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Discursive Contentions and Legal Repression in Authoritarian Regimes: Stories of Revolutionary Cuba, 1952-1958.

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Discursive Contentions and Legal Repression in Authoritarian Regimes:
Stories of Revolutionary Cuba, 1952-1958.

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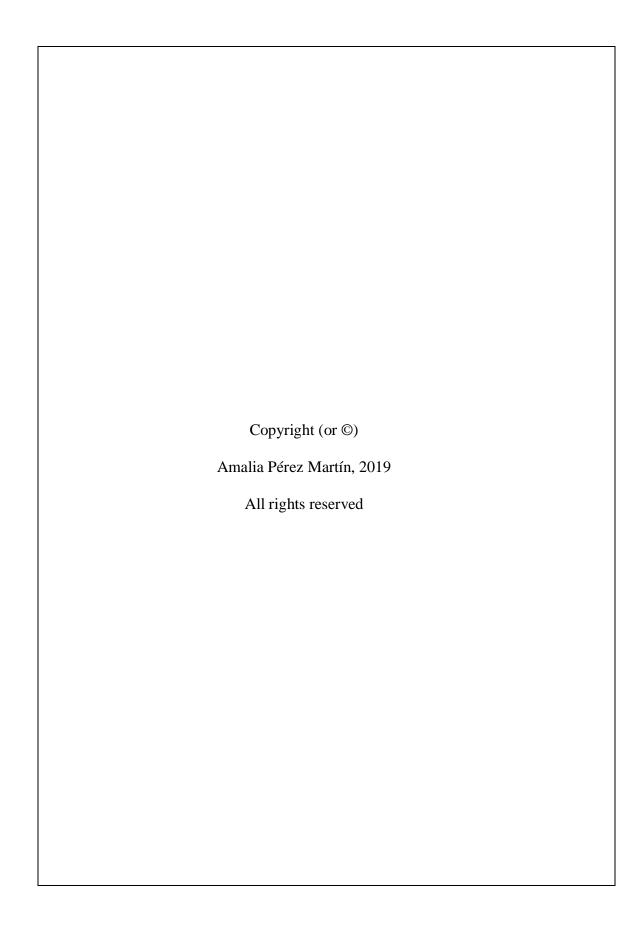for the degree of Master of Arts/Master of Science

In

Sociology

by

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ABSTRACT

Popular understandings of the 1959 Cuban Revolution have often explained it as the outcome of the armed insurgency guided by Fidel Castro. Scholars have overlooked the role in the revolutionary triumph of the long-term clandestine resistance against Fulgencio Batista's authoritarian regime. To address this gap, I utilize longitudinal archival data, which include police and judicial records of the criminal prosecution of political activism occurring from 1952 to 1958 in Havana. Drawing on content analysis and historical comparison, I examine how frames and narratives used by the protesters and the state varied over time. I focus particular attention on the impact of their cultural and socio-political context. My findings suggest similarities and differences in the discursive strategies of these actors across seven years while highlighting that a particular revolutionary identity was built through the discursive contentions that occurred in legal settings. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how framing interactions can lead to successful revolutionary mobilizations in authoritarian environments and the overlaps between social movements and revolutions. Moreover, through the examination of the criminal prosecution as a complex site of repression and contention, I advance a socio-legal comprehension of the Cuban revolution.

INTRODUCTION

"Did I tell you that I bought one sack of rice for the fifteen men I had hidden at home that day of the strike?" These were my grandfather's words in our recent phone call conversation. He was trying to make sure that this detail doesn't get lost in my understanding of his involvement as a clandestine fighter against Batista, the dictator of the 1950s in Cuba. My grandfather later confessed that he usually goes to bed thinking about the facts he might have forgotten to mention. My grandpa has an urgency *to tell* the stories of *his* revolution.

Popular understandings of the 1959 Cuban Revolution have explained the revolutionary outcome as the unique product of the military insurgency guided by Fidel Castro in the *Sierra Maestra* mountains of Eastern Cuba; what Eric Selbin (Selbin & Eric, 2013) calls "the myth of *La Sierra*." Certainly, while some studies have focus on the emergence and growing strength of the 26th of July Revolutionary Movement relative to other urban opposition groups (Pérez-Stable, 1993; Farber, 1976, 2006; Pérez, 2006; Sweig, 2002), most of the times these historians as well as scholars of social movements and revolutions (Goodwin, 2001) reproduce this "myth" by overlooking the particular role in the revolutionary triumph of the long-term clandestine resistance developed from 1952 to 1958 against General Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar's authoritarian regime. These accounts silence multiple stories of resistance, like those of my grandfather.

I propose to address this gap by using some strands of the social movement literature such as framing (Snow, D. A., Vliegenthart, & Ketelaars, 2018) and narrative analyses (Polletta, 1998; Gardner & Polletta, 2015), and studies on resistance in authoritarian regimes (Scott, 1985; Almeida, 2003; Johnston, 2005, 2006; Foran, 1997). Moreover, the Cuban case provides a suita ble scenario for the examination of overlaps and similarities between social movements and revolutions (Goldstone 1998; Selbin 2010), and on the issue of how some social movements morph into revolutionary efforts to change regimes (Almeida, 2008; Goldstone & Ritter, 2018).

Drawing on content analysis of police and judicial records of political activism occurring from 1952 to 1958 in Havana and through the historical comparison of cases from before (n=32) and after (n=28) the formal creation in 1955 of the 26th of July Movement (MR-26-7), I examine how frames and narratives of resistance from protesters and the state authorities changed over time during Batista's dictatorship in Cuba. Moreover, I show how these discursive contentions contributed to the formation of a collective revolutionary identity (Margaret R. Somers, 1994; Taylor & Whittier, 1992; Hunt & Bedford, 1994; Gould, 1995).

THEORETICAL APPROACH

This research engages with three main areas of collective action studies: 1) movement framing and narrative analyses, 2) storytelling of revolutions, 3) resistance and legal repression in authoritarian regimes. I bring these relatively unrelated perspectives

together to explain the narrative production of a collective revolutionary identity as a key factor of the revolutionary outcomes in Cuba.

Movements-State Discursive Contentions

In contrast with the resource mobilization and political process traditions in social movement analysis, the movement framing perspective emphasizes the importance of cultural factors in political activism. It includes *collective action frames* (Snow et al., 1986; Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992; Snow et al., 2018) and other cultural strands such as "stories" and "narratives" (Polletta, 1998a; Davis, 2002). These concepts help to explain the emergence and development of social movements, as well as the emerging and reinforcing processes of oppositional consciousness (Morris & Braine, 2001) and collective identity (Polletta, 1998a).

Collective action frames are the resultant products of framing activities within the social movement arena (Snow et al., 2018), they are sets of beliefs that "assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support and to demobilize antagonists" (Snow & Benford, 1992: 198). The framing processes encompass three core framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational (Snow & Benford, 1988; Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2018).

Despite the significant attention that the framing scholarship has received since the publication of the seminal work of Snow et al. (1986), this scholarship has failed to systematically analyze the dynamic and dialectical interplay between protagonists and their opponents. In this sense, Benford & Hunt (2003) have offered one of the most elaborated interactionist perspectives on movement framing, what others previously called "competitive framing process" (McCaffrey & Keys, 2000). Framing interactions involve other categories of frames such as *state counter-frames* and *movement re-frames* (Benford, 1987; Zuo & Benford, 1995; Benford & Hunt, 2003).

From their view, meaning is always in a state of becoming through the dramatic interplay between protagonists and antagonists (Benford & Hunt, 1992; Benford & Hunt, 2003). The latter can take the form of organized opposition, hostile institutions, social control agents, targets of change, and different forms of adversaries. Antagonists attempt "to rebut, undermine, or neutralize a person's or groups myths, versions of reality, or interpretative framework" through *counter-frames* (Benford, 1987: 75). In the present study, antagonists take the form of state agents acting as members of regular police forces, intelligence corps, and the criminal justice system.

There are some basic ways in which state opponents attack movements through counter-framing: counter-diagnosis (as in problem denials and counter-attributions of blame or causality), counter-prognoses, and attacks on the character of the movement or its members (Benford & Hunt, 2003). The latter discredits movements and their activists and supporters by impugning their character rather than addressing the substance of their claims. These counter-framings potentially reflect on a protagonist's collective identity and sometimes are associated with identity transformations (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2017).

Movement activists seek to correct or repair these state accusations via subsequent reframing efforts. Thus, *movement reframes* are collective attempts to respond to the

counter-frames of opponents in ways intended to ward off, contain, limit, or reverse potential damage to the movement's previous claims or attributes (Benford & Hunt, 2003). Movement participants do so with re-framing tactics such as ignoring, keying, embracing, distancing, and counter-maligning (ibid.). *Ignoring* refers to a no-response proactive strategy (e.g., deliberated in-action to not legitimize the counter-frame). *Keying* occurs when movements restate counter-frames by giving them new meanings that alter or oppose the original ones. *Embracing* refers to protagonists' acceptance and affirmation of antagonists' identity attributions. *Distancing* entails processes of movements' dissociation from attributed identities they find undesirable. Lastly, *counter-maligning* involves reframing disparaging claims by discrediting or attacking opponents (Benford & Hunt, 2003).

These key interactional framing processes provide a sound basis for understanding the dialectical interplay between antagonists and protagonists. However, while this elaboration fits my data due to the interactive nature of insurgents-state encounters within the repressive legal system, I also highlight relevant distinctions that the Cuban case sheds light on. The state-movements discursive interactions here become a space for collective identity building in a cross-time process of contentious storytelling.

Framing theorists have also incorporated *narratives* -conformed by stories, tales, anecdotes, allegories, and myths- in their discussions of frames (Benford, 1993b; Hunt & Benford, 1994; Fine, 1995; Benford, 2002). For instance, frames are "expressed and made concrete" (Fine, 1995: 134) and "exemplified" (Benford, 1993b: 196) by narratives. In contrast, scholars specializing in movement narratives and storytelling have claimed that subsuming "narrative" under the broader category of "frame" would obscure differences between the two in how they organize and represent reality, their relation to collective identities, how they engage audiences, and their criteria of intelligibility (particularly, Polletta 1998a, 1998b, 2006). However, recent studies have showed how narrative and frame can be deployed simultaneously and perform the same tasks, including collective identity development and external deployment for legal and policy outcomes (Olsen, 2014). In other words, antagonists and protagonists narrate their frames.

In general terms, *narratives* are "storied accounts of happenings that connect the past to the present and to an anticipated future" (Davis, 2002; Polletta et al., 2011; Snow et al., 2018). Studies of social movements storytelling contribute, in particular, to the understanding of recruitment occurring before the consolidation of formal movement organizations -"fledgling movements" (Polletta, 1998b)-, the conditions under which movements withstand defeats and rebound from strategic setbacks, and movements' impacts on mainstream politics (Polletta, 1998b). Moreover, authors have called attention to the "institutional forms of cultural expression" that shape and constrain stories - participant narratives and movement narratives (Benford, 2002)-, particularly in cases of storytelling in institutional contexts such as courts (Polletta et al., 2011, 2012; Benford, 2002).

