



Castro's Tactics of CONTROL IN CUBA

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AFTER THE BERLIN WALL FELL and the Soviet Union collapsed, U.S. policy toward Latin America degenerated into a condition of smug complacency and benign neglect. The policy apparently stemmed from the assumption that Leninist-style socialism had failed and that democratic capitalism had permanently prevailed as the Latin American system of choice, able to come into full bloom without further nurturing. This was naïve and, for a nation that depends in large part on Andean Ridge oil to fuel its economy, also foolhardy and dangerous.

U.S. complacency went hand-in-hand with the apparent assumption that Cuba's Fidel Castro had shriveled into permanent irrelevance, having devolved into a mere anachronism of the cold war, an obsolete curiosity and relic of failed Socialism on the junk heap of history. Unfortunately, to the unpleasant surprise of many in the U.S. government, it is now quite apparent that Castro was cleverer than anyone had given him credit for. Not only has he survived the widespread collapse of global communism to become the virtual ideological world leader of what remains of the communist faithful, but he has emerged as the leading ideological leader in the Western Hemisphere. As such, he plays an increasingly dominant shaping role in hemispheric politics, aided and abetted in large measure by continuing U.S. indifference to the region. This is evidenced by resurgent regional interest in his methods for taking power and for governing, both of which are being emulated and promoted to ever wider and more sympathetic audiences as alternatives to "democratic capitalism" linked to "international trade agreements." The most notable current champions of Castroism are Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez and Bolivia's President Evo Morales.

Nevertheless, in the face of clear evidence that fledgling democracies in Latin America are foundering on the rocks of entrenched oligarchies, enduring class stratification, widespread official corruption, and persistent, widespread poverty, U.S. policy continues, as it has over the last 15 years, tepidly hoping for the best. Meanwhile, disillusioned with democratic capitalism as a solution to Latin America's social and economic problems, Chávez, Morales, and other prominent Latin leaders are closely studying how to incorporate major elements of Castro's ideology and methods for governing in their own nations. Today, they are actively seeking to promote alternative forms of socioeconomic and political systems that they assert will be better suited to Latin American culture and ethnic "temperament" than democratic capitalism. As a result, much of what Chávez is now doing, and Morales has openly committed to do, mirrors the measures Castro took to consolidate control not only over the government of Cuba, but over the hearts, minds, and souls of the people.

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As a former member of Castro's Cuban government apparatus charged with implementing measures of social and political control in the aftermath of Castro's takeover, my purpose here is to broadly outline what it takes to control populations in general, with special emphasis on the principles and measures which were implemented by Castro to consolidate control over the Cuban people, and which he still uses today to control every aspect of Cuban life. It is hoped that highlighting these will help alert U.S. policymakers and military leaders to the measures pro-Castro, anti-American leaders like Chávez and Morales can be expected to employ on the Andean Ridge in their attempts to implement similar social, political and economic programs of social and political control.

A Reality of Governance

Setting aside utopian egalitarianism governed by wishful thinking, the cold hard facts of life are that the art of politics in some way hinges to a lesser or greater degree on employing effective measures to guide, influence, and control populations. As a result, control over people as a legitimate objective of political practice has been the subject of multiple theoretic and philosophical studies throughout history.¹ Subsequent to such discussion, there is near universal agreement that all governments, if they are to effectively govern and regulate society, have a legitimate interest in exercising some form of population control—even democracies. Therefore, the circumstantial or incidental application of techniques of control in the interests of building or maintaining a democracy is not only legitimate, but essential. Consequently, gaining a thorough understanding and mastery of the principles and mechanisms of population control is indispensable for anyone aspiring to be a politician, community leader, or military officer responsible for managing, caring for, and leading large groups of people.

Control Must Be Cultivated

As a first observation, thorough and effective control of a population cannot be gained through spontaneous actions; it requires premeditation. Without a program aimed at asserting control, spontaneous events resulting in leadership over a polity merely generate spurious, temporary effects that ultimately produce ineffective, short-lived govern-

ments. Thus, effective control demands a calculated program of action based on scientific rigor that aims to identify and implement measures based on socio-psychological principles. Political leaders in general must understand and possess the ability to apply these principles, methods, and techniques in a flexible manner, which requires acute observation, ingenuity, and astuteness; general axioms and superficial application do not suffice.

