

**The paradoxical entanglement between the natural and the political in Cuba's  
discursive road to 'revolutionary' modernity: *A historical analysis of the biopolitical  
propaganda strategies of the Asociación Libertaria de Cuba and the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement  
during the early stages of the Cuban Revolution, ca. 1956- ca. 1962***

Master thesis International Relations in Historical Perspective.

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December 15, 2021

Word count: 14991

### **Abstract:**

This thesis analyzes how the M26 and ALC wove their discourses of ‘revolutionary’ modernity in Cuba round a central historical narrative that explained Cuban ‘nature’ as inevitably politicized. By contextualizing this analysis in both the national and international context of the 1950s, it argues that Cuba’s layered discourse of Revolution was not ‘exceptional’ nor unfolded in a historical vacuum or in one-sided interaction with either one of the Cold War’s superpowers. Instead, it should be seen as one of the many (bio)political ideologies of modernity that arose globally out of the ashes of Europe’s nationalist regulation of the modern world. Accordingly, it testified to the crucial transition period to sincere modernity and, with that, a politicized sphere of nature and life that characterized the Cold War in at least Latin America.<sup>1</sup> With this discursive biopolitical approach of the early phases of the Cuban Revolution, this thesis aims to open up a new, less isolated and more historically engaged perspective on one of the most discussed topics of Cold War historiography.

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert M. Joseph, ‘What We Now Know and Should Know. Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies’, in: Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, *In From the Cold: Latin America’s new encounter with the Cold War* (Durham 2008) 3-46, there 4.; Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago 2011) 7, 17, and 180.

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**Abbreviations:**

M26: Movimiento Revolucionario 26 de Julio

ALC: Asociación Libertaria de Cuba

IISH: International Institute of Social History

INRA: Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria

OPI: Oficina de Publicidad e Información

## Introduction: constructing Cuban ‘nature’ in the struggle for ‘revolutionary’ modernity

In 1959, Fidel Castro, leader of the revolutionary 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement (M26) and by then also Prime Minister of Cuba, announced that his Revolution was a “green” one, thriving first of all on the natural “virtues of the [Cuban] people” rather than on material resources or capitalist- or Marxist-inspired visions on modernity.<sup>2</sup> These “virtues”, between the lines concretized as Cubans’ “reason” and “moral omnipotence”, gave Cubans the “shield” in their revolutionary fight against “the continuation of the [(neo-)colonial] past”.<sup>3</sup> More than that, they *made* Cubans revolutionary, because “revolutionary being (...) [was] having a mental [rational] vision on these [historical] realities and besides the [moral] values to confront [them]” according to Castro.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, in a modern world claiming to be guided by (legal) reason and moral rights, these natural “virtues” outweighed the “physical impotence” Cubans experienced in their struggle.<sup>5</sup> In line with this, Castro argued in 1955 that it would be “enough to be Cuban to have faith in the possibility that (...) [their repressors] may understand reason and be ashamed of their crimes (...) [and] come together under the flags of [moral] justice”.<sup>6</sup> This implied that Cubans were by ‘nature’ united in a historical collectivity that followed an inevitable evolutionary path from being colonized to a state of ‘revolutionary’ sincere modernity. In other words, either Cubans were by nature politicized or the Revolution was natural.

However, the M26 was not the only revolutionary movement that wove its political discourse round a black-and-white narrative of history that explained the political as natural and vice versa. Though departing from a different ideological starting point, also the anarchist

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<sup>2</sup> Fidel Castro, ‘When the people rule. Cuba is a nation which rules itself and does not take orders from anyone’ (spoken version January 21, 1959; translated version by Brian Baggins)

<https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1959/01/21.htm> (December 3, 2021). ;

Susan Eva Eckstein, *Back from the Future: Cuba Under Castro* (Second Edition; New York 2003) 14 and 26.

<sup>3</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York on October 30, 1955’ (version October 30, 1955; translated version by David Walters in 2019),

<https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1955/10/30-oct-1955.htm> (February 1, 2021). ;

Castro Ruz, ‘When the people rule.’.

Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C. (I Revolucionario)’, in: Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, *Dos Discursos del Comandante Fidel Castro en el X Congreso Nacional Obrero* (stenographic version of the Office of the Prime Minister; Havana 1959) 7-40, there 11.

<sup>4</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.;

Castro Ruz, ‘When the people rule.’.

<sup>6</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

Asociación Libertaria de Cuba (ALC) assumed that for the realization of a ‘revolutionary’ modern “future of liberty” Cubans first “had to save the characteristics that suited (...) [their] origin”.<sup>7</sup> According to the ALC, this meant that they would deprive themselves of the politicizing identity labels that had been stuck on them during the ages. This would allow Cubans to revive their dormant yet natural rational awareness of their exploitative “historical reality” and their equally natural “good will” or “moral authority” to challenge it.<sup>8</sup> With this revival of their ‘nature’, Cubans would subsequently feel forced to provide “the solution to the problem of the human inequality [and] the exploitation of man by man” that kept their irrational and immoral history alive.<sup>9</sup> In other words, also the ALC deemed its political ideal of ‘revolutionary’ modernity depended on Cubans’ ability to return to their ‘nature’ - or at least as it was interpreted by the ALC itself.

### Research topic

The central connection both movements made between the biological sphere of (non-)human being and life and the political sphere was not incidental, but, instead, a salient characteristic of the discursive course of the early Cuban Revolution. This thesis will analyze this connection in the discourses of the M26 and ALC while taking into account the (inter)national historical context in which they unfolded their visions. Based on this analysis, it will argue that the political use and centrality of ‘nature’ in Cuba’s discursive road to ‘revolutionary’ modernity served as a vital propaganda strategy. Through a black-and-white narration of history, the M26 and ALC presented Cubans as historically united in a bigger collectivity that presented the natural yet political counterpart of its historical repressors. The absence of this united ‘organic’ society- as is the term used to refer to this historically embedded conceptualization of Cuban ‘nature’ - in Cuba was explained as a direct result of the historical

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<sup>7</sup> IISH, Amsterdam, COLL00217, Cuba Social and Political Development Collection, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’ (no date nor place). ;

In fact, while Cuba’s anarchists were principally occupied with labor issues, the historical appeal of their libertarian ideology was in the first instance rooted in the increasing popularity of naturist understandings of “Nature” in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century labor culture. For more information about this, one can address oneself to the following literature:

Sam Dolgoff, ‘Cuba: The anarchists and liberty-Frank Fernandez’ (version 1989),

<https://libcom.org/library/cuba-anarchists-liberty-labour-movement-fernandez> (January 14, 2021). ;

Peter H. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland 2010).

<sup>8</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.;

IISH, Amsterdam, ALC, ‘No debemos ir al caos’, *El Libertario: organo de la Ass. libertaria de Cuba*, November 1952.;

IISH, Amsterdam, ALC, ‘Si no nos sobraran razones...’, *El Libertario: organo de la Ass. libertaria de Cuba*, November 1952.

<sup>9</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

belittlement and distortion that Cubans had been forced to undergo. While the ALC defined this as a politicizing process that had transformed the apolitical Cuban into a political citizen of an artificial nation, the M26 instead criticized it as a process of depoliticization that had pushed Cubans into a pessimistically driven state of “political apathy”.<sup>10</sup> Yet what connected both was their similar central reasoning that their Revolution for physical- that is political, economic, and environmental- change depended upon Cubans’ ability to transcend their distorted individualities and instead identify themselves as parts of this ‘organic’ society that united them by ‘nature’ and a concomitant path of historical evolution. To smooth this process and guarantee the desired result, both movements wove their discourses round a historicized definition of this ‘organic’ society that was said to epitomize Cuban ‘nature’ when liberated and revived in its authentic state, but in practice rather embodied its politicization.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to traditional politico-ideological studies, this thesis transcends the superficial differences between the nationalist M26 and the anarchist ALC. Instead, it pays attention to the similar biopolitical propaganda strategy of the ‘organic’ society both employed as the foundation of their discourses of ‘revolutionary’ modernity. In addition, it tries to disentangle its political function and historical meaning in the light of the (inter)national historical context of the 1950s and early 1960s. Roughly speaking, this periodization encloses the period between the establishment of the democratic opposition coalition against President Fulgencio Batista and the landing of Castro’s guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra in 1956 and the first years of the 1960s, when the M26-government increasingly tightened its grip on media and cultural production.<sup>12</sup> This time frame allows for the integration of neglected yet important

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<sup>10</sup> Eduard Masjuan Bracons, ‘La Cultura de la Naturaleza en el anarquismo ibérico y cubano’, *Signos Históricos* 8 (2006) 15, 98-123, there 119 and 120. ;

IISH, ALC, , ‘Si no nos sobran razones...’.

Andrew Saint George, ‘Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958’ (version February 4, 1958), <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/documentos/excerpts-interview-andrew-george-fidel-castro-sierra-maestra-1958> (November 14, 2021). ;

Castro, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 16.

<sup>11</sup> To reveal the biopolitical norms behind the efforts of the M26 and ALC to establish a cohesive community uniting Cubans (and their Homeland) into the imagination and experience of belonging to a historical community, guided by the political urge to rectify its past through Revolution, this thesis uses the concept of the ‘organic society’ as a coordinating term for these appeals. Though both movements did not mention the term ‘organic society’ literally, it does correspond with the imagination and experience of being part of a natural, historically embedded entity that both wanted to create amongst Cubans and, to a lesser degree, between Cubans and their physical environment.

<sup>12</sup> Rebecca M. Bodenheimer, *Geographies of Cubanidad: Place, Race, and Musical Performance in Contemporary Cuba* (Mississippi 2017) Introduction.

revolutionary voices *outside* the M26, in this case the ALC. By analyzing the propaganda strategy of the ‘organic’ society in Cuba’s layered discourse of ‘revolutionary’ modernity in its historical context, this research aims to deepen and nuance our understanding of the Cuban Revolution in the light of both Cuban and Cold War history.

## **Methodological framework**

### *Structure*

For this end, the research is divided into three smaller questions. The first chapter will start with providing an overview of how the M26 and ALC built the foundations of their ‘organic’ society through a black-and-white narrative of history. It will show how both conditioned the prospects of political change upon the task to liberate Cubans from the intellectual and emotional chains of history and gather them around their own politicized image of the ‘organic’ society. Simultaneously, it will explain why this biopolitical logic was perhaps inevitable in the light of the national historical context in which both movements found themselves.

The second chapter, in turn, will delve deeper into the biopolitical norms regulating the image of the ‘organic’ society. It will distinguish its central identity qualities and the implicit behavior-oriented normalization process that went behind this characterization. This chapter will show that the ‘organic’ society was inevitably also a revolutionary one.

To conclude, the last chapter will place the analysis of the biopolitical propaganda strategy of the M26 and ALC in its international context. This will reveal that the political construction of the ‘organic’ society not only served the goal of enthusing and activating Cubans for the goal of ‘revolutionary’ modernity in *Cuba*. Instead, it also acted as an unprecedentedly believable Southern effort to establish control of the (bio)political definition of ‘modernity’, ‘modern being’ and ‘life’, and the terms of ‘development’ in a post-1945 modern world.

### *Sources*

These analyses rely heavily upon the propaganda material that is archived by the International Institute for Social History (IISH). With regard to the M26, the source material ranges from either digitalized or archived speeches of Fidel and Raúl Castro individually to copied



publications of the movement's magazine *Revolución*.<sup>13</sup> With respect to the ALC, the focus will be on copied pamphlet and selections from its magazine *El Libertario* that are entirely stored in the IISH.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, there is some dissimilarity between the available source material of the M26 and the ALC. For this thesis, this will not be an obstacle of great importance, because the focus will be on the general biopolitical analogies between both movements. Of course, this does not mean that the material of both movements will not be treated with conscientious respect for their own distinct voices.<sup>15</sup>

## Historiographical context

### *The Cuban Revolution*

As might have already become clear between the lines, this research will not be carried out in isolation, but instead is embedded in an extensive historiographical debate about the Cuban Revolution and its meaning for the global Cold War. Generally speaking, this topic tends to be analyzed from a U.S.-centered perspective that treats it as a macro-historical event of the broader global Cold War. This tendency to analyze the Cuban Revolution from the angle of other global affairs, like U.S. Cold War foreign policy, is not strange when considering the classified nature of many Cuban state documents and archives. It remains anyhow problematic since it tends to narrow the historiographical debate about the Cuban Revolution by portraying it as merely a reactive event that should be explained in terms of U.S. politics.<sup>16</sup> The assumption that Fidel Castro became a communist because of U.S. hostility is for example just as often-heard as it is shallow. Fortunately, scholars of the Cuban Revolution, and of the Latin American Cold War in general, are increasingly replacing this superpower-centered approach for one that emphasizes the uniqueness of Latin American events during

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<sup>13</sup> Fidel Castro Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/index.htm> (December 9, 2021). ;

IISH, Amsterdam, COLL00217, Cuba Social and Political Development Collection, inventory number 2.; Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, *Dos Discursos del Comandante Fidel Castro en el X Congreso Nacional Obrero* (stenographic version of the Office of the Prime Minister; Havana 1959).

<sup>14</sup> IISH, Amsterdam, COLL00217, Cuba Social and Political Development Collection, inventory number 6 and 8.

