

THE SOVIETIZATION PERIOD: COLD WAR POLITICAL RHETORIC AND THE SOVIET-  
CUBAN ALLIANCE

by

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(Under the Direction of Joseph Kellner)

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the Sovietization Period of Cuba's history and asks the questions, what is the status of Sovietization historiography and how was it interpreted during the Cold War? The research method is a comparative analysis of how the ideologically opposed anti-communist Cuban exiles and pro-communist Cuban government narrated this transformative moment. This comparative framework is supplemented by a study of the historiography and an overview of the Sovietization Period. The study concludes that both camps framed Sovietization for their respective audiences. Exiled ideologues viewed Sovietization as a symbol of Fidel Castro's despotism and as a catalyst for his future downfall. The Cuban government interpreted the period as an example of fully realized socialist internationalism and vanguardism. These principles were used to frame Sovietization for the Soviet state and the Cuban people respectively. This study concludes that the historiography must be expanded to better understand this period.

INDEX WORDS: Cuba, Soviet Union, Sovietization, Cold War, Carlos Alberto Montaner, Cuban exiles, Granma

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DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad: *A Luta Continua*

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*UN JOUR JE SERAI DE RETOUR PRÈS DE TOI*

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## INTRODUCTION AND THESIS STATEMENT

In the spring of 1982 Carlos Alberto Montaner, the renowned journalist and anti-Castro activist, wrote an article for the newspaper *Agencia Latino America* titled “Is Fidel Castro Crazy?” Montaner began his career as an anti-Castro ideologue upon his exile from Cuba in the 1960s. In one of his most scathing critiques of Fidel Castro’s regime he accused the communist leader of severe paranoia, pathological distrust, and possessing delusion about the world around him. Montaner stated that the source of Castro’s mental issues was the United States. The journalist chided the Cuban president and called him an unhinged tyrant for accusing the CIA of deploying Blue Mold to sabotage Cuba’s agricultural yield. He wrote that Castro’s accusations showed that he had succumbed to a madness so extreme that other socialist demagogues distanced themselves from him. Montaner concluded that Castro’s psychotic personality was not new and it terrified millions of Cubans.<sup>1</sup>

Montaner’s article was not an ordinary salvo in his long-running political conflict against the Cuban government. Instead, it demonstrates how the Cold War shaped the globe into a multipolar ideological struggle. Montaner’s tirade against Castro was a part of a wider political conflict that was fought on the real battlefields of the global south and in the metaphorical battlefields of the writer’s room. These struggles between political narratives focused on how to characterize the economic models of the Soviet Bloc and its allies. “Is Fidel Castro Crazy?” specifically reflected the effort to characterize Cuban socialism. This paper is about the

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Alberto Montaner, “¿Esta Loco Fidel Castro?,” 1982, 1-2, box 23, Artículos CAM A Quemarropa 1982, Carlos Alberto Montaner Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto. G Richter Library, Miami.

Sovietization Period of Cuba's history and how it was interpreted by the island's anti-communist exiles and government. Sovietization was a moment of rectification where Cuba deepened its alliance with the Soviet Union and reformed its planned economy. The period ranged from 1970 to 1980 and continued to influence Cuban politics into the 1990s. The ideological camps included in this paper were not in direct dialogue with each other. However, their respective intellectual labors put them in the position of narrating Sovietization for their audiences.

The first chapter of this paper argues that Sovietization is an understudied topic in Cuban and Cold War historiography. This must be rectified in order to better understand the period's impact on Cuba's government and the Soviet-Cuban alliance. The second chapter of this paper states that Sovietization was an integral moment in Cuba's socialist history. The reforms introduced during this period reshaped the island's domestic and foreign policies, which ultimately stabilized its economy. The third chapter of this paper argues that the Sovietization Period was pivotal for anti-communist Cuban exiles and the Cuban government itself, both of whom sought to narrate the period in order to define and affirm their positions to their respective bases.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SOVIETIZATION

Secondary literature solely dedicated to Sovietization is sparse and the majority of existing discourse about the period revolves around its impact on the Cold War. Sovietization historiography began with Carmelo Mesa-Lago's 1973 article "The Sovietization of the Cuban Revolution: Its Consequences for the Western Hemisphere". Mesa-Lago argues that Cuba adjusted its ideological foundation to be subservient to the Soviet Union after the 1970 Zafra, in which the government attempted and failed to harvest a record 10 million tons of sugar in a single season. This ideological realignment resulted in the Cuban government moving away from what Mesa-Lago defined as the radical far left "Sino-Guevarism" of the previous decade. Castro instead promoted pro-Soviet politicians into leading government positions in an effort to embrace less radical Soviet socialism.<sup>2</sup> Mesa-Lago's argument became the basis of what the discourse calls the "Sovietization Thesis". Mesa-Lago's interpretation of Sovietization was contested by Frank Fitzgerald's 1987 article "The 'Sovietization of Cuba Thesis' Revisited". He concludes that the Sovietization Thesis overstated Cuba's supposed surrogate status. The article pointed in particular to the fact that Cuba's political interests in Africa during the mid-1970s were independent from the Soviet Union's.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "The Sovietization of the Cuban Revolution: Its Consequences for the Western Hemisphere," *World Affairs* 136, no. 1 (Summer 1973): 3-6, <https://jstor.org/stable/20671498>.

<sup>3</sup> Frank T. Fitzgerald, "The 'Sovietization of Cuba Thesis' Revisited," *Science & Society* 51, no. 4 (Winter, 1987/1988): 452-455, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40402832>.

The most recent contribution to this historiography is the 2018 book titled *Cuba's Forgotten Decade: How the 1970s Shaped the Revolution*. The volume is a collection of essays by Cuba and Cold War scholars that each focus on a specific aspect of Sovietization. The piece's overarching argument states that the 1970s was not a bleak period of ideological restructuring for Cuba. Instead, Sovietization was significant because it evolved the meaning of the Cuban Revolution and shaped the political imaginations of the Cuban people.<sup>4</sup> The book is important because it diversifies the study of Sovietization and fully encompasses how the period reshaped multiple aspects of Cuban society.

Sovietization also appears in general histories about Cuba. These contributions to Cuba historiography do not treat the Sovietization Period as a central topic of study. However, these works reveal how Sovietization is characterized by Cuba scholars and how the period intellectually and economically reshaped the Cuban Revolution. Sovietization is given a brief assessment in Aviva Chomsky's book titled *A History of the Cuban Revolution*. The period is included in her study of how Cuban socialism evolved throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chomsky rejects the idea that Sovietization made the Cuban government abandon the egalitarian ideals of revolutionary socialism. Instead, she argues that the period created and strengthened democratic institutions on the island. Chomsky emphasizes that Sovietization ultimately resulted in the expansion of popular democratic involvement in Cuban socialism. The period was the natural step away from the optimism of the 1960s and into a mature phase of institutionalized participation where Cubans could collectively influence the revolution.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Emily J. Kirk, Anna Clayfield, and Isabel Story, eds., *Cuba's Forgotten Decade: How the 1970s Shaped the Revolution* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 1-5, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=1843695&site=eds-live>.

<sup>5</sup> Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2015), 56, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=cat06564a&AN=uga.9923517948002931&site=eds-live>.

Ada Ferrer assesses how Sovietization shaped the Cuban Revolution intellectually. She argues in her monograph *Cuba: An American History* that the period allowed the Cuban state to pivot from its utopian notion of socialist labor where the individual would be remade into a revolutionary citizen. Instead, the government adopted more pragmatic strategies to build socialism. Ferrer states that Sovietization caused the government to achieve long-term domestic stability by prioritizing financial incentives for workers and material gains for the economy.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, the effects Sovietization had on the Cuba's financial system is mentioned in Louis A. Pérez Jr's book *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. Pérez argues that the Cuban government reformed its socialist economy during Sovietization by addressing two different financial obstacles. He argues that the state deployed a development strategy that sought to rectify issues it believed to be preventing economic modernization: over-centralization and poor financial incentives for workers.<sup>7</sup> Pérez points to these shortcomings as significant factors fueling Sovietization's deep financial reforms.

The Cold War is often interpreted as a political conflict fought through proxy wars instigated by the Soviet Union and the United States. This struggle resulted in a global competition for ideological supremacy between the communist and capitalist camps. Politicized narratives about global events were deployed as weapons in this world-wide struggle to win the hearts and minds of specific audiences. This framework used to understand the Cold War has not been applied to the Sovietization Period and doing so will better define its historical significance. This overlooked gap in the discourse will be addressed by this paper. The following analysis will introduce a new way to view Sovietization which would diversify the historiography solely dedicated to it.