Totalitarian Control

Totalitarian regimes, and those countries that throughout history have maintained dictatorial and personality-driven governments—such as Cuba—are totalitarian precisely because their leaders have developed the most refined and extensive procedures for controlling their populations. Currently, countries like Cuba are clearinghouses for socio-psychological techniques that aim at achieving the major objective of all totalitarian regimes: absolute political power by asserting total control over every aspect of a population's social, political, economic, and moral life.

Theoretical Premises of Control

In my experience, there are seven basic socio-psychological principles that must be employed to develop such an effective program of population control:

- *Systematic focus on developing an understanding of how national political and social systems work.* Nations or ethnic groups, developed or undeveloped, have to some extent an inherently stratified socio-political structure on one hand, together with established internal processes that modify that structure on the other. To control a society, one must first closely study and analyze the dynamics of the existing systems, both formal and informal, that govern that society. This enables the next step of formulating measures to exploit the dynamics of the systems to co-opt or effectively supplant them.

- *A detailed understanding of how individual identity is established at the micro and macro levels of social strata.* This starts with obtaining a knowledge of the cultural folkways and mores associated with how a person gains personal identity within a given society. It is essential to understand how individuals acquire their identity, followed by how individual identity then is socialized into broader

social structures at the micro level, such as how one is socialized into extended and nuclear family structures, occupational or trade groups, education systems (which in every society are powerful instruments of social organization and stratification), neighborhoods and local ethnic groupings, and religious or other social groups. In short, study must be made of every way in which people are connected at the micro level in close, face-to-face interaction. This in turn must be linked to studying and understanding the dynamics of individual identity and micro socialization as they apply to the formation of a collective national identity at the macro level. To this end, one must understand the relative importance of a national (country-based) identity as opposed to a pan-regional or community identity established by religious, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural affinity. Macro socialization does not usually occur as a result of intimate face-to-face interaction; it is formed and shaped by indirect means such as community links to a common literature and language, cultural history, religious liturgy, or the media.

- *Analysis of economic conditions and factors.* These must be understood because, to a great extent, they contour and regulate the social interaction that occurs at each level of society. Economic factors shape the educational and political systems and virtually every other aspect of social interaction. As such, they influence the nature of individual interactions, as well as the broader social and cultural interactions that produce important-to-understand cultural idiosyncrasies.

- *Understand how a specific society's formal and informal communication systems work.* The communication systems and networks that facilitate individual relations within a nation must be studied in great detail, since they constitute the nervous system of the body politic and are the bedrock of social interaction and intercourse that make the state viable. These systems range from informal networks of intimate direct interaction (face-to-face) to organized mass communications at a very impersonal level. Such communication networks vary in form and interconnection according to the social strata or region in which they operate. For example, communications reaching a family unit may be very different from nation to nation or culture to culture (i.e., different in a Latin American

region as compared to networks on the Arabian Peninsula).

- *Understanding of unique social conventions as factors of social influence that regulate and control the attitudes and behavior of populations.* Theory and tools developed for premeditated or spontaneous efforts to modify attitudes and behaviors are constrained by the dynamics of a society's unique set of social mores and customs. Therefore, communications must be developed that specifically have as their objective channeling and modifying existing mores, beliefs, feelings, motivations, and emotions in a manner that leads to cultural and psychological submission to the state.

- *Exploitation of charismatic leaders.* Changes in social systems are universally influenced and regulated by communications channeled through the nation's social strata by effective and charismatic leaders who are perceived as embodying the values of the movement they represent or over which they preside. Properly understanding and employing the unifying principle of charismatic leadership is essential to control a populace.

- *Understanding internal national and ethnic differences.* The measures employed for controlling the population must be applied according to national and ethnic differences. For example, the leadership imposed on Cubans, whose culture combines Spanish Catholic features with sub-Saharan African animist religious and cultural influences, entails a very different set of considerations and peculiarities than those that would be employed in developing measures aimed at controlling the populace of a rural area of Iraq where Sunni, Shia, and Kurd populations coexist uneasily, each having different cultural traditions, interpretations of Islam, and even languages.