My research follows these critical insights of the framing literature through the examination of frames and narratives that circulate before and after the formal creation of the MR-26-7 on June 12nd, 1955. Moreover, the Cuban case highlights the importance of micro-mobilization processes of narration under repressive regimes (Johnston, 2006; Viterna, 2013). This case also reveals that it is not only necessary that the frames resonate

with the perceived social realities, daily experiences, and cultural perceptions of the targets of mobilization, they must also effectively neutralize the counter-framings, thus undermining the legitimacy of their rationales for using repressive force against movement participants (Zuo & Benford, 1995). As my data show, states also use stories and engage in storytelling to develop repression (Polletta et al., 2011).

Cultural Context: Storytelling of Revolutions

Social movement scholars have recently highlighted (Goldstone & Ritter, 2018) the necessity of examining the overlaps and similarities between social movements and revolutions, and particularly how some social movements morph into revolutionary efforts to change regimes (Almeida, 2008). In this sense, studies of both revolutions and social movements "require an attempt to describe the framing or cultural narrative that gives meaning to participants' actions. Otherwise their origins cannot be understood" (Goldstone & Ritter, 2018: 685).

This claim is aligned with fourth-generation theories of revolutions (Goldstone, 2001; Foran, 2005; Goldstone, 2009; Selbin, 2013), which have called for a deeper understanding of the cultural and emotional aspects of revolutions. As Reed (2015) argues, this focus on subjectivity also redirected attention to narrative and language and consequently paired with the findings of the aforementioned scholarship on movement storytelling. Particularly, Selbin (2010, 2013) proposes that the crucial factor in explaining how and why revolutionary mobilization persists is the stories of revolution, rebellion, and resistance people tell. Resistance and rebellion are neither necessarily nor even often revolutionary. Yet stories of resistance and/or rebellion contribute to a revolutionary milieu within which revolution begins to seem possible.

The Cuban case has been explained as a Social Revolution (Selbin, 2013; Goodwin, 2001; Foran, 2005, 1997b). I agree that the use of Social Revolution stories helped to legitimize, popularized, and radicalized the revolution, but it also worked as a form of social control by setting the boundaries of a revolutionary identity, as a particular form of collective identity (Benford, 2002; Taylor & Whittier, 1992; Gould, 1995). These boundaries endured, nevertheless, in a continuous and dialogical process of contestation and re-doing. Consequently, I assume a narrative approach to the constitution of collective identity understood as "a shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experience, and solidarity" (Taylor & Whittier, 1992: 105).

Collective identity, as a set of shared meanings, is negotiated and renegotiated though the aforementioned discursive interactions (Hunt & Benford, 2004). By resisting negative definitions imposed by antagonists through reframing tactics, movements sustain and repair discredited collective identities. Drawing on storytelling studies, I argue that negotiations of collective identity also entail disputes over myths, memories, and mimetic adoption and adaptation of pre-existing cultures of mobilization (Nepstad, 2001; Benford, 2002; Polletta & Gardner, 2015; Polletta, 1998b; Foran, 1997a, 2005; Selbin, 2010). Along with these, leaders and activists use elements of the cultural context of movements such as beliefs, language, images, emotions, and artifacts that are available to reinforce their collective identity and mobilize participation and support (Jasper & Polletta, 2018).

Political Context: Resistance and Legal Repression in Authoritarian Regimes

The institutional and cultural settings in which the narrative construction of identities and symbolic systems are embedded (Polletta & Jasper, 2001) are at the same time located in larger systems of domination that structure societies (Morris & Braine, 2001). Hence, in a political context where the public opposition would not be tolerated or the complaints would not be heard or satisfied -as Scott (1985) proposes- the prevailing genre of politics of disenfranchised groups takes the form of *infrapolitics*. This disguised form of politics is "a stratagem deployed by a weaker party in thwarting the claims of an institutional or class opponent who dominates the public exercise of power" (Scott, 1989).

A possible strategy to avoid the trivialization of resisters that some authors have criticized in Scott's notion of *infrapolitics* (Gutmann, 1993) would be advancing beyond binary classifications such as individual and collective, overt and covert, hidden and public, informal and organized action, which produce an inaccurate depiction of protests reality. It is more precise to recognize that these forms of political action –*infrapolitics* and politics- can oscillate and transform into one another as part of "protest waves" or "protest cycles" (Tarrow, 1989) that lead to revolutions. Waves of protests "occur when multiple social movements or social groups engage in sustained protest clustered in time and spanning a wide geographical boundary" (Almeida, 2019: 25) Yet, how these waves of protests "may escalate or radicalize into a revolutionary movement" is still an open question (ibid).

The transition from disguised everyday resistance to overt and violent action in authoritarian regimes (Chen & Moss, 2019) has received several explanations (Davenport, Johnston, & Mueller, 2005). In order to advance our understanding of how both cultural and political contexts impact the radicalization of resistance, I focus on interactive discursive processes that occur in a particular institutional setting, i.e., criminal courts entailed with the prosecution of political activism. The complex contentions that take place in this setting resist the rigid zero-sum representation of the relationships between repression and mobilization (Davenport, Johnston, & Mueller, 2005; Earl, 2003, 2011).

In theoretical terms, legal repression -or legal control of protests- is described as a particular form of state repression (Barkan, 1980, 1984, 2006). In general terms, legal repression refers to the use of the law as a tool for social control (Shriver, Bray, & Adams, 2018). Protest policing, one of the forms of legal repression, can diffuse through institutional avenues such as courts. However, few studies in the fields of social movements and legal sociology have followed the post-arrest experience of protesters through the prosecution of accused protesters (Barkan, 2006; Starr & Fernandez, 2009). Moreover, recent endeavors have highlighted the particularities of legal repression (Shriver, Bray, & Adams, 2018) and political lawyering including invisible everyday work and survival strategies of lawyers to cope with authoritarian settings (van der Vet, 2018).

The study of the criminal prosecution and political lawyering in authoritarian regimes shows that the need to suppress dissent while maintaining state legitimacy does not go away. Thus, as the strategic use of the law by the state opens possibilities but also constraints on repressive efforts, observing discursive strategies in police and court settings becomes crucial for understanding political repression. Similar to previous findings (Noakes, 2000; Cunningham & Browning, 2004), state antagonists in Cuba vilified and

discredited opponents using different discursive strategies, e.g., "revolutionary" and "subversion" frames and narratives. Consequently, this article proves that in repressive environments, state-movement discursive contentions that still take place in legal settings become crucial for the constitutive process of revolutionary identities that ultimately make radical social change possible.

DATA AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Data and Data Sources

I drew from archival data sources to analyze collective action framing associated with the anti-Batista political activism sustained from March 1952 to December 1958 between protesters and repressive state institutions in Cuba. The primary archival data encompass court records from one of the key repressive bodies of this authoritarian regime, namely, *Tribunales de Urgencia.* In particular, I focus on the Havana court which, like similar tribunals in every province of the country, was created during the previous revolutionary wave of the 1930s and responsible for the prosecution of all political actions that took place in the capital. Batista used them "strategically" during his earlier periods of rule (Guerra, 2018) and maintained them after his 1952 military coup. The legislation that defined the exceptional procedures and the institutional organization of these courts suffered multiple changes over the years, resulting from multiple claims of unconstitutionality filed against them. However, the original 1934 decree-laws[1] that created them stayed in force until after the 1959 triumph.

Documents come from several state parties entailed with policing, surveilling, and prosecuting political activism, i.e., regular national police, secret national police, judicial police, military intelligence, the office of the attorney general, which include minutes of arrests, internal correspondence and extensive official reports from state officials describing protesters' activities, their demographic characteristics and political affiliation. Materials also document provisional decisions and final sentencing of protesters as well as specific interactions and interrogations that occurred during the trials.

Moreover, in twenty-five (42%) of the cases the judicial files encompass original activist-produced documents presented as evidence by police and intelligence agents, e.g., propaganda, flyers, newsletters, leaflets, private correspondence of movement actors as well as formal movement correspondence, and minutes of meetings. Court materials also incorporate detailed descriptions of artifacts used by protesters such as books, posters, flags, armbands, weapons, and explosive materials. Movements reframes and narratives can be likewise found through their interactions with the police officers recorded in minutes of the arrests and in their testimonies before the court. In all fragments quoted in this article, I identify the original code of the case and the date in which the court formally registered it. The texts are quoted in Spanish -the original language- and translated by the author in footnotes.

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[1] Decree-law No. 292, June 15th, 1934 and Decree-law No. 491 of September 14th, 1934.

I also drew from the Index of cases issued by the Havana court and preserved in the Cuban National Archive. This Index is a compilation of trials annually from March 1952 to December 1958 totalling 342 pages. Each case is registered with a unique code (consecutive by year) along with a brief description of the actions and the names of alleged offenders. In 2013 a team of eleven members of the Cuban Association of Veterans (a state sponsored NGO) gained institutional support to conduct a search to recover all the listed cases in the Index. They retrieved documents from three different archives: the Cuban National Archive (ANC), the Office for Historical Affairs of the Council of State (OAHCE), and the Cuban Institute of History (IHC). This team was able to recover and compile archival data for around one thousands of political trials.

Using this Index, I conducted a preliminary review of these trials by year and completeness. For the present study I decided to focus on a sample of 60 cases that sum 1,190 pages of archival data. I selected those cases with the most complete judicial files - with documents from the different state institutions and movements- in order to uncover the entire process of the prosecution and capture the most comprehensive discursive interactions regarding anti-Batista activism.

I also drew on other primary data such as testimonies and memoirs written by some of the activists prosecuted or mentioned in these cases. I, furthermore, incorporate secondary data that contain historical accounts of this epoch. These analyses have shown that the vast majority of actors involved in clandestine and openly anti-Batista actions in Havana in the period under study were male, white, with some educational instruction, and young. The sample of protesters in this study is representative of this depiction. Moreover, similar to historical examinations of other provinces of the country (e.g., García-Perez, 1998), according to the Havana court's records the police and the army accused members of several oppositional movements with possession of prohibited weapons and explosives, sabotage and bomb explosions,[2] public disorder such as holding worker and student strikes and demonstrations, producing, publishing and distributing propaganda, leaflets and misleading manifestos against the constitutional government, burning sugarcane fields, creating havoc on private and public property, and conspiracy against the state powers through illicit meetings and military training.

