even under the military dictatorship Brazilian and Cuban voting in the United Nations frequently coincided, and perhaps more astonishingly, that the massive presence of Cuban troops in Angola – one of the issues most fiercely attacked by the U.S. government – did not receive much open criticism from the Brazilian government[7].

It should be noted that it was not so much changes in Cuba or in international politics that were fundamentally decisive for the end of the "anos de gelo" between Brazil and Cuba, but the internal political process within Brazil. With the "abertura" policy of the Figuereido government, discreet diplomatic contacts began between Cuba and Brazil in the embassies of Panama and France. However, it was not until the democratization process in Brazil had significantly advanced and the civilian government under President José Sarney had come

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5 The precise circumstances – whether Quadros was forced out of power or whether his resignation had been intended as a challenge to strenthen his position – are subject to debate (cf. Skidmore 1967, p. 200—204).

6 The real extent of this support is still today very unclear. Contrary to the propaganda of the military regime, in fact it seems probable that direct Cuban aid to armed groups in Brazil was of a rather minor nature. However, as to my knowledge, an accurate and documented account of this still has not yet been published.

7 cf. Vasconcelos 1991, p. 188. An interesting analysis of the convergence of Brazil's and Cuba's foreign policy in the Central American crisis of the 1980s has been presented by Flávio Abrão Paes Leme (1996).

to power in 1985, that – on June 14, 1986 – the reestablishment of full diplomatic relations between Brazil and Cuba could be achieved. This was well in advance of most other Latin American countries, which reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba much later.

The successful outcome of these negotiations left a strong mark on Brazil-Cuban relations. The key to their success were certainly two words: respect and discretion. The negotiations had been conducted in Paris, on neutral territory, and more importantly, behind closed doors; and to good effect, during the negotiations neither side used them openly for public political propaganda purposes. It can be assumed that, of course, the Brazilian side set conditions for the reestablishment of diplomatic relations, including certainly a Cuban guarantee to renounce all "export of revolution" or support to armed groups in Brazil. However, this was not raised publicly as a demand or "precondition" with which Cuba had to comply; instead, the form of respectful, quiet negotiation made it possible for Cuba to come to an understanding even on sensible terms without losing face.

The mutual respect shown in these negotiations laid the foundation for unusually trusting relations ever since. Some remarkable side-effects of this can be seen still today: when at the end of August 1998 Fidel Castro came to Salvador de Bahia on a brief "technical stop-over" on a flight to South Africa, he had a 4-hour-long meeting with Senador Antonio Carlos Magalhães, the President of Congress – very much to the dismay of representatives of left-wing organizations whom Castro did not receive. On ideological grounds, Magalhães certainly could not be considered in any way close to the Cuban leader; Fidel Castro, attacked for meeting exclusively with Magalhães (all the more so during election time), explained that this was due to a long-standing personal relationship dating from the time when Magalhães served as Minster of Communications in the Sarney government, Magalhães being "an important man who worked vigorously for the strengthening of relations between Cuba and Brazil"[8].

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[8] cf. El Nuevo Heraldo, 1 sept. 1998; to counter the negative perception in the Brazilian left, on his way back from South Africa Castro again made a brief stopover in Brazil, on that occasion meeting not only with President Cardoso but also with the presidential candidate of the Worker's Party (PT), Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva.

1.3 Economic and commercial relations

As a consequence of the break in diplomatic relations between the two countries, after 1966 Cuba did not figure at all in Brazil's trade balance. However, even before the Cuban Revolution, economic exchange between the two countries had been low and irregular. For Brazil, the development model of import-substituting industrialization and concentration on the national market had meant that for a long time trade interests were rather limited with the Latin American countries in general (with notable exceptions). Cuba, moreover, is in relative terms a very small and quite distant country for Brazil, especially since the base of its economy was a product such as sugar that was not complementary to Brazil's economy, but in direct competition with it. With Cuba after the Revolution establishing a socialist national economy and orienting most of its foreign trade towards the non-hard-currency trading partners of the socialist world, even without the break in diplomatic relations the possibilities for economic relations certainly seem limited.

However, from 1977 there were some noteworthy attempts at business contacts between Brazil and Cuba, highlighted by the visit of a Cuban commercial delegation to São Paulo in 1981, at a time when political relations were still frozen. From 1980 some indirect business deals resumed, being realized through triangular operations involving third countries (cf. Vasconcelos 1991, p. 191). From that time various initiatives were launched for expanding economic relations, advocating "Cuba as a new alternative in commerce for Brazil" – so the title of a study published in 1985[9] – and often announcing promising business opportunities for Brazilian enterprises.

With the reestablishment of diplomatic relations in 1986, Brazil and Cuba not only sent high-ranking diplomats to their new legations, but with Ítalo Zappa on the Brazilian side and Jorge Bolaños, a vice-minister for foreign trade, on the Cuban side, both countries chose

[9] "Cuba – Uma Nova Alternativa Comercial o Brasil", published by the business consulting "RDC International".

diplomats with a pronounced "trade profile"[10]. Underlining this turn towards economic aspects in bilateral relations, in the same year, 1986, the Brazilian Confederação Nacional da Indústria (CNI) sent an important business mission to Cuba, which returned with a favorable report on the prospects for trade and commerce with the socialist island (cf. Confederação Nacional da Indústria 1987).

However, in the years that followed the development of bilateral trade did not live up to the optimistic expectations of the moment. Brazilian trade with Cuba encountered serious problems not only in financing and credit, but also in the financial limitations experienced by Brazil during this period and the outbreak of Cuba's hard currency foreign debt crisis in 1986. For it is precisely the year 1986, when Brazil re-established diplomatic relations with Cuba, that also marks the beginning of the island's profound economic crisis.

From 1983, within 4 years Cuba's hard currency debt with international creditors from the capitalist world had more than doubled, leading to a situation where Cuba could not pay the interest any longer. When, in 1986, renegotiation efforts with the "Paris Club" creditors failed, Cuba had to declare a de facto moratorium on its debt servicing. Needless to say this step made the island a difficult partner for any hard currency trade. "Se impuso un riguroso manejo de las divisas disponibles", writes Cuban economist Julio Carranza Valdés on the consequences of the debt crisis. "Entre 1985 y 1987 se produjo una fuerte reducción del nivel de importaciones en moneda libremente convertible del orden del 30 % (...) Por estas razones, en 1986 el gobierno cubano toma la decisión de mantener reducidas al mínimo posible las relaciones económicas con los países capitalistas y concentrar la mayor proporción de estas con los países del CAME, sobre todo con la URSS" (Carranza Valdés 1992, p. 133).

[10] Jorge Bolaños is today once again vice-minister for foreign trade in Havana; moreover it should be noted that he is acting coordinator for the IX Ibero-American Summit meeting to be held in Havana in November 1999.

1.4 Social and cultural ties

Despite their geographical distance, in Brazil one inevitably finds a generalized feeling of cultural proximity to Cuba. This is in many ways more deepseated than in other Latin American countries, in many of which Cuba acquired its special emotional status only due to the Revolution and its symbolic importance for the continent. In Brazil however, the sentiment of cultural kinship with Cuba dates back far beyond this.

Of singular importance certainly was the strong impact of the African descent of a large proportion of the Cuban and Brazilian nation and the ensuing parallels in their historic and cultural development[11].

Even the briefest look at the popular religions of both countries impressively confirms this. The beliefs and rites of the Cuban *santería* and of the Brazilian *candomblé* reveal striking similarities. Obviously, too, in cultural forms of expression such as the arts and music, the Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian impact make for many affinities between the people of both countries. As a result, despite the fact that different languages are spoken in Brazil and in Cuba, at times it seems easier for Brazilians and Cubans to find, on a popular level, "a common language" than for other nations of Latin America.

This historically developed cultural affinity received a strong boost from the political dynamics of the Cuban Revolution and its impact on the collective imagination of the continent. Manifold activities and ties between the societies of both countries developed, notwithstanding the political conflicts at government level. The generally easy and warm understanding between Brazilian and Cuban intellectuals, artists, athletes, musicians and academics was present throughout all the "anos de gelo" and did much to facilitate the subsequent reopening of official relations between the two countries.

Brazilian liberation theology had a singularly important impact in Cuba too, effectively contributing to the easing of state-church relations on the island since the mid-1980s. In fact, it was the official publication in Cuba of a long conversation between the Brazilian

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[11] An informative comparative study on the "Myth of Racial Democracy" in Brazil and in Cuba is Burdick 1992.

priest Frei Betto and Fidel Castro (cf. Betto 1985) which marked the first breakthrough in the “anos de gelo” between Cuba’s socialist state and the island’s Catholic church – some 13 years before Pope John Paul II, a declared opponent of Frei Betto’s liberation theology, was to visit Cuba[12].

In this study, it is impossible to give a more extensive overview of the great variety of social and cultural relations and affinities between Cuba and Brazil. The examples described may, however, give an idea of their importance when speaking of the countries’ bilateral relations.

Before proceeding to the development of Brazilian-Cuban relations since 1986, the process of crisis, transformation and continuity in Cuba since this date will be examined.

2. Cuba: crisis and transformation since 1986

Normally, great political changes are spectacular. In Cuba it is their absence which is spectacular. Although facing a profound economic and social crisis, eight years after the fall of the Berlin Wall the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba strengthened without exception the party's leading role in state and society, the socialist economy with no private Cuban entrepreneurs, as well as the personal continuity of the state leadership through Fidel Castro – and, in the event of his demise, through his brother Raúl Castro (cf. Granma International, 19 October 1997).

What demands explanation in Cuba is therefore not a fundamental political and economic break but rather much more the processes and factors which have prevented one. The “dual identity” of Cuba as a Latin American and a socialist country places an academic analysis at the intersection of so-called “transition studies” developed in coming to grips with democratization processes in Southern Europe and Latin America on the one hand, and “transformation studies” as applied to the upheavals and systemic changes in the socialist states of

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[12] Frei Betto participated in the event by special invitation of Fidel Castro; his account of this was published in the magazine “Caros Amigos”, March 1998 (Betto 1998).

Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union on the other. The "Cuban case" will be analyzed here in the context of this overall discussion – although (or precisely because) still-socialist Cuba represents a "deviant case" in the comparative debate.

With respect to the transformation process in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union the "dilemma of simultaneity" (Offe 1994: 57 ff) comes into discussion. In Southern Europe and Latin America the transition constituted a passage to democracy and indeed a fundamental change in the political regime, but not of the underlying economic system. In contrast, in the former socialist states the change in the political and the economic system had to be accomplished simultaneously.

Cuba poses the question of the relationship between economic and political change in a particular form. For, in view of the fundamental change in international relations since 1989, in Cuba, too, the maintenance of political authority has not been possible, as is often assumed or suggested, by simply "maintaining the status quo," but rather only through a substantial measure of changes which were implemented, or at least accepted, within the framework of the existing system.

Consequently, the fragmentation and informalization of the economy which is so striking in the post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe has taken place in Cuba as well; but here it has occurred within the framework of a still-socialist state. On the one hand, this doubtlessly undermines the "classic" socialist order of economy and society; but on the other, for the maintenance of political power this informalization has proved to be, as will be shown in this analysis, the most functional form of recourse to market mechanisms, when this became inevitable.

Indeed, the "dilemma of simultaneity" in the formerly socialist states includes yet a third level which Offe (1994, p. 64) calls "the territorial question". In a further sense this may be conceived as "the national question," that is the whole complex of sovereignty, integrity, and identity of the nation-state, its affirmation or questioning (and connected with this the role of external political actors), as well as of ethnically and nationally stamped movements and models of legitimation. In the collapse of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union these factors gained central im-

portance; in the democratization processes in Latin America they played only a secondary role.

As will be argued, Cuba differs from the transitions in Latin America in that, in conjunction with the political question, inevitably the national question is also raised, though not in the same terms as in Eastern Europe: in Cuba the affirmation of the nation against an overwhelming hegemonic power is the trump card of the socialist government, not of the opposition. While transition studies have emphasized the decisive importance of internal factors for the democratization process, Cuba appears as an example for how external actors can be a key factor in the whether and how of political transition processes.

2.1 The Cuban case in the international debate on transition and transformation

The starting point of the analysis must be Cuba's "dual identity" as a Latin American and as a socialist state. The Cuba of Fidel Castro was simultaneously a part of the "Third World" of developing countries and the "Second World" of socialist states. This dual identity marks to the present the political, economic, and social structure of the country. When the investigation of Cuban development is reduced to only one of these two perspectives, the analysis necessarily remains insufficient.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 ran up against the emphatic enmity of the United States, and it found a powerful ally in the Soviet Union. The quickly following proclamation of the "socialist character" of the Cuban Revolution was accompanied by increasing adoption of the political and economic model of the Soviet Union. In the 1970s, this was firmly anchored by the so-called "process of institutionalization," by the adoption of a new constitution in 1970 and by full membership in the "Council for Mutual Economic Assistance" (Comecon) in 1972.

In the Latin American identity of Cuba the Revolution represents the embodiment of the national struggle for independence. In this view the conflict with the United States was never entirely an "East-West" but rather always a "North-South" conflict.

Behind the formal socialistically-conceived institutions the foundation of Cuban politics in the military structures which grew out of the guerrilla war remained recognizable; and one cannot overlook the origin of the unquestionable leader at the top in the tradition of Latin American caudillo authority. Even today Fidel Castro is in the first place "Comandante en Jefe" of the Cuban Revolution – whether or not the constitution recognizes this title – and only in second place First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, President of the Council of Ministers and of the Council of State, etc.[13]

The classic transition studies have taken practically no account of Cuba. The four volume work of O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1986) on "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule" is in this regard typical; it lists socialist Cuba in passing among the undemocratic regimes, but explicitly excludes it from the analysis (Vol. 1: 10).

Since 1989 there have been in fact a large number of publications devoted to Cuba which use the word 'transition' in their titles; but on the assumption of an impending upheaval in Cuba, "transition" was for the most part not an analytical category for what was happening in Cuba but rather a cipher for what *should* happen in Cuba.[14]

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[13] In his remarkable essay on Cuba's Communist Party in 1969, Hans Magnus Enzenberger analyzed the ambivalent relationship of Fidel Castro to the Communist Party. In contrast to the "leading role in state and society" which it formally possesses, Enzenberger came to this conclusion about Cuba's Communist Party: "One thing it definitely is not: the political power." And further: "With great pertinacity Fidel Castro runs away from the avantgarde which he himself had summoned up. It will never catch up with him." (Enzenberger 1969: 215.) Since Enzenberger wrote his classic essay nearly thirty years ago Cuba has undergone the so-called "process of institutionalization" which gave the Party formal committees, congresses, and elective offices. Nevertheless, "it is blatant" – writes Rafael Rojas in 1997 (p. 25) – "that the Communist Party is not a Gramscian or even Leninist institution. The power of Fidel Castro is not divided or delegated over institutions but rather over persons." Significantly, the party congresses of 1991 and 1997 established no political tone of their own, but served rather only to ratify and mediate the government's. In the 1990s a process of deinstitutionalization can even be perceived (cf. Dominguez 1997:12.)

[14] For instance, in 1990 the Cuban-American "Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy" (ASCE) expectantly published the proceedings of its first annual meeting under the title "Cuba in Transition," where this explicitly meant "the transition of Cuba to a free-market democracy." (cf. ASCE 1992-1997)

Amazingly this exclusion of Cuba persisted when after 1989 some of the most prominent transition scholars set out on “travels to the East” and applied the theses developed for Latin America to the explanation of the upheavals in the socialist states.[15]

Of course Cuba is a special case, since until now no transition in the sense of a change of the political system to a Western style democracy has taken place. But the question why a process of this kind did not take place is only the reverse side of the question why it took place elsewhere. And it is the “deviant cases” that can be especially interesting precisely for comparative observation.

Generally, Cuba is also left out of the “transformation studies” dedicated to the socialist respectively post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Here, the continued existence of the socialist system in Cuba is often seen as the non-occurrence of transformation and thus Cuba does not appear as an object of research. Nevertheless, as in the states of Eastern Europe, Cuba also based its socialist development model on a thorough dissociation from the capitalist world market. Where now the transformation processes in Eastern Europe have to be understood always as processes of integration into the world market, so Cuba too – even though no systemic rupture took place – inevitably faces precisely this task of reintegration into the capitalist world economy.

From this emerge problems and processes which suggest linking the analysis of Cuban development with research on the so-called “transformation states” of Eastern Europe. Because where the collapse of trade relations with the socialist states deprived Cuban so-

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This obviously meant a goal, not the process currently under way. Since then, the Association has met annually under this title, “Cuba in Transition,” in the hope that developments in Cuba might someday measure up.

[15] Cf. Karl and Schmitter (1991), Schmitter (with Karl) (1994), or O'Donnell (1994); characteristically also Linz and Stepan (1996), who place developments in Southern Europe, Latin America, and post-communist Europe under the same roof of transition and consolidation research, mention Cuba only once – and this in relation to the pre-revolutionary Cuba of the Batista regime (357). Only quite recently have systematic attempts been made to place socialist Cuba in the context of international transition research. Particularly mentioned should be the seminar “Cuba a la luz de otras transiciones” conducted in Summer 1997 in Madrid (cf. Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana, No 6/7, 1997, Madrid).

cialism of its former conditions of existence, the maintenance of the political system was in no way possible as purely "holding fast to what exists" but rather only through changes. From this perspective the concepts of "transition" and "transformation" run in opposite directions. Precisely since the Cuban system – whether intentionally or unintentionally, whether consciously or unconsciously – has worked through considerable transformation processes, it has until now prevented a "transition" in the sense of a political system change to pluralism and multiparty democracy.

2.2 The political logic of Cuba's economic transformation

In the 1980s socialist Cuba conducted more than 80 per cent of its foreign trade with its allies in the socialist economic integration scheme, CMEA (Comecon). Obviously, the rupture of these relations after 1989 had an enormous impact on Cuba's economic crisis. However, it should be noted that the beginning of the crisis was earlier, with the year 1986 marking the turning-point (cf Carranza 1992). Essentially, three factors are decisive: 1) Cuba's rapidly growing debt (that is, its hard-currency debt with Western creditors) reached a point where Cuba could no longer pay the interest and had to declare a de facto moratorium leading to severe strains on its relations with capitalist markets and a reconcentration on its socialist trading partners; 2) growing problems of inefficiency and resource allocation in the Cuban economy, leading to a turnaround in the internal economic organization through the so-called "process of rectification", essentially amounting to anti-market reforms and a re-centralization of the economy; and 3) the beginnings of perestroika in the Soviet Union, with ever-increasing ideological and practical divergences between the two countries.

So from 1986 there was a notable crisis in Cuba, reaching dramatic proportions with the collapse of its socialist trading partners in Eastern Europe. To this the Cuban government responded with a dual strategy: first a strict emergency program was proclaimed. Its official name, "período especial en tiempos de paz" (special period in times of peace) alone indicated that it was an adaptation of a concept

originally developed for wartime. “At the moment we have virtually a war economy,” as Fidel Castro himself declared in 1991.[16]

From 1989 to 1993, Gross Domestic Product fell by 34.8%, according to official figures[17]. Massive shortages of provisions and the sharp fall in the general living standard were dealt with by virtually blanket rationing of all products, a measure designed to apportion the costs of the crisis broadly equally. Even with this severe suppression of national consumption, reintegration into the changed world economy remained unavoidable for the structurally highly foreign-trade dependent Cuban economy.

Parallel to the internal austerity policy, under the pressure to obtain hard-currency earnings a new world-market oriented sector based on the U.S. dollar was created in the Cuban economy. Its central elements were an opening-up for joint-venture enterprises with foreign capital and the expansion of international tourism. Around these dollar enclaves and in the import and export sector, Cuban quasi-state enterprises were established, the so-called “Sociedades Anónimas”, which operate on a hard-currency basis and openly imitate capitalist forms, but are managed and owned by party cadres and state or other official institutions.