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<sup>6</sup> Ada Ferrer, *Cuba: An American History* (New York: Scribner, 2021), 398-399.

<sup>7</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 265.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEFINING THE SOVIETIZATION PERIOD

Sovietization started after Cuba's Utopian Period of the 1960s where the government implemented socialist policies to rapidly overcome economic underdevelopment. The era was governed by the idealist goals of reshaping agriculture and the Cuban citizen. This period of idealism ended with the 1970 Zafra because the government failed to accomplish such an ambitious harvest and was forced to reevaluate its financial decisions. Sovietization began soon after as Cuba sought to move on from the Zafra and find a new way to develop its economy.

Sovietization came to Cuba as a series of economic, social, and political reforms. The organization influenced the most by Sovietization was the Junta Central de Planificación (JUCEPLAN). JUCEPLAN was an economic committee founded in 1971 and became Cuba's apparatus to centrally plan its economy. It enabled Cuba's 1972 induction into the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), a global trade organization designed and led by the Soviet Union to economically support its allies. Cuba joining this organization broadened its access to global socialist markets. Cuba's admission into the CMEA is regarded as the event that formally began the Sovietization process. Cuba joining this organization solidified its alliance with the Soviet Union and created the economic infrastructure to facilitate reforms.

The Cuban government during the Utopian Period was influenced by Che Guevara's idealist vision of revolutionary socialism. This vision was illuminated in Guevara's work *Socialism and Man in Cuba*. He argued that the Cuban Revolution inherited an underdeveloped

and backward economy that could only be modernized by building socialism. Guevara framed the construction of socialism as a process that would create a politically conscious Cuban man and woman. He contended that the creation of a modern economy and a new Cuban citizen could not have been attained without utilizing two key pillars of socialist planning. Guevara defined these pillars as revolutionary education and the development of technology. Education was intended to turn Cubans into socialist revolutionaries while technology was meant to develop Cuba's economy.<sup>8</sup>

The ideological convictions of Cuba's leadership had an impact on economic development leading up to the 1970 Zafra. The Cuban government desired to transition the island away from its reliance on outdated agricultural practices that resulted in inconsistent sugar harvests. This goal would be accomplished through the construction of advanced infrastructure to support the sugar economy. To this end; the construction of new hydraulic works, which began in 1963, was regarded as the key to Cuba's modernization. The expansion of hydraulic works was a result of Cuba's Second Agrarian Reform Law introduced the same year. The law nationalized privately owned land across the country and centralized state control over agriculture.<sup>9</sup>

Cuba's hydraulic projects included the construction of dams that would improve irrigation for the majority of the islands' major water sources which would help Cuba's sugar industry overcome the threat of droughts. Such droughts had previously harmed sugarcane yield in 1961 and 1962. Once these projects were completed, the economy would be strong enough for the state to invest in fertilizer and agricultural industries to further stimulate sugar production.

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<sup>8</sup> "Socialism and Man in Cuba," Che Guevara Internet Archive, Marxists, accessed October 19, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1965/03/man-socialism.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> "Land Reform," Cuba 101, Cuba Platform, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://cubaplatform.org/land-reform>.

The creation of these ventures would diversify Cuba's economy and modernize its agriculture.<sup>10</sup> The government's optimistic dedication to hydraulic infrastructure bears the mark of Guevara's emphasis on technological development.

The political leadership's enthusiasm for development persevered going into the 1970 Zafra, and it depended on the production of sugar as the primary path for Cuba's modernization. The government's commitment to the Zafra was motivated by hydraulics and Cuba's financial relationship with the Soviet Union. Castro proclaimed in his 1969 speech about the harvest that Cuba had remained underdeveloped since the Cuban Revolution's success. The development that had taken place through irrigation projects must be expanded to increase sugar production.<sup>11</sup> Castro also remarked that Cuba's financial alliance with the Soviet Union was crucial for future development because of the Soviet sugar purchasing scheme. The Soviet government bought Cuba's surplus sugar during the Utopian Period at the market price previously enjoyed prior to the American embargo. The Soviet subsidization of sugar became the largest contribution to Cuba's economy and it persuaded the government to commit to the 10-million-ton harvest. Castro declared that the Zafra will exponentially grow Cuba's economy because it would maximize Soviet subsidies and generate a large amount of state funds. The government would then invest these funds into future development projects.<sup>12</sup>

The utopian zeal for the 1970 Zafra's economic potential was also evident in how Cuban workers reaped such vast amounts of sugar in a single season. The government thought it was

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<sup>10</sup> "Institute for Hydraulic Resources: 08/10/1963," Castro Speech Database: Speeches, Interviews, Articles, 1959-1966, Latin American Network Information Center, accessed October 17, 2022, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1963/19630810-1.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "1970 Sugar Harvest Rally: 07/14/1969," Castro Speech Database: Speeches, Interviews, Articles, 1959-1966, Latin American Network Information Center, accessed October 16, 2022, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1969/19690714.html>.

<sup>12</sup> "Premier Castro 20 May Report on Sugar Harvest: 05/21/1970," Castro Speech Database: Speeches, Interviews, Articles, 1959-1966, Latin American Network Information Center, accessed October 16, 2022, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1970/19700521.html>.

necessary to mobilize Cubans and their revolutionary consciousness to achieve this massive undertaking. This task was accomplished by rallying agricultural and factory laborers to work more hours in order to realize the Zafra. Workers were motivated by volunteerism in which the government would offer moral incentives that appealed to ideals of revolutionary sacrifice and selflessness. Workers who met expanded harvest goals were often awarded with badges and ribbons from Castro himself instead of extra pay.<sup>13</sup>

The Zafra was nevertheless plagued by environmental and production problems stemming from earlier challenges to Cuba's Five-Year Sugar Plan, which spanned from 1965 to 1970. The Zafra was designed to be the culmination of the plan's goal to produce a total of 46 million tons of sugar. However, the sugar plan suffered setbacks due to the 1967-68 drought that decreased sugarcane yield. The drought persisted despite the hydraulic infrastructure built five years earlier.<sup>14</sup> The hardship caused by the drought was then exacerbated by a nation-wide shortage of machine parts that slowed down agricultural labor. These problems resulted in the economy falling short of the 1968 sugar quota, casting a shadow over the 1970 Zafra. Morale within the government disintegrated by May 1970 when Castro announced that the 10-million-ton goal could not be met. Instead, only 8.5 million tons of sugar were harvested.<sup>15</sup> The Zafra's failure prevented the government from creating a sugar surplus for trade with the Soviet Union.

This economic jeopardy forced the government to secure more consistent trade partners by joining the CMEA in 1972.<sup>16</sup> Cuba's admission into the organization grew its economy and expanded its relationship with the Soviet Union. Soviet-Cuban trade prior to the 1970 Zafra was

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<sup>13</sup> Pérez, 259.

<sup>14</sup> Pamela S. Falk, "Cuba's Foreign and Domestic Policies, 1969-78: The Effect of International Commitments on Internal Development" (PhD diss., New York University, 1980), 79-80, University Microfilms International.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

worth over 1.2 billion Cuban pesos, but dramatically increased after Cuba joined the CMEA. The Soviet and Cuban governments were enjoying a trade alliance worth 2.9 billion pesos by 1975.<sup>17</sup> Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union during the 1960s was founded on economic support. Utopian era Soviet aid differed from the trade facilitated by the CMEA, insofar as Soviet credit delivery during the 1960s was not built on mutual economic exchange.

The Soviet Union did send money to the Cuban government so it could accomplish its goals of agricultural development, and the total amount of Soviet credit delivered to the island up to the fall 1963 was worth nearly 500 million US dollars.<sup>18</sup> However, there was no apparatus to plan and regulate the delivery of Soviet aid to Cuba. Therefore, Soviet credit was sporadic and caused tensions between the two governments. A notable example of this tension was the Soviet Union's refusal to renew its annual aid program for Cuba in the spring of 1962. This decision was reinforced by the other CMEA member states.<sup>19</sup> Cuba joining the CMEA alleviated this tension plaguing the Soviet-Cuban alliance. The CMEA became the apparatus for Cuba to enjoy more consistent economic assistance through the Soviet sugar purchasing scheme. The organization also helped resolve tensions between the two countries because it created a mutual economic relationship. The Soviet Union now enjoyed Cuban sugar while Cuba received a currency surplus from Eastern Bloc buyers.

The changes made to Cuba's trade relations during Sovietization impacted domestic reforms on the island. Such reforms included the diversification of production, the expansion of infrastructure, and changes to social institutions. Economic diversification was a major domestic

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<sup>17</sup> Kirk, Clayfield, and Story, 26.