Analytic Strategy

Consistent with narrative immersion in social-historical analysis (Stryker, 1996; Shriver, Bray, & Adams, 2018), I conducted a qualitative examination of the archival materials to delineate patterns of both state and movement frames. Following my theoretical interest in interactive framing process (Benford & Hunt, 2003), I took state actors as the starting point of the discursive contentions and elaborated the interplay between state counter-framing and movement re-framings (see Ayoub (2017) for an application). The initial coding considered the broad trends in the data, including: 1) description of crime/protest event, 2) description of protesters, 3) frame deployer/author, 4) dates of documents and events described, 5) judicial decision recorded, and 6) type of documents included in each case. Additional coding focused on identifying the counter-

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[2] Based on Law No. 5 of November 16th, 1948.

frames deployed by state officials to attack the collective character of the movement or its members (see Shriver, Bray, & Adams (2018) for a similar strategy). Official frames clustered around three types of attacks: 1) vilifications of movements and participants, 2) attacks on movements' motives and 3) attacks on movements' ethics of recruitment.

The following coding focused on five types of movement reframes elicited to respond to the already coded state accusations. Staying close to the original texts, I introduced some variation into Benford & Hunt (2003)'s ideal types by coding the frames as 1) denying and delaying, 2) keying, 3) embracing, 4) distancing, and 5) counter-maligning.

Working along these lines, I conducted a comparative frame analysis (Johnston, 2005) across two different historical periods using a process-focused examination of the discursive interactions expressed across the 60 trials (Snow & Benford, 2005). Hence, while coding counter-frames I identified subcategories within them and registered the number and percentages (relative to the total sample) of mentions by period to give an idea of the frames' generality and variation. Then, I searched movement reframes and repairs connected to those state frames and identify continuities and differences from one period to the other.

The first period (1952-1955) goes from Batista's *coup d'état* to the creation of the MR-26-7 in June 12nd, 1955. The second period (1955-1958) endures until this government was overturned in January 1st, 1959. The socio-historical comparison facilitates analysis of frame variation before and after the movement exists and allows me to examine how institutional, political and cultural contexts shape protesters and state storytelling. By doing so, I am filling a gap in the social movements framing literature regarding the lack of systematic empirical studies across movements and time (Benford, 1997).

THE ANTI-BATISTA RESISTANCE (1952-1958)

A large period (1952-1958) of political struggle and deepening violence preceded the 1959 revolutionary triumph in Cuba. Some scholars concur that the total number of casualties in this period was far lower than the revolutionary government's official report of twenty thousand. Around two or three thousand deaths have been presented as a more reasonable number (Chase, 2010). Those deaths were concentrated in urban settings and occurred, mainly, from 1956 to 1958. Also, they included predominantly youths linked to several anti-Batista organizations. The relevance of the clandestine urban struggle can also be alleged by considering that four of the leaders of the clandestine brand of the 26th of July Movement in Havana integrated into the first revolutionary government after 1959.

Previous studies have outlined two basic periods of the anti-Batista resistance -1952-1955 and 1956-1958- based on the variations in the violent nature of the struggle and in the map of political organizations (Bonachea, 2018; Chase, 2010). The former period shows more constrained violence and failed conspiracies of planned coups and armed uprising, of which the assault on the Moncada military barracks led by Fidel Castro on July 26th, 1953 was among the largest acts. This period also saw concerted attempts to convince Batista to step down or call early elections, directed by fractions of the existing political parties such as *Auténticos* and *Ortodoxos*, or by well-known political and academic figures

grouped into *Sociedad de Amigos de la República* (SAR). These endeavors failed. In fact, during the years 1952 and 1953 at least three different lawsuits were filed by political and social organizations asking for a formal declaration of Batista's *coup d'état* as unconstitutional and questioning its depiction as a Revolution. All them were dismissed.

The year 1955 was a crucial time marker. This transitional year witnessed efforts of civic organization and dissent, some more successful than others. For instance, there was an extensive campaign for amnesty led by the Federation of University Students (FEU in Spanish) that caused the release of political prisoners, including the attackers of the Moncada military barracks (or *moncadistas*). However, efforts to negotiate with Batista had failed completely by late 1955.

Moreover, in 1955 some of the same actors of the previous civic demands and political parties – including Fidel Castro, one of the main Ortodoxo leaders – formally created a new revolutionary movement on June 12nd. This organization was called "26th of July movement" after the Moncada military action. Aware that Batista would not be removed by civic protest, this movement stated that at this point the "Revolution was the only way out" and further proclaimed "In 1956: we will be free or martyrs!" Thus, the period 1956-1958 witnessed broader mobilization in cities, particularly visible in a city-wide uprising in Santiago to back up the landing of the expeditionary insurgents in the *Gramma* yacht on December 2nd, 1956, and in a failed national strike on April 9th, 1958 - the strike that my grandfather was referring to. During this phase, a transition to more generalized violence occurred and state repression became rampant (Chase, 2010). As data under study show, violent conflict in urban spaces spread beyond organized university protest to a more widespread street violence affecting residential and commercial areas.

This second period also saw several changes within state security institutions. For instance, the creation of the *Buró de Represión de Actividades Comunistas* in 1955, the combination of various security forces under centralized command, and the recruitment and training of thousands of new soldiers in 1958 (Chase, 2010). Moreover, as in the first period, repressive governmental reactions were facilitated by the frequent suspension of constitutional guarantees (i.e., *habeas corpus*), and expedited by Batista's decrees of "public order" (Guerra 2018). The repression and killings also included sympathizers and people unrelated to the movements.

The description of these two periods reassembles Selbin's (2013) propositions about how and why revolutions persist and advance through stories of resistance, rebellion, and revolution. As (Scott, 1990) argues, resistance is most often rooted in everyday material goals rather than revolutionary consciousness. Resistance can also refer to a form of insurgency represented by the denial of people to collaborate actively with, or express support for, the current regime or authority figures. However, even when this may seem passive, staying in silence or refusing to sign minutes of arrest in the face of police accusations, are actually "actions." These inherently subversive notions and concepts – patience, finding a way to adhere to the letter of the law but not the spirit, and willingness to speak – often form the basis of stories of resistance (Selbin, 2013: 11) than later lead to the revolution, which is

"…a conscious effort by a broad based, popularly mobilized group of actors, formal or informal, to profoundly transform the social, political, and

economic institutions which dominate their lives; the goal is the fundamental transformation of the material and ideological conditions of their everyday lives. This reflects a process of origination and subsequent struggle, and an outcome, the effort at fundamental transformation" (Selbin, 2008: 131).

In the Cuban revolution both elements are realized. Yet, it has been coined as one of the historical epitomes of 'social' revolutions (Foran, 1997a). One of the goals of this paper is showing that the development of revolutions doesn't erase lesser instances like revolts, resistance, rebellions, or different forms of covert collective actions (Selbin, 2013).

Lastly, previous studies of the anti-Batista resistance have used as one of their principal sources of information national and well-known periodicals of that epoch such as *Bohemia,* as well as clandestine media such as *Resistencia*, *Revolución* and *Hoy* (Chase, 2010; Guerra, 2018). Instead, the present article updates our knowledge regarding these periods of Cuban history by examining rarely explored sources that illustrate not only the composition and dynamics among and within several forces of political opposition but also their various and shared interactions with apparatuses of state repression.

RESULTS

State frames and narratives: Attacking movement identities

As Benford & Hunt (2003) have argued, sometimes antagonists are concerned with discrediting movement activists and supporters by impugning their collective character rather than addressing the substance of their claims. Occasionally those attacks are indirect and take the form of vilifications. On other occasions, these attacks target movements' motives and ethics.

1) Vilifications

The most commonly deployed derogatory state frame in these data describes activists as *"revolucionarios"* (revolutionaries), appearing in 43 of the 60 criminal cases under study (72%). Different variants of this frame were incorporated in 1952 and stayed until 1958, with a high and a consistently high frequency in both periods. Right after Batista's *coup d'état,* state agents started using a *"contrarrevolucionario"* (counterrevolutionary) frame to denigrate oppositional actors and his actions against the government. However, it only emerged in three criminal cases in 1952. In the first one, a case inchoated for public disorder associated with Communist propaganda found in local offices of the Communist Party, police officers say in their minutes of the arrest: *"...que los individuos a que se hizo referencia al darse a la fuga se llevaron propaganda y los documentos que mas comprometían a los miembros del Partido, toda vez que la*

confidencia que tenía eran de que están tratando de soliviantar al pueblo a fin de organizar una **contra revolución** *para derrocar al gobierno…"*[3] (case 465-52, 05/10/52).

The other two cases are associated with crimes against state powers. In one, the leader of *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR),* García Bárcenas,[4] is accused in a report of the National Secret Police (dated 08/20/52) of having *"planes revolucionarios"* (revolutionary plans) to *"provocar un golpe* **contrarrevolucionario** *para producir la caída del actual gobierno con la misma violencia que subió al poder ..."* (case 798-52, 07/08/52).[5] In the other, following the same discursive pattern, the office of the general attorney and the chief of the National Secret Police echoed recent news published in *Ataja,*[6] *"…en los que de manera pública se pone de manifiesto los preparativos que se hallan en desarrollo para traer a Cuba un movimiento* **contrarrevolucionario**" (case 894-52, 08/13/52).[7]

As we can see in these quotes, the description as "counter-revolutionary" coexisted with other frames that also attacked protestors' identities, sometimes directly targeting organizations and their members, some times indirectly referring to them through their actions or propaganda. However, this frame was quickly removed from the language of repression. Thus, in 1952 a *"pseudo-revolucionario"* (pseudo-revolutionary) frame appeared referring to fourteen opponents associated with the *Auténtico* Party -the party of the Cuban ex-president Carlos Prío Socarrás- but in collaboration with members of other "revolutionary" organizations like *ortodoxos* and students, in another crime against the state powers. The Bureau of Investigations of the National Police filed a report that framed the conspiracy as a *"plan conspirativo para derrocar al Gobierno legalmente constituido por medio de una* **revolución insurreccional**, *fomentada por elementos descontentos y* **seudo-revolucionarios**…, *contando con un campo de entrenamiento para el manejo de armas…"* (case 558-52, 05/30/52).[8] In a similar vein, one of these conspirators is described as *"el mas característico de los asesinos* **pseudo-revolucionarios**, *que sembró el espanto en los últimos tiempos…"* (case 33-53, 01/14/53, emphasis added).[9]

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[3] "…that the referred individuals, while fleeing, took propaganda and the documents that most affected the members of the Party, since the confidences that I had was that they were trying to provoke the people in order to organize a **counterrevolution** to overthrow the government…" (emphasis added).

[4] This organization was founded a few months after Batista's coup by Rafael García Bárcenas, an extension of the *Ortodoxo* Party that will seek to overthrow Batista by violent means. Bárcenas, a well-known and popular professor of the University of Havana with vast political experience, directs his conspiratorial activities towards student youth and military means and edits with the name of *Vanguardia*, the press organ of this movement.

