
Cuban Freemasons in the Development of Civil Society and of a Political Opening

Cuba Futures: Past and Present
Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies
Cuba Project

Jorge Luis Romeu, Ph.D.
Research Professor, Syracuse University
Director, Juarez Lincoln Marti International Education Project
Email: romeu@cortland.edu;
Web: <http://myprofile.cos.com/romeu>

New York City, March 31 of 2011

Outline

- Introduction and background
- Demographic study summary
- Freemasons and Civil Society
- Discussion
- Conclusions

Objectives of this paper

- Fill a void in the literature
 - Of Cuban Civil Society (CS)
- Characterize Cuban Freemasons (CF)
 - And describe how they became what they are
- Propose specific ways they can contribute
 - To an Opening and Transition, through the CS

Three Research Questions

- Why are Cuban Freemasons important?
 - And how did they get to where they are now?
- Why is Civil Society important to an opening?
 - And what alternatives are there to an opening?
- What can Cuban Freemasons do, within Civil Society, to help facilitate an opening?
 - And what do they need to better achieve this?

CF missed in most studies of CS

- *One of the oldest*
 - With 150 years of continued existence
- One of the largest
 - Nearly 30K members, nation-wide
- One of the most widely spread
 - Over 300 lodges, one in every town
- Internationally known organization

Possible reasons for this absence

- Emphasis on dissident/religious groups
 - Freemasons are neither
- Anti-Masonic bias
 - Well-studied (CEHME, CEHMLAC)
- Incompetence
 - If studying Cuban civil society

What are the Freemasons?

- “The organization of morality”
 - ‘To make some good men, better.’
- Independent of any government
- Discourage partisan politics or religion
- Admit adult men of all races, professions,
 - Political persuasions, religions, social class, etc.
- Based on tolerance and brotherhood
 - XIX Century: Washington, Bolivar, Marti
 - XX Century: Cardenas, Churchill, Allende

About Civil Society

- It is a continuum; not a dichotomy
 - CS always exists, in some form or degree
- Groups are Independent from the state
- Not necessarily antagonistic to the state
 - Pro, against and indifferent to establishment
- Not necessarily politically motivated
 - Cultural, sports, social, religious, etc.
- Very strong indicator of a free society

About the Cuban situation

- Politically, experimenting slow change
 - Leadership change, after half-a-century
 - New economic areas, to private enterprise
 - Forthcoming PCC congress, long overdue
 - New administration in the United States
- Economically, experimenting problems
 - Increasing unemployment among young
 - Government closing down enterprises
 - Sugar, tourism, etc. down; oil price, up

Cuban Freemasons Composition

- All religions, all races, all walks of life
- All provinces, all regions, all towns
- Older, less '*educated*' than in pre-1959
- Under strong government supervision
- Since 1992, PCC and government members
- Since 2003, 13 '*dissidents*' of the Group of 75
- Representative cross-cut of Cuban society

CF Membership: *Effective* Masons

Effective masons: number per 1000 ha, with respect to *population at risk* (i.e. men, of required age, circumstances and requirements to belong).

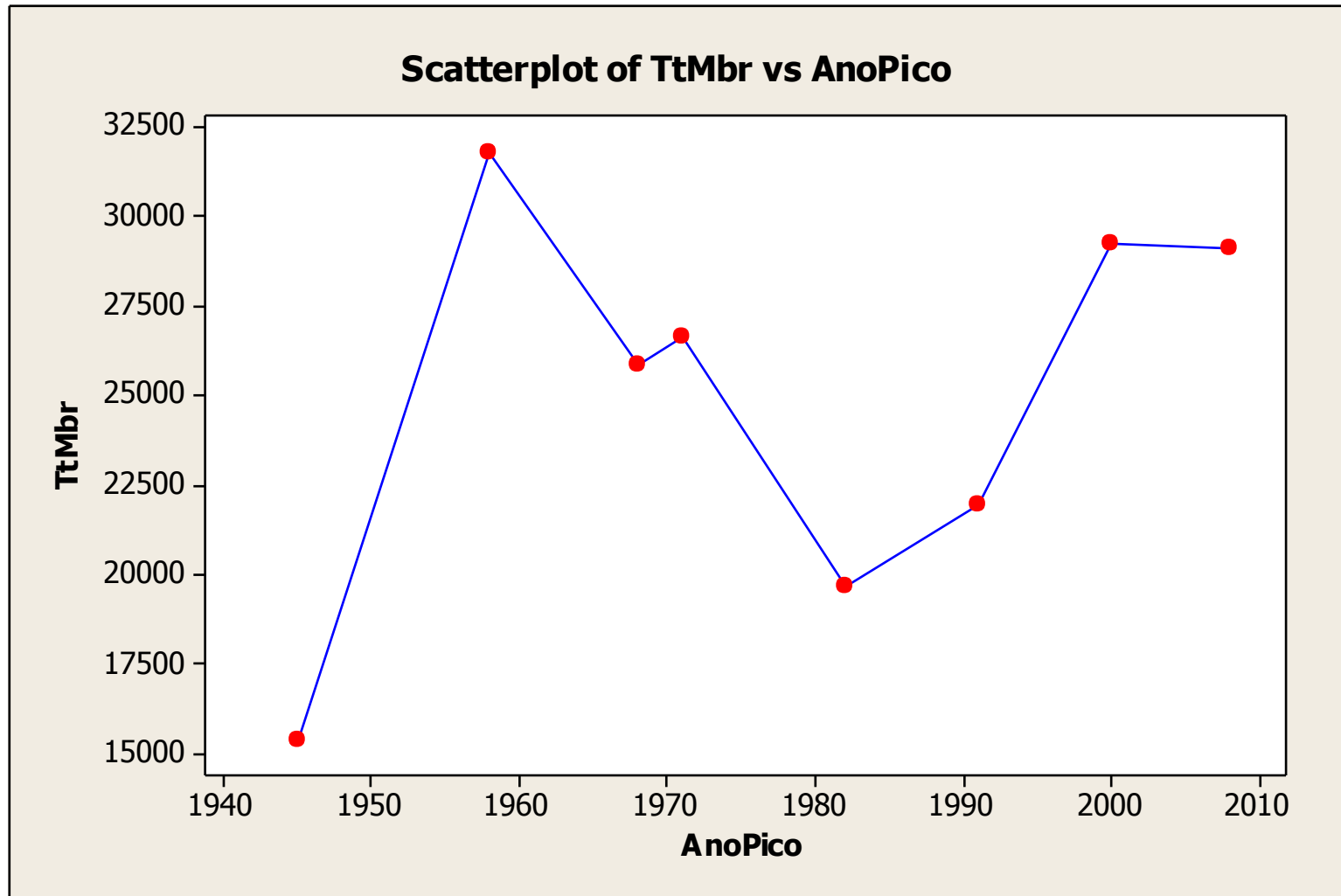
USA	Ano	Poblacion	Masons	/1000s	Efectiva
	1960	179,323,175	4,103,000	22.88	91.5
	2000	281,421,906	1,800,000	6.4	25.6
Cuba	1960	6000000	34000	5.67	22.7
	2000	11000000	29000	2.6	10.3