Furthermore, since the possession of U.S. dollars was legalized in July 1993, the government has set up throughout the country a large number of state hard-currency shops which are open to all Cubans. As a result the remittance economy has become a central stay of the Cuban economy: calculated according to official estimates, since 1994 Cuba may have received more dollars through money transfers from emigre Cubans to their relatives on the island than through its main export product sugar.[18]

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16 “Es virtualmente una economía de guerra la que tenemos en este momento,” (Castro 1991: 57).

17 Banco Nacional de Cuba 1995; it is very probable that the effective fall was even sharper. A comprehensive compilation of the available statistical data can be found in the annexos of CEPAL 1997.

18 In the balance of payments for 1994 the National Bank of Cuba showed an entry of US$ 574.8 million under the heading “current transfers” which, as is expressly explained, is “mainly due to the income from donations and remittances” (Banco Nacional de Cuba 1995: 20f). For 1997 this item was estimated at around US$800m (IRELA 1997: 4). For an excellent conceptualiza-

Only with the collapse of its socialist trading partners did the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba – in place since the beginning of the 1960s – reach its full impact. The United States being the island's "natural market" for almost all goods and services, Cuba finds itself not only exposed to the forces of the world market, but even more to a world market severely truncated by Washington's embargo. Although the precise figures of the "costs" of Washington's sanctions to the Cuban economy are debatable[19], there is no doubt that for any kind of Cuban economic development strategy the U.S. embargo represents an extraordinary hindrance, and one that can hardly be exaggerated.

The consequence of the strategy pursued by the Cuban government of "war economy cum dollar enclaves" was a split in the economy which has been very painful for the general population on the island. The ever-sparser ration-card provisions contrast with the state dollar shops offering everything from bread and meat to imported refrigerators and Sony color TV: nota bene, everything for sale to any Cuban, with just one criteria for allocation – sufficient U.S. dollars.

Thus both world market competition and international currency competition take place within Cuba itself and are a visible and everyday experience for everybody. And with the severe crisis of Cuba's socialist, peso-based economy and the devaluation of the national currency they occur in very drastic form: the average wage in the state economy of 180 pesos is now the equivalent of 8-10 U.S. dollars as monthly (!) earnings. This kind of distortion in monetary relations tears open a deep social chasm. What a steelworker earns as salary in a month, a waiter in a hard-currency hotel easily receives as tips while serving breakfast[20].

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tion of the remittances and their significance for Cuban development see Monreal 1998.

19 See for instance Zimbalist 1994.

20 In summer 1994 the devaluation of the Cuban currency reached its nadir with a black market rate of 130 pesos per US dollar while officially a 1:1 parity was maintained. From the beginning of 1996 to the present the exchange rate – by now also that of the officially established state exchange stands – has varied between 25 and 19 pesos per U.S. dollar. (cf. CEPAL 1997, Statistical Appendix, Table A14, and, with slight differences Marquetti 1995: 20.) On Cuba's monetary dualization see also Carranza, Gutiérrez, and Monreal (1995), as well as Ritter (1995) and Marquetti (1995).

The transformation in Eastern Europe has frequently been understood as a development "from plan to market", as, for instance, the title of the World Bank's World Development Report 1996 announces (World Bank 1996). Against this it has been argued that it is not a simple change "from plan to market" that has taken place in the former socialist countries, but rather that hybrid structures have appeared; that the economy and society are not developing in a linear way, but they have become fragmented and divided according to money; and that the old planned economy has not been replaced simply by "the market", but to a far greater degree by mixed structures characterized by informalization, in which surviving elements of the socialist state as well as personal relationships of the old party and planned economy elite are specifically combined with new market and capital structures (Altvater and Mahnkopf 1996: 463 ff).

As in the former socialist states, the crisis in Cuba's formal economy coincided with a no less massive growth of the black market and informal economy. The figures given for this are by nature vague. In a pathbreaking essay, Cuban reform economist Julio Carranza cited in 1992 for the first time figures which until then had remained unpublished: "In 1990 an estimated 2 billion pesos circulated through the black market (according to the Institute of Internal Demand), and in the following two years this number has probably quintupled." (Carranza 1992: 153). Since the money value of the official state retail trade at that time amounted to around seven billion pesos, it follows that more money was spent in the black market than in the formal economy. Unofficial Cuban estimates proceed from the assumption that in the first half of 1994, at the lowest point of the crisis, up to 50 per cent of consumer goods used in the country were not traded in the formal economy, but rather in black market businesses of every kind, family relationships, illegal private trade, barter businesses, etc.[21]

The causes of the boom in Cuba's informal economy are related to those in the post-socialist states. In each the informalization of the economy is not just a "survival of old structures" but rather feeds simultaneously from a new second source – newly-established mo-

[21] Information from economists in Havana in conversations with the author, August 1994.

netary economic relationships which economically exclude broad sections of the population. Anyone with no opportunities in the formal monetary economy is almost compelled to withdraw from it and take flight into the informal economy. In the same sense as a “peripheralization of Eastern Europe” has been diagnosed in reference to the former socialist states, a “Latin Americanization of Cuba” is taking place.

In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as Hopfmann (1997: 24) writes, “the radical upheaval and/or dissolution of the actually-existing socialist structures of acquisition and their system of social security had as its result a comprehensive social ‘unsecuring’. (...) For many actors this existence-threatening insecurity can only be to some degree ‘mastered’ through a combination of ‘survival strategies’: holding on to remaining interpersonal networks, through partial retreat into self-provision activities and/or taking up precarious work relationships (outside institutionalized regulations).”

Although in Cuba the socialist state economy continues, there is no doubt that here, too, the “actually-existing socialist structures of acquisition” have been radically shaken – less in the form of workplaces being shut down, layoffs and open unemployment than much more through the ever-sparser ration-card provisions and the dramatic devaluation of peso salaries. If peso salaries now determine only to a small extent the actual ability to buy goods and services, all other kinds of acquisition become disproportionately more important (whether legal, illegal, or in the large gray area in between). Something similar holds for the social security system inasfar as it is mediated by money: if the average monthly pension of 80 pesos is worth four U.S. dollars according to the quasi-official exchange rate, for a retired worker a mango tree in the back yard will bring in far more income than a state pension.

If, as Hopfmann writes on Eastern Europe, “informalization is above all an immediate consequence of the collapse of the system and the proclaimed turnaround to market economics and competitive democracy” (Hopfmann 1997: 24), then the case of Cuba may put this in a broader perspective. For in Cuba the sweeping informalization of economic relationships is occurring even though no political “turnaround” has preceded it. So the “erosion of the state” and the “unsecuring of reproductive relations” (Hopfmann) also lead to mas-

sive informalization processes, even if they take place under the cover of state socialism and the continuity of the single-party state.

It is obvious that far-reaching social and political consequences result from these economic developments for a system which had been based on (relative) social equality and which is in great measure legitimated by its social economic attainments. Central "achievements of the revolution," above all the free education and health system, have also suffered greatly under the economic crisis. Doctors lack medicine, hospitals lack X-ray film and sterile sutures; schools lack pencils, paper, and books. In both areas the devaluation of salaries has moreover led to a noticeable drain of qualified personnel, and to great material and motivation problems with those who remain.

The list of erosions of Cuba's socialist economic and social order can be continued. Here no turning point is in sight; the trend towards a slow economic recovery since 1993-94 (cf. CEPAL 1997) is largely restricted to the export and dollar sectors. Nevertheless it is important to see the continuance of some social and economic achievements of the "old" socialist structures, too. This is vitally important for the social fabric. State provision of subsidized food on the ration card has certainly been drastically reduced in comparison with the 1980s and is effectively insufficient for anyone to satisfy their daily needs. Nevertheless, it guarantees the supply of a basic quota of rice, beans, cooking oil, etc. almost free of charge; and precisely because of the monetary discrepancies, the rationed products have become more indispensable than ever for those who do not or who hardly participate in the new hard-currency sector.

If the grossly distorted monetary relationships, as expressed in peso salaries and the dollar exchange rate, were in fact the only mechanisms determining access to goods, privileges, and social status, the social situation would doubtlessly be far more polarized and the maintenance of social peace and the political status quo far more difficult.

The processes of informalization in the Cuban economy certainly represent a substantial loss of legitimation for the socialist system. Simultaneously, however, the informal structures are quite broadly tolerated – the extent they have reached would have otherwise been

simply impossible.[22] De facto, the state in Cuba allows the informal economy to play a central role in the economy. Since the socialist state economy no longer has the capacity to guarantee the provisioning of the population, a return to market mechanisms was inevitable in Cuba, too; and it is taking place in this informalized way, even though formal market reforms have not been carried out, or only to a minor extent.

This policy of de facto toleration of a broad informal, ultimately illegal economy follows far less from an economic than from a political logic: for the maintenance of political power it is proving to be the most functional form of re-introduction of market mechanisms – even if it makes everyday disregard of official norms and laws the normal state of affairs. The important point is that, since market activities are not formal and legal, no claims can be derived nor demands raised from them; that no organizing of the producers can take place; and that the state always has a free hand to intervene against undesired activities or those which reach too great an extent. It is precisely the legal insecurity of these market relations that renders them structurally dependent on the good will of state authorities, thus eliminating their potential to articulate themselves independently and to cause "political problems". Secondly, it also offers at every level possibilities to convert administrative positions and control functions into material benefits.