<sup>15</sup> This inequality has all to do with the simple fact that the anarchists eventually lost the inter-revolutionary struggle for the (bio)political control over Cuba's revolutionary transition to modernity. As a result, they simply have been given less attention by most studies and archives of the Cuban Revolution. This was (relative) neglect was even fostered by the fact that, as a movement, the ALC was forced to go underground when Castro's M26 tightened its grip on (alleged) opposition during the first years of the revolutionary Republic.

<sup>16</sup> Tanya Harmer, 'The 'Cuban Question' and the Cold War in Latin America, 1959-1964', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21 (2019) 3, 114-151, there 116 and 117.

the Cold War and the political agency of Latin American actors-whether ‘revolutionary’ or ‘counterrevolutionary’.<sup>17</sup>

In the study field of the Cuban Revolution, this stimulates the attention to “the story of the Cuban question in Latin America”, as historian Tanya Harmer phrased it. This recent historiography about the inter-American dimensions of the Revolution developed its own voice during the early 00s and points, amongst others, to the artificial and Eurocentric periodization of the global Cold War. In contrast to the standard approaches, it argues for attention to the socio-economic grievances in Cuba or Latin America that pre-dated 1945.<sup>18</sup> In the end, these Latin American-centered historians argue, such longstanding grievances were actually the root causes of many conflicts during the Cold War period. Concerning the Cuban Revolution, this meant that it was of the utmost importance to finally start seeing it and its meaning for Latin America’s Cold War in a *longue durée* framework that respects Cuba’s own historical development, affairs, and struggles.<sup>19</sup> This thesis takes this call (partly) into account by analyzing the layered discourse of the Cuban Revolution in relation with a definition of the Cold War as a more structural transition period to modernity that actually transcended the 1945-1989 superpower hostility. This definition will be further explained below.

A second development in the literature is the increasing focus on the domestic social and cultural causes and components of the Cuban Revolution, its particularly peaceful unfolding, and the “romanticized” nature of its guerrilla leadership.<sup>20</sup> What these studies have in common with U.S.-centered studies is that both often reach the same conclusion that the

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph, ‘What We Now Know and Should Know’, 9 and 10;

Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill 2012) 3-5.

Stephen M. Streeter, ‘Interpreting the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: Realist, Revisionist, and Postrevisionist Perspectives’, *The History Teacher* 34 (2000) 1, 61-74, there 67.;

Tanya Harmer, ‘The Cold War in Latin America’, in: Artemy Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle, *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War* (Abingdon 2014) 133-148, there 133 and 134.

<sup>18</sup> Tanya Harmer, ‘The ‘Cuban Question’, 118. ;

See for examples of this new historiography about the Cuban Revolution:

Aldo Marchesi, ‘Chapter 2: The Subjective Bonds of Revolutionary Solidarity. From Havana to Ñancahuazú (Bolivia), 1967’, in: Aldo Marchesi, *Latin America’s Radical Left: Rebellion and Cold War in the Global 1960s* (Oxford 2017) 69-100.

Julia E. Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution. Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Harvard 2004). ;

Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption and Resistance, 1959-1971*.

<sup>19</sup> William A. Booth, ‘Historiographical Review. Rethinking Latin America’s Cold War’, *The Historical Journal* (2020) First View, 1-23, there 2-4.

<sup>20</sup> María A. Cabrera Arús, ‘Chapter 10: Fashioning and Contesting the Olive-Green Imaginary in Cuban Visual Arts’, in: Jorge Duany, *Picturing Cuba: Art, Culture, and Identity on the Island and in the Diaspora* (Gainesville 2019) 155-174, there 155.

Cuban Revolution was ‘exceptional’. This perspective was not only prevalent under U.S. officials, but also promoted by the leaders of the M26 themselves.<sup>21</sup> This thesis does not immediately reject this exceptionality claim, but neither accepts it indiscriminately. Instead, it aims to nuance it by situating the biopolitical components of the Revolution - the normative and regulative framings of Cubans as subjects of a politically controlled yet ‘organic’ society- in the broader light of the Cold War as a transition period to modernity and, with that, a politicized biological sphere.<sup>22</sup> As shortly mentioned, this thesis builds on historian Greg Grandin’s definition of the Cold War as a struggle between conflicting visions on modernity. With this definition, it situates Cuba’s bumpy road to revolutionary modernity within the transformative, not to say “hot” crystallization of the Cold War period in the South.<sup>23</sup> This will make it possible to reveal how the global Cold War paradigm manifested itself on micro-level in the “politicization of everyday life”, individual being, and, for this thesis of lesser importance, the environment.<sup>24</sup> With this angle, this thesis hopes to counterbalance the still predominant understanding of the Cold War as a bipolar struggle between two superpowers and their contradicting politico-economic ideologies.

#### *The role of nature in modern society*

This research touches however not only the academic debate about the Cuban Revolution in the (Latin American) Cold War, but also important discussions about the relation between modern culture and politics and the environment. “Nature” or “landscapes” are often defined in aesthetical terms; presented as given, innate environments that represent an absolute physical sphere that forms the counterpart of the humanized cultural sphere. Though this “nature-culture dualism” is increasingly under fire, scientific attention to the significant role of the biological sphere in modern politics is still relatively marginal. An important contribution to the growing recognition of “the intersections (...) across a broad range of social and environmental structures” in Cuba is the work of anthropologist Maria Gropas.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 21 and 22.;

Richard Gillespie, *Cuba After Thirty Years: Rectification and the Revolution* (Oxford 1990) 3 and 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ilari Nikula, Biopolitics of Nature (Unpublished Paper Proposal in the Panel of New Sites of Biopolitics, University of Helsinki 2016), <https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/30608> (January 23, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 7, 17, and 180. ;

Robert P. Hager, ‘The Cold War and Third World Revolution’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 52 (2019), 51-57, there 51.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph, ‘What We Now Know and Should Know’, 4. ;

Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 17.;

Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 5, 320, 321, and 351.

<sup>25</sup> Maria Gropas, ‘Landscape, revolution and property regimes in rural Havana’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 33 (2006) 2, 248-277, there 248-250 and 271. ;

According to her, the meaning of “landscape” and physical reality is formulated through “a sociocultural and political process” and thus closely intertwined with structures of social and political power. Especially in the light of the important, and broadly acknowledged, role of rural landscapes in the political history of modernity and nationalism, it is surprising that the political and socio-economic dimensions of nature remain largely underrepresented—especially outside the anthropological realm.<sup>26</sup>

In Cuba, this intersection between the sphere of culture and politics and that of nature expressed itself in the fact that the island’s uncultivated (mountain)landscapes and *campesinos* traditionally played a vital role in the narratives of multiple liberation struggles. Concerning this connection between nature and revolution, historian Shannon Dawdy concluded that “the fight for liberty entails a sort of primordial rediscovery of the island’s native bounty which frees the actors from dependence on an artificial and inequitable economic system”.<sup>27</sup> This points to the importance of analyzing the political function and historical meaning of the liberational symbolic of Cuban ‘nature’ in the revolutionary discourses of the M26 and ALC. By taking this importance into account, this thesis hopes to bridge the artificial gap between political and cultural studies and natural landscape science.

## Theoretical framework

### *Discourse philosophy*

Closely in line with this aim, this research is embedded in a theoretical framework that draws mainly on post-structuralist (biopolitical) discourse philosophy. First, this framework departs from the Foucauldian idea that the meaning of reality is not given nor static but instead socially constructed through power-loaded discourse.<sup>28</sup> Explaining this, David Goldberg stated that “the social (self-)conception is mediated, if not quite absolutely cemented, by a set of discursive practices”. The reason why these practices have the ontological capacity to

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Karl Benediktsson, “‘Scenophobia’, geography and the aesthetic politics of landscape’, *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 89 (2016) 3, 203-217, there 203. ;

Jenna Elizabeth Andrews-Swann, *Transnational Landscapes and the Cuban Diaspora* (Dissertation Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial, Athens 2010), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Gropas, ‘Landscape, revolution and property regimes in rural Havana’, 248, 249, and 271.

<sup>27</sup> Jeanine Barone, ‘Cuba’s Green Revolution’, *National Geographic* (version April 12, 2013), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/intelligent-travel/2013/04/12/cubas-green-revolution/> (January 14, 2021). ;

Shannon Lee Dawdy, ‘La Comida Mambisa: Food, Farming, and Cuban Identity, 1839-1999’, *New West Indian Guide* 76 (2002) 1/2, 47-80, there 61 and 62.

<sup>28</sup> Hanne Svarstad, Tor A. Benjamin, and Ragnhild Overå (eds.), ‘Power theories in political ecology’, *Journal of Political Ecology* 25 (2018) 1, 350-425, there 350.

define how humans understand, experience, and *perform* themselves, is because they are grounded in social power and exclusion structures. This means that the meaning of ‘normality’ is largely controlled by the most powerful social group.<sup>29</sup>

However, contrary to structuralism, the intellectual father of discourse philosophy Michel Foucault considered a discourse not as a determinist force that is rooted in static power structures. Instead, he argued that reality is formed by multiple discourses that, indeed, are all grounded in social power structures but still interact and call attention to and challenge each other’s exclusion structures. In fact, the whole existence and disciplinary power of a discourse depends on the exclusion of other people, opinions or definitions. These excluded ‘others’ are presented, and subsequently through normalization processes also unconsciously accepted, as “threats” against the existing (biopolitical) order. As a result, Foucault concluded that a discourse was not only built upon social power imbalances, but the performance of its central norms and definitions also reconfirmed these underlying structures.<sup>30</sup>

### *Foucauldian biopolitics*

To extend the Foucauldian approach, this thesis also departs from Foucault’s assertion that the transition to modernity *inevitably* required a discursive construction of power-loaded norms and definitions of human ‘nature’.<sup>31</sup> According to Foucault, the arrival of politically secular and polyarchic modernity (in the Western 18<sup>th</sup> century) required a new form of ontological power to define ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ being and life in a society. As a result, modernity was distinguished from its predecessors by the “entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power, into the sphere of political techniques”.<sup>32</sup> To mark this new dimension of power, Foucault coined the concept of

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<sup>29</sup> David Theo Goldberg, ‘Modernity, Race, and Morality’, *Cultural Critique* (Spring, 1993) 25, 193-227, there 193.

<sup>30</sup> Michiel Leezenberg en Gerard de Vries, *Wetenschapsfilosofie voor geesteswetenschappen* (Amsterdam 2017; third edition) 289-293.;

Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London 2012) 27-29, 53, and 54.;

Michel Foucault, ‘*Society Must Be Defended*’, *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York 1997) 280.

<sup>31</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, ‘From Biopower to Biopolitics’, *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 13 (2002), 99-113, there 100 and 101.

<sup>32</sup> Annette Gough, ‘Searching for a crack to let environment light in: ecological biopolitics and education for sustainable development discourses’, *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 12 (2017) 4, 889-905, there 889 and 891.

Lazzarato, ‘From Biopower to Biopolitics’, 100 and 101. ;

Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, ‘Global Liberal Governance: Biopolitics, Security and War’, *Journal of International Studies* 30 (2001) 1, 41-66, there, 41-43.;

biopolitics in the 1970s. Unlike classical forms of powers, biopolitics was not executed by a single (religious) sovereign. Instead, it worked through the development and institutionalization of powerful norms of normal or natural being and behavior that controlled people's lives and evaluated them on an individual basis. Hence, 'biopolitics' referred to the complex of irreducible, both discursive and non-discursive, practices that assessed individuals on their "normalness" or "pathology".<sup>33</sup>

Following Foucault's thoughts about the inevitable connection between the arrival of modernity and the politicization of human being and life, other biopolitical post-structuralists like sociologist Thomas Lemke extended "the notion of biopolitics to [all] life on Earth', including the "natural (both physical and biological) environment".<sup>34</sup> Combining both general post-structuralist approaches of physical nature in the field of political ecology and Foucauldian-inspired ideas about biopolitics, this thesis follows this extended definition of biopolitics and biopower. The emphasis will, however, remain on the construction of human rather than environmental nature. Eventually, as will become clear, it was the first deciding about the character of the latter rather than the other way around.<sup>35</sup> In accordance with Foucault, Cuba's revolutionaries also seemed to realize that it was the political definition of human nature that was the first unescapable necessity in the construction of modernity-

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'Plain Philosophy' (version March 30, 2015), <https://philosophytranslator.tumblr.com/post/115005492302/can-you-explain-biopower-to-me-i-always-feel-like> (January 14, 2021). ;

Rachel Adams, 'Michel Foucault: Biopolitics and Biopower' (version May 10, 2017), <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/05/10/michel-foucault-biopolitics-biopower/> (January 14, 2021).

<sup>33</sup> Leezenberg and De Vries, *Wetenschapsfilosofie voor geesteswetenschappen*, 291.;

Gough, 'Searching for a crack to let environment light in', 889 and 891. ;

Lazzarato, 'From Biopower to Biopolitics', 100 and 101. ;

Dilon and Reid, 'Global Liberal Governance', 41-43.;

'Plain Philosophy'.

Adams, 'Michel Foucault: Biopolitics and Biopower'.;

Thomas Lemke, Monica Casper, and Lisa Jean Moore, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York 2011) 5.

<sup>34</sup> Gough, 'Searching for a crack to let environment light in', 891. ;

David Goodman, 'Agro-Food Studies in the 'Age of Ecology': Nature, Corporeality, Bio-politics', *Sociologia Ruralis* 39 (2002) 1, 17-38, there 17-19, 22, and 23.

