

Cuba: A Haven for Jews?

Abstract

A close inspection of politics and religion in twentieth-century Cuba, especially after the 1959 revolution, reveals that an interesting mix of cultural freedom and anti-Zionist feelings has prevailed in Cuba. This paper will show that the contradictions found in the analysis of the government's relationship with the Jewish community are in fact not coincidental. They are fueled by not only Cuba's general receptive and open culture but also actions of self-interest by the Cuban government that happen to coincide with an anti-discriminatory policy towards the island's Jews. The regime's anti-Zionist record does not stem from anti-Semitic sentiment but from a purely self-interested approach to international relations. Thus most references to anti-Semitic occurrences are in fact mislabeled as such. My argument will show that save for a few blatant anti-Semitic actions, the Cuban government's position has always been and continues to be favorable and responsive towards the needs of its Jewish community.

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Although it is not well-known, Jews have populated the island of Cuba ever since Columbus landed there in 1492. Jews who have made Cuba their home will vouch for its friendly and hospitable treatment of their small religious minority. Most scholarly research on Jewish life in Cuba documents an absence of any entrenched tradition of anti-Semitism, defined as any incidence of prejudice, persecution and hostility against Jews and Judaism, on the island throughout the twentieth century, as well as an absence of systematic religious persecution within the Cuban Revolution. However, a survey of Cuba's history discloses occasional incongruities with this claim. To understand the relationship between the Cuban government and its Jewish community, it is essential to recognize periods in Cuba's history when the island was not as accommodating to Jews and to investigate the motivations behind this unfriendliness. A close inspection of politics and religion in twentieth-century Cuba, especially after the 1959 revolution, reveals an interesting mix of cultural freedom and anti-Israeli feelings that have prevailed in Cuba. The contradictions found in the analysis of the government's relationship with the Jewish community are fueled by Cuba's generally receptive and racially diverse culture versus actions of political self-interest by the Cuban government. Furthermore, these actions coincide with an

anti-discriminatory policy towards the island's Jews. Cuba's perceptions of Jews and its perceptions of the Jewish state of Israel are not one and the same. The government has treated Jews well because it views them not as a religious but rather as a racial group. On the other hand, its relationship with Israel has been purely political and divorced from religion. Although historians have recorded some incidents of anti-Semitism in Cuba, it has never been firmly rooted and has never assumed the form of a mass movement. Save for a few blatant anti-Semitic actions, the government's position has always been and continues to be favorable and responsive towards the needs of its Jewish community.

Consistently, Jews have been welcomed by Cuban society. Cubans came to respect the Jewish community as a white ethnic group rather than a separate religious group. One of the reasons for this friendly welcome, contends Bettinger-Lopez, is the attempt to whiten Cuba's population by extending entry to mostly white Europeans while rejecting blacks from Haiti and Jamaica.¹ Cuba's white upper class, in fact a minority in the population, has, for much of Cuba's history, subjugated, discriminated against, and segregated the larger racially mixed population. After achieving independence from Spain, Cuba came under the influence of the United States. American culture, values, and society, including conceptions of race, infiltrated all levels of Cuban life. Eventually, the corruption associated with American hegemony would lead to the revolution. Cubans developed a race-color continuum based on North American racial hierarchies, placing whites at the top and blacks at the bottom. To Cubans, whiteness became a sign of modernization and progress. Perhaps they wanted white Jews to intermarry with the darker-skinned population in order to fit their conceptions of white as right and black as racially inferior. Since Cuba's racial hierarchy is not rigid, Cubans sought to intermix with white Jews in order to advance themselves to the top of each color division. Because this race-color continuum still dictates Cuban experience today, Jews continue to fit into its upper echelons.