State control and participation are also the key words for the external opening and the newly-emerged hard-currency sectors in the Cu-

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[22] Ever since Julio Carranza first wrote about "the necessity of recognizing the existence of an informal sector" (1992: 153) this tolerance has also extended to Cuban economics and social sciences so that here, in the course of the 1990's, the dynamics and problems of the "informal markets" can be analyzed using this term even in official publications. For instance Marquetti (1995: 9) writes: "A not inconsiderable part of the sales of certain products takes place in the 'informal market' where, under the new conditions, a relative loosening of the border between the legal and the illegal has taken place." (cf. also García Lorenzo 1995). When the government set up official state exchange bureaus in the fall of 1995, even the Communist Party organ "Granma" announced that they "offer the same rate which rules in the informal foreign exchange market" (Granma International, 1 November 1995) – a remarkable admission of what had long previously been taken note of in the official discourse only as speculation and criminality against the socialist economy.

ban economy: in joint-venture enterprises state institutions are always a direct partner of the capitalist investor; and the state at least co-determines the handing out of jobs through employment agencies which foreign enterprises are obliged to use. Moreover, although the now nearly 300 “Sociedades Anónimas” in the hard-currency sector are quasi-capitalist in structure, in content they are parastatal enterprises reserved for official elites. By some in Cuba this is referred to as “cadre capitalism.”

A very different question, however, is whether this strategy holds a development perspective for the country. The argument of reform economists in Cuba is that this kind of informal and restrained economic structure may function for quite some time as crisis management, but that it does not provide a basis for a national economy which has to recover from a profound economic crisis and which wants to maintain and finance an ambitious health, education, and social system for eleven million Cubans. Instead, reform-oriented economists as Carranza, Gutiérrez, and Monreal have pleaded “for a gradual but comprehensive and coherent reform of the economic model”, for “moving from the classical model of socialism to another model of socialism ..., that accords the market an active although not exclusive or dominant role in the allocation of resources and the general functioning of the economy.” (1995: 10).

Understood in this way, the Cuban reform discussion turns not so much on the question of the “introduction” of market mechanisms but rather much more on the question of what kind of market mechanisms these should be: formally and legally recognized, which could develop a continuing economic dynamic – or merely tolerated but in principle illegal market mechanisms which remain much weaker economically but appear to be easier controllable politically.

After 1993 the first careful steps were taken toward the first option. A range of self-employed occupations (“trabajo por cuenta propia”) were allowed, though in practice they are subjected to numerous restrictions and, with fewer than 200,000 self-employed people registered, have until the present acquired only very limited economic significance. The most far-reaching internal economic market reform was obviously triggered by political reasons after the open outbreak of the social crisis in the summer of 1994. On 5 August the first (and so far only) open riot against the Castro government took place in Havana, followed by a large refugee movement in which more than

30,000 Cubans left the country on improvised rafts. Only a week after Fidel Castro had declared the borders of Cuba closed once again, his brother Raúl Castro – that is the Vice-President and the head of Cuba's army – announced the opening of food markets. What is more, Raúl Castro justified this step quite explicitly on the grounds that the provision of food had to be considered the highest "economic, political and military priority" of the country (Granma Internacional, 28 September 1995).

A more extensive reform policy did not however follow. The legalization of private small restaurants, called "paladares" after a popular Brazilian telenovela, in June 1995 marked the high point of the development. Already by the end of the year market mechanisms became principally a matter of increased controls and restrictions.[23]

Then in March of 1996 Raúl Castro read a "Report of the Politburo" which in martial tones attacked the island's critical intellectuals, some of whom had supposedly become a "fifth column at the service of the enemy."[24] (R. Castro 1996) Explicitly named was the Center for the Study of the Americas (CEA), the leading institution in the reform discussion.[25] Since then the "containment" position in regard to market-oriented reforms has won the upper hand, and is explicitly

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[23] See for example the interview in the Party organ "Granma" with Vice-Minister for Work and Social Security, Conrado Valladares, under the title, "Trabajo por cuenta propia – Por ahora, sólo controlar" [Self-Employment: for now, only to control] (Granma Internacional, 1 March 1996).

[24] The director of the Center was fired, all leading academics (amongst them Carranza and Monreal) were transferred to other institutions. For a report on the reform debate and the political struggles see Hoffmann 1997a. In circumstances that remain unclear, the internal records of this purge were published in Miami (Giuliano 1998); although the form of their presentation is sensationalist, the authenticity of these documents has been confirmed. They provide insight into the authoritarian methods with which the state and party apparatus acted against deviant voices within its own ranks.

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justified on the grounds of the political and ideological dangers associated with reforms, thus withdrawing them from any economic discussion.[26]

It should be emphasized that the de facto toleration of the informal economy was practically untouched by all these struggles. To be sure there are repeated raids, confiscations, and also arrests,[27] but there has never been an across the board attempt to establish "law and order" in the Cuban economy. As long as the Damocles sword of in- principle illegality hangs over it, no "social force" can arise out of the informal economy that might threaten the political status quo.

Cuba's "second economy" is thus far from stepping "from behind the scenes to center stage," as it was formulated in the title of the most thorough external analysis of the issue by Pérez-Lopez (1995). On the contrary, the political condition for its existence is precisely that it remains backstage. Nevertheless its becoming broader and a part of everyday life represents a structural transformation within a system which at one time had been based on an omnipresent state, responsible for practically all the concerns of the individual and society.[28]

While research on Eastern Europe increasingly takes into account, in addition to the great upheaval, the existence and effect of continuity, for Cuba the reverse is the point: to recognize the profound ruptures and changes behind the the great continuity at the political level. As in the post-socialist states of Eastern Europe, it is essential

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[26] For instance Raúl Valdés Vivó (1997: 4), the director of the Communist Party's main cadre training academy, writes in a programmatic article in "Granma": "The creation of seeds of a local bourgeoisie would bring in a social force which sooner or later would serve the counterrevolution."

[27] Cuba's attorney general Juan Escalona officially reported for 1995 a total of 541 raids against "black market kingpins" (macetas), leading to the confiscation of 208 automobiles, 121 motorcycles and 56 trucks, as well as 188 houses (Latin American Weekly Report, 25 January 1996).

[28] At the aforementioned seminar on "Cuba in the Light of other Transitions," Jorge Domínguez (1997: 13) put forward these changes (amongst others) as evidence for his thesis that Cuba was currently undergoing a change of regime, that is a transition from a "totalitarian" to an "authoritarian" system. In his reply Mesa-Lago (1997) referred to Domínguez's conceptual unclarity and argued that it was a question not of a "change of regime" but rather merely of a "change within the regime."

to think of the transformation in Cuba, too, not merely as “from plan to market” or to limit ones attention to the officially implemented reforms. Instead, the point is to take precisely the informalized mixed forms analytically into account – and not to see this informalization as a “defect” but rather as, given the prevailing political logic, a thoroughly functional construction, which in the case of socialist Cuba has contributed in considerable measure to the maintenance of political power.

2.3 “Democracy made in the USA”: the Cuban dilemma of the simultaneity of the political and the national question

A second key to the analysis of Cuba’s “non-transition” to Western-style democracy lies in the so-called "third level of simultaneity" which can be conceived as “the question of the nation”: the sovereignty and integrity of the nation-state, and, unavoidably bound up with this, the role of external political actors, above all of the relationship to the dominating hegemonic powers and the internal political questions which follow from this.

For Cuba this is of central importance. The fact that Cuba was left out of the classical transition research studies relating to Latin America was not least due to the external political ties of the socialist Caribbean state. For even if Cuba had never been a formal member of the Warsaw Pact, the missile crisis of 1961 had nevertheless drawn the border of the Cold War here: the USSR withdrew its missiles from the island, and in response the USA de facto recognized that Cuba was part of the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence. The consequence was a kind of implicit recognition of the Brezhnev Doctrine which also shaped social science research: as long as Cuba was an ally of the Soviet Union, it was assumed, the question of internal political democratization was not much of an issue, and Cuba thus was not a subject of investigation for transition research oriented toward the model of pluralistic multi-party democracy.

Consequently, after 1989 the widespread expectation of an imminent change in the Cuban political system was based not only on the disappearance of the trade relations that had prevailed until then and the economic crisis that was foreseen to result, but also on the fun-

damentally changed situation in external politics which for socialist Cuba meant the disappearance of its long standing hegemonial and protective power.

We have spoken of Cuba's "dual identity." Precisely at this point the inadequacy of seeing Cuba only from the perspective of its "socialist identity" and thus of explaining it solely in terms of the East-West conflict, becomes clear. The "Latin American identity" of Cuba, where the Revolution represents a project of national independence from the USA, remains of decisive importance. However massive Cuba's actual dependence on the Soviet Union was, the economic embargo and the continued confrontational politics of Washington allowed the alliance with the Soviet Union always to appear as a means for standing up to the insolence of the "real" hegemonial power – the USA.

In contrast to the transition processes in Latin America, in Cuba the question of the political system change is intrinsically bound up with the question of the nation; but in comparison with Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union it poses itself in reverse. The affirmation of the nation is in Cuba the trump card of the socialist government, not of the opposition. When Cuba lost its overseas ideological ally, nationalist legitimation did not need to be newly invented, but rather only to be more strongly emphasized. Marx was not taken down from the wall, but now José Martí, the hero of the Cuban independence struggle a century ago, moved to the center. Article 5 in the Constitution was changed: the Communist Party was no longer defined as the "vanguard of the working class" but instead as the "vanguard of the Cuban nation" (cf. Azcuy 1994: 48).

Already early after the 1959 Revolution the confrontation with the U.S. had become a central internal political argument of the Cuban government against its opponents. The great social conflict which the Revolution meant, with its confiscations and radical transformation of the economy and society, found its decisive vent in the emigration of the old elites to the U.S. Today around one million Cubans, Cuban-Americans, live in the U.S., above all in and around Miami. And both the conflict of the Cuban Revolution, exported to the U.S., and the long-standing hegemonial claims of the U.S. are combined today in Washington's Cuba policy. The result is that U.S. policy effectively stands in the way of and has until now hindered any democratization process in Cuba.

The Helms-Burton law, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1996, shows in exemplary form the degree to which Cuba's political question is actually bound up with the "national question."[29] This law turns the old property claims of the Cuban exiles into the central point of Washington's Cuba policy. Most Cubans who emigrated to the U.S. after 1959 later took up U.S. citizenship. The Helms-Burton Law – and precisely herein lies some of its most terrible political dynamite – elevates the claims of citizens who were expropriated as Cubans by a Cuban government according to Cuban law into an issue where the U.S. government intervenes in oder to "protect the property of U.S. citizens."