<sup>18</sup> "The Effects of Hurricane Flora on Cuba," November 15, 1963, 8, National Intelligence Council (NIC) Collection, Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/0000331418>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

reform that impacted Cuba's economy in the 1970s. The island's exports after the 1970 Zafra continued to be dominated by sugar. However, the sugar trade became complemented by coffee, citrus fruit, and nickel shipments to CMEA member states. Indeed, Cuba was on track to have over 55 percent of its exports be made up of these alternate trade items by 1975. Economic diversification was assisted by the government's continued investment in developing infrastructure. The Cuban government planned the construction of roads, ports, and irrigation systems throughout the island. These projects stimulated sugar, coffee, and fruit production.<sup>20</sup>

Cuba's economic diversification influenced the way key social institutions functioned, and nowhere more so than in education. The government was encouraged to reduce some emphasis on agriculture and find new financial sectors to stimulate. The shift away from only growing the sugar, fruit, and coffee industries would create more jobs in non-agricultural fields. Creating jobs outside of agriculture would help safeguard the economy against fluctuating sugar harvests. This economic pressure, coupled with Cuba's recent population growth, persuaded the government to stimulate education. Cuba experienced a baby boom in the mid-1960s which created a large influx of students by the early-1970s. For example, in 1965 a total of 73,776 children entered the 7<sup>th</sup> grade across the country, which then doubled to 135,901 children by 1971.<sup>21</sup> This growth in Cuba's student population generated a high demand for teachers.

Cuba's education system was expanded through the creation of a new model of secondary schools known as Basic Rural Secondary Schools (BRSS). The BRSSs were boarding schools where students performed agricultural work alongside their academic studies. Castro intended these schools to house up to 20,000 children in 1972 which would gradually expand to

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<sup>20</sup>Arch R.M. Ritter and Cherita Girvan, "Growth Strategy and Economic Performance in Revolutionary Cuba: Past, Present and Prospective," *Social and Economic Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1972): 330, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27856539>.

<sup>21</sup> Kirk, Clayfield, and Story, 133.

100,000 children by 1974.<sup>22</sup> The BRSSs were examples of how the Cuban government reconciled its economic reforms with utopian idealism. The economy was further diversified by increasing the number of teachers nationwide. The government accomplished this task by attracting young instructors with a salary at an age where Cubans were not expected to earn money. These educators were also guaranteed admittance to universities that would allow them to gain upper-level degrees while teaching.<sup>23</sup> Ideologically, the BRSSs fulfilled Guevara's vision articulated in *Socialism and Man in Cuba*. Students performing agricultural work as a part of their curriculum would learn collectivist values that would prepare them to be revolutionary citizens.<sup>24</sup> The BRSSs indicate that Sovietization was not a direct adoption of Soviet economic practices from the 1970s. Instead, Cuba's domestic reforms were adapted to fulfill the island's material and ideological interests in a moment where the government confirmed its alliance with the Soviet Union

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 134.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CUBAN EXILE AND GOVERNMENT INTERPRETATIONS OF SOVIETIZATION

Sovietization caused exiled anti-communist ideologues to negatively characterize it for their political agendas in the 1970s and the 1990s. These ideologues interpreted Sovietization as both a symbol of communist despotism and a catalyst for Cuba's future transition to a liberal democracy. Two figures that respectively spoke to these ideological pivots were Miguel Zayas in the late 1970s and Carlos Alberto Montaner in the early 1990s. The political development of Cuban exiles must first be defined in order to understand Zayas' and Montaner's significance. In broad terms, exile politics during the Cold War was a struggle between anti-communist militancy and moderate calls for dialogue with the Cuban government. These distinct camps within the exile community differed in their political tactics but were united by the shared goal of overthrowing Fidel Castro.

The trajectory of this struggle between militancy and moderation can be divided by decade. In the 1960s, anti-communist exile activism was firmly controlled by the militant camp. Exiled militants were primarily made up by right wing hardliners, who were supported by some centrist liberals and left wing anti-Castroists.<sup>25</sup> This bloc of exiled radicals collaborated with the American government in the early 1960s through paramilitary operations, most infamous being the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion. This militant phase of exile political activities faltered after the

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<sup>25</sup> María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 123, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=6878&site=eds-live>.

Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The American government chose to limit exiled military raids on Cuba in order to avoid provoking a war with the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup>

Militancy was then challenged by a period of ideological transition in the 1970s. Voices advocating for rapprochement with the Cuban state began to grow loud among exiles.<sup>27</sup> This movement for peaceful dialogue as a path to overthrow Castro triggered a violent reaction from extremist hardliners. These radicals resorted to terrorist attacks against Cuban government officials and exiles who were seen as traitors. This wave of violence included assaults against Cuban embassies throughout Latin America and the bombings of businesses owned by moderates. Hardliner attacks became so commonplace that the FBI nicknamed Miami, one of the largest enclaves of Cuban exiles, the terrorist capital of the world. One deadly example of this extremism against moderate Cubans was the assassination of José Peruyeo, a veteran of the Bay of Pigs Invasion who criticized exile extremism.<sup>28</sup>

This struggle within the exile community temporarily ended after the 1980 Mariel Boatlift. The Boatlift was a government approved six-month period of emigration from Cuba in which over 100,000 people left the island for the United States and South America.<sup>29</sup> This period dissolved hopes for rapprochement due to renewed tensions between the United States and Cuba. Hardliner voices then proceeded to dominate exile politics throughout the 1980s. However, many conservatives soon turned to lobbying within the American political system as a means to overthrow Castro.<sup>30</sup> This form of lobbying differed from the paramilitary collaboration with the American government during the 1960s. Exiled conservatives had grown into a prominent voting

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 126-127.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 141-142.

<sup>29</sup> "Mariel boatlift," Human Migration, Britannica, last modified August 7, 2022, accessed February 14, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mariel-boatlift>.

<sup>30</sup> García, 146.

bloc by the Reagan era that overwhelmingly supported the Republican Party. This political allegiance gave exiled hardliners the clout necessary to lobby the federal government for diplomatic measures against Cuba.<sup>31</sup> The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 then ushered in renewed calls for dialogue from exiled liberals. This pro-dialogue camp had hoped to lead negotiations with an economically and politically weakened Cuban government, and in this way force democratic reforms that would dismantle the Castro regime. One organization that led this movement was the Cuban Liberal Union (CLU).<sup>32</sup>

The context surrounding Cuban exile politics is significant for understanding the importance of Miguel Zayas and Carlos Alberto Montaner. Zayas was an exiled Cuban sugar magnate who was embedded in the internal exile ideological struggle of the 1970s.<sup>33</sup> He was a member of the conservative camp who resisted calls for rapprochement with the Cuban government during Sovietization. His resistance took a nonviolent form in 1977 when he allied with *Accuracy in Media Incorporated* (AIM) against *The National Geographic Magazine*. AIM is a prominent conservative anti-communist think tank founded in late 1969 by Reed Irvine, a former economist for the Federal Reserve. AIM was created to police mainstream media's reporting on global affairs. Zayas and AIM criticized *The National Geographic's* moderate and normalizing interpretation of Sovietization. Their critiques were clear examples of the conservative resistance to rapprochement with the Castro regime. This dialogue was also an early case of the exiled hardliner shift from militancy to the political lobbying of the 1980s. Zayas used his status as a Cuban exile to collaborate with non-Cuban conservatives in condemning *The National Geographic's* normalization of Sovietization. Indeed, he intended to use his rhetoric to

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 146-147.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

<sup>33</sup> "Collection CHC0212- Rafael Miguel Zayas Collection," University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, Atom Library Miami, accessed February 15, 2023, [https://atom.library.miami.edu/chc0212?sf\\_culture=en](https://atom.library.miami.edu/chc0212?sf_culture=en).

control the discourse about Sovietization and the Cuban state on behalf of the conservative exile camp. Zayas attempted to accomplish this goal by addressing a moderate exile audience with his writings about Sovietization.

Montaner is a Cuban exile who fled the island in the early 1960s after the Cuban Revolution embraced Marxism. He initially emigrated to Miami before permanently relocating to Spain in 1970. Montaner turned to journalism as a tool to oppose the Cuban government. His writings throughout the Cold War criticized the socialist regime and zealously attacked Castro personally. He viewed Castro as the main culprit behind Cuba's economic instability, political repression, and the decision to ally with the Soviet Union. Montaner became a dominant voice in exile political discourse when he founded the CLU in 1990. The CLU soon joined the Liberal International in which Montaner has served as vice president since 1992, cementing his place as a leader of the exile movement's liberal wing.<sup>34</sup> The pro-dialogue camp of the 1990s viewed Cuba's post-Cold War economic crisis as a chance to overthrow Castro and create a liberal democracy. Montaner used his analysis of Sovietization to build on this platform by framing the period as the reason why this opportunity for counterrevolution exists. His politicized rhetoric about Sovietization was aimed at his fellow liberals and was intended to make their political agitation against the Cuban government more effective.