Cuba's good treatment of the Jewish community also fits in with the revolutionary hero Jose Marti's vision of a racially equal community of Cubans. Marti claimed that race does not matter and that "we are all Cubans." His ideology became ingrained in Cuba's cultural understandings about race and Cuban identity. Although most could date their settlement in Cuba back a maximum of fifty years, by 1930 many Jews identified with Marti's democratic ideology and dedication to his and their homeland. The interest he, a non-Jew, expressed in Jewish culture brought him even closer to Cuba's Jews. For example, one of Marti's most famous phrases was "My slingshot is David's," an Old Testament reference to the story of David and Goliath that was later interpreted by Castro's regime to illustrate Cuba's task of "confronting the Goliath of United States imperialism."² Cubans found common ground in the liberator's abhorrence of religious prejudice and the fusion in his writing of Christian and Judaic thought.³ Marti represented, for Cuba's Jews, just as for the rest of the

¹ Bettinger-Lopez, 23

² Levine 1993: 3

³ Levine 1993: 179

population, a paragon of *cubanidad* because of his call for a Cuban identity independent of American influence. His acceptance and support of religious, racial, and ethnic diversity in Cuba epitomized the reasons why they enthusiastically embraced the tropical island as their home.⁴ In addition, his study of the Bible, Talmud and Hebrew became a positive influence on Cuban attitudes towards Jews.⁵ Jose Marti died in the name of justice and liberty and a race-less society. Thus, strong support is garnered for Cuba's treatment of its Jewish population not as a religious community but as an ethnic or racial group. This fits the protections they are provided, given Jose Marti's racially democratic, "race-less," and ethnically pluralistic ideals that have carried on into the present.

In order to understand the political, cultural, and racial complexities behind Cuba's relationship with its Jewish community, we need to establish the role of some historical implications. Cuba's beginnings are rooted in Jewish history. The first Spaniard to set foot on the land was Luis de Torres, a *marrano*, or Jew forced to convert to Catholicism under the Spanish Inquisition. According to Tom Miller, since "Castro is among the more common names of marranos,"⁶ it is possible that even Fidel Castro is Jewish or at least part Jewish. As we will see later, this connection will come to bare greatly on the revolutionary regime's relationship with its Jewish community. Because Spanish law prohibited it, however, Jewish religious life was absent from the island until after Cuba's liberation in the 1898 War of Independence.⁷ All subjects in Spain's New World colonies had to be baptized. But after breaking free from Spanish control, Cubans thought to formulate their own identities as far as possible from the remnants of the Spanish power they abhorred, including the Roman Catholic Church. As the power of the Roman Catholic Church waned without the Spanish government to legitimize its sole authority, non-Roman Catholic worship services were increasingly permitted, giving other religions including Protestantism, Santeria and Judaism the opportunity to flourish. Decrees of religious freedom mitigated by Jose Marti's ideology of racial equality and ethnic pluralism brought Jewish religious services to Cuba as early as 1904 when American Jews founded the first synagogue.⁸ Moreover, with the passage in the 1930s of a law permitting Jewish immigrants to become Cuban citizens, Jews increasingly came to feel Cuban.⁹

Most of the Jews that immigrated to Cuba came from Poland and Turkey. They fled their native countries to escape anti-Semitism and mandatory military service during the Balkan Wars, Bolshevik Revolution, World War I and other conflicts during the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Jews were considered second-class citizens in their native countries and faced violent discrimination in the wake of increasing nationalist sentiments during these

⁴ Bettinger-Lopez xxxii-xxxiii

⁵ Bettinger-Lopez xxxiii

⁶ Miller, 509

⁷ Levine 1993: 2; Bettinger-Lopez xxxvi

⁸ Bettinger-Lopez xxxvi Note: Bettinger-Lopez will be used for all historic facts from now on unless otherwise noted.

⁹ Bettinger-Lopez xxxvii

¹⁰ Bejarano 20

times. They found their way to Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in the inter-war years, due to subtle anti-Semitic quotas limiting their entrance to the US.¹¹ Jews desired to immigrate to the US because it had a burgeoning Jewish population and was known as a land of freedom and opportunity. This is clearly illustrated in the following testimony:

In Poland there was a lot of anti-Semitism, and this influenced my decision to emigrate. I decided to leave for Cuba because at that point in time there was a law that allowed those who stayed in Cuba for a year to enter the US. In 1923 one could not enter the US without a North American visa.¹² (my translation)

Approximately fifteen thousand came to Cuba after 1924, when the most restricting US immigration law was passed. As family members followed each other to Cuba, Jewish communities sprang up in many areas. With time, Jews on the island rose from peddlers to merchants while maintaining their identity through a closed social system of schools and other institutions.¹³ In 1959, Cuba's Jewish community consisted mostly of small shop owners. By the eve of revolution, Jews had attained prosperity and a sense of security, reflected in the construction in the 1950s of two prominent synagogues.

