

# The Grand Lodge of Cuba in the Later Twentieth Century:

*A Historical and Statistical Examination*

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**T**HE FIRST PART OF THIS PAPER SUMMARIZES THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE Grand Lodge of Cuba (GLC), presented to the International Conference on American and Latin American Freemasons (Los Angeles, CA, December 2011), sponsored by University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) History Dept. and the Grand Lodge of the State of California. A version of it was published, with all conference papers, in a special issue of the journal *Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña (REHMLAC)*. The second part of the paper, discussing how the GLC came to be and exists in Cuba, under a Marxist regime, was especially written for *AQC*. The paper embodies a statistical and historical analysis of the development of the GLC from 1945 to 2010, based on a demographic study of this institution. Research identifies and evaluates several important factors that have contributed to membership growth and decline in the second half of the twentieth century. Important characteristics of the institution are then identified and discussed, as they relate to historical developments. Finally, Freemasonry in Cuba has been unique in its accept-

ance under a communist regime. It is examined how this has come about, and to what extent particular persons or policies were responsible for such singular development.

During the second half of the twentieth century Cuba and its Freemasons have lived through very difficult times. These included a pluralistic phase (1944–52), Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship (1952–58), the advent of the Cuban revolution up to the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1959–89), developments after the loss of Soviet and other socialist countries' economic subsidies (1989–2007), and developments after General Raul Castro took over the government from his ailing, older brother Fidel (2006).

The present paper pursues two objectives: first, to overview, using a demographic approach, the evolution of the GLC during the second half of the twentieth century, and secondly to identify and analyze several important characteristics of Cuban Freemasons that help explain the manner the GLC has survived in the Cuban Marxist regime.

This analysis addresses two important research questions: first why, if in any way, is the GLC still relevant and how does it fit within the rest of Cuba's contemporary civil society, and secondly how has the GLC evolved during the second half of the twentieth century, what difficulties has it found to survive in this singular society, and what solutions has it implemented?

The GLC, at over 150 years old, is one of the oldest organizations of Cuban civil society. With about 30,000 members nationwide, in over 300 lodges in almost every town, it is one of the largest and most widely-distributed Cuban organizations. It has traditionally admitted members of all races, social classes, political persuasions, and religions. Finally, the GLC, directly or through its members, has traditionally participated in Cuba's political, economic and social life.

The scope of the research and of the data analysis is limited to the GLC, that is first, second and third degree Masons.<sup>1</sup> We shall not be discussing the origins of Freemasonry in this paper. For the history of Cuban Freemasons during the nineteenth century, readers are referred to Bro. Aurelio Miranda's work.<sup>2</sup> For more recent developments, readers are referred to that of Dr Torres-Cuevas.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 2010, out of the 29,000 members of the GLC, 4,213 of them, or 14.5% had obtained higher degrees. Annual Message for 2011–12. IPH Lázaro F. Cuesta Valdés 33°. SGC (p.s.r.) of the Supreme Council, 33 Degree.

<sup>2</sup> Aurelio Miranda Álvarez, *Historia documentada de la masonería en Cuba* (La Habana: Molina y Cia, 1933).

<sup>3</sup> Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, *Historia de la Masonería Cubana: seis ensayos* (La Habana: Edición Imágenes Contemporáneas, 2003).

## PART I: A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE GLC IN THE LATER TWENTIETH CENTURY

### Summary of previous work

An initial demographic study of the GLC<sup>4</sup> discusses the period 1945–80. Its second part<sup>5</sup> discusses the period 1980–2010. In this section a summary is given of the main results of these two studies.

Fig. 1. presents the graph of yearly membership of the GLC, 1948–2010, showing Total and Effective Masons.<sup>6</sup> Data from the GLC were obtained through Bro. Gustavo Pardo Valdes, who was at the time President of the Academy of Higher Masonic Studies of the GLC. Pardo obtained them from the Grand Secretary of the GLC. These data were strictly validated by comparing them to various sources, such as the web page and several publications of the GLC, as well as to the data in several publications by Torres-Cuevas, Fernandez-Callejas<sup>7</sup> and other well-known researchers.<sup>8</sup> Population data were obtained from Cuban censuses.<sup>9</sup> The ensuing extensive statistical analysis<sup>10</sup> has formed the basis of several academic research papers.<sup>11</sup>

In both panels of Fig. 1. can be observed *three* distinct cycles. The first two, from 1945 to 1959, and from 1959 to 1980, are analyzed in the *REHMLAC* paper. The third cycle, from 1980 to 2010, is analyzed in the *CEHME* paper. In turn, each of these cycles can be decomposed into periods, characterized by specific social, political and economic events. To help answer the research question ‘What happened during these years?’ a

<sup>4</sup> Jorge Luis Romeu, ‘Estudio Estadístico del Auge y Declive de la Gran Logia de Cuba Durante el Período de 1945 a 1980’, in *REHMLAC* vol.3, No. 2 (Dec. 2011–Apr. 2012), 158–184. <http://rehmlac.com/index/vol3n2>

<sup>5</sup> J. L. Romeu, ‘Estudio Demográfico del Nuevo Auge de la Gran Logia de Cuba: Período de 1980 al 2010’, *Actas del Simposio del CEHMLAC* (Gibraltar: Centro de Estudios Historicos de la Masoneria Espanola, October 2012). Available at author’s web page: <http://web.cortland.edu/romeu/CehmezdaPtMason2012.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Effective Masons: a statistic developed by the author to standardize (i.e. compare across time and space) the data. Yearly total Masons are divided by one fourth of the corresponding total population (for females and men younger than 21 and men with criminal records and serious physical and mental disabilities cannot become Masons).

<sup>7</sup> Roger Fernandez-Callejas, ‘A Report on Masonry in Cuba in 1969’, *AQC* 82 (1969), 101–3.

<sup>8</sup> Romeu, *REHMLAC*, Section 2: Data Validation.

<sup>9</sup> Cuban censuses of 1943, 1953, 1971 and 2002, taken from *Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE)*. Web Pages: [http://www.cubagob.cu/otras\\_info/censo/index.htm](http://www.cubagob.cu/otras_info/censo/index.htm); and <http://www.one.cu/>. (Accessed XII/5/11). Yearly values between censuses were linearly interpolated.

<sup>10</sup> J. L. Romeu and Gustavo Pardo Valdés. *Análisis demográfico de la masonería cubana*. Habana. 2010. Accessible in the author’s web page: <http://web.cortland.edu/romeu/MasonDemoTodos.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> J. L. Romeu and G. P. Valdes, ‘Demographic Study of Cuban Blue Lodge Masons’, presented to, and published in, the *Proceedings of Social Statistics*, 2012 Annual Conference, American Statistical Society, and expanded in the journal *Estadística* of the Inter-American Statistical Institute, 63 (181), 57–75.

YEARLY COMPARISON OF TOTAL V. EFFECTIVE MEMBERSHIP

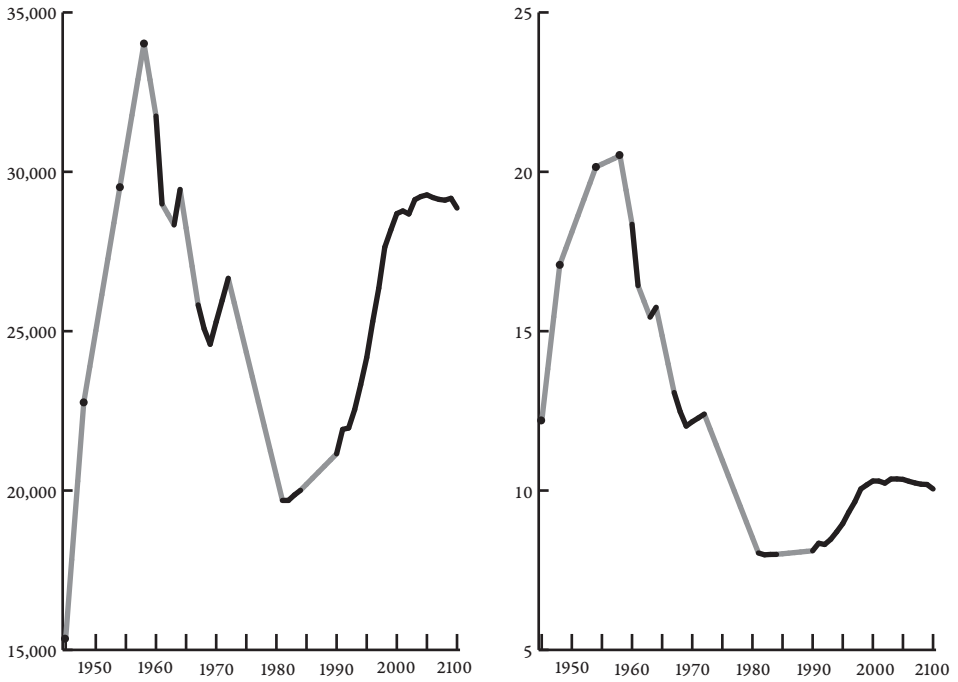


Fig. 1. Yearly membership in the GLC: A) Total Members; B) Effective Masons.