<sup>35</sup> It is important to emphasize that this thesis will not focus on the formulation and implementation of environmentalist policies. It therefore does not analyze the ideas of Cuba's revolutionaries about how the degradation of the environment and the change of the climate could be slowed down, combatted or even reversed.. Though are interesting topics as well, this was not the primary concern occupying Cuba's revolutionaries in the 1950s nor are they related to this thesis' goal to understand the biopolitical sides of the modernization plans that provided the blueprint for the eventual Cuban Revolution and its resulting into a revolutionary state. For interesting work about the environmentalist policies of the revolutionary government that the M26 established in 1959, one could read the following book:

Sergio Díaz-Briquets and Jorge Pérez-López, *Conquering Nature: The Environmental Legacy of Socialism in Cuba* (Pittsburgh 2000).

whether revolutionary or not. A 'revolutionary' modern Cuba could not go without a revolutionary modern civilization.

In line with this, this thesis focusses mainly on the politicization of human being and everyday life in Cuba through the image of the 'organic' society. Moreover, this discursive construction of the 'organic' society is treated as grounded in exclusion structures and having the ontological power to define and discipline what was natural, and thus normal being and behavior in Cuba and what was not. Revealing the norms that regulated this construction and, with that, formed the biopolitical conditions both movements considered necessary for the realization of 'revolutionary' modernity will lead to a more nuanced perspective on the Cuban Revolution and its ambition to create a radically different form of modern being and life that distanced itself not so much from other Cubans but even more from its history and those upholding it.

## Chapter one: ‘revolutionary’ modernity and its performance by the ‘organic’ society

This chapter analyzes how the M26 and ALC wove their political visions on ‘revolutionary’ modernity round a historically substantiated description of Cuban ‘nature’ - a term to refer to the construction of all aspects of natural identity and life in Cuba . While stressing the need of Revolution and activating Cubans to their political preferences, both movements constructed a politically controlled and normative image of an ‘organic’ society that united Cubans by nature and history.<sup>36</sup> This chapter elucidates this discursive construction and explains its political function in the national historical context in which both movements unfolded their propaganda strategy. On this ground, it is structured into three parts. The first two parts analyze the historicized propaganda maneuvers that the M26 and ALC made to transform Cubans into citizens of the ‘organic’ society. The third part, in turn, places this political salience of Cuban ‘nature’ in Cuba’s post-colonial context. In total, this chapter will show that the biopolitical propaganda strategy of the ‘organic’ society was indispensable in the construction of ‘revolutionary’ modernity.<sup>37</sup>

### 1) The M26: history and Cuban ‘nature’

#### *1.1. Cuban ‘nature’ and its material distortion*

To start with, according to the M26, history showed that Cubans were by ‘nature’ united in a transcultural, -ethnic, and -class entity of people. As the victims of the (continuing) exploitative past, Cubans were historically confirmed as the natural yet political opposites of their Western repressors. Unfortunately, however, history not only reconfirmed the ‘nature’ that united Cubans, it also testified to its age-long distortion, repression, and belittlement.

At a physical level, this expressed itself according to the M26 amongst others in the mass unemployment controlling the lives of many Cubans. Rather than reflecting a natural laziness, Castro blamed the cruel fact that many Cubans lacked a reason “to live for” and felt “divorced

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<sup>36</sup> To reveal the biopolitical norms behind the efforts of the M26 and ALC to establish a cohesive community uniting Cubans (and their Homeland) into the imagination and experience of belonging to a historical community, guided by the political urge to rectify its past through Revolution, this thesis uses the concept of the ‘organic society’ as a coordinating term for these appeals. Though both movements did not mention the term ‘organic society’ literally, it does correspond with the imagination and experience of being part of a natural, historically embedded entity that both wanted to create amongst Cubans and, to a lesser degree, between Cubans and their physical environment.

<sup>37</sup> The political importance of the discursive creation of the image of a national and historical community of Cubans is also recognized by other historians, including Lillian Guerra: Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 5, 320, 321, and 351.



[from] other beings” to the continuing material power of the island’s exploitative history.<sup>38</sup> Clarifying this in 1955, he stated furiously: “I’ve heard Cubans who have told me with their arms raised to the sky: I’m not a lazy person! I’m a working man! I could have earned a living there! But it is so sad to go knocking door to door, house to house, looking for a job so that you don’t have to steal, just to be able to feed your children.”<sup>39</sup> Distancing Cuban ‘nature’ from its present “physical impotence”, Castro continued that this was all caused by the fact that Cubans were still “totally abandoned [from their land that] was prohibited for men that wanted to work on [it]”.<sup>40</sup> This material continuation of history effected that Cubans were primarily occupied with a daily struggle with poverty, “high rents” and other forms of civil “exploitation” for which they lacked state protection.<sup>41</sup> To complete the distortion of their ‘nature’, these material worries subsequently drove Cubans into an artificial state of “political apathy” and made them forget about the political unity they actually formed, Castro stated in 1958.<sup>42</sup>

### *1.2. Cuban ‘nature’ and its immaterial distortion*

This was not even the whole story yet. In fact, the process of distortion was a twofold one that also undermined Cuban ‘nature’ at an immaterial (intellectual and emotional) level.

According to the M26, this expressed itself foremost in the systematic indoctrination of Cubans with “hypocritical lies”, primarily aimed at wedging them apart in order to keep the past with Cubans as the divided and thus inferior ‘other’ alive.<sup>43</sup> Yet while their “physical impotence” was, at least in the short term, quite unescapable, Cubans actually *could* control the normative power of history in their own heads and lives.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, this was exactly where the Revolution began according to the M26. To breach the vicious circle that kept the “tragic times of the past” alive, Cubans logically had to break with the immaterial chains underlying the “nightmare [in which they] have lived for ages” first.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, *El Camino Verdadero: discurso pronunciado por Fidel Castro Ruz el 24 de febrero de 1960* (Havana 1960; edited by the Press of the INRA). 5.

<sup>39</sup> Castro, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

<sup>40</sup> Castro, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.; Castro, *El Camino Verdadero*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Castro, *El Camino Verdadero*, 4, 5, 8, and 9. ;

<sup>42</sup> Saint George, ‘Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958’.

<sup>43</sup> Castro, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 11 and 38.

<sup>44</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

<sup>45</sup> Castro, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 11.

Fidel Castro, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C. (I Revolucionario)’, in: Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, *Dos Discursos del Comandante Fidel Castro en el X Congreso Nacional Obrero* (stenographic version of the Office of the Prime Minister; Havana 1959) 41-62, there 47.; Castro, *El Camino Verdadero*, 4.

To reinforce this reasoning, Castro used the biblical metaphor of King Solomon in 1959. Following King Solomon- who had been confronted with two women claiming to be a baby's real mother-, Cubans were ought to separate genuineness from falseness and delusiveness.<sup>46</sup> Where Solomon had suggested to divide the baby ( 'Cuban 'nature'') to make his decision, Cubans had to pattern themselves on the real mother and deprive the neo-colonialists ( 'the lying mother') of the power to kill their baby.<sup>47</sup> This meant that they had to shake off the stupefying and dividing immaterial chains of history and recover their true identities as conscious and committed mothers of the political baby that united them. To put it differently, the foundations for the collectivizing and politicizing image of the 'organic' society were laid.

### *1.3. The national and political 'organic' society*

Completing its construction of the 'organic' society with its black-and white narrative of history, the M26 argued that after four ages of neo-colonialism-whether de jure or de facto-, it was impossible to argue that the current division and "political apathy" defining Cuba's society was natural.<sup>48</sup> Instead, history demonstrated that Cuban 'nature' was inextricably entangled with Cubans' natural yet inevitably political antagonism against their historical repressors. To stress this, Raúl Castro argued that "our people [as a whole] have suffered and still suffer" "mercilessly under the (...) criminal repression". The "real causes of our faults [however] lay in earlier times", when Cubans started to allow their 'nature' to be distorted by delusive influences from outside.<sup>49</sup> Of course, these influences had aimed to divide and depoliticize Cubans, because this would prevent them from challenging "the continuation of the past".<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, although this individualist and apolitical mentality might have been comfortable for a while to distract Cubans' attention from their cruel realities, it was also alarming. It had alienated Cubans further and further from their true identities "as idealistic

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<sup>46</sup> In this biblical story, King Solomon is confronted with two women who are both claiming to be the mother of a baby. Solomon is asked to decide which woman speaks to truth and should get the baby. To solve the mystery, Solomon proposed to physically divide the baby in two so that to both women get an equal share. One woman agrees, while the other one declines out of love for her baby. This is enough for Solomon to know which woman is the real mother.

<sup>47</sup> Castro, 'Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.', 50.

<sup>48</sup> Saint George, 'Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958'.

<sup>49</sup> IISH, Amsterdam, COLL00217, Cuba Social and Political Development Collection, inventory number 2, Raúl Castro, Transcendental Mensaje de Raul Castro a la Juventud Cubana y Mundial, June 27, 1958, 2 and 5.

<sup>50</sup> Castro Ruz, 'Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.', 11.

brothers”, guided by the “irresistible desire to (...) give their lives” for the revolutionary defense of their “Homeland”- their ‘baby’.<sup>51</sup>

#### *1.4. Naturalizing the Revolution, while politicizing the Cuban individual*

Be that as it may, the M26 also understood that Cubans could not abandon their traditional focus on family-, class- or community ties just like that. Therefore, Castro did not mince matters by announcing that the M26 was there to help. As he reassuringly explained, “the Revolution had the principal goal to turn every Cuban into a revolutionary citizen who loves and sometimes truly defends his soil”.<sup>52</sup> Part of this task was making clear that “a revolutionary process stood above (...) personal passions, above the individuals and the small-minded things that usually formed the ingredients of the everyday life”. Refuting Cubans’ apolitical and individualist or, at best, communal, mentality, Castro continued that the revolutionary task to save Cuban ‘nature’ called upon Cubans to “transcend(...) these daily things” and revive their true identities as citizens of the ‘organic’ society.<sup>53</sup> In the same yet less reassuring way, he continued that the need of such break with the immaterial chains of history was compellingly, because their heavily repressed ‘nature’ found itself on the verge of “death”.<sup>54</sup>

With this logic, the M26 conditioned its political ideal of ‘revolutionary’ modernity on a biopolitical revolution, oriented at the politicization and collectivization of how Cubans understood and performed their identities and lives. Through a black-and-white narration of history, the movement explained that, under the layers of distortion, Cubans were united in a politicized ‘organic’ society. Likewise, if Cubans would liberate and revive their ‘nature’ through a collective identification with this ‘organic’ society, the physical transcendence of history would only be a matter of time, according to the M26. In the end, if the natural was political, then the political was natural.

## **2) The ALC: history and Cuban ‘nature’**

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<sup>51</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘First Speech by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz on Radio Rebelde’ (spoken version April 14, 1958; translated version by David Walters in 2019), <https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1958/04/14-april-1958.htm> (December 8, 2021).

<sup>52</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, *¡La Revolución Cumple!* (Havana 1959; edited by the OPI) 3.

<sup>53</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 48.

<sup>54</sup> David Salvador Manso and José María de la Aguilera Fernández, ‘Introducción’, in: Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, *Dos Discursos del Comandante Fidel Castro en el X Congreso Nacional Obrero* (stenographic version of the Office of the Prime Minister; Havana 1959) 3-5, there 4 and 5.

But the M26 was not the only revolutionary aiming to capture Cubans' hearts and minds with a historically substantiated narrative that explained them as members of a natural yet politically controlled community. Though drawing completely different ideological conclusions, the ALC argued with a similar black-and-white historical narrative that Cubans had been alienated from this natural family they formed by nature and history. Through ages of (im)material belittlement, Cubans were pushed into artificial roles as the "slaves" from their (neo-)colonial "masters".<sup>55</sup> In order to free their 'nature' through the creation of 'revolutionary' - as in 'post-historical' - modernity, Cubans first had to break with this role as inferior people. To leave no doubt about what they were supposed to find and revive with such a break, the ALC also mobilized its dichotomic narrative of history to create an irreducible image of an 'organic' society that guided Cubans in the rediscovery of their 'nature'.