A government program that effectively integrates measures based on the above seven principles creates in society a bastion of psychological conditioning very difficult to overcome by those seeking to challenge the regime in power later. Obviously, developing such a program requires a massive investment in research aimed at gathering, analyzing, collating, and utilizing information pertinent to each principle. Thus, a telling mark of totalitarian regimes is that they characteristically invest inordinate amounts of money and other resources in social research, and they usually prioritize social



On 10 October 1960, on the eve of the military trial of more than a hundred insurgents captured in the mountains, Fidel Castro warns, "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword" to those who attacked his regime.

research above meeting the requirements of other pressing state needs. Such research is administered by government ministries that have been established specifically for the purpose of identifying and managing the complete psychological domination of their citizens. This is why totalitarian regimes like Cuba's often evolve into recognized world leaders in social research.

Control in Cuba

That Cuba has become a global symbol of totalitarian rule at the beginning of the 21st century is one of the great ironies of modern history. Motivated by a vision of egalitarian democratic rule and universal human equality, Cuba was the only Latin American country to fight continually against Spanish colonialism (for over 100 years) to gain its independence. However, following the end of Spanish rule, Cuba's attempts at establishing a democracy were constantly interrupted by political instability and civil unrest that persisted into the 1920's and early 30's (and which, unfortunately, was abetted by the U.S.'s ill-advised meddling).² During this process, the bloody, tyrannical government that assumed power in the early 20th century was ousted by a popular insurrection that aimed once more at establishing a democracy. However, the democratic forces were again thwarted in 1952 by dictator Fulgencio Batista, who seized power by coup d'état, promising to establish democracy.

Instead, he proved to be an especially cruel and exploitative tyrant. So onerous and corrupt was Batista's rule that his government fell easily in the late 1950s when challenged by the relatively modest but persistent insurgency led by Fidel Castro, another charismatic but utterly self-possessed dictator who, like Batista, came to power promising democracy, but on assuming power reneged on his commitment.

In contrast to the short-sighted venality that characterized Batista, Castro was a much shrewder analyst of the tide of human events. Unlike Batista, who lived to exploit the populace to support his own luxurious lifestyle, Castro lived for acquiring power. To this end, he followed a strategy of first consolidating power by currying favor with the Cuban middle and lower economic classes, followed later by implementing more extreme measures to consolidate total psychological and moral control over the rest of the population once power was firmly in his hands.

In this way, Cuba's century-old pursuit of liberty and democratic rule went by the wayside as it fell back into the pattern of trading one strongman for another. The current strongman has since successfully established a totalitarian dictatorship built around his own cult of personality under a thinly disguised façade of communism.

The Seven Principles of Control Applied in Cuba

Employing the seven principles previously noted, Castro has developed a unique system of population control through a sophisticated program of calculated psychological domination supported by targeted coercion. His program is not built on a form of repression characterized by indiscriminate bloodshed and mass coercion, as often depicted by outside observers and world media. Intimidation through state terrorism is used, but it is used only in a very selective and targeted fashion, in a way calculated not to unduly agitate the majority of the citizens. Nor is control obtained through what is popularly termed brainwashing, though socio-psychological manipulation of the population is one of the principal instruments in the system of control. Rather, the Cuban regime imposes a mental and spiritual yoke upon the population. It conditions the psychological outlook of the populace through

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- **Public opinion surveys**
- **Leader creation**
- **Propaganda**

a calculated policy that narrows expectations by limiting individual choices across the social spectrum. As a result, in practical application, Castro's regime has gradually habituated the Cuban population to accept, in large part unconsciously, a social, political, and economic environment in which lack of choice is the norm. Therefore, a life of limited choice that produces accepted dependence on the state has become the virtual psychological status quo; it is an element now entrenched in the national character of the Cuban population itself. Thus, Castro need not gauge the ultimate success of his population control by public expressions of popular support for his regime, but by evidence of mass resignation, as manifested in a general lack of significant organized resistance.