Source: Yearly membership reports from the Grand Secretary, GLC and author's calculations.

comparison was made between the GLC time series and their concurrent historical events. Serial change points were used to identify the beginning and the end of cycles, and the periods defined.

To illustrate data characteristics Table 1 shows, for selected years, GLC membership and the number of lodges, with their corresponding *Total Cuban population* and *Effective Masons*. Notice how 1958 and 1981 (highlighted) are the two years where the GLC achieves the maximum and minimum number of lodges, *Total* and *Effective* Members, during the period of 1945–2010. Table 2 presents seven defined historical periods, with their related main events.

Year	Members	Lodges	Population	Effective
1945	15,361	207	5,048,750	12.17
1958	34,025	340	6,638,133	20.50
1968	25,072	332	8,040,800	12.47
1981	19,690	326	9,794,900	8.04
1990	21,153	314	10,433,000	8.11
2000	28,689	314	11,142,000	10.30
2008	29,110	316	11,417,246	10.20

Table 1. GLC membership for selected years, 1945–2008. *Source:* Romeu and Pardo Valdés, pp. 2 and 3

Historical Epoch	Years	Membership Trend	Relevant Events
Before the Revolution	1945–58	Accelerated growth	Grau, Prío, and the struggle against Batista
First Years after the Revolution	1959–69	Accelerated reduction	Emigration; Bay of Pigs; October Crisis; Revol. Offensive; UMAP
Second Revolutionary Period	1970–76	Slower reduction Missing Data.	Zafra de los 10 Millones; End of Legal Emigration
Third Revolutionary Period	1977–80	Accelerated reduction	State Economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel boatlift
Fourth Revolutionary Period	1981–90	Slower growth Missing Data	Gorbachev; Dissolution of USSR; Economic Liberalization after the Mariel Boatlift
Fifth Revolutionary Period	1991–2000	Accelerated growth	IV Congress of PCC; Special Period; Rise of Tourism
Sixth Revolutionary Period	2001 to date	Stability	New Millenium; Tourism; Support from Venezuela; Raul Castro

Table 2. Historical periods derived from the GLC annual membership data.

A statistical model<sup>12</sup> was also developed and fitted that helps explain the data variation:

$$\text{Members Current Year} = \text{Members Previous Year} - \text{Losses} + \text{Gains}$$

$$\text{Losses} = \text{Withdrawals} + \text{Politically-Motivated} + \text{Deaths}$$

$$\text{Gains} = \text{New Members (affiliations)} + \text{Re-affiliations}$$

Withdrawals refer to Masons who became disillusioned and left the GLC. Politically-motivated losses include: (1) emigration caused by the 1959 revolution; (2) demits (or never joining) the GLC due to government policies,<sup>13</sup> and (3) demits (or never joining) the GLC because the new revolutionary ideology was more attractive than that of Freemasonry. Model results, discussed at length in the mentioned papers, were satisfactory. Hence they support the plausibility of the above-stated hypotheses, upon which such a model was developed.

In the 1990s GLC membership growth rates tripled after the Fourth Communist Party Congress allowed its members to join and non-government jobs in tourism increased.<sup>14</sup>

Year	Members	Effective	Estimation (0.01)	Estimation (0.03)	Difference
1991	21,918	0.0084	21,365	21,809	444
1992	21,962	0.0083	21,584	22,485	901
1993	22,539	0.0085	21,803	23,182	1,379
1994	23,321	0.0087	22,029	23,900	1,872
1995	24,169	0.0090	22,262	24,641	2,379
1996	25,301	0.0093	22,504	25,405	2,902
1997	26,344	0.0096	22,757	26,193	3,436
1998	27,635	0.0101	23,020	27,005	3,985
1999	28,173	0.0102	23,296	27,842	4,546
2000	28,689	0.0103	23,578	28,705	5,127

Table 3: Comparison of GLC growth rates, before and after the IV Party Congress (1991)

Source: Yearly reports from the Grand Secretary and author's calculations

<sup>12</sup> Identified in footnote 11.

<sup>13</sup> During the early years of the revolution the government developed a policy to obtain adherence to its cause, characterized by Fidel Castro's phrase 'Within the Revolution, everything, outside the Revolution, nothing.' *Discurso a los Intelectuales*, 1963. <http://www.min.cult.cu/loader.php?sec=historia&cont=palabrasalosintelectuales>

<sup>14</sup> This increasing GLC membership trend differs markedly from decreasing trends that existed in other countries, such as the USA, during these same years.

Table 3 shows two membership estimates: using growth rate 0.01 (in 1980s) and rate 0.03 (1990s). Growth comparison shows a relative increase of 5,127 new members in year 2000, who would have not joined the GLC had growth rate remained that of the 1980s.

Table 4 shows how GLC membership stabilized at about 29,000 during the first ten years of the twenty-first century. Notice a yearly churn (members joining and leaving the GLC) of about 10%. After over a decade of such high turnover, the make-up of present-day GLC membership may be very different from that of the 1980s, or even before.

Year	Members	Effective	Lodges	Dropped	Joined
2001	28,772	0.0103	314	2,170	2,075
2002	28,677	0.0102	314	1,247	1,697
2003	29,127	0.0104	316	2,141	2,239
2004	29,225	0.0104	316	***	***
2005	29,276	0.0104	316	***	***
2006	29,192	0.0103	316	***	***
2007	29,134	0.0102	316	***	***
2008	29,110	0.0102	316	***	***
2009	29,169	0.0102	316	***	***
2010	28,863	0.0101	316	***	***

Table 4: GLC yearly membership data, in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

*Source:* Reports from the Grand Secretary GLC, and the author's calculation.

The wide geographical distribution of GLC members is illustrated via provincial data, shown in Table 5. Notice how in each of Cuba's fourteen provinces there are multiple lodges. Metro Havana contains one third of all lodges and members, and the four provinces closer to Metro Havana<sup>15</sup> account for over half of the membership of GLC. Also, notice how predominantly urban provinces have a higher concentration of lodges and Masons (i.e. Effective Masons indicator) than more rural ones.

<sup>15</sup> Pinar del Rio, Havana Province, Matanzas and Villa Clara.

Province	Lodges	Members	% Lodge	% Memb	Effective
Total	316	29,127	100	100	10.42
Pinar Del Rio	17	2,706	5.38	9.29	14.90
Prov. Habana	29	2,494	9.18	8.56	14.03
Ciudad Habana	111	9,329	35.13	32.03	16.95
Matanzas	28	2,370	8.86	8.14	14.14
Villaclara	29	2,667	9.18	9.16	13.05
Cienfuegos	14	1,387	4.43	4.76	14.04
Sancti Spiritus	11	991	3.48	3.40	08.61
Ciego De Avila	8	449	2.53	1.54	04.36
Camaguey	14	709	4.43	2.43	03.62
Las Tunas	6	604	1.90	2.07	04.60
Holguin	12	1,138	3.80	3.91	04.46
Granma	10	1,104	3.16	3.79	05.37
Stgo De Cuba	19	1,992	6.01	6.84	07.69
Guantanamo	7	1,187	2.22	4.08	09.36

Table 5: GLC Provincial absolute/relative membership and Lodge data, circa 2007

Source: Reports from the Grand Secretary, GLC and author's calculations

Based on the analyzed data, events and model, key characteristics were identified for each period. They are discussed in detail in the mentioned papers, and summarized below:

- Period 1945–59: doubling of GLC membership was possibly impacted by a strong post-war economy, and the growth of urban middle classes, which nurtured a large segment of members.<sup>16</sup>
- Period 1959–80: 40% decrease, largely among young and professional members was possibly impacted by the wide state control of Cuba's economic life, which triggered strong emigration, many demits and few affiliations.

<sup>16</sup> A similar phenomenon occurred in the United States and other countries during this period.