### *2.1. Cuban 'nature' and its (im)material distortion*

The differences between both movements started when the ALC started to describe its 'organic' society. According to the anarchists, history had shown that the world was divided into "the exploited" people and "the exploitative" classification systems that had labeled them as inferior and thus exploitable.<sup>56</sup> 'Systems' rather than the people who pursued them indeed, because, from a historical perspective, it made more sense to blame the systematic habit of subordinating 'nature' to a sociopolitical ideology-whether religiously or secularly caparisoned- than the people who simply had been allured by it. In the end, the exploitative identity of history sprang in the first instance from the moral failure of such biopolitical systems of classification. Explaining this in *El Libertario*, the ALC argued that "capitalism (...) is a shambles of immoralities; Religion has proved its inutility during the many centuries of experience; [while] the bourgeoisie State struggles in a labyrinth of, very often, criminal contradictions". As the icing on the exploitative cake, the recent invention of the nation state "in the shape of the totalitarian State [had] from its defense by the Nazi-fascists to its sustenance by the Soviet dictatorship, (...)brought the maximum of outrages against the human dignity, without having been able to solve the most fundamental conflicts of the economic or political order".<sup>57</sup> From a *longue durée* perspective, thus, it was logical to challenge the mentality underlying these different systems of exploitation rather than their

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<sup>55</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores de Cuba!'.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>57</sup> IISH, ALC, 'Si no nos sobran razones...'.

superficial ideological appearances. So long as this mentality was allowed to continue its “working at the totalization of the world” it would remain “destructive for the whole human species”.<sup>58</sup>

## *2.2. The transnational and apolitical ‘organic’ society*

What the ALC concluded from its historicized world view was that Cubans were indeed positioned at the right side of history, but then as parts of a transnational collectivity. Since the movement chose the transhistorical and -national (albeit Western-controlled) habit to organize nature into hierarchically ordered classes as its anti-figure to dissociate its ‘organic’ society from, its definition of Cuban ‘nature’ did not follow the same nationalist contours as that of the M26. According to the ALC, history had made it impossible to argue that the ‘organic’ society was a national community. Instead of this, the ALC argued that history had shown that Cubans were naturally united in a global “liberating” community of “the exploited” and “disinherited masses” whose boundaries *purposely* transcended all cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic or political labels.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, another conclusion the ALC draw from its black-and-white narrative of history was that Cuban ‘nature’, when deprived of its labels, had an apolitical core. Although it might seem as if Cubans were the natural counterparts of one specific political ideology, such as imperialism, or of a group of Western states, in their purest essences they simply were not. Their natural character actually transcended such superficial and historically variable political aversions and instead evolved around the transhistorical and -national social and moral aim to solve “the problem for man of the human inequality [and] the[ir] exploitation”.<sup>60</sup>

In fact, the whole idea that Cuban ‘nature’ referred to a political nation was at the root of the continuation of the exploitative past. To uphold this idea would actually be the same as to continue the performance of the distorting labels of classification that had been established since the Western invention that ‘nature’ could, and should, be ‘civilized’ according to the standards of normality then in vogue. As part of “the exploited”, Cubans had been vulnerable

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<sup>58</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>59</sup> IISH, Amsterdam, COLL00217, Cuba Social and Political Development Collection, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores!’ (Havana; n.d.). ; IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>60</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

to these politicized identity labels and accompanying behavioral prescripts.<sup>61</sup> Due to the omnipresence of these Western-controlled biopolitical classification systems and their own material inferiority, Cubans had appeared defenseless against such politicizing labels. They had seen no other choice than internalizing and performing these labels, which the ALC considered as harmful as the M26 deemed Cubans' "political apathy".<sup>62</sup> These labels had transformed the originally apolitical and cosmopolite Cuban into a small-minded political citizen of an unfounded nation.

Thus, Cubans first had to "break with (...) [these immaterial politicizing] chains" of history before they could "mark a limit [to the past]".<sup>63</sup> Through its black-and-white narrative of history, the ALC asserted that the creation of 'revolutionary' modernity was not a matter of *transferring* the biopolitical authority to regulate being and life in Cuba to a more legitimate candidate. Instead, it was one of *erasing* the whole habit to make power-loaded distinctions between humans where there actually were not any. Only then, Cubans could evolve to the "society without slaves or masters" that suited their 'nature'.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, if Cubans would revive their 'nature' through the image of the apolitical and transnational 'organic' society, this creation of 'revolutionary' modernity would only be a matter of time.

### *2.3. Naturalizing the Revolution, while politicizing the Cuban individual*

Nevertheless, the 'organic' society might have been an apolitical one in theory; it certainly was not in practice. Through the use of Cuba's (neo-)colonial history, the ALC transformed the definition of Cuban 'nature' into a foundation of its own ideology of 'revolutionary' modernity. In the end, for the apolitical and transnational 'organic' society, it would be no more than natural to act like anarchists "above the extended nationalisms (...); much higher than the flags (...) [for] the definitive and salving fusion of all fatherlands into a global federation of humans and free peoples, for the union of all flags into an unshakeable fascicle, that erases (...) all hatred".<sup>65</sup> With this, also the ALC naturalized its vision on Revolution, while it actually established a new form of biopolitical authority to organize life and being in a modern world.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>62</sup> Saint George, 'Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958'.

<sup>63</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores!' and '¡Trabajadores de Cuba!'.

<sup>64</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores de Cuba!'.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem.

### 3) The 'organic' society in its national historical context

In a broader light, however, this was perhaps also inevitable. In a modern(izing) world characterized by the absence of a biopolitically authorized religion, historian Frank Fernández explained that the answer to the question “what is history” could decide not only how a community understood its “evolution”, but also how it “observe[d] its present (...) [and] the uncertainties of its future”.<sup>66</sup> Hence, to make a credible bid to the political power to define Cuba’s future, the M26 and ALC had to start with explaining the island’s history and its consequences for the definition of natural “Cuba and Cubanness”.<sup>67</sup> This need was even strengthened by the shattered character of the historical discourse of Cuban ‘nature’. This was caused by two reasons, both rooted in Cuba’s (neo-)colonial history as “the entrance to the New World” and a Spanish plantation colony.<sup>68</sup>

#### 3.1. Subordinating ‘nature’ to foreign interests

First, the biopolitical construction of the ‘organic’ society was to some extent a logical continuation of the biopolitical tradition to submit Cuban ‘nature’ to political interests.<sup>69</sup> While Cuba’s indigenous people always had lived “in harmony with their physical and biological environment”, the Spaniards had transformed the island’s environments and population into living capital when they ‘discovered’ and settled themselves on it in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>70</sup> This drastic transformation not only changed the real meaning of being and everyday life in Cuba; it also imposed a pervasive economized and politicized understanding of ‘nature’ amongst Cubans that would last for centuries. This materialist understanding became one of the main obstructions to the development of a native identity discourse. When other islands in the Caribbean successfully launched their independence struggles against the

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<sup>66</sup> Frank, Fernández *El Anarquismo en Cuba*. Colección Cuadernos Libertarios 6 (Madrid 2000) 11.

<sup>67</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-century Cuba* (North Carolina 2001) 23.

<sup>68</sup> Franklin W. Knight, ‘Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba, 1750-1850’, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 57 (1977) 2, 231-253, there 232-234.;

Rafael Hernández, ‘The Cuban Revolution and the Caribbean: Civil Society, Culture and International Relations’, *Interventions* 12 (2010) 1, 46-56, there 48. ;

David Michael Smith, ‘The American melting pot: A national myth in public and popular discourse’, *National Identities* 14 (2012) 4, 387-402, there 387. ;

De la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-century Cuba* (North Carolina 2001) 21-26 and 45-53.;

Laird W. Bergad, Fe Iglesias García, and María del Carmen Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1880* (Cambridge 1995) 13, 14, and 23.

<sup>69</sup> In fact, the premise that human and environmental nature constitute a sphere that was still untouched by the culturalizing and politicizing hands of humans is hard to uphold for any country with a colonial past.

<sup>70</sup> Reinaldo Funes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba : An Environmental History Since 1492*. Translated version by Alex Martin. (North Carolina 2008) 8, 9, 15-17, and 20;

traditional rule of colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many (wealthy) Cubans were not even thinking about questioning their proudly borne name as the “Ever Faithful” colony.<sup>71</sup> Only at the very end of the century, the Cuban majority gave in to a pragmatic inter-cultural, -ethnic, and -class alliance for the purpose of national independence. As is often the case with relations built on pragmatism, this national unity disappeared as snow in summer when this purpose was achieved.<sup>72</sup>

The result was that Cuba’s own national identity discourse “had to start from little more than a tabula rasa” after the achievement of formal independence. Since Cubans were not used to invent their own “means of expression”, their natural identity discourse was shattered and mainly a “translational” one as amongst others historian Louis Pérez noted.<sup>73</sup> In this light, it was not without reason that the M26 and ALC considered their political ideals depending on their ability to engage Cubans in a biopolitical project that explained their ‘nature’ as collective and revolutionary.

### 3.2. *The Cuban melting pot*

In addition, the political need to construct an ‘organic’ society was strengthened by the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterized the post-colonial Cuban society. According to the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, “the human factors of Cubanidad” could be compared with an “ajiaco”: a Latin American stew “that never stops cooking because the multifarious ingredients that compose it are constantly renewed, mixing with each other and dissolving into a broth”.<sup>74</sup> This characterization actually did not come out of thin air but dated from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a period when the idealist idea of the “melting pot” was highly in vogue in the Americas. Since then, it has actually proved to be more of a myth than a reality, with the structural inequalities in the U.S as a notable example.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Knight, ‘Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba’, 231 and 232. ;

De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 21-26, and 45-53.

<sup>72</sup> Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature* (Cambridge 1989) 1-4.;

Mark Smith, ‘The Political Economy of Sugar Production and the Environment in Eastern Cuba, 1898-1923’, *Environmental History Review* 19 (1995) 4, 31-48, there 31.

<sup>73</sup> Louis A. Pérez Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (North Carolina 1999) 94.

Pérez Firmat, *The Cuban Condition*, 1-4 and 7.;

Gillian McGillivray, *Blazing Cane: Sugar Communities, Class, and State Formation in Cuba, 1868-1959* (Durham 2009) xv.

<sup>74</sup> Fernando Ortiz, ‘The human factors of Cubanidad’ (translated by João Felipe Gonçalves and Gregory Duff Morton), *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4 (2014) 3, 455-480, there 455.

<sup>75</sup> Philip Gleason, ‘The Melting Pot: Symbol of Fusion or Confusion?’, *American Quarterly* 16 (Spring, 1964) 1, 20-46, there 20 and 21.



Also Cuba's cultural and ethnic "stew"-composed by African, Latin American and Asian descendants- was made of unequally cooked ingredients. While some flavors prevailed, others were barely noticed, whereas other others were not even mentioned on the shopping list and thus never had made it to the pan. In short, the (neo-)colonial past had left Cuba's society fractured by "structural disparities" that expressed themselves along socio-economic and cultural lines. This provided a deathblow to the attempts made to foster a united understanding of national history, natural identity, and the political future that suited this.<sup>76</sup> Hence, it was not for nothing that historian Lillian Guerra concluded in her analysis of the Cuban Revolution that the forging of a historically embedded 'organic' society was crucial for the imaginedly "participatory" "grassroots dictatorship" the M26 eventually established.<sup>77</sup>

#### 4) Conclusion

Thus, while a historically substantiated political definition of 'nature in itself was already vital to create a sense of social normality in a secularly ruled modern world, it becomes even more when including the national context in which the M26 and ALC unfolded their propaganda strategy. To meet this need, both movements centered their discourses of 'revolutionary' modernity around a politicized and activating black-and-white narration of history that explained Cuban 'nature' as a dying species that needed to be saved from the immaterial tentacles of history. Explaining the conditions of this rescue, the M26 and ALC called upon Cubans to transcend their passive individualities and surrender themselves to the image of the 'organic' society. Though their definitions of this image differed in theory, in practice both agreed that history showed that Cuban 'nature' was inevitably politicized when liberated from its distortion and revived in its authentic condition. In this way, both movements politicized Cuban 'nature' while they naturalized their vision on Revolution.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Knight, 'Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba, 1750-1850', 232-234.;

Hernández, 'The Cuban Revolution and the Caribbean', 48. ;

Smith, 'The American melting pot', 387.;

De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 21-26, and 45-53.;

Bergad, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1880*, 13, 14, and 23.

<sup>77</sup> Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 2, 5, and 13. ;

NB. Guerra focused actually on the M26 only. This thesis, however, argues that her findings can be extended to include the encouragement of a sense of historical and political unity amongst Cubans during the Cuban Revolution in general,

<sup>78</sup> Obviously, the ALC effectuated this politicization of Cuban 'nature' implicitly by using an apolitical, anarchist language. However, the result was the same as it was in the discourse of the M26, that is that the definition of natural identity and life in Cuba became submitted to political ideology.

The following chapter will concentrate on the formulation and normalization of the biopolitical norms regulating being and life in this ‘organic’ society. This will unravel further how the M26 and ALC normalized the performance of their vision on ‘revolutionary’ modernity as naturally Cuban. In turn, this concretization of the biopolitical charge of Cuba’s layered discourse of ‘revolutionary’ modernity will shed new light on the historical meaning of the Cuban Revolution.

## **Chapter two: The rational and moral ‘organic’ society and its inevitable evolution to ‘revolutionary’ modernity**

The first chapter has shown how the M26 and ALC answered to the need to define Cuban ‘nature’ in the political construction of post-colonial modernity. Through a black-and-white explanation of history, both movements created their own politicized image of the ‘organic’ society that was said to epitomize Cuban ‘nature’ in its authentic condition. This chapter delves into the biopolitical norms regulating this image. It analyzes the qualities both movements framed as naturally Cuban and pays attention to their politicizing implications for the definition of ‘normal’ behavior in the ‘organic’ society. To structure this, the chapter is structured into three parts. The first two will be concerned with the politicization of individual being in the shape of the rational and moral ‘organic’ society that the M26 and ALC invented. The conclusionary latter will shift the attention to the politicized codes of ‘normal’ behavior that attended this normative qualification of Cuban ‘nature’. Together, these parts will show that the biopolitical norms underlying the ‘organic’ society were not chosen haphazardly, but instead served a clear political function.