This construction of the Helms-Burton law, rendering U.S. citizenship taken up by Cuban exiles retroactively effective for claims on confiscated properties, conflicts conspicuously with international law, as well as with the previous legal practice of the U.S. itself.[30] On the political level it reinterprets the entire *internal* Cuban conflict of the Revolution post factum explicitly as an *international* conflict in which the revolutionary Cuban state stands not in opposition to Cuban citizens but in opposition to U.S. citizens and thereby the U.S. It is precisely in this internationalized construction that the property issue is now newly placed on the political agenda. U.S. policy could scarcely be more helpful to the strategy of the Cuban government to recast every internal conflict into the dichotomous friend-enemy mould of "Cuba versus the U.S." To the extent that this works, the Cuban leadership has until now quite successfully prevented any deviant political opinion from becoming legitimate and viable discourse in national politics.

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29 Named after its initiators, the Republican Senator Jesse Helms and the Democratic Representative Dan Burton. The official name is "Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996" (full text available on the internet at ftp://ftp.loc.gov/pub/thomas/c104/h927.enr.txt). For more on the Helms-Burton Law see IRELA 1996 as well as Hoffmann 1997b.

30 More than thirty years ago the "U.S. Foreign Claims Settlement Commission" pronounced: "The principle of international law that eligibility for compensation requires American nationality *at the time of loss* is so widely understood and universally accepted that citation of authority is hardly necessary" (quotation from Muse 1996: 6; emphasis added). Supplementing Muse the contributions of Altozano, Horn, and the Department for International Law of the OAS in IRELA 1996 offer a broad discussion of these juridical aspects.

In addition, in the Helms-Burton Law the U.S. stipulated a long and detailed catalogue of conditions for a democratic transition in Cuba. These include dissolving the state security apparatus (Sec. 205a3), announcing “free and fair” elections for a new government (Sec. 205a4), permitting privately owned media and telecommunication companies to operate (Sec. 205b2A) and taking “appropriate steps” to return nationalized property to U.S. citizens and entities or to provide “equitable” compensation (Sec. 205b2D). Washington's requirements even extend into personnel policies: “For the purposes of this Act, a transition government in Cuba is a government that ... does not include either Fidel Castro or Raúl Castro” (Sec. 205a7). From the point of view of Cuban functionaries, no matter how reform-oriented they might be, this catalogue of conditions describes less a transition government than an already executed and nearly complete change of power. And all this, note, is defined by U.S. law.

Moreover the Helms-Burton Law also stipulates further conditions and requirements for what the U.S. would recognize not only as a “transition government” but as a fully-fledged “democratically elected government.” Through this the law aims to dictate the cornerstones of Cuban politics far beyond the end of the Castro era. It thus takes up the heritage of the notorious Platt Amendment, anchored in the Cuban Constitution in 1901, which ceded to the U.S. the right of intervention and became the symbol for the semi-colonial dependence of the Cuban Republic.

This is unpalatable even for many Cubans who are resolute Castro opponents. “With the Helms-Burton Law Cuba would fall from the dictatorship of Fidel Castro into the tutelage of the U.S. Congress,” Alfredo Durán (1995: 3), formerly a participant in the Bay of Pigs invasion and currently one of the leaders of the moderate forces among the Cuban exiles, objected in a Senate hearing. “All the requirements in the law establish criteria for democracy in Cuba which only the Cuban people can have the right to determine.”

If U.S. Cuba policy professedly rests on analogies from Eastern Europe, it overlooks that in this case there will be no simple “repeat”. The Cuban leadership, too, has seen that Erich Honecker, Egon Krenz and many other members of the East German elite were subjected to legal proceedings or severe social discrimination, and the Cubans will have drawn their conclusions from this. Moreover, the implacability of the hardliners among the Cuban exiles, their political

practice marked by intolerance and the violent acts of Cuban exile extremists leads one to suppose that what in united Germany often bordered on unconstitutionality (cf. Wesel 1994: 37f, 145-161) might well be carried out in distinctly less civil forms in a post-Castro Cuba. Against this background, a "transition government" postulated by U.S. law and dependent on the literally reactionary section of Cuban exiles, is neither an attractive nor even feasible prospect for anyone in Cuba's political leadership (or anyone in a leading position anywhere in state, economy, or society).

Rhetorics apart, U.S. policy may be banking not so much on a "transition" as much more on a "breakdown" of government: not on a change but rather on a collapse of the system, preferably through a resignation of the Castro government forced by the population. However, in this, too, simple analogies with Eastern Europe may be misleading. Wherever in the upheavals in Eastern Europe it came to this kind of mobilization "from below", dissatisfaction with the status quo alone was not enough; it only became effective when it was combined with the prospect of a better future. Three factors were central to this hope: (1) the promise of an improvement in the standard of living by turning toward a market economy; (2) the association to a community associated with material well-being (the European Union for many Central Eastern European countries, or, as the most prominent example, the unification of the German Democratic Republic with the Federal Republic); and (3) "the radiant past" (Burawoy and Lucás 1992), that is: historic moments of the nation idealized to form a national "better self" to which one could supposedly "return."

These three factors are, of course, closely interrelated. In Cuba however, all three of these factors are almost inevitably connected with the Cuban exiles (and consequently also with the USA). As the old upper stratum, the majority of which left the country after 1959, the exiles embody the nostalgically exaggerated "Golden 1950s" of Cuba before the Revolution.[31] On the other hand the economic suc-

[31] Official Cuban historiography, according to which pre-revolutionary Cuba was feudal and backward and Havana was merely the "casino and bordello of the Yankees," stands diametrically opposed to this idealized image of the "Golden 50s" cultivated by the exile community. Against this black and white perspective Pérez-Stable (1993: 14-33) offers a balanced account of Cuba's dependent capitalist development before 1959.

cess story of the Cubans who emigrated to the U.S. offers manifest "proof" of the promise of a liberal capitalist economy (as well as of its opportunities for social advancement).[32] And finally the Cuban exiles are the living plea for the advantages of an association with a greater entity, that is, integration with the U.S.

However, to the extent to which these promises of a better future are associated with the exiled Cubans and the U.S., they at the same time present a conflict loaded with enormous (and justified) fears – not only for the present elite on the island but also for the population at large. The whole social conflict of the Cuban Revolution, which was "solved" after 1959 as emigration, threatens to return. This fear includes the Cuban exiles' claims to property and dominion (the question of residential property in Havana alone involves massive social conflict). No less important is the anxiety about a situation of political upheaval itself, because in this constellation "change" seems conceivable only as a violent confrontation. These promises of a better future are thereby politically blocked; they appear possible only in their individual form – as emigration to the USA -, but not as a collective social process in Cuba itself.

A strong emphasis on internal factors has characterized transition research on Latin America. The formative work of O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1986) founded this explicitly on the "uncertainty" of "rapidly changing constellations" and the "underdetermination" of transition processes whereby internal actors gain overwhelming importance. (Cf. O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 3ff.)

In the last ten years in Cuba the opposite has been the case: the internal constellations have not been rapidly changing, but rather not changing at all; conditions do not appear uncertain, but rather too certain, not under- but rather over-determined. And the Cuban case is an example of how external factors can come to have overwhelming importance for the question of transition. "Virtually every one of the East European transitions amounted to national liberation," Bunce (1995: 91) writes. In Cuba, where the Revolution led by Fidel Castro embodies the "national liberation," the reverse holds true.

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[32] Even if the initial conditions for the Cuban immigrants were much more favorable than those of other immigrant groups, their economic and social success remains remarkable. An outstanding insight is provided by the social history of the development of Miami of Portes and Stepick (1993).

Here it is the political "non-transition" which presents itself as protection of national independence; and any process of democratization – at least any peaceful and untraumatic one – seems only possible to the degree to which the quest for political change convincingly respects the national integrity obtained through the Revolution. The efforts of the U.S. and the Cuban exiles, to "export democracy" from outside through political confrontation and economic pressure, have had precisely the opposite effect: the stabilization of the system under attack despite internal crisis and loss of legitimation.

In the light of this analysis of the Cuban crisis and transformation process since 1986, in the following a brief panorama of the development of Brazil-Cuban relations in this period will be presented, and the challenges posed by the Cuban process for Brazil's foreign policy will be examined.

3. The Cuban transformation: new challenges for Brazil's foreign policy

3.1 Brazil's foreign policy in times of change

In the 1990s, and largely connected with the rise of Fernando Henrique Cardoso first as minister of foreign relations, and then as President of the Republic, many observers have come to identify a "new foreign policy" in Brazil. One aspect, certainly, has been that the Brazilian government has strongly underscored the international interests and responsibilities of Brazil: "Mas é importante reconhecer que o Brasil não é um país de responsabilidades e interesses internacionais limitados. Essas responsabilidades e esses interesses ultrapassam as nossas fronteiras imediatas" (Cardoso 1994: 241).[33]

These "greater Brazilian interests" beyond the countries' borders have found their foremost expression in the dynamic development of the Mercosul integration scheme. In this, Brasil is not only the biggest

[33] For an outline of the Itamaraty's vision of Brazil in the world context see Lampreia 1995.

partner but also has proven to be the driving force and leading voice. On a second level, Brazil's projection and interests have gone beyond the borders of the Mercosur. Although the Brazilian government has constantly denied any hegemonic ambitions towards its neighboring countries[34], Brazil has increasingly acquired the role of being seen internationally as *primus inter pares* and the leading nation of Latin America. In recent years this has become very evident, for instance in the discussions about a possible increase in the number of permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, with Brazil widely being seen as the "natural representative" of Latin America.

