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*The European Union Perception of Cuba:
From Frustration to Irritation*

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9. How important is European integration to the United States today?
10. The failure of a necessary partnership? Do the United States and the European Union necessarily have to understand each other? Under what conditions?
11. Is it possible to conceive a strategic partnership between the United States, the European Union and Russia?
12. Russia: a member of the European Union? Who would be interested in this association?

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The European Union Perception of Cuba: From Frustration to Irritation*

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THE EUROPEAN UNION PERCEPTION OF CUBA: FROM FRUSTRATION TO IRRITATION

Fidel Castro dramatically selected the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of his failed attack against the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953, for his rejection of any kind of humanitarian assistance, economic cooperation, and political dialogue with the European Union (EU) and its Member States, signaling one of the lowest points in European-Cuban relations.¹ Just days before the anniversary of what history would later recognize as the prelude to the Cuban Revolution, the European Union's Foreign Relations Council issued a harsh criticism of the regime's latest policies and personal insults against some European leaders (notably, Spain's José María Aznar), in essence freezing all prospects of closer relations. The overall context was, of course, the global uncertainty of the U.S. occupation of Iraq in the aftermath of the post-September 11 tension. Having survived the end of the Cold War and the perennial U.S. harassment, the Castro regime seemed to have lost its most precious alternative source of international cooperation, if not economic support.

An Overall Assessment

In April 2003 an extremely serious crisis affected Cuba's international relations, and most especially its link with Europe. It was the result of the harshness of the reprisals against the dissidents and the death sentences imposed on three hijackers of a ferry. These developments pushed back a series of rapprochement measures maintained by the European Union and most of its member states with the expectation of contributing to facilitate the political transition at the expected end of the Castro regime. In spite of the fact that the Cuban government justified its actions in view of the perceived threat presented by the increased activity of the internal opposition and the backing provided by the U.S. government to the dissidents, the bluntness of the response (disproportionate imprisonment and summary executions by firing squad) was too much to swallow.

The measures generated an unprecedented world-wide protest not limited to the usual conservative sectors in the United States and the Cuban exile community. Traditionally tamed governments in Europe made explicit protests, while important backers of the Cuban regime abandoned their endorsement, changing it for a straight denunciation. In the European context, the serious deterioration caught the EU institutions flat-footed, with the result that once again a possible cooperative arrangement became doubtful.² After careful consideration, prefaced by intended measures to be taken by several member states, the institutional framework of the EU acted accordingly. The European Parliament passed a Resolution and the Council adopted conclusions condemning Cuba. The Commission announced on May 1, 2003, the freezing of the procedure to consider the admission of Cuba into the Africa-Pacific-Caribbean (ACP) Cotonou Agreement.³ In essence, this

¹ See his speech at Santiago de Cuba, on July 26, 2003, "Calumniar y sancionar a Cuba, además de injusto y cobarde, es ridículo," *Granma*, 27 julio 2003. www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2003/07/27/nacional/articulo24.html. Appendix XII.

² AFP, "Prisión a disidentes traba acuerdos con la Unión Europea," *El Nuevo Herald*, 1 abril 2003.

³For general information, consult the EU Commission website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/development_old/cotonou/index_en.htm

decision pushed back the EU-Cuba relationship to a low level, similar to the one existing in 1996 when the EU voted a Common Position (CP)⁴ conditioning a full European cooperation package to reforms to be made by the Cuban regime.⁵ This time it was not the Cuban regime's withdraw of the application process, as it did in 2000, but the decision of the European Union not to continue with the negotiations. As expected, however, Cuba decided to again withdraw its application in order to avoid an embarrassing rejection. From a dubious attitude and the absence of a clear single policy on Cuba, now the EU appeared to have confirmed an effective common policy.

On June 5, the Presidency (held by Greece) of the EU issued an unprecedented blistering declaration on Cuba's "deplorable actions" in "violating fundamental freedoms," demanding the immediate release of "all political prisoners," and calling on EU member states to limit high-level government visits to Cuba, to reduce the profile of participation in cultural events, and to invite dissidents to national day celebrations.⁶ On July 21, the EU Council of Foreign Affairs issued a conclusion using some of the crudest terms labeling Cuba's latest actions, confirming the previously announced sanctions of a mostly political nature.⁷ The EU demanded the release of political prisoners, denounced the manipulation of an anti-drug trafficking campaign for internal repression, condemned Cuba's demonstrations against European embassies, and expected a new attitude of the Cuban government, conditioning all future assistance on political and economic reforms.⁸ In sum, from a policy of persuasion, the EU had expressed first frustration in expecting signs of reform from Cuba, and finally issued unequivocal signs of irritation.⁹

In contrast with the apparent cohesion of EU's policies on Cuba, variation has been the order of the day regarding European national attitudes towards Cuba, explaining the lack of a cohesive, well-coordinated policy, to the frequent (behind the scenes) dismay of the staff of the European Commission.¹⁰ For example, while Belgium can usually be labeled as a neutral observer, more critical when led by conservatives than by Social Democrats, Austria prefers a cultural approach, and the most critical states are led by Sweden's "Nordic fundamentalism" based on pressures to respect human rights. Germany has opted for a gradual rapprochement and the UK tilts towards change through trade and cooperation. The special relationship between Spain and Cuba has neutralized most of the hard line attitude tested by Prime Minister José María Aznar after coming to power in 1996. Italy has replicated the engagement policy of France, while Portugal has inserted Cuba into its Latin American foreign policy. Direct

⁴ See Appendix I.

⁵ For a review of these events, see my book entitled Cuba, the United States and the Helms-Burton Doctrine: International Reactions Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000.

⁶ Declaration, Presidency of the European Union, June 5, 2003. See Appendix X.

⁷ EFE, "Europa prepara su crítica más dura contra Castro," El Nuevo Herald, 12 julio 2003; AFP, "EU to Launch New Attack on Cuba," July 17, 2003.

⁸ See my commentaries: "Triste aniversario del Moncada," La Opinión de Los Angeles, 22 julio 2003 (www.laopinion.com/editorial.artopinion.htm.html?rkey=003072213501613982); and "Cuba: un trist aniversario," Avui, 25 juliol 2003 (www.avui.es/avui/diari/03/jul/25/100125.htm); "De Bruselas al Moncada", La Clave (Madrid); El Nuevo Herald, 1 agosto 2003 (www.miami.com/mld/elnuevo/news/opinion/6429749.htm?template=contentModules/... 8/2/2003).

⁹ See my commentary: "Unión Europea-Cuba: de la frustración a la irritación," La Opinión de Los Angeles, 20 mayo 2003; "La Unión Europea ante Cuba," El Nuevo Herald, 13 mayo 2003.

¹⁰ For an expanded comment, see Susanne Gratius, "Cuba: un caso aparte en la política exterior de la Unión Europea," in Joaquín Roy and Roberto Domínguez, eds. Las relaciones exteriores de la Unión Europea, (México: UNAM, 2000), pp. 261-272.

government contacts have multiplied in recent years and only Finland does not have an embassy in Havana (only for economic reasons).¹¹

In the meanwhile, the European media ceased to look at Cuba through the lenses of the Cold War, which has resulted in mixed views in the political analyses of the Castro regime. In general, European newspapers seem to recognize the advances of the Cuban Revolution, while they are more critical of the human rights violations and economic weaknesses of the regime. Understandably, this pattern has drastically changed since the incidents of April 2003. In terms of volume, Cuba seems to enjoy disproportionate attention in the European media considering the relative value of the country in global trade and economic terms. While the British press seems to be more objective, in Spain Cuban affairs can turn into the subject of debate at the level of internal politics. Political parties are equally subdivided into ultra conservatives rejecting direct contact with Castro, far-left nostalgics retaining loyalties to the Cuban Revolution, and the majority of the rest favoring a critical dialogue as the best way to guarantee a peaceful transition. Most lively on Cuban affairs are the European NGOs (church organizations, universities, foundations) dealing with Cuba, as well as regional and local governments, especially in Spain and Italy.¹² Pax Christi, one of the most vocal and influential church-related NGOs, has issued critical reports on European links with Cuba.¹³ In any event, as we see in the last part of this study, media, intellectuals, and political forces exhausted their confidence in the Cuban potential for reform as a result of the serious April 2003 events.

On the economic scene, activities between Cuba and Europe have been increasing in the last decade. Trade has doubled. EU exports to Cuba topped €1.43 billion in 2001 (44% from Spain, followed by Italy and France). Cuban imports in Europe were in the amount of €581 million (54% in the Netherlands, followed by Spain). Two thirds of Cuba's imports from developed countries come from the EU. Bilateral development aid and tourism are two of the most important sources of European involvement in Cuba. Almost 70% of cooperation assistance comes from Europe, led by Spain (16.8%), followed by the Commission. Italian tourists are the leaders (13%) in a key sector for the Cuban economy. European direct investment in Cuba is over 50% of total foreign investment, with Spain covering 25%, followed by Italy with 13%.¹⁴ Of the 400 investment consortia, 105 are with Spanish companies, followed by Canada (60) and Italy (57).¹⁵ Considering this impressive level of engagement, it is not surprising that only Sweden does not have a bilateral cooperation agreement with Cuba, and ten European countries have investment protection agreements with Havana. Spain leads the European pack with the number of agreements of different kinds with the Cuban government, followed by Italy, the country that in 1993 inaugurated the investment protection pacts.¹⁶

¹¹ IRELA, "Revision of European Policy on Cuba," pp. 17-21.

¹² IRELA, "Revision," pp. 25-26.

¹³ *The European Union and Cuba: Solidarity or Complicity?*, September 2000.

http://www.cubacenter.org/media/recent_briefs/paxchristi.html

¹⁴ IRELA, "Revision," pp. 27-34; Comisión Europea, *Cuba y la Unión Europea*, 2003.

¹⁵ EFE, "Mayoría de inversores en Cuba provienen de la UE", *Diario las Américas*, 9 febrero 2003.

¹⁶ IRELA, "Revision," p. 34.

The ACP: A Back Door to the EU?

Whatever is the evaluation of the relationship between Cuba and individual European countries, the stark reality is that Cuba is the only Latin American country that still does not enjoy a bilateral cooperation agreement with the EU. A search through the official EU web pages could (and still does to a great extent) generate a sense of confusion and frustration because Cuba does not have a place like any other Latin American country in the External Relations structure of the Commission and until very recently did not occupy a specific place in the framework of the Directorate General for Development (formerly called DG VIII).¹⁷ With the derailment in the year 2000 of the process towards the signing of the post-Lomé agreements, EU officers dealing with the Cuba dossier used to joke that they were commissioned to take care of the ACP... and Cuba, with no documents, while all the files were frozen in the Directorate General of External Relations (formerly DG Ib), and the EU Commission delegation in Mexico was in theory accredited to Havana.

This anomaly was further complicated when Cuba became a member of the ACP countries without being a signatory of the Cotonou agreements, successor of Lomé. Nonetheless, Europe as a whole has been Cuba's most important trade and investment source, replacing the Soviet Union as Havana's main commercial partner. With the vanishing of the Soviet Bloc, Europe has been able to afford to accept Cuban exceptionalism and has developed what can be labeled as "conditioned constructive compromise" based more on the carrot than the stick. But, until very recently, Brussels has barely used its economic leverage to pressure Cuba on a political level. The peculiar political structure of the EU has helped reinforce this weakness. European persuasion has been reduced to the spirit and the content of the Common Position of 1996, which in turn owes its development to the aftermath of the confrontation between the EU and the United States over the Helms-Burton law.¹⁸

The Common Position, approved under the Spanish conservative leadership in the fall of 1996, renewed every six months, is a pre-condition for a bilateral agreement between the EU and Cuba, a clause that has been explicitly rejected by Havana.¹⁹ It calls for a pacific transition to a pluralist democracy, preferably led from the top, with the benefit of development aid being channeled through European and Cuban NGOs. Observers have noted that this Common Position is void in view of the volume of bilateral relations with the majority of the most important member states. It has been basically violated by Cuba's most important partner, Spain, both in terms of trade and aid, under both socialist and conservative governments. Only the Nordic countries seem to respect the terms of the position. The result of this mixed message is that Cuba has not taken seriously the tough attitude emanating from the EU common institutions.

¹⁷See current format (May 2003):

http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/country/country_home_en.cfm?cid=cu&lng=en&status=old#overview See general web: <http://www.imf.org/external/country/index.htm>

¹⁸Richard Nuccio, "The USA and Cuba", in Richard Haas (ed.), *Trans-Atlantic Tensions: The United States, Europe and Problem Countries*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999, pp. 7-29.

¹⁹Eduardo Perera, "Condicionalidad y condicionamientos previos en la cooperación al desarrollo de la Unión Europea" en *Revista de Estudios Europeos*, La Habana, núm. 53/54, 2000, pp. 3-33.

A rough picture of the attitudes of the different member states on Cuba's prospective Cotonou membership shows a southern bloc composed of Spain (with its own internal contradictions of economic engagement and political confrontation with Cuba), Portugal, Italy and France acting as main proponents. In contrast Germany, the UK and Sweden seem to distance themselves in the political dimension. Less influential in world affairs, Austria, Belgium and Finland don't have much at stake in the Caribbean and Latin America. A group of "blockers" (Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK) seem to slow down the process of the post-Lomé arrangement, while "openers" (France, Portugal, Spain and Italy) favor a positive approach. "Mediators" (Austria, Belgium and Germany) remain ready to serve accordingly.²⁰

It is also a fact that institutional relations have been recently difficult for two kinds of reasons. The first is composed of uncomfortable personal linkages and references, not by chance implicating Spanish officials. When a deal seemed to be close in early 1996, the insistence of Commissioner Manuel Marín on the human rights issues became an insurmountable obstacle.²¹ The cloudy atmosphere has worsened since a new Commission was established. In 1999, Javier Solana, the new High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, was insulted by the Cuban leadership, claiming that he was endorsing U.S. policies. At some times, there appeared to be friction between the EU officers and Cuban ministers during the Lomé negotiations. The second origin of difficulties seems to derive from external crises. Stemming back to the shooting down of the Brothers to the Rescue planes, the controversy over the Elián González crisis, and protests against U.S. interference were extended to cover all foreign activities in Cuba.

In any event, and in spite of all difficulties, the road to a post-Lomé deal seemed to be on a sure path, initiated in Brussels in September 1998²² and culminating in the signing of the new agreement on June 23, 2000, in Cotonou. Havana was not dealing now with one office in Brussels but with a multilateral outfit of 77 countries. In essence, the switch of Cuba's position in the EU structure from the Latin American context to the post-Lomé cooperation framework was dictated by a political decision to send a message to Cuba that the insertion in the Cotonou setting was the best option and that the political dimensions were downsized. However, Castro rejected the procedure, and withdrew the application intention,²³ claiming the Resolution issued by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in its annual gathering was one-sided, and suspended the scheduled visit of the Troika.²⁴ Ironically, the overall climate for Cuban membership in Lomé was positive, shifting towards a normalization of the EU-Cuba relationship, this time anchored in the ACP multilateral context.²⁵ Only some European governments seemed to oppose, led by the UK, the Netherlands, and Sweden. According to evident signals, the UK apparently threatened to veto the arrangement

²⁰IRELA, "Revision of European Policy on Cuba?" p. 1.

²¹ Nuccio, *op. cit.*

²² Francesc Granell, "Cuba y la Unión Europea: del encuadre latinoamericano al ACP caribeño", in *Revista Española de Desarrollo y Cooperación*, núm. 3, Madrid 1998.

²³ For an academic analysis from the Cuban point of view, see Hilda Puerta Rodríguez, "El Acuerdo de Cotonou y el posible ingreso de Cuba," *Revista de Estudios Europeos*, No. 60, 2002, pp 3-24.

²⁴ Resolution on Cuba presented by Poland and the Czech Republic.

²⁵ IRELA, *Revision of the European Policy towards Cuba: Perceptions and Interests of the EU Member States*, Madrid, 2000.

once it would come to be discussed by the Council. Consequently, Cuba then branded the EU conditions as “arrogant”, “unacceptable”, and dependent on the “U.S. policy”.²⁶

Supporters of Cuba’s membership and most neutral observers considered the Cuban reaction as unexpected and violent. In fact, the decision was a slap in the face of ACP members that advocated Cuba’s membership. ACP diplomats in Brussels confessed on the record to being surprised, although off-the-record seasoned ambassadors suspected the outcome and were not caught off guard.²⁷ EU Commission officers expressed tongue-in-cheek satisfaction for what they feared was the result of hard work with high expectations. Evidence shows that the decision was taken after a complete internal debate on the cost and benefits. The Cuban government figured that the economic benefits were not an adequate compensation for the loss of political independence and the insertion into a multilateral dialogue of unforeseeable consequences when dealing with democracy and human rights. In a gathering of high government officials of the Caribbean and Central America, off the record, Castro called the deal “demasiado fastidio para tan poca plata” [too big of a nuisance for so little money].²⁸ This euphemistic ocurrencia, an apparently innocent remark, became an omen of a more serious incident to come in April of 2003, confirming the worst suspicions about the priorities of the Cuban regime regarding the European linkages.

However, some months later, in the sequel to this mini-drama, on December 14, 2000, and to the surprise of many observers, Cuba became the 78th member of the ACP group. The novelty of the event is that Cuba joined without signing the Cotonou convention.²⁹ For the confusion of experts and unguarded observers, this anomaly led some to believe that Cuba had in fact obtained the same benefits. This is not the case.

In reality, the charter of this organization (in essence, an international organization like any other) had to be amended to provide for a new member that will not use the only and unique service of the organization: the trade and cooperation benefits from EU member states. In comparative metaphorical terms, Cuba’s membership in the ACP is like belonging to an exclusive golf club without being able to play golf, only watching others play and walking around the facilities.³⁰ Seasoned observers may point out that this is another example of an EU compromise to accommodate for difficult circumstances and give the impression to the three parties (the EU member states, the ACP countries and Cuba) that they have won something in the preparation of Cuba becoming a full member some day. Harsher critics of the overall picture may claim that this only reveals a certain degree of absurdity with no substantial results. However, this odd solution only reflects that the ACP group is composed of sovereign states that endorsed Cuba’s membership. While some member states expressed reluctance, the EU accepted the ACP wishes and pointed out to the Cotonou procedure. The result is the current split solution, void by the explicit rejection of any EU assistance issued by Castro on July 26, 2003.