- Period 1980–92: end of accelerated decline, and the beginning of a slow growth was possibly impacted by new possibilities of self-employment and a more relaxed governmental policy (the first political dissenters appeared).
- Period 1992–2000: accelerated growth, with more young and professional members, was possibly impacted by the 1991 Cuban Communist Party Congress decision to allow members to join religious and fraternal organizations,<sup>17</sup> and vice-versa, as well as by greater self-employment opportunities generated by the growth of international tourism.
- Period 2000–10: stabilization at 29,000 members was possibly due to member saturation, as well as government liberalization in several political, social and economic areas, introduced by the new administration of General Raul Castro.<sup>18</sup>

The overall conclusion, from observing sixty-five years of GLC evolution, is that the degree of state control over the economy and the educational establishment which can seriously affect private citizens' opportunities for advancement (e.g. for studying and working), in a country where the young could not emigrate,<sup>19</sup> was a key factor in the (positive or negative) demographic changes in Cuba's Freemasonry during the second half of the twentieth century.

### Some Relevant Characteristics of Cuban Freemasons

The previous section showed how, in the second half of the twentieth century, GLC membership went from accelerated growth (1945–59), to accelerated decay (1960–80), to stabilization (1981–91), and finally again to accelerated growth (1992–2010) and membership stabilization,<sup>20</sup> and several factors were identified affecting such evolution. In this section several characteristics are discussed that make the GLC, as an organization, particularly interesting.

<sup>17</sup> IV Congress of the Cuban Communist Party. October 1991. Radio Rebelde <http://www.radiorebelde.cu/50-revolucion/congresos/4-congreso.html>. Accessed on V/1/2012.

<sup>18</sup> 'Revolution in Retreat', in Special Report, *The Economist*, vol. 402, No. 8777. III/24/2012. Raul in 2006 replaced his brother Fidel as president. Examples of (1) economic changes: state land leased to private farmers; (2) political changes: limitation to two terms of five years, for heads of state (Fidel Castro had led Cuba, under several titles, for 47 years); (3) social changes: Mariel Castro has defended the civil rights of previously ostracized homosexuals.

<sup>19</sup> Emigration, overwhelmingly to the USA, ended after the October 1962 Missile Crisis. It restarted (1966–71) with the Freedom Flights (Varadero, Cuba to Miami, Florida). The Cuban government prohibited males aged fourteen to twenty-seven from leaving the country (citing military age). No emigration was allowed between 1972 and the 1980 Mariel Boatlift.

<sup>20</sup> After 1992 there were ten years of intense turnover in the membership, both in initiations and demits. By the year 2003 almost as many new members had joined (and perhaps left) the GLC as there were in 1980.

'Inclusion' makes GLC<sup>21</sup> a singular organization. It admits male members from all religions,<sup>22</sup> races,<sup>23</sup> walks of life,<sup>24</sup> socio-economic strata,<sup>25</sup> regions of the country<sup>26</sup> and political persuasions,<sup>27</sup> becoming a cross-cut of Cuban society.<sup>28</sup>

Freemasons are *egalitarian*: all Master Masons (MM) enjoy the same rights and obligations. Lodges are *democratic*: their officers are elected, and every MM can aspire to hold any position in the lodge. Sessions are *participative*; any MM has the possibility of respectfully arguing for, or against, any statement or proposal made in lodge.

The GLC has a tradition of active participation in civic life. In the late nineteenth century many GLC officers became leaders in Cuba's autonomic movement.<sup>29</sup> In the twentieth century, many others were leaders in political, educational and social activities, for GLC provided those wanting to participate outside political parties an opportunity to do so.<sup>30</sup>

For example, Grand Masters Regüeiferos, Llansó Simoni, Llansó Ordoñez and Muñoz Sañudo were civic and economic leaders; Wolter del Río and Santos Jimenez were university professors and cabinet ministers; Iraizoz, was a prominent newspaper editor.

GLC philosophy and involvement in civic life is best described in a book edited under Grand Master Santos Jiménez's tenure:

[Freemasonry] does not intend to impede the struggles for the different ideals that exist among men, but to seek that everyone may be able to defend one's principles, against the principles of others, without using any other weapon than reason, and without bringing to the struggle any other pursuit than the noble desire of seeing their ideals succeed, based upon their own merits. [Freemasonry] does not pretend to castrate the human thought, but on the contrary, to energize it in such a way, that it is no longer necessary to use imposition by force to succeed.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Other Grand Lodges may incorporate specific characteristics of their respective countries and communities.

<sup>22</sup> Most Masons are Catholic, the prevalent Cuban religion, others are Protestant, some practise Afro-Cuban religions, and a few are Jewish.

<sup>23</sup> Since the start of Cuba's first War of Independence in 1868 lodges have admitted non-whites. GLC has traditionally been racially integrated. Currently the Grand Commander of the Supreme Council as well as many lodge officers and members of the Grand Line are Afro-Cuban.

<sup>24</sup> In most lodges one finds factory workers, employees, technicians, as well as college professionals.

<sup>25</sup> Predominantly from working and professional lower and middle classes.

<sup>26</sup> There are over 300 lodges spread across almost every town throughout the country.

<sup>27</sup> Includes members of the Cuban Communist Party, government officials and security apparatus (Past GM Collera Vento was such a member), internal dissenters and ex-political prisoners (Hector Maseda, 33°, a member of the Supreme Council, is a dissident ex-political prisoner), as well as non-political citizens.

<sup>28</sup> Women have a separate organization, Acacias, and the young people had another one, AJEF, which was closed in 1966.

<sup>29</sup> Dominique Soucy y Delphine Sappez, 'Autonomismo y Masonería en Cuba', *REHMLAC* vol. 1, No. 1 (2009).

<sup>30</sup> See Torres-Cuevas, 64 and 65.

<sup>31</sup> Grand Lodge of Cuba, *La masonería: sus fines, su historia, su obra* (Habana: Molina y Cia, 1936), 36.

Other important characteristics that complement Freemasonry's ethical teachings, developed by active participation in the lodge, include fostering of reading habits,<sup>32</sup> honing of organization skills and democratic methods of leadership, managing and living within a budget, effective public speaking, the art of listening and arguing respectfully, of negotiation based upon persuasion and reason, and abiding by a system of rules and regulations. Such characteristics definitely contribute to prepare good civic leaders.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Freemasons constitute a fraternity where brothers must exercise tolerance.<sup>34</sup> These two characteristics have helped develop open and free forums where, through interaction, peaceful and productive exchanges of ideas occur.<sup>35</sup>

Because of their fraternal and tolerance principles, lodges have become incubators of novel organizations and ideas, where members discuss divergent views, cross-fertilizing each other. This may well be Freemasonry's most important contribution to civil society.

In summary, there are three key functions that Freemasonry, and thence GLC, provide to society: (1) the connecting function,<sup>36</sup> (2) the disseminating function,<sup>37</sup> and (3) the incubating function.<sup>38</sup> Precisely because of these characteristics, some political regimes have encouraged the development of Freemasonry, while others have, openly or discreetly, opposed it.

## Cuban Freemasons and Civil Society

Cuban civil society (CS) is a topic that has long interested this researcher,<sup>39</sup> for CS and the GLC are closely related.

It is worth noting how GLC was not banned in Cuba, a one-party Marxist state, when pre-revolutionary CS was disbanded after the 1959 revolution.<sup>40</sup> Such occurred in Nazi Germany, in Fascist Spain and Italy, and in the Marxist Soviet Union, all of them also one-party, ideological states.<sup>41</sup> Such an exception constitutes a unique case in modern history.

<sup>32</sup> In addition to degree liturgies and catechisms, Masons read books on history, rituals, philosophy, etc.

<sup>33</sup> See Torres-Cuevas, 78 and 162.

<sup>34</sup> Other Brethren such as Keith Sheriff, of St. John's Lodge, Gibraltar, and this author, believe that tolerance is not enough these days, and that acceptance should be the contemporary attitude.

<sup>35</sup> In Cuba and Puerto Rico, during the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries, the main leaders of autonomist parties, and of liberal ideological currents, were Masons and interacted in their lodges.

<sup>36</sup> Lodges help Masons establish new contacts, thus fostering interaction among its members.

<sup>37</sup> Lodges help Masons spread new ideas among their lodge members, and members of other lodges.

<sup>38</sup> Lodges foster the creation of other organizations that implement useful and new ideas.

<sup>39</sup> Jorge Luis Romeu, 'Un Análisis de la Literatura sobre la Sociedad Civil Cubana', *Caribbean Studies U. Puerto Rico*, Rio Piedras. vol. 41, No. 1 (January–July, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> Other institutions such as Rotary, Lions, Boy Scouts and the Catholic Youth, were disbanded shortly after 1959. Some Cuban Masons, fearing the GLC would follow suit, emigrated and founded Masonic institutions in exile in the USA.

<sup>41</sup> Ellic Howe, 'The Collapse of Freemasonry in Nazi Germany 1933-35', *AQC* 95 (1982).