At the same time, Brazil's foreign policy has increasingly stressed its commitment to "Western values" and the universal promotion of democracy (Cardoso 1994: 238). In international forums, such as the Rio Group, Brazil has many times raised its voice in this sense[35]. Motivated by signs of political crisis in Paraguay, Brazil has also been active in introducing a democratic clause to the Mercosul treaties. This commitment to "Western values" notably includes not only representative democracy and human rights but also "the universalizaton of the values of the market economy" (Cardoso 1994: 242). A closer relationship with the United States is also a declared policy goal of this new Brazilian foreign policy (Cardoso 1994: 241).

At the same time, the reintegration of Cuba into Latin American and hemispheric organizations and integration schemes is a longstanding foreign policy goal of the Brazilian government. And ever since the resumption of full diplomatic relations in June 1986, Brazil has had an active policy towards Cuba that openly ran up against the above described U.S. policy of isolation and cold war type confrontation with the island. Notwithstanding ups and downs in bilateral relations, this basic decision for a "normalization" of bilateral relations and a policy of "constructive commitment" has been followed by all Brazilian governments since then. And a clear stand against the U.S. embargo and the up-grading of the economic sanctions against Cuba – through the Torricelli law of 1992 and the Helms-Burton law of

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34 In this sense see also the argument of Calcagnotto 1998.

35 For a compilation of documents referring to this see Grupo de Rio 1995.

1996 – has been an essential part of Brazil's "mature relationship" (Cardoso 1994: 239) with the United States.

Given the analysis of the Cuban transformation process presented in part 2, it should be clear from this brief outline of Brazil's foreign policy interests, that the "Cuban case" raises a number of challenges for Brazilian foreign policy-making. In this light the Brazilian policy towards Cuba and the bilateral relations between the two countries since 1986 will be briefly described in the following.

3.2 The development of bilateral political relations since 1986

The resumption of diplomatic relations in June 1986, much earlier than most countries of the region and precisely at the onset of the described crisis in Cuba, certainly marked a milestone in Brazilian-Cuban relations. Since then, a number of important accords and memorandums of understanding have been signed. These include, amongst others, periodic meetings between diplomats of the two countries and the creation of an ad-hoc commission on the revision of the legal instruments between Cuba and Brazil (both 18.3.1987); an agreement on cultural and educational cooperation (29.4.89) and on scientific and technical cooperation (18.3.1987), both variously amended in later agreements; and a number of agreements on economic issues, such as the trade accord (16.10.1989), the important understanding on the Cuban debt with Brazil (4.3.1994), and the accord on promotion and reciprocal protection of foreign investments (26.6.1997; for a complete list of the bilateral accords see Annex I.) This was accompanied at times by gestures of humanitarian aid such as after the devastation wrought by hurricane "Lili" in Cuba in 1997, when Brazil decided to send 20 million tons of foodstuffs to the island.

These bilateral accords have laid solid grounds for a sound bilateral relationship between Cuba and Brazil. It is important to see that this growing number of political agreements was developed in spite of the crisis situation in Cuba. For instance, the commercial accord was signed in October 1989, that is at a time when the upheavals in Eastern Europe were reaching their climax and many expected so-

cialist Cuba to be “the next domino to fall”. The signing of the commercial accord was thus regarded by Cuba as a valuable “vote of confidence” in difficult times. In the rhetoric of Fidel Castro: “We who have huge enemies, know to appreciate a huge friend.”[36]

Important, too, were the high-level visits of the heads of state and foreign ministers all through these years. Notwithstanding certain setbacks, such as the cancellation of the planned visit of then foreign minister Francisco Rezek to Cuba in 1991[37], the top-level contacts remain much more numerous and continuous than those Cuba has with other Latin American countries. Most prominently they have included various visits by Fidel Castro to Brazil, such as on the occasion of the inauguration of Collor de Mello as Brazilian President in 1990 (cf. Castro 1990) or the United Nations Environment Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where the Cuban head of state received an extremely warm welcome from large sections of the Brazilian population.

Finally, with regard to the domestic side of this foreign policy issue, it may be noted that the question of Brazil’s relations to Cuba is no longer an issue that closely reflects the political and party cleavages within Brazil. The “Parlamentary Group for Friendship with Cuba” includes members from the whole political spectrum, from left to right.

3.3 Economic and commercial perspectives

The resumption of diplomatic relations and, since then, the signing of fundamental agreements on trade, investment and cooperation laid the foundation for a normalization of Brazilian-Cuban economic relations. Of special importance in this respect has been the understanding on Cuba’s US$ 40m hard currency debt with Brazil in 1994, an issue that is still presenting a major obstacle to trade relations in many other countries.

Still, the Cuban economy is very small compared to the Brazilian, and many of the exagerated hopes associated with Cuban-Brazilian

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[36] Cf. Juventud Rebelde, 14.6.1992, p.1

[37] Despite these strains, during the Ibero-American summit in Guadalajara in July 1991, for instance, the then Brazilian President Collor was one of the few Latin American heads of state to hold a private meeting with Fidel Castro.

trade had to give way to a more sober reality. Trade with Cuba has never amounted to more than 0.35% of total Brazilian foreign trade. (For statistical data on Brazilian-Cuban trade relations see Annex 2.)

In the first years after the resumption of diplomatic relations, Brazilian exports to Cuba expanded rapidly, until 1990, when the severe economic crisis in Cuba greatly limited the island's import capacity, reducing Brazilian exports from US$ 84.5bn in 1990 to US$ 17.2bn, a mere fifth, two years later. Above all, the expansion of the import-dependent dollar sectors in the Cuban economy since 1993, however, allowed for a gradual increase in Brazilian exports to Cuba, reaching an estimated US$ 49.6bn, mostly products of the automobile and mechanical engineering industries and foodstuffs (see Annex II, Table 3).

Brazilian imports from Cuba show a very unstable development, the main product imported (64% of total imports in 1997) being pharmaceutical products – to be more precise, the import of a large quantity of vaccinations against meningitis by a single institution on a non-regular basis[38].

Foreign direct investment by Brazilian companies in Cuba has been of little significance so far (cf. CEPAL 1997, Table A 25). Also, Brazilian participation in the booming Cuban tourism industry has been steadily growing, but with 13,000 tourists in 1997 still remained low[39]. However Cuba's growing health tourism sector deserves special attention, its prime marketing target being the Latin American middle classes. Benefiting from the high educational standard of Cuba's doctors and medical workers, special tourist hospitals have been set up. Unlike the island's general medical system, they are not lacking in pharmaceuticals or equipment. They offer good service, paid for in U.S. dollars, at rates significantly lower than much of the continent's private health system[40].

Despite these modest results up to now, within the Brazilian business community there is considerable interest in Cuba. Also, the

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38 Other sources even give a figure of 72.2% of total imports for the import of vaccinations by "Razão Social Não Consta do Cadastro" (COMEX, cited by Confederaçao Nacional da Indústria 1998, p. 31).

39 Source: Dirección Nacional de Inmigración, Cuba (mimeo)

40 No statistical data on the number of Brazilians participating in this kind of tourism was available.

Brazilian Ambassador in Cuba, Alvaro Gurgel de Alencar, sees great potential for the expansion of bilateral trade[41]. In 1998 a new initiative was headed by the Confederação Nacional da Indústria. First, a Brazilian business delegation visited Cuba, then a few months later a high-level Cuban delegation held "Seminars on Commercial Opportunities with Cuba" in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, and other cities.

Indeed, this renewed interest does not seem unfounded. Although there is, as has been shown in part 2, no general transformation to a formalized market economy under way, Cuba's state sector is increasingly adapting capitalist methods, and the dollar sectors within the socialist economy have expanded greatly over the last few years, being nourished not only by the tourist demand but, since the legalization of the U.S. dollar in 1993, in rapidly increasing form by the remittances from Cubans abroad (cf. Monreal 1998). In Cuba itself, for many state or joint-venture enterprises production for these dollar zones in the national economy has come to be known by the expression "exportaciones en fronteras" (exports within the countries' borders). This hard currency market within Cuba could result in an attractive market for Brazilian exports that should not be underestimated. And more traditional fields of economic activity also appear attractive: Petrobrás recently signed an exploration and production contract for offshore oil exploration in Cuba (Financial Times, London, Nov 20 1998).

An important new development has been Brazilian technical assistance in the Cuban Economic Reform Program. In this, the Brazilian IPEA cooperates with the Cuban Instituto Nacional de Investigación Económica (INIE) on the promotion of bilateral economic integration. Other partners of official Brazilian technical assistance include the Cuban Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning, the Ministry of Finance and Prices and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. In addition, in March 1998 a technical mission from Cuba's Central Bank was invited on a 12-day visit to Brasilia to learn on the spot from the practice of Brazil's Central Bank.

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[41] Interview with the author in Havana, 26.2.1998

3.4 The dynamics of Brazilian-Cuban social and cultural relations

Since the resumption of diplomatic relations in 1986, many of the social and cultural relations maintained or cultivated in the time before under adverse circumstances, could resurface and expand. It is not possible to list the wide range of activities, meetings and exchange programs in this paper. The annual film festival in Havana is as much an important event for Brazil's filmmakers as is Havana's biennale for painters and artists. And when the Cuban theatre company Buendía presents "Otra Tempestad," their award-winning adaptation of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," in Brazil, it can be sure to find an interested audience.

Not to be forgotten is the wide range of contacts in the field of sport which in recent years have been steadily increasing. Sporting contacts have even developed new forms such as the "export" of Cuban athletes; in early 1999 serious talks were started between the Cuban and the Brazilian Volleyball Federation to have the players of Cuba's national team play in Brazilian teams in the Brazilian national championship tournament of 1999/2000 (cf. O Globo 26.2.99).

Certainly the greatest Brazilian impact on the general Cuban population has been the Brazilian telenovelas. Their popularity with the island's television audiences has been simply stunning. And they have provided the Cuban public not only with entertainment but even with new "role models" for the new times. In this sense it is most significant that in Cuba small private restaurants, legalized in 1995, have been given the nickname "paladar" – after a Brazilian telenovela, where the female protagonist starts a small informal business by that name, eventually converting it into a whole chain of restaurants, a dream story of the promise of capitalism.