²⁶ Granma, 29 abril de 2000.

²⁷ Interviews carried out in Brussels and the Caribbean during the months of July and August 2000.

²⁸ Literal quote from a Caribbean high government official.

²⁹ See statement in ACP web: <http://www.acpsec.org/gb/press/146b034e.html>

³⁰ Georgetown Agreement of 1992.

EU Standing Showcases

During all this time, it has been reasonably expected that the EU would continue the policy of persuading Cuba towards a political reform. Brussels would also maintain a limited profile of normalcy with Havana in the diplomatic field, stressing that the door of opportunity regarding the ACP deal was open.

As an example of the obvious contradiction between bilateral engagement and supranational conditioning, the record shows that the EU has collectively demonstrated impressive coherence on two fronts in the context of the United Nations. On the one hand, the EU member states bloc has opposed the embargo and the Helms-Burton law.³¹ This is a sign of the slow but steady build up of an incipient EU common foreign policy. Europe can muster a much superior solidarity than the one that seems to be absent in Latin America. Moreover, in the annual conference of the Human Rights Commission, Europe is highly unified. In contrast, the Latin American countries seem to go their separate ways, although there was an improvement in the 2002 vote, but the split reappeared in 2003, in part further confused by the opposition of most Latin American governments to the war in Iraq.

Since 1996, the year of the approval of Helms-Burton and the subsequent passage of the Common Position on Cuba, the European states have maintained a solid bloc attitude on both items. Not only have the EU members voted in unison, but they have tried to do so in conjunction with the candidate countries that expect to join the Union in the near future, in compliance (although not legally binding, with the result of certain exceptions) with the rule of coherence to foreign policy. It would be a sign of bad initiation rites if candidates voted differently in international settings than the EU member states. In contrast, Latin American governments seem to have at least three fronts regarding Cuba. Some vote for, some abstain, and some others oppose, according to circumstances or changes in the executives.³²

Other diplomatic moves show a certain degree of ambivalence and contradiction depending on the prevailing circumstances, who is holding the EU presidency, and what kind of individual conflicts and priorities member states have regarding Cuba. For example, in one of the attempts to speed up the process of a closer relationship with Cuba, Belgium Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Louis Michel, holding the presidency of the EU, visited Havana in August of 2001, raising expectations in EU circles and irritation in Cuba, as well as concerns in the U.S. Department of State. The Cuban government officially considered the visit in its Belgium dimension, while Spain (as next EU presidency) demoted its representation in the Troika to the minimum. The visit, announced to the EU Commission with barely five days notice, served to somewhat smooth the friction between Brussels and Havana caused by the ballot cast in the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. The EU wanted to send a message of holding the door open and the Cuban government managed to show that it counted on Brussels' understanding, especially during the Belgium presidency. This linkage was predicted to be more difficult during the Spanish presidency in the first semester of 2002, with Madrid heavily pressed by crucial EU pending issues, such as the debate on the future of Europe, the plans for enlargement, and economic dimensions in the new

³¹ See my book Cuba, the United States, and the Helms-Burton Doctrine, chapter 5, pp. 105-129.

³² See my column "Coherencia europea, vacilación latinoamericana," El Nuevo Herald, 18 abril 2001.

euro era. A new run of disagreement with Brussels while Spain was at the wheel of the EU might not have been the most beneficial outcome for any party, but it might have tactically helped Castro as it has on other occasions.³³

In the absence of the standard bi-lateral cooperation framework agreement, the standing EU policy towards Cuba can be subdivided into three main areas. The first one is a relationship based on humanitarian grounds; the second is an attitude towards the anchoring of Cuba in its natural Caribbean habitat; the third, and most complex, is the setting of the wider ACP framework.

Regarding humanitarian assistance, the EU record shows that the funds provided by the Commission have increased in the line of cooperation assistance delivered through NGOs during the past five years: from 0.6 M€ in 1997 to 5.4 M€ in 2001, with a peak of 8.2 M€ in 2000. Waiting for quality proposals, the Commission has been considering it essential to ensure that NGO projects meet the criteria of financial and institutional sustainability, to allow for long-term impact at the beneficiary level. In the view of Brussels, if properly conducted and monitored, NGO cooperation may therefore effectively contribute to the development of the incipient civil society in Cuba.³⁴

With respect to humanitarian aid and development assistance, this variance on a programmable basis was phased out. A comprehensive evaluation conducted in April/May 2000 concluded that Cuba was no longer in a state of emergency. Before 2000 Cuba received sums sometimes reaching €30 million per year, a level that was reduced after the failure of the cooperation agreement in 1996. A humanitarian aid allocation of €8 million was channeled through the 2001 European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) funds. In addition, the Commission allocated €0.5 million to address the emergency needs of the affected population in the region of Matanzas, in the wake of Hurricane Michelle (November 4, 2001). In sum, the record shows that since 1993 the EU has financed close to €125 million of assistance measures, of which nearly two thirds have been in the field of humanitarian aid. It is estimated that some 16% of the Cuban population has benefited from this aid. Following the Commission decision to phase out humanitarian aid, measures supporting economic reform and civil society development have been increasing. Assistance of this type to Cuba would continue as long as programmable funds are not available. It was expected that, on average, between €15 and 18 million would be used for development programs in Cuba.³⁵

The exception made for this line of assistance was based on the logic of the seriousness of Hurricane Michelle's destruction, estimated at \$1.8 billion, considered as the worst natural calamity in Cuba in fifty years. Thus the justification for the use of € 0.5 million earmarked to provide medical and other emergency supplies for affected persons. As far as disaster prevention is concerned the Commission, in December 2001, approved funding for Cuba in the amount of € 0.92 million in the context of a regional program for the Caribbean.

The EU Commission and other EU entities have been well aware of the seriousness of the Cuban economic situation. In addition to the damage caused by natural disasters,

³³ See my column entitled "Cuba y la Unión Europea," *Diario16*, 5 setiembre 2001.

³⁴ From EU Commission sources. See Appendix V.

³⁵ Data and considerations from EU Commission sources.

the Cuban government has seen a severe drop in fiscal revenues and foreign exchange because of consequences of the September 11 attack. Tourism decreased by 13% in September 2001 and 20% in October 2001, and U.S. remittances were reduced by 60%. On top of that Russia's decision to close its Cuban 'spy station' represented an annual loss of some \$200 million. In this rather dark setting, Cuba had to look for its natural geographical habitat. In consequence, the EU Commission has been clearly in favor of promoting the regional integration of Cuba in the Caribbean, Latin American and ACP context. In this connection the opportunities that the follow-up to the I EU-Latin America-Caribbean Summit held in Rio in 1999 provided in terms of support measures and partnerships, were to be fully exploited. The Commission has been also willing to facilitate Cuba's participation in regional measures under the auspices of CARIFORUM (of which Cuba has been a member since October 2001) through relevant budget lines. For example, a financial proposal under the 2002 budget was set foreseeing Cuba's participation in a regional Caribbean project to fight swine fever.

A more complex pending issue has been presented by the consequences of the impasse regarding the application for the Cotonou agreement. Following the 9th Evaluation of the Common Position the Council concluded on June 25, 2001, that the EU would welcome a constructive dialogue with Cuba on a future cooperation framework based on the respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law. This conclusion was reiterated by the Council in its 10th Evaluation of the Common Position issued on December 10, 2001.³⁶ It was doubly ratified in June and December of 2002, with the 11th and 12th evaluations.³⁷ This EU procedure was explicitly rejected by Cuba.³⁸ The Council deliberately chose this formulation as an implicit reference to Cotonou since the same text is contained in Art. 9 of the Agreement. As we will see later on, Cuba did not submit any other request for membership, even though Castro announced his intention to do so on December 12, 2002.

On a more politically-oriented level, during the EU Spanish presidency of the first semester of 2002, relations with Cuba reflected a freezing of the attempts made during the previous Belgian presidency. The end balance was mixed. What was perceived by Cuba as a "window of opportunity" (the presidencies of Spain, Denmark and Greece would not make Cuba-EU relations a priority in the sense expected by Havana) did not materialize beyond the trip taken by Belgian Foreign Minister Jean Louis Michel to Cuba in August of 2001, or the low-level troika trip of December 2001.³⁹

Meanwhile, the weight of Cuba's international activity and concerns seemed to have tilted towards the Western Hemisphere, away from Europe, perceived as concentrating on more pressing issues such as enlargement, the rise of the right, and immigration on top of the crucial disagreements over the U.S. intervention in Iraq. This thesis was confirmed by the absence of Castro in the II EU-Latin American-Caribbean Summit held in Madrid on May 17-18, 2002, replicating his decision of not attending the Ibero-American Summits held in Lima in 2001 and in the Dominican Republic in 2002, a yearly event where the Cuban leader has been the frequent main protagonist of

³⁶See Appendix II.

³⁷ See Appendixes III and IV. AFP, "UE vuelve a pedir transición democrática y libertades en Cuba," 10 diciembre 2002.

³⁸ AFP, "Desdén La Habana las posiciones de la Unión Europea," 14 diciembre 2002.

³⁹ Mauricio Vicent, "La UE cree insuficiente," El País, 9 diciembre 2001.

polemics.⁴⁰ Among the reasons behind his decision was his calculation of not reaping the expected benefits and risking a losing confrontation with some vocal counterparts, and most especially Spain's Prime Minister José María Aznar.

It always remained to be seen if an (very unlikely) activation of Title III of Helms-Burton would cause a European reaction that would endanger the future of the World Trade Organization (WTO) besieged by a politically-loaded litigation, the main reason for the crafting of the 1997 and 1998 understandings between the EU Commission and the Clinton administration. This deal was signed between the United States and the European Union, by which the EU agreed to monitor future European investments in illegally expropriated U.S. properties in Cuba. In turn, the United States would freeze retaliatory measures against European investors, notably titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton law.⁴¹ But all of this reasonable logic seems to belong to the pre-September 11 world scene.

All things considered, in the event that the U.S.-Cuba relationship continues to follow the impasse of four decades while the inexorable biological transition proceeds in Havana, it was expected that the European attitude would not drastically change. The EU as an entity would continue to act in a fashion of conditioning a bilateral agreement to a minimum of progress in the political field, while the Common Position would be reduced to an endorsement of this policy. In fact, in the aftermath of Carter's visit to Cuba, this attitude was confirmed by EU Commissioner Chris Patten. In the context of the II EU-Latin American Summit, he qualified Cuba's respect for human rights as lacking.⁴² The bulk of the available assistance was supposed to be dedicated to a minimum of anchoring Cuba in the market economy.⁴³ In contrast, Castro invested his political capital in courting his neighbors in the setting of CARICOM's summit held in Havana in December 2002, where Cuba would receive encouragement for a deeper relationship with the ACP group, an offer that the Cuban leader took upon himself with renewed energy.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Peru Egurbide, "Fidel Castro pide visado," El País, 15 mayo 2002; Pablo Alfonso, "Castro decide no asistir," El Nuevo Herald, 17 mayo 2002.

⁴¹ See Roy, Cuba, the United States, and the Helms-Burton Doctrine, chapter 7.

⁴² "EU would help Cuba more if it saw Better Respect for Human Rights," Sources Say (Brussels), May 16, 2002.

⁴³ Confirmed in a meeting between EU Commissioner Poul Nielson and Cuban Vice Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, Rodrigo Malmierca (Agence France Press, "Europa ayudará a la economía de mercado," El Nuevo Herald, 5 marzo 2002, 17A).

⁴⁴ AFP, "ACP pide a UE estudiar 'sin condición previa' candidatura de Cuba a acuerdo de cooperación," 11 diciembre 2002; EFE, "Apoyan ingreso de Cuba a pacto de Cotonú," El Nuevo Herald, 10 diciembre 2002; Pablo Alfonso, "La diplomacia de La Habana hacia el Caribe anglófono," El Nuevo Herald, 8 diciembre 2002.

Before the Storm

The year 2002 ended with two important developments on EU-Cuba relations. On the one hand, on December 8 Fidel Castro surprisingly announced that Cuba would reapply for accession to the Cotonou agreement.⁴⁵ On the other, the European Commission made official the opening of a full Delegation in Havana. Inaugurated in March 2003 by EU Commissioner Poul Nielson (who is in charge of development and ACP affairs), it was entrusted to an experienced staff led by former Cuba desk chief in Brussels, Sven Von Burgsdorff, with direct knowledge of Cuba, under the expectation of positive, substantial developments.⁴⁶ The background to these twin details is a combination of interlaced developments involving more than the two basic actors.

As outlined above, after a six-year period of frosty relations presided by the Common Position of 1996, the Belgian presidency led the first modest troika approach in December 2001. However, the Spanish presidency during the first semester of 2002 did not take any initiative to further the dialogue with Havana (in spite of a wide consensus recommending consultations). The Danish presidency during the second part of 2002 decided to insert the dialogue with Cuba in a wider EU-Latin America setting. While several Member States expressed renewed interest in furthering bilateral commercial relations, a majority in both the Council and the European Parliament consider the Common Position as a limiting factor that conditions the potential use of available instruments in the fields of political, economic and development cooperation on progress in respecting civil and political rights in Cuba.

As a first move from the ACP Group, a request was made on September 26, 2002, to grant Cuba observer status for the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiation process. Although the Member States were divided, a clear majority was in favor of the request advocating Cuba's regional political and economic integration. On November 4, 2002, the EU troika met with Cuba in Copenhagen, with the Commission represented by Poul Nielson. Both parties were frank, but not aggressive in their positions. Disagreement continued over the EU Common Position, the human rights situation in Cuba and cooperation in the area of human rights, while Cuba committed to pursue reforms to establish a more market-oriented economy. Cuba then hinted on probable candidature for membership in the Cotonou Agreement, a thought that was strongly encouraged by the Commission. Cuba then agreed to the Commission proposal to set up an EU-Cuba task force to identify solutions in the field of investment and trade. As a result of behind the scenes negotiations, a potential compromise solution suggested by the Commission and supported by the Member States was contemplated in which Cuba would be given an "informal" observer status during the "all-ACP" phase of the Economic Partnership negotiations.⁴⁷

Following the XII Evaluation of the EU Common Position all Member States, for the first time, were willing to reconsider the instruments available, with a view to making them more effective in the pursuit of the objectives of the Common Position. Following a Commission proposal the Council adopted on December 10, 2002, the

⁴⁵ AP, "Cuba to renew request to join aid pact," The Miami Herald, December 9, 2002.

⁴⁶ AFP, "La Comisión Europea favorece a la isla," El Nuevo Herald, 7 marzo 2003; Bosco Esteruelas, "La Comisión Europea abre la colaboración con Cuba," El País, 7 marzo 2003; Enrique Serbeto, "Castro podría abrir la puerta de salida a los cubanos a cambio de la ayuda de la UE", El País, 3 marzo 2003.

⁴⁷ From EU Commission and Council sources.

Conclusions reconfirming the Common Position. However, they two important modifications were introduced: (1) On the one hand, there were no longer limitations on development cooperation measures as long as the Cuban government attempted to meet the objectives of the Common Position (respect of human rights and democracy, improvement of living standards of the Cuban population and promotion of sustainable economic growth); (2) On the other, the term for periodic reviews of the Common Position was extended from six to twelve months, with the intention of giving both parties a longer term for pursuing a political dialogue.⁴⁸

Almost simultaneously, Castro announced in Havana before a meeting of all CARICOM Heads of Government (celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the opening of diplomatic relations between Cuba and four Caribbean states, in frontal challenge of the U.S. embargo) that Cuba intended to join the Cotonou Agreement. However, two fundamental questions then were: How the EU would react to this? What were the Cuban expectations and real intentions?

Cuba, understandably, would like to receive an answer before it submits its application. The problem is that the EU will not reveal its decisions a priori (in the ACP context or in any other membership procedure). For months, after much give and take, EU Commission officers were successful in convincing their Cuban counterparts that the European Union history is full of examples of a cycle including applying, rejection, resubmitting application, and admission. The United Kingdom and Spain are among the countries that experienced such process, and Cuba would not be different.⁴⁹ It must be understood that it is not EU policy to take an official position on a matter such as the admission of a new member to Cotonou unless the interested third party has formally introduced a membership request. The EU will therefore not be in a position to pronounce itself on Cuba's eventual membership in Cotonou before being in possession of the Cuban request. In consequence, if Cuba were in the future to approach the ACP-EU Council of Ministers with a new request for accession to Cotonou then the competent EU institutional bodies would have to assess the matter on the basis of the relevant part of the Cotonou Agreement (Art. 94) as any other third party request.

However, Cuba, if accepted by the ACP-EU Council of Ministers as a new member and subject to the conclusion of the ratification process in the Member States, would not automatically be in a position to enjoy the financial benefits under the Agreement. This is stipulated in Art. 94, dictating in consequence that Cuba's eventual accession would not infringe on the benefits enjoyed by the ACP States signatory to this Agreement under the provisions on development cooperation. Since the allocations for the 77 ACP Cotonou members have already been distributed on an indicative basis, Cuba would not receive funds under the present 9th European Development Fund (EDF). It would be feasible that the EU could decide to add a specific budget line, as was the case with South Africa, in order to finance cooperation measures benefiting Cuba under this Agreement. It is equally important to recall in this connection that Cuba, once a member, would have to meet the essential elements of the Cotonou acquis (as in the case of EU membership) in order to enjoy the eventual financial and commercial benefits deriving from the Agreement.

⁴⁸ General Affairs Council. XII Evaluation of the Common Position on Cuba. Conclusions. December 12, 2002. Appendix IV.

⁴⁹ From EU sources.

An intriguing subject related to this complex membership procedure is the attitude of some individual member states. It is a fact, never confirmed in public, that some EU Member States continued to object to Cuba's accession to Cotonou at that stage because, in their judgment, Cuba had not made progress in human rights improvements. EU officials are careful to point out that Art. 94 sets out the formal requirements for membership to Cotonou. Eligible is any "independent State whose structural characteristics and economic and social situation are comparable to those in the ACP States." It is interesting to note that no other conditions are mentioned. If Cuba ever submits a request for accession this petition will be assessed on no other grounds than the ones contained in the Cotonou Agreement.