The Cuban government has imposed this psychological yoke over the population with a program that is characterized by a refined matrix of measures that specifically aim to habituate the average Cuban to accepting limited choice as the norm. Around this norm are grouped a variety of interrelated factors that form a pyramid of constraining factors.

The central vertical axis and spine of this structure of total dominance is the principle of exploiting the influence of a charismatic leader. At the base and foundation of the pyramid of control is Castro himself, as the Cuban people have been conditioned over time to accept his decisions as infallible and his authority as inviolable—so completely, moreover, that he can neither be successfully defied nor challenged. Consequently, mass psychological acceptance of Castro's infallibility effectively reifies in the public mind the perception that personal involvement in political choice for the average citizen is off the table. In other words, the majority of the populace has generally resigned itself to believing that participation in the government is simply not a personal option. This is the cornerstone

of Cuba's program for mass psychological domination. Once the masses have accepted as a principle that they are properly and severely limited in their ability to choose their own political leaders, this provides the foundation for further measures to promote psychological submission to the dictates of the state and its leadership.

The following pyramid of psychological themes and measures has been built on this foundation:

- Inculcation of governmental infallibility and omnipotence, and mass psychological acceptance of the impossibility of the government's removal, reinforced by propaganda designed to create this impression by mixing accounts of both real and misleading events intended to demonstrate the impossibility of successfully challenging the state.

- Acceptance of the state's absolute control of property and its strict regulation of individual liberties.

- Acceptance of the dominant and unbridled power of the police and secret service to monitor and control the activities of Cuban citizens. As a result, fear of the police and secret service permeates Cuban society, even at the highest levels (just below Castro) of the government, the Communist Party, and the military. Thanks to a vast network of local informants, fear and its corollary, suspicion, reach down into individual homes and families. This marks the successful implementation of what amounts to a scheme to keep the nation in a constant state of paranoia in which neighbors suspect and fear neighbors.

- Information control. In Cuba, all information reaching the population comes from state media. Typically, this information is highly textured propaganda. The importance Castro places on maintaining absolute control over information is apparent in his maniacal efforts to block all information from the outside world that might challenge state-purveyed information. Cuba, for instance, expends enormous resources to jam Radio and TV Marti broadcasts emanating from Miami, Florida.

- Emigration control. Cuba seeks complete control of its citizens' movements both inside and outside the country. Castro is cagey, however. Although the government officially maintains a policy of reprisal against anyone desiring to leave, in reality, departures are controlled in a way calculated to dissipate the strength of potential internal opposition. Put another way, Castro lets troublemakers leave.

- Behavior control created by instilling a sense of resignation and helplessness through legal sanctions imposed on all activities according to the government's dictates. Choice is closely circumscribed across a spectrum of activities, including what is acceptable for a person to hear in the news or to buy in a store, where a person can live, what he can do for a living, and where he can travel. Compliance with such measures is promoted as a necessary patriotic duty and is subject to state monitoring.

- Zero tolerance of political or social opposition. A key to totalitarian control is not to allow the opposition to mature into a critical mass that could call the government's authority into question. Repression of all opposition is abetted by government control of communications and by conscious efforts to sow mistrust and chronic intangible terror among potential opposition elements.

Principles and Tactics of Control

Cuba's program to dominate its populace has three major components:

- *Public opinion surveys.* The government spends an enormous amount of time collecting public-opinion information based on the premise that it cannot influence, control, or direct a population if it does not know what the people are thinking and doing. Analysis of this knowledge guides follow-on action. In a totalitarian society, such information is usually obtained by posting agents and informants in the community. The Cuban government sponsors two kinds of extensive data collection efforts: structured and incidental. The former describes collection from agents and observers who routinely circulate through communities to collect observations. The latter occurs when observers are sent to collect data associated with a concrete and current situation, normally one involving a conflict.

- *Leader creation.* It is not uncommon in less developed cultures for the population to see authoritarianism as the only solution to social and political instability. However, because authoritarian governments have a hard time identifying successor leaders once the leader dies or is removed, the legitimacy of the government he headed immediately comes

into question. The country may become disoriented and society might collapse unless another equally effective authoritarian ruler assumes control. For that reason—to keep the population under control—totalitarian regimes are particularly concerned with perpetuating authoritarian leaders.