Membership Development:

Effective masons: number per 1000 ha, with respect to *population at risk* (i.e. men, of required age, circumstances and requirements to belong).

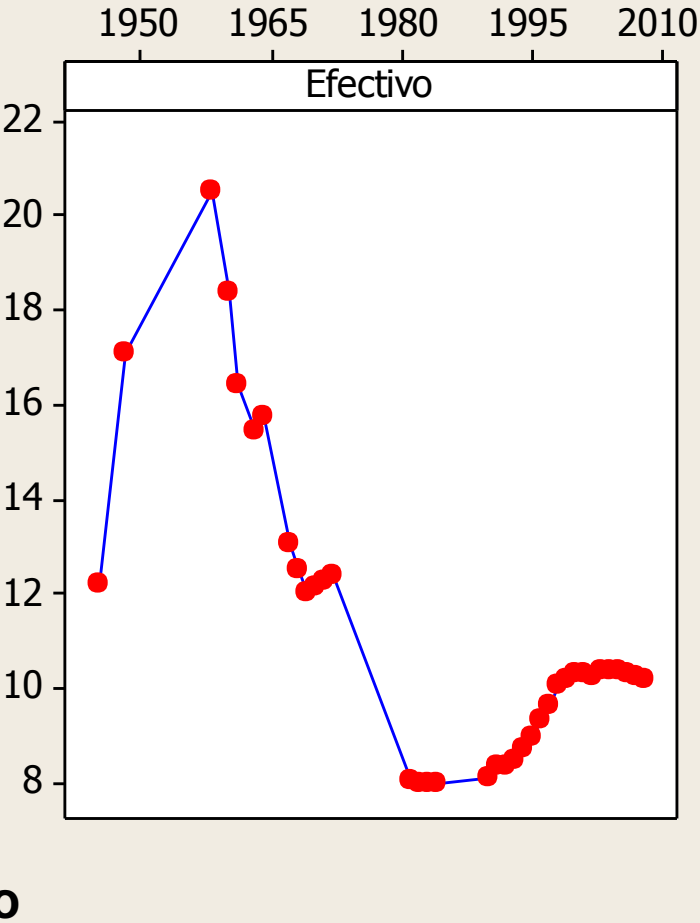
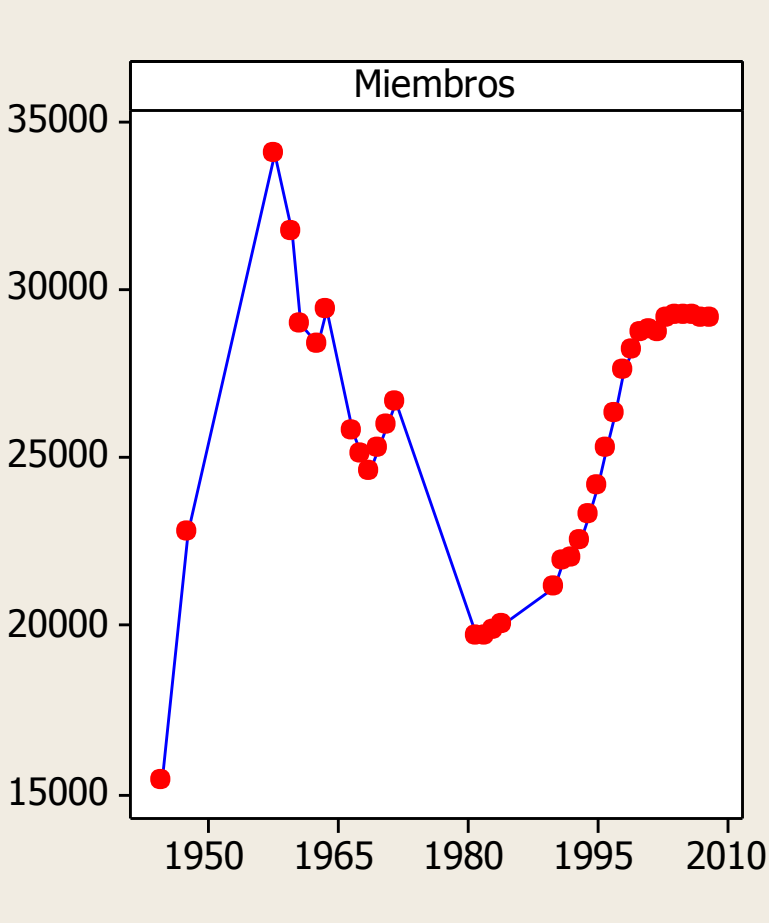
AÑO	Miembros	Logias	Poblacion	Efectivos
1948	22757	259	5329100	17.08
1958	34025	340	6638133	20.50
1968	25072	332	8040800	12.47
1981	19690	326	9794900	8.04
1990	21153	314	10433000	8.11
2000	28689	314	11142000	10.30
2008	29110	316	11417246	10.20