Zayas and Montaner demonstrates how Sovietization influenced exile politics the 1970s and the 1990s. Zayas' critique of *The National Geographic* shows that conservative exiles saw Sovietization as a symbol of attempted rapprochement with the Cuban government. Montaner's political platform for a liberal democracy shows how the period shaped liberal plans for Cuba's

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<sup>34</sup> "Info," El Blog de Montaner, accessed February 3, 2022, <http://www.elblogdemontaner.com/about/>.

future. Indeed, the following sources reveal that Sovietization impacted how exile politics evolved from violent militancy to conservative political lobbying and liberal calls for dialogue.

The spat between Miguel Zayas, AIM, and *The National Geographic* began with the magazine's article titled "Inside Cuba Today". The piece was written by the journalist Fred Ward and published in January 1977. The article is noteworthy because it included the voices of Cuban government officials in its overview of the island's economic and political reforms. Ward's respect for the government's explanation of Cuban socialism yielded a normalizing narrative of Sovietization. His lack of overt anti-communist rhetoric spurred Zayas and AIM to critique the article. It is important to note that Ward was not a Cuban exile. However, his analysis of Sovietization in a nationally syndicated magazine indicates that the moderate exile agenda of the 1970s appealed to a general American audience.

Ward's normalizing and largely positive view of Sovietization stemmed from its ability to address Cuba's immediate problems with underdevelopment. Such development issues that caught Ward's attention were housing, education, agriculture, and food security. Ward's focus on Sovietization's outcomes are significant because it shows that Zayas' and AIM's rejection of his article was rhetorically deceitful. He opened his analysis by noting that the Cuban population greatly increased from 6 million to 9 ½ million people within a single generation. This population boom put pressure on the government to mobilize and construct new apartment buildings. However, Ward remarked that the Cuban state lacked the required amount of funds generated by trade and economic aid from the Soviet Union. These funds were insufficient for the Cuban housing sector because they were shared by state-owned factories and schools. Ward did not characterize Cuba's housing problem as a failure for the socialist government. He instead commended the political leadership for resolving this issue by having JUCEPLAN include

housing construction in its economic plans. The government predicted that guaranteeing state resources to housing would shelter more than 150,000 people by 1982. Apartment construction could even be accelerated with the support of visiting engineers from the Soviet Bloc.<sup>35</sup>

Ward also commended Sovietization for how it restructured education by including the voice of Max Figueroa, the Director of Educational Development for the Ministry of Education. Figueroa boasted that more than 10 percent of the country's gross national product was solely dedicated to funding public education, which had reduced the national illiteracy rate from 25 percent to less than 3 percent.<sup>36</sup> Figueroa went on to claim that the state's investment in education included the construction of more than 800 new Basic Rural Secondary Schools in Cuba's underdeveloped countryside.<sup>37</sup>

Ward's sympathy and commendation for the government resolving underdevelopment extended to how it ran agricultural production throughout the 1970s. He confirmed that sugar was still a major economic export for the Cuban economy. However, the amount of sugar fluctuated throughout the early 1970s from 4 to 8 ½ million tons per year (with the 1976 harvest being estimated at 6 million tons). These fluctuations were due to intermittent droughts.<sup>38</sup> The government bringing Cuba into the CMEA and the expansion of the Soviet subsidization scheme combatted this shortcoming because the Soviet Bloc continued to buy sugar at an inflated price. Ward cited Luis de la Fé, the Vice Minister of the Sugar Ministry, who claimed that the 1976 Zafra sold for 2 billion in credit from Soviet buyers. De la Fé remarked that this money was combatting underdevelopment by supporting Cuba's First Five Year Plan that began in 1975.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Fred Ward, "Inside Cuba Today," January, 1977, 41-42, box 2, Joint Resolutions of '62, Rafael Miguel Zayas Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

The government's policies to tackle food insecurity also interested Ward. He stated that Cuba's rationing system is often viewed as evidence that socialism is inherently flawed because it causes food scarcity. However, he contended that the reality in Cuba painted a different picture. Ward included the voice of Illidio Sabatier, a state economic planner who argued that the government's rationing system did not always indicate shortages. Instead, rationing was meant to ensure the equal distribution of food to all Cuban citizens. However, Ward believed that the existence of rationing implied that some shortages did exist. He then highlighted the Federation of Cuban Women (FCW) for working to combat this issue. The FCW is a state-led mass organization primarily concerned with mobilizing Cuban women in the construction of socialism. Ward implied that this organization alleviated the threat of food insecurity by providing free daycare to all Cuban families. He detailed that the FCW's daycare services were intended to incentivize more women to enter the work force. Cuba's rationing system permitted working women to shop for their families twice a week which allowed mothers access to an adequate amount of food for their children. Ward suggested this scheme was seen across the island by 1977 by noting that 30 percent of all Cuban women were in the labor force and over 80,000 children were looked after by the FCW daily.<sup>40</sup>

Ward did possess some skepticism about Cuba's reforms. He revealed, for instance, that the country's new electoral process was a potential threat to the government's long-term objective of maintaining domestic stability. Ward explained that Cuba's elections were expanded by the recently ratified 1976 Constitution. The new constitution allowed citizens to vote for local municipal delegates. These delegates would then elect members to the newly created National Assembly of People's Power, which served as the chief legislative body for the Cuban

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 50.

government. The political leadership praised this reform as a significant step towards creating a democracy where the organs of state power were to be fully controlled by the Communist Party of Cuba (CPC).<sup>41</sup> However, Ward highlighted that Cuba's new election law had failed to solve the question of Castro's succession. He argued that Castro's charisma dominated Cuban politics and his eventual departure from leadership could create a political vacuum. Instability would then return to the island because the allure of a military dictatorship could be too much for the government to resist.<sup>42</sup>

Zayas and AIM responded to Ward's article by vehemently discarding any normalizing views it had towards Sovietization. Zayas initially confronted *The National Geographic's* editing staff in January of 1977 about the article's contents. He claimed that Ward could never understand the Cuban people's oppression because he did not know Spanish. Therefore, he was unable to read between the lines of the government's manicured tour of the country.<sup>43</sup> Zayas' critique continued in his letter to Gilbert Grosvenor, *The National Geographic's* lead editor. He claimed it was unfair for Ward to insinuate that Castro had anchored communism in the Caribbean and he felt that the piece represented a moral capitulation to the Cuban government.<sup>44</sup> Zayas also took issue with Ward's suggestion that Cuba's political leadership raised the standard of living for its people. He stated that the island's gross national product had actually decreased since Castro assumed power in 1959. Therefore, Cuba's standard of living was inferior when compared to before the Cuban Revolution. Zayas viewed that the omission of this fact was troubling and it caused him to believe that Ward's article popularized Castro's tyranny.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>43</sup> Miguel Zayas to Gilbert Grosvenor, January 4, 1977, box 2, Joint Resolutions of '62, Rafael Miguel Zayas Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Zayas' hardliner interpretation of Sovietization was not accepted by the magazine's editing staff. John Schofield, *The National Geographic's* associate editor, opposed his claim that Ward promoted the Cuban government's agenda. He stated that the Ward's interpretation was objective because the state allowed him to go anywhere he pleased. Ward was also permitted to interview anyone he wished in any setting except for military zones.<sup>46</sup> Schofield then claimed that the article was reviewed by experts from two cabinet level federal departments and a member of the Congressional Research Service. These experts agreed with the article's scope and contents.<sup>47</sup> The mention of a federal review process is significant because it further suggests that the moderate exile interpretation of Cuba was circulating among non-Cuban Americans in the 1970s.