Why was GLC spared? This excellent research question requires consideration of several factors: (1) GLC civic and patriotic trajectory, (2) that this is widely acknowledged among Cubans, and (3) GLC heterogeneous membership, as well as (4) its important international connections.<sup>42</sup> Finally, GLC came, after 1960, under (5) indirect government control through obligatory measures.<sup>43</sup>

After the 1990 collapse of the Soviet Union and the European Eastern Block, Cuba lost its economic subsidies, plunging it into a severe crisis. Cuba turned to international tourism as a source of income. At the same time, Cuba's CS began revamping, with hundreds of new non-governmental organizations (NGOs)<sup>44</sup> exerting a growing influence in daily life.

One of the most prominent was the Catholic Church (CCH). Directly through its dioceses and parishes, or through Caritas,<sup>45</sup> its international charitable organization, CCH began creating religious, social and educational programmes<sup>46</sup> as well as reviving old ones. Internet publications appeared,<sup>47</sup> edited by the dioceses,<sup>48</sup> in particular that of Havana.<sup>49</sup> The relevance of CS and CCH organizations has increased under President Raul Castro. For example, in 2010 Cardinal Jaime Ortega was instrumental in releasing Cuban political prisoners.<sup>50</sup> The above provides a roadmap for activities that GLC can undertake to contribute to CS and enhance its status.<sup>51</sup>

GLC fulfills the three conditions in CS definition.<sup>52</sup> It is (1) independent of the state, (2) its membership is voluntary, and (3) its goals are advanced through peaceful means. As one of the oldest, largest, and geographically expanded CS organizations, GLC has an important role to play.

Some of the contributions GLC could offer CS can be better understood by referring to the beginnings of Freemasonry, in early seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Eng-

<sup>42</sup> Such as Presidents Truman of the USA, Lazaro Cardenas of Mexico, and Salvador Allende of Chile.

<sup>43</sup> GLC was supervised by the Office of Religious Affairs of the Cuban Communist Party, which required lodges to submit detailed session reports, with names of attendees and topics of debate, under severe fines, and surveillance through overt and covert members of the Cuban security apparatus, such as Past Grand Master Collera Vento.

<sup>44</sup> Bildner Center/City University of New York (CUNY). Report on Cuban ONGs: <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/dept/bildn/publications/documents/Reaud15.pdf> Accessed on V/1/13

<sup>45</sup> Caritas Cubana [http://www.caritas.org/worldmap/latin\\_america/cuba.html](http://www.caritas.org/worldmap/latin_america/cuba.html) Accessed on V/1/13

<sup>46</sup> Centro de Bioetica: [http://www.cbioetica.org/congre\\_fibip/academic\\_eng.pdf](http://www.cbioetica.org/congre_fibip/academic_eng.pdf) (accessed V/10/13)

<sup>47</sup> *Vitral*, of Diocese of Pinar del Rio <http://www.vitral.org/> and *Palabra Nueva*, of Diocese of Havana <http://www.palabranueva.net/newPage/index.php> (accessed V/10/13) are two good examples,

<sup>48</sup> Several diocesan web sites and their formation centers (accessed on V/10/13) can be found in: [http://www.palabranueva.net/newPage/index.php?option=com\\_weblinks&view=category&cid=14%3Asitios-diocesanos&Itemid=6](http://www.palabranueva.net/newPage/index.php?option=com_weblinks&view=category&cid=14%3Asitios-diocesanos&Itemid=6) and [http://www.arquidiocesisdelahabana.org/contens/webs/ind\\_main12\\_formacion.htm](http://www.arquidiocesisdelahabana.org/contens/webs/ind_main12_formacion.htm)

<sup>49</sup> Archdiocese of Havana web site: <http://www.arquidiocesisdelahabana.org/> (accessed V/10/13)

<sup>50</sup> *El País* [http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2010/07/07/actualidad/1278453615\\_850215.html](http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2010/07/07/actualidad/1278453615_850215.html)

<sup>51</sup> For more discussion on the current activities of the Supreme Council, see the next section of this paper.

<sup>52</sup> V. Pérez-Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society* (Harvard University Press, 1993).

land. Then, Masonic lodges were conceived as embryos of an emerging CS. Such ideas, thoroughly discussed in Margaret Jacob's *Living the Enlightenment*,<sup>53</sup> are still valid today.

Jacob affirms that 'Lodges were spaces in a new zone of civil society'<sup>54</sup> that 'occupied a middle ground' in this society, where 'some men and a few women sought to express those ideals sociably.'<sup>55</sup> Therefore, lodges constitute a forum for novel ideas that perhaps couldn't be shared as freely in other established social forums.

Jacob continues, stating that 'First and foremost, lodges were schools of government,<sup>56</sup> ruled by *constitutions*, whose officers are democratically elected among their peers.'<sup>57</sup> Jacob then states that lodges foster 'the creation of constitutionally governed civil societies,'<sup>58</sup> where merit (i.e. personal achievement) 'is the sole criterion for status within the Lodge.'<sup>59</sup>

Jacob discusses the egalitarian<sup>60</sup> Masonic concept of 'promotion within the lodge as grounded upon real worth and personal merit only,'<sup>61</sup> instead of based on the rank or wealth that an individual holds in society, often inherited.

All the above ideas, which were revolutionary and dangerous in 1717, may still be so today in some societies and may help to explain the rapid growth of the GLC after 1990. Before that date some citizens, who later became economically independent of the state, would not have joined the GLC. And some others, considered by official agencies<sup>62</sup> to be insufficiently qualified to join the higher structures because of unwelcome personal values,<sup>63</sup> may have sought acceptance in the GLC. Such was the attitude, in the eighteenth century, of individuals who were also unfavorably considered by their official society.

## PART II: HOW CUBAN FREEMASONS CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN THE CUBAN MARXIST REGIME.

Three excellent questions have been proposed:

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasons and Politics in XVIII Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 57.

<sup>55</sup> Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 143.

<sup>56</sup> Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 124.

<sup>57</sup> Blue lodges have three degrees. Once a member has obtained the third, that of Master Mason, he becomes eligible to hold any office and vote in every lodge election.

<sup>58</sup> Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 135.

<sup>59</sup> Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> See Landmark Number 22: 'The Equality of all Masons.'

<sup>61</sup> Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 54.

<sup>62</sup> Such as the Communist Party, the government, and sensitive professional positions.

<sup>63</sup> Such as religious, philosophical, economic, political, social, or others of an ideological nature.

1. How was the GLC able to flourish in Catholic Cuba, first under Spain, and later, after independence?
2. How was the GLC able to continue to exist under Castro's Marxist regime, when Freemasonry was banned under Fascist and Nazi regimes, and other totalitarian dictatorships?
3. How, if in any way, has the Castro regime tried to use the GLC to pursue its policies, in the way as Napoleon Bonaparte tried to use Freemasonry to consolidate his expanding Empire, in the France of early 1800s?

### How was the GLC Able to Flourish in Catholic Cuba?

Under Spain, Cuba was never as Catholic as other larger and richer Spanish colonies.<sup>64</sup> Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Santo Domingo were poor and scarcely populated islands until after 1790. Then two events occurred: (1) Haiti's slave revolt provided the opportunity to take over Haiti's sugar cane production, and (2) Spain lost all other, richer, American colonies to independence.

By then, Cuba and Puerto Rico had developed a weak CCH, whose bishops and Spanish priests often complained about lack of fervor,<sup>65</sup> and who identified with Spanish interests. For during Cuba's colonial era, as well as during its wars of independence, CCH and many of its priests supported Spain. At the start of Cuba's two independence wars Havana's Bishops published edicts requesting priests to support Spain in June 1869,<sup>66</sup> and exhorting the flock to combat the rebels in June 1895.<sup>67</sup>

Cuban Catholicism and anti-clericalism were milder than those of Spain or Mexico, both before and after independence. This allowed Freemasonry to flourish in Cuba.<sup>68</sup>

### How did the GLC Continue to Exist under Castro?

Freemasonry was banned by Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. Why was the GLC not disbanded by the government, as were other Cuban CS pre-revolutionary organizations? The answer requires the consideration of three issues: (1) the long and distinguished history of the GLC, (2) the singular nature of Cuba's Marxist regime, and (3) the unorthodox approaches the Cuban government applied to control the GLC effectively.

<sup>64</sup> Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia were the richest Spanish colonies.

<sup>65</sup> Torres-Cuevas, 70.

<sup>66</sup> Jose M. Castellano Gil, *La Masoneria Española en Cuba* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Centro de Cultura popular Canaria, 1996), 297.

<sup>67</sup> Castellano Gil, *La Masoneria Española en Cuba*, 300.

<sup>68</sup> Lay organization *Catholic Action* produced, in the 1950s the booklet *A Catholic and Mason?* to address the increasing number of Catholic men joining GLC.