As Bettinger-Lopez testifies, comparing the treatment Jews received in their adopted home [Cuba] with the anti-Semitism faced in their native lands, most had only high praise for Cuban hospitality.¹⁴ For example, in *La Comunidad Hebrea de Cuba*, Margalit Bejarano provides the following testimony of a Jewish immigrant:

I fell in love with Cuba and I am going to die loving Cuba because for me Cuba is something incredible. We emigrated from an anti-Semitic country, Jews having lived in Poland the last few years very poorly. But here we have freedom and everything, and also nature and warm weather, and always spring.¹⁵ (My translation)

Cuba's warm and friendly atmosphere allowed Jews to develop tightly-knit communities while maintaining ties with other Cubans and the nation itself.¹⁶ For many Jews, Jewish identity developed within a Cuban framework. On the other hand, many Jewish social events took place at private clubs throughout Havana. This posed a barrier to Martí's vision of equality for all Cubans regardless of ethnicity, race or religion. However, according to Bettinger-Lopez, the result was still an unproblematic commingling of Jews and Gentiles.¹⁷

Interestingly, Bejarano provides an example of an anti-discriminatory practice whose anti-Semitic nature can be contended. She argues, "the attitude of Cuban society in general manifested itself in the nickname 'polacos' or 'turcos'

¹¹ Behar xiii in *Cuban-Jewish Journeys*

¹² Bejarano 28

¹³ Behar xiv in *Cuban-Jewish Journeys*

¹⁴ Bettinger-Lopez, xxxvii

¹⁵ Bejarano, 31

¹⁶ Bettinger-Lopez, xxxvii

¹⁷ Bettinger-Lopez, xxxvii

that came to be used as synonymous to Jewish.”¹⁸ Cubans blatantly disregarded the different origins of its Jewish immigrants and also ignored the Jews’ desire to be referred to as Cuban-Jews rather than as foreigners, which Poles and other such labels connoted. Even those immigrants of Turkish origins were labeled ‘polacos.’ In this way, the term encompassed all Jews and became insulting. It not only denied Cuban Jewish citizens their right to *cubanidad* but also failed to acknowledge their ethnic pluralism, the same ethnic pluralism advocated by Martí and incorporated in *cubanidad*. Unlike the majority of scholars on the Cuban Jewish community, Bejarano explicitly considers these labels as a form of prejudice against Jews. She notes that whereas the first generation of Cuban Jews accepted this nickname in passing, the second generation saw it as an insult.¹⁹ Generational differences must be taken into account when inspecting such claims of anti-Semitism. Compared to the anti-Semitism they suffered in their countries of origin, those of the older generation only felt grateful for Cuban hospitality and felt no need to take up quarrels over an ignorant nickname. But for the younger generation of Cuban Jews, the label ‘polaco’ became an insult symbolic of the prejudice Jews had faced in their native countries. Not having to experience real, violent anti-Semitism and also lacking any connection to Poland like many of their parents, they came to view these labels as a threat not only to their Jewish identity but also their right to equality under the larger notion of *cubanidad*.

Moreover, blatant incidents of anti-Semitism during the first part of the twentieth century did occur on the island. Several historians cited instances of Jew-baiting propaganda, government curbs on Eastern European immigration, prohibition of Jewish meetings and army-led attacks on Jewish stores and people.²⁰ However, these incidents were rooted not in discriminatory attitudes towards European Jews but in the oversensitive national self-consciousness, the economic competition Jews posed to Spanish merchants, and the economic depression of the 1920s and 30s. These anti-Semitic tendencies manifested themselves only after 1933 when Hitler assumed power and distributed his propaganda worldwide. After WWII broke out and the economic depression ended, anti-Semitism in Cuba waned, proving that Cubans were merely influenced by Nazi propaganda calling for racial purification, which fueled economic rivalries. As Bejarano argues, “In the republic of Cuba an official political rhetoric against Jews never existed; the slogan of the revolutionary government – “Cuba for the Cubans” – was never directed against them as Jews, but rather as a part of the foreign population in general.”²¹ She agrees with other scholars that the government of the time still followed Jose Martí’s vision of a race-less Cuba in which pluralism flourished but the notion of *cubanidad* prevailed. However, she goes on to say that:

