

Setback for an Emerging Approach

Cuban Americans' 'Third Way' Ideals Meet Cold War Castroism

By William Booth
Washington Post Staff Writer

MIAMI, Feb. 26—To the outside world, the images from this subtropical city in the hours after two civilian planes were downed Saturday by Cuban MiGs were of raging, wailing men and women, crowded into a sweltering airplane hangar, calling in Spanish for blood—for revenge, for blockades, for war.

Yet underneath the primal anger and sorrow lie some of the most complex politics in America—here in a supercharged and no longer monolithic city of 700,000 Cuban exiles and their offspring, where the Cold War is not

over but actively being fought, with all its intrigues, plots and counterplots, buzzing around board rooms and coffee shops, dominating the airwaves and newspapers.

The first reactions to the shooting were blunt. The politicians and the hard-liners here called for a unilateral embargo—meaning a military blockade—of Cuba. This in a city that sends at least \$500 million back to the island to support relatives and where several flights a day shuttle as many as 300 Cuban Americans home to visit their relatives.

President Clinton, reacting to the shoot-down of the two civilian aircraft piloted by Cuban emigres, today or-

dered an end to the flights, a move applauded by exile leaders such as Jorge Mas Canosa, leader of the powerful Cuban American National Foundation.

But there is more going on in Miami.

"There have been all the emotions you would expect: anger, hopelessness, devastation, frustration," said former Miami mayor Xavier Suarez.

What is different, Suarez said, is that the downing of the planes devastated not only the hawks and those who want dialogue with the Castro regime but the burgeoning group of exiles, many with close ties to the Dem-

See MIAMI, A7, Col. 1

MIAMI, From A6

ocratic administration, who were looking for "a third way," a way to topple the Castro regime by encouraging massive acts of civil disobedience on the island—acts even funded by Miami exiles.

For the last two years, a younger generation of Cuban Americans has begun to reject calls for military intervention by the United States, the position taken for decades by veterans of the Bay of Pigs such as Mas Canosa who long has guided exile politics here. Instead they have begun to think that the way to challenge the Cuban regime is from the inside, with a groundswell of popular resistance.

That has been the tactic embraced by the leaders of Brothers to the Res-

cue, whose pilots were shot down. Indeed, Brothers to the Rescue is perhaps the most clear example of the move by many here toward the "third way."

The founder of the group is Jose Basulto, himself a Bay of Pigs veteran who in the past endorsed military assault by the United States. Now, however, he says that U.S. presidents will never free Cuba by military force and that a change must be done by Cubans themselves.

The Brothers began by flying strictly humanitarian search-and-rescue flights to save rafters floundering in the Florida straits, but the mission evolved into buzzing downtown Havana, scattering propaganda leaflets. But Brothers is committed, Basulto

and others in the group said, to nonviolence.

It was also the tactic by other, newer groups, such as the one that took to the seas in boats from Key West last year, traveling to the edge of Cuba's territorial waters in the hopes of prodding their countrymen to unite and protest the Castro regime. The "Freedom Flotilla" ended in disaster when one of the boats sank and a man died in the waters of a heart attack.

The "third way," with its messages of solidarity and commitment to non-violent confrontation, was growing in popularity, especially among those weary of Cold War rhetoric and empty promises by U.S. administrations.

But the downing of the two planes sent shock waves through those supporting such tactics. For the MiG mis-

siles followed less publicized but important actions in Cuba by the Castro regime, which has been cracking down on dissidents.

On Saturday, Concilio Cubano, an umbrella organization representing 130 pro-democracy groups in Cuba, was planning to hold an unprecedented summit. But the Castro government denied them permission to meet and instead began arresting dissidents and independent journalists.

As Suarez, a Cuban American politician, put it: The hard-liners were shaken by the arrests and MiG attacks because they never trusted Castro and had their worst fears confirmed. Those who supported dialogue were shaken because the action showed them that the Cuban government could not be trusted. And to those ad-

vocating a third way, it illustrated that attempts to get near the island could be met by deadly force, and that those who tried to protest nonviolently on the island would be imprisoned and harassed.

"The Cuban regime needs outside opposition to justify its activities on the island," said Ramon Cernuda, a Cuban American publisher here who represents dissidents in Cuba. "It is a tactic orchestrated by the highest levels of the Cuban government."

What those who support the third way do now is unclear.

"This hardens views, there is no question," said Max Castro, a senior researcher at the University of Miami's North-South Center. There was a great attraction to the nonviolent path, especially one driven by dissidents on the island. "But now there may be the need for people who had been designing these plans to do some rethinking about it."