Demography 1945-2008



Time Series of total and effective yearly membership:

Miembros Por ano: 1940 - 2010

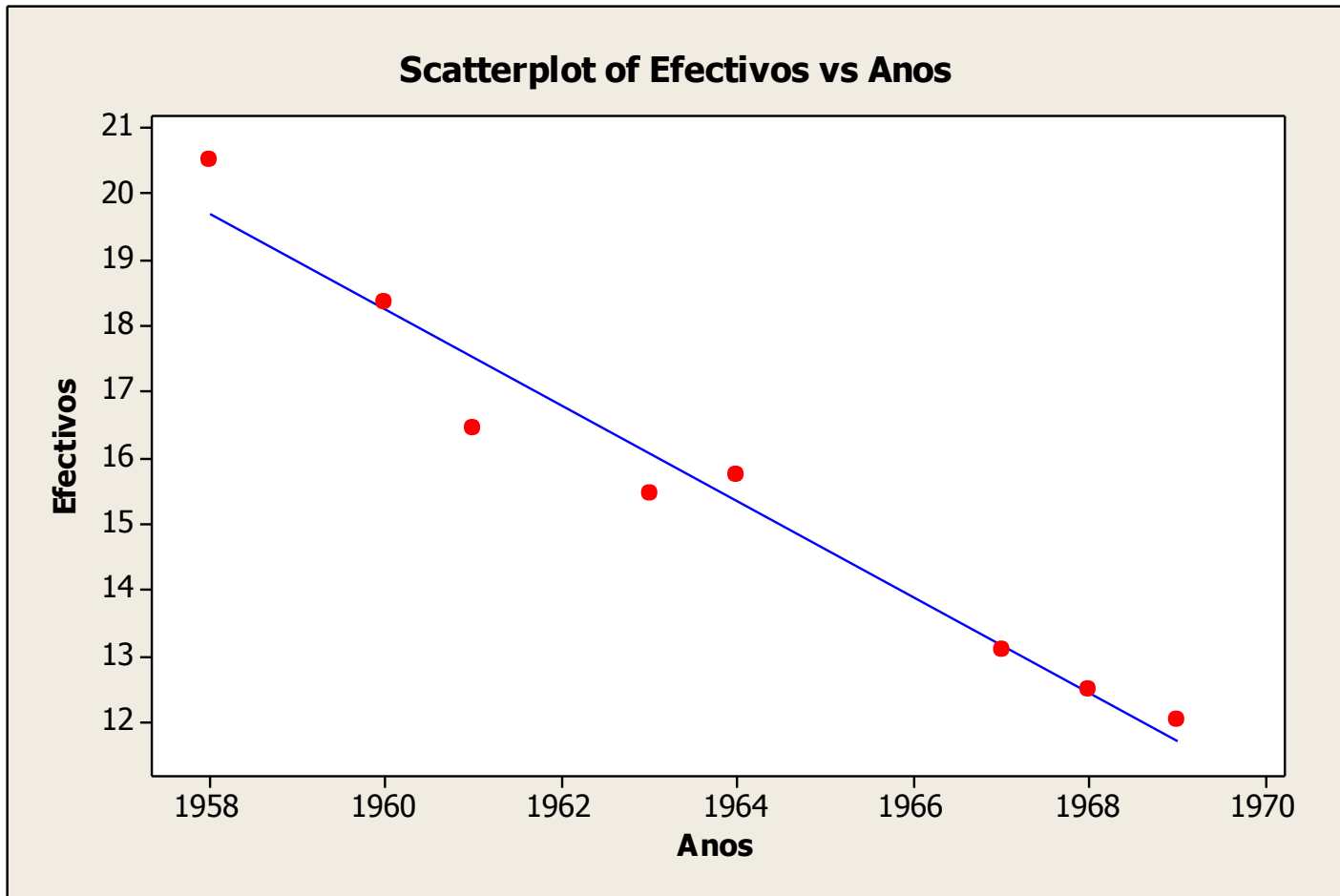


Membership Distribution by Province

PROVINCE	Area (km ²)	Population	Lodges	Membrs	Mbr/Ldg	Efective
TOTAL	109,886.19	11,177,743	316	29127	92.2	10.423
PINAR DEL RIO	10,904.03	726,574	17	2706	159.2	14.897
PROV. HABANA	5,791.59	711,066	29	2494	86	14.03
CIUDAD HABANA	721.01	2,201,610	111	9329	84	16.49
MATANZAS	11,802.72	670,427	28	2370	84.6	14.14
VILLA CLARA	8,412.41	817,395	29	2667	92	13.051
CIENFUEGOS	4,180.02	395,183	14	1387	99.1	14.039
SANCTI SPIRITU	6,736.51	460,328	11	991	90.1	8.611
CIEGO DE AVILA	6,783.13	411,766	8	449	56.1	4.3.62
CAMAGUEY	15,615.02	784,178	14	709	50.6	3.617
LAS TUNAS	6,587.75	525,485	6	604	100.7	4.598
HOLGUIN	9,292.83	1,021,321	12	1138	94.8	4.4.57
GRANMA	8,375.49	822,452	10	1104	110.4	5.369
STGO DE CUBA	6,156.44	1,036,281	19	1992	104.8	7.689
GUANTANAMO	6,167.97	507,118	7	1187	169.6	9.363

Characterization of CF historical periods: 1945 to 2008:

Historical Epoch	Years	Membership trend	Relevant Events
<u>Before the revolution</u>	1945-1958	Accelerated growth	Grau, Prío and struggle against Batista
<u>First Years after the revolution</u>	1959-1967	Accelerated reduction	Emigration; B. Pigs; October Crisis; Rev.. Offensive; Umap
<u>Second Revolutionary Period</u>	1968-1971	Some stability	Zafra de los 10 Millones; End of Legal Emigration
<u>Third Revolutionary Period</u>	1972-1981	Moderate reduction	State Economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel
<u>Fourth Revolutionary Period</u>	1982-1990	Slow growth	Economic Liberalization after Mariel: Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR
<u>Fifth Revolutionary Period</u>	1991-2000	Accelerated growth	IV Congress of PCC; Special Period; Rise of Tourism
<u>Sixth Revolutionary Period</u>	2001 to date	Stability	New Millenium; Tourism; Support from Venezuela



