



CONVIVENCIA

CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS

...pensando Cuba

EL CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS CONVIVENCIA (CEC)

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I. INTRODUCTION

- **Cuba's reality in context**

The change in era that the world as a whole is going through due to the fourth industrial revolution is characterized by globalization processes and the use of new technologies in the areas of information and communications, leading to a greater awareness of the global village and links of solidarity among members of the community of nations.

Another facet of this era which shows a less agreeable, and at times lamentable aspect, is the loss of regional cultures due to transnational banalization and the growth of individualism while at the same time the loss of the human face amidst depersonalizing mass production.

To this is added the political disruption occasioned, among other reasons, by the lack of credibility in the political class; professionalization without true vocation in those that should be public servants; generalized corruption and populism of various types; extreme pragmatism without a modicum of ethics; the indiscriminate repetition of economic and social models and formulas not keeping in mind different cultures, local reality, civic and political illiteracy and in some cases the anthropological damage visited by recidivist totalitarianism or by Messianic populism.

All these circumstances and an information avalanche, sprinkled with fake news and amplified by social media lacking ontological discernment, has occasioned, at the same time, the highest level of intercommunication in the human family, an increase in existential disorientation and lack of sense, uncertainty about the future, disrespectfulness for the dignity and rights of the human being, and of the sovereignty of the citizen, together with dispersion in processes, lack of coordination and good governance in the media and lack or poor strategic solutions to the current crisis that revisits all latitudes.

- **Importance of think tanks in Cuba and in the rest of the world**

Keeping in mind this concise analysis of our realities, we can find more than sufficient reasons to assess the importance of *think tanks*. Today, more than ever, think tanks are very important both for the political community as well as for civil society.

Cuba, in addition to being part of the change of era happening in the world is also experiencing a generational change in leadership, and a communicational change too despite the slow yet efficient use by

the population of social media and the new information and communication technologies (TICs), and a gradual awareness by the citizenry about the irreversible fatigue of the economic and political system now exacerbated by the economic crisis and external pressures.

For all these reasons, a group of Cubans emerged and trained in the midst of the Catholic Church first realized the urgent need to create a think tank independent from the State, the Church, and political opposition leaders of various ideologies, in order to be able to serve all of them with the following services which respond to the increasing need to seek exit ramps, peruse the international horizon and to assess our existing weaknesses, strengths and opportunities in Cuba today.

Think tanks are even more necessary due to the fact that institutes of thought existing since 60 years ago respond to a totalitarian ideology in decadence, still controlled and directed by the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), the one party as stipulated in the current Constitution as follows: “The Communist Party of Cuba, sole, Martí-like, Fidel-like, Marxist and Leninist, organized vanguard of the Cuban nation, sustained in its democratic character and by the permanent relationship with the people, is the directing and superior political force of society and the State.”

This one-party system and excluding ideology has been imposed in such a manner that even the Constitution establishes that “The socialist system, which informs this Constitution, is irrevocable. Citizens have the right to fight by all means, included armed struggle, when no other recourse is available, against anyone who tries to do away with the political, social and economic order established by this Constitution.”

In this type of system in a stage of fatigue and slow transformation, first cosmetic which will later become necessarily structural, think tanks take on an exceptional importance. This goes as far as having the authorities themselves asking Cubans to “think like a country,” to “think Cuba.” For more than a decade our think tank has been exercising, in an independent, inclusive and pluralistic way this service to generate vision, thought and strategic prospection, and for more than five years we have commenced as well, much earlier than the call from the government, a process of thought creation which we have labeled “Itinerary of Thought and Proposals for Cuba.”

In this way we try to contribute, from an alternative space, in the search for solutions for Cuba which finds itself in an unresolved labyrinth between attempts by the Government to extend the continuation of the decadent totalitarian system and strengths of the growing civil society which is gradually awakened and empowered by the new TICs and the mobility provided by social media.

And so we have entitled our latest book published in conjunction with publishers Ediciones Convivencia and Editorial Hypermedia (available in Amazon): *Cuba busca una salida* (Cuba seeks a solution).