### **1) The rational ‘organic’ society**

As seen, the M26 and ALC both attributed “the [physical] continuation of the past” in the first place to the continuing power of the immaterial chains of history.<sup>79</sup> These kept Cubans imprisoned in their foreign ascribed role as inferior people who ignorantly and apathetically obeyed to the gradual ruin of their ‘nature’. Likewise, the goal of saving Cuban ‘nature’-“the people” and “the nation”- relied upon Cubans themselves to liberate and revive their natural identity and accompanying way of life.<sup>80</sup> To smooth this process and guarantee the desired, homogeneous effect, Cuba’s revolutionaries created the irreducible image of the ‘organic’ society. Yet what was this ‘organic’ society more than its historical position at the victimized thus right side of history? Moreover, if history served only to legitimate Cubans as united in the ‘organic’ society, upon which ground did this historical evidence then rest in the first place? In other words: what ‘nature’ tied Cubans together in the ‘organic’ society?

#### *1.1. The M26: Cubanizing ‘rationality’ through history*

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<sup>79</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 11.

<sup>80</sup> Ibidem, 10.

To create clarity, the M26 pursued its biopolitical goal to “turn every Cuban into a revolutionary citizen” by stressing that Cubans were first of all characterized by natural rationality.<sup>81</sup> According to the movement, it was natural for Cubans to “reason with common sense” and “see(...) clearly” their (historical) realities.<sup>82</sup> The only thing suppressing this reason was the mentioned immaterial continuation of history. Following the central assumption that the prospects of Revolution hinged upon the revival of Cuban ‘nature’, Castro argued in 1959 that “seeing clearly” was equal to “saving the nation, saving the people”. Likewise, “the genuine compatriots, the real patriots, the people who have something honorable for which we fight understood why (...) these are times to see and talk clearly!”.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, Castro continued, “everyone who, at this moment, is not seeing clearly is either behaving irresponsible or *un estúpido*”.<sup>84</sup> These people rejected their ‘nature’ and, consequently, allowed it to be destroyed. Hence, they not only behaved as a fool, but also as “a counterrevolutionary” propagating “the downfall of the people”.<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, the M26 also understood that its political raising of the Western-introduced concept of ‘reason’ could have an unnatural or even unwanted taste. Probably, the structurally discriminated and consequently often un(der)educated average Cuban might not immediately picture himself as rational. To solve this potential error in its ‘organic’ society and guarantee that its biopolitical discourse was received favorably, the M26, again, turned to its faithful friend ‘history’. With a historicized legitimation, the movement explained not only the current ignorance and undereducation of Cubans as alien but it also broadened the definition of rationality. Rather than referring to the privilege of education, ‘being rational’ was about having the *discipline* to act “well-considered and observantly” and the *political experience* to solve “problems” of “the [sociopolitical] environment”.<sup>86</sup>

#### *1.1.a. Ignorance as a product of false indoctrination and material belittlement*

First, in accordance with the mentioned assumption that Cuban ‘nature’ was historically repressed and distorted, the M26 stressed that the (neo-)colonial “politics that had ruled our

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<sup>81</sup> Castro Ruz, *¡La Revolución Cumple!*, 3.

<sup>82</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 50 and 52.

<sup>83</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10-12.

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem, 39.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 41.

<sup>86</sup> M26, ‘Temario para oposiciones de maestras de enseñanza común’, *Revolución: órgano del Movimiento* 26 de Julio, August 1, 1959. ;

country” rather than Cubans themselves were responsible for “the unforgiveable oblivion of the classes of the people that were kept in eternal sleep”.<sup>87</sup> ‘Kept’ to sleep indeed, because this ignorance reflected just like the “political apathy” the general distortion of Cuban ‘nature’.<sup>88</sup> Through material and immaterial belittlement, Cubans had been driven into an emotionally and intellectually colonized state of “historical pessimism” and “deceptions” about themselves and their future as a nation.<sup>89</sup> This, in turn, had relegated their rational ‘nature’ to the background.

The first main facet of this twofold colonization of Cuban ‘nature’ expressed itself in the propagation of a “lying and fatalistic complex of historical ideas about that our people was independent” and thus already had reached its historical climax.<sup>90</sup> Logically, this had demotivated Cubans to carry out their rationally substantiated aversion against the “continuation of the past”.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, this pessimism was as problematic as it was false. Taunting the counterrevolutionary campaigns in 1959, Castro jeered that Cuba’s historical repressors “were not capable to see that Cuba[’s ‘organic’ society] was not a ridiculous or miniscule group that played “high ball” on Saturdays”, but instead “the vast majority of the people”.<sup>92</sup> By presenting Cubans as stupid, these (neo-)imperialists aimed to keep Cubans disillusioned about the prospects of their own (political) capabilities. This suited best their own ambition “to exploit the resources of the Nation and the work of the people for their own benefits” and ensure “the continuation of the past”.<sup>93</sup>

In addition, “the truth was hidden for the people” through systematic material discrimination.<sup>94</sup> By depriving Cubans of material wealth, Cuba’s exploiters had effected that “thousands of children living in the countryside could not go to school, (...) not because their lack of capacity or interest, but because of their lack of resources”.<sup>95</sup> In this way, “the ones with the monopoly on culture”, socioeconomic, and political affairs had imposed “the

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<sup>87</sup> Oscar F. Rego, ‘Se revertirán al pueblo las utilidades de más de 30 millones de pesos acumulados por depósitos en empresas de servicios públicos’, *Revolucion: organo del Movimiento* 26 de Julio, June 27, 1959.

<sup>88</sup> Saint George, ‘Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958’.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 16-18.

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem, 16.

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, 22.

<sup>93</sup> Ibidem, 11.;

Castro Ruz, *El Camino Verdadero*, 8. ;

Saint George, ‘Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958’.

<sup>94</sup> Castro Ruz, *El Camino Verdadero*, 8. ;

<sup>95</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 11 and 22.

monopoly on ignorance” on the originally rational Cuban, Castro explained.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, Cubans were driven to a state of degradation “without something to live for”.<sup>97</sup> In this light, it was no wonder that they eventually had given in to this twofold process of distortion, if only because a state of “political apathy” seemed psychically more comfortable than striving against the stream day in day out.<sup>98</sup>

*1.1.b. Broadening the definition of rationality: discipline and experience rather than education*

Understandable as this apathy might be, the M26 deemed it of the utmost importance that Cubans opened their eyes to the “tragic times of the past”.<sup>99</sup> Luckily, for this task, Cubans not only had to live on the fact that their ignorance was artificial and reflected their general subordination to “people that, out of idleness, could (...) conspire and gossip about the Revolution” to prevent Cubans from becoming “the competent people (...) with enough [rational] righteousness and strength” they actually were.<sup>100</sup> Rather, the M26 argued that history had shown that ‘being rational’ involved more than ‘being educated’. Actually, it was about having the discipline to abstain from emotional behavior and the experience to formulate a solid answer to “the problems of the nation and the people”.<sup>101</sup> Logically, these qualities could rather be found in the historically unguilty Cubans than in their “blind” repressors who had been governed by “privileges” and emotions of greed.<sup>102</sup>

First, the M26 argued that Cubans were historically disciplined to live “with the sweat on (...) [their] foreheads”.<sup>103</sup> Besides allowing them to dig up their natural reason, this discipline also granted them the tools to think before acting, develop “critical” perspectives on their realities, and avoid “the emotional behavior” that had ruled the past.<sup>104</sup> Additionally, despite having been sidelined and silenced for centuries, Cubans’ collective experience with (neo-)colonial

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<sup>96</sup> Ibidem, 11, 22, and 23.

<sup>97</sup> Castro Ruz, *El Camino Verdadero*, 5.

<sup>98</sup> Saint George, ‘Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958’.

<sup>99</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 5 and 40.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 47.

<sup>100</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 22 and 23.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 44 and 47.

<sup>101</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Ibidem, 10 and 34.

<sup>103</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 22 and 23.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 44.;

<sup>104</sup> M26, ‘Temario para oposiciones de maestras de enseñanza común’.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10

repression had also brought them an irrefutable “political maturity”.<sup>105</sup> Albeit in an apathetical and ignorant condition, Cubans *had* seen and experienced the irrational repression and distortion of their ‘nature’. Therefore, Castro explained in 1959, they “already knew about the ones who had destroyed (...) [their] Fatherland” and realized that their ‘nature’ and the “roots of *Cubanísima*” found themselves on the verge of “death”.<sup>106</sup> Likewise, they knew “there (...) [was] no happiness without Homeland and without honor” and “understood the (...) [necessity of the Revolution], whatever the place or circumstance” they found themselves in.<sup>107</sup>

Thus, besides confirming their rational ‘nature’ - albeit in a latent condition-, history also gave Cubans the tools to reactivate their reason and position themselves on the right side of the future as well. They had learned that “the faults of today would cost (...) [them] very dearly tomorrow” and knew the necessity to transcend their paralyzing “historical pessimism” and become “aware of the [ir] historical minute”.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, they had acquired the discipline required to leave their pessimistically driven comfort zones of “political apathy”.<sup>109</sup> By presenting these abilities as the vital conditions for ‘being rational’, the M26 popularized its rational ‘organic’ society through the use of history.

### *1.2. The ALC and the rational Cuban: Cubanizing ‘rationality’ through history*

The ALC agreed that the political task to free Cuban ‘nature’ from its historical chains had to be performed in the sphere of individual and daily life. Accordingly, it urged Cubans to shake off their politicizing identity labels and revive the “characteristics of (...) [their] origin”. Moreover, spurring Cubans to “raise (...) [their] warning voice against the false distortions of the historical realities”, the ALC equalized this revival of Cuban ‘nature’ to a process of rationalization.<sup>110</sup> The only reason preventing Cubans from “presenting a clean history” was because they were still defining themselves according to the irrational classification systems that underlied the “criminal” past.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Castro Ruz, Fidel, ‘When the people rule.’.

<sup>106</sup> Salvador Manso, ‘Introducción’, 4 and 5.

<sup>107</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 22, 23.

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 44.

<sup>108</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10, 16, 39, and 40.;

<sup>109</sup> Saint George, ‘Excerpts from an interview with Andrew George Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra in 1958’.

<sup>110</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*.

### *1.2.a. Ignorance as a product of false indoctrination and material belittlement*

Still, just like the M26, the ALC had to deal with the fact that caparisoning its discourse of Cuban ‘nature’ in the language of rationality might not get across very well with its lower class supporters. Luckily, also to the anarchists ‘history’ extended a helping hand. First, the ALC used its black-and-white narrative of history to explain that the lack of rationality in Cuba(n history) was artificially *produced* by external forces. These forces had submitted Cubans to a “redundancy of blind vanity and bad intention”, and interests that all had been serving “narrow-minded partiality” and the “politics of fortune”.<sup>112</sup> With this, they had transformed Cubans from non-politicized thus rational individuals into political citizens whose “thinking [was] corrupt[ed]” by the idea of belonging to a nation.<sup>113</sup>

To finish this distortion of Cuban ‘nature’, the ALC continued that this nation was not ruled by well-considered dialogues but by emotional impulses. One of the main thorns in its flesh was the electoral democracy that had been established after Cuba had liberated itself from the yoke of de jure dependency. Rather than having been able to end the irrationality in Cuba, this democracy had only anchored and institutionalized the distortion. In its magazine *El Libertario*, the movement criticized Cuba’s democracy as an “electoral farce”, performed by politicians who acted anything but rationally. A primary field in which this irrationality was exposed over and over again was during the build-up to the elections for a new government. Every four years, new people set themselves up as potential “leaders”, all promising “to improve the capitalist winter”. To persuade Cubans of their false promises, these politicians pursued “their personal and partial controversies in order to gain the sympathy of the people” rather than well-considered dialogues. In this light, it was no surprise that, “when they achieved the power, they (...) [forgot] everything [they had promised]”, the ALC derided.<sup>114</sup>

### *1.2.b. Broadening the definition of rationality: historical lessons*

At least it was no surprise for the rational Cuban. In the end, the ALC explained, “history (...) [had taught Cubans] many reasons to expect nothing else from them than what they are doing”. Through their experiences, Cubans had learned that these people were “governed by

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<sup>112</sup> IISH, Amsterdam, ALC, ‘No hay que asombrarse...’, *El Libertario: organo de la Ass. libertariá de Cuba*, November 1952.;

IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>113</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>114</sup> IISH, Amsterdam, ALC, ‘Repudiara el pueblo la farsa electorera’, *El Libertario: organo de la Ass. libertariá de Cuba*, February 1952.



the desire to power and the conviction of infallibility, sure of the fact that they form a privileged elite to whose decisions the slavish nation had to submit itself". Therefore, the movement argued, it would be unfair if Cubans expected them "to transform themselves into healthy and balanced servants of the democracy, in line with and loyal to their statements".<sup>115</sup>

More than that, this expectation would also be dangerous, because, as Cubans knew, there "were no reasons left anymore" to allow their rational 'nature' to be sacrificed for personal power ambitions any longer.<sup>116</sup> Concerning the "electoral farce", this meant that, on the eve of a new electoral period, Cubans might be "full of confidence and enthusiasm because of the speeches, but [also] with the absolute [rational] conviction that there is the mass and on the other side there are the masters". Actually, "there was no one [in the Cuban society] who seriously believed in this" irrational political game that was created to let them swallow their continuing repression.<sup>117</sup> If their experiences had proved one thing then it was that *they* rather than their masters possessed the reason required to bring the liberty, equality, and fraternity that had been promised with modernity's 18<sup>th</sup>-century invention.<sup>118</sup> To "be loyal to (...) [their] history" therefore meant to comply with the knowledge that only they "could save (...) [their 'nature'], strengthened by (...) [the] unity of the[ir rational] ideas (...) and the compelling necessity (...) to confirm the present scandals and the inefficiency of all the means that have been tried, repeated, and proposed for a long time".<sup>119</sup>

### 1.3. Conclusion

Thus, just like the M26, the ALC presented Cubans not only as rational because the irrationalities in their lives were caused by external forces who constantly got "entangled in the confusion of their own stupidities".<sup>120</sup> Instead, history had also bestowed Cubans with the knowledge and experience needed to solve these irrationalities and "mark a limit (...) [to] the problem of the human inequality".<sup>121</sup> In this way, both movements popularized their rational

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<sup>115</sup> IISH, ALC, 'No hay que asombrarse...'.  
<sup>116</sup> IISH, ALC, 'Si no nos sobran razones...'.  
<sup>117</sup> IISH, ALC, 'No hay que asombrarse...';  
 IISH, ALC, 'Repudiara el pueblo la farsa electorera'.  
<sup>118</sup> Robert Wokler, 'The Enlightenment Project As Betrayed by Modernity', *History of European Ideas* 24 (1999) 4-5, 301-313, there 301-305, and 311.  
<sup>119</sup> IISH, ALC, 'Si no nos sobran razones...';  
 IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores!'.  
<sup>120</sup> IISH, ALC, 'No hay que asombrarse...'.  
<sup>121</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores de Cuba!'.