[5] "…to provoke a **counterrevolutionary coup** to produce the fall of the current government with the same violence with which it came to power…" (emphasis added).

[6] The Cuban newspaper *Ataja* was owned by Alberto Salas Amaro, a member of PAU, Batista's Party, and served to its interests.

[7] "…in which the preparations that are being developed to bring a **counterrevolutionary movement** to Cuba are publicly revealed." (emphasis added).

[8] "…a conspiratorial plan to overthrow the legally constituted government by means of an insurrectional revolution, fomented by discontented and **pseudo-revolutionary elements**...who have a training camp for the handling of weapons." (emphasis added)

[9] "the most characteristic of the **pseudo-revolutionary assassins**, who sowed terror in recent times…" (emphasis added).

These fragments also show that different forms of the "revolutionary" frame coexisted to support a derogative depiction of the anti-Batista resistance as an organized and political conspiracy against the state powers rather than a spontaneous popular opposition in response to his *coup d'état*. This depiction didn't change after the formal creation of the 26th of July Movement. Comprehensive intelligence and police reports confirmed in early 1956 that the new organization lead by "Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz" from abroad was a "*un movimiento de carácter revolucionario*" (a movement of a revolutionary character). At the same time, a Military Intelligence Service (SIM in Spanish) report portrayed MR-26-7's members and other accomplices from oppositionist political organizations as aiming "*confundir*" (to confuse or bewilder) the authorities and public opinion in general by publicly proclaiming that,

> "…que están luchando pacíficamente por lograr la unión y la concordia entre los cubanos, cuando lo cierto es que están cooperando activamente con los mas destacados **elementos insurreccionales** a crear en el país el estado de perturbación que estos necesitan para desencadenar la **guerra civil** que están incubando…" (case 78-56, 02/03/56, emphasis added).[10]

Other vilifying frames co-existed along with the "revolutionary" depiction and shaped its derogatory connotation. Thus, the second most commonly deployed vilifying frame evoked the imagery of "subversive" elements, which appears in 39 cases (65%). Yet, while "revolutionary" stays relatively constant across time, the "subversive" frame goes from 24 in the first period to 15 in the second. As table 1 suggests, this variation could have resulted from the more frequent deployment of other vilifying frames such as "terrorist," "insurrectional," and "disturbing" in the second period. Certainly, all these frames are informed by narratives that place participants as "altering the public order," "threatening the nation's stability," and "disturbing the public peace of the Republic." Moreover, in both periods all these terms were used together and interchangeably to describe individual actors and collective organizations as well as their plans, actions, or propaganda.

This fuzzy combination of multiple derogatory frames also aimed to attach violent and criminal connotations to any revolutionary actor and their actions, and in this way legitimize the criminal prosecution. Only in a few cases of the second period did I find subtle delineations between violence and revolution. For instance, the following fragment seems to describe violence as a remnant of the failed revolutionary endeavor of "the illicit organization called 26th of July Movement":

> "…al ver fracasados sus intentos de derrocar al gobierno constituido por medio de una **revolución**, pues carecen de ambiente popular para ello, han dado instrucción a sus seguidores, para que por medio de atentados **terroristas, sabotajes, y otros medios delictivos** obstruyan la labor del gobierno, manteniendo un estado de alarma en la sociedad aunque esta

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[10] "…[that] they are fighting peacefully to achieve union and concord among Cubans, when the truth is that they are actively cooperating with the most prominent **insurrectionary elements** to create in the country the state of disturbance that they need to trigger the **civil war** they are incubating." (emphasis added)

condene los medios inhumanos que utilizan." (case 570-57, 07/01/57 emphasis added)[11]

Table 1. State Vilifying Frames (1952-1958)

Period	Revolutionary	Subversive	Insurrectional	Terrorist	Disturbing	Gangster[12]
1952-1955	22	24	14	7	5	7
1955-1958	21	15	18	10	8	2
Total	**43**	**39**	**32**	**17**	**13**	**9**

2) Attacks against movements' motives:

"Communist" and "socialist" frames were also utilized (28%) by state officials to depict oppositional actions as reactionary and support criminal accusations against participants. In the institutional arenas linked to the prosecutions, Communism was commonly described as a tool utilized to "disturb," "manipulate" and "mentally intoxicate" young students and workers in order to fabricate reactionary acts and spread the pervasive influence of *"el comunismo mundial"* (the worldwide Communism) throughout Cuba (e.g., case 969-53, 10/06/53, case 174-54, 03/15/54).[13]

Other attacks incorporated frames where the revolutionary attempts seemed to receive financial and military resources from overseas or directives from external actors. In the first period, mainly in cases from 1952 and 1953, intelligence reports repeatedly narrated how oppositional organizations and actors located in Cuba were linked to the insurrectional plans of ex-president Carlos Prío Socarrás and his Minister of Higher Education, Aureliano Sánchez Arango.[14] In some occasions state officials condensed these accusations through the frames "Priístas" or *"la revolución de Aureliano"* (the Aureliano's revolution) respectively, or by referring to both as *"los Auténticos"* due to their common affiliation to the *Auténtico* Party. State narratives, furthermore, incorporated the idea of *"venganza"* (revenge) as their main motivation and described them as *"revanchistas"* (revanchists) (case 78-56, 02/03/56).

In 1954, the National Secret Police introduced some variation into these narratives of external influences by acknowledging the existence of several oppositional "tendencies" and at the same time possible "divisions" between them. Specifically, a report of the chief

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[11] "…that seeing unsuccessful their attempts to overthrow the government by a **revolution**, because they lack popular room for it, they have given instructions to their followers, that through **terrorist attacks, sabotage and other criminal means** to obstruct the work of the government, maintaining a state of alarm in society even if it condemns the inhuman means they use." (emphasis added)

[12] The inverse development in the use of "gangster" deserves a deeper historical assessment. I argue that its high presence in the first period was related to *Asociación Revolucionaria Guiteras* (ARG), a specific organization that was still acting in those years but that was created during the previous revolutionary situation of the 1930s.

[13] Out of the fifteen cases, six are related to students, two to workers, and the rest are cases were the accused offenders are members of the Party after its illegalization.

[14] Aureliano actually found in 1952 an organization called *Acción Armada Auténtica* (Triple AAA) that recruited experienced revolutionaries from older generations and trained students in military tactics to bring the revolution to Cuba. In 1954, after secretly entered into the country, he was unexpectedly caught in a conspiracy meeting and numerous incriminatory documents were occupied. Aureliano could scape and seek asylum in the Uruguay Embassy but his plans were frustrated.

of this agency narrated that some students left an organizational meeting at the University of Havana because "*Carta a la Juventud*" -a communication signed by Aureliano- was read to the attendees. These students -as the state report narrates- argued that they could not forget Aureliano's aggressions against students when he was a Minister (case 210-54, 04/06/54).

In the second period, the Chief of the National Police still described "tendencies" but now as a deliberated politics of groups, where every one of them had a specific role or mission in their way to the revolution,

"…los que mantenían vigencia de tipo político, se encargarían de la resistencia cívica, los insurreccionales de mantener la agitación y la intranquilidad tratando de crear ambiente de revolución, y los comunistas tratarían de penetrar en los centros laborales … creando conflictos obreros y huelgas capaces de llegar a una paralización general que daría al traste con nuestra economía…" (case 381-56, 08/15/56).[15]

The depiction of their purposes is still attached to a specific representation of every collective. However, I argue that this new narrative entailed a more complex attack to these groups' identities. It also tried to close any space for exculpation derived from the recognition of differences or divisions between the groups. Thus, even when they could have assigned different tactical missions, in the worlds of the same chief of the National Police, all of them wanted the same and coincided in the disturbing motives, "*que les prepare el camino para desembocar en una revolución y por medio de esta derrocar al régimen…"* (case 381-56, 08/15/56).[16]

As table 2 shows, in the second period, narratives about Aureliano and Carlos Prío faded but did not disappear. Since 1956 the links of the "revolutionary" actions of Fidel Castro and Carlos Prío -and occasionally Aureliano- to external sources were re-oriented by adding new bonds to Dominican "*dictador,*" Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. In this way, the state blamed all the "groups" together because, *"…en ausencia de todo escrúpulo de patriotismo, de doctrina, y de ideología se han prestado a satisfacer las ambiciones extraterritoriales* [de Trujillo]*"* (case 381-56, 08/15/56).[17]

Despite these state attacks based on the Trujillo nexus, as they emerge (15%) in other police and intelligence reports, by 1956 Fidel Castro's group or tendency was recognized on its own terms. In fact, this comprehension already existed in the first period when Fidel -an ex-student leader and a well-known member of the *Ortodoxo* Party who was campaigning for a position as a national representative in the 1952 frustrated elections-

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[15] "…those who maintain political validity, would be responsible for the civic resistance, insurrectionaries to maintain turmoil and restlessness trying to create an atmosphere of revolution, and communists would try to penetrate into workplaces (...) creating labor conflicts and strikes capable of reaching to a general paralysis that would ruin our economy…"

[16] "…to pave the way that leads to a revolution and through this overthrow the regime."

[17] "…in the absence of any scruples of patriotism, doctrine, and ideology, they have lent themselves to satisfying the extraterritorial ambitions [of Trujillo]."

appeared as the most popular tendency among the students (case 210-54, 04/06/54). In the second period, even after the failure of the Moncada military action, state officials started naming Fidel as "the responsible for the Moncada event," or the leader of "the revolutionary movement *of the* '26th of July'". In parallel, this "illicit" and "insurrectional" movement became "*fidelista*" in the state discourse.

In early 1956 - as a vignette of how prevailing those associations regarding Fidel were at that moment- a police officer caught a minor when drawing a number "26" and the letter "R" on a street pole in a public park. Purposely pondering that the date of the occurrence, January 28th, was the birthday of Cuban national hero Jose Martí, the police agent developed a narrative in which "the R" was about to be *"…la **Revolución tan pregonada de 'Fidel Castro'**, uno de los líderes al Cuartel Moncada en Santiago de Cuba (…) el eje principal de esta intriga revolucionaria…"* (case 58-56, 01/30/56, emphasis added).[18]

It is important to notice that these state narratives about Fidel's new movement - being organized from abroad and still intriguing- illustrate that even the state strategically exploited stories' ambiguity to forge agreement (Polletta et al., 2011). But, how could ambiguity be effective in a legal setting like the criminal prosecution? I argue that the particular rules governing this institutional context[19] were what allowed the state to recycle its previous discursive strategies, such as considering a "political-revolutionary history" or being "a person prepared in revolutionary struggles" (e.g., case 558-52, 05/30/52) to provide some sense of legitimacy to the open-ended stories of participants' criminal motives. In a similar vein, the state repeatedly used commemorative dates of "patriotic traditions" as the main justification for conducting and enhancing policing acts, surveillance, and prosecutions (e.g., case 128-53, 02/26/53).