Zayas soon contacted Reed Irvine in February of 1977 with the hope that AIM could convince *The National Geographic* that it published inaccurate information.<sup>48</sup> AIM continued Zayas' condemnation by publishing an independent report on the article. AIM's report viewed the piece as a distorted and inaccurate analysis of the despotism inherent to socialist societies. The think-tank lambasted *The National Geographic* for knowingly omitting crucial details about the nature of life under socialist Cuba; such as the decreased quantity of rationed consumable goods, the repression of religion, and the destruction of free trade.<sup>49</sup> AIM's assessment of the article characterized it as seldom deviating from the Cuban government's political narrative. Its critique of Ward's piece ignored his skepticism about Cuba's electoral reforms and future political leadership. Zayas' and AIM's attempt to discredit the article shows that their

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<sup>46</sup> John Schofield to Miguel Zayas, January 27, 1977, 1, box 2, Joint Resolutions of '62, Rafael Miguel Zayas Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Miguel Zayas to Reed Irvine, February 27, 1977, 2, box 2, Joint Resolutions of '62, Rafael Miguel Zayas Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto. G Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>49</sup> "The Geographic's Flawed Picture," March, 1977, 2-3, box 2, Joint Resolutions '62, Rafael Miguel Zayas Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

interpretations of Sovietization did not fully consider the various facts and nuances about its impact on Cuba. This component to Zayas' analysis possessed a level of deceit that was used to rhetorically control the discourse about Sovietization.

The dialogue between *The National Geographic*, Zayas, and AIM was a microcosm of the ideological struggle between moderates who favored normalization and conservatives who adopted lobbying tactics. Ward espoused normalizing rhetoric by commending Sovietization's reforms while rejecting Cuban socialism. He viewed the reforms as a remarkable development for Cuba that could be genuinely beneficial for its people. However, he stopped short of outright praise for socialism as a political model. Instead, Ward was skeptical enough to not fully exalt the Cuban government. He assigned credit where he believed it was due while remaining hesitant about Sovietization's long term political consequences. Ward's piece does not overtly represent the exile goal of overthrowing Castro. However, his rhetoric does resemble the dialogue between moderates and the government in the 1970s. One example of this discourse was the Areíto Group, a diplomatic mission made up of young middle class Cuban moderates who visited Cuba in 1977 to build goodwill with the Castro regime.<sup>50</sup> Ward's generous examination of Sovietized Cuba correlates rhetorically and chronologically with these efforts at rapprochement.

Zayas and AIM responded in defiance to Ward and the moderate camp. They reflected the hardliner position of the 1970s by believing there were no redeeming qualities of Cuban socialism or Sovietization. Zayas saw Cuba's reforms and rectifications as guises for the communist oppression over the Cuban people. His convictions were supported by AIM which led to him to believe that Ward fell victim to government rhetoric. Zayas possessed the extremist

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<sup>50</sup> María de los Angeles Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors: Cuban Exile Politics in the United States* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 90, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=e000xna&AN=335701&site=eds-live>.

position of non-negotiation while indicating the coming shift in tactics from violent terrorism to lobbying with non-Cuban conservatives.

The objective of Zayas' rhetoric against *The National Geographic* was to control the dialogue about Sovietization both within and outside of the Cuban exile community. Much of the 1970s had been marred by hardliner terrorism which was used to silence calls for rapprochement as a means to overthrow Castro. Zayas' and AIM's attempt to convince *The National Geographic* that they popularized the Cuban government's rhetoric shows how conservatives were beginning to embrace lobbying as a way to dominate the discourse. In Zayas' case, he was not lobbying the American government to pass specific political policies against Cuba. Instead, he cooperated with an element of the political status quo to influence exile politics and its interpretation of Sovietization. Zayas' critique of *The National Geographic*, as well as his collaboration with AIM, was done to speak to a moderate exile audience and combat their attempts at normalizing relations with socialist Cuba.

Zayas' response to *The National Geographic* shows that exiles became interested in narrating Sovietization's impact on Cuba. This interest continued into the 1990s when Cuban liberals interpreted Sovietization as the root cause for the Castro government's future collapse. This concept was formed in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991 where Cuba became economically isolated. Cuba's seclusion from the rest of the world resulted in the Special Period. The Special Period was an era of austerity measures implemented by the government to address the economic crisis caused by the loss of Soviet aid.<sup>51</sup> The period is regarded to have lasted from 1991 to the early 2000s.

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<sup>51</sup> Pérez, 293.

The Soviet Union's collapse had a profound impact on Sovietization's reforms. Many rectifications were reversed by Special Period policies which eroded the Cuban government's legitimacy. A major example of Sovietization's rollback is the reversal of the economic development made during the 1970s. Over 50 percent of Cuba's factories and plants closed during the Special Period due to shortages of fuel and replacement parts for machines. The government also severely rationed food and other consumable goods for the general public.<sup>52</sup> These economic pressures ultimately forced the state to relinquish some control over the economy by permitting Cubans to privatize hundreds of state-owned businesses and trades.<sup>53</sup> The pivot away from Sovietization's reforms indicates that the Communist Party of Cuba saw that capitalist adjustment was necessary for its own survival.

Carlos Alberto Montaner rose to political prominence amidst this context. Cuba's international isolation and the Special Period influenced his hopes for its future. Montaner wished that the socialist regime would collapse under the weight of the Soviet Union's absence. The resulting power vacuum would then allow Cuba to transition to a multi-party liberal democracy. A model of this proposed counterrevolution was articulated in a 1990 *Miami Herald* article titled "A Ray of Hope for Cuba". The piece explained what type of government would replace Castro and how the liberal pro-dialogue camp could overthrow him.

The article stated that Cuba's democratic transition would be founded on the election of a provisional civilian government legitimized by an anti-communist constitution. This government would be made up of Christian democrats, social democrats, liberals, and conservatives all united to oppose the Castro regime. These political factions were dubbed the "four internationals" and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Carlos Alberto Montaner, "Transition to Democracy in Cuba," September 20, 1995, 23, box 18, Seminario en el "Carter Center" Sobre Cuba- 20 Sept. 1995 Trabajo de CAM, Carlos Alberto Montaner Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

were inspired by similar opposition blocs that dismantled communist governments in Eastern Europe.<sup>54</sup> The article justified dialogue with a weakened Cuban state by indicating that its plan to overthrow Castro would allow exiles to negotiate for key reforms like a new constitution. These reforms would then allow exiled leaders to reenter Cuba's political system and dismantle the socialist government. This liberal counterrevolutionary platform was the foundation for Montaner's analysis of Sovietization. He even expanded on this model by specifically proposing that Castro can only be defeated if Cuba's socialist bureaucracy is abolished and its private sector is strengthened.<sup>55</sup>

Montaner summarized his view of Sovietization in a 1995 speech given at the Carter Center. The Carter Center is an Atlanta based nonprofit organization founded by President Jimmy Carter to promote liberal democracy around the world.<sup>56</sup> Montaner explained to American and Cuban liberals why the Castro government faced imminent collapse. He remarked that Castro now had few allies to turn to for economic aid and Cuba suffered icy diplomatic relations within the newly created Russian Federation. There was also little hope to maintain power without making changes to liberalize Cuba's economy. These setbacks made Castro appear delegitimized because he was forced to adopt a less fierce public persona to build new relationships abroad and implement austerity policies at home.<sup>57</sup> He indicated that Sovietization caused these problems for the government because it made Cuba overly reliant on Soviet economic support. Therefore, the loss of this financial aid delegitimized Castro and created the

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<sup>54</sup> "A Ray of Hope for Cuba," October 23, 1990, box 30, Artículos Sobre "La Plataforma Democrática Cubana" 1991, Carlos Alberto Montaner Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>55</sup> Montaner, "Transition to Democracy in Cuba," 22.

<sup>56</sup> "Our Mission," About, Carter Center, Accessed February 15, 2023, <https://www.cartercenter.org/about/index.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Montaner, "Transition to Democracy in Cuba," 3.

catalyst for overturning the Cuban state. Indeed, Montaner saw Sovietization and the resulting Soviet-Cuban alliance as the source of this crucial opportunity to dismantle Cuban socialism.

Montaner's convictions about the Cuban government's future persisted into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He summarized the liberal camp's enduring assessment of Sovietization in his 2007 article about Castro's legacy for *Foreign Policy Magazine*. The article was a part of a debate Montaner had with Ignacio Ramonet, a Spanish journalist and socialist academic. The debate's contents spoke to a general audience interested in the reasons behind the Cuban state's survival. Montaner indicated that the government's perseverance did not disprove his analysis of Sovietization. He argued that Castro had shown himself to be a military strongman bent on ruling through a one-party dictatorship since 1959. However, this dictatorship would ultimately fail when Castro eventually steps down from political leadership. Montaner hoped that the loss of such a strongman, coupled with the hardships of the Special Period, would usher in an era of democracy.<sup>58</sup> For Montaner, the root cause of this theorized future was still Sovietization. He continued to hope that the economic instability caused by the period's reforms would one day lead to the establishment of a liberal government. This hope held out because Montaner was convinced that Castro must eventually face the progression of history and accept the global defeat of communism.<sup>59</sup>

The central goal of Montaner's rhetoric in the outset of the Soviet Union's collapse was to articulate a liberal counterrevolution against the Cuban state. Montaner was not following the conservative tactic of lobbying within the American political system to accomplish this objective. Instead, he attempted to use his rhetoric to address an audience of his fellow exiled

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<sup>58</sup> Carlos Alberto Montaner, "Was Fidel Good for Cuba? A Debate Between Carlos Alberto Montaner & Ignacio Ramonet," January/February, 2007, 57-58, box 21, Foreign Policy, Carlos Alberto Montaner Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

liberals to politically mobilize them and create a Cuban democracy in their own image. Pursuing this goal would facilitate their return to the island and secure their place in national political leadership. Montaner's analysis of Sovietization contributed to this wider political agenda. He intended to give the liberal exile bloc an adequate understanding of why the Cuban government was weakened and how they can use that weakness to their advantage.

