Cuban Libertarian Movement
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A libertarian reply to Celia Hart
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the future of our beloved Cuban people. That struggle, Celia, can only be fought with clear ideas, with precise ideas, with ideas of strength and not with the customary odes to the untouchable figure of Fidel; it can only be waged with people organized around their deepest convictions and not with vague warnings or diffuse insinuations about the comings and goings of the elite. You have to pay the ideological price and you suffer directly the pressures from the system, that is understandable and it makes your position prone to difficulties and harassment. But at least you can speak, Celia, and that's a possibility the majority of us Cubans do not have. We everyday Cubans have many disadvantages compared to you, and a single but enormous advantage: we already know that El Cid Campeador will not return astride Babieca and we also know that to the left of Fidel there isn't any chasm, any cliff, any deep hole. What opens up, not to the right of Fidel but to his left, Celia, is nothing more nor less than the wide course of liberty.

are not the "maximum program" of the anarchists and they may perhaps be qualified as "reformist" in the current Cuban context. However, they are a good base for the articulation of a really leftist policy for Cuba. You know better than we what degree of participation and commitment Cuban communists will have to have – in particular the younger ones – with this policy and what weight may have within the Party those who subscribe to this type of orientation. Nevertheless there's no doubt that it overwhelms the Party's organization and makes room for, among others, the currents that you yourself have recognized as revolutionary. For the same reason, there's also no doubt that that policy clashes head on with a constellation of interests, privileges and expectations that are clearly situated to its right, within and without the Communist Party: a situation and a process that, if our memory doesn't fail us, up until a few years ago were considered part of the class struggle.

Be that as it may, Celia, we must go on fine tuning the analysis and strengthening the will. If we have been ironic with you in many instances in this letter is due to the fact that we understand that you have not yet immersed yourself in the problem nor are you anywhere near ready to come out publicly with your real roots. Your intentions seem sincere and perhaps even compatible, but you still speak with a half tongue, you get distracted with metaphors that go nowhere and you haven't had the courage to put on the table the fabric of concrete conflicts that underlie the process of building a leftist alternative for Cuba. Bread is bread and wine is wine Celia: that is the real start of any alternative that pretends to remain firm before the eventual adversities and not start from the palace intrigues but from the collective conscience of the Cuban people. You have carefully avoided talk of factional conflict but you must agree with us that it is precisely what everybody reads between your lines. And you also know that the fight must be fought at any price because what's at stake is nothing less than

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cause that right is reserved for the Communist Party? Do you or don't you know that those revolutionaries are not allowed to have their own library open to the public, can't put on a radio show, can't meet without asking permission, can't have their own newspaper nor can they freely defend their orientation in labor, youth, neighborhood, gender-based, or ecological movements? These things require a framework of freedom actually non-existent and demand not state intervention but autonomy, they demand nothing less than the socially guaranteed possibility that every collective – whatever its nature, as long as it doesn't threaten the other's freedom – set its own rules. You enjoy a privileged position Celia, and you cannot have missed that the obsession with surveillance, control, repression etc. is one thing, and another very different thing is freedom. On what side do you think socialism and the left are? We know your preoccupation with the causes for the fall of the Soviet block: then, don't you think that the fatal disregard for freedom displayed by them might have had at least something to do with the debacle? This experience is a gold mine of teachings and they unequivocally say, in this beginning of the XXI century, that socialism can no longer be conceived as the spontaneous outcome of a vaporous historical necessity or as a sophisticated operation in social engineering or the genius of a messianic will. XXI century socialism can only be built starting from the collective consciousness and such cannot flourish except from a root of liberty. And once again Celia, this has nothing to do with the "chasm".