Table 2. Attacks against movements' motives (1952-1958)

Period	Communist	Prío/Priístas	Aureliano	Fidel/Fidelistas	Trujillo
1952-1955	11	11	12	1	0
1955-1958	6	6	3	8	2
Total	**17**	**17**	**15**	**9**	**2**

3) Attacks against movements' ethics:

Similar to the way in which state framed the revolution of being financed or directed by external sources, the most common state attack to movement ethics of recruitment included the instrumental manipulation or utilization of minors, students, and women. Moreover, the state also used narratives where protestors perform actions of coercing and paying others to get involve or where participants seem to act because they were drunk.

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[18] "…**the very trumpeted Revolution of 'Fidel Castro,'** one of the leaders of the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba (…) the main axis of this revolutionary intrigue." (emphasis added)

[19] The Decree-law No. 292, June 15, 1934 defines *tribunales de urgencia,* as "bodies specialized in this type of investigation … that, although belonging to the ordinary jurisdictional bodies, are provided with a special competence, by reason of the matter, to know about this class of crimes, … using elements of conviction [or evidence] derived from presumptions that have to take their starting points … in the personal conditions of the accused, their background in relation to this kind of delinquency, and other circumstances of the fact…"

Narratives of manipulation of young and inexperienced students were deployed since 1952 but synthetized in the aforementioned 1956 extensive intelligence report (case 78-56, 02/03/56). Sometimes this was portraited as a double manipulation by people from outside the student federation (FEU in Spanish) such as members of the MNR or Communists (case 1074-52, 09/30/52), and by older students within the organization (case 45-53, 01/16/53). In both cases, participants attempt to maintain political dominance "*utilizando*" (utilizing) inexperienced youths (case 210-54, 04/06/54). In other occasions, it was not the inexperience but rather certain disposition or previous training to perform violent and risky actions that could lead to their strategic manipulation (e.g., case 285-55, 06/13/55 and case 33-53, 01/14/53). In this situation, the intelligence agency blamed older leaders because *"...vienen aleccionando a veintenas de jóvenes universitarios y secundarios, en una doctrina demagógica de inhumano martirologio por la liberación nacional…"* (case 308-54, 06/10/54).[20]

Less frequent but still existent, state officials developed narratives where women appeared as objects utilized or even threatened by organizations. For instance, intelligence reports alleged that two girls "were surprised and taken as an instrument" by MR-26-7 national leaders -who were fugitives from justice- in order to circumvent surveillance in their travel from the Eastern part of Cuba to Havana (case 417-57, 06/05/57). Moreover, in a 1955 report of the Secret Police, a young black girl is portrayed as harassed by protesters that were taking part in a student street demonstration with the only apparent intention of *"...tratar de hacerla parecer como víctima de atropellos por miembros de la policía nacional"* (case 512-55, 12/12/55).[21] Following this discursive line, in both periods police and intelligence documents told stories where protesters were trying to make up "victims" of repression in order to utilize them as *"...estandarte en que justificar su actitud subversiva e insurreccional para captar simpatías en el pueblo"* (case 914-52, 08/17/52).[22]

The aforementioned 1956 SIM's report also recycled these previous discursive trends and incorporated them to the state depiction of Fidel Castro's new revolutionary movement and its insurrectional plans,

> "… se han reclutado hasta jóvenes imberbes, especialmente entre los estudiantes de la 2da enseñanza, e inclusive a mujeres a quienes lanzan a la calle a realizar actos atentatorios contra el orden publico y a provocar a los agentes del orden para que estos se vean obligados a actuar contra ellos y poder, de estar forma, tergiversando siempre la verdad de los hechos, acusar al gobierno y a la fuerza publica de presuntos atropellos y de falta de garantías para la llamada Oposición…Utilizar la prensa y la radio, …, para difundir editoriales que no son otra cosa que encendidas proclamas

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[20] "… [they have been] teaching a score of university and secondary youths, in a demagogic doctrine of inhuman martyrology for the national liberation." Moreover, "the University of Havana" was framed as a troubling place, a space for strengthening the resistance and finding protection from repressive attacks due to the "problematic" autonomous status of the university (case 128-53, 02/26/53 and case 174-54, 03/15/54).

[21] "…trying to make her look like a victim of abuses by members of the national police…"

[22] "…a flag [or banner] that justify their subversive and insurrectional attitude to attract sympathy from the people."

subversivas o insinuaciones a la ciudadanía para que esta adopte una línea de resistencia civil… o para que se revele contra las autoridades y contra el Gobierno…[obligarlo] a clausurar horas radiales, para ellos entonces proclamar públicamente 'que son víctimas de la tiranía y que el gobierno impide la libre emisión del pensamiento'…Lesionar durante los motines que se originen a elementos pertenecientes a sus propios grupos, especialmente estudiantes, para después denunciar que la Fuerza Pública los ha atropellado brutalmente, secuestrar y ocultar durante algún tiempo a individuos conocidos como revolucionarios u opositores del régimen, para ellos acusar al gobierno y a los cuerpos de policía de su presunta desaparición" (case 78-56, 02/03/56).[23]

Beyond claims of luring unexperienced and vulnerable others, in the early years of anti-Batista resistance the state also utilized a depiction of protestors as coercing and forcing others to participate. However, the repression needs the existence of willful offenders to justify itself. Therefore, in the face of three women alleging that their involvement in certain oppositional actions was the result of being victims of threats made by activists -well-known ARG activists who were killed by the police in these events- the state selectively renounced to those previous frames and rather considered these women as "accomplices" or "partners in crime" (case 128-53, 02/26/53).

Interestingly, in two cases where individuals were prosecuted for street demonstrations such as screaming *"Viva Fidel Castro!"* or "*hablar mal del gobierno de la República de Cuba en público*" (publicly speaking ill of the government of the Republic of Cuba) the police officers argued that participants manifested "*síntomas de embriaguez por ingestión de bebidas alcohólicas"* (drunkenness symptoms from ingestion of alcoholic beverages) (case 792-58, 07/01/58 and case 1199-58, 09/21/58). Interestingly, in both cases the accused offenders were absolved by the court in 1958 but the ingestion of alcohol seemed to stay out of the judicial decision. Moreover, state officials portrayed activists as paying others to make them act in their favor or support. I consider the state stories of paying and drinking as associated narratives (see table 3) because they both could target the legitimacy of oppositional actions and undermine any possibility of identification with a revolutionary collective identity.

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[23] "... young beardless people have been recruited, especially among high school students, and even women who are thrown into the street to carry out acts against the public order and provoke law enforcement officers so that they are forced to act against them and in this way, always distorting the truth of the facts, accuse the government and the public force of alleged abuses and lack of guarantees for the so-called Opposition (...) Using the press and the radio, (...) to disseminate editorials that they are nothing but burning subversive proclamations or insinuations to the citizens so that they adopt a line of civil resistance (...) or so that they reveal against the authorities and against the Government ... [forcing it] to close radio hours, for them then to proclaim publicly 'that they are victims of the tyranny and that the government prevents the free emission of thought' (...) To injure during the riots members of their own groups, especially students, to later denounce that the Public Force has brutally run over, kidnap and hide for some time individuals known as revolutionaries or opponents of the regime, for them to accuse the government and the police forces of their presumed disappearance…"

Lastly, sometimes friendship was depicted as the only reason for state suspicion of involvement in subversive activities or the existence of a collective cause. In this way, friendship became a justification for conducting arrests and searches of persons and into private locales (case 220-54, 10/14/54). In these narratives, *"los amigos"* (friends) are taken as sources of material and organizational aids, e.g., they can facilitate safer places to conduct conspiracy meetings and elude surveillance (case 914-52, 08/17/52). Moreover, in the state discourse friendship added some sense of bondage or moral obligation with the cause or their organizations (case 1074-52, 09/30/52).

Table 3. Attacks against movements' ethics (1952-1958)

Period	Manipulating/Victims	Coercing/Forcing	Drinking/Paying	Friendship
1952-1955	6	3	0	4
1955-1958	9	0	7	1
Total	**15**	**3**	**7**	**5**

Movements reframes and repairs

1) Denying and delaying

Whereas Benford & Hunt (2003) include "ignoring" as a possible movement reframe, I propose that is more accurate to describe this first discursive response in these data as "denying and delaying." Thus, rather than ignoring state accusations, offenders were 1) partially or totally denying these allegations, and 2) denying any collaboration with the prosecution by remaining in silence or refusing to sign police documents.

Partial denials generated imperfect acceptance of militancy or political activism by accused offenders. They sometimes assumed certain levels of involvement while refusing the most radical or incriminatory behaviors, such as acknowledging their membership but denying any awareness about the use of weapons, military armament or insurrectional plans (e.g., case 459-54, 10/14/54). In this regard, offenders could even recognize that they were "revolutionaries in the past" -as in the struggles during the 1930s against Gerardo Machado or as members of the Communist Party in that epoch- and at the same time deny any current affiliation to "revolutionary organizations" (case 956-52, 09/30/52). As I will show later, this can also be considered as a strategic embracing of a participation identity.

Furthermore, denials of charges -or remaining in silence- repeatedly took the form of delaying the course of police and intelligence investigations that could potentially incriminate other members of the movement. In the absence of criminal defendants' rights to legal representation and bail before the trial, they barely said in the face of police and intelligence agents that their formal discharges or statements would be delivered in the "appropriate judicial setting," or "with the proper legal guarantees" (e.g., case 459-54, 10/14/54; case 570-57, 07/01/57). Moreover, a less evident form of circumventing accusations but with a similar effect of delaying the criminal prosecution was the incrimination of absent others in the first period (e.g., case 558-52, 05/30/52). Later, this strategy gains a different connotation when the mentioned person is a recognizable assailant in the Moncada attack, exiled in another country at the time of the accusation (e.g., case 520-57, 06/05/57).

On a few occasions, accused offenders remained in silence but agreed to add their signatures. Conversely, remaining in silence and refusing to sign were usually converging

tactics collectively deployed. For instance, in May 1955 a group of 21 women of *Frente Cívico de Mujeres Martianas,* facing charges of public disorder for performing a street march and handling propaganda that blamed Batista as "reactionary and pro-imperialist," all decided to remain in silence and refused to sign the minutes of their arrest (case 503-55, 12/05/55).

Both forms of denials -denying accusations and denying cooperation with prosecution- and their delaying effects could be explained as forms of *infrapolitics* (Scott 1990) or as a performative form of telling stories of resistance (Selbin, 2010). However, considering the institutional and political contexts of these occurrences, participants' silence or "in-action" (Zuo & Benford, 1995), as well as their claims for proper legal guarantees could be also taken as direct oppositional actions against police torture during interrogations. I will come back to this point at the end of this section.