## The Long and Distinguished History of the GLC

The history of the GLC is here discussed only after 1859, when Andres Cassard arrived in Santiago de Cuba with instructions from Grand Commander Albert Pike, of the Mother Supreme Council in Charleston, SC, to organize the *Gran Oriente de Colon*.<sup>69</sup> Before 1859, Cuba enjoyed a few short periods when Freemasonry was allowed.<sup>70</sup> Its first lodges included wealthy and aristocratic Cubans and Spaniards as members.<sup>71</sup> In addition, several para-Masonic secret societies, seeking independence,<sup>72</sup> were created. However, between 1835 and 1859 Masonic activities in Cuba were prohibited and lodges were dissolved.<sup>73</sup>

Two years after Bro. Cassard created the Supreme Council in Santiago, Pike sent Vicente Antonio DeCastro<sup>74</sup> to redress some problems that had arisen.<sup>75</sup> Instead, Bro. DeCastro created the *Gran Oriente de Cuba y las Antillas*,<sup>76</sup> an openly pro-independence order.<sup>77</sup> After 1862, GOCA lodges spread throughout Cuba, disbanding in 1868 shortly before the first independence war.<sup>78</sup> In early 1870 twenty-three out of the thirty lodges under the *Gran Logia de Colon*, suspected of sympathy with Cuban rebels, were closed by the colonial government.<sup>79</sup> Grand Master Puente Badell, of *Gran Logia de Colon*, and nine of his officers were sequestered and murdered in February 1871 in San Juan de Wilson, near Santiago.<sup>80</sup> This illustrates the degree that Spanish colonial authorities suspected and feared the activities of *autochthonous* Masonic lodges.

However, not all lodges were composed of a majority of Cubans, nor did their members sympathize with independence. After the 1868 revolution that deposed the Spanish Queen Isabella, Freemasonry was again allowed in Spain, and several Spanish *Obediencias* finally appeared in Cuba and Puerto Rico,<sup>81</sup> organizing lodges that competed with the already-established *autochthonous* ones.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Miranda 126, and Torres-Cuevas, 55-56.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. when French Masons arrived from Haiti, or during the Spanish Revolution of 1820-1823.

<sup>71</sup> For the founding of Masonic orders in early XIX Century, see Miranda, 38-77 and 101-123.

<sup>72</sup> *Soles y Rayos*, in 1823 (Miranda, 107), and *Aguila Negra*, in 1826 (Miranda, 116).

<sup>73</sup> For Cuban Masonic history after 1830 see Miranda, 122-123.

<sup>74</sup> Freemason and renowned medical doctor.

<sup>75</sup> Personal rivalries in the Supreme Council, and resentments due to dependence of GLC on Supreme Council.

<sup>76</sup> See Torres Cuevas, 57-61 and 110-127; Miranda, 164.

<sup>77</sup> Considered irregular because of its strong political views. See Miranda, 131; Torres-Cuevas, 70.

<sup>78</sup> Tinima, Redencion and Buena Fe lodges included many of the organizers and generals of the war of 1868-78, such as Agramonte, Cespedes, Maso, Aguilera, Gomez and Maceo. See Miranda, 276-77; Torres Cuevas, 176.

<sup>79</sup> See details on Cuban lodge closings in Castellano Gil, 263.

<sup>80</sup> Miranda, 313-54, dedicates an entire chapter to the murder of GM Puente Badel. Torres-Cuevas, 61, and Murphy, *History of Freemasonry in Cuba*, also discuss this.

<sup>81</sup> The Spanish *Obediencias* were organized several years after *autochthonous* ones: GOE (*Gran Oriente Español*), GONE (*Gran Oriente Nacional de España*), GODE (*Gran Oriente de España*), GLS (*Gran Logia Simbolica*).

<sup>82</sup> Lodges chartered by the Supreme Council in Charleston, and formed mainly by Cuban or Puerto Rican nationals.



Consequently, two conflicting Masonic factions arose in Cuba and Puerto Rico:<sup>83</sup> one, mainly populated by Spaniards,<sup>84</sup> supported centralization from Madrid; another, filled mainly by Cubans and Puerto Ricans,<sup>85</sup> supported decentralization (autonomy or independence).

Spanish *Obediencias* did not favor autonomy or independence. Castellano Gil states how these 'were contrary to segregationist movements,'<sup>86</sup> adding that 'members of Spanish lodges ... are considered advanced guardians that watch for the integrity of the fatherland.'<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, Spanish *Orientes* 'demanded from all their affiliates in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, proof of their pro-Spanish sentiments.'<sup>88</sup>

After Cuba's 1868–78 independence war was lost, remnants from the GOCA and other Masonic groups united under *Gran Logia Unida de Colon e Isla de Cuba*.<sup>89</sup> Antonio Govin, its newly elected Grand Master, with other Grand Lodge officers and members, founded the Autonomist (Liberal) Party to seek peacefully for Cuba a status similar to that of Canada within Britain. This alternative had been unsuccessfully pursued by several Cuban leaders since the early 1800s.<sup>90</sup> The Autonomist party published several newspapers, developing a solid ideological struggle until the start of the war of 1895.<sup>91</sup>

Cuba's last war of independence was organized by Jose Marti, and led by generals Gomez, Maceo, and Garcia, all Masons. The American intervention government of 1899–1902 included several cabinet ministers who were Masons. Cuba's first president, Estrada Palma, its third vice-president, its fifth president, and scores of political, economic, educational and social leaders, were all Masons. In Puerto Rico, the majority of cabinet ministers in the autonomist government under Spain<sup>92</sup> as well as many leaders after the US intervention were also Masons.

Many historians have recognized the significant contributions that Freemasons have made to Cuba's economic, political and independence struggles,<sup>93</sup> as well as to its social and educational advancement, especially in leaders and ideas.<sup>94</sup> Such fact is implicitly

<sup>83</sup> For Puerto Rico, consult: Jose A. Ayala, *La masonería puertorriqueña de obediencia española: siglo XIX* (Murcia: Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de Murcia, 1991). For Cuba: Castellano Gil, *ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> GOE, GONE, GODE, GLS. See Castellano Gil and Jose A. Ayala.

<sup>85</sup> Many leaders of GLC and *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico* (GLSPR) supported Canadian-style autonomy.

<sup>86</sup> Castellano Gil, 285.

<sup>87</sup> Taken from the Official Bulletin of GODE. Cf. Castellano Gil, 285.

<sup>88</sup> Castellano Gil, 287.

<sup>89</sup> Formed with GOCA, Grand Oriente de Colon, and other lodges. Torres-Cuevas, 170–74; 188–91.

<sup>90</sup> Among them Caballero in 1807, Varela in 1820, and Jose A. Saco throughout most of the nineteenth century.

<sup>91</sup> Simultaneously, Puerto Rican Freemasons helped found their own Liberal Autonomist Party.

<sup>92</sup> Among them Munoz-Rivera, DeDiego, Barbosa, Coll y Toste, and Fernandez-Juncos.

<sup>93</sup> The First National History Congress, organized by the Cuban-International Society of Historical Studies of the Office of the City Historian of Havana, celebrated on 8–12 October 1942, recognized Cuban Freemasonry as the Institution that 'has contributed more elements towards the Independence, freedom, culture and progress of Cuba.'

<sup>94</sup> Torres-Cuevas, 78–9.



supported by the actions of the Spanish authorities, who systematically suppressed *autochthonous* lodges. For example, in 1895 ‘Spanish Governor Callejas suspended all Masonic activity in Cuba.’<sup>95</sup> Evidently, Freemasons’ contributions in leaders and ideas have been disproportionately larger than the size of all Masonic institutions with respect to Cuba’s general population.

In spite of such evidence, some historians strongly disagree. Castellano Gil, for example, opines that ‘individual behavior of a Mason should be separate from the theoretical thought of the institution.’<sup>96</sup> Castellano states that, since not all independence leaders were Masons, nor all Masons supported Cuba’s independence or autonomy, Freemasonry as an institution should not get credit for activities of some of its members.

It is unreasonable to expect Masons to develop partisan political activity within, or in the name of, their lodges. First, such activity is prohibited in Masonic constitutions. Secondly, Freemasonry is not a political party. Such historians miss the real contribution by Freemasons, that of grooming and connecting leaders, and polishing and distributing their ideas, something that Spanish authorities and their military understood well, and which triggered, among other atrocities, the 1871 murder of GM Puente Badell, referred to above.

It is noteworthy to point out how Castellano Gil, whose well-documented book quotes extensively Miranda and Torres-Cuevas,<sup>97</sup> fails to acknowledge this event, and only indirectly alludes to it in his footnote 454, on page 271.