Anti-Semitism began to emerge during the revolution of 1933, originating in the mechanism of Nazi propaganda. The nationalist and socialist

¹⁸ Bejarano, 199 (my translation from Spanish)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sapir, Boris 1948 cited by Bettinger-Lopez 22

²¹ Bejarano, 104 (my translation from Spanish)

propaganda found in Cuba a fertile ground among the Spanish merchants that saw with disgust the entrance of Jewish immigrants into commerce and manufacturing of shoes and clothes, that they came to dominate. The principal theme of anti-Semitic propaganda in Cuba was the immigration of Jewish refugees from Germany, presented as a danger to native workers, as well as the ethnic homogeneity of the Spanish race.²² (My translation)

Thus, economic status rather than religion played a role in the anti-Semitic propaganda that manifested itself during this epoch. There was an antagonism between the Jewish and Spanish white elite both vying for wealth. Because Cuba's race-color continuum dictated that wealth, power, and whiteness implied a higher status in society, both the Spanish and the Jews claimed elite status. Their whiteness gave Jews more power, prestige, and status in Cuban society than they had in their native countries, allowing them to flourish and thrive economically. However, Nazi propaganda inflamed anti-Jewish sentiment created by the economic hardship of those times. Cuban-born Spaniards felt threatened by Jewish dominance of the shoes and clothing market. The white, upper class Jews that dominated this business also threatened their power and status ethnically since their whiteness posed a danger to the power hegemony of this Spanish white elite. But when the economic conflict between the Spanish and the Jews disappeared, the two groups reconciled their roles within Cuba's racial hierarchy and the antagonism ended. Thus, although anti-Semitism occurred sporadically on the island, it never captured the mood of the larger population.

Additionally, even in the early days of the revolution, Jews were not harmed by revolutionary trials or by the purges of Batista supporters since few Jews had entered government. Throughout history, Jews tended to stay away from government for fear that any failure might be blamed on the Jewish people as a whole. They came to Cuba fleeing anti-Semitism to build their own enclaves where they could practice their religion and live comfortable lives. It was not in their interest to meddle in the affairs of a government that they knew could instigate acts of anti-Semitism. Although Cuban Jews had overwhelmingly entered the mainstream and were now considered upper and middle class, they were not persecuted as Jews in any manner by the Castro government.²³ But the 1961 nationalization of businesses and other socialist changes forced bourgeois Jewish Cubans, like other upper and middle class countrymen, to make an agonizing decision. In the words of Bettinger-Lopez, "they had to decide between staying in Cuba or abandoning forever what to many had become their tropical promised land and emigrating to the US to remake their families and community within the great power to the north, the US, which years earlier had closed its doors to them."²⁴ Since many Jews were involved in commerce and business, their capitalist ties clashed with revolutionary reforms.

²² Ibid.

²³ Levine 1996:267

²⁴ Behar, xiv in *Cuban-Jewish Journeys*

Approximately ninety-four percent of Cuba's Jewish population fled after the revolution nationalized properties and businesses leaving a community of about one thousand practicing Jews.²⁵

It is important to recognize that so many Jews left not because of anti-Semitism but because of the harsh economic realities they faced as upper and middle class Cubans. The nationalization of private businesses, the implementation of agrarian laws, and America's strained ties with Cuba inspired the Jewish community's decision to uproot. Bettinger-Lopez quotes, "it is true that, once in a while, anti-Semitic language was heard. But it was not in a form...an organized mass. The Jews in Cuba felt like any other Cubans. We left Cuba because we couldn't support a system of vigilance, an imposition of ideas; and thinking not only of ourselves, but also our children, we chose to leave the country."²⁶ Similarly, Robert Levine argues that Cuba's Jews saw their nation as a land of opportunity and comfort.²⁷ Had the revolution not soured the political and economic situation in Cuba, Jews would not have abandoned their new-found haven.

While the Revolution did not target Jews specifically, they did suffer economically along with other members of Cuba's middle class. Most of those who chose to stay did so because they were either too old or too poor to leave, were assimilated into Cuban society, or believed in the Revolution. Interestingly, since the majority of Jewish businessmen ended up leaving in the 1960s, the remaining Jewish community was permitted to survive without much sanction because it no longer posed a threat to the revolution and its socialist, anti-capitalist ideology.²⁸ After 1959, Jewish life suffered in Cuba, but never disappeared. Jews could still pray in synagogues and attend Jewish Sunday schools. In the 1970s, the synagogue in Santiago, the school in Havana and the Zionist Union of Cuba were closed because there were not enough Jews to attend them. Another synagogue in Havana, the United Hebrew Congregation, was abandoned in the 1980s.²⁹ Again, the closing did not occur as a testament to the government's anti-Semitism. Other synagogues remained in operation to cater to the religious needs of practicing Jews.