For a leftist alternative for all Cubans

Demilitarization, self-management, basic freedoms: three minimal elements and three roads to travel to make a leftist alternative in Cuba and to involve in it not the current ruling elite but the whole of the Cuban people. These proposals

in the myth of centralized planning that has been mistaken in the real world with the wisdom of the technocrats or the omnipresence of the military or the ineffable occurrences of the "Commander in Chief" that have always taken first place to the ideas of the collective organisms. Besides, it's enough to analyze the results: Would you say, Celia, that the road traveled from the first impulse to establish communism in the Island of Youth to the actual presence of transnational corporations is a road towards socialism? No Celia, centralized planning has not only not brought us socialism but rather it can be qualified as a succession of blunders, before and after that failed sugar harvest of the ten million tons of sugar. Self-management, meanwhile, has all the credibility and that is the way undertaken by dozens of social movements in Latin America as a strategy of resistance and as a way to solve in a practical way – even if success is mixed, even in clearly neoliberal contexts – their most pressing needs in terms of food, health, shelter etc. Once again: self-management is also possible now and it has nothing to do with that "chasm" that you assume lies to the left of Fidel.

Lastly, a leftist alternative in Cuba must reclaim with force and determination the problem of the essential freedoms. We have to only demilitarize the brains and stop suspecting that behind every Cuban hides a potential "agent of imperialism" and immediately the subject becomes a blinding light. Pray tell us, how would a project to build socialism be affected should 12 million Cubans enjoy –among a thousand other prerogatives – the possibility of speaking, traveling or organizing in whatever shape or form they see fit? Let's repeat one of your sentences: "All young people today who harbor political questions, those worthy of being heard, will always be of the left, anarchist, Trotskyite etc. But ALL are revolutionary". Very well, stop playing hide and seek and be sincere with yourself and your readers: Do you or don't you know that those revolutionaries can't have the political organization they would like be-

Responding to the invitation extended a few days ago from Havana by Celia Hart Santamaria – member of the Cuban Communist Party and daughter of prominent figures of the regime – calling for discussions on leftist alternatives for Cuba's future, and where she explicitly asks for an anarchist opinion, the Cuban Libertarian Movement (MLC – Movimiento Libertario Cubano) makes public its proposals for the debate.

It is with great curiosity, interest and care that we have read your letter "About my Interview in the pages of La Jornada of April 5th", published simultaneously by the Spanish web pages Rebelión and La Haine. There are very many things we could discuss in your letter, Celia, really very many things. But, to be frank, we care little whether you await the definite prophesized assumption of Christ, Buddha and Mohammed or that you sit besides Lincoln and Whitman; we don't care you feel you are a "princess of the Race" or that your brief opinion about John Paul II insinuates a certain disagreement with his trajectory that Fidel did not show these past few days: as far as we're concerned, you may continue happily with your poetic experiments which we won't censure nor will we care a whole lot about your lyric output. Also with continued frankness, you may change what you say as many times as you please; whether because of a reprimand or whether your conscience and/or your intellectual pickiness drive you to correct a shot that you yourself know is in danger of being misinterpreted: you have all the freedom in the world to do so and it will be up to your readers from now on to grant your words whatever credibility and trustworthiness they deserve and you are capable of earning. Besides, again in all honesty, in your letter you touch upon issues of vital importance such as the "inertia" of the Communist Party or the existence of "certain mechanisms of capitalist restoration" in Cuba; facts more than well known and of little novelty whose really interesting feature is the fact that it is precisely you who admits to them: but that isn't what we want to discuss exactly at this moment either.

What matters at this time, only as a beginning, is that we take our position in the ideological and political map, that we adopt a position regarding such and such situations, such and such trajectories and such and such persons. In that order of things we would like to minimally and briefly debate with you. Let's be a little more precise. You say you're looking for, and perhaps building a leftist option, a leftist alternative for Cuba. We tell you then that your concern is also ours and of a very large number of people, in whose front lines — and not because of being vanguards but because of being coherent — are the anarchists you mention in your letter. But for sure what we cannot share is your affirmation that "to the left of Fidel is the chasm". That sentence, and only that sentence, is what we would like to discuss now.