‘organic’ society through their black-and-white narration of history that positioned Cubans as the rational ‘others’ in an irrational world.

However, what was the use of this rationality if Cubans did not feel incited to behave accordingly? More than that, why would they even heed their historical lessons and use their discipline to replace the comfort of indifference with the stress attending a rational vision? Was the power of historicization enough to persuade them? Moreover, for movements so fond of distancing their revolutionary discourses from their (neo-)colonial counterparts, was this power also enough to compensate the Western connotation of the rational ‘organic’ society? All in all, despite their efforts to Cubanize the definition and conditions of ‘being rational’, the invention of the rational Cuban remained not a very radical departure from the language their Western enemies had used to distinguish their modern man in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Did the M26 and ALC actually proclaim a true revolutionary break with the foreign-controlled past?

This possible friction between the image both movements wanted to secure and the historical reality in which they conditioned their visions on modernity on the reincarnation of Cuban ‘nature’ in the shape of the rational ‘organic’ society could obstruct their (bio)political influence. To re-enforce their revolutionary credibility and legitimacy, the M26 and ALC added a second quality to their ‘organic’ society, that is Cubans’ irrefutable morality. What followed was that the revival of Cuban ‘nature’ was not only a matter of “seeing clearly”, but also of having “the necessary [moral] values” to act upon it, as Castro illustratively had phrased it.<sup>122</sup>

## **2) The moral ‘organic’ society**

### *2.1. The M26 and the moral Cuban*

In line with this, the M26 argued that Cubans’ position at the unguilty side of history testified not only of their reason, but also of their natural morality. Moreover, while their reason had been attacked and repressed for ages, Raúl Castro explained that Cubans’ natural moral “principles” had only been strengthened. Likewise, his brother Fidel continued that Cubans might not be the most educated ones, but they certainly formed “the noblest and most feeling people in the world”.<sup>123</sup> This morality reflected the purest essence of Cuban ‘nature’ that

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<sup>122</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’ 10 and 27.

<sup>123</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘When the people rule.’.

transcended cultures, classes, and even “political or religious beliefs”.<sup>124</sup> It actually could be seen as the red thread in Cubans’ historical evolution as the political counterpart of their immoral and irrational repressors. Accordingly, this morality provided the first foundations on which the ‘organic’ society rested.

### *2.1.a. Distancing the rational ‘organic’ society from its Western counterparts*

Logically, this moralization of the ‘organic’ society put a different complexion on its earlier description as rational. Carrying the political use of Cubans’ historical innocence to the utmost limit, the M26 held that Cubans’ irrefutable “moral omnipotence” distinguished their reason as sincere from the show of rationality that was performed by their exploiters.<sup>125</sup> This morality had protected their reason from getting contaminated with irrational emotions like greed or egoism. Although it had been forced into hiding for a while by external influences, it at least had not been attacked from within and, with that, ruined permanently. Thus, from a historical perspective, Cubans’ rationality was inextricably entangled with if not depended on their morality.<sup>126</sup> In line with this, Castro announced in 1958 that it was “enough to be Cuban to have faith in the possibility that they [Cuba’s repressors] may understand reason and be ashamed of their crimes, in the possibility they will be sorry and (...) also come together under the flags of justice”.<sup>127</sup> By equalizing reason with morality in its construction of the ‘organic’ society, the M26 eliminated the Western and elitist connotation.

### *2.1.b. Motivating Cubans to internalize their rationality*

In addition, the movement rebutted the potential reluctance Cubans could feel to internalize the image of the rational ‘organic’ society. Probably, the average Cuban would recognize himself sooner in the claim that history testified to his moral ‘nature’. This was important because, Raúl Castro explained, Cubans’ moral “principles” provided not only the red thread of their historical evolution as an ‘organic’ society. They also “connected the historical pasts with the future” of ‘revolutionary’ sincere rational and moral justice.<sup>128</sup> They gave Cubans the “irresistible desire” to shake off the chains of history and start “seeing clearly” and challenge

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<sup>124</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 2, Raúl Castro, Transcendental Mensaje de Raul Castro a la Juventud Cubana y Mundial, 2, 6, and 7. ;

Castro Ruz, ‘When the people rule.’.

<sup>125</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

<sup>126</sup> Ibidem.;

Castro Ruz, ‘First Speech by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz on Radio Rebelde’.

<sup>127</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

<sup>128</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 2, Raúl Castro, Transcendental Mensaje de Raul Castro a la Juventud Cubana y Mundial, 2, 6, and 7.

the historical frictions between the ideological pretexts of Europe's modernity and its exploitative implementation in Cuba.<sup>129</sup>

Moreover, in this struggle for historical rectification they would succeed, Castro predicted already in 1953 during his famous speech *History Will Absolve Me*. In a world claiming to be a modern and civilized one, the rational and moral Cuban would inevitably be “more powerful than the [“idle” and “blind”] consortium of the dictatorship and its mercenary armies” that wanted to prolong the façade of modernity.<sup>130</sup> As a true believer in modernity, the M26 concluded that the past had perhaps been governed by the law of the jungle; the future certainly would not.

## 2.2. *The ALC and the moral Cuban*

### 2.2.a. *Distancing the rational ‘organic’ society from its Western counterparts*

Given the political use of Cuba's, historically seen undeniable, “moral omnipotence”, it was no surprise that also the ALC availed itself of it.<sup>131</sup> Distancing the rational Cuban from its exploiters, the ALC argued that Cubans' natural moral aversion against exploitation explained why they had not dirtied their hands with the “rascally” interests of their exploiters. In contrast to their “unscrupulous” and “emulative” masters, Cubans had always been guided by a natural “good will”.<sup>132</sup> Consequently, while their political masters had made “impossible promises” of liberty, equality, and fraternity with “the only goal [to enrich] (...) themselves thanks to their bad manners”, Cubans had just been “very unguilty”.<sup>133</sup> Albeit silently, they had strongly disapproved the “dogmatic imposition” and “slavish hierarchy” that had been and still was characterizing their (historical) realities.<sup>134</sup> The only reason preventing them from actively challenging this friction between their ‘nature’ and outside realities was because the main (bio)political “formula of (...) monstrous power” behind these realities “wrecked the

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<sup>129</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘First Speech by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz on Radio Rebelde’. ;  
Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10 and 10.

<sup>130</sup> Ibidem, 10, 22 and 23.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the closure of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 44.;

Castro Ruz, ‘First Speech by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz on Radio Rebelde’. ;

Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘History Will Absolve Me’ (spoken version October 16, 1953; translated version by Pedro Álvarez Tabío and Andrew Paul Booth and edited by Andrew Paul Booth and Brian Baggins in 1977), <https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1953/10/16.htm> (December 9, 2021).

<sup>131</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

<sup>132</sup> IISH, ALC, ‘Si no nos sobraran razones...’ and ‘No hay que asombrarse...’.

<sup>133</sup> IISH, ALC, ‘No hay que asombrarse...’.

IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores!’.

<sup>134</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores!’.

IISH, ALC, ‘Si no nos sobraran razones...’.

voluntariness” and forced Cubans into passivity.<sup>135</sup> Irrespective of this, luckily, their moral ‘nature’ still had allowed them to preserve their reason and protect it against the externally imposed irrationalities. With this historicized logic, the ALC also conditioned the right to be rational on historical innocence and deprived its rational ‘organic’ society from its Western connotation.

### 2.2.b. *Motivating Cubans to internalize their rationality*

In addition, while the politicizing chains of history had “corrupted the thinking” of the rational Cubans, the ALC saw their “moral authority” just like the M26 as a transhistorical quality that explained Cubans as historically united in the rational ‘organic’ society.<sup>136</sup> Besides placing Cubans already with one foot in this society, the ALC also argued that Cubans’ morality compelled them to “raise (...) [their] warning voice against the false distortions of the historical realities”.<sup>137</sup> Their morality would act as a primary force driving Cubans towards a state of ‘revolutionary’ modernity that was “naturally following the line of [their moral] solidarity and mutual [rational] comprehension”, the ALC finalized its argument in *El Libertario*.<sup>138</sup> Thus, according to the ALC, the internalization of the quality of morality would be enough to eventually internalize the whole package the image of the ‘organic’ society offered, *including* its inevitable evolutionary path to ‘revolutionary’ modernity.

## 3) **Conclusions and the politicization of everyday life**

In other words, this politicization of individual being went hand in hand with the politization of everyday life, which historian Greg Grandin considered the main characteristic of the Cold War in Latin America.<sup>139</sup> In the end, it was inevitable that the picture of the rational and moral ‘organic’ society had politicizing implications for the definition of ‘normal’ behavior in Cuba. In the words of the M26, every Cuban in the ‘organic’ society was a “revolutionary citizen”.<sup>140</sup> Logically, as rational and moral citizens of the ‘organic’ society, Cubans were no longer expected to live their lives in obedience and indifference. To underline this, Castro stressed in 1959 that “revolutionary being (...) [was about] having a mental [rational] vision against these realities and besides the [moral] value to confront [them]”. The revival of Cuban

<sup>135</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores!’ and ¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>136</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

IISH, ALC, ‘No debemos ir al caos’.

<sup>137</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>138</sup> IISH, ALC, ‘Si no nos sobran razones...’.

<sup>139</sup> Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 17.

<sup>140</sup> Castro Ruz, *¡La Revolución Cumple!*, 3.

‘nature’ was thus only the beginning of a real Revolution against “the continuation of the past”.<sup>141</sup> It granted Cubans “the necessary [rational and moral] consciousness (...) to achieve the moral, patriotic, and material benefits” of the Revolution.<sup>142</sup> Likewise, it allowed them to “set(...) up trenches of ideas [needed for] setting up stone trenches”.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, Castro illustratively concluded that the “function” of the ordinary Cuban had “changed a decisive function for the Fatherland and the Revolution”. Instead of an insignificant individual, he was now a committed citizen of a rational and moral society who was “going to decide about the triumph or failure” of the final survival struggle of Cuban ‘nature’.<sup>144</sup>

The ALC agreed with this. With the revival of their true identities, Cubans would inevitably become committed to the struggle against the political systems of repression that, from a moral perspective, “had brought maximum of outrages against the human dignity” and from a rational perspective, had been “unable to solve the most fundamental conflicts of the economic or political order”.<sup>145</sup> Hence, if the Cuban individual revived the “characteristics that suited his origin”, the need to “take a new [‘revolutionary’] course” that was “loyal to his history” and ‘nature’ would become inescapable.<sup>146</sup> To put it differently, also the ALC considered revolutionary behavior ‘normal’ behavior in the ‘organic’ society.

Thus, as true modernizers, the M26 and ALC blurred the line between what was said to be natural and what was politically desired. By defining Cuban ‘nature’ within the abstract language of morality and rationality, they allowed themselves enough room to define the performance of their political programs for ‘revolutionary’ modernity as ‘normal’ behavior. Just like their Western counterparts and predecessors, they exploited the political uses that the Enlightenment language of modern nature offered.<sup>147</sup>

The next chapter will however show that the vagueness of this language not only provided the M26 and ALC the tools to mold the sphere of individual being and everyday life in Cuba to their own political preferences. Instead, the political function of their rational and moral

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<sup>141</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 11 and 38.

<sup>142</sup> Ibidem, 26.

<sup>143</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.

<sup>144</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 9 and 10.

<sup>145</sup> IISH, ALC, ‘Si no nos sobrarian razones...’.

<sup>146</sup> Ibidem.;

IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’ and ‘¡Trabajadores!’.

<sup>147</sup> To some extent, such biopolitical guidance of what ‘rationality’ and ‘morality’ in the modern civilization actually meant, was of course necessary for the need of sociopolitical order and coherence.

‘organic’ society extended Cuba’s national borders and actively interacted with the international context of the 1950s. In this international context, it represented not a classic Southern effort to meet the Northern standards of modern development. Instead, it served as an unprecedentedly believable reprimand from Southern modernizers to the Northern monopoly on the concrete (bio)political definition of modernity.