During the revolution, the actions and policies of the Castro regime seemed contradictory in principle. On one hand, individual Cuban Jews were discriminated against by the revolution's anti-religious ideology. Jews, Christians and other religious people had restricted access to jobs and universities. Religious persons were not allowed membership in the Communist Party.³⁰ Since the Party controlled all aspects of society including the distribution of jobs, Jews had to choose between religion and the Party. However, as long as they participated in the revolutionary activities, Jews could practice religion on the side.³¹ A sentiment of fear over the anti-religious ideology coupled with the

²⁵ Behar xv in *Cuban-Jewish Journeys*

²⁶ Epstein 1981:100 quoted by Bettinger-Lopez, 10

²⁷ Levine 1996: 267

²⁸ Bettinger-Lopez, 9

²⁹ Levine 1996:271

³⁰ Kaplan, 4

³¹ Miller, 512.

government's control of all aspects of society tended to pervade the Jewish community but it was not debilitating in the same sense that anti-Semitism was in Eastern Europe. According to Robert Levine, "even though Castro bent over backwards to honor those who wanted to express their Judaism openly, the realities of life under Castro meant that these observant souls would have to remain outsiders within Cuban society."³² Even though they were fearful of stigmatization, Jews were able to practice their religion. They were also permitted to buy and distribute kosher food and were able to receive donations from Canada and other countries for special Passover and Rosh Hashanah food products.³³

Furthermore, the 1991 statute of religious freedom enacted by the government opened Jews to more freedoms and opportunities under the law. Before 1991, the Cuban criminal code protected Jews from national, religious and racial hatred. This harkened back to Castro's respect and admiration for Jose Marti's vision of a racially pluralistic and democratic society. After 1991, Castro's government came to recognize, respect and guarantee freedom of conscience and religious worship of their choice, based on respect for the law. It is not known for sure why Castro chose to adopt this policy but given the time period one can make some educated guesses. Because the Soviet Union had just been dismantled and United States continued to strangle Cuba economically with the blockade, Cuba was forced to enter the Special Period. Castro needed to act inventively to garner as much foreign support and investment as possible. A decree of religious freedom certainly served to boost his public relations abroad. Jews and other religious minorities suddenly found themselves treated in official rhetoric as an exhibit of religious freedom under socialism. Possibly, the act was intended to minimize some of the bad reputation Cuba had acquired abroad from claims of numerous human rights violations such as disappearances and executions of counter-revolutionaries. With a better reputation, Cuba could seek much needed trade relations and boost its tourist industry on which it was becoming increasingly reliant as a primary source of its gross domestic product. Religious freedom is a far cry from strict adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideology and atheist communism which Castro's socialism was supposed to eventually reach. The change in policy from atheism to religious freedom illustrates that the Special Period has definitely soured the prospects of a completely communist Cuba.

The government's perception of Jews as a racial group must be distinguished from its political relationship with Israel as a Jewish state. Cuba severed diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973, along with other Third World countries. Castro permitted training camps for Palestinians terrorists on its soil, both Abu Nidal and George Habasch, prominent leaders of terrorist organizations aimed at destroying Israel, were allowed to train in Cuba even though they were not Cuban citizens.³⁴ As Israel's relationship with the United States strengthened, Cuba withdrew its support for Israel in line with its strictly anti-US foreign policy.

³² Levine 1996: 285

³³ Asis 1998: 9.