In Cuba, where problems surrounding Castro's succession have long been anticipated, much effort has been expended to identify leaders at lower levels for indoctrination and training. It is hoped that when the time comes for Castro to leave power, these new leaders will continue to exercise authority in a manner calculated to ensure the continuity of the regime. Preparing this chain of leadership involves—

- ▶ Inserting agents and informants into the population to identify the best candidates for leadership.

- ▶ Selecting and approaching prospective leaders in whom the local people clearly show confidence.

- ▶ Identifying leaders who have independently emerged at the head of organizations sympathetic to the regime, as well as those involved in organizing mass demonstrations.

- ▶ Preparing selected leaders by providing indoctrination, training, and experience through assignment to positions of increased responsibility.

- *Propaganda.* In Cuba, as in all states governed by authoritarian regimes, propaganda is of incalculable importance for controlling the population. According to authoritarian theory, propaganda will only be effective if it is designed

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to support specific objectives stemming from concrete situations. (Propaganda used merely for propaganda's sake will actually be counterproductive; its banality will undermine the believability of all state-disseminated information.) Consequently, developing effective propaganda requires a thorough understanding of the specific conditions and idiosyncrasies associated with a specific situation. For example, content and messages will be significantly different depending on whether they are to be directed at farmers in Cuba, oil workers in Venezuela, or bazaaris in Iraq. To further illustrate, propaganda aimed at religious Cubans of Spanish-Catholic heritage who have been influenced by

long-standing secular-humanist policies and the national traits of Cuban pragmatism and tolerance, as well as other cultural factors, would not serve well if used on those who display the fanatical sentiments that occur in some non-Catholic, less secular, religiously intolerant Middle East populations.

Propaganda should generally be employed in two modes for distinct purposes:

- ▶ Information directed at buttressing public faith and confidence in the regime.

- ▶ Disinformation aimed at misleading adversaries. Such propaganda attempts to modify the opposition's psychological perceptions in order to minimize or alter its actions. It will usually take the form of regime messages juxtaposed against the opposition's arguments or convictions, and it will be transmitted by special technical means in a manner that seeks to modify the target audience's perceptions or beliefs without them realizing it.

There is also specialized political propaganda, which combines facets of information and disinformation with other important features. It must—

- ▶ Contain primarily emotional-affective content. Political propaganda will not be effective unless it elicits emotion as opposed to merely attempting to persuade with argument. Political propaganda must stimulate intense passion to emotionally agitate the masses into accepting governmental assertions, then acting as the government wishes.

- ▶ Help unify disparate groups into a single body around themes that produce passionate core attitudes.

- ▶ Showcase the leadership or the symbolic significance of a specific leader to buttress support for both as legitimate representatives of the targeted group's values.

- ▶ Constantly repeat basic themes using speeches, mass media, graphics, individuals, and whatever other means are available.

- ▶ Provide a unifying cosmic paradigm that satisfies all groups. For example, Nazism and Communism were distinct from other political ideologies because their proponents recognized that political ideology alone was unlikely to achieve much without the addition of "spiritual" content. Emulating this strategy, Castro's regime set itself apart from the relatively weak Communist movements of Eastern Europe, which abandoned any spiritual or emotional appeals to the masses in favor of rational persuasion.

As a result, those movements lost their fanatical adherents and leaders and then their general psychological hold over the people. (By way of comparison, similar emphasis on promoting the "spiritual" component of fundamentalist Islamic extremism appears to be a prime motivating factor for adherents of the faith that is fueling global terrorism.)

- ▶ Adapt to the audience at which it is directed. In the Middle East, propaganda must be based on the Koran, while in Cuba, appeals that are more secular, objective, and not exclusively religious in nature are more effective.