In the prologue of this publication, which gathers the first six Reports of Strategic Prospection by CEC, I wrote this simile between the labyrinth of Cuba and the search for a way out from Carroll’s “children’s tale”:

— *“Cheshire Cat —Alice began timidly, since she was not entirely sure if he would like this treatment: but the Cat did nothing more than to widen his smile, reason why Alice decided he indeed liked it.*

—*Which road do I take? she asked.*

—*Where do you want to go? — was his response.*

—*I don’t know...—Alice answered.*

Then, said the Cat— it doesn’t matter.”

Cuba, in its current labyrinth of uncertainties, is akin to the situation of uncertainty by Alice in the thick of the forest. She wants to get out of there but doesn't care much in which direction.

Wisdom, which only smiles at those that lack it, warns her in anticipation in the voice of the cat that the way out depends on where you want to get to.

Martí said: "To think is to anticipate." "In prevention lies the art of salvation." "To lead is to foresee." "Making provisions is the essential quality for the constitution and government of the people."

Reason why the Centro de Estudios Convivencia (CEC) (Center of Coexistence Studies), an independent think tank located in Pinar del Río, Cuba, which conducts its studies on the two lungs of the single Cuban nation: Island and Diaspora, has desired to conduct an "Itinerary of Thought and Proposals for the Future of Cuba" aimed at foreseeing and proposing a public discussion, a vision of the future where we would like to get with everyone together, so as to not fall again in the improvisations and experiments of the past, and so as to find pluralistic and peaceful paths to reach such a democratic, prosperous and happy future.

- **The case of a think tank in closed systems: the CEC**

Following I present to you what is the Center for Coexistence Studies, from the hinterland of Cuba, what is our vision of the Country, and of our think tank, what are our objectives, lines of work and some of the results so far obtained. The mere existence of a thought and strategic prospecting laboratory inside Cuba and in its Diaspora, is an example of what can be done, even under the most difficult circumstances, which demonstrates the valor and currency of the following vision by President Vaclav Havel, another of the guiding lights of our think tank:

"...even under Communist domination, there was already, to a significant degree, a civil society in a restrictive mode, which needed to be given the opportunity to exert pressure, and to advance towards the establishment or a civil society in its widest sense of the word... In Poland it was the Church and the labor unions that defended these proposals; in Hungary these emerged initially by means of the development that was called the second economy; in Czechoslovakia they defended themselves mainly in the domain of public debate and cultural dissidence... All these experiences, lived in different countries, demonstrated the viability of alternative institutions, organizations, networks and social movements (such as churches, labor unions, dissident networks, etc.)... These practical demonstrations took place during a prolonged period of time... and paved the way... of what ended up happening at the end of the 1980s when a vent opened up, a window of opportunity, on account of the incompetency or lack of will of the leaders of the States and of the Marxist parties to employ violence against their own populations."

This is what we do at the CEC: "pave the way."

II. THE CENTER FOR COEXISTENCE STUDIES (CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS CONVIVENCIA, CEC) CUBA.

WHAT ARE WE:

The **Center for Coexistence Studies (Centro de Estudios Convivencia, CEC)** is a **pluralistic, inclusive, independent, non-partisan, non-profit space**, of Cuban civil society, which tries to **inspire, create and divulge ideas and solutions through its studies on strategic prospecting and ethical and civic training initiatives.**

The CEC is a **center for thought and proposals** (*think tank*) made up of citizens from various

philosophical, political and religious points of view interested in debating ideas, conducting studies and proposing solutions regarding aspects of life in our country, with the goal of contributing to increasingly incorporating more and more Cubans to be informed, committed and contributing to the improvement of the nation and to its integration in the world.

The CEC intends to **contribute to the unity in diversity of the Cuban nation** building bridges of coexistence, study and cooperation between the two lungs: the Island and its Diaspora.