Last but not least it should be pointed out that many places in Brazil have some sort of solidarity or friendship-with-Cuba groups. As one practical example of how this can turn into a mutually beneficial two-way-solidarity, the case of the city of Niterói's fight against the resurgence of the dengue fever epidemic in March 1998 may be cited. Investigators from Niterói went to Cuba, Cuban scientists came to Niterói, and as a result of their cooperation they discovered a new

type of larvicide to combat the plague (cf. Jornal do Brasil, 29.3.1998, under the headline “Soluçao Cubana”).

3.5 Possibilities and dilemmas of Cuba’s reintegration into regional and hemispheric institutions

Parallel to the reestablishment and development of the bilateral relations with Cuba, constant Brazilian diplomatic efforts have been directed towards the reintegration of Cuba into regional, Latin American or hemispheric institutions. The latter, for obvious reasons, is the most difficult: since hemispheric institutions include the USA, Washington, following its policy of isolation of Cuba, is certain to block any initiative towards rapprochement or reintegration of Cuba[42].

The most prominent organisation of this type is the Organization of American States (OAS), from which Cuba was expelled at the height of the Cold War. Cuba’s reintegration is a stated goal of the organization, and Latin American presidents or politicians have often raised the issue in one way or the other. However, the stubborn “no” from Washington is not the only obstacle to this. The second is in principle shared by most Latin American governments, and certainly by the Brazilian one – the commitment to pluralist and representative democracy as a condition for membership, as explicitly formulated in the resolution of the organization’s 21st meeting in Santiago de Chile in 1991, and later incorporated into Chapter II of the OAS Charter, giving it permanent and binding character.

It must be added that this resolution has not only been “just a piece of paper”, but that the OAS member states have put it into practice on various occasions. The clause was invoked for the first time with the coup d’état against the Aristide government in Haiti in 1991; in 1992 it was invoked in Peru in the case of Fujimori’s “autogolpe”; in Guatemala in 1993, and more recently, in the case of Paraguay. In all these cases, the OAS states acted unitedly in favor of preserving democratic order in a member country, often in open confrontation with that country’s de facto government. These experiences have

[42] This attitude has been codified by law as obligatory for the U.S. executive through the Helms-Burton law of 1996.

greatly enhanced the confidence in the mechanisms approved in Santiago; they have established as practice the commitment of Latin American countries to put, in the case of OAS member states, the values of political democracy above the principle of non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs (cf. Duval 1998: 330f).

Given the binding character of this democratic clause in the OAS Charter, even if it were not for the continuing U.S. cold war policy versus Cuba, the issue of Cuba's full reintegration into the OAS is at present hardly imaginable without substantial political changes in Cuba. However, differentiated and gradualist approaches in relation to Cuba could be thought of. Effectively, in the first half of 1998 there were reports of an initiative by the Canadian government to advance the issue of Cuba's rapprochement with the OAS, supposedly backed by Brazil, Colombia and Mexico (IRELA 1998, p. 6).

In an interview in March 1998, the head of the OAS Department in the Brazilian foreign ministry, Conselheiro Douglas Vasconcellos, did not confirm this, but he did stress his position that the OAS should at least start processes of rapprochement with Cuba, and that these negotiations should begin with the current government – suggesting, too, that Brazil could take a leading role in this: "We could not afford *not* to have a strong protagonism" [43]. He insisted however, that there would have to be at least "some changes" on the part of the Cubans – in order to make progress and "not to satisfy the U.S., but the prevailing structures ot the OAS".

However, any perspective of gradual rapprochement with Cuba remains essentially theoretical all the while the U.S. power of veto is firmly in place. Given this deadlock situation within the OAS, other forums such as the Ibero-American summit meetings have come to play a more dynamic role in the Latin American countries' desire to bring Cuba – including its present government – back into the regional international scene. Together with summit meetings by the United Nations and its sub-organizations, these Ibero-American summits have provided the main stage for Fidel Castro's "new internationalism" of friendly reinsertion into the world diplomatic scene. Constructed in a similar way to the Ibero-American summit meetings is the European-Latin American summit to be celebrated in Rio de

[43] Interview with the author in Brasilia, 18 March 1998.

Janeiro in June 1999. (The counterpoint to these initiatives is the U.S.-initiated “Summit of the Americas”, first held in Miami in December 1994, from which Cuba is explicitly excluded.)

The VI Ibero-American summit in Viña del Mar in November 1996 held a political surprise. The summit passed, as was to be expected, a resolution strongly condemning the Helms-Burton law. Surprising, and not only in their form, were also the various initiatives to urge the Cuban government to democratize, as well as the defense Fidel Castro gave in his speech, describing the Cuban one-party-system as a true grassroots democracy far superior to the “representative democracy” of other Latin American countries. A spectacular turnaround, however, came when in the final document all participants – including Fidel Castro – committed themselves to a common definition of democracy, explicitly comprising political pluralism and unconditional respect for the individual civil and human rights[44].

Certainly, the Ibero-American summit meetings have no organisational structure comparable with the OAS, and concrete and binding steps have not followed from the Cuban pledge to pluralism in the Viña del Mar declaration. However, it was the first such pledge ever made by Fidel Castro since the early years of the Revolution, and inside and outside of Cuba critics or opponents of the government have compared it to the Helsinki accords signed by the socialist governments of Eastern Europe, which had such central value as reference point for opposition movements there.

In November 1999 Cuba’s diplomatic rapprochement with Latin America will be highlighted when the Ninth Ibero-American Summit is held in Havana. However, the Havana summit meeting will also highlight the problems and conflicts involved in this process – to the extent that some Latin American governments have been “thinking aloud” of boycotting the Havana summit or changing its modalities.

Recent developments in Cuba have led to a severe strain in Cuba’s relations with the other countries of the hemisphere, including many that have been longstanding opponents of the U.S. government’s policy of economic sanctions and political isolation. Indeed, in the first months of 1999 the political climate in Cuba has substantially

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[44] For an interesting account of the more detailed circumstances see Font 1998, 243ff.

worsened. A tough new anti-opposition law was passed, the penal code was stiffened, massive police patrolling was introduced in Havana, two Salvadorean citizens accused of terrorism were sentenced to death, and – the event which had perhaps the biggest impact – a trial was staged against four non-violent dissidents, who were sentenced to 3- to 5-year prison terms.

Internationally these measures have been widely criticized. In Brazil, 13 delegates of the "Workers Party" (PT), traditionally strongly sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution, urged the country's foreign ministry to protest to the Cuban government, and the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission adopted a corresponding resolution unanimously. The Canadian government, which has a longstanding policy of "constructive engagement" with Cuba, has announced a review of "all our bilateral activities". Uruguay has called for the United Nations Human Rights Commission to condemn Cuba. The Salvadorean government did not attend the preparatory meeting in April for November's Ibero-American Summit because of the death sentences passed on the two Salvadorean citizens; at the preparatory meeting Nicaragua announced that its president had decided not to attend the summit meeting because of the lack of democratic progress on the island. Hosting the Ninth Ibero-American summit, it seems, is for Cuba far from being an easy diplomatic triumph but hard work.

As has been shown in part 2, the external and hard-currency sectors of the Cuban economy have experienced the most dynamic development within the Cuban transformation process, whereas changes in the domestic economy have been much more timid and limited, and much more limited still the changes that can be interpreted as tending towards a democratization of the political system. Correspondingly, initiatives for integration into primarily politically-defined organizations or associations have a much more difficult time than primarily economic associations (although some of these, too, have clauses on democracy as a condition for membership, as is the case of the Mercosul).

So doing the (relatively) easy things first, in economic integration schemes Cuba has advanced significantly in recent years. For instance, Cuba was a founding member of the Association of Caribbean States (ASC), founded in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) on 24 July 1994. The Caribbean was also a central focus of Cuba's diplomatic efforts in the following year, culminating with a widely ac-

claimed trip by Fidel Castro to a number of the islands and states of the region in 1998, at the end of which the 15 heads of state of the CARICOM regional integration scheme announced that they will be working towards “Cuba becoming an active member endowed with full rights before the year 2000”.

On the wider level of continental integration, Cuba has held observer status in the Latin American Association for Integration, ALADI, since 1986. Here no political conditions for membership have ever been formulated. And in spite of its prevailing state-socialist economic system, in November 1998 Cuba was admitted as a full member of ALADI (afp, 6 Nov 1998).

In the international discussion on attaching democratic conditions to political or economic relations, the question has often been raised whether democracy should be defined *as* a precondition for establishing relations or if, in contrast, diplomatic and commercial ties should be fostered precisely in order to promote democratization. Looking at the case of Cuba from a Brazilian point of view, this question presents itself in a particular form. For in all institutions or organizations where the United States has decisive influence (and besides the OAS this includes the IDB, the World Bank and the IMF, in other words most of the financially powerful institutions), Cuba is facing the first option – democracy as a precondition, and thus exclusion – in a most severe form. We should recall here the list of “conditions for democracy” formulated in the Helms-Burton law, as described in part 2 of this study.

Facing this fact, for the foreign policy of Brazil (or any other country, for that matter) the question raised above is only theoretically an either-or option; in practical terms it translates into the question of maintaining at least a certain mix of these two options in regard to Cuba by using at least part of those organizations, where integration is possible, for the second alternative of fostering relations in order to promote processes of democratization through cooperation, or only soft conditions, betting on an underlying democratic “lock-in effect”. Following the argument developed in part 2, that the polarization between the USA and Cuba is one of the central obstacles to political change in Cuba, such de-polarizing measures should be strongly recommended as a counterweight. Needless to say: In all integration schemes involving Latin America, without doubt, Brazil’s stand will weigh heavily.