- ▶ Exploit the human herd instinct. Propaganda is best transmitted in a collective setting, where the effect of its emotional content is greater. Speeches to large groups of people are especially important. Propaganda transmitted directly to large numbers of people in close physical proximity to each other facilitates the formation and circulation of the desired opinions, sentiments, and behavior,

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promoting the equivalent of a "group think" contagion among them. Under these circumstances, skillfully communicated propaganda (usually by a charismatic leader) can produce a monolithic bloc of supportive sentiment. The individual "spirit" of individuals in the group at which propaganda is being directed may be agitated to the point of producing a group emotional state of "ecstasy," which in turn heightens suggestibility for attitude and behavior modification.

- ▶ Present themes and talking points of propaganda as if they were already facts. Consider, for example, two possible ways to say the same thing: "You should live in a democracy" and "The Iraqi people clamor for democracy." The first statement

is conditional (“You should live”); it suggests that “you” haven’t accepted democracy yet. “You” can also be singular, focusing a listener inward and out of group-think, while “live” is a weak verb, connoting existence but not much else. On the other hand, “The Iraqi people clamor for democracy” makes a bold declarative statement—there’s no doubt about it; they *clamor*. The subject (“Iraqi people”) conjures up the masses and invites belonging, and clamor is an active verb that connotes arm waving and shouting. Hammered home on every occasion, such declarative, all-embracing claims begin to produce psychological effects on the populace. Individuals who feel excluded from what they perceive to be the majority opinion, and therefore marginalized, will end up joining the movement merely because they do not want to be left out.³

► Repeat slogans and mottos over and over until they reify, becoming established in the popular mind as axiomatic “common knowledge.”

► Create heroes and martyrs. The essence of propaganda is creating a mythos typified by people who can be held up to the masses as exemplars of the movement’s ideals.

► Create villains to serve as scapegoats and counterpoints to the heroes and martyrs.⁴ This exploits the natural human tendency to defend the herd from an external enemy. The identification of villains strengthens the cohesion and unity of the masses, stimulating and focusing their collective anger while sowing discord in the ranks of the movement’s opponents.

In a related vein, during actual armed conflict with a specific enemy, the propagandist must counter public reaction to each enemy strike by immediately publicizing some sort of success. Only in this manner will it be possible to maintain the morale of the sympathetic population while aggravating the enemy’s skepticism about his own cause.

The Cult of Charismatic Leadership

In the control of large groups, the influence of charismatic leadership cannot be overemphasized. As a result, totalitarian governments take on cult-like status. In Cuba, the personality cult built around Castro has been one of the key elements in population control. Cult appeal continues to be especially effective in Cuba because the population has largely

been rendered psychologically incapable of opposing the regime.

To create a cult following, the charismatic leader must make considerable efforts to understand the state of public opinion and to clearly and accurately assess the people’s most pressing needs. He must also have a good eye for estimating the support for a particular ideological movement.

After a careful analysis of public opinion and public needs, the charismatic leader must establish his presence and then be supported by intense, effective propaganda efforts focused on a program to satisfy the population’s needs and motivations. If the leader is challenging the government in power, the leader can be instrumental in creating a shadow of doubt among the general populace by pounding home propagandistic themes in mass speeches. Such public engagement must always be keenly attuned to the cultural sensitivities of the audience. And, assuming circumstances are calling into question the legitimacy of the government’s programs, or the government itself, although the public will be unlikely to initially fully support an opposition movement, it is also unlikely that they will openly reject it either.

To exploit this direct mass appeal, charismatic leaders should call meetings and demonstrations whenever an opportunity presents itself. They especially need to take advantage of incidental situations, no matter how few people are present, to convey the movement’s themes and programs. On such occasions, leaders should deliver impassioned, vehement speeches, especially if speaking in front of disorganized masses, which are ripe for psychological manipulation and shaping. Depending on the prevailing socio-economic conditions or events, repeated speeches repeating the same themes often convert small and large groups into devout followings. As part of his rhetorical strategy, the speaker should use such occasions to vilify accused enemies while holding up martyrs and heroes for emulation.