Grand Master Wolter del Rio explained the nature of Masonic contributions in his 1930 message:

Freemasonry, as an Institution, is one of doctrinaire and not of material activity ... We discuss principles in an abstract order ... without deriving concrete cases or conclusions because, as an Institution, we cannot do this. Every Brother individually, with the teachings, Masonic ideals, and doctrines, should by himself, as a man, provide for such conclusions, independently of the Institution, the applications that he freely considers appropriate, with the serenity, the limitations and the human philosophy that characterizes every Mason.<sup>98</sup>

Summarizing, during Cuba’s lengthy road to independence, Masonic lodges fulfilled the three key functions discussed earlier: connecting, disseminating and incubating ideas.

Hence, first through their involvement in Masonic lodges, Cubans interested in autonomy or independence (two roads leading to socioeconomic development) were

<sup>95</sup> Castellano Gil, 286. For a similar persecution in Puerto Rico, see ‘The Prisoners of San Felipe del Morro’, by Bro. Luis Otero, *Scottish Rite Journal*, Nov/Dec. 2013, 22–24.

<sup>96</sup> Castellano Gil, 267. For more opinions on historical interpretations by *masonologists*, see pages 16 and 24.

<sup>97</sup> Both these Cuban historians discuss Puente Badell in their works: see footnote 80.

<sup>98</sup> Miranda, 280 and 281.

able to meet, exchange and enrich their ideas, and create parallel organizations to implement them. Secondly, Spanish authorities recognized and feared such bonding and nurturing catalytic effect. Then, as the independence war started, the Spaniards closed *autochthonous* lodges, in Cuba and in Puerto Rico.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, during the 1959 revolution that brought Castro to power many Cuban Masons participated, peacefully<sup>100</sup> and otherwise,<sup>101</sup> on both sides. Many revolutionaries were themselves, or had family and friends who were, Masons. So the new government was well aware of the institution's relevant and long involvement in Cuba's struggles and civic life.

It is here suggested that Castro's government recognition of the GLC's historical role was influential in permitting the GLC to continue operating after 1960. Another important reason why the GLC functioned without government interference was advanced by PGM Pineiro del Cueto in his 1971 report to the Conference of Grand Masters of North America: 'because of the desire of the Cuban government to avoid an adverse reaction from international Masonry.'<sup>102</sup>

### The Singular Nature of Cuba's Marxist regime

The second item of Question 2 is answered as follows: as opposed to Russia, Germany, Italy or Spain, where the new government leaders had a well-defined ideology when arriving to power, the young 1959 Cuban revolutionaries were an heterodox mix of nationalists, liberals and socialists.<sup>103</sup> In addition, Cubans had not fought an enemy supported by Freemasons.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, as opposed to Poland, Czechoslovakia or Hungary after World War Two, Cuba was not invaded by the Russian army, which then appointed their new government leaders. Cuba's geographical situation in the Americas permitted the new Cuban government a larger degree of autonomy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union<sup>105</sup>, to develop a different type of Marxism. Notice how, in addition to the singularity of allowing Freemasonry to operate, Cuba is the only communist state that never included, as part of its official name, the adjective Socialist, Popular, or Democratic. Cuba's official name remains simply, *Republic of Cuba*.

<sup>99</sup> Other associations: religious orders, cultural and regional clubs, etc. were NOT closed by Spanish authorities.

<sup>100</sup> GM Piñero del Cueto exhorted both sides to stop the armed struggle and to solve their differences peacefully.

<sup>101</sup> Artemisa Lodge served as meeting and training site for revolutionaries that participated in the Moncada Barracks assault, the first armed conflict against Batista (Torres-Cuevas, 211), and Bro. Fernandez-Callejas's article 'Accion de la masoneria en el movimiento de liberacion a Cuba', *Mundo Masonico* (La Habana, Jan/Feb 1959).

<sup>102</sup> Commission on Information of Recognition of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America, Annual Report, Washington DC. February 24, 1971. Page 4: Cuba.

<sup>103</sup> Most Cuban revolutionaries became Marxists, and started reading this theory after seizing power in 1959.

<sup>104</sup> As occurred to Lenin v. Kerenski, in Russia, in 1917, to Franco v. the Republicans, in Spain, in 1936.

<sup>105</sup> Precluding Soviet troops invading Cuba, as occurred in Hungary in 1956 or in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

## Unorthodox Approaches the Cuban Government Applied to Effectively Control the GLC

To analyze how the Cuban government was able to effectively control the GLC, it is necessary to review the events that occurred in it, starting in the 1950s.<sup>106</sup> During GM Piñeiro del Cueto's ten year tenure relevant events occurred, such as doubling of the GLC membership to over thirty thousand and increasing the number of lodges to over three hundred. Also, several international Masonic events<sup>107</sup> were held in Cuba, and the GLC built a new high rise.

GLC membership included large merchants and land-owners, but mostly middle class professionals, small businessmen, workers, tradesmen, employees, and farmers, of all races.<sup>108</sup> Such socioeconomic heterogeneity allowed the GLC membership to remain above nineteen thousand during the 1960s, in spite of the emigration of 10% of the Cuban population, mostly from its middle and upper classes. But the changes in the political system caused shocks that rocked the institution. And, as occurred within the general population, Cuban Freemasons also split into pro and anti-government factions.

This situation was replicated in the GLC leadership.<sup>109</sup> In 1960 GM Tarajano emigrated to Miami, leaving DGM Aurelio Alvarez in charge. Shortly after, Alvarez also left the country, passing the leadership to the Grand Senior Warden, Cespedes Mora. In Florida Tarajano formed the Grand Lodge of Cuba in Exile.<sup>110</sup> In Cuba several GLC officers were arrested for conspiring to overthrow the regime,<sup>111</sup> while others actively supported it. Meanwhile several GLC meetings were held and proposals backing or criticizing the new government were heatedly debated.<sup>112</sup>

The years 1960–65 constituted a transition period, where the GLC leadership remained ill-defined, several Grand Officers resigned, and others were arrested, left the country or changed functions. In 1965 Dr Francisco Condom was elected Grand Master and some stability finally began to emerge. The GLC, however, came out from this difficult period weakened, both politically and institutionally. In the ensuing years its membership declined to about 40% of that of 1958.

<sup>106</sup> For details of the GLC history under the revolution, *see* Torres-Cuevas, 226–44; or the GLC web page: <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/masoneria-revolucion> (Accessed IX/28/13).

<sup>107</sup> Confederacion Masonica Interamericana and Supreme Council meetings. Torres-Cuevas, 210–15.

<sup>108</sup> Torres-Cuevas, 215, 220.

<sup>109</sup> For more details see Torres-Cuevas, 226–38, and the same GLC web page.

<sup>110</sup> Recognized by the Conference of US Grand Masters: <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/masoneria-revolucion> At the time, based on Russian and Eastern Europe experiences, some GLC officers thought it would also be dissolved.

<sup>111</sup> Especially newly-elected GM Cuervo Calvo, who was later released, then replaced by DDGM Martinez Gomez and allowed to emigrate. Torres-Cuevas, 236–7.

<sup>112</sup> The author's father, an 18th Degree Mason, attended several of these meetings, where proposals to dissolve the GLC were defeated. In spite of so many problems, GLC continued operating, albeit with a lower profile.

Torres-Cuevas proposes five causes<sup>113</sup> for the GLC decline during 1960–70:

1. The economic impact of the revolution in the upper and middle classes.
2. The massive exodus.
3. The diminished credibility of Freemasonry to provide solutions for the country's social problems.
4. Political and social marginality, as a result of the new regime.
5. The deaths of older members.

The present author adds a sixth cause:

6. Explicit government policies created to disincentivize new affiliations and promote attrition, especially among the young.

During the 1960s and the 1970s belonging to a lodge or a church was seen by the regime as an indication of a lack of zeal. And so known members of lodges or churches<sup>114</sup> found it very difficult to study at the university or other specialized schools, to find or keep a good job, to obtain a promotion,<sup>115</sup> or alternatively to emigrate.<sup>116</sup> As a result of these government policies membership in the GLC not only decreased, but those who did join were older, less influential, and less educated, than in the past.<sup>117</sup>

Bro. Roger Fernandez-Callejas, a Cuban Freemason and Masonic author,<sup>118</sup> discussed this situation in his *AQC* paper. He wrote:

Presently the lodges are working under serious difficulties. Initiations are few because few have the courage to join in the face of opposition and harassment. There are resignations of members virtually every day ... Lodges cannot meet regularly because of difficulties placed in their paths ... for example, a government license is necessary for each meeting. ... Brethren are laboring under the most adverse conditions.<sup>119</sup>

The conditions reported by Fernandez-Callejas from exile were the ones under which this author became a Freemason in 1969.