First years of revolution: accelerated reduction of members: strong emigration;
B. Pigs; October Crisis; statization of economy; UMAP; revolutionary offensive

Membership movement in any organization

- $\text{Members CurrentYear} =$
 - $\text{Members PreviousYear} - \text{Losses} + \text{Gains}$
- In the CF case, we can break down Losses & Gains:
- $\text{Gains} = \text{New members} + \text{Re-affiliations}$
- $\text{Losses} = \text{Withdrawals} + \text{Payment} + \text{Deaths} + \text{PolitIndcd}$
- Politically induced losses include: Emigration;
 - Left or never joined, due to adverse government policies
 - Left because new ideology was more attractive/fulfilling

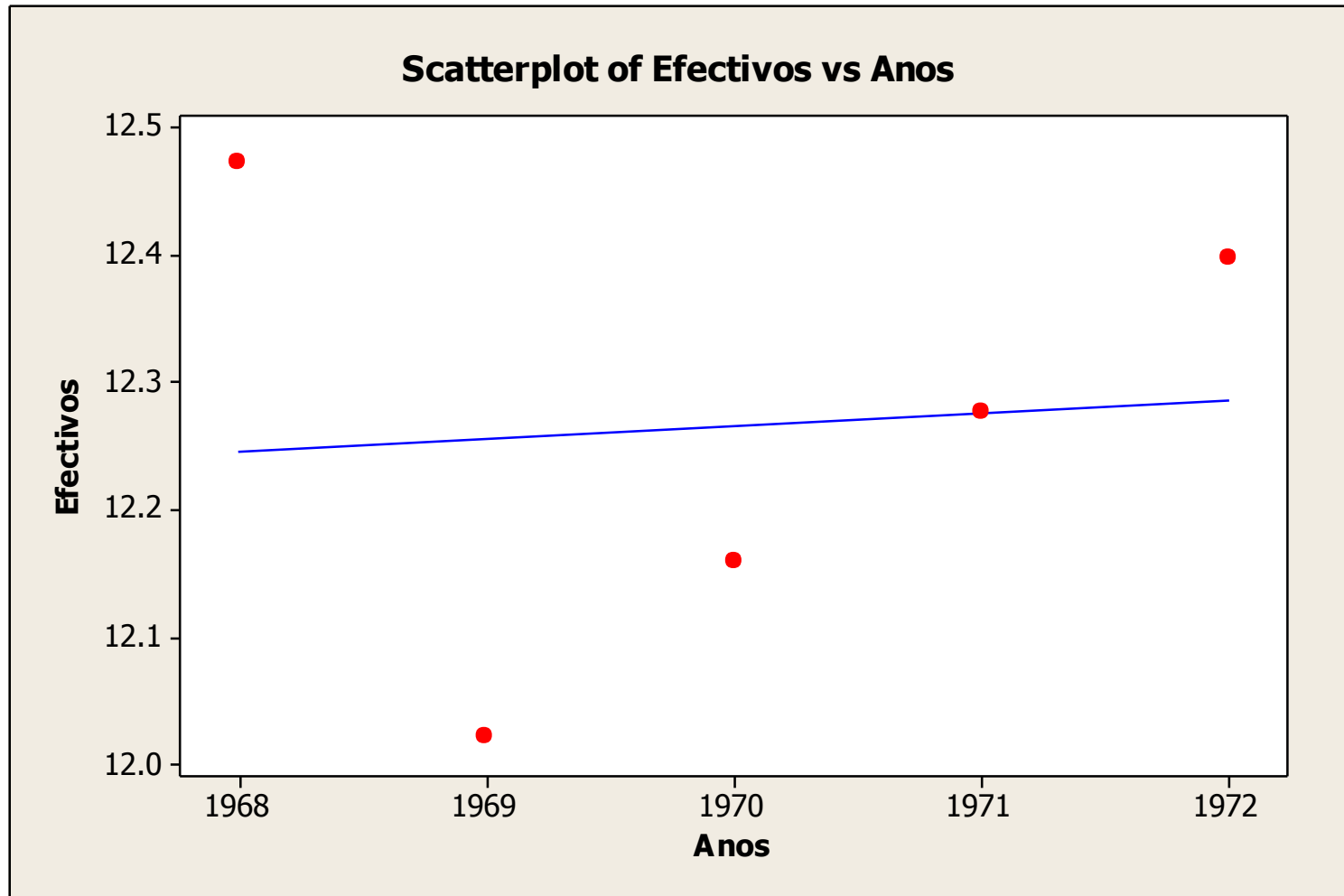
Cuban Emigration to USA (INS Data): 1959 -1969

Yer	TotMason	TotEmigr	Miembros	EffectiveMas	MsEmig(x1)	MsEmig(x1.5)	Death(1%)	Left(2%)
1959	*	62,800	32738	0.02051	322	483	327	655
1960	31753	60,781	31492	0.01836	279	418	315	630
1961	28992	50,857	30449	0.01643	209	313	304	609
1962	*	73,632	28940	0.01643	302	454	289	579
1963	28335	15,535	28621	0.01544	60	90	286	572
1964	29446	15,045	28313	0.01575	59	89	283	566
1965	*	25,366	27793	0.01575	100	150	278	556
1966	*	55,422	26657	0.01575	218	327	267	533
1967	25824	49,756	25637	0.01308	163	244	256	513
1968	25072	50,182	24608	0.01247	156	235	246	492
1969	24589	49,415	23595	0.01202	148	223	236	472
Total					2017	3026	3088	6177