Street Demonstrations

Historically, the faction that seizes the streets is the one that seizes control of the population and, eventually, national power. Mass street demonstrations exploit crowd psychology to help move the people toward desired perceptions and behavior. Due to human herd instinct and a general tendency



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Cuba's President Fidel Castro speaks to thousands of people gathered during International Workers Day at the Plaza of Revolution in Havana, Cuba, 1 May 2006.

to desire social conformity, individuals are increasingly drawn together by impassioned and vehement expressions that outline specific political objectives. In addition, concerted and repeated demonstrations inevitably place stress on the ranks of the enemy, sowing seeds of doubt, fear, and the feeling that they (the enemy) are becoming the minority. This is calculated to create cracks in opposition unity by generating apprehension in prospective opponents, the object being that they themselves will conclude that the majority opposes them. Although there are always fanatics in the ranks of opposition groups whose actions will not change even if they perceive public animosity toward them, many in the opposition can be expected to feel neutralized, so much so that they eventually may abandon the cause.

Demonstrations may have very few participants in the beginning of a movement, but they will continue to grow in numbers if they—

- Are organized frequently and repeatedly.
- Are led by effective leaders who have a strong vision predicated on the people's needs and concerns.
- Are supported and complemented by propaganda.
- Convey vehement intensity.
- Take place under the banner of martyrs and heroes.
- Aim to inspire a decision to oppose and fight opponents without respite.

Recent history is replete with examples of street demonstrations that grew rapidly into powerful tools for antigovernment movements. Some recent examples include massive street demonstrations in Iran in 1978 and 1979 that led to the downfall of the Shah, similar street movements supporting Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution and the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the mass demonstrations that led to Hugo Chavez's short-lived resignation in 2002. These highlight the political power generated through mass demonstrations by crowds in the street.

Cuba provides a number of case studies illustrating the power of public demonstrations to achieve public objectives. Chief among them is the one that was carried out against President Manuel Urrutia Lleó in 1959 after Castro allegedly resigned. Another significant demonstration was the mobilization called for by the government to neutralize the mass exodus from Mariel. In that instance, nearly one million people gathered to confirm support for the Castro regime.

Mass demonstrations are especially useful when one has superior coercive means to defeat or annihilate opponents. However, such demonstrations should not be organized if lackluster turnout or effective countermeasures by the opposition could increase the population's sense of helplessness.

Community Organizations

The organization and control of community institutions is another essential element of population control. A major role of community organizations is to police society for political correctness and continued submissiveness to the state. In Cuba, the net-

work of community organizations has proven very effective at helping the central government maintain control over the state. (Nazi Germany employed similar networks for the same purpose.)

These organizations are directed and controlled at different levels, some locally, some nationally, and some by the head of state himself. Community organizations active in Cuba include the Revolutionary Defense Committees (comprised of neighbors in each block who are willing to support the government and keep watch), the Federation of Cuban Women, trade unions (which in Cuba are formally chartered arms of the state Communist Party), the University Students Federation, and the High School Students Federation, among others.

Community organizations enable control over the population by—

- Rapidly mobilizing large numbers of people for mass demonstrations on behalf of the government.
- Conditioning behavior by compelling individuals to take part in events with which they might not agree.⁵ In Cuba, individuals often participate in community organizations to avoid government scrutiny and trouble.
- Providing a ready force that, through effective management of its emotions, can be launched against opposition demonstrations.
- Neutralizing any possibility of the rise of opposition groups.
- Complementing the government's ability to monitor what is happening in society even in obscure or insignificant locations.
- Providing a controlled and monitored outlet for organization members to express disagreement and feelings of helplessness. Unmonitored discontent could lead to recruitment of disaffected group members by opposition elements.
- Generating pro-government sentiments through affective association.
- Facilitating the government's ability to meet the needs of the population in real as well as paternalistic and disingenuous ways.

Zonal Security

Zonal security is a means of controlling the population by inserting agents and informants at the community level. Such collaborators are essential for complete control of a social order. They facilitate control of the population by—

- Collecting information on the general state of public opinion.
- Uncovering members of the opposition.
- Circulating rumors favorable to the government.
- Identifying new recruits for regime appointments.
- Verifying information by investigation.
- Creating divisions in the ranks of an emerging opposition.
- Acting to discredit the leaders of any opposition.
- Rendering covert support to government leaders as required.