However, the question if and to what extent Cuba meets the democracy and human rights criterion, as defined in Art. 9, is to be discussed only once Cuba is a member of the Agreement. The award of financial and commercial benefits under the Agreement is subject to fully respecting the stipulations of Art. 9. This, however, is not an issue while Cuba is not a Cotonou member state. It has to be understood that while the Common Position is a unilateral foreign policy statement of the EU, Cotonou is a multilateral partnership agreement constituting mutual rights and obligations under international law. This is separate from the annual UN Geneva evaluation of human rights, although it would be inconsistent if the EU Member States and candidates vote solidly to censure Cuba, and approve Cuba's credentials for Cotonou. However, it has to be recalled that the EU has consistently supported motions in the UN criticizing the human rights situation in countries with cooperation agreements, including Lomé and Cotonou signatories.

The decision to reapply for membership in 2002 and its consequences need to be considered in a wider and more complex scenario before the crisis of 2003, according to the analysis developed in Brussels. First, there was the financial exhaustion of Cuba by an accumulation of external shocks in 2001 (Hurricane Michelle, September 11 attacks, closing the Russian military intelligence station, global economic slowdown, oil price increases), with the result that Cuba faced in 2002 a sensible shortage in foreign hard currency, estimated at around \$500 million. As a remedy, the Cuban government made special efforts to attract more tourism and foreign direct investment as well as to agree with debtors on rescheduling arrangements. However, some estimates question the internal benefits of these revenues, since as high as 40% are dedicated to import foreign products to be consumed by tourists.⁵⁰

On the home front, measures to further liberalize the domestic economic environment, especially for the local entrepreneurial sector, have however not been improved accordingly. The economic gap between Cubans who have access to U.S. dollars and those who do not is increasing, as well as internal political dissidence. The crime rate has been obviously on the rise in recent years but tight police and law and order control have clearly succeeded in reducing its more visible effects. Police forces have harassed political dissidents (especially the organizers of the Varela project) and independent journalists, leading to the drastic measures taken in March and April of 2003.⁵¹

⁵⁰ From EU sources.

⁵¹ From EU Commission sources.

On the international front Cuba embarked, after striking a rather conciliatory tone with the United States following the September 11 attacks, on a double-edged strategy: pursuing a more confrontational course with the Bush Administration and engaging in a deliberate offensive towards the growing U.S. anti-embargo lobby both in Congress and in the business community. Following Cuba's narrow condemnation at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 2002, which was supported by several Latin American countries, including for the first time Mexico (with the taping of conversations held with President Fox), relations with the neighbors became rather sour (with insulting remarks against Uruguay's president). Relations with the Caribbean have been less problematic, with Cuba having signed partial free trade protocols with CARICOM in June 2001 and having joined CARIFORUM (the EU-ACP aid framework in the Caribbean area) in October 2001.

Because of the endemic economic crisis in Cuba the regime was in 2002 interested in improving its relations with the EU. In spite of the Geneva confrontation and rejection of the conditions of the EU Common Position, a positive attitude towards Brussels developed. Allowing Osvaldo Payá to travel to Europe to receive the Sakharov Prize was apparently part of the strategy. In the context of this mild EU-Cuba "honeymoon," the Commission was accurately perceived by Cuba as a major, cohesive force for a deeper rapprochement. However, Brussels was well aware that Havana's moves were dictated by a long-term strategic interest. Castro did not expect any special softening of the official U.S. attitude after the Republican victory in the mid-term elections in the Fall of 2002. Hence, he needed the Europeans for breathing space, pressed by financial shortfalls in Cuba and the rest of Latin America. The squeeze on oil from Venezuela has been only one of the troubles. Moreover, the economic opening from the United States in allowing the exports of some items has not come without a price --food and medicine sales are costly since they have to be purchased on a cash basis.

In consequence, the EU Commission opted once again for a policy of "constructive engagement", as opposed to one based on coercion, hoping for preparing the foundations for change in the longer run. In this line of thought, the opening of the EU Delegation in Havana was supposed to serve as the proper setting for the inclusion of Cuba in the new Asia-Latin American (ALA) Regulation (in which Cuba was already inserted in its 1992 arrangement), including a technical framework agreement governing the implementation of EU aid. This new instrument would allow for substantially wider development assistance objectives than under the Common Position, although this measure remains the EU policy towards Cuba. The Council Conclusions of December 10, 2002, significantly widened the scope of EU development cooperation in Cuba, thus taking away the sector limitations imposed in 1996.

The new ALA Regulation establishes clear principles for programming through a Country Strategy Paper and multi-annual indicative program, and limits the role of Member States at the project approval stage and allows untying of aid at the regional level. It has to be noted that, in spite of the absence of a standard cooperation agreement and the lack of membership in the Cotonou structure, Cuba participates to some extent in several EU programs: INCO (the network of research institutes), ALFA (the network of universities), URB AL (the network of cities), and AL INVEST (the promotion of investments). Cuban partners can also apply to @LIS, a program of cooperation in the

development of information and communication technologies in Latin American countries.⁵²

On balance, there was still a sense of moderate frustration, combined with some resignation, as a common denominator of the European attitude. This perception would survive provided the Cuban internal situation would not worsen beyond the tolerable limits of international impact. However, in the event that during the path to a definite transition the European policy of economic engagement renders the expected results, a sense of satisfaction would then become visible. Meanwhile, each one of the member states will continue to proceed in the defense of their best interests and historical obligations. Frustration will diminish as long as the emphasis is put on lessening the tensions in preparing the way for a peaceful transition, under the assumption that the future of Cuba is, after all, in the hands of the Cubans. A Declaration of the EU Spanish presidency welcoming the “Varela Project,” was explicit in this line of thought widely shared by a majority of the decision-making and opinion circles of the EU: [The project] “will succeed in opening a debate in favor of the process of a peaceful transition towards a pluralist democracy and reconciled Cuban society.”⁵³ The European Parliament’s award of the Sakharov Prize to Oswaldo Payá,⁵⁴ the renewed offer of constructive engagement, and the opening of an EU Delegation in Havana were confirmation of this line of thought and policy. However, the serious events of April 2003 drastically changed the constructive EU approach.

The (Other) Empire Strikes Back

Right after the serious events EU observers and representatives of member states compiled a bleak picture submitted in reports to the different institutions for their subsequent actions. It included, among others, the following aspects:

- Since March, in 29 trials, 75 defendants were found guilty and convicted under law articles 88 and 91 of the penal code, three others were charged under lesser charges. All those arrested were found guilty.
- Sentences ranged from 6 to 28 years with the average being 15-20 years; a total of 1454 years.
- The conduct of the trials has raised serious concerns about access to justice and the right to a free and fair trial by an impartial tribunal. The trials fell well short of international standards particularly with regard to: Adequate time and

⁵² European Commission, Cuba and the European Union, 2003.

⁵³ Declaration by the EU regarding the “Varela Project” (May 20, 2002).

⁵⁴ For a selection of impact of the ceremony in the Miami press, see: EFE, “Aznar pedirá a Cuba que permita a Payá recoger el premio Sajarov,” Diario las Américas, 3 diciembre 2002; AP, “Cuban Dissident Cleared to Leave to Accept Award,” The Miami Herald, December 15, 2002; Rui Ferreira, “El viaje de Payá causa entusiasmo y temores,” El Nuevo Herald, 17 diciembre 2002; Nancy San Martín, “Castro Foe’s Human Rights Award puts World Spotlight on Cuba,” The Miami Herald, December 17, 2002; Constant Brand, “EU Honors Cuban Dissident, Back Fight for Democracy,” The Miami Herald, 18 diciembre 2002; Editorial, “Payá’s Freedom Prize,” The Miami Herald, December 18, 2002; EFE, “Payá: existe un doble embargo en Cuba,” Diario las Américas, 18 diciembre 2002; AFP, “Payá pide solidaridad a Europa,” El Nuevo Herald, 24 diciembre 2002; EFE, “Payá espera que UE continúe apoyando la apertura pacífica de Cuba,” Diario las Américas, 20 diciembre 2002; for text in Spanish: “Un premio para el pueblo cubano,” El Nuevo Herald, 21 diciembre 2002; Diario las Américas, 22 diciembre 2002; in English: “Sakharov Prize Honors all Cuban People,” The Miami Herald, December 22, 2002.

facilities for the preparation of a defense and communication with the counsel of defendant's choosing; fair public hearing by independent and impartial tribunal; summary group trials each lasted on average one day; defendants were tried in groups of approximately six, each on different charges; no independent international observers were allowed in the courtrooms; State Security filled the courtrooms and some family members/supporters were turned away.

- EU ambassadors were denied access to the trials.
- On April 11, three people responsible for kidnapping a boat were executed, ending a nearly 3-year moratorium on the application of the death penalty.⁵⁵

With this background, on the eve of the May 1 celebration, as important in Cuba as it is in most of the world with the exception of the United States, the European Commission, in its weekly meeting, considered the thorny topic of Cuba and decided to file the still pending petition of Cuba to become a member of the Cotonou Agreement. The Commission issued a statement indicating that the situation in Cuba “has strongly deteriorated in such a very serious manner that the Commission did not want to remain silent.”⁵⁶ Commissioner Poul Nielson recommended delaying the process some months waiting for a change to be made by the Cuban government. Other members of the Commission (led by Spain’s Loyola de Palacio and UK’s Chris Patten, in charge of external relations) pressed for an indefinite ban on membership. Nielsen declared that the reason for this drastic decision was that the cooperative agreement is not limited to commercial benefits, but it also includes the area of respect for human rights.⁵⁷ Moreover, Patten put the burden on Cuban authorities (“the ball is in their court”) until they “repair the damage done to the most basic human rights.” The Commission also contemplated the renewal of Cuba’s membership in the UN Human Rights Commission.⁵⁸ For its part, the EU Council acted with a speedy condemnation, warning Cuba not to expect European aid.⁵⁹ The Latin American Group of the Council decided to endorse an unsuccessful Nicaraguan censure motion against Cuba presented at the Organization of American States (OAS), to issue instructions to governments to limit contacts and participation in programs to be held in Havana, and to carry out a special evaluation of the Common Position on Cuba in place since 1996.

These moves were the coordinated results of decisions made by the other EU institutions. When the first arrests were announced, the Greek Presidency of the EU issued a critical declaration.⁶⁰ On April 10, the European Parliament approved a Resolution expressing concern, criticizing the lack of due process, demanding the release of the detainees, calling Cuba to stop “hampering human rights,” and asking the

⁵⁵ Information and data from several EU sources and Member States.

⁵⁶ EFE, “Congelan la petición cubana,” El Nuevo Herald, 1 mayo 2003; Tim Johnson, “Senators Want to let Americans Visit and Spend Money in Cuba,” The Miami Herald, May 1, 2003.

⁵⁷ Bosco Esteruelas, “La UE congela su relación con Cuba por la represión de disidentes.” El País, 1 mayo 2003.

⁵⁸ From internal EU Commission sources.

⁵⁹ European Union. Council. General Comment before taking action on the Draft Resolution ‘Human Rights Situation in Cuba’ April 16, 2003. Appendix VII; Amadeu Altafaj, “La UE emite una condena unánime,” ABC, 15 abril 2003; Javier Jiménez, “La UE condena la tiranía de Castro,” La Razón, 15 abril 2003.

⁶⁰ April 14, 2003. Appendix VII.

Council to “display firm resolve in tackling the issue of human rights in Cuba, and to monitor the situation very closely.”⁶¹

For its part, the EU Council acted with a speedy condemnation, warning Cuba not to expect European aid.⁶² The Latin American Group of the Council decided to endorse an unsuccessful Nicaraguan censure motion against Cuba presented at the Organization of American States (OAS), to issue instructions to governments to limit contacts and participation in programs to be held in Havana, and to carry out a special evaluation of the Common Position on Cuba in place since 1996.

These decisions were the expected official result of a series of European reactions, first to the imprisonment of dissidents and later to the summary executions implemented by the Cuban government.

Right after the announcement of the imprisonment of 76 dissidents, their organizations, led by leaders such as Elizardo Sánchez, Gustavo Arcos and Osvaldo Payá, opted for asking the help of the EU institutions in their release.⁶³ European newspapers stepped up critical commentaries against the Cuban government, while intellectuals signed declarations of condemnation on both sides of the Atlantic.⁶⁴ Press activity became spectacular most especially in Spain, and it was not limited to the conservative press, a trend that has been evident since the mid 90s.⁶⁵ Moreover, op-ed pages in newspapers of all sorts of political inclinations have become frequent showcases of commentaries by Cuban anti-Castro exiles.⁶⁶ Some notable desertions in the backing of the Cuban government as with the case of Portuguese Nobel winner writer, Jose Saramago,⁶⁷ reminded observers of the spectacular alarm created by the Heberto Padilla “confession” in 1971.⁶⁸ The scandalous reaction reached an unprecedented level when the executions were announced.⁶⁹ In Spain, the alarm was translated as censure in press reports, editorials, and columns published by leading opinion makers of all sorts of political inclinations.⁷⁰ PSOE leaders qualified the

⁶¹ European Parliament, Resolution on Human Rights in Cuba, April 10, 2003. See Annex VI.

⁶² European Union. Council. General Comment before taking action on the Draft Resolution ‘Human Rights Situation in Cuba’ April 16, 2003. See Appendix VIII. Amadeu Altafaj, “La UE emite una condena unánime,” *ABC*, 15 abril 2003; Javier Jiménez, “La UE condena la tiranía de Castro,” *La Razón*, 15 abril 2003.

⁶³ Mauricio Vicent, “Los disidentes de Cuba piden ayuda urgente a la Unión Europea,” *El País*, 1 abril 2003.

⁶⁴ *La Razón*, “Miedo a la libertad en Cuba,” 2 abril 2003; “Carta de los intelectuales a Castro,” *El País*, 2 abril 2003; *El País*, “Nocturnidad y alevosía,” 7 abril 2003; EFE, “Mas de 300 personalidades exigen a Castro que libere a los detenidos,” 11 abril 2003; Wilfredo Cancio Isla, “Destacados intelectuales condenan ola represiva,” *El Nuevo Herald*, 2 abril 2003

⁶⁵ Ernesto Sotomayor, “Vuelta de tuerca de Fidel Castro,” *Cambio16*, 28 abril 2003.

⁶⁶ César Leante, “Ser periodista (libre) en Cuba,” *El País*, 13 mayo 2003.

⁶⁷ “Hasta aquí he llegado,” *El País*, 14 abril 2003.

⁶⁸ Pablo Alfonso, “El mundo condena la represión en Cuba,” *El Nuevo Herald*, 15 abril 2003.

⁶⁹ Antonio Elorza, “La ira del comendador,” *El País*, 15 abril 2003; Fernando Jáuregui, “A vueltas con Castro,” *La Razón*, 15 abril 2003; AFP, “Tormenta intelectual por la represión en Cuba,” *El Nuevo Herald*, 5 mayo 2003.

⁷⁰ The bluntness of the language used can be traced back to the commentaries on the arrests of dissidents. See, for example, two classic editorials of *El País*, “Redada castrista,” 2 abril 2003, and “Nocturnidad y alevosía,” 7 abril 2003. As examples of early critical commentaries, see: Carlos Herrera, “Ahora le toca a Fidel,” *ABC*, 4 abril 2003, and “Pues nada, ¡Viva la Revolución!” *ABC*, 11 abril 2003; Jorge Moragas, “Contraluz en La Habana,” *La Razón*, 6 abril 2003; *La Vanguardia*, “Coletazos castristas,” 8 abril 2003; César Alonso de los Ríos, “Cuba 2003,” *ABC*, 10 abril 2003. After the executions, the sharpness of the style used reached unprecedented levels, both in editorials and informative pieces: *El Mundo*, “En el

executions as “savage”, while Izquierda Unida branded them as a “political mistake of great magnitude.”⁷¹ Former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González used harsh qualifiers on live TV interviews referring to Castro “in the last stages of a decrepit regime. Former Socialist leaders and prestigious diplomats with social democratic credentials were especially critical of the Cuban leadership.”⁷²

The Spanish government and the leadership of the Partido Popular were especially noted for their blistering remarks.⁷³ Prime Minister Aznar, while invited to the White House, met in Washington, D.C., with Cuban-American members of Congress and issued a condemnation of the Cuban regime.⁷⁴ The PP also used the occasion to create confrontation with the opposition,⁷⁵ reviving the insertion of the Cuban issue as an internal theme to be manipulated for electoral purposes.⁷⁶ The Hispano-Cuban Foundation awarded its International Prizes for Human Rights to three distinguished Cuban dissidents in a ceremony to be held at the Spanish government setting of Casa América.⁷⁷ The Spanish Senate passed a motion to “withdraw” a medal given to Fidel Castro in 1987 on the occasion of a visit by its President.⁷⁸ A former President and current PSOE spokesman in the Senate lamented the lack of Spanish consensus on Cuba and potential loss of Spain’s influence in the Cuban transition.⁷⁹ The who-is-who of Spanish artists signed protest manifestos along worldwide figures,⁸⁰ with the result that only Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez remained isolated in the group of famous writers siding with Castro.⁸¹ In spite of the internal controversies, a survey

infierno cubano no hay consuelo para nadie,” 14 abril 2003; Mauricio Vicent, “Castro ejecuta a tres secuestradores de un ‘ferry’” El País, 12 abril 2003; Rosa Montero, “Cuba,” El País, 15 abril 2003; Fernando Jáuregui, “A vueltas con Castro,” La Razón, 15 abril 2003; Ignacio Sánchez Cámara, “Cuba: la tiranía consentida,” ABC, 26 abril 2003.

⁷¹ Alberto Pérez Giménez, “Castro ordena ejecutar a tres hombres tras un juicio sumarísimo sin ninguna garantía,” ABC, 12 abril 2003; ABC, “Sangrienta vuelta de tuerca en Cuba,” 12 abril 2003.

⁷² El Nuevo Herald “De Cuba, nada sorprende a Semprún,” 7 mayo 2003; Máximo Cajal, “Guantánamo,” El País, 8 mayo 2003.