The first thing we want to point out to you is the logic problem such a statement creates; a statement that momentarily negates, barring some rectification on your part, the expectations you have been generating with some of your performances. By logic, only two things can follow from your statement: either the leftist option you're looking for is found to the right of Fidel or else that alternative is the very same Fidel and the total continuity of the self-sufficient monologue he has followed all along. You realize that, if your leftist alternative is to the right of Fidel – which we doubt, you don't look dumb – this debate is totally meaningless and it would be better to stop it right now. But you'll also notice that if that option you speak of is nothing but the very self-same Fidel for all eternity, even in his physical absence, it is not very clear why all the hoopla on your part when it's only a matter of, like a bland condiment, reading Trotsky, Lukacs, Rose Luxembourg and Gramsci. But also, not from the logical point of view but from the political point of View, you would have to explain what would that left to the right of Fidel be. Is that left to the right of Fidel responsible for the "inertia" of the Party and for the "mechanisms of capitalist restoration"? How come such things can happen? Is it

immediately attainable Celia, and there's no reason to counter them. For sure you'll tell us that the revolution would not survive without "its" armed forces but that's nothing but a fallacy the "Commander in Chief" and his minions have gotten you accustomed to. This is because the Cuban armed forces are constituted as a response to a hypothesis of conflict – in theory, a U.S. invasion – that is wrongly proposed or that will not happen. In the first place, the Cuban armed forces would have no power – and I agree with you that this is a disgrace for all humanity – against the aerial bombardment and ruination that the USA uses as its main method in the initial phases of the war. As has been demonstrated in Iraq, guerrilla resistance is much more effective than a regular army that simply cannot be up to the task. Second, there are plenty of elements to assume that such conflict does not nor will it conform tomorrow to that model: Cuba does not warrant the same reasons given for Afghanistan and Iraq – nor those given later for Iran and North Korea – nor does it constitute a relevant strategic threat nor has it deserved a real military consideration. Do the math Celia and you will see: the financing given by the USA to the "dirty work" in Cuba in the last five years is less than the cost of one single night of bombardment over Baghdad, even if the Commander in Chief's megalomania is hurt a little with such calculations. In consequence, the demilitarization is feasible now and has nothing to do with the "chasm".

Second, a leftist alternative in Cuba should immediately embark on the road to elf-determination. Do you believe that the construction of socialism should be strongly identified – sine qua non condition, we would say – with the direct self-management of the economy by the workers? Unfortunately, in Cuba for many years self-management has been assimilated in short order to the Yugoslavian experience and has been implicitly associated with the imminent threat of the market and the attendant "chaos". Thus, all hopes were deposited

a leftist option in Cuba face an almost untouched and virgin field. And we ask you please — assuming a reply on your part — be a little bit imaginative and don't recommend that we perform a similar search with the expressions "health in Cuba", "education in Cuba", "sports in Cuba", etc., because what we're proposing doesn't necessarily contradict such things but rather it imbues them with a different content, redefines them and infinitely enriches them. As you've probably seen, therefore, there is a body of ideas that in embryonic form represent their corresponding revolutionary social achievements – normally belonging to the left imagery – that in Cuba are used badly or very little. And we are absolutely convinced of three things that are intimately linked to our theme, as this has been established from the beginning: in the first place, Fidel hasn't shown to have on top of his shoulders the most adequate head to elaborate thought and define the necessary actions: he's had over half a century to do it and … nothing!; second, this field of ideas and realizations is located not to his right but to his left; and lastly, that none of them represent the "chasm" so feared and whose mention causes you so much worry. We have only to show you three examples especially significant and with possibilities of immediate implementation.

First, a leftist alternative in Cuba should consider an urgent demilitarization in the widest sense of the word. It would consist of not only the re-dimensioning of the armed forces, with the attendant savings and the corresponding transfer of resources to other sectors of the economy infinitely needier. It would also entail the loss of the armed forces' historical privileges and that the diverse problems of Cuban society would no longer be seen as questions of "national security". Above all it would be a matter of thinking about socialism like what it should really be, that is, a new living relationship of solidarity among free and equal beings; and to avoid superimposing on these facts a not so socialist articulation between "commanders" and subordinates. These things are

Fidel's carelessness? By chance the Commander in Chief, First Secretary of the Party and President of the Council of Ministers and State was overridden and his orientations have been ignored? Or perhaps Fidel also performs the biblical feat of trinity and, like Jesus – who is one with God the Father – sits to the right of himself? These questions only pretend to illustrate the confusion generated by the shortness of your expositions and the truth is that we have not yet touched upon the core issue: that is, we haven't as yet fallen in the "chasm" you claim is the only thing that exists to the left of Fidel.