Breaking Opposition Unity

All mass political action must have a common goal and unity of views. Unity of views demands at the very least a modicum of trust among movement participants. Consequently, any “virus” introduced into the political structure that promotes distrust can undermine the required unity of thought, trust, and action, and can, in turn, promote disintegration. In such a case, frustration and failure produce a progressive form of pessimism that extinguishes any passion for a cause.

The Cuban government has controlled the population and suppressed all opposition by effectively cultivating pessimism about the possibility of overthrowing the government. Without the possibility of success, no movement has arisen to contest the government's hold on power. In fact, this disabling pessimism has become a permanent feature of the national mindset.

The Cuban regime also forestalls opposition unity and inculcates mass resignation by—

- Sowing in the public consciousness paradigmatic political arguments that contradict opposing views.
- Publicly deconstructing any paradigmatic arguments potential opponents might make.
- Showing force and inflexibility in the face of opposition demands.
- Discrediting leaders it considers dangerous.
- Promoting pessimism with regard to the possibility of a successor.
- Splintering the opposition's ranks by bribing its members or co-opting them with the promise of individual benefits.

Spreading Rumors

Another effective tool for disrupting potential political opponents and consolidating a regime's

control over the populace is rumor. A rumor is a specific untruthful proposition that is passed from person to person without any available means to verify it.⁶ Politicians and military leaders have always employed rumors to create desired psychological states in given populations—friendly as well as enemy. The fundamental conditions required for a rumor to be effective are—

- It cannot be debunked by accurate, obtainable information.
- It must be simple, specific, and concrete.
- It must be circulated widely.
- It must be circulated in critical situations of severe emotional tension.
- It should respond to the explicit or implicit needs of the population.

In wartime or other critical situations, rumor is an effective complement to more purely political and military means of control. It is useful because it allows the originator to—

- Discredit leaders.
- Manipulate public opinion.
- Sow skepticism, discord, and despondency in enemy ranks.
- Infuse psychological rejection of terrorism against the state.
- Change the people's perception of the regime and its forces.

To circulate a successful rumor, one need only design it, characterize it as an important secret, and then feed it to those most likely to spread it effectively. It is a somewhat cynical but nevertheless apparently valid observation that the public's appetite for rumors is great while its skepticism about rumors is slight. As a result, well developed, well placed rumors often have their intended effect.

Recap and Antidote

The success achieved in a number of countries and regions where rigorous socio-psychological

methods have been applied to control, influence, and direct the population shows that mastery of this knowledge is indispensable for anyone who seriously aspires to leading or managing large groups of people. These methods can help establish a stable system of government, or they can be used to disrupt and destabilize a society prior to a grab for power. Properly applied, they can also render a society nearly impervious to outside influence.

The antidote for extreme measures of authoritarian control is to shore up social mores and formal political institutions that promote the free and open expression of ideas and opinions. Among these are inculcating by law and ethical instruction at all levels of society respect for the personal moral rights to openly criticize the regime in power without fear of retribution, and to personally participate in the selection of those who are in power. With the above in mind, the final tests as to whether Castroism has taken root in places like Venezuela and Bolivia will be if Chávez and Morales leave their offices peacefully—or at all—when the people at some point vote them out in legitimate elections; and if the people accept Castroite dictatorial authoritarianism should their leaders refuse to hand over power. **MR**

NOTES

1. For classic discussions of the legitimacy of population control, see Plato, *The Republic* (Spain: Edicomunicación SA, 1999); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Colombia: Panamericana Editorial, 2002); Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Spain: P.P.P. Ediciones, 1985).

2. Cuba's difficulties post-independence were exacerbated by the ill-advised meddling of the United States. In part, the meddling was motivated by disdain for the ability of Spanish and African descendants to establish and sustain a viable democracy. See Jose Ramon Ponce, *Al final del arcoiris: Un Psicólogo en el Contraespionaje Cubano* (Miami, FL: Support to Democracy, 2003).

3. See Sigmund Freud, *Psychology of the Masses* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995); and Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of Crowds* (Argentina: Editorial Albatros, 1995).

4. Machiavelli.

5. O. Klippeberg, *Social Psychology* (Mexico-Buenos Aires: Editorial Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965).

6. Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman, *The Psychology of Rumor* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1947).