2) Keying

Sometimes participants restated claims made by the state in a way in which they develop different meanings that stand in opposition to the original ones (Benford & Hunt, 2003). Anti-Batista movements' keying strategies entailed repairs of state vilifications and attacks to movements ethics.

- Keying vilifications: To go beyond the mere denial of the state promoted *'revolución del 10 de marzo,'* protestors should provide an alternative definition of revolution. In other words, if Batista's was not a revolution because of its lack of actual popular support, how should revolutions look to draw that support? Not all anti-Batista organizations assumed this question or provided a response to it, even when -as I showed before- the state and the media insisted on framing indistinctly anti-Batista organizations as "revolutionary." In the first period, while certain *ortodoxos* keep asking for elections in an environment of legality and constitutional guarantees (references in case 327-52, 04/16/52 and case 143-56, 03/19/56), the most radical amongst them -the youths- circulated ideas and propositions of revolutions since 1952. For instance, in the Issue No. 2 of the mimeographed Ortodoxo paper, *El Acusador* (August 16th, 1952), Fidel Castro, under the pseudonym of "Alejandro," proposed,

> "**El momento es revolucionario y no político**. La política es la consagración del oportunismo de los que tienen medios y recursos. La revolución abre paso al **mérito verdadero**, a los que tienen valor o ideal sincero, a los que exponen el pecho descubierto a toman en la mano el estandarte. A un Partido Revolucionario debe corresponder una dirigencia **revolucionaria, joven y de origen popular que salve a Cuba…**" (case 906-52, 08/18/52, emphasis added).[24]

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[24] "**The moment is revolutionary and not political**. Politics is the consecration of the opportunism of those who have means and resources. The revolution opens the way to **true merit**, for those who have sincere values or ideals, for those who expose their uncovered chest to take the standard in their hands. A Revolutionary Party must correspond to a **revolutionary, young and popular leadership that saves Cuba**" (emphasis added). In the same month and echoing this line of argumentation, Emilio 'Milo' Ochoa, another

This narrative of revolution is not only proposing who can be considered as "a revolutionary," but also who cannot be considered as such. In other words, it is identifying the "boundaries" of an emergent revolutionary identity (Taylor & Whittier, 1992) by creating a sense of other (Hunt & Benford, 2004). In the second period, the question was directly addressed in propaganda of the MR-26-7. The Issue No. 2 of *El Aldabonazo*[25] asked "what is a Revolution?" under the premise that Revolution was the only way out and that, consequently, there was no more room for seeking elections, as in "*Elecciones No, Revolución!*" (No elections; Revolution!) Moreover, the proposed response refined who - a person or an organization- could be considered as "revolutionary,"

> "Hay revolución cuando se produce un cambio de las instituciones como consecuencia de una transformación profunda de las condiciones, políticas económicas, sociales y culturales de un país …Llamaremos revolucionario al Partido, movimiento, o persona cuyos actos preparan intencionalmente ese cambio… La revolución transforma la economía, sustituye instituciones políticas y sociales por otras, crea nuevos patrones morales y establece principios que siempre están afiliados a una determinada filosofía de la vida. Por eso, ser revolucionario no es algo sencillo..." (*El Aldabonazo*, evidence in case 493-56, 11/05/56).[26]

In this same Issue, the MR26-7 restated the relationship between revolution and violence and expanded on the ideological sustenance and legitimacy of the revolutionary violence,

> "… **no puede confundirse violencia con revolución**. Una invasión extranjera, un golpe militar reaccionario, son violentos y a la vez contrarrevolucionarios. Ejemplo claro de esto esta en el golpe de estado del 10 de marzo en que una pandilla de delincuentes comunes se apodero violentamente del poder… **la revolución es también una idea: Violencia**

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key leader of the Ortodoxo Party, was accused of a crime against the state powers' for saying -among other things- in the TV show called *Ante la Prensa* that *"... el momento de ahora no es político, que el momento es patriótico, de unir a todos los cubanos para derrocar esta dictadura, esta tiranía"* (case 961-52, 08/27/52).
[25] MR-26-7 clandestine publication directed by Carlos Franqui. Soon later it was transformed into *Revolución*, also directed by Franqui. It remained after 1959 until it was merged with other pro-government publications in 1965 originating Gramma, the official newspaper of the Communist Party.
[26] "There is revolution when there is a change of institutions resulting from a profound transformation of the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of a country (...) We would call 'revolutionary' to the Party, movement, or person whose actions intentionally prepare for that change (...) The revolution transforms the economy, replaces political and social institutions with others, creates new moral standards and establishes principles that are always affiliated with a certain philosophy of life, so being a revolutionary is not something simple ... "

sin idea es crimen… **Violencia con idea es revolución**. Idea transformadora y superadora de los problemas vitales del hombre…la rebelión solo se justifica cuando va acompañada de un pensamiento revolucionario...insurrección acompañada de la huelga general y de la completa generalización de la violencia, es decir Revolución…" (*El Aldabonazo*, evidence in case 493-56, 11/05/56, emphasis added).[27]

- Keying ethics: Activists responded to accusations of misguided youths, students and women who had been lured by elders, experienced participants, or simply males by stressing their protagonist role in the revolution. The revolution proposed by the MR-26-7 relied on a new generation of young revolutionaries inspired by Jose Martí's nationalist ideals; a new generation that even before the creation of the movement was involved in several forms of anti-Batista activism.

The aforementioned issue of *El Acusador* started with the statement: *"somos jóvenes y si no hacemos lo que la Republica espera de nosotros, seremos traidores" (*we are young and if we do not do what the Republic expects from us, we will be traitors) (case 906-52, 08/18/52). Later, young students associated with Aureliano's Triple A -some of them who will later become members or collaborators of the MR-26-7- were also entailed with the mission of "substituting spent politicians" (case 308-54, 06/10/54). This goal certainly encompassed some criticism of previous generations but also apprenticeship from and reverence to the best revolutionary Cuban traditions, as it appears in repeated references to the heroic revolutionary -and almost mythical- leaders.

Sometimes these narratives were used as a way to re-elaborate backlashes in the process of movement formation and collective identity construction. In five cases of the first period, in ortodoxo propaganda and offenders' statements before the police, I found inspirational allusions linked to Eduardo Chibás.[28] Some of them referred to his death as a sacrifice –"an immolation"- that should inspire public and collective commemorations, as in 1953 "*la manifestación del silencio*" to his grave (case 561-53, 07/20/53). In the second period, the failed '*Revolución del 30*,' and Chibás as its incarnation, were deployed as key motivating sources of the MR-26-7's new and definitive "national and democratic" revolution:

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[27] "…**violence cannot be confused with revolution**. A foreign invasion, a reactionary military coup, are violent and counterrevolutionary at the same time. Clear example of this is in the March 10th coup in which a gang of common criminals violently seized power ... **the revolution is also an idea: Violence without idea is crime** ... **Violence with an idea is revolution.** Transformative and overcoming idea of the vital problems of the man ... the rebellion is only justified when it is accompanied by a revolutionary thought ... insurrection accompanied by the general strike and the complete generalization of violence, that is to say Revolution ..." (emphasis added).

[28] The historical leader of the *ortodoxos* who killed himself during a radio show after being unable to present proofs of his allegations of corruption against the Minister of Higher Education, Aureliano Sanchez Arango. Historical accounts have told a completely different history about the motivations of Chibás to commit suicide.

"…el centro mismo de toda la problemática cubana se encuentra en la idea revolucionaria…estudiamos profundamente el por qué no se completó el programa de la generación del 30 y aportamos soluciones a los problemas que ellos no pudieron superar…una revolución que ha de culminar el ciclo de 1930…para asegurar así la democracia integral" (*El Aldabonazo*, evidence in case 493-56, 11/05/56).[29]

Furthermore, in contrast to state accusations of coercing and forcing others to perform political activism, a union leader accused of organizing a clandestine and subversive "revolutionary unionism" stated in a public meeting that,

"ahora no podrán alegar los enemigos que celebramos una asamblea donde los compañeros fueron **coaccionados**, como muchas veces se nos calumnio, no nos protege a nosotros la fuerza publica, los protege a ellos, …a donde están y que se han hecho los difamadores, hoy ha sido la prueba mas elocuente que son muy pocos y no los sigue nadie…ellos saben muy bien que la **honestidad** en el manejo de los fondos del sindicato no la puede negar nadie, nuestra **limpieza** esta lejos de toda sospecha" (minutes of a union meeting presented by the intelligence agency in case 747-52, 06/28/52, emphasis added).[30]

In this case, the leader restates the organizational ethics of the union as honest and clean. Other cases opposed similar organizational dynamics and recruitment activities to the above-mentioned state depictions. Activists responded by describing their actions as the normal duties of union members, student activists or party leaders who "*piden*" or "*ruegan*" (ask or beg) for "cooperación" (cooperation) (e.g., case 177-52, 03/10/52). In the second period, the MR-26-7 directly contested coercing state narratives by including as one of its rules for fundraising activities that, "any form of money collection through coercion or violence is totally outside our procedures" (*Manifiesto No. 2*, evidence in case 42-56, 01/24/56). Here, indirectly addressing a state frame becomes a "discursive opportunity" (Jasper & Polletta, 2018) to define and develop a revolutionary identity.

Lastly, participants likewise restated the aforementioned incriminatory allusions to friendship. Interestingly, in the first period they usually did not deny the alleged friendship

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[29] "…the very center of all Cuban problems is found in the revolutionary idea ... we study deeply why the program of the 1930s generation was not completed and we provide solutions to the problems that they could not overcome ... a revolution that has to complete the cycle of 1930 ... to ensure integral democracy…"

[30] "…now the enemies cannot claim that we held an assembly where the comrades were **coerced**, as we are often slandered, the public force does not protect us, protects them ... where do they are now? and what do the defamers have done? today it has been the most eloquent proof that there are very few and nobody follows them ... they know very well that the **honesty** in the handling of union funds cannot be denied by anyone, our **cleaning** is far from any suspicion…" (emphasis added)

but specified that "being a friend" of someone was not the same as having *"sentimientos revolucionarios"* (revolutionary sentiments) (e.g., case 914-52, 08/17/52).[31]

3) Embracing

Protagonists' endorsements of outsiders' collective identity attributions took the form of stoic acceptance of charges and militancy in both periods. In particular, once the MR-26-7 was formally created, accused activists repeatedly assumed militancy by saying *"soy miembro del 26 de julio"* (I am a member of the MR-26-7), *"soy fidelista"* (I am a *fidelista*) or *"soy simpatizante de los fidelistas"* (I am a sympathizer of the *fidelistas*).[32]

Activists, furthermore, combined embracing and keying techniques by first acknowledging the validity of selected antagonists' claims but then transforming their original meaning. Hence, in the second period, friendship and political action became notably entangled. [33] This variation could illustrate a "strategic deployment of identity" (Bernstein, 1997; Taylor et al., 2009). Thus, while in the first period friendship appeared as the contrary of being a revolutionary (as I showed before, it was a form of individuals' exoneration), in the second stage it was complementary and supportive of the revolutionary identity. In this later sense, friendship informed clandestine networks of cooperation and solidarity,[34] and facilitated recruitment for political and high-risk actions.