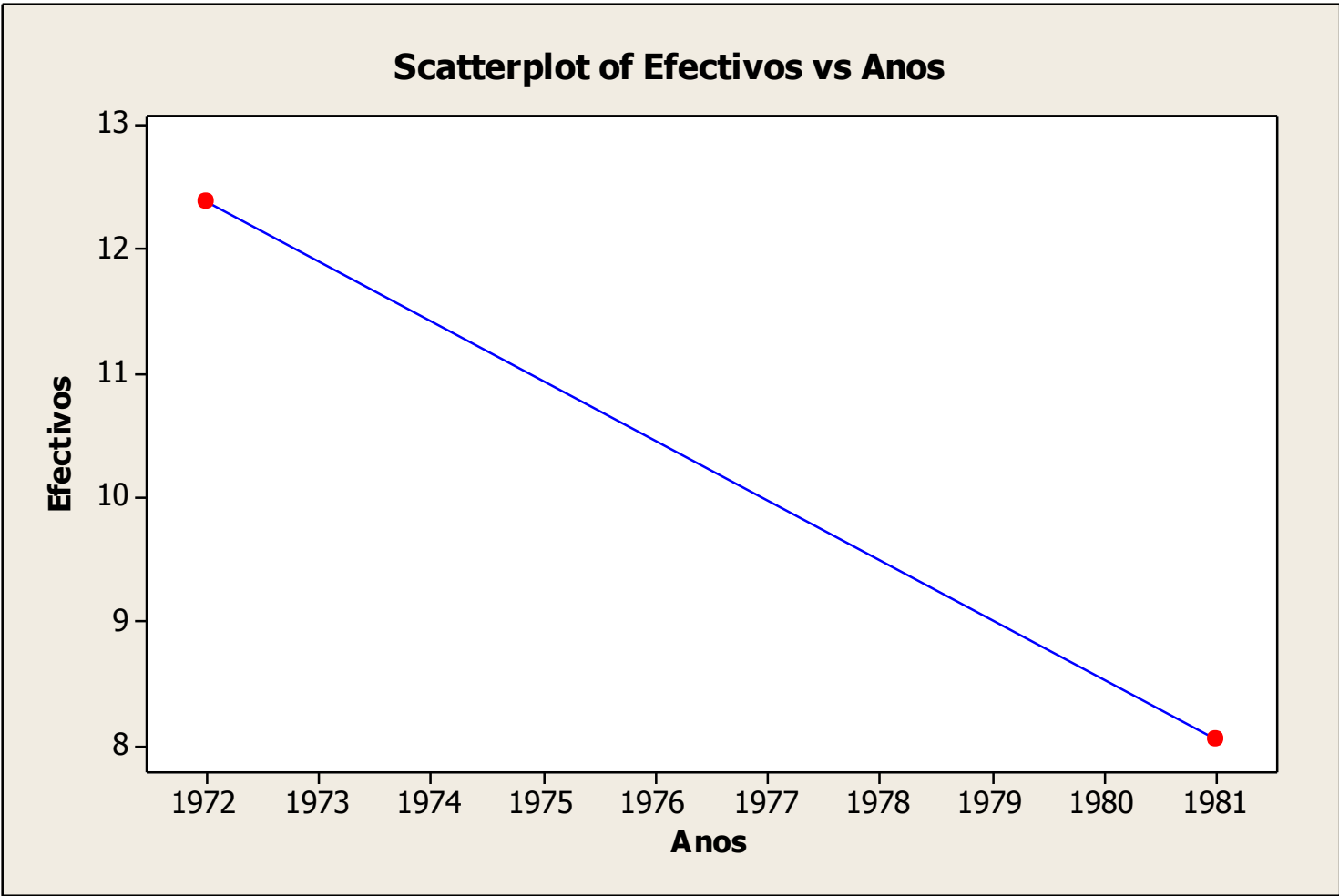
Function (Effective Masons) is annually adjusted for two estimates (x1 & x1.5) of number of masons yearly emigration, providing Lower Bounds, as we are only considering the emigration to the USA, and not elsewhere.

Membership Reduction: 1959-69

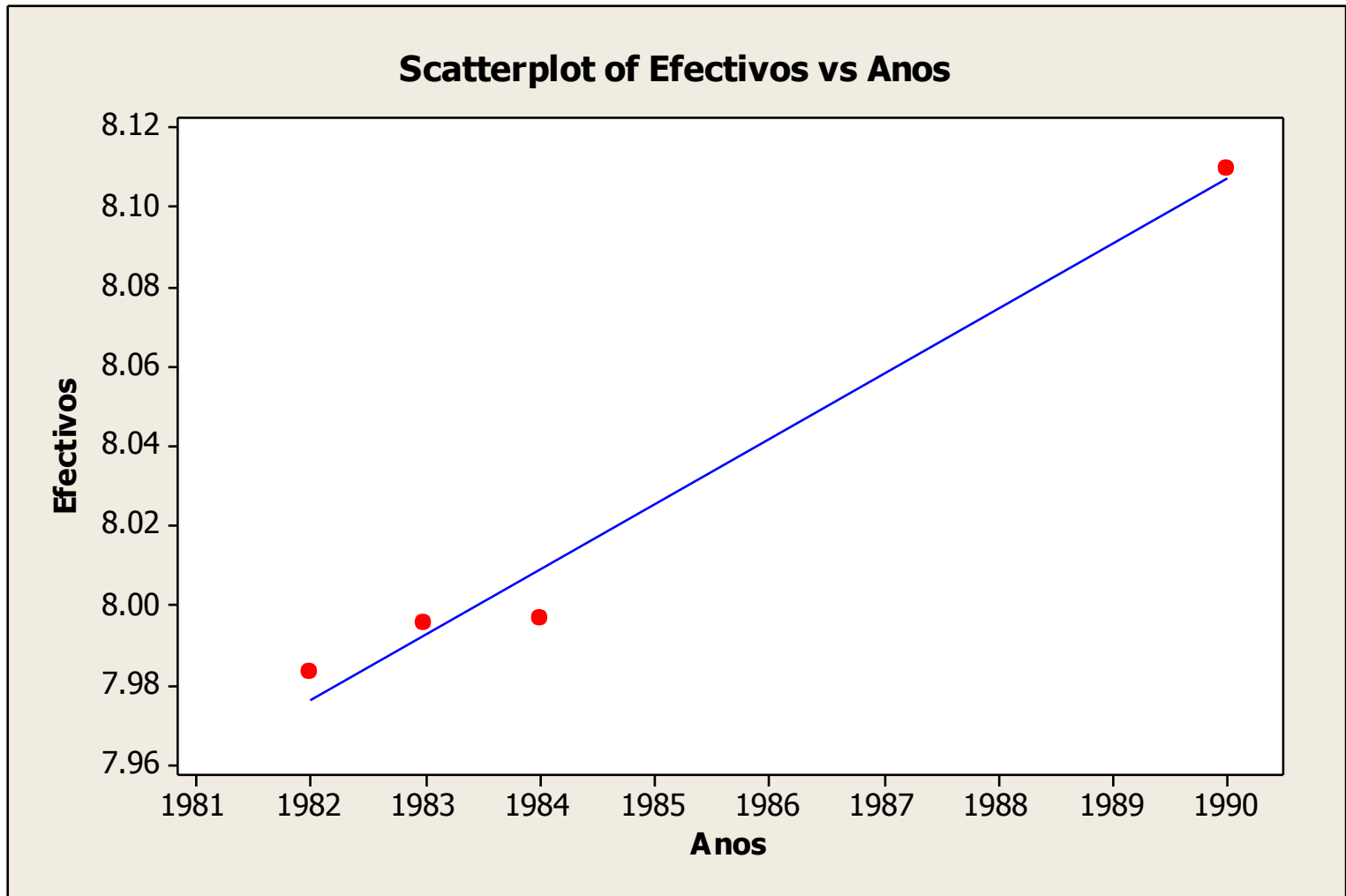
- **Attrition:** $3K + 3K + 6K = 12K$
 - Left the country: 3026 (Lower Bound)
 - Left the Institution for ideological reasons
 - Left the Institution due to government policy
 - Deaths, natural reduction: 3088 (L.B.)
- **Balking:** $(25K + 12K) - 34K = 3K$
 - Never (re)affiliated, for ideological reasons
 - Never (re)affiliated, due to government policy
 - Transfers, new ordinary affiliations