⁷³ EFE, “Gobierno español dice que las ejecuciones revelan que Castro sigue siendo un tirano,” Diario las Américas, 13 abril 2003.

⁷⁴ Pablo Alfonso, “Condena Aznar la represión en Cuba,” El Nuevo Herald, 9 mayo 2003.

⁷⁵ Gabriela Galotti, AFP, “Aznar acusó a la oposición de no tener el coraje de poner la cara,” Diario las Américas, 16 abril 2003.

⁷⁶ Alberto Míguez, “Zapatero, ausente en la concentración contra la tiranía de Castro ante la Embajada cubana,” La Razón, 13 abril 2003; La Razón, “Los valedores del tirano,” 13 abril 2003; Pilar Marcos, “Aznar reta a Zapatero a condenar ‘con coraje’ las tres ejecuciones de Cuba,” El País, 13 abril 2003; E.I.P., “La oposición de izquierdas condena al régimen cubano y recuerda a Aznar la relación Fraga-Castro,” La Razón, 15 abril 2003; Javier Pradera, “Y tú más...,” El País, 30 abril 2003; El Mundo, “IU califica la manifestación contra el régimen cubano de ‘manipulación,’” 25 abril 2003; ABC, “La izquierda y el mito del castrismo,” ABC, 26 abril 2003; El Mundo, “Del castrismo tenebroso al anticastro desquiciado,” 27 abril 2003; Antonio Elorza, “Segurosos,” El País, 9 mayo 2003; E.L. Palomera, “Zapatero y Llamazares guardan la pancarta contra Castro,” La Razón, 23 abril 2003; Agustín Yanel, “La oposición acusa al PP de utilizar a Cuba,” El Mundo, 30 abril 2003; Camilo Valdecantos, “El Congreso condena la represión castrista, pero sin lograr el consenso,” El País, 30 abril 2003. For a panoramic review of Spain-Cuba relations, see my book entitled La siempre fiel (Madrid: Universidad Complutense/La Catarata, 1999).

⁷⁷ AFP, “Fundación Hispano-Cubana premia a tres disidentes,” Diario las Américas, 10 mayo 2003.

⁷⁸ AFP, “Senado español estudia retirar medalla que le dio a Castro,” Diario las Américas, 1 mayo 2003.

⁷⁹ Juan José Laborda, “Dividiendo inmisericordemente hasta con Cuba,” El País, 6 mayo 2003.

⁸⁰ See “Carta Abierta contra la represión en Cuba”, organized by the Asociación Encuentro, El País, 7 junio 2003, reprinted in No. 28/29 (2003).

⁸¹ Reuters, “García Márquez rompe su silencio,” El Nuevo Herald, 30 abril 2003; Carlos Fuentes, “Las infidelidades de Fidel”, Diario las Américas, 4 mayo 2003; Enrique Krauze, “Gabo en su laberinto,” El

revealed that an overwhelming majority of 90% of Spaniards believe that Castro should leave power, while 78% condemns the executions, figures similar to the popular opposition to the war in Iraq and to the U.S. embargo against Cuba.⁸²

David Responds to the New Goliath

Cuban authorities replied to this criticism and opposition by using hard expressions such as “blackmail” and “soft” [on the United States] for the actions and attitudes of Europeans.⁸³ The Cuban ambassador in Madrid branded Spanish politicians as “opportunists” seeking electoral gains.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, protests in Europe and Latin America degenerated in serious confrontations and aggressions inflicted on press members by Cuban diplomatic staff.⁸⁵ The EU Commission warned that the repressive measures could have a “devastating effect” on the relations with the EU.⁸⁶ Several European countries cancelled or considerably downsized the level of scheduled participation in programs and activities to be held in Cuba.⁸⁷ The French government, in spite of its spat with the United States over the war in Iraq, issued extremely critical statements against Castro, vouching for support of EU-wide measures,⁸⁸ while intellectuals signed letters of protest.⁸⁹ The Italian parliament and government, dominated by premier Berlusconi’s party, announced their intention of proposing what they envisioned as a European-wide embargo on Cuba, in anticipation of tougher measures to be implemented when holding the EU presidency in the second semester of 2003, while reducing the diplomatic relations between the two countries to the level maintained with Pinochet’s Chile from 1973 to 1990.⁹⁰

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque responded to the EU’s criticism in a three-hour press conference held on April 9, transmitted on Cuban television. He lamented that the EU was not making similar condemning statements on the situation on the imprisonment and trial of the Cuban security agents arrested in Miami. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also claimed that the EU has never condemned the United States for

País, 9 mayo 2003; AP, “Respuesta de García Márquez no satisface a Sontag,” El Nuevo Herald, 10 mayo 2003; Fabiola Santiago, “Bitter Honeymoon,” The Miami Herald, May 10, 2003, E1.

⁸² AFP, “90% de los españoles cree que Castro debe abandonar el poder,” Diario las Américas, 6 mayo 2003; El País, “El 87% de los ciudadanos condena el régimen cubano, según el Pulsómetro,” 6 mayo 2003.

⁸³ Joaquim Ibarz, “Castro arremete contra Aznar y González tras las críticas a las ejecuciones,” La Vanguardia, 27 abril 2003. Mauricio Vicent, “Cuba acusa de chantaje y tibieza a la UE”, 19 abril 2003; “Cuba ahonda su aislamiento y desprecia la relación con la UE”, El País, 20 abril 2003.

⁸⁴ El Mundo, “La embajadora de Cuba acusa a los políticos españoles de oportunismo,” 19 abril 2003.

⁸⁵ ABC, “España pide explicaciones,” 25 abril 2003; Reuters, “Adversarios y simpatizantes de Castro chocan en Caracas,” El Nuevo Herald, 27 abril 2003.

⁸⁶ “Castro’s Policy on Dissidents to Delay EU Process,” Nordik News, April 24, 2003; AFP, “Represión en Cuba tiene un ‘efecto devastador’ sobre las relaciones con la UE”, Diario las Américas, 23 abril 2003; Mauricio Vicent, “Cuba pierde el apoyo de Europa,” El País, 25 abril 2003.

⁸⁷ Agence Europe, “La Commission européenne aura la semaine prochaine un debat sur la situation a Cuba,” April 23, 2003; Reuters, “La Unión Europea reduce sus contactos con La Habana,” El Nuevo Herald, 24 abril 2003.

⁸⁸ AFP, “Francia critica duramente las recientes ejecuciones en Cuba,” Diario las Américas, 2 mayo 2003.

⁸⁹ AFP, “Cuba, ‘la mayor cárcel del mundo para los periodistas,’” Diario las Américas, 3 mayo 2003.

⁹⁰ AFP, “Posible embargo de UE a Cuba,” Diario las Américas, 30 abril 2003; Sources Say (Brussels), “Berlusconi Wants EU to Adopt Cuba Embargo,” April 30, 2003; AP, “Italia pide tratar a Castro como a Pinochet,” El Nuevo Herald, 5 mayo 2003.

a much higher annual number of executions. Pérez Roque also stated that recent sentencing of dissidents as well as executions were performed strictly according to Cuban law and were “a sad but absolute necessity for defending the vital right to national independence and sovereignty,” as the United States “is looking for a pretext for an armed intervention” in the island, by “creating the conditions for a new massive exodus from Cuba,” are some arguments consistently reflected in other official declarations and reflections in the Cuban media. Most of these arguments were reiterated by the address made by Fidel Castro on May 1, and reflected by Cuba’s former ambassador to the EU, Carlos Alzugaray.⁹¹

On Friday May 16, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba summoned the newly-appointed charge-d’affaires of the European Commission in Havana and announced the withdrawal of Cuba’s application procedure for membership in the Cotonou Agreement of the Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries, and in fact renouncing to benefit from European development aid.⁹² In a blistering note published in Granma, the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, the government blamed the EU Commission for exerting undue pressure, alleged its alignment with the policies of the United States, and rejected the EU’s censure for the measures taken by Cuba during the previous weeks.⁹³ In reality, Cuba avoided an embarrassing flat rejection of its application. This was the anti-climatic ending for a long process that can be traced back to the end of the Cold War, in a context where Cuba has been testing alternative grounds to substitute for the overwhelming protection of the Soviet Union.

In the expectation of a lasting impasse and Cuba’s rejection of positive moves, in addition to not attending Cuba’s May 1st celebrations, EU member state embassies in Cuba were to be invited to establish a new report on the situation of Human Rights in Cuba for an evaluation by the Council.⁹⁴ On June 5, the EU Greek Presidency issued a harsh Declaration, labeling as “deplorable” the recent Cuban actions, “aiming not only at violating fundamental freedom, but also at depriving civilians of the ultimate human right, that of life.” In consequence, the EU called Cuban authorities “to release immediately all political prisoners,” and decided the following collective measures:

- limit bilateral high-level government visits
- reduce the profile of member states’ participation in cultural events
- proceed with the reevaluation of the EU Common Position⁹⁵
- invite Cuban dissidents to national celebrations⁹⁶

⁹¹ “Nueva etapa en las relaciones entre Cuba y la Unión Europea,” Cuban Review (Netherlands) in press, 2003.

⁹² Anthony Boadle, “Cuba Pulls Request to Join EU’s Cotonou Aid Pact,” Reuters, May 17, 2003; EFE, “Cuba retirará su solicitud de ingreso al Convenio de Cotonou,” El Mundo, 19 mayo 2003; Pablo Alfonso, “Cuba pierde el respaldo económico de Europa,” El Nuevo Herald, 20 mayo 2003; Nancy San Martín, “Cuba Withdraws from European Pact,” The Miami Herald, May 20, 2003 7A.

⁹³ Declaración del MINREX, 19 mayo 2003. Appendix IX.

⁹⁴ From EU and member states sources.

⁹⁵ Declaration by the Presidency, on behalf of the European Union, on Cuba. June 5, 2003. See Appendix X. Reuters, “La UE impondrá sanciones diplomáticas a Cuba, June 5, 2003; AFP, “Silencio oficial y satisfacción en disidencia tras medidas de UE contra Cuba,” June 5, 2003; Nancy San Martín, “EU Set to Review Relations with Cuba,” The Miami Herald, June 6, 2003; Gabriel Cañas, “La UE adopta sanciones diplomáticas contra Cuba,” El País, 6 junio 2003; Enrique Serbeto, “La UE reduce al mínimo sus relaciones con Cuba en respuesta a la ola represiva,” ABC, 6 junio 2003.

In fact, this policy was dramatically inaugurated when on July 14 the French embassy invited Cuban dissidents to the reception for the anniversary of the French Revolution. The Cuban government responded with a non-attendance policy and the celebration of a parallel function to celebrate its admiration for the 1789 event.

Cuba's Foreign Minister Pérez Roque qualified these EU measures as a result of a "superficial analysis" of Cuba, a "victim of an agreement between the United States and the EU," showing "European incapacity for maintaining an autonomous policy."⁹⁷ He also refused to receive the members of the EU Troika (Italy, Greece and Denmark), while Cuban officials skipped attending receptions at EU member states diplomatic functions. In an adaptation of a common epithet bestowed on Cuban exiles in Miami, Fidel Castro indirectly referred to the EU as a "little gang" and "a mafia allied with fascist imperialists."⁹⁸ U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, received the latest EU measures with satisfaction indicating that the United States might join the European Union in a common strategy towards Cuba.⁹⁹

This apparent U.S. invitation for a coalition added fuel to the ongoing fire. The Cuban government increased the level of the confrontation with the EU to an unprecedented level.¹⁰⁰ Fidel Castro and Foreign Minister Pérez Roque targeted Italy and, most especially, Spain as the leaders of the EU measures imposed on Cuba.¹⁰¹ The Italian government announced the termination of development programs estimated at about \$40 million, then rejected Cuban personal insults against Premier Silvio Berlusconi (addressed as "Nero," and "Benito Berlusconi"), and subsequently congressional sources demanded the withdrawal of the ambassador.¹⁰² France announced the termination of some cooperation programs, while former Socialist Prime Minister Laurent Fabius questioned what he considered as a cautious attitude on behalf

⁹⁷ EFE, "Acusan a la Unión Europea de plegarse a Estados Unidos," El Nuevo Herald, 7 junio 2003.

⁹⁸ EFE, "Castro arremete contra 'mafia' aliada de EE.UU.," Diario las Américas, 8 junio 2003; AFP, Pablo Alfonso, "Castro amenaza tras sanción de Europa," El Nuevo Herald, 8 junio 2003; Marie Sanz, "En un punto muerto las relaciones con Europa," El Nuevo Herald, 8 junio 2003; J. Luis Sariol, "Dispuestos, invencibles," Juventud Rebelde, 8 junio 2003; Sara Mas, "Nuevas y grandes batallas nos esperan," Granma, 8 junio 2003; Mauricio Vicent, "Castro arremete contra la UE por las sanciones a Cuba," El País, 8 junio 2003.

⁹⁹ George Gedda, "Se acercan EE.UU. y Europa ante Cuba," El Nuevo Herald, 9 junio 2003.

¹⁰⁰ For the official text of the statement, see "The European Union capitulates to the USA," Granma Internacional, June 11, 2003; "Declaración de Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores," Granma, 12 junio. Appendix XI.

¹⁰¹ Anita Snow, AP, "Cuba Angrily Accuses EU of Catering to U.S." The Miami Herald, June 12, 2003; Pablo Alfonso, "Cuba acusa a España e Italia de conspiración," El Nuevo Herald, 12 junio 2003; EFE, "Cuba acusa a Aznar," El Mundo, 11 junio 2003; EFE, "Fidel Castro encabeza una marcha," El País, 12 junio 2003; EFE, "Castro se refiere a Aznar como 'caballerito de ideas fascistas,'" El Mundo, 12 junio 2003; The Miami Herald, "Castro protests his allies 'fascism,'" The Miami Herald, June 13, 2003; Pablo Alfonso, "Castro agrava la crisis," El Nuevo Herald, 13 junio 2003; Granma, "Encabeza Fidel y Raúl patrióticas marchas," 12 junio 2003; Reynold Rassi, "No cederemos un átomo," Granma, 12 junio 2003; Granma Internacional, "Insta Fidel Castro a UE a abstenerse de sancionar a Cuba," 13 junio 2003; Marelys Valencia, "Una fuerza popular sacudió a La Habana Vieja," Granma Internacional, 12 junio 2003.

¹⁰² AP, "Reacciona Europa," El Nuevo Herald, 14 junio 2003; La Repubblica, "Centinaia di migliaia di cubani in piazza contro Italia e Spagna," June 14, 2003; Corriere della Sera, "Cuba: manifestazione contro l'Unione europea," June 14, 2003.

of the French government towards Cuba.¹⁰³ The Spanish government initially exercised extreme restraint¹⁰⁴ when challenged by a government-led demonstration in front of the Spanish embassy, presided over by Castro himself. Spain's Premier José María Aznar, accused as the main author of the "treacherous escalation against Cuba," was labeled by Castro on live television as a "caballerito", "coward", "fascist", and a "little Fuhrer", depicted in posters as wearing a Hitler-looking moustache and a swastika. While the Spanish press reiterated critical commentaries on the Cuban reactions, former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González branded Castro's actions as "pathetic," expressing doubts about the internal security of Cuba in view of the rash of aircraft and boat hijackings.¹⁰⁵

Then, accusing Spain of improperly using its facilities, the Cuban government announced the cancellation of the bi-national agreement for the Spanish Cultural Center, a unique institution funded by Madrid since 1997 at an initial cost of over \$3 million for the remodeling of a beautiful and centrally-located building in front of the Malecón waterfront.¹⁰⁶ In an effort to divide the EU and Spanish leadership, the Cuban government indicated that the alleged Spanish and Italian influence on European decisions dictated its measures. With kind references to King Juan Carlos (in contrast to the attitude toward President Aznar) and former Spanish anticommunist dictator Francisco Franco (who never broke diplomatic relations with Cuba), Castro reiterated his personal inclinations. Ironically, commentators insisted on the similarities between the current Cuban situation and the last stages of the Franco regime.¹⁰⁷ Behind the scenes, Cuban officials confidentially expressed concern about the international isolation of the regime and the erratic and counterproductive result of the actions and declarations implemented and issued by the top leadership, hoping that calm would finally prevail, reconstructing basic relations with the EU, a thought that is shared by the EU leadership.¹⁰⁸ Cubans attributed the ability to deal with different languages to their easiness to make friends and enemies alike.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ See text of article published in Le Nouvel Observateur, reproduced in La Estrella (Madrid), 29 junio 2003.

¹⁰⁴ Luis Ayllón, "El gobierno español no entrará en una 'escalada de provocaciones'," ABC, 13 junio 2003; El Mundo, "Palacio contesta a Castro que sus criticas 'no responden a la realidad'," 13 junio 2003; AFP, "Rajoy defiende la 'cercanía con el pueblo cubano'" Diario las Américas, 15 junio 2003; El Mundo, "El gobierno español no protestará," 13 junio 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Andrés Oppenheimer, "Opportunities seen for Latin America in a Tense Era," The Miami Herald, June 12, 2003.

¹⁰⁶ EFE, "Castro retira a España la gestión del Centro Cultural en La Habana," El País, 13 junio 2003; L. Ayllón, "Castro da 90 días al gobierno de Madrid para que abandone el Centro Cultural Español," ABC, 15 junio 2003; Mar Marín, EFE, "Castro eleva tensión con España," Diario las Américas, 15 junio 2003; AFP, "Cuba interviene en La Habana el Centro Cultural Español," El Nuevo Herald, 14 junio 2003; Andrea Rodríguez, "Castro Takes Over Spanish Embassy Cultural Center," The Miami Herald, June 15 2003; "El Centro Español aguarda por la llegada de los nuevos administradores," El Nuevo Herald, 15 junio 2003.