### **Chapter three: The rational and moral ‘organic’ society and the post-1945 discredit of European modernity**

This chapter analyzes the interaction between the biopolitical discourses of the M26 and ALC and the international context of the 1950s. First, this context, characterized by the post-1945 discredit of European modernity, will be described. Subsequently, the biopolitical norms and conditions of ‘revolutionary’ modernity that both movements formulated will be reviewed in the light of this context. This will show that the M26 and ALC actively engaged with the international climate of their times. More than that, it will argue that the invention of the rational and moral ‘organic’ society did not act as an effort to *extend* the geographical boundaries of the Western monopolized global modern civilization. Instead, Cuba’s revolutionaries made unprecedentedly believable effort to ‘modernize and thus *transform* the norms on which these boundaries rested.<sup>148</sup> In this way, they participated directly in the global Cold War struggle for ideological control of the post-1945 (bio)political definition of ‘modernity’, ‘modern being’ and ‘life’, and ‘development’-alias the (bio)political regime of modernity.<sup>149</sup>

#### **1) The global 1950s and the end of European modernity**

##### *1.1. The Enlightenment Project and the invention of modernity*

Before this intervention in the global Cold War can be singled out, it’s first necessary to give some impression of the context in which this struggle arose and subsequently was battled out. First of all, this research departs from the generally and internationally understood idea that “modernity [both the concept and its political materialization] was bred from the Enlightenment out of its notions of the rights of man and its respect for individual autonomy, which brought the [European] age of feudalism to a close”. This “Enlightenment Project”, as this 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosophical birth of modernity was called and popularized by historians as Robert Wokler, provided the normative foundations on which the conception of the modern, civilized, and “enlightened” man was built. Distinguishing this man from his uncivilized

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<sup>148</sup> The term ‘global modern civilization’ refers to the dominant conception and political reality of who meets the dominant norms of being modern and thus civilized and who did not. Basically, the term refers to the Western world, which dominated and still dominates the discursive and real political gateways of this proverbial civilization.

<sup>149</sup> To refer to the discursive formulation and real political anchoring of these definitions this thesis uses the term ‘(bio)political regime of modernity’. This term, thus, does not refer to a concrete material regime like a national government, but rather is concerned with the invisible construction of biopolitical norms and conditions of ‘being civilized’ and ‘modern’. On the other hand, it also refers to the political consolidation and enforcement of these norms through real policy and tangible political actions.



predecessors and counterparts, this conception was foremost grounded on the unprecedented reason and moral sense of justice that would characterize him and his behavior. In contrast to his medieval and uncivilized counterparts, Wokler explained, the modern man had freed his “nature from the shackles of tradition” and “barbarous, (...) irrational”, and “blind faith. This allowed him to be honestly “committed to universal justice” and reason.<sup>150</sup> Undeniably driven by Europe’s own expansionism and civilizational interventionism, this moralist and rationalist conceptualization of modern being and life in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe soon became the standards of ‘being civilized’ in the rest of the world as well.

Two centuries later, however, the complete opposite of this “progressive” morality and rationality would be appropriate to typify the modern past.<sup>151</sup> Halfway through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world had been startled by what had been “the age of the [aggressive European] nation-state”. With two world wars and the age-long colonial violence in the non-Western world fresh in mind, most people agreed that the reality of modernity had been far from what it had been promised to be. This inspired in both academic and popular circles in the First World a debate about who or what should be held responsible for the “monstrous child” the modern past and its dominant “civilization ha[d] become”.<sup>152</sup>

### *1.2. The distortion of modernity: who to blame?*

Some people blamed the Enlightenment Project itself. With their vague conceptualization of the modern man as ‘rational’ and ‘moral’, the Enlightenment philosophers had cleared the way for an exclusive political regulation of what these qualities meant in real life. This had made it inevitable that the real definition of being modern would “acquire(...) a discursive character”. What followed was a dangerous “closeness between reason and [political] ideology in the origins of modernity (...) [which had] direct consequences in the construction the ‘other’ and the treatment of other cultures”, Jorge Larraín explained. At best, this meant that the original emphasis on reason and morality got “relativized”.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Wokler, ‘The Enlightenment Project As Betrayed by Modernity’, 301-305, and 311.

<sup>151</sup> Andrew Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies* (third edition; West Sussex 2010) 2.

<sup>152</sup> Wokler, ‘The Enlightenment Project As Betrayed by Modernity’, 311.; Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 9.

<sup>153</sup> Jorge Larraín, *Ideology and Cultural Identity: Modernity and the Third World Presence* (Cambridge 1994) Introduction.; Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 9.

Others actually doubted whether the Enlightenment Project itself should be blamed for the discrepancy between modernity's theory and its (bio)political materialization. All in all, Andrew Vincent explained, one could also argue that Europe's "ideological politics was at the root of much of the mass of pain, misery and warfare of the mid-twentieth century".<sup>154</sup> Expressing this dominant sentiment in the post-1945 world, Wokler continued that "the metempsychosis of modernity" actually "began (...) when whole peoples (...) [were] doomed" as inferior by Western Europeans nationalists. This was the beginning of an aggressive, and "totalizing ideology" of modern nature.<sup>155</sup> For the formulation, propagation, and implementation of this ideology, these nationalists had "instrumental[ized]" the original ideals of modernity in order to "conceal domination and the exercise [immoral and irrational] of power". During this process, they had "downgraded [reason] to being a servant of power (...) and (...) a [politicized] principle which informs history and the organization of society".<sup>156</sup> The result, in turn, had been an aggressive and exclusive politics of modern civilization, characterized by the "rationalization" of biological difference.<sup>157</sup>

In this way, the promises of the Enlightenment Project to put "an end to the age of privilege" and create an open modern civilization that united all people in rational and moral justice had completely been ruined. Still the causal connection was that "modernity", or at least its (bio)political materialization as "the age of the [Western European] nation-state", had "betrayed" or "killed" the moral and rational intentions of the Enlightenment Project rather than the reverse. In the words of Wokler, this meant that "the Enlightenment Project is (...) blameless for the predominant political divisions of modernity (...) [and its] religious and ethnic strife. Politically no less than theologically, it offered us a multiplicity of goods that failed" in the hands of humans.<sup>158</sup>

### *1.3. Rising alternative (bio)political ideologies of modernity*

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<sup>154</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 9.

<sup>155</sup> Ibidem, 5 and 9.;

Wokler, 'The Enlightenment Project As Betrayed by Modernity', 306 and 311.

<sup>156</sup> Larraín, *Ideology and Cultural Identity*, Introduction. ;

Howard Brick, 'The End of Ideology Thesis', in: Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Marc Stears, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford 2013) 90-114, there 90-92.

<sup>157</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 5 and 9.;

Heinrich von Treitschke, 'Nationalism in Classical Social Theory', in Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalism: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge 1996).

<sup>158</sup> Wokler, 'The Enlightenment Project As Betrayed by Modernity', 301-306, and 311.

Nevertheless, irrespective of who or what was responsible for the irrationality and barbarity of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, everyone agreed there had to be a radical change in the way modernity was used to be performed. More directly this meant that Europe's ideological hegemony over the (bio)political organization of modernity was water under the bridge. With Europe's fall, the leadership vacuum on which the ideological Cold War competition over the future (bio)political terms and conditions of modernity could begin, was created.<sup>159</sup>

In the end, logically attending the discredit of European modernity was the global rise of alternative ideologies of modernity that characterized the Cold War era.<sup>160</sup> Though differing in their exact (bio)political ideas, these new ideologies all aimed to present themselves as the more rational and moral substitutes of Europe's nationalist regulation of modern being and life. The most famous examples were, of course, the capitalist and Marxist-Leninist ones of, respectively, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., who both claimed to rationalize and moralize modernity's reality by submitting the organization and regulation of nature and life to politico-economic theory and science. However, albeit less notable also Cuba's inter-revolutionary debate about the (bio)political norms and conditions of 'revolutionary' modernity reflected this ideological debate and its unprecedentedly global scale. The following paragraphs analyze this interaction.

## **2) The rational and moral 'organic' society in its international context**

### *2.1. Extending the boundaries of the global modern civilization....*

Because that the M26 and ALC did not formulate their biopolitical visions on 'revolutionary' modernity in a vacuum should be clear. With their rational and moral 'organic' society, they reacted directly to the post-1945 discredit of Europe's (bio)political regime of modernity. With nationalist Europe being deposed from its throne as the political mother of modern civilization, the relations between the 'civilized' West and the traditionally excluded non-Western 'other' took, at least theoretically, a new aspect. With the tide of history in their favor, the M26 and ALC invented the rational and moral 'organic' society that presented the Cuban man as no less 'modern' than the likewise discursively invented civilized European had been. By assimilating Cuban 'nature' discursively to the theoretical conditions of 'being

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<sup>159</sup> Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 7 and 17. ;

Hager, 'The Cold War and Third World Revolution', 51.

<sup>160</sup> Federico Romero, 'Cold War historiography at the crossroads', *Cold War History* 14 (2014) 4, 685-703, there 694

modern', both movements exploited the weakness of the Western monopolized gateways to the global modern civilization to make a convincing request to extend its geographical boundaries.

## 2.2....or transforming them?

A closer look shows however that Cuba's revolutionaries not merely reacted to their international context in the hope to add Cubans to the Western designated civilized world; they also *interacted* with it. Attending the fall of Europe's modernity was a rising awareness of the social and historical plasticity of the biopolitical norms on which the relations in the world still rested. For example, while the idea of the civilizational superiority of the West European nation state had seemed absolute before 1945, after the Second World War, no one believed in its legitimacy nor disciplining power anymore. Being aware of this plasticity, the M26 and ALC not merely strained for fitting Cubans into the Western monopolized image of modern nature and join the exclusive old world. Instead, exploiting their historical context, they entered the Cold War struggle over the biopolitical future of modernity as representatives of the new world, consisting of the exploited ones who had not betrayed modernity's promises of reason and moral justice. Consistently emphasizing the historical relations between Cubans and the colonial West, they internalized Cubans' historical position as the non-European 'other' and transformed it into a proof of their rational and moral nature. Now that everyone agreed that Europe's (bio)political execution of modernity had failed, Cubans could bear their label as the 'other' with confidence. Rather than signifying their inferiority, their 'otherness' could now be interpreted as indicating their civilizational *superiority* over their barbarian repressors.

In line with this, the M26 and ALC asserted that Cubans- as not just an indiscriminately selected group of non-Europeans but above all as rational and moral 'others'- were the perfect candidates for the proverbial empty leadership chair in the (bio)political regime of post-1945 global modernity. To substantiate why Cubans should become not simply a member but actually the leader of the global modern civilization, the M26 and ALC used a twofold argumentation structure. Strategically capitalizing on the theoretical global wish to rationalize and moralize modernity's (bio)political reality, this argumentation structure itself served a political function as well. First, both movements argued that the realization of true justice required that the traditional inequality between the Western and the non-Western world in the biopolitical regime of modernity was equalized. Additionally, to strengthen their arguments,

the M26 and ALC also stressed the rational need of such change. In this way, they exploited the political uses soft power could bring in Western dominated modern world that awkwardly tried to restore its balance after the 1945.

### *2.3. Political legitimacy from a moral perspective: historical compensation*

First, the M26 and ALC underlined the moral need to grant the primary victims of the cruel past an influential role in the ideological stipulation of the (bio)political terms ought to rectify this distortion of modernity's promises. Pouring some extra salt into Europe's wounds, they argued that the need of a revolutionary break with the modern past was felt the most amongst the ones who had been discriminated as inferior 'others'. In the words of the ALC, "the exploited" people "knew the necessity to take a new course that offered sincere space to the manifestation" of "a truly better world (...) in which evolution is directed to constant improvement of all expressions of [natural] existence". As part of these exploited 'others', Cubans were bound by "the good will" and "aspirations" to take this new course and steer the world towards a revolutionary moral direction "with respect for everyone".<sup>161</sup>

Additionally, Raúl Castro continued that the victimized Cuban people felt not just stimulated, but also morally compelled to prevent the past from continuing, wherever they were.<sup>162</sup> Due to their experiences, Cubans could not "remain [passive] witnesses of all the humiliations and cruelties (...) [nor could they] be cowardly to charge the real perpetrators of this".<sup>163</sup> This would not only be unnatural to themselves, but also to the revolutionary (bio)political changes the modern world simply had to undergo in order to restore its legitimacy. Since everyone understood the need of a moral rectification, the readiest way to answer it successfully was to change the guards of the traditionally Western monopolized (bio)political regime of global modernity. Such equalization of the hierarchically structured relations between Western and non-Western people would erase the primary cause of the uncivilized crimes of the past, both movements implicitly hinted. "(...) peace between the exploited and the exploiting" would remain "impossible", which made it logical that such relations of inequality just had to be neutralized at all in order to "present (...) [a] clean history", so the ALC argued.<sup>164</sup> And how

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<sup>161</sup> IISH, ALC, 'Si no nos sobraran razones...'. ;

IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores de Cuba!'

<sup>162</sup> Castro Ruz, 'Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.', 11 and 44.

<sup>163</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 2, Raúl Castro, Transcendental Mensaje de Raul Castro a la Juventud Cubana y Mundial.

<sup>164</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores de Cuba!'

could the exploited better be rehabilitated in his dignity then by compensating his historical exclusion and putting him in charge of the (bio)political regime of the post-1945 modern world?