The Sovietization Period galvanized anti-communist exiles to wage an ideological struggle against it in the 1970s, and again in the 1990s. Exiled hardliners like Miguel Zayas competed with moderates over how to frame Sovietization as it was unfolding. This contest resulted in conservatives internalizing their ideology and embracing lobbying as a weapon against Castro. Cuban liberals after the Soviet Union's collapse then called for dialogue and negotiation as a way to force a regime change. Carlos Alberto Montaner represents the convictions of the liberal exile camp. He developed the pro-dialogue position by characterizing Sovietization as the cause for a future counterrevolution. This imagined overthrow of Castro never came to pass. Nevertheless, Montaner's and Zayas' accounts rejected the important changes that came to Cuba after 1970.

Sovietization was also interpreted by the Cuban government during the 1970s with a similar level of ideological interest. Its rhetoric about the period addressed two different audiences: the Soviet state and Cuban workers. This dual narration of Sovietization coincided with the Marxist-Leninist concepts of internationalism and vanguardism. These principles were rhetorical tools used by the Cuban government to interpret Sovietization. Internationalism was used to narrate Cuba's adoption of a realist pragmatic foreign policy which resulted in the island joining the CMEA and deepening its alliance with the Soviet Union. This principle addressed the Soviet state. Vanguardism was used to clearly explain Sovietization's reformed system of

economic management to Cuban workers. The government's dual narration of the period further shows that it was not a universal appropriation of Soviet economic and political policies. In particular, Cuba's new financial practices did not reflect their Soviet counterparts of the time. Regardless, the government used this rhetorical tactic to legitimize the Soviet-Cuban alliance and the economic reforms created during Sovietization.

Indeed, the government used internationalism and vanguardism to validate Sovietization's reforms. This tactic served Cuba's foreign and domestic interests. Sovietization was framed for the Soviet government in order to rhetorically cement the island's position in the Communist Bloc. The Cuban state legitimized its alliance with the Soviet Union by portraying Cuba as benefitting from the CMEA's fair treatment of underdeveloped member nations. The government also credited its Soviet patron for the material economic progress made during the 1970s. The period was then interpreted to Cuban workers in order to legitimize economic reform. The government accomplished this task by explaining to the proletariat how they would collaborate with the state to manage the economy.

Internationalism and vanguardism must first be defined in order to understand their role in the Cuban government's interpretation of Sovietization. Internationalism is the idea that nations around the world must collaborate with each other instead of competing over resources and power. The government used internationalism to portray its post-1970 alliance with the Soviet Union as an idealized form of mutually beneficial cooperation. Vanguardism is the concept of a revolutionary party guiding the workers in the construction of socialism within a respective country. This principle was used by the government to frame Sovietization's reforms as key in recovering Cuba's economy from the 1970 Zafra. One reform the government narrated

with interest was its new model of economic planning. This model made the government the guide for mass worker organizations who would be led in developing Cuba.

Perhaps the most significant document that represents the government's rhetorical use of internationalism and vanguardism was the 1976 Cuban Constitution. As previously mentioned, the Constitution was part of a series of reforms that democratized Cuba's national elections. The document also embedded the two principles of the government's narrative about Sovietization within Cuba's political makeup. "Article Five of Chapter One" embedded the principle of vanguardism by declaring that the CPC is a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party responsible for achieving communism. This point was reinforced by "Article Seven of Chapter One" because it interpreted the worker as fundamental to the growth and survival of Cuban socialism. This article stressed that the government would organize workers for the defense and development of the revolution through mass bodies like the FCW.<sup>60</sup>

"Article Twelve of Chapter One" embodied the rhetorical commitment to internationalism as a tool to frame Sovietization. The Constitution stated that the Cuban government endorses ideals of proletarian intentionalism as a means to fight imperialism and capitalism. The document linked its ideological convictions to the goal of building good relations with the Soviet Bloc. It stated that Cuba aspires to use its anti-capitalist mission to foster an alliance with the Soviet Union through cooperation and mutual aid.<sup>61</sup>

The 1976 Constitution demonstrated the government's strategy of framing the period for two different audiences. The Cuban state was clearly communicating to its Soviet allies through the principle of internationalism by ideologically committing the island to the Soviet Bloc. The

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<sup>60</sup> "Republic of Cuba Political Constitution of 1976," Republic of Cuba Constitutions, Political Database of the Americas, accessed January 25, 2023, <https://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Cuba/cuba1976.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Cuban people were similarly addressed by the principle of vanguardism. The government asserted that a new form of economic planning executed by state led mass bodies would be the mode of Cuba's future development. The Constitution is another example of Sovietization's reforms not emulating the Soviet model of the 1970s. Instead, Cuba's economic practices would respond to its material conditions by empowering existing mass organizations to overcome underdevelopment.

The use of internationalism as a rhetorical tool originated in Cuba's adoption of a realist pragmatic foreign policy. The government changed its foreign policy after the economic failure of the 1970 Zafra and the political failure to export socialist revolution to Latin America. The 1970 Zafra represented the financial blunder of Cuba's Utopian Period. The harvest demonstrated that the state could not shape Cuba into a self-sufficient socialist nation powerful enough to overcome underdevelopment and imperialism by itself.

Political failure also came at the end of the 1960s, when the Soviet Union and Cuba were interested in numerous Latin American states as potential sites for proletarian revolution. These prospective revolutions could have resulted in the creation of socialist allies close to Cuba. Soviet policy in Latin America called for socialism to be introduced through peaceful political blocs made up of left-wing vanguard parties participating in national elections. The Cuban government rejected this tactic in favor of armed guerilla struggles reminiscent of the 1959 Revolution.<sup>62</sup> The Cuban state politically supported these nascent revolutionary movements by officially recognizing communist rebels in Venezuela while also calling on Haitians and Dominicans to overthrow their capitalist oppressors.<sup>63</sup> However, it was clear by the turn of the

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<sup>62</sup> W. Raymond Duncan, *The Soviet Union and Cuba: Interests and Influence*, ed. Alvin Z. Rubenstein (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 25.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

decade that this idealist foreign policy failed to produce another socialist nation in the western hemisphere. These setbacks pushed the government to adopt a realist pragmatic foreign policy that would strengthen Cuba's national security through cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Realist pragmatism is the international relations theory where the state maximizes national security through foreign policy decisions.<sup>64</sup> The Cuban government followed realist pragmatism in the early 1970s by embracing Sovietization and creating bilateral relations with the Soviet Union through the CMEA. Cuba received economic and political security guarantees from this new diplomatic connection. These guarantees strengthened Cuba's national security after the 1970 Zafra and the defeat of Cuban-backed Latin American guerilla movements. The island now received economic stability from trade with the Eastern Bloc and enjoyed a committed political alliance with the Soviet Union that combatted its hemispheric isolation.<sup>65</sup>

The Cuban government had to then communicate this foreign policy shift to its Soviet ally. The island's political leadership turned to internationalism as the rhetorical device to accomplish this task. This undertaking began in June of 1972 with a speech given by Fidel Castro during his diplomatic tour of Eastern Bloc nations. The tour was intended to build good will with these countries just one month before Cuba's admittance into the CMEA. Castro took an opportunity during his visit to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to articulate to the Soviet Union its new relationship with Cuba.