¹⁰⁷ Fernando Savater, "Franco en el Caribe," El Nuevo Herald, 7 junio 2003; Andrés Oppenheimer, "Para Felipe González, 'Fidel está patético,'" El Nuevo Herald, 12 junio 2003; El País, "Lo último de los Castro," 13 junio 2003; Alberto Pérez Giménez, "Generalísimo Castro," ABC, 15 junio 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Mauricio Vicent, "La ofensiva de Castro contra la UE somete a Cuba a un completo aislamiento internacional," El País, 15 junio 2003; Pablo Alfonso, "La crisis con la UE puede entrar a un callejón sin salida," El Nuevo Herald, 15 junio 2003; EFE, "UE-Cuba. Nielson: no cambiará ayuda UE a Cuba tras 'primavera perdida,'" 12 junio 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Mauricio Vicent, "Humor cubano frente al conflicto diplomático con España e Italia," El País, 15 junio 2003.

The EU Foreign Affairs Council rejected as “unacceptable” the insults from Havana, confirming the sanctions. Italy pressed for the termination of cooperation funding still enjoyed by Cuba,¹¹⁰ but Javier Solana, the High Representative for Foreign Policy of the EU did not endorse the ending of humanitarian aid.¹¹¹ While the Spanish government reaction was prudent, vowing not to engage in a “verbal spiral of mutual disqualifications,” the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Cuba’s ambassador to Madrid, Isabel Allende, to give her its displeasure for the general situation, the threats on the Cultural Center, and the presence of Castro in the lead of the demonstrations, an activity considered “outside the margins of normal diplomatic usage.”¹¹² Allende, in turn, blamed Spain for the diplomatic conflict.¹¹³

In an exchange of declarations and opinions issued by Cuban and Spanish officials, the already cloudier context of relations between the two countries got even more confusing if not contradictory. On the one hand, Spain’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ana Palacio, in a symposium organized by the Partido Popular- controlled FAES foundation, publicly stated that the Cuban regime was “exhausted” and “will not survive its founder”, because of its “caullista” character. Moreover, she noted that “the Cuban transition has already started”, and that “the Cuban Suárez [as a parallel to the Spanish political process) is already present in the island”.¹¹⁴ Coincidentally, the Spanish press frequently mentions Oswaldo Payá as the “Cuban Suárez”.¹¹⁵ In addition, while business delegations decided to postpone scheduled visits to Cuba waiting for a better climate, reports emanating from the governing Partido Popular signaled the intention of the Prime Minister of convening the Spanish companies dealing with tourism in Cuba to recommend them “not to benefit the Castro regime”.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, in contrast to the acrimony of official relations between Havana and Madrid, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs Pérez Roque assured over one hundred Spanish and Italian companies that they would not be affected, reducing the conflict to a personal feud.¹¹⁷

In an apparent cohesive policy of avoiding further controversies, the Spanish government elected a wait-and-see attitude expecting the Cuban government to make the next move regarding its announced plans for the intervention of the Cultural Center. While legally speaking the Castro government could use the contractual clauses to denounce the agreement with a ninety-day notice, the Spanish government could litigate on the grounds of expenses incurred in the delivery of furniture and the over \$3 million contributed for the remodeling of the building. Meanwhile, the official posture of

¹¹⁰ EFE, “Europa declara inaceptable la actitud de Castro,” El Nuevo Herald, 17 junio 2003; Bosco Esteruelas, “La UE califica de ‘inaceptables’ los insultos del gobierno cubano,” El País, 17 junio 2003.

¹¹¹ AFP, “Solana en contra de suspender la ayuda humanitaria a Cuba,” Diario las Américas, 18 junio 2003.

¹¹² EFE, “Ana Palacio dice que España no entrará en espiral verbal,” Diario las Américas, 17 junio 2003; Luis Ayllón, “El Gobierno español convoca a la embajadora de Cuba tras las últimas ofensas de Castro,” ABC, 17 junio 2003.

¹¹³ EFE, “Embajadora cubana responsabiliza a España de la crisis bilateral,” Diario las Américas, 18 junio 2003. [Note: this article wrongly identified this Isabel Allende as a daughter of former Chilean President Salvador Allende]

¹¹⁴ Peru Egurbide, “España dice que el régimen de Cuba está agotado y que la transición ha empezado,” El País, 2 julio 2003; Luis Ayllón, “Ana Palacio asegura que la transición a la democracia en Cuba ya ha comenzado,” ABC, 2 julio 2003.

¹¹⁵ Alberto Fernández-Salido, “Oswaldo Payá, el ‘Suárez cubano,’” La Razón, 6 julio 2003.

¹¹⁶ Lisette Bustamante, “El gobierno convocará al sector turístico en Cuba,” La Razón, 7 julio 2003.

¹¹⁷ Mauricio Vicent, “Cuba tranquiliza a los empresarios españoles,” El País, 29 junio 2003.

Madrid was revealed in the collective demands and expectations inserted in the EU General Affairs Council conclusions of July 21. In Cuba, the government was about to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks.

As an answer to the conditioning message of assistance and the political demands given by the EU, Castro dramatically ended a half a century of Cuban history confronting the United States by electing to target a new enemy –the European Union. Calculating the effective EU assistance to about an average of \$4.2 million in recent years, reduced to less than \$1 million in 2002, of which no funds have arrived yet, Castro pointed out that Cuba has imported European goods valued at \$1.5 million, while EU's imports of Cuban products only amounted to \$571 million. He not only blamed Spain's Prime Minister Aznar for being the main instigator of the EU measures, but labeled Spanish education as a "banana republic disaster, a shame for Europe". In an apparent deviation from his previous selective critiques and kind references to different EU commissioners, Castro also accused the professional staff of the EU institutions ("a small group of bureaucrats") of drafting a resolution (a "cowardly and repugnant act"), allegedly without consulting their ministers. Claiming the EU is endorsing "the hostility, threats, and dangers for Cuba" of the "aggressive policy of the hegemonic superpower", he stated that Cuba "does not need the European Union to survive," and bowed that "neither Europe nor the United States will say the last word about the destiny of humanity."¹¹⁸

Subsequently, the Cuban government sent a three-paragraph letter to the European Commission confirming the terms of Castro's speech. The EU Commission answered this address by confirming the spirit and the content of the conditioning conclusions and declarations, lamenting the "extreme attitude of the Cuban government," accepting its decision, and pledging to maintain its willingness for a political dialogue with Cuba.¹¹⁹ The Spanish government remained silent while millions of European citizens and the EU leadership went on vacation.

Conclusion

The balance sheet of the experience of the European Union's policies and attitudes on Cuba shows a mixed picture. It is composed of a coherent script of measures intended in the first place for maintaining the communication line open, and secondly for contributing to facilitating the conditions for a sort of "soft landing" in the terrain of democracy and market economy in the event of a peaceful transition. This strategy does not come free of charge, as demonstrated by the persistent negative vote on Cuba in the UN Commission for Human Rights, and the maintenance of the Common Position imposed in 1996 conditioning any special cooperation and aid package to the implementation of political reforms.

¹¹⁸ See speech at Santiago, July 26, 2003. For initial wire reports, see Mar Marín, EFE, "Castro responde a UE con renuncia a diálogo político y a ayudas," 27 julio 2003. See text in Annex XIII, reproduced in *Granma*, 27 julio 2003. For selected reports in the Spanish press: Mauricio Vicent, "Castro renuncia a la ayuda humanitaria," *El País*, 28 julio 2003; Angel Tomás González, "Cuba renuncia al diálogo y la ayuda", *El Mundo*, 28 julio 2003.

¹¹⁹ Sandro Pozzi, "Cuba comunica oficialmente su renuncia a las ayudas de la UE," *El País*, 2 agosto 2003.

These institutional framework contrasts, on the one hand, with the apparently uncoordinated policies of the member states that trade and invest in Cuba according to their individual interests. This has made the Common Position “neither common, nor a policy,” in the words of sarcastic EU insiders.¹²⁰ On the other hand, the EU collective strategy contrasts with the U.S. policy of confrontations and harassment. While the United States has been pursuing a path composed of the embargo and extraterritorial laws such as Helms-Burton, the EU has opted for a “constructive engagement”. While the European pattern has been geared toward preparing for the transition, the United States policy has concentrated on regime change.¹²¹ Both, however, share one dimension in common –Cuba has not changed or reformed according to the expected results. The European strategy can be labeled at its initial stages after the end of the Cold War as one based on good intentions and reasonable (if not high) expectations. But at the end of any serious attempt to condition an offer of a special status in the EU structure (bilateral agreement, Lomé, Cotonou), the result has been a high degree of frustration. With the latest development of the arrests and executions, this sentiment has been translated into blunt irritation.

Decision-makers in Brussels and many European capitals have come to the conclusion that Castro’s priorities place a conditioned relationship with the European Union at a lower level than the urgency to maintain a line of internal discipline at the cost of violating basic human rights. Moreover, the confrontation with the United States is considered by the Cuban regime as the ultimate *raison d’être* to justify the continuation of the system and the refusal to modify it, or even less to change it. This ever-present theme is obsessive in all communications and declarations of the Cuban government when dealing in public and in private with EU officials. In view of the alleged “aggressive,” “subversive,” irresponsible,” and “provocative,” behavior of U.S. officials in Havana supporting “mercenaries, created, organized, trained and financed”¹²² by Washington, in Brussels and in many European capitals observers wonder why the Cuban government does not decide to close down the U.S. Interest Section instead of executing reprisals against European embassies. The answer is very simple. Besides having a scapegoat at hand, Castro needs the United States presence in Havana to administer the visa programs and guarantee the reception of funds from the exile community.

In sum, in view of the seriousness of the events of April 2003, considering the unanimous condemnation and censure issued by the EU institutions, and taking into account the Cuban hard-line in rejecting conditions from the EU, it is expected that the freezing of the consideration of Cuba’s membership in the ACP network and any other special economic benefits will continue. As discussed above, the strategy of giving Cuba a longer breathing space by extending the period of evaluation of the Common Position from a semester to a year was scuttled in view of the Cuban blunt rejection of conditions, with the result of the renewal of the conditioning by the Council in June and July of 2003. The prospects of a harder EU attitude under the Italian presidency in the second part of the year were confirmed by the Declaration issued by the Presidency, the

¹²⁰ From EU Commission and Council sources.

¹²¹ For a review of the U.S. policy towards Cuba since the end of the Cold War, see Thomas Morley and Chris McGillion, *Unfinished Business: America and Cuba after the Cold War, 1989-2001* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹²² Terms used by Cuba’s Foreign Minister Pérez Roque in a letter addressed to EU Commissioner Poul Nielson, May 23, 2003, in answering his letter of concern dated April 22, 2003.

announcement of the new diplomatic measures to be implemented, and the confirming conclusions of the General Affairs Council. The explicit rejection of conditions made by Fidel Castro on July 26 has made the prospects of a rapprochement cloudier than ever.

Appendix I

COMMON POSITION
of December 2, 1996,
defined by the Council on the basis of Article J.2
of the Treaty on the European Union on Cuba.

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the European Union and, in particular, Article J.2 thereof,

HAS DEFINED THE FOLLOWING COMMON POSITION:

1. The objective of the European Union in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a process of transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a sustainable recovery and improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people. A transition would most likely be peaceful if the present regime were itself to initiate or permit such a process. It is not European Union policy to try to bring about change by coercive measures with the effect of increasing the economic hardship of the Cuban people.
2. The European Union acknowledges the tentative economic opening undertaken in Cuba to date. It is its firm wish to be Cuba's partner in the progressive and irreversible opening of the Cuban economy. The European Union considers that full cooperation with Cuba will depend upon improvements in human rights and political freedom, as indicated by the European Council in Florence.
3. In order to facilitate peaceful change in Cuba, the European Union
 - a. Will intensify the present dialogue with the Cuban authorities and with all sectors of Cuban society in order to promote respect for human rights and real progress towards pluralist democracy;
 - b. Will seek out opportunities - even more actively than heretofore - to remind the Cuban authorities, both publicly and privately, of fundamental responsibilities regarding human rights, in particular freedom of speech and association;
 - c. Will encourage the reform of internal legislation concerning political and civil rights, including the Cuban criminal code, and, consequently, the abolition of all political offences, the release of all political prisoners and the ending of the harassment and punishment of dissidents;

- d. Will evaluate developments in Cuban internal and foreign policies according to the same standards that apply to European Union relations with other countries, in particular the ratification and observance of international human rights conventions;
 - e. Will remain willing in the meantime, through the member states, to provide ad hoc humanitarian aid, subject to prior agreement regarding distribution; currently applicable measures to ensure distribution through non-governmental organizations, the churches and international organizations will be maintained and, where appropriate, reinforced. It is noted that the Commission is proceeding on the same basis;
 - f. Will remain willing, through the member states, also to carry out focused economic cooperation actions in support of the economic opening being implemented. It is noted that the Commission is proceeding on the same basis.
4. As the Cuban authorities make progress towards democracy, the European Union will lend its support to that process and examine the appropriate use of the means at its disposal for that purpose, including:
 - The intensification of a constructive, result-oriented political dialogue between the European Union and Cuba,
 - The intensification of cooperation and, in particular, economic cooperation,
 - The deepening of the dialogue with the Cuban authorities, through the appropriate instances, in order to explore further the possibilities for future negotiation of a Cooperation Agreement with Cuba, on the basis of the relevant conclusions of the European Councils in Madrid and Florence.
 5. The implementation of this common position will be monitored by the Council. An evaluation of this common position will be undertaken after six months.
 6. This common position shall take effect on 2 December 1996.
 7. This common position shall be published in the Official Journal.

Done at Brussels, 2 December 1996.

For the Council
The President
R. QUINN

Appendix II

General Affairs Council. Conclusions X Evaluation of the Common Position on Cuba December 10, 2001

The Council took note of the tenth evaluation of the EU Common Position on Cuba and acknowledged the efforts made in recent months to open a constructive and frank dialogue on all issues of common interest, in keeping with its conclusions on the ninth evaluation of the Common Position last June.

The Council reiterated that the objectives of the European Union toward Cuba remain the encouragement of a process of transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, a lasting economic recovery and a rise in living standards for the population.

Following a detailed examination and exchanges of information – notably during the recent political dialogue between the EU Troika and Cuba – the Council observes that the situation in that country is still seriously wanting as regards the recognition and application of civil and political freedoms and the refusal of the Cuban authorities to contemplate reforms leading to a political system based on those values.

However, it notes that there are a few signs of movement: greater religious freedom, the fact that the death penalty has not been carried out for two years, a marked decrease in the number of political prisoners and an increase in the number of United Nations human rights instruments ratified.

The Council also welcomes the decision taken by the Cuban Parliament at its sitting on 4 October to approve Cuba's accession to all the UN Conventions on terrorism.

The Council therefore considers that the Common Position is still valid and remains the basis of the European Union's policy toward Cuba. The Council considers it essential to continue the dialogue in order to produce tangible results, particularly as regards future cooperation based on respect for democratic principles, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. In that context, the Council would point out that it expects to see meaningful indications from the Cuban Government that it is moving to achieve the Common Position's objectives.

The Council points out that it is extremely important to the EU that Cuba should abide by the principles of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It hopes that Cuba will be able to sign these two Covenants at the earliest opportunity.

In connection with Cuba's current economic difficulties, the Council underlines the importance of the increased economic links, trade and tourism between the EU countries and Cuba in helping to improve the situation in the country. Accordingly, the Council urges Cuba to extend and develop the economic and legal reforms it has begun. In that connection, the Council considers that the EU must step up cooperation in Cuba, in particular through civilian and non-governmental organizations.

Appendix III

General Affairs Council. Conclusions XI Evaluation of the Common Position June 17, 2002

The Council took note of the eleventh evaluation of the European Union common position on Cuba. Major changes on the part of the Cuban government toward the accomplishment of the aims of the common position are still lacking. Therefore, the common position remains the basis of the European Union's policy toward Cuba and the Council took note of its continued validity. However, the Council noted some positive signs, such as greater religious freedom, the decrease of political prisoners, the non application of the death penalty for two years and a half and the ratification of more instruments on human rights. The Council, recalling the UNCHR Resolution of 19 April 2002, invites Cuba to sign the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the earliest opportunity. The Council noted some recent signs of increased openness by the Cuban authorities but considered that these are only the first steps.

The Council reiterated that the objective of the European Union toward Cuba remains the encouragement of a process of transition to pluralist democracy, the respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, as well as an economic recovery that allows an improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people. The Council expects positive steps by the Cuban government, which will lead to real reforms toward a political system, based on democratic values. In this sense, the Council follows with interest the evolution of the Varela project, legally based on the constitution, and encourages the Cuban government to consider it as a legitimate initiative since it represents an important effort to introduce these reforms.

The Council reaffirms that it is essential to deepen the political dialogue resumed between the EU and the Cuban authorities in order to produce tangible results, particularly in the political, economic and civil rights spheres, with the aim of future cooperation based on the respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law. The Council considers that the EU should reinforce its cooperation efforts in the country supporting meaningful economic and legal reform and the civil society.

Within the framework of this dialogue, the European Union will continue to monitor the evolution of the human rights situation and the various initiatives within the constitutional process in Cuba.

Appendix IV

General Affairs Council. Conclusions XII Evaluation of the EU Common Position on Cuba December 10, 2002

The Council took note of the twelve evaluation of the European Union Common Position on Cuba and acknowledged the continuation of an open and constructive dialogue with Cuba on all issues of common interest. The Council reiterated that the objectives of the European Union policy toward Cuba remain the encouragement of a process of transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, a lasting economic recovery and an improvement in the living standards for the population.

The Council noted that since the previous evaluation last June, there have been no significant positive steps by the Cuban Government leading to the accomplishments of the aims of the Common Position. Although recognizing some positive signs in the field of greater religious freedom, no progress is observed in the implementation of reforms leading to a political system that respects civil and political freedom. All civil initiatives, claiming political freedom and respect for civil rights and aiming at a political system based on democratic values, such as the Varela project, should be encouraged. In addition the Council would strongly urge the Cuban Government to take the necessary steps to ratify the UN Covenant on Political and Civil Rights as well as on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Council therefore reaffirms that the Common Position is still valid and remains the basis of the European Union's policy toward Cuba. In order to promote a more efficient pursuit of the aims of the Common Position the Council considers that the political dialogue should be continued in order to promote tangible results, particularly in the political, economic and civil rights spheres. At the same time the Council encourages the strengthening of the EU development cooperation in Cuba in areas that promote the transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights as well as in areas that improve the standards of living of the Cuban population and promote sustainable economic growth. The Council welcomes the decision of the Commission to open an office in Havana as one instrument to strengthening this cooperation. The Council decided to evaluate the Common Position in December 2003.