<sup>113</sup> Torres Cuevas, 241-242.

<sup>114</sup> Mandatory government surveys known as *Cuentame-tu-vida* were frequently passed in schools and workplaces, asking about religious beliefs and membership in churches and fraternal organizations.

<sup>115</sup> In 1969, this author, as a college student in his early twenties, had to struggle with such situation and decisions. In 1965 he was expelled from the university and sent to the UMAP labor camps for two years. He wrote a collection of short stories about his UMAP experiences (*Los Unos, Los Otros y El Seibo*, Ediciones Universal, Miami, 1971) published outside Cuba under his father's pen name Beltran de Quiros. The book was praised by Prof. Seymour Menton, a UC Irvine specialist on Latin American literature, in his treatise *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution* (U. Texas Press, 1973). In 1979, the Cuban government found out, and he was arrested by the security apparatus, then *Released Guilty* (under parole). Eventually, he graduated with a Maths degree from the University of Havana, but was forbidden to teach in Cuba. During the past 33 years, he has read statistics in American, Spanish and Latin American universities, directly, as Fulbright Scholar, or via the Juarez Lincoln Marti Project, that he founded in 1994: <http://web.cortland.edu/matresearch>

<sup>116</sup> See footnote 19.

<sup>117</sup> Torres-Cuevas, 242.

<sup>118</sup> Fernandez-Callejas was an important GLC officer up to the 1960s, when he emigrated. He authored several books, including *Curso de Masoneria Simbolica*, and gave many important papers in the Cuban lodges.

<sup>119</sup> Fernandez-Callejas, 'Masonry in Cuba', *AQC* 82 (1969), 101-3. See footnote 7.

The present author<sup>120</sup> developed a formal statistical model to analyze the decline of Freemasons in the GLC during the 1960s,<sup>121</sup> assessed and published in a peer-reviewed statistical journal.

The model considers and compares actual membership with an estimate of those Masons who left the country, or the institution, as well as those who died. The significance of the statistical model lies in identifying and quantifying the different sources of membership attrition during this decade. The largest attrition component consists of those leaving the GLC because Freemasonry no longer represented their ideology (but the new regime did), together with those who feared the consequences of the government policies to disincentivize membership.

We still need to consider another unquantifiable component: those who never affiliated to GLC because of the two above reasons. Table 6 summarizes the model findings:

Factors	Estimate	Percent
Emigrated	3000	25%
Deaths	3000	25%
Left (all reasons)	6000	50%
Total Attrition	12000	100%

Table 6: Summary of factors in membership decline: 1959–70  
 Source: Percentages were calculated using the stats model results

Prior to 1959 the GLC developed several important social and educational programmes that Fernandez-Callejas discussed in his 1969 *AQC* paper. Of these programmes, only three remain active: the Library and Museum,<sup>122</sup> the Academy of Higher Masonic Studies,<sup>123</sup> and the Masonic Home.<sup>124</sup> The GLC social and educational programs – the Shoe Fund, Masonic Dress, the National Masonic School, and the Masonic University<sup>125</sup> – ended when the government took over all levels of education and all social agencies.

<sup>120</sup> Romeu is a Chartered Statistician Fellow of the RSS, and reads statistics in Syracuse University.

<sup>121</sup> *Estadística*, Inter-American Statistical Institute. 63 (181), 57–75. Also see footnote 11.

<sup>122</sup> GLC web page: <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/museo> and <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/biblioteca>

<sup>123</sup> GLC web page: <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/academia>

<sup>124</sup> GLC web page: <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/asilo> has capacity for 90 interns but is in poor condition. Recently volunteer brethren have provided voluntary time to help maintain it.

<sup>125</sup> This author's father read law in the Masonic University until it was closed in 1960.

## How, If in Any Way, Has the Castro Regime Tried to Use the GLC?

The third question posed, whether the Castro regime tried to use the GLC to pursue its policies, as Napoleon Bonaparte tried to use Freemasonry to consolidate his expanding Empire, requires an answer in two parts: before and after 1990.

Before 1990, Cuba received economic support from the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block, and was interested in spreading revolutionary systems to the Third World, where Freemasons are often members of the upper classes. Hence, using the GLC to advance its interests was not efficient, as Masons represented a different cohort than the one targeted by the regime. Furthermore, Soviet and Eastern Block economic support was sufficient.

The situation changed in 1990, when the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block disintegrated. Cuba lost its subsidies and underwent times of extreme difficulty.<sup>126</sup> To survive, internal and external policies radically changed. First, mixed private-government corporations were created to build hotels. Expatriate<sup>127</sup> and international tourism was fostered as a source of income. Then in 1991 the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) Congress authorized its members to join the GLC and the Churches, and vice-versa. Table 3 shows GLC membership growth in the 1990s, and uses two growth models to assess the relative impact of the new CCP policy.

Before 1991 the Cuban government closely supervised all Masonic lodges<sup>128</sup> and it was generally assumed that there were undercover informants and government agents among Cuban Freemasons. This became public knowledge when PGM Collera-Vento (2000–03) appeared on Cuban TV, announcing that he had been, for thirty years, a Secret Police informant.<sup>129</sup>

After 1991 things changed. Thousands of new Masons, including CCP and government officials and members of political dissident movements,<sup>130</sup> joined the GLC and are eligible for election to GLC leadership. So both government and opposition can now, through them, exert a larger influence in the development of the institution.

This new situation, well managed, provides GLC with two singular roles. Raul Castro's administration has been slowly pursuing economic and political changes inside Cuba and also expanding international contacts to finance them. The almost thirty thousand GLC members can, as discussed above, contribute to develop economic and

<sup>126</sup> These difficult times are officially known in Cuba as *Periodo Especial en Tiempos de Paz*.

<sup>127</sup> Remittances from Cubans abroad, and expenditures from their visits to relatives, are two important sources of hard currency <http://www.ascecuba.org/publications/proceedings/volume21/pdfs/perezlopezdiaz-briquets.pdf>

<sup>128</sup> See Fernandez-Callejas, 'Masonry in Cuba', *AQC* 82 (1969), 101–3 and footnote 43.

<sup>129</sup> Edict No. 171 of the Grand Master of GLC about Agent Gerardo, PGM Collera Vento. GLC web page: <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/node/405> Accessed on V/1/2012.

<sup>130</sup> Seven of 75 prisoners of conscience released in 2012 through the intercession of CCH belonged to the Craft: <http://en.mercopress.com/2010/07/08/cuba-promises-to-the-catholic-church-the-liberation-of-52-political-prisoners>



political change through their participation in CS. And the international relations of Freemasonry can help the Castro administration to expand its contacts abroad, in search of badly needed hard currency.

Such opportunities, addressed sagely as done by the CCH and Caritas,<sup>131</sup> can significantly help GLC recover its past relevance, both inside the island and abroad.<sup>132</sup>

But in recent years, in spite of new activities such as regional Masonic conferences<sup>133</sup> that predict a brighter future, the GLC has changed slowly, as attested by its outdated web page.<sup>134</sup> GM Evaristo Gutiérrez Torres has not travelled abroad and has kept a low profile.

On the other hand, Grand Commander Lazaro Cuesta Valdes<sup>135</sup> of the Supreme Council 33<sup>o</sup>,<sup>136</sup> elected in 2011, has made large strides. Under Cuesta's stewardship, the Supreme Council has developed an active web page and a presence on Facebook.<sup>137</sup> IPH Cuesta has organized an international conference on 'Freemasonry and Integration to Current Society',<sup>138</sup> a topic that suggests an active interest in developing broader membership participation.<sup>139</sup> A second international conference, on the same topic, is under preparation for 2014.

Grand Commander Cuesta Valdes has also in the past two years visited Rome, as well as both USA Supreme Councils (Northern and Southern Masonic Jurisdictions), in Ohio and Washington DC. During this last trip,<sup>140</sup> IPH Cuesta Valdes visited Cuban Lodges in Miami,<sup>141</sup> and has informally met with other Cuban Masons there.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Section 2.3 of this paper details how Caritas and Church contributions have persuaded the Cuban government to allow the establishment of web publications, new educational programs, restoration of churches, etc.

<sup>132</sup> Such as requesting from the Cuban government to provide inexpensive internet and web page access, facilities to acquire computers for every lodge, and facilities and authorization to develop new internet publications, workshops, training programs, and other courses for GLC members, with the help and support of Freemasons abroad.

<sup>133</sup> An example of GLC regional conference <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/node/791> (Accessed IX/29/13).