³⁴ Asis 1998: 3

Cuba also published anti-Israel propaganda pieces and banned books by Anne Frank, Isaac Bashevis Singer and Elie Wiesel. Repeatedly, Cuba participated in embargoes and sanctions against Israel and voted for the infamous resolution stating "Zionism equals racism." Again, this was because Cuba wanted to condemn Israel for its good relationship with the United States, "that devil to the North." Since Cuba now supported the Palestinians and their quest for their own state of Palestine on the land that Israel occupied, voting for the resolution was perfectly in line with Cuba's policy. It sought to denounce the US and the imperialism it stood for. Castro wanted to support all those peoples, especially minorities in the Third World much like Cuba itself, in search of their own independent state free from hegemonic influences of First World countries like the United States and her Israeli allies. For example, the Cuban press painted Israelis as right-wing fanatics determined to drive out Arabs and to expand Israeli territory through aggression and imperialism.³⁵ However, by the late 1980s, relations warmed up somewhat when Castro realized that good relations with Israel were more beneficial, and that further symbolic condemnation of the US through severed relations with Israel was merely counterproductive. Perhaps Castro realized that Cuba had a good deal in common with the small socialist state of Israel and needed it as a friend rather than enemy. According to Levine, his backing of the Palestinian Labor Organization in order to garner more support from the nonaligned countries of the Third World in the Middle East actually distanced Cuba from other Latin American Nations.³⁶ In 1988, an official delegation from Cuba visited Israel to study irrigation methods. In 1994, Israel's chief Ashkenazi Rabbi visited Cuba and was cordially received by Fidel Castro.³⁷

Despite anti-Israel sentiment that existed in Cuba, however, the only time blatant anti-Semitic attacks occurred in all of Cuban history was during the Gulf War. Arab students threw stones at Adas Israel Synagogue in Havana, but the violence was quelled immediately and no one was physically harmed.³⁸ In this case, Arabs in support of an Arab hegemony in the Middle East chose to release their anger on the Jewish community. They wanted to instigate fear and to condemn Israel's continual support of and from the United States. Castro condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait but was also deeply saddened by America's unilateral invasion of Iraq without the sanction of the United Nations. In light of his antagonistic relationship with "those damn Yankees," he saw this as another attempt to establish American hegemony in the non-aligned Middle East.³⁹ At that time Cuba had no economic or trading ties with Iraq. But it was just entering its Special Period after the demise of the Soviet Union and their trade relations on which Cuba depended so much for many supplies. Consequently the rise in oil prices caused by the war must have created deep concern in the government about the war's outcome. The jump in oil prices created a further strain on the already struggling Cuban economy.

³⁵ Levine 1993: 262

³⁶ Levine 1993: 261

³⁷ Levine 1996: 275-279

³⁸ Asis 1998:3

³⁹ Castro speech 1/12/1991 <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/1991/>

In spite of this, it still seems Castro's anti-Israel policy is not rooted in anti-Semitism. Originally, Castro had supported Israel because he sympathized with the Jewish people's struggle for an independent state to call their homeland. Cuba's fight for independence from Spain and from US hegemonic power was still fresh on the minds of many Cubans. As Bejarano claims, "the fact that Jews were known to be socialist and had an inclination for social democracy made Cubans sympathetic to them."⁴⁰ Even while adopting an anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian policy, Castro still held Israel in esteem as a fellow small, socialist state. Since 1973, the government has chosen to oppose Israel not because it hates Jews but because aligning politically against Israel has allowed it to gain leadership among non-aligned nations and support from Arab countries in the United Nations. The policy also has become a way for Castro to take a stand against US imperialism and express his hatred of the power concentrated in the United States. Castro has opposed Israel purely for political reasons – because Israel has close ties to Cuba's worst enemy – the United States. The government's relationship with its Jewish community in no way resembles its strenuous relations with the state of Israel.

Cuba's relationship with its Jewish community has to be viewed independently in most cases from its relationship with Israel because of its purely political and diplomatic calculations. Thus anti-Semitic labels of anti-Israel occurrences are in fact mislabeled as such. Racial constructions define Cuba's perception of its Jewish community while political interests determine its diplomatic relationship with the Jewish state of Israel. Although anti-Semitism occurred occasionally on the island, it never turned into an institutionalized mass movement because of Cuba's racially mixed and pluralistically tolerant society. The fact that only those who posed a threat to the revolution faced discrimination further shows that the Jewish community as a whole was left in peace because it did not challenge the socialist regime and because Jews fit into the Cuban understanding of an all-encompassing community based on the notion of a raceless *cubanidad*. Thus, those Jews who experienced anti-Semitism did so for political or economic reasons divorced from their religion.

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⁴⁰ Bejarano, 170.

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