Zafra de los 10 Millones; End of emigration; Full state economy



Expansion of state economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel Boatlift

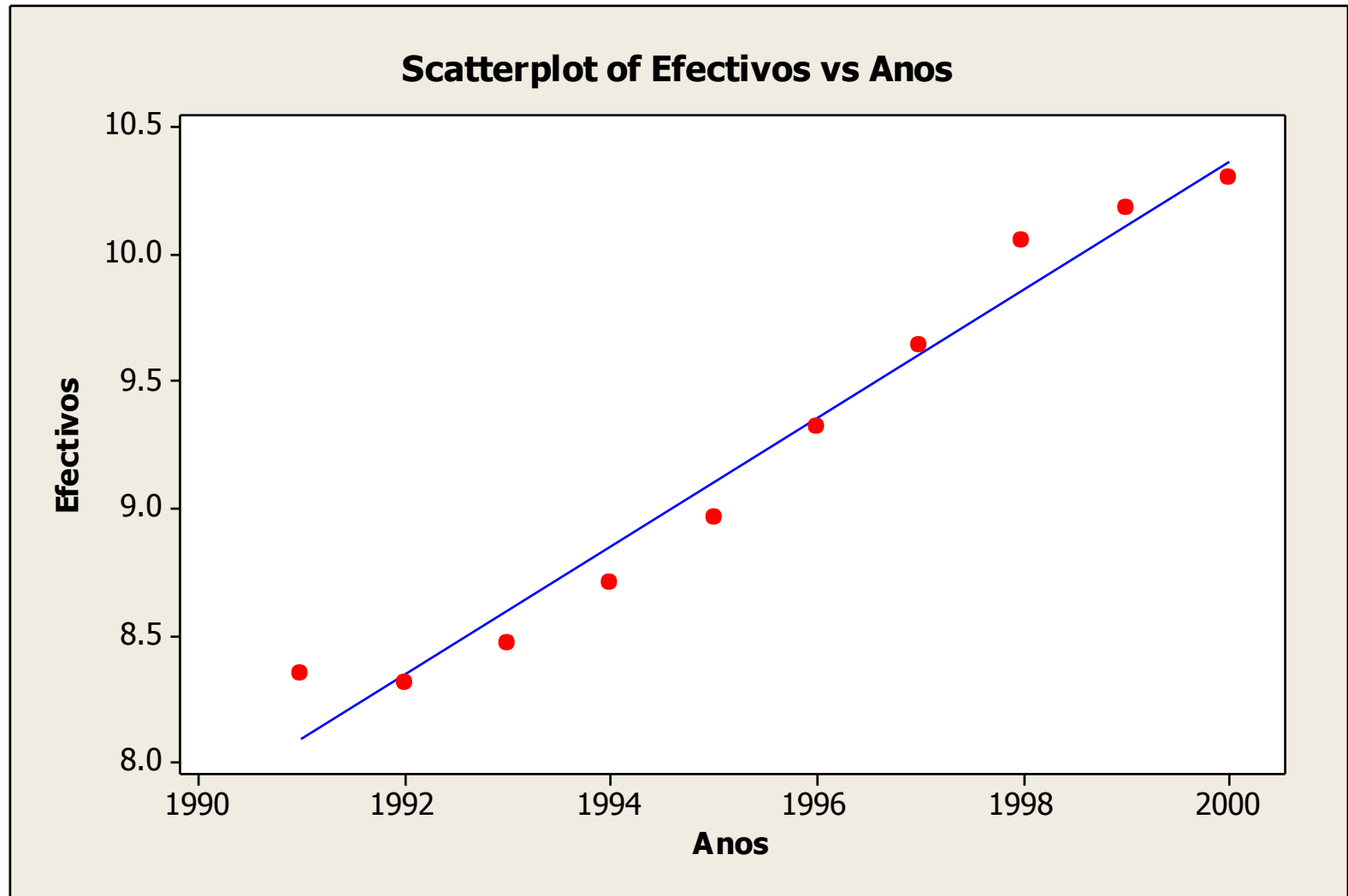


Economic liberalization after Mariel: Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR.