<sup>134</sup> GLC web page <http://www.granlogiacuba.org/> costs US\$600/year to operate, paid with donations from brethren abroad, which provides 60 hrs/month of connection time and a small buffer, evidently insufficient to keep it up-to-date. (Personal Communication from the Chair of GLC Committee for Foreign Relations. Email of X/21/2013)

<sup>135</sup> Cuesta is several years younger and more dynamic than his predecessor, octogenarian Armada Peña (1991–2011).

<sup>136</sup> For more information on the SCG33 visit its web page: <http://www.supremocuba.org/> (Accessed on V/10/13)

<sup>137</sup> SCG33 in Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/supremoconsejograd33cuba> (Accessed on V/10/13)

<sup>138</sup> [http://www.supremocuba.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=29&Itemid=6](http://www.supremocuba.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29&Itemid=6) (V/10/13)

<sup>139</sup> Several 2013 Conference papers and the 2014 announcement can be read in the SCG33 web page.

<sup>140</sup> <http://masonerialibertaria.wordpress.com/2013/09/12/recuento-de-mi-visita-a-los-estados-unidos-del-14-de-agosto-al-11-de-septiembre/>

<sup>141</sup> IPH Cuesta visited Lodge Luz de America No. 125, under Jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Florida, on X/6/13. A report of such visit is in: [http://www.supremocuba.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=75:la-rl-america-recibe-al-supremo-consejo](http://www.supremocuba.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75:la-rl-america-recibe-al-supremo-consejo) Accessed on X/7/2013.

<sup>142</sup> Hundreds of Cuban Freemasons, former members of GLC, now live abroad. Many have joined lodges in the US, Spain, Puerto Rico, etc. This author belongs to Resp. Lodge Jose Celso Barbosa 106, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The Supreme Council invited Cuban Masons abroad to an open meeting held in Havana in October 2013,<sup>143</sup> to discuss ways for resolving the Masonic breach that has separated Cuban Masons in the island and abroad for over fifty years.<sup>144</sup> The GLC has closely followed these events.<sup>145</sup> GM Gutierrez Torres also participated in meetings with Cuban Freemasons in the diaspora and drafted ‘Official Message No. 6’.<sup>146</sup> Some of its content addresses GLC events occurring half a century ago, and which are difficult to ascertain, as their main actors have long disappeared and there is little documentation remaining, especially to support interpretations of intentions. The cost in dollars to travel to Cuba, especially for Cubans abroad, is not insignificant,<sup>147</sup> and provides another stream of badly-needed hard currency for the Cuban Government.

In summary, the GLC is much larger in both membership and lodges than the Supreme Council. However, it has been unable to maintain an updated web page, or to organize international conferences, like the Supreme Council has. The GM of GLC has not travelled abroad, while the Grand Commander of Supreme Council has. It is as yet too early to assess whether this is due to leadership styles and abilities, or to other factors, such as Cuban government interest in using Freemasonry in the manner indicated above.

## Conclusions

The following has been demonstrated:

<sup>143</sup> *Encuentro por la Unidad Masónica Cubana* symposium was attended by MRGM Gutierrez Torrez, of the GLC: ([http://www.supremocuba.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=66:encuentro-con-masones-cubanos-en-el-mundo](http://www.supremocuba.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=66:encuentro-con-masones-cubanos-en-el-mundo) Accessed on IX/28/13). MRGM Gutierrez’ Message No. 6 is abridged in the Appendix.<sup>145</sup> There are three parties (Grand Lodges of Florida and Cuba, and Cuban Freemasons in the USA) whose legitimate interest must be served, while preserving both the Ancient Landmarks and the respective Constitutions. Negotiations must address two important legal issues: the irregularity of some members and lodges, and respecting jurisdictions.

<sup>144</sup> Several *irregular* Masonic groups exist in the USA, mostly in Florida, and New Jersey. Among them *Gran Logia de Cuba en el Exterior*, *Gran Logia Unida de las Antillas*, *Serenísima Gran Logia*, and *Federación de Masones Cubanos Cuba Primero*. See <http://www.francmasoneria.org/masoneria-en-miami-logias-que-trabajan-en-espanol/> Many Cuban Masons who, until recently, were required by the Cuban government to demit from their lodges at the time of leaving the country found problems to rejoin the Craft in the USA. Such problems, which are not faced by Masons in Spain and Puerto Rico include: language barrier, high cost of affiliation, different protocols (American lodges work in York Rite, while Cuban lodges use Scottish Rite) and race (many US lodges had, especially in the past, restrictions regarding non-white Masons wanting to join. Some Cuban Masons are of mix-race or black).

<sup>145</sup> The Report of the President of the Permanent Commission for Foreign Relations of the GLC discusses key issues regarding origins of the breach between Cuban Masons <http://masonerialibertaria.wordpress.com/2013/09/23/la-unidad-masonica-y-el-informe-especial-a-la-alta-camara-masonica/> (Accessed IX/23/13).

<sup>146</sup> Available in SCG33: <http://www.supremocuba.org/attachments/article/91/MENSAJE%20N%C2%BA%206%20-%20A%20LAS%20POTENCIAS%20MAS%20C3%93NICAS%20DE%20NUESTRA%20AMISTAD.pdf>

<sup>147</sup> SCG33 invitation announcement: <http://masonerialibertaria.wordpress.com/2013/09/25/ciclo-turismo/> Travel Agency; <https://es-la.facebook.com/CicloTurismoCubano> Cuban –born visitors to Cuba, even when naturalized abroad, are required to obtain a Cuban passport and entry visa, at the cost of several hundred dollars.



1. A summary of statistical, demographical and historical analysis of the development of the GLC during the second half of the twentieth century.
2. A discussion of the reasons for its singular existence and continuous operation inside a Marxist regime. In our opinion, such singular existence is due to the singular characteristics of the GLC, its connection with international Freemasonry, the singular characteristics of the Cuban regime, and the singular way that the Cuban government has been able to harness the Masonic institution, as well as its members.

In comparing the GLC situation with, for example, Freemasonry in Nazi Germany, excellently described by Bro. Howe,<sup>148</sup> we distinguish five specific differences:

1. A stronger presence of GLC: Effective Masons in 1958 Cuba, were 20.5; in 1925 Germany, and considering all its Grand Lodges and a population of sixty million, Effective Masons were only 5.37.<sup>149</sup>
2. The GLC did not have a Jewish membership issue, anathema under Nazi Germany. Cuba had a race issue. But GLC was one of the most widely racially integrated institutions in the country, an objective strongly pursued by the 1959 revolution.
3. Government efforts to dissolve the several Grand Lodges were fruitful in Germany in 1934, but unsuccessful in the one united GLC in 1960.
4. The GLC had a long tradition of civic involvement in Cuban struggles. Civic participation was weaker in Germany, especially after WWI.
5. An analysis of Bro. Howe's paper also establishes significant similarities in both circumstances, especially government harassment and subjection of Grand Lodge members to similar discrimination in employment, and other advancement opportunities.

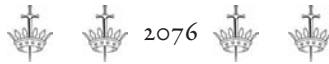
At the time of writing this paper very interesting events are occurring in the GLC. There are important meetings taking place between Cuban Freemasons in the island and abroad, as well as between the Grand Lodges of Cuba and Florida. Such meetings seek a solution for the situation of the several hundred Cuban Freemasons currently in the USA, especially in Florida and New Jersey, affiliated to irregular Masonic organizations or remaining unaffiliated for the reasons expressed in footnote 145.

<sup>148</sup> Ellic Howe, 'The Collapse of Freemasonry in Nazi Germany', *AQC* 95 (1982).

<sup>149</sup> German Effective Masons = TotMasons/(TotPop/4) \*1000 = 80559/(60M/4)\*1000 = 5.37

The second half of the twentieth century also coincides with one of the most interesting and challenging periods of the history of the Cuban nation.

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## APPENDIX

### *Key Points in Message No. 6 of GM Evaristo Gutierrez Torres*

*See document url in footnote 147*

1. In the decades of 1960 and 1970 a group of GM and PGM of the GLC formulated a strategy to save the Cuban Craft from any eventual intervention by the Cuban Government.
2. In those years, this was a real possibility, mainly supported by the precedents of what had happened to the Craft under totalitarian systems.
3. Such strategy consisted in the creation of a Delegation of Cuban Masons Abroad, stationed in the State of Florida, with the agreement of the GM of that Grand Lodge.
4. That Delegation would be charged with organizing exiled Cuban Masons into Lodges that, in the event that the Craft inside Cuba were to be proscribed (by the government), they would be ready to guarantee the survival of the GLC outside of its jurisdictional territory.
5. The evolution of historical events enabled such a possibility not to materialize, so that the GLC, during the 1980s, was able to keep itself at arm's length from such organizations.