CEC **spreads its ideas and constructive proposals** by means of its digital journal *Convivencia*, workshops, gatherings for systematic study, through novel cyber technologies (TICs), social media, and especially, publishing the results of its research on its website: www.centroconvivencia.org

WHERE WE COME FROM:

We consider ourselves inheritors of what can be identified as the first root of an institution of thought and political foresight in the history of Cuba, emerging from the midst of the Catholic Church, in other times of oppression and need for liberation and future vision. When inaugurating the first chair of ethical and civic education in the History of Cuba at the San Carlos and San Ambrosio Seminary in Havana, Father Félix Varela, the one that “first taught us (Cubans) to think”, defined what, in our opinion, should be ethical and civic education today and in the future in Cuba.

“I would call this chair, the chair of liberty, of the rights of man, of national guarantees... the source of civic virtues, the foundation of the great building of our happiness”...and in another place he says: “It is about training men of conscience and not charlatans of society... men which are not arrogant with the weak, or weak with the powerful.”

Inspired by these roots, we have more than 25 years of experience and systematic work. We are the inheritors and legacy workers of the extinct Centro de Formación Cívica y Religiosa (CFCR) (1993-2007) and its journal *Vitral-la libertad de la luz* (1994-2007). We followed up with the “Itinerary of Thought and Proposals for Cuba” begun by the CFR in 2005 some 15 years ago.

OUR INSPIRATIONAL SOURCES ARE:

- III. The Christian-inspired Humanism of Jaques Maritain.
- IV. The nation-building project of Félix Varela and José Martí, our founding fathers.
- V. The community and brotherly personalism of Emmanuel Mounier and Paul Ricoeur.
- VI. The liberating and conscience-building education of Varela, José de la Luz and Paulo Freire.
- VII. An inclusive, pluralistic, participatory and open-to-the-world society.
- VIII. A State based on the rule of law, secular, democratic, with strong institutions.
- IX. A social market economy tending to a welfare state.
- X. We believe that “There is no fatherland without virtue,” as stated by Father Félix Varela.
- XI. We believe in “human improvement, future life and the utility of virtue,” as Martí believed.
- XII. We believe in “the formula of triumphal love: With all and for the good of all” of José Martí.

- XIII. We wish “that the foremost law of the republic be the worship by Cubans of the full dignity of man” as posited by José Martí.

THE VISION OF THE CEC:

- XIV. Let CEC be a laboratory for thought, strategic prospecting and a school of ethical and civic education, with efficacy and efficiency working towards a quality democracy, good governance and holistic human development by seeking the common good among all Cubans in the Island and in the Diaspora.
- XV. Let CEC serve Cuba supplying pluralistic and inclusive thought, to contribute to consensus building based on an ethical modicum that can impact positively on the public debate, by means of the media and the TICs, with viable, fair and sustainable proposals.
- XVI. Let CEC achieve the goal of gathering and including thinkers, scholars and experts respecting the diversity of philosophies and creeds, the plurality of political points of view and schools of economic thought, keeping as a principle unity in diversity and the primacy of the dignity of any individual to his or her harmonious, holistic and social development.
- XVII. Let the CEC achieve the goal of integrating and participating in the international community of think tanks, universities and other research institutions to update their academic levels, exchange research and work towards the opening of Cuba in relating and integrating Cuba with the community of nations.

OUR VISION ABOUT CUBA:

To contribute with our work, from Cuba, with its two lungs Island and Diaspora:

- XVIII. Let Cuba be a free and prosperous Nation in which we can *heal the anthropological damage caused by totalitarianism so as to advance towards a holistic human development* in a just, harmonious, peaceful and participatory society, built upon the four pillars of the founding fathers Varela and Martí: Truth, Virtue, Love and the primacy and full dignity of the human person.
- XIX. Let Cuba cultivate an *education for liberty and responsibility* that may overcome our ethical and civic illiteracy, which may teach us to think by ourselves, with critical awareness and for the exercise of citizen sovereignty, involved in dialogue and solidarity.
- XX. Let Cuba reach “with all and for the good of all” a brotherly coexistence, inclusive and laborious, that may allow us to *reconstruct the multi-colored tapestry of Cuban civil society*, a new name and protagonist of a quality democracy, for good governance and a fair integration into the international community.