Demographic Data for Period 1982 - 91

Notice population growth is the same as that of Masons

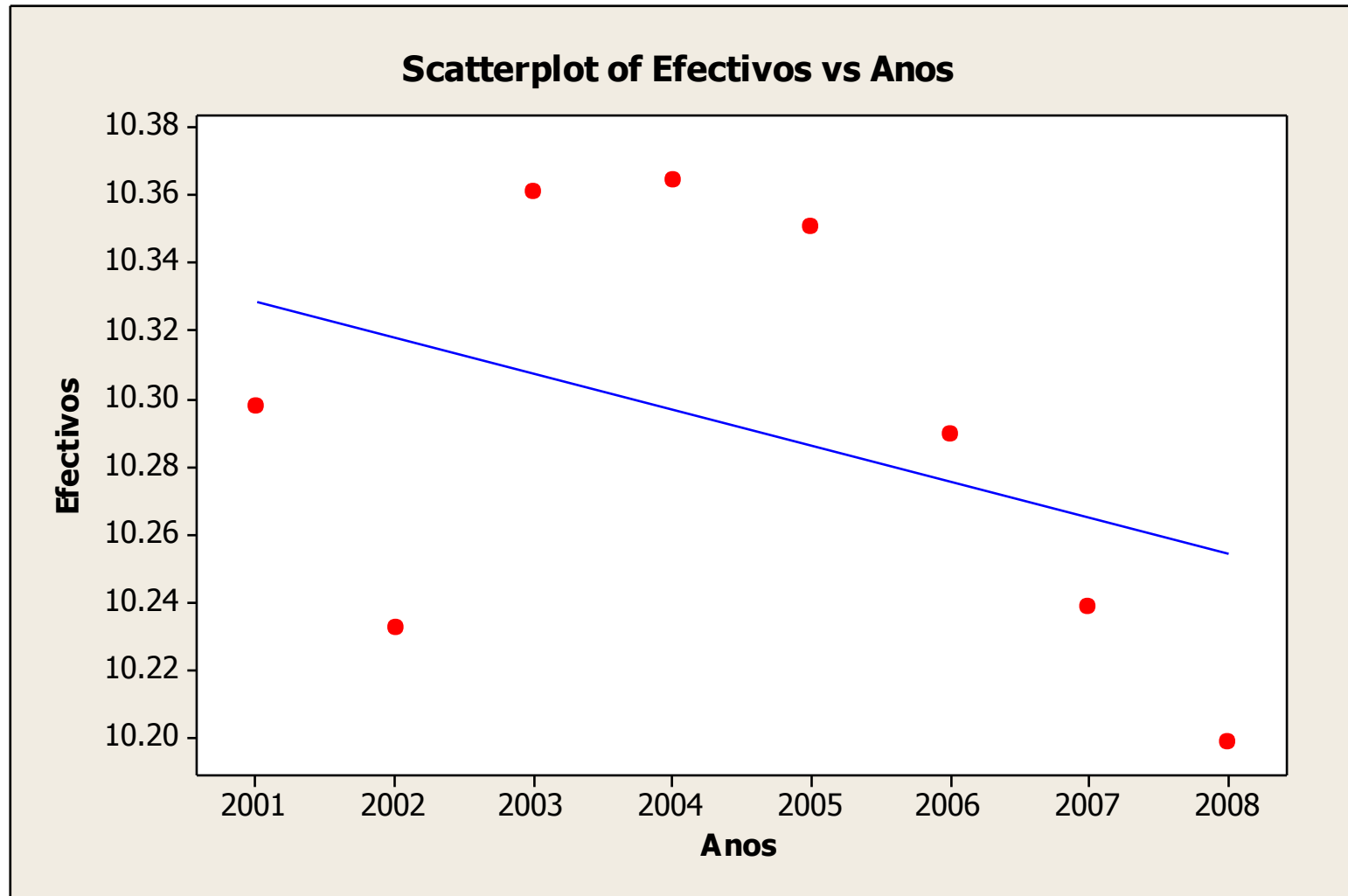
Year	Members	Estimate	Population	Estimate
1982	19690	0.009	9865800	0.009
1983	19862	19867	9936700	9954592
1984	20007	20046	10007600	10044184
1985		20226		10134581
1986		20408		10225792
1987		20592		10317825
1988		20777		10410685
1989		20964		10504381
1990	21153	21153	10433000	10598921
1991	21918	21344	10503900	10694311



IV Congress PCC authorizes members; Special Period: Private Ent./Tourism

Growth by IV PCC Congress & Economy

Year	Population	Estimate	Members	Estimate	IV-PCC	Difference
1990	10433000	0.007	21153	0.03	0.021	*
1991	10574800	10506031	21918	21788	21597	190
1992	10645700	10648824	21962	22441	22051	390
1993	10716600	10720220	22539	23114	22514	601
1994	10787500	10791616	23321	23808	22987	821
1995	10858400	10863013	24169	24522	23469	1053
1996	10929300	10934409	25301	25258	23962	1296
1997	11000200	11005805	26344	26016	24465	1550
1998	11071100	11077201	27635	26796	24979	1817
1999	11142000	11148598	28173	27600	25504	2096
2000	11176406	11219994	28689	28428	26039	2389



New Millenium; Tourism; Private Enterprise; Hugo Chávez & Venezuela.

	GrwthRate=	0.003	(0.3%)	Annual	
Year	Population	Estimate	Members	Estimate	Effective
2000	11176405.78	11176406	28689	28689	10.27
2001	11210811.56	11209935	28772		
2002	11245217.33	11243565	28677	28861	10.20
2003	11279623.11	11277295	29127		
2004	11314028.89	11311127	29225	29035	10.33
2005	11348434.67	11345061	29276		
2006	11382840.44	11379096	29192	29209	10.26
2007	11417246.22	11413233	29134		

Notice how 0.3% describes well total growth: of the country as well as of the members of the institution. Last column, approximately 10.27 *efective masons* shows how there is no real growth: only keeping up with population. *Impact* of the institution, remains therefore constant.