The lost words

We've tried to approach the subject respectfully and with care for the sake of this exchange, leaving aside for the time being the deceptions and reservations accumulated over several decades. We likewise strive to be ample and exhaustive, at least within our limited means. It occurred to us to take a range of subjects normally associated with leftist thinking, link them to Cuba and with Fidel by extension and ask what elaborations or illuminations were available as a starting point for the debate. For that purpose we made use of the most powerful tool at our disposal at this time: the Google advanced search, limiting the search to the exact sentence, in the Spanish language, in any file format and for all possible domains. This way, anybody could verify the exactness of our findings and you yourself would be in good shape to do so, for we don't doubt that you have access to the Internet without any inconveniences. Let's look at the results of our little research and perhaps you will agree with us that they are indeed surprising.

Let's start by saying that to the phrases "Cuban worker's councils" and "worker's councils in Cuba" Google's search yielded a "no document found"; which is probably due to a very simple fact and that is that one does not reflect on some-

thing that does not exist or has not even been imagined. The same result happens with the expression "self-management in Cuba" although in this case we did find one — only one – about "Cuban self-management", and which only informs us that the idea is practically unknown in the island. Following the same procedure, we arrive at the sad conclusion that as far as Cuba is concerned one doesn't write and one doesn't talk about "worker's autonomy" or "autonomous unions"; which only confirms that the leadership of such organizations are not terribly interested in the matter and that the predominant orientation consists of keeping them within the sphere of dependency on the state. Things being what they are, it is not surprising that something as "extremist" as the collective and voluntary interruption of work barely yields discourses of very low intensity: the search for "strikes in Cuba" results in 5 documents of a historical character and when we input "Cuban strikes" we find one lonely and exotic result. Even so, we didn't give up in our quest, but to our amazement, in the case of "class consciousness in Cuba" and "Cuban class consciousness" Google again replies to our query "no documents found". Things get a little better when we use "Cuban cooperatives" or "cooperatives in Cuba" and there finally we find a modest thirty-odd documents, not necessarily of official origin nor mostly adulatory and among which we note some pearls of interest such as that of Jesus Cruz Reyes where he takes deep offense when asked whether those organizations are independent or not. Faced with such a promissory – when compared to the former — result we continued our spirited quest, only to be told right away that nothing is said about "Cuban social movements" or about "Cuban autonomous university"; although to be fair, we do note now that there are 4 documents which contain the phrase "university autonomy in Cuba" to inform us of the lack thereof, naturally, and another 5, mainly in reference to the past, that consider it opportune

to make use for some reason or another of the phrase "social movements in Cuba".

And so, after many successive failures we decided to steer our research towards a concept we certainly don't regard with much sympathy: worker's state. Do you know how many documents show up containing the expression "Cuban worker's state"? Only 30, the overwhelming majority Trotskyite and not all of them favorable. Among them only one came from Cuba's officialdom, and in reality it was a collaboration by John Hillson sent from the city of Los Angeles. We think this lack might be due to the strong identification of the expression with the Trotskyite tradition; we think that your rescuing the founder of the red army would face obvious difficulties and we tried to see if a similar expression would yield better results: proletarian state. Not even now did success crown our efforts: the phrase "proletarian state in Cuba" had a single orphan result. The article belongs to Luis Ramirez Caraballo and Antonio R. Barreiros Vazquez, entitled "Place and role of the FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces, tn) as a especially significant component of the Cuban proletarian state" and you can find it in the Revista Cubana de Ciencias Sociales (Year 4, no. 12 September – December 1986). Perhaps, Celia, you share our disillusionment and you also loathe that, when one speaks in Cuba about the proletarian state, in reality it's not fundamentally the proletarians but rather the armed forces. Does this have anything to do with the militarization of Cuban society?

The "chasm" is the absence of liberty, equality and solidarity

To wit: we have used a range of indicators that are far from perfect and can only be of an approximate character; even so, we have the firm impression that they also allow us to maintain a trustworthy hypothesis. That is, reflections on building