Castro opened his speech by connecting Cuba to Marxism-Leninism. He stated that Cuba's revolutionary process can only be realized by studying Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Elaborating, Castro credited Marx and Lenin as being the only political thinkers that enabled Cuba to understand the problems preventing its development. Castro went on to laud Marxism

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<sup>64</sup> Kirk, Clayfield, and Story, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 33.

for giving his countrymen the concept of the class struggle which allowed them to realize that capitalism and imperialism intentionally kept Cuba underdeveloped. Lenin's *The State and Revolution* was then praised for showing how to overcome these obstacles by utilizing the power of the state and the masses.<sup>66</sup> Castro ended his speech by tying Marxism-Leninism to internationalism. He proclaimed that Marxism-Leninism enabled the young Soviet Union to overcome underdevelopment and imperialist counterrevolution in the 1920s. He declared that this same ideology and Soviet history itself will now help Cuba accomplish these same feats.<sup>67</sup>

Castro was articulating a connection between Cuba's underdeveloped economy and the need to embrace the Soviet Union to modernize it. He was not using economic figures and production goals to frame the government's view of Sovietization to the Soviet Union. Instead, he used ideological platitudes to cement Cuba's position in the Soviet Bloc and to increase its economic security. An example of this strategy is seen at the end of his speech where he declared that himself and the government to be representatives of the Cuban people. As a national representative, Castro committed all Cubans to the Soviet Union's fight against imperialism and for the global unity of all socialist countries.<sup>68</sup> This move let Castro speak directly to the Soviet government by rhetorically confirming that Cuba will follow the expectations of the Soviet-Cuban alliance and the CMEA.

Cuba joining the CMEA came with benefits and limitations. The CMEA solved the short-term goal of immediately improving Cuba's economy by broadening the Soviet sugar purchasing

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<sup>66</sup> "Discurso Pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario, en La Universidad 'Carolinum'. De Praga, Checoslovaquia, con Motivo de Concedersele el Título de Doctor en Ciencias Jurídicas Honoris Causa, El 22 de Junio de 1972," Discursos e intervenciones del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente del Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba," Cuba, accessed January 24, 2023, <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1972/esp/f220672e.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

scheme. Broadening the scheme would ensure a consistent influx of funds for the government to use on domestic development. In return, Cuba became subject to the organization's system of production and was mandated to be the socialist world's preeminent sugar exporter. This directive restricted Cuba from forming trade partnerships with non-socialist countries.<sup>69</sup> The Cuban government accepted these restrictions for the long-term benefits of CMEA membership- Cuba could experience a prolonged and consistent sugar trade with the Soviet Union. Consistent trade would then create a level of economic stability not seen on the island since the Cuban Revolution. This long-term stability would allow the Cuban economy to eventually mature over time and diversify its trade partners.<sup>70</sup>

The Cuban government became concerned with how to narrate these economic changes that came with Sovietization and CMEA membership. A 1974 article in *Granma*, the official newspaper of the CPC, framed the Soviet-led CMEA as an integral piece to Cuba's development. The article's emphasis on the CMEA's policies for economic modernization is another example of how the government used internationalist language to frame Sovietization. The piece addressed the Soviet state by commending it for fairly treating Cuba and other underdeveloped CMEA countries. The article accomplished this task by using Cuba's role in the organization to criticize its capitalist counterpart, the European Economic Community (EEC).

The piece focused on how the capitalist and the socialist worlds dealt with the incorporation of underdeveloped countries into the global economy. It argued that the EEC failed to correctly integrate its underdeveloped members into the organization because it was run by multinational corporations, which maintained unequally organized technical and industrial projects throughout different member states. Less developed nations who did not have the

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<sup>69</sup> Falk., 198.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

resources to accomplish these projects were left vulnerable to exploitation from foreign capital.<sup>71</sup> The article argued that these corporations exploited underdeveloped EEC countries for the benefit of wealthy members states like the United Kingdom and France. In contrast, the article highlighted that the CMEA was built on equal collaboration between member states regardless of their level of development. The CMEA's system of economic cooperation, which was created and managed by the Soviet Union, was viewed as being beneficial for developing nations like Cuba.<sup>72</sup>

The article continued to emphasize the Soviet Union's fair treatment of Cuba by highlighting the unequal distribution of power within the EEC. Voting rights among the organization's member states were disproportionate as West Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom all possessed two votes each for economic legislation. Smaller and less developed countries like Denmark and Ireland only possessed one vote respectively. In contrast, CMEA members all had one equal vote in order to prevent wealthier states from exploiting their economically weaker counterparts.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the article implied that the Soviet Union did not abuse Cuba's financial weaknesses for its own benefit.

This rhetorical use of internationalism to frame Sovietization continued with the 1974 *Granma* article titled "The New Stage of Soviet-Cuban Economic Collaboration". This article shows how the government used internationalism to credit the Soviet Union for creating material economic progress in Cuba. It argued that the financial partnership between both nations was mutually beneficial and helped Cuba develop. The article addressed the Soviet state by praising it for aiding in the island's modernization through scientific and technical collaboration. This

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<sup>71</sup> Oneida Alvarez Figueroa, "El CAME: Un Ejemplo de Verdadera Integracion Economica Internacional," May 10, 1974, 2, January 1974-June 1974, *Granma*, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto. G Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

collaboration was done to raise Cuba's productive forces and improve its standard of living. Indeed, the article cited that Soviet aid since Cuba joined the CMEA had resulted in over 100 factories being constructed or retrofitted across the island. Such factories included mechanical and metallurgical plants.<sup>74</sup>

The article then briefly shifted its adoration from the Soviet Union to Fidel Castro. Castro was credited for strengthening the Soviet-Cuban alliance by accepting the CMEA's bilateral trade policies. Castro's political work was emphasized to show how his role in admitting Cuba into the CMEA led to international economic collaboration with the Soviet Union. The article included Soviet compliance with Cuban trade agreements as an example of this cooperation. Soviet engineers recently fulfilled a CMEA economic treaty signed by Castro when they repaired nickel plants across Cuba. One plant located in the province of Cienfuegos was redesigned to produce 30,000 tons of nickel for Cuba to trade with CMEA countries.<sup>75</sup> The article characterized these examples of material development as upholding the principle of internationalism articulated by Castro in 1972.

The government used internationalism to narrate Sovietization to the Soviet state by venerating its economic collaboration with Cuba. Vanguardism was similarly used to interpret Sovietization's economic changes to Cuban workers. The government rhetorically framed itself and the proletariat as the mechanisms that would realize Cuba's economic development. This task was accomplished by using vanguardism to rationalize the restructuring of Cuba's planned economy that occurred during Sovietization. Comparing how the government characterized state

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<sup>74</sup> Semion Skachkov, "Nueva Etapa en la Colaboracion Economica Sovietico-Cubana," January 23, 1974, January 1974-June 1974, Granma, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

planning before and after 1970 shows how the principle was used to narrate this reform for the Cuban people.

Cuba's utopian era model of economic planning possessed a disunity between the government's bureaucracy and the working class. An example of this disunity was seen in Castro's account of a bureaucrat in charge of cow insemination. He delivered this account in a 1967 speech to Havanan steelworkers about their role in Cuba's economy. Castro reported that a bureaucrat in charge of livestock did not realize that insemination rates had in fact exceeded the amount he calculated due to the motorization of inseminators. The livestock worker that delivered him this news boasted that that over 1 million cows had been inseminated. Castro noted that this bureaucrat was clueless of production exceeding his indices because he was disconnected from the revolutionary power of the workers and their factory equipment. He then dedicated the rest of his speech to deriding the bureaucracy by stating that the "ministry" is divorced from the lived realities of Cuban laborers. He believed that Cuban bureaucrats had become more interested with economic figures and less knowledgeable of the proletariat's ability to develop Cuba.<sup>76</sup>

Castro's critique of Cuba's bureaucracy exposed a larger issue with the island's utopian era model of economic planning. Indeed, the implementation of economic plans and their performances were impaired by an inefficiency rooted in Cuba's economic administration. This phenomenon was labeled *burocratismo* by the Cuban government and it referred to the disconnect between Cuba's bureaucracy and the production of goods from workers. This disequilibrium led to micro-inefficiencies within the Cuban economy. Such inefficiencies

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<sup>76</sup> "Castro Addresses Steelworkers in Havana: 02/01/1967," Castro Speech Database: Speeches, Interviews, Articles, 1959-1966, Latin American Network Information Center, accessed January 25, 2023, <http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1967/19670220.html>.

included low labor and capital productivity.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the presence of *burocratismo* within the government shows that Castro's example of cow insemination exceeding bureaucratic indices was an exception, not the norm. The inclusion of this example in his speech was done to show how efficient Cuban economic planning could be when in the hands of the working class.