Along with references to friendship, brotherhood and camaraderie, in several cases of the second period specific attributes of the collective identity associated with the MR-26-7 emerged through artifacts such as colored pieces of fabrics, armbands, movement flags and stamps. In fact, previous references to political flags arose in propaganda of *juventud ortodoxa* (evidence in case 561-53, 07/20/53), as well as doctrinal books, stamps, poems, rings with specific inscriptions, allusions to historical leaders and heroes, associated to other organizations such as the *MNR*, the *ARG,* and the Communist Party (e.g., 345-54, 06/25/54; 459-54, 10/14/54).

By the second period, the state agents involve in policing, surveilling and prosecuting anti-Batista activism seemed completely aware of the political symbolism and the participants' affection to these devices. Therefore, the state incorporated these cultural objects in the elaboration of indictments, e.g., the presence of the colors white, black and red -the colors of MR-26-7 flag- became reasons for suspicions (case 816-57, 09/05/57). Moreover, it is important to note here that -as *pintadas* in Francois Spain (Johnston, 2006)- elaborating and displaying political flags and short graffiti (e.g., "*Abajo Batista*") in public spaces were acts commonly performed by young activists. The apparent spontaneity of these acts could suggest an implicit form of contestation to state attacks on movement ethics regarding youths.

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[31] Similar treatment in seven of the nine cases where protestors allude to friends and friendship.
[32] The latter appeared in four cases: 197-57, 02/27/57; 570-57, 07/01/57; 816-57, 09/05/57; 1199-58, 09/21/58.
[33] This is the connotation that appear in ALL the six cases with references to friends or friendship in the second period: case 78-56, 02/03/56; 197-57, 02/27/57; 417-57, 05/07/57; 520-57, 06/05/57; 570-57, 07/01/57; 1057-57, 11/25/57.
[34] This appeared also in the *Manifiesto a la nación* (Manifesto to the nation) released by Fidel Castro from prison in 1955 (evidence in case 78-56, 02/03/56) but also from before, in orthodox pamphlets as "Cuban, do not throw out this proclaim, give it to a friend" (case 411-52, 05/11/52).

4) Distancing

Participants also distance themselves from attributed identities they find undesirable and embrace other imputed identities. It is possible to argue that some sort of 'distancing' was in place when participants apologized and expressed remorse (case 558-52, 05/30/52). Also, as in a case mentioned before, when women portrait themselves as victims of "activists' threats" to force them to act in their support (case 128-53, 02/26/53), they could be distancing from the imputed incriminatory revolutionary identities and embracing the victim identity to circumvent accusations. However, this does not necessarily mean that actors find those distant identities completely "undesirable," but maybe that incarnating these identities was troublesome in the specific institutional setting of the criminal prosecution (Tatum, 2002; Polletta, 2012) and in an authoritarian context.

In a different dimension, protagonist participation of women in violent actions registered in both periods could have also distanced them or at least complicated state representations of women as make-up victims or movements' mere objects. For instance, the 1958 case of Lila, a MR-26-7 member that in the moment of the detention gave to her 21-years-old partner a pill "so he could not be forced to confess" -which lately produced his death- highlights Viterna's (2013) assertion about Salvadorian women in war; we know more about violence against women than about violence exercised by women. And this happens precisely because the role of women as protagonists defies the patriarchal official discourse.

Lila's correspondence shows how she explained to her mother and daughter her enrolment in insurrectional activities: "*es mi deber estar ahora con mis compañeros de ideales*" (it is my duty to be now with my brothers of ideals). These "*queridos hermanos*" (beloved brothers) -as she said in one letter to other activists- would inscribe on her movement armbands,

> "… quien lucha como tu es merecedora de todo nuestro respeto y admiración ya que lo hace con desinterés, con gran sacrificio y verdadero amor patrio. Sigue en la línea que has trazado, no desmayes, Cuba te necesita…" (evidence in case 66-58, 01/21/58). [35]

Lila's coexisting roles of mother, daughter and fighter forced the state agents to decide whether to sustain the victim narrative that attacks participation motives or to consider her as the main person responsible in order to justify the criminal prosecution. The state momentarily distanced itself from its victim narrative and sent her to prison until the trial. However, Lila was released before it and could not be prosecuted. [36]

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[35] "… whoever fights like you is worthy of all our respect and admiration since it is done with disinterest, great sacrifice and true patriotic love. Follow the line that you have left behind, do not faint, Cuba needs you…" (evidence in case 66-58, 01/21/58).

[36] Due to space, I cannot develop my argument here, but this is a finding that needs to be placed in dialogue with recent publications that have uncovered women participation in the Cuban Revolution. I align, in particular, with Chase (2015).

Another form of distancing informed the contention around the Communist frames deployed by the state. Students -who were accused of public disorder due to their anti-Batista and alleged "Communist" public demonstrations and meetings- depicted one of these acts as "*martiano*" (from Martí) and consequently "cultural" (case 174-54, 03/15/54). In this way José Martí became a distancing device from any political and communist implications. Later, after the MR-26-7 creation, some of its members argued that they did not participate in a specific action because *"se enteraron"* (they heard) that some members of the Communist Party were involved (case 417-57, 05/07/57). Also, the movement directly distanced from the state imputed identity when claimed: "*Fidel desmintió el carácter comunista del movimiento, precisando la ideología nacionalista y democrática del movimiento…*" (Fidel denied the communist character of the movement, specifying [its] nationalist and democratic ideology) (case 493-56, 11/05/56).

The distance between the MR-26-7 and the PSP (Communist Party) is also revealed through their contrasting approaches to the Moncada attack. The Communists denied any connection and depicted it as a "putsch" and "an adventure" (case 969-53, 10/06/53), because it has given to the government pretexts to suppress all oppositional meetings and public demonstrations (case 320-54, 06/16/54). In fact, an intelligence report portraited the Moncada events as "*un contragolpe revolucionario*" (a revolutionary counter-hit) (case 969-53, 10/06/53). The state later incorporated "Moncada" to its narratives of political activism; for instance, it was used in a 1954 intelligence report to support the accusation of four businessmen of committing a crime against the state powers because they were trying to sell used military uniforms and shoes,

> "…cuando los sucesos del cuartel 'Moncada' solo se distinguían los asaltantes por los zapatos y en este caso se han ocupado zapatos que a juicio de los investigadores habían sido adquiridos para remediar esta falta" (case 220-54, 04/12/54).[37]

Interestingly, this particular part of the state narrative was contested by one of the defense lawyers in his petition to the court for offenders' provisional liberation before the trial,

> "…para señalar la gravedad de tener ropas militares un civil, se señalan los hechos acaecidos en el cuartel Moncada, pero repetimos que solamente se mencionan estos hechos como comentarios y no como imputación…" (case 220-54, 04/12/54).[38]

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[37] "…when the events of the 'Moncada' barracks only the assailants distinguished themselves by the shoes and in this case, in the opinion of the investigators, the shoes were acquired to remedy this flaw…"

[38] "... to indicate the seriousness of a civilian having military clothes, the events occurred in the Moncada barracks are pointed out, but we repeat that only these facts are mentioned as comments and not as imputation ..."

Unfortunately, archival records of this case do not contain the final resolution from the court, but I still can argue that the non-political defense followed -which even portraited the offenders as "*adictos al régimen actual*" (addicted to the current regime) and therefore "*no subversivos*" (not subversive)- was successful in its distancing operation. The state attorney responded affirmatively to lawyers' demands and requested the provisional releasing of the offenders, which was accepted by the court.

5) Counter-maligning

Cuban anti-Batista activists also reframed disparaging claims by discrediting state opponents. As we can see in underground *ortodoxo* propaganda presented in support of criminal accusations in 1952 and 1953, activists deployed a direct contestation to Batista and spoke directly to him. In these movement documents,[39] a singular subject "I" is the one "*acusando*" (accusing) and threatening Batista for his crimes while building on "communicative styles" available in their cultural context (Jasper & Polletta, 2018). The statement, "*Batista, en el nombre del pueblo Cubano, yo te acuso*" (Batista; in the name of the Cuban people, I accuse you) was a direct adaptation of "*Machado, yo te acuso*," previously employed during the revolutionary situation against Gerardo Machado in the 1930s (case 561-53, 07/20/53).

One could say that this first-person style undermines the construction of the shared sense of "we-ness" that is crucial for collective identities (Hunt & Benford, 2004). However, on the one hand, the "I" coexisted with other group tellers like "the people" or a general "we" that appeared in motivational framings. On the other hand, this verbal style seems to facilitate the following transition from that disguised "I" to a teller incarnated in 'a' Fidel Castro that signed on behalf of the National Directorate of the 26th of July Revolutionary Movement (as in *Manifiesto no. 1* and *Manifiesto no. 2*, in cases 42-56, 01/24/56 and 78-56, 02/03/56). Moreover, in the later period the counter-maligning tasks switched the interlocutor to "*el pueblo cubano*," members of the army, and every Cuban, as in "*Cubano: a la conquista de tu libertad!*" (Cuban: to the conquest of your freedom!) (case 133-58, 02/14/58). Yet, it is vital to say that this 'talking to every Cuban' style was borrowed from the previous *ortodoxo* communicative style.

These discursive borrowings -as in Selbin's (2010) "mimetic" processes of cultural adoption and adaptation-[40] informed the narration of the social revolution frame in the second period. They facilitated the communication of an important point: the MR-26-7 revolution was not about overthrowing Batista but rather about eradicating the causes that brought him to the power (evidence in case 493-56, 11/05/56). The eradication of those causes became the MR-26-7's agenda for Cuba's better future, one in which every Cuban must undertake responsibility.

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[39] For instance, in *Son los mismos* (they are the same) (case 411-52, 05/01/52), in *El Acusador* (the accuser) (case 906-52, 08/18/52), and in the Issue No. 2 of *Patria! Periódico Doctrinal de la Juventud Ortodoxa del Municipio y provincia de la Habana* (case 561-53, 07/20/53).

[40] This newsletter of the *juventud ortodoxa* of Havana explicitly stated that the editorial note "*Batista; yo te acuso!*" was "a reproduction and adaptation of 'Machado: I accuse you!'" published by the student journal *Alma Mater* in November 1930.