Appendix V

EC Cooperation with Cuba 1997-2001 (Commitments)

Budget line	Sector	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
B-210	Humanitarian aid	10.3	9.8	11.4	2	8.5
B-219	Disaster prevention					0.9
B-20	Food security	0.2	0.2	0.7	1	0
B-6000	NGOs Co-Financing	0.6	2.4	2.8	8.2	5.4
B-311	Economic cooperation with LA countries	1.1	2	2.1	5.8	4.9
B-70	EIDHR (European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights)	0	0	0	0	0.5
Total		12.2	14.4	17	17	20.2

Source: European Commission, Cuba y la Unión Europea (2002).

Appendix VI

European Parliament Resolution

April 10, 2003

Human rights in Cuba

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Cuba,
 - having regard to the declaration of 26 March 2003 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the arrest of opposition members in Cuba,
 - having regard to the common position 96/697/CFSP of 2 December 1996, defined by the Council on the basis of Article J.2 of the Treaty on European Union, on Cuba¹²³, and periodically renewed,
 - having regard to the provisions of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement¹²⁴ (Cotonou Agreement),
- A. extremely concerned by the numerous arrests in Cuba, where over 70 human rights activists, members of the political opposition, intellectuals, independent journalists, Varela Project promoters and members of other groups supporting democracy in Cuba, and trade unionists have been imprisoned since 18 March 2003,
- B. whereas these arrests are essentially based on offences such as dissenting from official Cuban policies and exercising the right of freedom of expression, and, for that reason, the individuals in question are accused of subversive activity under Law 88 on Defending National Independence,
- C. whereas the exercise of the freedom of expression is a fundamental human right,
- D. whereas the trials of these citizens were summary in the extreme, and whereas the trials are being held without even the minimum requirements of due process, in the total absence of international observers and members of the diplomatic corps; whereas the sentences requested are extremely severe, ranging from 20 years to life and even the death penalty,
- E. whereas various sentences have already been pronounced, including 27 years' imprisonment in some cases,
- F. whereas the Commission, in accordance with normal procedure in such matters, is drawing up an evaluation report to be forwarded to the Member States with a view

¹²³ OJ L 322, 12.12.1996, p. 1.

¹²⁴ OJ L 317, 15.12.2000, p. 3.

to taking a decision on whether to accept the Cuban Government's request to join the Cotonou Agreement,

- G. whereas the Commission has recently opened an office in Havana,
- H. whereas in December 2002, the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize for freedom of expression to the Cuban dissident and opposition member Oswaldo Payá,
 - 1. Strongly condemns the wave of arrests and sentences involving the Cuban opposition and independent press, since such repressive behaviour does not encourage a climate for peaceful change in the country;
 - 2. Calls on the Cuban authorities to release those arrested immediately;
 - 3. Believes that no law may restrict the right of freedom of expression and under no circumstances may it impose prison sentences on individuals exercising that freedom; stresses that the freedom of expression, organisation and information is one of the cornerstones of all democratic systems;
 - 4. Believes that the immediate release of all those arrested and the cessation of these arbitrary arrests would constitute a very clear and positive signal with regard to the Cuban Government's wish to engage in political dialogue with the EU and to bring about Cuba's accession to the Cotonou Agreement;
 - 5. Urges the Council and the Commission to continue their efforts to promote positive change in Fidel Castro's regime on the basis of the universal principles concerning respect for human rights and democratic values;
 - 6. Calls on the Cuban authorities to stop hampering human rights and to remove all barriers to freedom of movement, expression, information and association and to party political involvement;
 - 7. Asks the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and its Delegation for Relations with the Countries of Central America to display firm resolve in tackling the issue of human rights in Cuba, and to monitor the situation very carefully;
 - 8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the ACP Council of Ministers, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Government and National People's Assembly of the Republic of Cuba, and to Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, winner of the European Parliament's 2002 Sakharov Prize.

Appendix VII

European Union Presidency April 14, 2003

Declaration

- The EU condemns the large-scale arrests, unfair summary prosecution and arbitrary and excessive sentences of numerous dissidents for peacefully expressing their political, religious and social views and for exercising their right to full and equal participation in public affairs.
- Consequently, the EU demands that those persons, whom it considers as prisoners of conscience, be released without delay and calls further for the immediate release of all political prisoners. It is also deeply concerned about the continued repression of members of the opposition.
- The EU strongly condemns the recent executions conducted after summary trials of Cuban citizens and deplors the end of the moratorium on death penalty in the country.
- These latest developments, which mark a further deterioration in the human rights situation in the country, will affect the EU's relationship with Cuba and the prospects for increased cooperation. Violations of civil and political rights will be monitored very closely by the EU and they will continue to influence the Union's relations with Cuba."

Appendix VIII

EUROPEAN UNION

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

*Fifty-ninth Session
(Geneva, 17 March-25 April 2003)*

*Geneva, April 16, 2003
Final Draft*

***GENERAL COMMENT BEFORE TAKING ACTION
ON THE DRAFT RESOLUTION
'HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CUBA' (L.2)***

General comment on the draft resolution entitled "Human Rights Situation in Cuba".

The European Union wishes to stress its grave concern at the human rights situation in Cuba, which has significantly deteriorated during the last weeks. In this light, the EU would welcome a draft resolution reflecting in a stronger and more effective manner the recent unfortunate developments.

The EU condemns the large-scale arrests, unfair summary prosecution and arbitrary and excessive sentences of numerous dissidents for peacefully expressing their political, religious and social views and for exercising their right to full and equal participation in public affairs.

Consequently, the EU demands that those persons, whom it considers as prisoners of conscience, be released without delay and calls further for the immediate release of all political prisoners. It is also deeply concerned about the continued repression of members of the opposition.

The EU strongly condemns the recent executions conducted after summary trials of Cuban citizens and deplors the end of the moratorium on death penalty in the country.

These latest developments, which mark a further deterioration in the human rights situation in the country, will affect the EU's relationship with Cuba and the prospects for increased cooperation. Violations of civil and political rights will be monitored very closely by the EU and they will continue to influence the Union's relations with Cuba.

We would like to reiterate that the objective of the EU in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a process of transition to a pluralist democracy and respect for human

rights and fundamental freedoms as well as a sustainable recovery and improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people.

The EU recognises the efforts of the Government of Cuba to give effect to the social rights of the population despite an adverse international environment.

Lastly, the EU strongly urges the Government of Cuba to receive the personal representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and to provide all the facilities necessary for her to be able to fulfil the mandate contained in resolution 2002/18.

The EU will support the draft resolution L.2 [and the amendment L.74].

Appendix IX

STATEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

May 17, 2003

The Government of Cuba has once again found itself compelled to withdraw its request for accession to the Cotonou Agreement, which regulates economic and cooperation relations between the European Union and the 79 countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP).

This decision is Cuba's response to that of the European Commission, which last 30 April announced that it was indefinitely postponing all consideration on the Cuban request that such Commission should submit to the Council of Ministers of the 15 member countries of the European Union. The alleged pretext was a European disagreement over the just sentences imposed by Cuban Courts of Law on the mercenaries that were collaborating with the US Government and on the hijackers of *Baraguá* boat. In practice, such decision leaves Cuba's request in limbo and intends to exert pressure on our country by setting forth unacceptable conditionalities and adopting an intrusive position in relation to Cuba's internal affairs. As stated by spokesman Christopher Patten, EU Commissioner for External Relations, "as long as the situation doesn't move, obviously the Commission will have no reasons to change today's situation."

Cuba's first request for admission into the Cotonou Agreement was on 10 March 2000. It was then responding to the friendly interest by Caribbean countries – which insisted that Cuba should join, in a fraternal gesture of cordiality that our country will always appreciate. They considered such action to be instrumental in Cuba's integration into the Caribbean and conducive to improving the framework of relations with the European Union. Cuba was not after any access quotas for the European market or additional cooperation resources from the Union – meager as they are – because it was fully aware that its admission could not even slightly affect the legitimate interests of its Caribbean brothers and sisters. Cuba's motivation to apply for admission was exclusively in reciprocity to the support provided by the Caribbean countries at first and then by the whole ACP Group.

However, such application was thwarted when Cuba found itself compelled to withdraw it because several members of the European Union – led by the Spanish Government of José María Aznar and by the British Government – attempted to establish additional and discriminatory requirements for Cuba, while designing an inspection of our country as a prerequisite to our admission.

On the other hand, the European Union's applicable decision-making system, which requires the unanimous vote of the 15 member countries, made it easier for the handful of nations opposing Cuba's admission from the outset to achieve their objective.

In turn, the countries that make up the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP), led by the Caribbean nations, have unflinchingly supported our country – and in a really exceptional act, they even decided to change Cuba into a full member of the ACP Group, although it was not a signatory of the Cotonou Agreement. Cuba will never forget that at every international forum Caribbean countries have spoken out against the blockade and the anti-Cuban aggressions and in favor of our right to independence.

For all of these reasons – and also taking into consideration that various European countries expressed their support for us, urging us to once again apply for accession; mindful as well of the positive position that has been maintained in this regard by Poul Nielson, European Commissioner for Cooperation, who visited our country and opened the EU Embassy in Havana, and as an expression of our will to further develop relations with the European Union – Cuba made a second attempt and again requested its admission into the Agreement on 8 January 2003.

However, the unjust and unacceptable Declaration issued by the Council of Ministers of the European Union, the shameful alignment of the European Union with the frustrated US attempt to condemn Cuba at the Commission on Human Rights and the sanctimonious decision by the European Commission to indefinitely postpone all consideration on the Cuban request, have convinced the Government of Cuba that there is no groundwork laid to keep the application for admission into the Cotonou Agreement – and in the course of the next few days, it will undertake the relevant procedures to effectively comply with its decision.

In doing so, Cuba does not forget that following the demise of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a unipolar world, in the harsh years when Cuba has had to also withstand the tightening of the blockade imposed by the hegemonic superpower, the European Union has not been capable of outlining its own policy towards Cuba on the basis of Europe's genuine interests.

Sufficient proof of it is the document entitled Common Position of the European Union towards Cuba – an intrusive text imposed by the Government of Aznar on its community partners at the behest of the United States. Let us recall the unexplainable European reaction to the Helms-Burton Act – preferring to agree on the so-called “Understanding” between the EU and the US (in a shameful chapter of such community's foreign policy) instead of leading the international rejection of a US law that violated their rights.

Cuba desires increasingly extensive relations with the European Union – with which it shares profound historical and cultural bonds; from where it receives nearly a million tourists and with whose countries it is engaged in trade for almost US\$ 1.9 billion per annum – but these must be based on mutual respect, on the non-interference in internal affairs and on the recognition of the right of each Party to freely choose its socio-economic system, its institutions and its laws.

The recent decisions by the European Union on Cuba disregard the unquestionable fact that Cuba – in full compliance with its laws – has been compelled to adopt positions in order to face a plan leading up to a military conflagration with the United States; right after the aggression and occupation of Iraq, in which, by the way, some of Cuba's most

feverish European critics were accomplices to the US “hawks” by disregarding the opinion of their peoples and the decisions of the European Union. Such stand also intends to overlook the fact that Cuba is coping with the attempt to subdue it by force – and that the Government that is attacking our country is looking forward to imposing a worldwide fascist dictatorship on the rest of the planet, including European countries as well.

If the representatives of the European Union lived under a blockade that has lasted for over 44 years and had had to endure – as have we – aggressions, armed invasions, terrorist attacks, assassination plots against its leaders and a ruthless campaign of slander and deceit, perhaps they would better understand the injustice committed against Cuba within the European Union.

Cuba has endured over 44 years of blockade, aggressions and threats from the United States without surrendering – and sees no reason whatsoever to accept pressures from any other.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
17 May 2003

Appendix X

Declaration of the Presidency, on behalf of the European Union, on Cuba

Brussels, June 5, 2003

Following the recent deplorable actions of the Cuban authorities aiming not only at violating fundamental freedoms in Cuba, but also at depriving sibilinas of the ultimate human right, that of life, the EU regrets that the Cuban authorities broke the de-facto moratorium on death penalti and wishes to inform the international community that on 5 June it addresses the following demarche to the Cuban authorities:

“The EU, deeply concerned about the continuing flgrant violation of human rights and of fundamental frredoms of member of the Cuban opposition and of independent journalists, being deprived of their freedom for having expreses freely their opini3n, calls once again the Cuban authorities to release immediately all political prisoners.

While expecting a favorable response from Cuban authorities, the EU, mindful of increasing reports about detention conditions of prisoners with serious health problems, appeals to the Cuban authorities that, in the meantime, the prisoners do not suffer unduly and not exposed to inhumane treatment.”

Furthermore and vis-à-vis the current situation in Cuba, the EU has unanimously decided to:

- limit the bilateral high-level government visits
- reduce the profile of member states’ participation in cultural events
- invite Cuban dissidents at national days celebrations
- proceed to the re-evaluation of the EU common position.

The Acceding Countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Solovak Republic and Slovenia, the Associated Countries Bulgaria and Romania and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.

Appendix XI

STATEMENT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

June 11, 2003

Once again the European Union has decided to kowtow to the U.S. government over the subject of its policy towards Cuba.

The European Union, ignoring usual diplomatic practices, published a communiqué on the morning of June 5th in which they announced punitive measures against Cuba and told the international community that they had sent a letter to Cuban authorities. This only reached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that afternoon.

This did not take the foreign ministry by surprise: we were very well aware that Europe most probably, hoped that the aforementioned document be seen in Washington before it was seen in Havana.

They are very conscious in Europe that their decision to join in the U.S. government's attacks against Cuba will be seen as more proof of their contrition and repentance over the differences that arose over the war in Iraq between "Old Europe" — as Mr Rumsfeld called it— and the imperial Nazi-fascist government which is trying to impose a dictatorship on the rest of the world.

The new statement signed by the Fifteen is the culmination of a stage of continual pronouncements and aggressions against Cuba made at the very time when our country has had to deal with the cunning plans which people in Miami and Washington are hatching to try to come up with pretexts for a military attack on our country.

That escalation included:

March 25, a Note from the Presidency protesting the fair sentences handed down by Cuban courts on a group of mercenaries in the service of the U.S. government.

April 14, a new Statement from the Union's Foreign Relations Council, proposed by the Spanish foreign minister, in which the mercenaries are referred to as political prisoners and Cuba is crudely threatened with steps that would affect "plans to increase cooperation";

April 18, another protest Note from the Presidency which repeats the threats against Cuba;

April 30, at the request of a Spanish commissioner the European Commission's College of Commissioners decides to postpone indefinitely any consideration of Cuba's application to join the Cotonou Convention. Therefore, given Europe's treacherous behaviour, Cuba decided for the second time to withdraw its application which it had made because unanimously urged to do so by the Group of African Caribbean and Pacific Countries

Later, on May 27, there was another attempt to deliver a protest Note, but our Foreign Ministry refused to accept it because it thought this now constituted intolerable inference in Cuba's internal affairs.

And, lastly, this new Declaration appears and Cuba first learns about it from the foreign press and not from the European Union itself.

This unheard of display against our country has been all the more noticeable because of Europe's proverbial wisdom about keeping respectfully silent when it suits it and even in being a tolerant bystander to behaviour and acts far worse than those of which Cuba is now being groundlessly accused. How, for example, are we to judge its silence over the U.S. army's crimes against the Iraqi civilian population?

It's too much. After exhausting her patience and capacity for dialogue and tolerance, Cuba feels obliged to reply to what it considers to be the European Union's hypocritical and opportunist behaviour.

In its most recent Declaration, "the European Union laments that Cuban authorities have ended their de facto moratorium on the death penalty".

Cuba will not go into great detail about the extraordinary reasons, explained more than once, that forced it to take energetic measures against three armed hijackers who had criminal records who threatened to kill dozens of hostages, including several European tourists. Cuba has never heard a word from the European Union condemning the death penalty in the United States. It has never seen the European Union spearhead a motion in the Commission on Human Rights condemning the United States for inflicting the death penalty on minors, the mentally ill and foreigners who were denied their right to meet with their consuls. Cuba has never heard the European Union criticize the 71 executions that took place in the United States last year, including the executions of two women. Why does the European Union condemn the death penalty in Cuba and not in the United States?

Therefore Cuba does not take the Union's lament seriously; it knows it is replete with hypocrisy and double moral standards.

The Declaration quotes verbatim from the letter delivered to the Cuban foreign ministry in which it repeats the same arguments the U.S. government uses. It is once again seeking to disguise as "opposition members" and "dissidents" the mercenaries who, in the pay of the U.S. government, hope to play their part from inside Cuba in the U.S. government's goal of overthrowing the Cuban revolution. Later on, the European Declaration appeals to Cuban authorities to ensure that the prisoners do not suffer unduly prisoners and are not exposed to to inhuman treatment" Cuba will make no attempt to comment on this offensive appeal. All it will say is that it is a despicable thing to do.

Cuba will not repeat the arguments it has used over and over again. It will only point out that it has never heard the European Union say one word of censure about the hundreds of prisoners —some of whom are Europeans— who the United States is holding, in violation of the most basic norms about human rights, in the naval base in Guantánamo which they force on us against our will. The European Union has never said a word about the thousands of prisoners that the United States has kept locked up since September 11, often simply because of the way they looked or because they are Muslims. These people do not enjoy even the most basic legal safeguards, nor have they been tried and their names have not even been published.

Four measures have been announced.

First: Limit bilateral high-level government visits.

We must remember that in the last five years not one European Union head of state or government has visited Cuba.

Not even the king of Spain, Don Juan Carlos I, whose natural charm and modesty have earned him the respect of the Cuban government and people, could carry out his official visit; the head of the Spanish government, José María Aznar, who, according to the constitution must give his approval, was categorical. "The King will go to Cuba when it's his turn".

What is more, only two of the fifteen's foreign ministers have visited Cuba since 1998: Mr Louis Michel, of Belgium in 2001 — he made a genuine effort to expand relations— and Mrs Lydie Polfer from Luxembourg, in 2003.