THE MISSION OF THE CEC:

To create pluralistic thought and strategic prospecting, to offer ethical and civic education, to generate proposals for peaceful solutions and public debate, with Cubans on the Island and on the Diaspora, to foment inclusion, freedom of expression, citizen participation, social justice and a quality democracy in the present and in the future of Cuba, by means of educational processes, thought workshops and the use of media, new information technologies and social media.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CEC:

- XXI. To organize workshops and classes in ethics and civics, with 14 courses in our own textbook *Ética y Cívica* (2014) and others.

- XXII. To organize meetings with scholars, professionals and experts located in Cuba and in the Diaspora, to generate thoughts and to formulate and debate visions and proposals for short-, mid- and long-term solutions, from the starting point of economic, political and social challenges of the country, as an exercise of strategic prospection.
- XXIII. To make use of the media, the new TICs and social media to spread this thought, especially by means of our bi-monthly journal, its weekly Newsletter and its daily columns on Cuban topics.
- XXIV. To put into practice our visions, reports and proposals for micro-projects which may, in a small scale, experiment with what we are positing for our country.

XXV. LINES OF WORK OF THE CEC:

1. A roadmap of thoughts and proposals for Cuba (*think tank*) establishing relationships with universities and think tanks. (www.centroconvivencia.org/propuestas)
2. A program of Ethical and Civic Education by means of 14 courses for citizenship training with our own textbook: *Ética y Cívica: Aprendiendo a ser persona y a vivir en sociedad* (Ethics and Civics: learning to be person and to live in society (www.centroconvivencia.org/cursos))
3. The publication of a though journal entitled *Convivencia*, already with 72 issues, a weekly newsletter and a daily column (www.centroconvivencia.org/revista)
4. Consensus building and the promotion of micro-projects that correspond with our objective. (www.centroconvivencia.org/microproyectos)

RESULTS OF THE ITINERARY OF THOUGHT AND PROPOSALS FOR CUBA

Our work of strategic prospection for Cuba has produced the following reports:

- Informe I: “La economía cubana a corto, mediano y largo plazo: visión y propuestas”. (Report I: The Cuban economy short-, medium- and long-term: vision and proposals)
- Informe II: “Tránsito constitucional y marco jurídico complementario: visión y propuestas”. (Report II: Constitutional transition and complementary legal framework: vision and proposals)
- Informe III: “La cultura cubana: visión y propuestas”. (Report III: Cuban culture, vision and proposals)
- Informe IV: “La educación en el futuro de Cuba: visión y propuestas”. (Report IV: Education in the future of Cuba: vision and proposals)
- Informe V: “La agricultura en el futuro de Cuba: visión y propuestas”. (Report V: Agriculture in the future of Cuba)
- Informe VI: “Los Medios de Comunicación Social y Nuevas Tecnologías: visión y propuestas”. (Report VI: Social media and new technologies: vision and proposals)
- Informe VII: “Ética, Política y Religión en el futuro de Cuba: visión y propuestas”. (Report VII: Ethics, Politics and Religion in the future of Cuba: vision and proposals)
- Informe VIII: “Gobernabilidad y Gobernanza en el futuro de Cuba: visión y propuestas”. (Report VIII: Governability and governance in the future of Cuba: vision and proposals)

These reports are available in: www.centroconvivencia.org/propuestas

OUR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

XXVI. With the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria (UFV) MADRID, SPAIN. At the UFV we have created through a cooperation agreement the Centro España-Cuba “Félix Varela”(CFV) Available at <https://ipi-ufv.com/centro-espana-cuba-felix-varela/>

XXVII. With the Universidad Sergio Arboleda (USA) BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA.

XXVIII. With the University of Pennsylvania (UP), PENNSYLVANNIA, UNITED STATES in its Think Tanks and Civil Society Program (TTCSP), of the Lauder Institute, UPenn

XXIX. With the Real Instituto Elcano (RIE) MADRID, SPAIN.

You can meet the BOARD OF DIRECTORS and the ACADEMIC COUNCIL of the CEC at www.centroconvivencia.org/nosotros