#### *2.4. Political legitimacy from a rational perspective: the laws of history and discourse*

Moreover, and secondly, the need of such change of power was actually not just a matter of nobleness or moral compensation for the barbarian past. Instead, also from a rational perspective on the laws of history and discourse, it seemed the only solution to the friction between modernity's theory and reality. These laws made it simply impossible for someone of the exploiting world to effectuate this rectification. Even if he would want to shake off his exploitative and arrogant mentality that underlay the barbarian past, he would not be able to, because this mentality also ruled his whole conception of normality.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, the ALC explained that it was an "illusion"; "a childish faith" to think that the exploiting "wolves" of the past could effectuate such "rectifying effort that cleans up the public life of the past". These wolves might hide their true identities and interests under different political ideologies, but "history [had] taught" the "unguilty" Cuba that, eventually, they all kept being "driven solely by self-interest".<sup>166</sup> History had shown how "the most precious and noble of (...) the human personality" had been betrayed with "devilish incantation". Instead of justice and reason, Europe's modernity had created "resentful societies (...) like those ruling in Germany under Hitler, in Italy under Mussolini [and] like those that rule in the nations crushed under the weight of the militarized machine of the hammer and sickle".<sup>167</sup>

Moreover, if one thought it would be enough to depose nationalist West Europe from the throne of the (bio)political regime of global modernity then he was wrong. In fact, the exploitative and arrogant mentality of the modern past lived through in "the imperialists on Wall Street (...) [and] the communism of Stalin", the ALC warned.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, "one should not be surprised" if the barbarian repression of 'others' who did not fit with the exclusive biopolitical definition of modern nature- whether for reasons of politico-economic or

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<sup>165</sup> IISH, ALC, 'No hay que asombrarse...'. ;

IISH, Amsterdam, Asociación Libertaria de Cuba, '¿Y esa es la historia?', *El Libertario: organo de la Ass. libertaria de Cuba*, November 1952.

<sup>166</sup> IISH, ALC, 'No hay que asombrarse...'. ;

<sup>167</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, '¡Trabajadores de Cuba!'. ;

<sup>168</sup> IISH, ALC, 'No hay que asombrarse...'. ;

biological ‘science’ - would continue so long as such self-interested people continued to be in charge of global modernity. This made it not only stupid but also unfair to expect them to undergo “an impossible metamorphose” into sincere “servants” of modernity, the ALC concluded.<sup>169</sup>

Agreeing with this logic of discourse, the M26 continued that the old “reactionary” guard would always remain paralyzed by “counterrevolutionary fever”, which would prevent it from breaking with its barbarian habits. For a while, perhaps, these people of the ‘old world’ might “pretend to be in favor of (...) revolutionary” sincere modernity. Yet when it came to the crunch, they all would inevitably betray their true reactionary nature and obstruct every prospect of change with “false interests that actually serve the big privileges” and “the continuation of the past”.<sup>170</sup> This meant that the key to a ‘revolutionary’ sincere modern future could not be found with “the democratic-capitalist powers (...) [that defended] the present system of social exploitation’ nor with ‘the other part consisting of the powers of the new state capitalism of the red fascism”, the ALC and M26 both stressed.<sup>171</sup> Instead, history showed that it belonged to the historical ‘others’, who had been excluded from the (bio)political identity of pre-1945 ‘normality’ and thus could see and challenge the disciplining norms behind the exclusion structures upholding it. In other words, following the laws of history and discourse, only the excluded ‘others’ could “save (...) [all] human nature of the terrible threat hanging today above its head”, the ALC summarized.<sup>172</sup>

Thus, if the global wish to save the (bio)political legitimacy of modernity through a process of rationalization and moralization was real, then it was time for the West to confer its leadership to the exploited and excluded ‘other’. With its rational and moral ‘nature’, the Cuban people would be a logical choice from both a moral and rational viewpoint. In the end, Cubans had the historical innocence, the discursive outsider position, and the natural reason and “good will” that were all needed to “see clearly” the (im)material remainders of Europe’s version of modernity and replace them with ‘revolutionary’ sincere modernity.<sup>173</sup> In other words, Cubans met all the conditions of the political legitimacy the M26 and ALC considered

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<sup>169</sup> IISH, ALC, ‘No hay que asombrarse...’.

<sup>170</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 11, 12, 19, and 22.

<sup>171</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores!’.

<sup>172</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>173</sup> IISH, ALC, ‘Si no nos sobraran razones...’ ;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10.

necessary in order to fill the empty leadership seat in the (bio)political regime of global modernity.

### *2.5. The meaning of the Cuban Revolution*

Of course, the ALC explained, with political legitimacy came also the political responsibility to face the “historical reality” and no longer believe in the “lying distortions” of modernity’s original promises.<sup>174</sup> As people who could see the historical and social relativeness and plasticity of norms that, amongst the ones within the dominant discourse of normality seemed absolute, they were obliged to open their eyes.<sup>175</sup> In line with this, the M26 and ALC considered the Cuban Revolution not as a random event that was primarily concerned with the erasure of history in Cuba. Instead, in the words of the ALC, it should be seen as the first sign of “the liberating movement of the people” who were “installed to break through (...) [the] chains” of the past that were established and still upheld by the “discredited flags”.<sup>176</sup> In the same line, Raúl Castro continued that “in Cuba we fight not only for (...) the exclusive well-being of the adored island that enlightens and strengthens us with its simple name”. Instead, the Cuban Revolution was about “the welfare to live a good life [according to modern standards] for everyone”.<sup>177</sup> Comparing Cubans with the French and Roman revolutionaries, the M26 stressed that the Cuban people personified the “common denominator” of the conditions needed for replacing the irrational and immoral past with a ‘revolutionary’ sincere modern world.<sup>178</sup>

### **3) Conclusion**

Thus, with their historicized rational and moral ‘organic’ society, the M26 and ALC interacted directly with the international context of the post-1945 power vacuum in the (bio)political regime of global modernity. Whereas their rational and moral ‘organic’ society at first sight seemed to serve the goal of extending the geographical boundaries of the global modern civilization, a second glance at its embedding in history teaches that Cuba’s revolutionaries actually aimed for something bigger. By internalizing Cubans’ historical

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<sup>174</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.

<sup>175</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>176</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores!’.

<sup>177</sup> IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 2, Raúl Castro, Transcendental Mensaje de Raul Castro a la Juventud Cubana y Mundial.;

Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 19.

<sup>178</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 19. ;  
Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’.



position as the non-European 'other' and stressing the historical discredit of Europe's (bio)political version of modernity, they painfully singled out the latent global consciousness that the modern world in its traditional unequal shape would never regain the (bio)political legitimacy and, with that, disciplining and normalizing power it had before 1945.

Understanding this, the M26 and ALC skillfully exploited the profits soft power could bring in a post-1945 world, united by formal resentment against the crimes of the recent past that had been perpetrated through the use of hard power. With this, they made an unprecedentedly believable Southern bid for ideological control over the future (bio)political regulation of global modernity, its civilization, and the conditions of development.

### **Conclusion: the biopolitical propaganda strategy of the ‘organic’ society in historical perspective**

This thesis has analyzed the historical meaning of the biopolitical propaganda strategies characterizing Cuba’s discursive road to ‘revolutionary’ modernity in the 1950s, as represented by the M26 and ALC. Through the instrumentalization of Cubans’ undeniable historical innocence, the M26 and ALC had argued that Cubans were by ‘nature’ united in a bigger historical collectivity; an ‘organic’ society that presented the natural yet political counterpart of its historical repressor. Whether calling it “seeing clearly” and “moral omnipotence” or the “absolute conviction” of “historical reality” and “moral authority”, both movements agreed that this ‘organic’ society united and distinguished Cubans by their natural rationality and morality.<sup>179</sup>

In spite of this, Cuba’s (historical) reality could not be called very rational nor moral. This friction between Cubans’ inside ‘nature’ and outside reality was caused by the fact that Cubans had been alienated from their true identities. Through lies and structural discrimination, they had been transformed into insignificant or even inferior people who ignorantly obeyed to their continuing repression. To help them overcome the exploitative tentacles of history, the M26 and ALC took it as their responsibility to guide every Cuban in the process of rediscovering, liberating, and reviving their ‘nature’. This resulted in the (discursive) absorption of every Cuban individual into the homogenizing image of the rational and moral ‘organic’ society that was said to epitomize the revival of Cuban ‘nature’ but rather embodied its politicization.

With this politicizing of individual being and identity, the M26 and ALC also sent in a good cross to finish their biopolitical ambitions with “the politicization of everyday life” that characterized the Cold War in Latin America.<sup>180</sup> Heading this cross in, both movements continued that it would be ‘normal’ for the rational and moral Cuban to join the Revolution that aimed to rectify the irrational and immoral past. Accordingly, while naturalizing the Revolution, the M26 and ALC politicized the sphere of everyday life.

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<sup>179</sup> Castro Ruz, ‘Speech at the opening of the X National Labor Congress of the C.T.C.’, 10; Castro Ruz, ‘Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz at the Garden Room in New York’. ; IISH, ALC, ‘No debemos ir al caos’.; IISH, COLL00217, inventory number 6, ALC, ‘¡Trabajadores de Cuba!’.; IISH, ALC, ‘Repudiara el pueblo la farsa electorera’.

<sup>180</sup> Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 7 and 17. ;

*The 'organic' society in its international context*

However, the political function of the 'organic' society extended Cuba's national borders. Besides activating Cubans to their political preferences, the M26 and ALC also interacted directly with the global Cold War competition for ideological control of the post-1945 (bio)political definition of 'modernity', its 'civilization', and 'development'. Having witnessed two world wars and the systematic (neo-)colonial exploitation of the non-Western world, most people in all hemispheres agreed at least on paper that Europe's nationalist (bio)political version of modernity had failed in fulfilling the original promises of reason and moral justice. This realization triggered a global rise of alternative ideologies of modernity, all claiming to provide the solution for the friction between modernity's 18<sup>th</sup>-century promises and its 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century (bio)political reality.

Amongst these alternatives were the discourses of the M26 and ALC. With their rational and moral 'organic' society, both movements actively engaged in the global ideological competition that laid the foundations of the Cold War period. Understanding that the discredit of the West's legitimacy to dominate the (bio)political regime of global modernity was no longer a non-Western issue only, the M26 and ALC internalized Cuba's historical position as the non-European 'other' and transformed it into a sign of Cubans' rational and moral superiority over the European authors of the cruel past. With this, they capitalized on the sore spot of the West that was reluctantly to give in to the latent yet unescapable knowledge that the task to rescue the political legitimacy of the modern world required a drastic elimination of its exclusion structures that had favored the West at the cost of the non-Western world. In this way, the M26 and ALC seized a well-timed moment to present themselves as legitimate candidates for the proverbial vacancy to replace Europe as the (bio)political leader of global modernity.

*The historical meaning of the Cuban Revolution: exceptional or not?*

The conclusion that the M26 and ALC actively participated in the global competition for ideological control of the (bio)political terms of post-1945 modernity has consequences for the often-heard "thesis of Cuban exceptionality" in Cold War historiography.<sup>181</sup> To be short about this: the biopolitical discourses of the M26 and ALC were *not* exceptional, but instead

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<sup>181</sup> Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 21 and 22.; Gillespie, *Cuba After Thirty Years*, 3 and 4.

meaningful products of their historical contexts. First, by weaving their discourses of ‘revolutionary’ modernity round a politicized definition of Cuban ‘nature’, they provided a classic example of how the Cold War expressed itself in Latin America as a crucial period for the construction of post-colonial modernity. As in every construction of ‘modernity’, this went inevitably together with the politicization of individual being and “everyday life”.<sup>182</sup> With regard to Cuba, this inevitability was even strengthened by the cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic divisions that plagued the island since its (neo-)colonial history.<sup>183</sup>

Additionally, their biopolitical construction of the rational and moral ‘organic’ society reflects that the M26 and ALC were aware of the fall of Europe’s version of modernity. Moreover, by embedding this construction in a black-and-white narrative of history, they proved to be not only aware of this unprecedented theoretical opening for non-Western voices but also willingly to exploit it to the utmost limit. Although the normative strength of the image of the ‘organic’ society might, at least with respect to the M26, have resulted in an ‘exceptional’ mass support for the Cuban Revolution, in discursive terms it was just one of the many (bio)political ideologies of modernity that arose globally on the ashes of West European modernity.

Taken this all together, this thesis calls attention to the need to see the Cuban Revolution in the broader light of Southern participation in the Cold War. Rather than being at the mercy of the whims of either the U.S. or U.S.S.R., Southern modernizers played an underestimated role in the global ideological search for the (bio)political terms of the post-1945 modern world. This role deserves more attention. Further research would therefore be useful to other non-Western (bio)political discourses of modernity that claimed to provide the answer to the post-1945 legitimacy collapse of global modernity. This will not only enrich the historiography of the Cold War by moving the focus away from the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., but it can also create awareness of the plural (bio)political character of modernity in general.

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<sup>182</sup> Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 7 and 17. ;  
 Hager, ‘The Cold War and Third World Revolution’, 51.;  
 Joseph, ‘What We Now Know and Should Know’, 4.;  
 Rachel Adams, ‘Michel Foucault: Biopolitics and Biopower’ (version May 10, 2017),  
<https://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/05/10/michel-foucault-biopolitics-biopower/> (January 14, 2021).;  
 Annette Gough, ‘Searching for a crack to let environment light in: ecological biopolitics and education for sustainable development discourses’, *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 12 (2017) 4, 889-905, there 889 and 891.

<sup>183</sup> This division probably applies to other post-colonial states on the Latin American continent as well.

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