Demographic Summary: 1959-2007

- Total Mason losses between 1959-69:
 - Lower Bound: 12K (includes only emigration to USA)
- 1992 IV Congress PCC + Economy: extra growth
 - Members of PCC, and government officials
 - Citizens previously concerned about joining CF
 - Dissidents (e.g. 13 of the 75 prisoners of Spring 2003)
- Stabilization, after hitting 29K (in the 2000s)
 - Saturation? More emigration (lottery)? Other?
- Result: CF are true cross-cut of Cuban society
 - Economic, political, educational social, racial, religious

Two Historical Examples:

- **Spain 1960s: Laureano Lopez Rodo**
 - And his Opus Dei economic group developed
 - From within, the Economic opening that
 - Eventually brought fourth a Transition (1975+).
- **Portugal 1970s: Marcelo Caetano**
 - Post-Salazar slow and inadequate change
 - Provoqued the military insurrection
 - Revolucion de los Claveles, 1973
 - That brought about the fall of this government.

Alternatives to an Opening

- Maintaining the Status Quo
 - Economic, political and social status
- **Implosion and Violence in the streets**
- Coup d'état -or such attempt- followed by:
 - Civil war, or by faction in-fighting, or by
 - Military intervention and foreign occupation
- Triggers massive, uncontrolled exodus
 - Toward USA, and other Caribbean areas
 - Failed State: drugs and terrorism hub

Examples of Successful Transitions

- Spain, during the 1960 - 1975
- Portugal, after Salazar/Caetano: 1973+
- Chile, during the years 1988 -1998
- Brasil under the Generals: 1970 - 1985
- Mexico, with the PAN: 1980 – 2000
- All these Transitions started with:
 - A social and economic liberalization
 - A strengthening of Civil Society

Pre-conditions for a Transition

- Preparing an economic opening
 - Showing potential for economic growth
- **Existence of an Alternative Space**
- **Development of a strong Civil Society**
 - That interacts internally and with government
- Cooperation and an Understanding
- Avoid Foreign Intervention in the process
 - Only, as impartial arbiters and supporters

Freemasons and Civil Society

- Singular Characteristics of CF
 - Seniority, extension, membership, egalitarianism, inclusiveness, variety, brotherhood, tolerance, ethical nature, international, democratic rules
 - Allows examining topics openly, having various points of view, from different groups coming from the Civil Society.
 - Potential to become a Forum for alternative and new Ideas, and a source of new leaders.

Freemasons in Civil Society

- Incubators of Citizens
 - Free men; independent thinkers
- Incubator of new Ideas
 - Open discussions, in an environment of respect
- Increases Social Capital
 - Interaction between different social strata
- Tolerance and Acceptance
 - Of new/different ways of thinking
- Democratic rules and procedures
 - Freely elected leaders and judicial system

Others abilities developed

- Effective public speaking
- Listening and arguing respectfully
- Use of persuasion and reason
- Organization skills of large groups
- Democratic methods of leadership
- Dealing and living with a budget
- The art of Negotiation with others
- Abiding by a system of rules/regulations

Advantages over other organizations

- **Egalitarian**
 - Does not have over-riding hierarchies
- **Democratic**
 - Members elect and are elected, periodically
- **Participative**
 - Precludes captive audiences: objecting is possible
- **Open**
 - Open to larger variety of groups (religious, social etc.)
 - Allows for a more general exchange of views

Other advantages/disadvantages

- Part of a large international organization
 - May obtain aid from foreign sources
- 1992: government and party membership
 - Allows the possibility of a real *FORUM*
- Institutional opportunity to grow
 - No other competing organizations now exist
- Needs to become completely independent
 - To develop its full capacity of action.

Some restrictions suffered

- Loss of some Lodges, locals and income
- Restrictions to develop social programs
- Legal and extralegal government control
- Economic restrictions on membership
- Imposition of fines, of reports, etc.
- Limited access to media/Internet
- Restrictions to form new Lodges
- Limitations to receive foreign support

Some Progress Made

- Official visits from masons from abroad
- Reduction of constraints on membership
- 1992: membership of government officers
 - And of previously concerned citizens
- A few new Lodges: Diaz Bravo/Acacias
- Intermittent access to the Internet
 - Yahoo Listserve – no longer operating
 - La Colmena Blog – intermittent
 - Web pages exist for a few Lodges

Discussion

- Has the potential to contribute to an opening
- Needs to have the same advantages
 - That today enjoy some religious organizations,
 - And their International central organizations
- Example: the Catholic Church and Caritas
 - Have Web Pages and Journals in the Internet
 - Receive remittances and materials from abroad
 - Can develop community social programs.

Some necessary steps for CF:

- Lodges to create their Web Pages/Bulletins
 - Unconstrained access to Internet and Media
- Stronger interaction, within and abroad
 - Between Lodges, and with other Grand Lodges
- Possibility to implement in every Lodge
 - Social, economic and cultural programs as before
- Re-establish links with Cuban Diaspora
 - Regularize, individual and institutional situation
 - Of current Cuban Freemasons and Organizations

Social Function of Freemasons

- Non political: good men => better men
- Some Masons feel a call to act on social problems
 - Peacefully but actively, to improve their environment
- Examples of such participation in the past:
 - In Cuba: under Spain, the autonomic movement
 - In Puerto Rico: under Spain, autonomic movement
- **Connecting** Function: establish contacts/interact
- **Spreading** Function: discuss the key issues
- **Incubator** Function: individual/organizations.

Conclusions

- Strengthening Civil Society
 - Key to develop an Opening in Cuba
- Negotiation, not Confrontation FORUMS
- Recognize Freemasons as an institution
 - Of large importance to Cuban Civil Society
 - Given its human and geographical breadth
 - In fact, an Un-Official, Popular *Parliament*
- Unique opportunity for institutional growth
 - Does not have to compete: Rotary, Lions, etc.