Movements counter-attacked state representatives to repair their revolutionary motives. In 1956, a MR-26-7 flyer dropped by protestors when hitting glass windows of private stores, contested state accusations about Trujillo-Fidel cooperation by equating Batista not only to Leonidas Trujillo but also to the longtime dictator of Nicaragua, Anastacio 'Tacho' Somoza, recently executed by Rigoberto López Pérez (flyer presented in case 490-56, 11/12/56). This flyer not only condemned Batista as a dictator by equating him to Trujillo and Somoza but also by stressing the heroism of those who risk their lives -as Rigoberto- to execute dictators like him (i.e., *tachado Tacho*). The question marks placed under the other two dictators' pictures along with the appealing of heroism seem to work likewise as a motivational call to act against Batista.[41]

Anti-Batista groups also targeted police and judicial officials and institutions as part of their repairing claims. In this process, they also built shared understandings about the legal repression. Thus, SIM members and Batista supporters were framed as *"chivatos"* and *"soplones"* (snitches) and *"traidores-vende-patria" (*country-selling traitors) (case 561-53, 07/20/53; case 570-57, 07/01/57). These movement frames were shaped by the institutional conventions ruling this particular criminal court as we can see in police and intelligence agents' narratives. They repeatedly affirmed that evidence against protestors was obtained "confidentially" or acquired through "*fuentes confidenciales pero de entero crédito*" (confidential, but entirely reliable sources) (e.g., case 128-53, 03/26/53, and deployed similarly in eight other cases).

In a similar sense, since the earlier period organizations educated their members on the repressive nature of these criminal prosecutions. For instance, 1952 *ortodoxo* propaganda blamed the judicial system as "*justicia castrense"* (military justice) due to its obvious support to the political regime (case 906-52, 08/18/52). In 1953, Issues No. 3 and 4 of *Carta Semanal*, underground communist propaganda, called for the liberation of political prisoners detained under the arbitrary application of Batista's "aggressive" laws of "public order" and to stop state persecutions against communist leaders (evidence in case 969-53, 10/06/53). Through these and other similar complaints, anti-Batista organizations capitalized the legitimacy of their protests by highlighting the government's arbitrary use of the law.

Organizations in revolutionary Cuba were responding -as studied by Morris (1993) in the Birmingham confrontation of 1963- to the strategic use of the law by the state. We already knew that Batista selectively suspended constitutional guarantees to habilitate repression, but these data also show that lower rank police and intelligence agents conducted mass arrests and filed collective accusations that included extensive lists of all the known leaders of parties and organizations. They framed the leaders as "*autores intelectuales*" (intellectual authors), regardless they were not present or related to the alleged crimes (e.g., 53 members of PSP were accused of elaborating propaganda in case 969-53, 10/06/53). Beyond the legalization of the political persecution of those leaders,

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[41] In other movement contestations, Batista is also equated to Trujillo: "…Only two despots of our America are left standing: Trujillo and Batista … It will be their turn…" (MR-26-7 propaganda in case 133-58, 02/14/58). But in the earlier case 143-56 (03/19/56) one of the main leaders of the Orthodox Party, Pelayo Cuervo Navarro -also an active lawyer in cases under study- is accused of public disorder for arguing on a TV show that Batista knew which members of his army were involved in a conspiracy with Trujillo. At the same time, he denied any implications of the Orthodox Party to other dictatorships of the Americas.

these state "counter-tactics" (Morris, 1993) eventually justified subsequent multiple suspensions of the trials due to the absence of those offenders. In other words, the state was also delaying the trials to retain activists in jail. [42]

Due to the exceptional nature of *tribunales de urgencia* and their procedures, the available strategies for social movement litigation were highly constrained. However, at least two forms of political lawyering were employed. First, the trials' suspensions -due to the absence of both offenders and witnesses for the prosecution- were purposively contested by movement lawyers who filed *habeas corpus* -when not suspended by Batista- aiming to obtain the provisional liberation of accused offenders.[43] While the Supreme Court usually denied these petitions, it occasionally mandated that in the case of a new suspension, Havana's *tribunal de urgencia* should immediately order the liberation of the accused. The Supreme Court's reasoning notices that these subsequent suspensions responded to causes not attributable to the detainees and that they were violating the expedited nature of these particular prosecutions (case 969-53, 10/06/53).

Second, lawyers filed complaints and accusations of rights violations before and during the trials alleging that their defendants were injured or beaten during police interrogations. As a variation of this tactic, at least one lawyer in these data refused to accept his designation denouncing the lack of procedural guarantees to support the defense of their clients (case 66-58, 01/21/58). Graciously, in two occasions (cases 327-52, 04/16/52; case 558-52, 05/30/52) in which these complaints arose, police officers had previously used the word *espontáneo* (spontaneous) to describe the way in which the accused released testimonies that incriminated them or other activists.

The political nature of these defense strategies is also illustrated by the fact that some of these experienced litigants were active members of anti-Batista organizations, and even took part in direct oppositional actions. Several of them suffered violent retaliation and persecution from the Batista regime.[44] In particular, Fidel Castro assumed a *per se* defense (Barkan, 2006) in the famous trial associated to the Moncada events. However, his earlier but less known -almost invisible- defense of activists who were caught while printing the aforementioned *El Acusador* (case 906-52, 08/18/52), opens a different analytical angle regarding political lawyering in authoritarian contexts. In this case, Fidel happened to be one of the coded authors (under the pseudonym of "Alejandro") in the impugned propaganda. All the accused offenders, in this case, were absolved. Beyond this fact, one could examine his intervention as a form of *infrapolitics* and put in dialogue with recent works on the symbolic and "invisible everyday work and survival strategies of lawyers" to cope with authoritarian settings (van der Vet, 2018).

Last but not least, in twenty (33%) of the 60 cases in this study the accused were found not guilty by the Havana court. Many other cases were dropped and not prosecuted

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[42] It is worth to note that this state "counter-tactic" was previously used in the famous trial against the attackers of the Moncada barracks. In this case, the state accused members of different organizations as intellectual authors. Several of them were released.

[43] This tactic was used in five of the sixty cases (three in the first period, two in the second).

[44] For instance, Menalao Mora y Pelayo Cuervo were assassinated in 1957. The former died during the failed assault to the Presidential Palace but the later wasn't related to the event. Yet, the police beat him to death the day after. Another example, Alfredo Yabur Maluff could scape and seek asylum in the Ecuadorean embassy in Havana. After the 1959 triumph, he became the second Ministry of Justice of the revolutionary government. All of them appear several times in the cases under study acting as movement lawyers.

due to the accused's absentia. These findings -and the absolutions in particular- rise relevant interrogations regarding the role of legal repression and political litigation in authoritarian regimes. Can we interpret them as successful movements outcomes in these environments? Were these absolutions venting contradictions between police and intelligence agencies and the judicial system? These questions claim further research, but it is worth to highlight here that while only minor contradictions appeared across the different repressive agencies, more relevant distances emerged between these agencies and the Havana court. Sometimes, the debate in the judicial setting took a completely different direction, away from the stories and arguments proposed by the police or the intelligence agents. Moreover, *votos particulares* (particular votes) (e.g., case 128-53, 04/17/53) issued by judges to express their disagreement regarding the decided absolution of offenders or the application of judicial procedures, suggest that the divergent decisions of this Havana court -compare to the apparent uniformity of police and intelligence agencies- were the result of existing conflicts within it. Absolutions, furthermore, might reveal that even in authoritarian regimes, courts are not mere pawns of the 'dictator' but still spaces of contention (van der Vet, 2018).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to our understanding of revolutionary movements in authoritarian environments. Historical variations in discursive contentions between state and oppositional actors introduced several questions. For instance, why did the counterrevolutionary frame disappear so quickly? Was it because Batista lost legitimacy as a revolution or because the multiple and repetitive acts of oppositional resistance accumulated, gaining legitimacy as truly revolutionary? Or both? In any case, the contention over the revolutionary frame continued across the years as a persistent dispute regarding the appropriation of previous revolutionary traditions and oppositional cultures. In particular, there were clear variations in the relationship between friendship and the revolutionary identity. Possible responses to this could involve the changes introduced in the structures of repression during the second period, the activists' liberation from fear (i.e., *1956: seremos libres o mártires!*) and shifts in commitment and motivation associated to the creation of the MR-26-7.

The studied discursive contentions emerge as a privileged space for dissecting the storytelling of social revolutions. This paper shows, in particular, how the interactive process of meaning construction and identity building in legal settings informed and shaped the radicalization of the social revolution narrative. Moreover, the Cuban case shows the performative and dramaturgical dimension of the telling (Benford & Hunt, 1992). In this regard, the ample and purposive use of artifacts (Jasper & Polletta, 2018) by movements and their actors allowed not only communication with their audiences but also the opportunity to repair and counter-attack their antagonists' claims. As I showed here, the state also told stories and utilized material and symbolic culture as justification for repression.

The Cuban case, furthermore, illustrates the overlaps between social movements and revolutions, by probing that both share narrative devices and strategies. This study,

however, goes deeper in this endeavor by showing that 'waves of protest' -illustrated through the under studied first period- can play as intermediate stages between movements and revolutions. Consequently, using a complex approach to the relationships and interactions between violent and nonviolent, open and clandestine, individual and collective characters of everyday resistance and movement actions this study likewise challenges previous depictions of the Cuban Revolution as a "guerrilla-led revolution" (Goodwin, 2001) or an insurrectional endeavor. Extending the temporal frame of analysis to the first period, I uncovered multiple forms and stories of resistance previously silenced by studies on the Cuban Revolution conducted by both social movement scholars and experts on revolutions.

Through the examination of the criminal prosecution as a complex site of repression and dissent, and a space for meaning construction, this paper advances our comprehension of authoritarian regimes, and in particular the Cold War authoritarianism. Batista's repressive tactics -especially in the first period- against political activism did not happen in total isolation from other tactics, closer to democratic expectations. Strategies of movement litigation such as filing *habeas corpus* and claiming for detainees' rights, showed that social movements in democratic and authoritarian environments can share tactics, supporting the thesis of movement-revolution overlapping.

The discursive contentions illustrated here open a broader discussion about the legitimacy and efficacy of non-legal and legal violence in state-movement contentions. MR-26-7 engaged in moral distinctions between state violence and oppositional violence through the occasional depiction of the revolutionary actions and methods as "clean." As historians of the Cuban revolution have said (Chase, 2010), these appeared as two types of violence (revolutionary vs *batistiano* violence), rather than violence versus nonviolence. In this regard, this paper opens future avenues to re-think the post-revolutionary times through the continuities and distances between forms of domination and resistance developed by old and new societies. For instance, Law No. 1, issued by the new revolutionary government in 1959, abolished *tribunales de urgencia* and their special procedures. Soon after, the same government created novel *tribunales revolucionarios* (revolutionary courts) that conduced, first, the execution of all the police and military agents of Batista -some of their names appear in the data analyzed here-, and later to the prosecution of "counter-revolutionaries." Further research is needed to understand commonalities and distances between *tribunales de urgencia* and *tribunales revolucionarios* as forms of legal repression and protest policing.

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