Indeed, Castro proposed that eradicating the problem of a disconnected bureaucracy meant that workers must become active participants in economic planning and management. One way to realize this solution would be through education. He suggested in the same 1967 speech that the government increasing the availability of university education would turn more of the country's workforce into technicians and specialists. These educated workers could then labor in factories and farms alongside their peers. The disconnect between bureaucrat and worker would be abolished because the responsibilities of the bureaucracy would be shared with the proletariat. Castro believed that this process could be completed in just a few years. In one example, he stated that agriculture-animal husbandry institutes could require students to train in agricultural labor. These students with hybrid technical and agricultural training were predicted to number 40,000 by 1974 and almost 100,000 by 1975.<sup>78</sup> It is unclear if this proposed solution to *burocratismo* was entirely implemented during Sovietization. However, it did influence the reform that was made to economic planning. Cuba's new planning model that emerged during the 1970s gave the proletariat agency over the economy and production through mass worker organizations.

The Cuban state interpreted its pivot to this model of economic planning by clearly explaining to the Cuban people how it worked. One example was how the state narrated the Federation of Cuban Women and the prominent economic role it assumed during Sovietization.

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<sup>77</sup> Ritter and Girvan, 329.

<sup>78</sup> "Castro Addresses Steelworkers in Havana".

In 1974, the FCW was featured in *Granma's* report on the expansion of daycares in Havana. These daycares were designed to care for the children of workers living in the city. The FCW was responsible for planning and executing the construction of these facilities. FCW planners were concerned with efficiently serving the correct number of working-class women in need of childcare aid. Vilma Espín, the president of the FCW, collaborated with the Development of Social and Agricultural Buildings (DSAB) in order complete the project.

Espín met with members of DSAB brigade no. 14 who had experience with building daycares in Peru.<sup>79</sup> She then led the FCW in working with the DSAB to plan the appropriate amount of the daycares that would adequately provide for Havana's working-class. The FCW determined that daycares would be built large enough to house up to 180 children with 18 builders and 80 volunteers assigned to construct each building. The FCW directed brigade no.14 to complete 4 daycares per year using prefabricated building materials provided by the state.<sup>80</sup> The efficiency and scale of the FCW's collaboration with the DSAB demonstrated the material impact Cuba's reformed model of planning had on the island.

The government continued to explain its reformed planning model by using vanguardism to portray itself as the leader for economic development. An example of this rhetorical legwork was the explanation of JUCEPLAN's responsibilities for 1975. In the summer of 1974 Luis Gutierrez, the Vice Minister of JUCEPLAN, was interviewed by the Agency of National Information. The interview was included in *Granma* and it covered two integral topics concerning JUCEPLAN's role in 1975. These topics were the way JUCEPLAN prepared its economic plan and its annual goals for the next year. Gutierrez stressed that JUCEPLAN

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<sup>79</sup> Maria Jimenez, "Realiza Encuentro la FMC con Brigada del DESA que Construye Círculos Infantiles," December 14, 1973, 4, July 1973-December 1973, *Granma*, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

prepared for the next year by receiving rules and regulations for its economic analyses from the government's Political Bureau and Executive Committee. JUCEPLAN's central planning board then worked alongside several mass worker organizations in analyzing Cuba's economic sectors. The planning board used this collaborative stage to communicate the various government directives each organization had to follow when executing the 1975 plan.<sup>81</sup>

Gutierrez also stated that JUCEPLAN's main goal in 1975 was to keep the working class invested in the creation and execution of the economic plan. The interview reveals that JUCEPLAN and the government presented themselves as responsible for keeping the means of production in the hands of workers.<sup>82</sup> The state believed it accomplished this task by having mass organizations comprised of Cuban laborers develop the economy by participating in its planning. This policy was interpreted by JUCEPLAN and the Cuban government as following the principle of vanguardism. Gutierrez stated that this economic model made the CPC act as a vanguard party that led Cuba's development by mobilizing the working class through mass bodies.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, this source demonstrates that the government used vanguardism to communicate the significance of Cuba's new planning model to everyday laborers.

The government's vanguardist framing of Cuba's reformed planning style shows that it made economic management more centralized. Cuba was hampered during the Utopian Period by the bureaucracy's and the working class's conflicting interests in economic production. The adoption of a reformed planning model fixed this problem by embracing centralization because it made the bureaucracy and proletariat work together under government leadership. The state directed the rules and regulations of each year's economic plan to worker-led mass organizations

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<sup>81</sup> "Objetivos Fundamentales del Plan de la Economía para 1975," July 9, 1974, 2, July 1974- December 1974, Granma, Cuban Heritage Collection, Otto G. Richter Library, Miami.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

who would then execute it. This evolution in state planning satisfied Castro's insistence that bureaucrats and workers must collaborate to efficiently develop Cuba.

Cuba's reformed style of planning related to the Sovietization Period because it was a change made after 1970 that utilized the recently created JUCEPLAN to improve the economy. This new planning system was not a one for one adoption of Soviet practices at the time. Instead, it was created for Cuba's economic and material conditions. It utilized Cuba's mass worker organizations to overcome issues with underdevelopment that had plagued the island for decades. The state used vanguardism to narrate this economic reform to Cuban workers by framing itself as the leader for national development.

Internationalism and vanguardism were the rhetorical tools used by the Cuban government to frame Sovietization for two different audiences. The government's rhetoric about Sovietization's reforms intended to legitimize its alliance with the Soviet Union and the domestic changes in were implemented during the 1970s. It is important to note that the government's narration of Sovietization continued during the Special Period. Government rhetoric in the early 1990s reaffirmed Cuba's socialist policies and its commitment to Marxism-Leninism. Indeed, the government stayed loyal to its ideological convictions while being forced to make concessions in order to secure its survival. This circumstance resulted in the state popularizing slogans about sacrifice and perseverance. Catchphrases like "Cuba against everyone" and "Nothing is impossible for those who struggle" resembled the government's tactic of rhetorically adhering to its socialist foundations while preparing the public for an uncertain future without the Soviet Union.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Pérez., 303.

## CONCLUSION

The Sovietization Period ushered in an era of reform and stability for Cuba. The island's exiled anti-communist ideologues and socialist government both attempted to interpret Sovietization for their respective political bases. Exiled ideologues framed the period as a symbol of communist despotism and as a catalyst for Castro's downfall. These analyses were born from the exile political contexts of the 1970s and 1990s respectively. The Cuban government framed Sovietization as an essential step in developing the island and building socialism. This narrative was articulated through the Marxist-Leninist ideals of internationalism and vanguardism. Internationalism was used to address the Soviet state in order to cement Cuba's place in the Communist Bloc and fulfill the demands of its realist pragmatic foreign policy. Vanguardism was used to narrate to Cuban workers the domestic impact of Sovietization's economic changes. This principle was specifically used to interpret Cuba's new model of state planning that emerged in the early 1970s.

These contrasting narratives about Sovietization reveals the need to broaden the historiography about it. The lasting legacy and consequences of the period are not well known among Cuban and Cold War historians because it has often been treated as a secondary topic in broader works about Cuban history. This gap in academic understanding is simply a result of Sovietization not being given the appropriate amount of interest by modern scholars. *Cuba's Forgotten Decade: How the 1970s Shaped the Revolution* serves as the genesis of a new emerging dialogue that specifically studies the impact Sovietization had on Cuban socialism.

This paper intends to encourage future histories to be written about the Sovietization Period so that its significance may be more clearly defined. The piece is significant in Sovietization historiography because it will generate future scholarly works that will pose and answer new questions about period's historical nature. One potential research question asks: how did Sovietization shape the genuine ideological beliefs of the Cuban state? This paper shows how the government rhetorically framed Sovietization. However, did the period's foreign policy and domestic reforms fundamentally reshape the ideological platform of Cuba's political leadership? Another question that deserves further study inquires if other nations in the Soviet Bloc experienced their own version of Sovietization? This question was born out of Cuba's particular challenges with underdevelopment that influenced what reforms emerged during the 1970s and how they were characterized. This context behind Sovietization appears specific to Cuba but was it seen in other underdeveloped CMEA nations like Vietnam or Mongolia?

Future additions to the historiography should be encouraged by how it is evolving. *Cuba's Forgotten Decade: How the 1970s Shaped the Revolution* renewed the discourse by rejecting the old assumption that Sovietization was an insignificant era of political reform. This argument progressed the historiography past aged debates about the period's role in Cold War international relations and its secondary status in broader works about Cuban history. Indeed, the book is a steppingstone for this paper to bring the study of Sovietization into forefront by focusing on the topics of political rhetoric and ideological transformation. This paper's inclusion in the new emerging historiography will hopefully serve as a catalyst for future works about the period. This scholarly process will ideally result in a comprehensive understanding of Sovietization and its historical legacy.

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