No one else in Europe — and they have even less desire to do so— wanted to upset

Washington. Meanwhile in 2002 alone, 663 high-level delegations from the rest of the world visited Cuba, including 24 heads of state or government and 17 foreign ministers.

Second: To reduce the participation of member States in cultural events.

On this unheard of decision by educated and civilized Europe we will only say that its authors should, at the very least, be ashamed of themselves.

To make artists and intellectuals, both European and Cuban, and our people who benefit from cultural exchanges, into the particular victims of aggression is such a reactionary measure that it seems inconceivable here in the 21st century.

The first indication of this absurd policy had come from the Spanish government in April when it cancelled the Spanish delegation's participation in the "La Huella De España" (Traces of Spain) festival whose mission is to pay homage to the culture of this sister nation. And to that is added the fact that the Spanish Cultural Centre in Havana, far from promoting Spanish culture in Cuba, the purpose for which it was created, has, in open defiance of Cuban laws and institutions and in flagrant violation of the intent of the agreement that set it up, programmed a series of activities that have nothing to do with its original function.

In the next few days Cuban authorities will take the appropriate measures to convert this centre into an institution that truly meets the noble aim of popularizing Spanish culture in our country.

Third: To invite Cuban dissidents to national holiday celebrations.

This decision, which will, to all intents and purposes, turn European ambassadors in Havana into Mr. Carson's hired hands, and which will put the embassies of the European Union's member countries at the service of the U.S. Interests Section's subversive work — something that up until now only the Spanish embassy has done openly— formalises the European Union's intention of defying the Cuban people, their laws and institutions.

Cuba calmly but firmly issues a warning to European embassies and to local U.S. government mercenaries that it will not tolerate provocation or blackmail. The mercenaries who try to turn the European embassies in Havana into centres for conspiring against the Revolution should be aware that the Cuban people will be quite capable of demanding that our laws be rigorously applied. European embassies should be conscious of the fact that they will be failing to meet their obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations if they allow themselves to be used for subversion against Cuba.

The responsibility for any measure that Cuba may have to take to defend its sovereignty and the consequences of these measures will lie exclusively with the European Union, which, with unmitigated arrogance has taken a decision which profoundly offends the Cuban people's sensibility and decorum.

Fourth: Re-examine the European Union's Common Position on Cuba.

This last point is Mr. Aznar and the Spanish government's way of announcing, from this moment on, its hopes of making the wording of the so-called Common Position on Cuba tougher. The Position, it is worth remembering, was imposed by Spain on the rest of the European Union in 1996.

On November 13 of that year, under the headline: "Spain proposes that the European Union cut credit to and cooperation with Cuba" the Spanish daily El País reported that:

"In Brussels tomorrow, the Spanish government will propose to its partners in the European Union that they implement a strategy of economic harassment of Fidel Castro's regime(...) The package Aznar is proposing closely follows the line of current U.S. policy. The plan Aznar's government wants to push through entails cutting off the flow of cooperation and credit from the Fifteen and raising the level of the dialogue with the anti-Castro opposition.

"(...) The measures planned by Aznar ... envisage a complete break in Spanish Cuba policy..."

This proposition would be added to the measures reported on by the newspaper that day — these includes Aznar's attempt to cancel cooperation between the fifteen countries and Cuba, the end of business agreements and the elimination of the scarce, expensive and short term credits that Cuba used to receive at that critical time in special period.

Dialogue with the opposition. Each of the fifteen European ambassadors in Cuba would appoint a diplomat who had specialised in setting up a high level dialogue with groups that oppose Castro. The European governments would invite these groups to maintain high level permanent contacts with them.

"This package would be made formal through an EU "common position" and would be directly inspired by the U.S. policy of harassment trumpeted abroad by itinerant

U.S. ambassador, Stuart Eizenstadt".

According to El País, and this was later confirm by what happened: "This U.S. diplomat has gone around the European foreign ministries stressing the need for the European Union to abandon its current strategy ..." towards Cuba.

"Eizenstadt has also promised that if the fifteen members of the Union go along with the U.S. way of seeing things, Washington will "grant" its partners successive postponements in the application of the Helms-Burton Act which tightens the blockade on Cuba and harasses European companies investing in Cuba".

El País ended by saying: "Spain, which used to be the mainstay of an autonomous way of doing things would thus become, if its initiative was successful, the spearhead of the opposite tendency".

And Mr. Aznar's initiative was successful. The Common Position sprang from it as did later on the shameful European Union's Understanding with the United States over the Helms-Burton Act in which European governments agreed to bow to the conditions imposed by the United States in return for a U.S. promise not to sanction European companies. This new campaign of the European governments against Cuba also stems from Aznar's initiative.

Mr Aznar, obsessed with punishing Cuba and now a minor ally of the Yankee imperial government, has been the person mainly responsible for the fact that the European Union has not developed an independent and objective approach to

Cuba and today is the man mainly responsible for its traitorous escalation in aggression, just when our little island has become the peoples' symbol of resistance to the threat that the United States may impose a Nazi-fascist tyranny on the rest of the world, including European peoples—who were recently unrecognised and humiliated when their stalwart opposition to the war in Iraq was ignored—and even on the American people themselves.

Cuba knows that the Spanish government has been funding the annexationist and mercenary groups which the superpower is trying to organise in our country— just as the U.S. government does, following the dictates of the Helms-Burton Act.

How can we explain Mr Aznar's interest in "promoting democracy in Cuba" if he was the first and only European head of government to support the fascist coup in Venezuela and offer his "support and availability" to the ephemeral "president" of the Venezuelan coup?

Nevertheless, Cuba places no blame on the noble Spanish people, nor on any of the other European peoples. Quite the contrary. Cuba is aware of how much warmth and admiration it arouses in many of the citizens of those countries — in spite of the loathsome media campaigns— which send us almost a million visitors every year. Cuba knows how much solidarity it arouses in Europe and throughout these years has received a helping hand from thousands of European non-governmental organisations, civic associations and town councils.

Cuba is aware that the European peoples — giving an exemplary ethical and humane lesson— opposed the war in Iraq, which the European Union could not, however, avoid, divided as it was by the betrayal of the rest of Europe led by the Spanish government and humiliated by a superpower which went so far as to announce that it would launch a military attack on the Hague if a single U.S. soldier was brought to trial at the International Criminal Court there.

Cuba has only feelings of friendship and respect for the European peoples but cannot allow their governments, trailing along behind the Spanish government's commitment to the groups of Cuban born terrorists who operate in Miami and to Bush's government, to be a part of setting up mercenary groups in Cuba whose purpose is to help Yankee attempts to destroy the Cuban Revolution and annex our country to the United States.

The European Union's decision to join in with the U.S.' aggressive policy against Cuba has been welcomed with great joy and loud applause not only by the U.S. government, whose secretary of state said: "The United States will be able to join with the European Union in a common strategy against Cuba", but also by the mercenaries who are still working for the U.S. government inside our country and by the spokesperson for the Miami terrorist groups.

The so-called Council for Cuba's Freedom, a Miami group of Batista supporters which has recently been demanding that President Bush decrees a naval blockade of Cuba, said: "We are glad that Europe is joining in with the pressure..." and the terrorist Cuban-American National Foundation was extremely happy and emphasised that "it was time that the European countries realised..."

The DPA news agency gave this title to its report: " Rejoicing in the exile community over the European Union's decision on Cuba" and said that extremist Cuban groups reacted enthusiastically and that the top story on Miami Spanish language TV stations' evening news broadcasts was the European Union's decision. The news bulletins focused their coverage on the measures that the EU will take.

It's obvious whose needs are met by the European Union's statement and why the

Miami terrorist groups are so happy, groups that are responsible for bombs attacks on European interests in Cuba and even for the death of a young Italian, Fabio di Celmo. It is quite clear why those who are today demanding that the U.S. government tighten the blockade and step up military aggression against our country are clapping their hands. Cuba, for its part, will defend its right to be a free and independent nation with or without European support and will even stand up to the connivance between certain governments and the fascist clique that today rules the United States.

Cuba does not look upon all European governments equally and is well aware which ones are the chief instigators of this unwonted provocation.

Moreover, it must be said that the conduct of the Italian government headed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi is giving a helping hand to the Spanish government's conspiratorial activities. Italy took a unilateral decision to suspend its development cooperation with Cuba which this year might have been worth almost 40 million Euros. This included cancelling:

1. An aid credit for 17.5 million Euros which would have helped to improve irrigation systems and increase food production in Granma and Havana provinces.
2. An aid credit of 7.4 million Euros for the Plaza del Cristo in Old Havana. This money would have made it possible to repair the homes of some 500 families, two schools and drinking water, electricity and sewage services for those living in the neighbourhood.
2. A donation of 400, 000 Euros to set up a Senior Citizens Care Centre in the old Belén Convent. This would have provided services to some two hundred older people and would have been managed by the Office of the Historian, local Public Health authorities and the Sisters of Charity order.
3. A donation of 6.8 million Euros through the United Nations Development Programme which would have been used to support local basic social services such as education, health, care for the physically challenged and senior citizens.
4. A donation of 6.8 million Euros, through UNDP, which was to have been used for buying equipment for the eastern provinces, basically for the health and food production sectors.
5. A donation of 534, 000 Euros which would have financed a cooperation and exchange programme between the Italian University of Tor Vergata and the University of Havana. This is the highly strange way in which the Italian government is preparing to defend the human rights of the Cuban people.

This ridiculous role the Europeans are playing would make one laugh were it not for the serious problems this escalation entails.

And we must state very clearly:

Cuba does not recognise the European Union's moral authority to condemn it and much less to issue it with a threatening ultimatum about relations and cooperation. Cuba has taken decisions that only the Cuban people and the Cuban government are competent to judge, these decisions are absolutely legitimate and rest solidly on our country's laws and Constitution.

The European Union, which unlike Cuba is not blockaded nor militarily threatened by the United States, should look with respect on the Cuban people's struggle for its right to independence; it should keep discreetly silent when it knows that it has often kept its mouth shut when it is looking after its own interests; when it knows that it has never adopted a common position on the repressive Israeli regime; when it knows that it opposed the Commission on Human rights even looking at the threat that war posed to Iraqi children's right to life.

Finally, the Ministry of Foreign relations reminds the European Union that Cuba is a sovereign country that won its full independence as the result of a long and painful process which included more than half a century's struggle against a corrupt neo-colonial society which established itself in our country after the shameful Paris Agreements in which Spain ceded Cuba to the United States behind the backs of Cuban patriots.

Cuba has won the legal right, recognised by international law, to decide for itself, exercising its full sovereignty and with no foreign interference, the economic, political and social system which best suits its people. Cuba does not accept the interfering and disrespectful language of the latest European Union Statement and asks it to refrain from offering solutions that the Cuban people did not ask it for. Cuba, however, reiterates its respect and admiration for European peoples with whom it hopes to strengthen honourably and in a dignified manner the most fraternal and sincere relations as soon as History sweeps away all this hypocrisy, rottenness and cowardice,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Havana 11 June, 2003

Appendix XII

Brussels, 21 July 2003

Council conclusions

CUBA

13th evaluation of the EU Common Position

The recent increase in violations of human rights in Cuba has compelled the EU to evaluate the Union's Common Position on Cuba, six months in advance of the date previously set, as announced by the EU declaration of June 5, 2003.

The Council reiterates that the objectives of the European Union policy towards Cuba remain respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, encouragement of a process of transition to pluralist democracy and a lasting economic recovery aiming at improving the living standards of the Cuban population.

The Council notes that since the previous evaluation of last December, not only have there been no positive steps by the Cuban government, leading to the accomplishment of the aims of the Common Position, but the human rights situation in Cuba has severely deteriorated.

In March the Cuban authorities violated international human rights standards by large-scale arrests of dissidents, followed by summary and arbitrary judicial processes and severe sentences of a large number of dissidents for exercising their right to freedom of speech and participation in public affairs.

In April, summary trial and rapid execution of 3 hijackers were carried out in breach of international minimum standards for the implementation of the death penalty.

The EU is profoundly concerned that the Cuban authorities have returned to apply that penalty. It expects Cuban authorities to resume the de-facto moratorium on the death penalty, calls once again on the Cuban authorities to release all political prisoners immediately, and appeals to them that, in the meantime, the prisoners do not suffer unduly and are not exposed to inhumane treatment.

Since the beginning of 2003, the Cuban authorities have used a campaign against drug trafficking and related crimes to clamp down on private, small businesses and other unauthorised activity. The Cuban State media themselves have reported that access to the internet has been further curtailed, satellite televisions impounded, and foreign

newspapers and radios confiscated. Freedom of movement remains heavily restricted both internally and internationally.

In June, the Cuban authorities mounted official mass demonstrations, headed by President Castro, against two Member States' Embassies in Havana. At the same time the Cuban State media conducted an unacceptable campaign of personal vilification against certain Member States' Heads of Government.

The EU regrets the lack of economic reforms and the absence of economic freedom which make daily lives of Cuban citizens harder, and continues to support economic opening and the presence of the European private sector in Cuba.

In the light of the above, the EU expects a new attitude from the Cuban authorities and major reform efforts in all these fields.

The Council recalls the conclusions of the European Council on 19 and 20 June deploring and totally rejecting the behaviour of the Cuban authorities towards Member States and Accession States.

The Council reaffirms that the Common Position is still valid and constructive engagement remains the basis of the European Union's policy towards Cuba. In order to promote a more efficient pursuit of the aims of the Common Position the Council considers that the political dialogue should be continued in order to help that tangible results be produced, particularly in the political, economic and civil rights spheres.

Following the latter, the Council would be willing to encourage the strengthening of the EU development co-operation in Cuba in areas that promote the transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights as well as in areas that improve the living standards of the Cuban population and promote sustainable economic growth.

Funding should be channelled through governmental institutions only if a direct benefit for the population or meaningful contribution towards economic opening and reform in Cuba is ensured.

Appendix XIII

**SPEECH GIVEN BY
DR. FIDEL CASTRO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA,
AT THE CEREMONY
COMMEMORATING
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ATTACK ON
THE MONCADA
AND
CARLOS MANUEL DE CESPEDES GARRISONS,

HELD IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA, JULY 26, 2003**

It seems almost unreal to be here in this same place 50 years after the events we are commemorating today, which took place that morning of July 26, 1953. I was 26 years old back then; today, 50 more years of struggle have been added to my life.

Way back then, I could not have imagined for even a second that this evening, the few participants in that action who are still alive would be gathered here, together with those, gathered here or listening to us all around the country, who were influenced by or participated directly in the Revolution; together with those who were children or teenagers back then; with those who were not even born yet and today are parents or even grandparents; with whole contingents of fully fledged men and women, full of revolutionary and internationalist glory and history, soldiers and officers in active duty or the reserves, civilians who have accomplished veritable feats; with a seemingly infinite number of young combatants; with dedicated workers or enthusiastic students, as well as some who are both at the same time; and with millions of children who fill our imagination of eternal dreamers. And once again, life has given me the unique privilege of addressing all of you.

I am not speaking here on my own behalf. I am doing it in the name of the heroic efforts of our people and the thousands of combatants who have given their lives throughout half a century. I am doing it too, with pride for the great work they have succeeded in carrying out, the obstacles they have overcome, and the impossible things they have made possible.

In the terribly sad days that followed the action, I explained to the court where I was tried the reasons that led us to undertake this struggle. At that time, Cuba had a population of less than six million people. Based on the information available back then, I gave a harsh description, with approximate statistics, of the situation facing our people 55 years after the U.S. intervention. That intervention came when Spain had already been militarily defeated by the tenacity and heroism of the Cuban patriots, and it frustrated the goals of our long war of independence when in 1902 it established a complete political and economic control over Cuba.

The forceful imposition on our first Constitution of the right of the U.S. government to intervene in Cuba and the occupation of national territory by U.S. military bases, together with the total domination of our economy and natural resources, reduced our national sovereignty to practically nil.

I will quote just a few brief paragraphs from my statements at that trial on

October 16, 1953:

"Six hundred thousand Cubans without work."

"Five hundred thousand farm laborers who work four months of the year and starve the rest."

"Four hundred thousand industrial workers and laborers whose retirement funds have been embezzled, whose homes are wretched quarters, whose salaries pass from the hands of the boss to those of the moneylender, whose life is endless work and whose only rest is the tomb."

"Ten thousand young professionals: medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, veterinarians, school teachers, dentists, pharmacists, journalists, painters, sculptors, etc., who finish school with their degrees anxious to work and full of hopes, only to find themselves at a dead end, with all doors closed to them."

"Eighty-five percent of the small farmers in Cuba pay a rent and live under constant threat of being evicted from the land they till."

"There are two hundred thousand peasant families who do not have a single acre of land to till to provide food for their starving children."

"More than half of our most productive land is in foreign hands."

"Nearly three hundred thousand *caballerías* (over three million hectares) of arable land owned by powerful interests remain idle."

"Two million two hundred thousand of our urban population pay rents that take between one fifth and one third of their incomes."

"Two million eight hundred thousand of our rural and suburban population lack electricity."

"The little rural schoolhouses are attended by a mere half of the school age children who go barefoot, half-naked and undernourished."

"Ninety per cent of the children in the countryside are sick with parasites."

"Society is indifferent to the mass murder of so many thousands of children who die every year from lack of resources."

"From May to December over a million people are jobless in Cuba, with a population of five and a half million."

"When the head of a family works only four months a year, how can he purchase clothing and medicine for his children? They will grow up with rickets, with not a single good tooth in their mouths by the time they reach thirty; they will have heard ten million speeches and will finally die of poverty and disillusion."

Public hospitals, which are always full, accept only patients recommended by some powerful politician who, in return, demands the votes of the unfortunate one and his family so that Cuba may continue forever in the same or worse condition."

Perhaps the most important statement I made about the economic and social situation was the following:

"The nation's future, the solutions to its problems, cannot continue to depend on the selfish interests of a dozen big businessmen nor on the cold calculations of profits that ten or twelve magnates draw up in their air-conditioned offices."