Finally it may be noted that from the academic field of political and economic science, there has been a renewed and lively discussion on the reintegration of Cuba into Latin America and the hemisphere. A remarkable initiative has been launched by the "Cuba Project" directed by Mauricio A. Font at Queens College, City University of New York. It is aimed at bringing together academics and political decision-makers of key countries involved. In May of 1997, a high-level symposium was held in Santiago de Chile[45]; in the fall of 1998 – with the co-sponsorship of the Institute for European-Latin American Relations (IRELA, Madrid) – a similar meeting was held in New York; and for 1999 a high-level symposium on the issue is planned in Brazil. This should be an excellent opportunity to discuss the Brazilian role in Cuba's reintegration into the continent with broad participation of the national and international academic and political community.

3.6 Promoting democracy in Cuba: Brazil's turn to "outspoken language"

At the beginning of 1998, in the Brazilian foreign ministry the impression had gained ground that in terms of political democratization in Cuba there had been "a virtual standstill"[46].Despite good bilateral relations and expanding cooperation and exchange in many areas, a sense of frustration prevailed over the complete failure of the Cuban government to show at least gestures towards the commitment to democracy and pluralism signed in Viña del Mar two years before. With the ongoing confrontation policy from the United States as expressed in the Helms-Burton law and no signs of flexibility on the Cuban part, both sides were seen as "in their barracks", leaving little room for more active engagement of Brazil or the Rio Group. Cuba, as a result, was considered "not so high on our agenda". The question whether Brazil would consider playing a role in any kind of politi-

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45 The contributions to the conference were published in Álamos et al. 1997, cited in this study. Further information on the Queens College Cuba Project can be found on the Internet under: http://www.soc.qc.edu/procuba.

46 On the basis of interviews conducted with officials of the foreign ministry in Brasilia in March 1998.

cal transition in Cuba was answered with: “A clear ‘No’ – that’s the orientation we have”.

A similar attitude was also conveyed by Brazil’s ambassador in Cuba[47]. Asked about a possible role for Brazil as mediator in the conflict between Cuba and the USA the answer, here too, was a clear ‘no’: “In reality, there is no room for this type of mediation.” With the principle of the promotion of democracy conflicting with the principle of Cuba’s sovereignty and non-interference in another country’s internal affairs, Ambassador Gurgel de Alencar clearly saw the latter being the dominant one for Brazil’s policy towards Cuba.

Given this background, the declarations of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso during the “II Summit of the Americas” in April 1998 in Santiago de Chile, strongly demanding steps towards democratization, the adoption of a multi-party system and the liberation of political prisoners in Cuba, marked a notable change of tone in Cuban-Brazilian relations that came as somewhat of a surprise to many.

However, that “Brasil muda discurso e cobra democracia em Cuba”, as then titled by the Brazilian press (O Globo, 20.4.1998), was underscored in the visit of Brazil’s foreign minister, Luiz Felipe Lampreia, to Cuba in May 1998. Minister Lampreia not only met with Havana’s archbishop Jaime Ortega but symbolically also staged a meeting with the Island’s most prominent dissident, the president of the Cuban Commission for National Reconciliation and Human Rights, Elizardo Sánchez – being this the first time in recent years that a Latin American minister publicly sought talks with the domestic opposition to Castro’s government during an official visit to the island.

As was to be expected, the Cuban reaction to Lampreia’s meeting with dissident Elizardo Sánchez was not one of enthusiasm. The high-level visit proceeded with Lampreia meeting his Cuban counterpart Roberto Robaina and National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón, a US$ 15m loan by Brazil for the import of foodstuffs by Cuba was agreed and accords on cultural and economic cooperation were signed (Folha de São Paulo, 28.5.98). However, in a clear sig-

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[47] Interview with Ambassador Alvaro Gurgel de Alencar, 26.2.1998 in Havana.

nal of diplomatic "retaliation", Cuba cancelled the planned meeting of Lampreia with President Fidel Castro.

It should be noted that Lampreia's visit to Cuba came as part of a complex diplomatic initiative. First, Lampreia had met with Bill Clinton's special representative on hemispheric affairs, Thomas McLarty, in Washington, from where he went on to meet with leaders of the Cuban exile community in Miami, followed by a visit to the Vatican to obtain from Pope John Paul II first-hand information on his recent – and very successful, it may be added – visit to Cuba in February 1998. Right after the stay in Cuba Lampreia went on to participate in the 28th OAS meeting in Caracas and from there he travelled once again to the U.S. to meet President Clinton in Camp David, Cuba being a subject of discussion on both occasions (cf. Gazeta Mercantil, 3.6.98, p. A-5). This extensive program provoked the Brazilian press to write: "Poucas viagens de um chanceler brasileiro foram preparadas com tanto carinho como essa", deducing with that this was not just a regular high-level visit with the Cuban authorities, but that "Brasil quer influir na transição pós-Fidel" (Folha de São Paulo, 24.5.98)[48].

In his talks with the Cuban authorities Lampreia stressed that the adoption of pluralist democracy is a pre-condition for Cuba's "return to the American family", making clear that without democratic progress on the island Brazil is not willing to back Cuba's reintegration into the OAS. After his visit he underscored the "complete lack of any disposal towards dialogue" on human rights issues on the part of the Cuban authorities. In the ensuing meeting of the OAS in Caracas, the Brazilian minister raised the tone once again, calling upon Cuba to end its "delirio solitario".

It is too early to evaluate the impact of this change of tone on Brazilian-Cuban relations. However, Fidel Castro's aforementioned stopover on the way to South Africa in August 1998, meeting first

[48] Although Lampreia made a point of meeting with Pope John Paul II before travelling to Cuba, the Brazilian foreign minister was far from following the diplomatic strategy the Vatican had employed during the Pope's visit in February. Lampreia's direct approach and outspoken language against the Castro government's policy on human rights and democratic liberties stand in obvious contrast to the Pope's careful, often metaphorical language and his discreet diplomacy, in, for instance, asking behind closed doors for the amnesty of a non-public list of political prisoners.

with Senador Antonio Carlos Magalhães and then, on the way back, for a friendly two-hour talk with President Cardoso on the complexities of the world economy, made it clear that bilateral relations are still far from frosty.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

Since the resumption of diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1986, earlier than most other Latin American countries, Brazil has maintained good relations with Cuba, based on mutual respect. In addition to this, Brazil has established itself as the continent's most vocal actor on the international political scene, individually and within the framework of the Mercosul and the Rio Group. This combination, plus the economic weight of the country, has turned Brazil into a preferred diplomatic partner for the government in Havana.

For Latin America, Cuba remains an unresolved issue all the while the reintegration of the island into the region's organizations cannot be achieved. It is to be hoped that Brazil can use its high foreign-policy standing and the great respect it commands on both sides of the conflict to counteract in some degree the destructive cold war confrontation between Cuba and the USA, which is holding the country in the polarized position of either defending unconditionally the Castro government or alternatively having a U.S.-imposed democracy with openly colonial attitudes, as prescribed by the Helms-Burton law. In a sort of combined effort, both the government in Washington and that in Havana have until now been effectively preventing any third position or moderate alternative from gaining ground and viability. But as long as this U.S.-Cuban polarization persists, a traumatic and violent confrontation in Cuba remains a seriously threatening prospect. Only by overcoming it can a peaceful and civil process of political democratization, one which takes place in a dignified way and is led from within the island, become a realistic prospect.

Active engagement of the international community is therefore a necessity. Given the deadlock in U.S.-Cuban relations it is essential that valid international partners offer alternative communication channels to turn to. In this sense, Latin America can have a privileged role to play, and particularly Brazil.

There is a good model for this form of indirect diplomacy: In August 1994, at the height of the Cuban *balsero* refugee crisis and the acute climate of confrontation with the USA, the Cuban government announced the signing of the Tlatelolco treaty on nuclear non-proliferation – a step long demanded by the U.S. government and as long rejected by Fidel Castro. Given the timing, it seems evident that the main intended receiver of this gesture was Washington. However, the announcement was made by Cuba's foreign minister Roberto Robaina during a visit to Brazil, and explained explicitly as a contribution Cuba is ready to make to the cause of Latin American unity.

This type of unspectacular, silent diplomacy may be the most important and most far-reaching contribution Latin American and Brazilian foreign policy can make to the democratization of Cuba: to continuously work on keeping open *possibilities* for an alternative to the dichotomous polarization of "With Fidel or with the Yankees". This includes working on and promoting credible and viable perspectives for the present-day Cuban elite for a possible "day after", reducing their (well-founded) fear of change; in this, cooperation programs, scholarships, academic and cultural exchange can be very helpful. But it also includes a strong commitment to the sovereignty of the Cuban nation, even if this involves a certain degree of confrontation with the United States.

Moreover, it includes working on credible and solid mechanisms that can guarantee that, if it ever comes to a situation of political change, this change will occur in civil and law-abiding form, preventing arbitrary revenge and respecting the properties and biographies of those on the island. If at some point in time a sovereign democratic reform process is to gain momentum in Cuba, it will be crucial for it to find sufficient and sufficiently strong national and international support to resist the formidable pressures, threats and interference it will no doubt encounter.

However, from the above analysis of the Cuban transformation process something else also follows: that the most probable prospect at the moment is that the present political system will persist for some time to come. Against this background it should be a general guideline for Brazil's foreign policy to work in constructive ways to foster gradual changes; to think of democratization as a gradual, incremental process and not only as a "transition to" kind of idea, and to accept this perspective as a valuable and substantial policy goal.

In its cooperation with Cuba, in quite a number of projects Brazil seems to be following a similar line of thought, and these approaches certainly can and should be much extended.

This requires much patience, and it will often be a frustrating undertaking, when time and time again areas of discussion are closed or when possibilities for democratic advances are rejected by either one of the *backs suecos* in the game, by the government in Washington or by that of Havana.

There is, indeed, much reason for pessimism; however, there is no convincing alternative but to try and try again. Somehow, our initial anecdote may hold a touch of optimism. In fact Garrincha, the legendary Brazilian soccer star, back in 1958, did not get to score against the *back sueco*.

But in the end Brazil won the match against Sweden by 5 goals to 2, and became triumphant world champions.

Annex I:

List of international agreements between Brazil and Cuba

Annex II:

Statistical data on Brazilian-Cuban trade relations

Table 1

Table 2

Table 3

Table 4

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