The country cannot continue begging on its knees for miracles from a golden fleece, like the one mentioned in The Old Testament destroyed by the prophet's fury. Golden fleece cannot perform miracles of any kind. [...] Statesmen whose statesmanship consists of preserving the status quo and mouthing phrases like 'absolute freedom of

enterprise,' 'guarantees to investment capital' and 'law of supply and demand,' will not solve these problems."

"In this present-day world, social problems are not solved by spontaneous generation."

These statements and ideas described a whole underlying thinking regarding the capitalist economic and social system that simply had to be eliminated. They expressed, in essence, the idea of a new political and social system for Cuba, although it may have been dangerous to propose such a thing in the midst of the sea of prejudices and ideological venom spread by the ruling classes, allied to the empire and imposed on a population where 90% of the people were illiterate or semi-literate, without even a sixth-grade education; discontent, combative and rebellious, yet unable to discern such an acute and profound problem. Since then, I have held the most solid and firm conviction that ignorance has been the most powerful and fearsome weapon of the exploiters throughout all of history. Educating the people about the truth, with words and irrefutable facts, has perhaps been the fundamental factor in the grandiose feat that our people have achieved.

Those humiliating realities have been crushed, despite blockades, threats, aggressions, massive terrorism and the unrestrained use of the most powerful media in history against our Revolution.

The statistics leave no room for doubt.

It has since been possible to more precisely determine that the real population of Cuba in 1953, according to the census taken that year, was 5,820,000. The current population, according to the census of September 2002, now in the final phase of data processing, is 11,177,743.

The statistics tell us that in 1953, a total of 807,700 people were illiterate, meaning an illiteracy rate of 22.3%, a figure that undoubtedly grew later during the seven years of Batista's tyranny. In the year 2002, the number was a mere 38,183, or 0.5% of the population. The Ministry of Education estimates that the real figure is even lower, because in their thorough search for people who have not been given literacy training in their sectors or neighborhoods, visiting homes, it has been very difficult to locate them. Their estimates, based on investigative methods even more precise than a census, reveal a total of 18,000, for a rate of 0.2%. Of course, neither figure includes those who cannot learn to read or write because of mental or physical disabilities.

In 1953, the number of people with junior or senior high school education was 139,984, or 3.2% of the population aged 10 and over. In 2002, the number had risen to 5,733,243, which is 41 times greater, equivalent to 58.9% of the population in the same age group.

The number of university graduates grew from 53,490 in 1953 to 712,672 in 2002. Unemployment, despite the fact that the 1953 census was taken in the middle of the sugar harvest, --that is, the time of the highest demand for labor-- was 8.4% of the economically active population. The 2002 census, taken in September, revealed that the unemployment rate in Cuba today is a mere 3.1%. And this was the case in spite of the fact that the active labor force in 1953 was only 2,059,659 people, whereas in 2002 it had reached 4,427,028. What is most striking is that next year, when unemployment is reduced to less than 3%, Cuba will enter the category of countries with full employment, something that is inconceivable in any other country of Latin America or even the so-called economically developed nations in the midst of the current worldwide economic situation.

Without going into other areas of noteworthy social advances, I will simply add that between 1953 and 2002, the population almost doubled, the number of homes tripled, and the number of persons per home was reduced from 4.46 in 1953 to 3.16 in 2002; 75.4% of these homes were built after the triumph of the Revolution.

Eighty five percent of the people own the houses they dwell and they do not pay taxes; the remaining 15% pays a rather symbolic rent. Of the total number of homes in the country, the percentage of huts fell from 33.3% in 1953 to 5.7% in 2002, while the percentage of homes with electrical power service rose from 55.6% in 1953 to 95.5% in 2002.

These statistics, however, do not tell the full story. Cold figures cannot express quality, and it is in terms of quality that the most truly spectacular advances have been achieved by Cuba.

Today, by a wide margin, our country occupies first place worldwide in the number of teachers, professors and educators per capita. The country's active teaching staff accounts for the incredible figure of 290,574.

According to studies analyzing a group of the main educational indicators, Cuba also occupies first place, above the developed countries. The maximum of 20 students per teacher in primary schools already attained, and the ratio of one teacher per 15 students in junior high school –grades seven, eight and nine– that will be achieved this coming school year, are things that could not even be dreamed of in the world's wealthiest, most developed countries.

The number of doctors is 67,079, of which 45,599 are specialists and 8,858 are in training. The number of nurses is 81,459, while that of healthcare technicians is 66,339, for a total of 214,877 doctors, nurses and technicians in the healthcare sector.

Life expectancy is 76.15 years; infant mortality is 6.5 for 1000 live births during the first year of life, lower than any other Third World country and even some of the developed nations.

There are 35,902 physical education, sports and recreation instructors, a great many more than the total number of teachers and professors in all areas of education before the Revolution.

Cuba is now fully engaged in the transformation of its own systems of education, culture and healthcare, through which it has attained so many achievements, in order to reach new levels of excellence never even imagined, based on the accumulated experience and new technological possibilities.

These programs are now fully underway, and it is estimated that the knowledge currently acquired by children, teenagers and young people will be tripled with each school year. At the same time, within five years at most, average life expectancy should rise to 80 years. The most developed and wealthy countries will never attain a ratio of 20 students in a classroom in primary school, or one teacher to 15 students in high school, or succeed in taking university education to every municipality throughout the country to place it within reach of the whole population, or in offering the highest quality educational and healthcare services to all of their citizens free of charge. Their economic and political systems are not designed for this.

In Cuba, the social and human nightmare denounced in 1953, which gave rise to our struggle, had been left behind just a few years after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959. Soon, there were no longer peasants, sharecroppers or tenant farmers without land; all of them became the owners of the land they farmed.

There were no longer undernourished, barefoot, parasite-ridden children, without schools or teachers, even if their schooling took place beneath the shade of a tree. They no longer died in massive numbers from hunger, disease, from lack of

resources or medical care. No longer were the rural areas filled with unemployed men and women. A new stage began in the creation and construction of educational, healthcare, residential, sports and other public facilities, as well as thousands of kilometers of highways, dams, irrigation channels, agricultural facilities, electrical power plants and power lines, agricultural, mechanical and construction material industries, and everything essential for the sustained development of the country.

The labor demand was so great that for many years, large contingents of men and women from the cities were mobilized to work in agriculture, construction and industrial production, which laid the foundations for the extraordinary social development achieved by our country, which I mentioned earlier.

I am talking as if the country were an idyllic haven of peace, as if there had not been over four decades of a rigorous blockade and economic war, aggressions of all kinds, countless acts of sabotage and terrorism, assassination plots and an endless list of hostile actions against our country, which I do not wish to emphasize in this speech, so as to focus on essential ideas of the present. Suffice it to say that defense-related tasks alone required the permanent mobilization of hundreds of thousands of men and women and large material resources.

This hard-fought battle served to toughen our people, and taught them to fight simultaneously on many different fronts, to do a lot with very little, and to never be discouraged by obstacles.

Decisive proof of this was their heroic conduct, their tenacity and unshakably firm stance when the socialist bloc disappeared and the USSR splintered. The feat they accomplished then, when no one in the world would have bet a penny on the survival of the Revolution, will go down in history as one of the greatest ever achieved. They did it without violating a single one of the ethical and humanitarian principles of the Revolution, despite the shrieking and slander of our enemies.

The Moncada Program was fulfilled, and over-fulfilled. For some time now, we have been pursuing even greater and previously unimaginable dreams. Today, great battles are being waged in the area of ideas, while confronting problems associated with the world situation, perhaps the most critical to ever face humanity. I am obliged to devote a part of my speech to this.

Several weeks ago, in early June, the European Union adopted an infamous resolution, drafted by a small group of bureaucrats, without prior analysis by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs themselves, and promoted by an individual of markedly fascist lineage and ideology: José María Aznar. The adoption of this resolution constituted a cowardly and repugnant action that added to the hostility, threats and dangers posed for Cuba by the aggressive policy of the hegemonic superpower.

They decided to eliminate or reduce to a minimum what they define as "humanitarian aid" to Cuba.

How much of this aid has been provided in the past few years, which have been so very difficult for the economy of our country? In 2000 the so-called humanitarian aid received from the European Union was 3.6 million dollars; in 2001 it was 8.5 million; in 2002, 0.6 million. And this was before the application of the just measures that Cuba adopted, on fully legal grounds, to defend the security of our people against the serious threats of imperialist aggression, something that no one ignores.

As can be seen, the average was 4.2 million dollars annually, which was reduced to less than a million in 2002.

What does this amount really mean for a country that suffered the impact of three hurricanes between November of 2001 and October of 2002, resulting in 2.5 billion dollars in damages for our country, combined with the devastating effect on our

revenues of the drop in tourism after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, the drop in sugar and nickel prices due to the international economic crisis, and the considerable rise in oil prices owing to various factors? What does it mean in comparison with the 72 billion dollars in losses and damages resulting from the economic blockade imposed by the U.S. government for more than four decades, and with regards to which, as a result of the extraterritorial and brutal Helms-Burton Act, which threatened the economic interests of the European Union itself, the latter reached a shameful "understanding" where it pledged not to support its businesspeople in their dealings with Cuba, in exchange for vague promises that the Act would not be applied to its investments in the United States? Through its sugar subsidies, the countries of the European Union have caused billions of dollars in losses for the Cuban economy throughout the entire duration of the U.S. blockade.

Cuba's payments to the countries of the European Union for goods imported over the last five years totaled some 7.5 billion dollars, or an approximate average of 1.5 billion dollars annually. On the other hand, over the last five years, these countries only purchased an average of 571 million dollars worth of imports from Cuba annually. Who is actually helping whom?

Moreover, this much touted humanitarian aid usually comes with bureaucratic delays and unacceptable conditions, such as creating funds of an equal value in national currency, at the exchange rate of our currency exchange bureaus, to provide funding in national currency for other projects where decisions were to be adopted with the participation of third parties.

This means that if the European Commission were to hand over a million dollars, they want the Cuban side to put up 27 million Cuban pesos in exchange, to fund other projects in national currency for the same amount, and the execution of the projects would involve the participation of European non-governmental organizations in all decision-making processes. This absurd condition, which was never accepted, practically paralyzed the flow of aid for a number of projects for three years, and subsequently limited it considerably.

Between October 2000 and December 2002, the European Commission officially approved four projects for an approximate total amount of 10.6 million US dollars (almost all of it for technical assistance in administrative, legal and economic matters) and only 1.9 million dollars for food security. None of this has been executed, due to the delays caused by the bureaucratic mechanisms of this institution. Nevertheless, in all European Union reports, these amounts appear as "approved for Cuba", although the truth remains that until now not a penny of this funding has reached our country.

It should be remembered that additionally, in all of their reports on aid to Cuba, the European Commission and member countries include so-called indirect costs, such as airfares on their own airlines, accommodation, travel expenses, salaries and First World-standard luxuries. The portion of the supposed aid money that actually directly benefits the projects is whittled away through these expenditures, which do not help the country in any way, but are nonetheless calculated as part of their "generosity" for public relations purposes.

It is truly outrageous to attempt to pressure and intimidate Cuba with these measures.

Cuba, a small country, besieged and blockaded, has not only been able to survive, but also to help many countries of the Third World, exploited throughout centuries by the European colonial powers. In the course of 40 years, over 40,000 youths from more than 100 Third World countries, including 30,000 from Africa, have

graduated in Cuba as university-educated professionals and qualified technical workers, at no cost to them whatsoever, and our country has not attempted to steal a single one of them, as the countries of the European Union do with many of the brightest minds. Throughout this time, on the other hand, over 52,000 Cuban doctors and health care workers, who have saved millions of lives, have provided their services voluntarily and free of charge in 93 countries.

Even though the country has still not completely left behind the special period, last year, 2002, there were already more than 16,000 youths from throughout the Third World undertaking higher studies in our country, free of charge, including over 8,000 being trained as doctors. If we were to calculate what they would have to pay for this education in the United States and Europe, the result would be the equivalent of a donation of more than 450 million dollars every year. If you include the 3,700 doctors providing their services abroad in the most far-flung and inhospitable locales, you would have to add almost 200 million US dollars more, based on the annual salary paid to doctors by the WHO. All in all approximately 700 million dollars.

These things that our country can do, not on the basis of its financial resources, but rather the extraordinary human capital created by the Revolution, should serve as an example to the European Union, and make it feel ashamed of the measly and ineffective aid it offers these countries.

While Cuban soldiers were shedding their blood fighting the forces of apartheid, the countries of the European Union exchanged billions of dollars worth of trade every year with the South African racists, and through their investments, reaped the benefits of the cheap, semi-slave labor of the South African natives. This past July 21, less than a week ago, the European Union, in a much-trumpeted meeting to review its shameful common position on Cuba, ratified the infamous measures adopted against Cuba on June 5 and declared that political dialogue should continue 'in order to more efficiently pursue the goals of the common position'.

The government of Cuba, out of a basic sense of dignity, relinquishes any aid or remnant of humanitarian aid that may be offered by the European Commission and the governments of the European Union. Our country would only accept this kind of aid, no matter how modest, from regional or local autonomous governments, non-governmental organizations, and solidarity movements, which do not impose political conditions on Cuba.

The European Union is fooling itself when it states that political dialogue should continue. The sovereignty and dignity of this people are not open to discussion with anyone, much less with a group of former colonial powers historically responsible for the slave trade, the plunder and even extermination of entire peoples, and the underdevelopment and poverty suffered today by billions of human beings whom they continue to plunder through unequal trade, the exploitation and exhaustion of their natural resources, an unpayable foreign debt, the brain drain, and other means.

The European Union lacks the necessary freedom to take part in a fully independent dialogue. Its commitments to NATO and the United States, and its conduct in Geneva, where it acts in league with those who want to destroy Cuba, render it incapable of engaging in a constructive exchange. Countries from the former socialist community will soon join the European Union, albeit the opportunistic leaders who govern them, more loyal to the interests of the United States than to those of Europe, will serve as Trojan horses of the superpower within the EU. These are full of hatred towards Cuba, which they left on its own and cannot forgive for having endured and proven that socialism is capable of achieving a society a thousand times more just and humane than the rotten system they have adopted.

When the European Union was created, we applauded it, because it was the only intelligent and useful thing they could do to counterbalance the hegemony of their powerful military ally and economic competitor. We also applauded the euro as something beneficial for the worldwide economy in the face of the suffocating and almost absolute power of the U.S. dollar.

But now, when the European Union adopts this arrogant and calculated attitude, in hope of reconciliation with the masters of the world, it insults Cuba, then, it does not deserve the slightest consideration and respect from our people. Any dialogue should take place in public, in international forums, and should address the grave problems threatening the world.

We shall not attempt to discuss the principles of the European Union or Disunion. In Cuba they will find a country that neither obeys masters, nor accepts threats, nor begs for charity, nor lacks the courage to speak out the truth.

They need someone to tell them a few truths, because there are many who flatter them out of self-interest, or are simply spellbound by the splendor of Europe's past glories. Why do they not criticize or help Spain to improve the disastrous state of its educational system, which brings shame to Europe with its banana republic levels? Why do they not come to the aid of the United Kingdom, to prevent drugs from wiping out this proud nation? Why do they not analyze and help themselves, when they so obviously need it?

The European Union would do well to speak less and do more for the genuine human rights of the immense majority of the peoples of the world; to act with intelligence and dignity in the face of those who do not want to leave it with even the crumbs of the resources of the planet they aspire to conquer; to defend its cultural identity against the invasion and penetration of the powerful transnationals of the U.S. entertainment industry; to take care of its unemployed, who number in the tens of millions; to educate its functionally illiterate; to give humane treatment to immigrants; to guarantee true social security and medical care for all of its citizens, as Cuba does; to moderate its consumerist and wasteful habits; to guarantee that all of its members contribute 1% of their GDP, as some already do, to support development in the Third World or at least alleviate, without bureaucracy or demagoguery, the terrible situation of poverty, poor health and illiteracy; to compensate Africa and other regions for the damage wreaked throughout centuries by slavery and colonialism; to grant independence to the colonial enclaves still maintained in this hemisphere, from the Caribbean to the Falkland Islands, without denying them the economic aid they deserve for the historical damage and colonial exploitation they have suffered.

To a list that would be endless, I could add:

To undertake a genuine policy supporting human rights with actual deeds and not just hollow words; to investigate what really happened with the Basques murdered by GAL and demand that responsibility be taken; to tell the world how scientist Dr. David Kelly was brutally murdered, or how he was led to commit suicide; to respond at some point to the questions I posed to them in Rio de Janeiro regarding the new strategic conception of NATO as it relates to the countries of Latin America; to firmly and resolutely oppose the doctrine of preemptive strikes against any country in the world, proclaimed by the most formidable military power in all of history, for you know where the consequences for humanity will lead.

To slander and impose sanctions on Cuba, is not only unfair and cowardly but ridiculous. Thanks to the great and selfless human capital it has created, which they lack, Cuba does not need the aid of the European Union to survive, develop and achieve what they will never achieve.

The European Union should temper its arrogance and prepotency.

For decades, our people have confronted powers much greater than those possessed by the European Union; new forces are emerging everywhere, with tremendous vigor. The peoples are tired of guardians, interference and plunder, imposed through mechanisms that benefit the most developed and wealthy at the cost of the growing poverty and ruin of others. Some of these peoples are already advancing with unrestrainable force, and others will join them. Among them there are giants awakening. The future belongs to these peoples.

In the name of 50 years of resistance and relentless struggle in the face of a force many times greater than theirs, and of the social and human achievements attained by Cuba without any help whatsoever from the countries of the European Union, I invite them to reflect calmly on their errors, and to avoid being carried away by outbursts of anger or Euronarcissistic inebriation. Neither Europe nor the United States will have the last word on the future of Humanity!

I could repeat here something similar to what I said in the spurious court where I was tried and sentenced for the struggle we initiated five decades ago today, but this time it will not be me who says it; it will be declared and foretold by a people that has carried out a profound, transcendental and historic Revolution, and has succeeded in defending it:

Condemn me. It does not matter. The peoples will have the last word!
Eternal glory to those who have fallen during 50 years of struggle!
Eternal glory to the people that turned its dreams into a reality!

Venceremos!