

Repression Against Civil Society

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Cuban government-Party officials constantly state that Cuba enjoys the most perfect democracy. This is a peculiar interpretation, for the Cuban regime meets all the requirements of a full-fledged dictatorship. Not only is freedom of expression non-existent, but also there is no such thing as separation of powers or economic freedom. In Cuba, one man, and one man alone has the power to decide what people can do, say and read; the power to write laws, to have them adopted and then enforced; the power to choose the type of punishment for those who disobey his laws, as shown during the repressive wave he staged in 2003.

The proof is in the official “pudding.” Cuba’s Foreign Minister, Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, defined the dictatorial character of the regime when he tried to justify the repressive measures of spring 2003: *“In the years of the fraudulent republic [1902-1958], during the bloody, US-supported- and-militarily-backed dictatorships of Machado and Batista, summary trials were held. Those regimes went even further in expediting a solution: they murdered opposition activists and committed crimes against them; many simply disappeared.”*

Without argument, the People’s National Assembly adopts legislation such as Law 88, commonly referred to as



the “Gag Law” in 1999. It was titled in Orwellian “newspeak” as “Law for the Protection of Cuba’s Independence and Economy.” It was designed to police all manifestation of freedom of thought.

Law 88 was so unjustifiable that it took four years for the government to decide on enforcing it. The government started to enforce the gag law when the surge of civil society, including independent economic activity, gained momentum. However, the gag law was not meant to police “illegal” economic activity. In January 2003, the regime issued Law 232 specifically worded to bring down Cuba’s flourishing informal economy, an embarrassment to a government maintaining a failed central planning.

However, it has not been easy for the Cuban government to exert absolute control over the population, especially when a civil society has emerged throughout the country, out of the people’s unmet needs. The regime has resorted to force in order to nip the independent sector in the bud.

By early 2003, a virtual parallel nation was growing outside government control. Because it operated under market economy dynamics, the informal economy offered better quality and lower priced services and products than the State sector. It also created new jobs at a time when unemployment in the poorly run centralized economy was increasing.

The political opposition was also gaining elbow room, and was organizing itself around several peaceful transition proposals for democratization and the rule of law. The Varela Project gathered thousands of signatures and its leader, Oswaldo Payá, delivered the referendum petition

to the People's National Assembly in the midst of international acclaim. Other organizations aligned themselves with opposition leader Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello's Assembly to Promote Civil Society, and independent labor groups joined the Independent National Workers Confederation of Cuba (CONIC).

At the same time, other grassroots initiatives prospered, in an effort to fill the population's daily void with free and independent alternatives, such as the 200 independent libraries nationwide. Several independent medical clinics and half a dozen independent pharmacies were distributing medical supplies donated by Democracy Support Group (GAD) and other Cuban exile organizations.

On another front, we saw the surge of an independent free press. Independent journalists, working through more than a dozen independent press agencies, had built an international reputation and their professionalism was acknowledged by the greater part of the international media.

The government's frustration with its inability to exert full control over Cuban society manifested itself in an unprecedented wave of repression. In January 2003, Cuban authorities deployed a national offensive to enforce Law 232; it searched homes, confiscated personal property and arrested people.

The government is opposed to the free services, like the libraries, that independent groups offer people. The authorities periodically confiscate the library collections – books that were received as donations and gifts. The libraries offer a unique service of making available titles that the regime bans from State libraries. During the March 2003 wave of repression, several independent librarians

were arrested, and their books confiscated.

The independent clinics run the same fate. The government considers as an affront – and a crime — the distribution of free medicines at a time when these items can be purchased only in U.S. dollars at the State pharmacies. The clinic at Miguel Sigler Amaya’s home was dismantled after his arrest in March 2003. The police confiscated some 90 pounds of medical supplies: antibiotics, analgesics and vitamins destined for free distribution to the community. They also confiscated the clinic’s aerosol and oxygen equipment, a glucometer, physical therapy equipment, syringes and first aid dressing supplies.

By implementing a violent wave of repression against free thought and freedom of speech, the government tacitly admitted that its self-proclaimed “battle of ideas” was a failure. The government had absolute monopoly on all media and all resources – access to the Internet included – and the regime imprisoned Cubans who dared to express views contrary to the official ideology. The main charges brought up against the 75 peaceful activists and independent journalists during the April 2003 trials were: publishing abroad, navigating the Internet and owning short-wave radios.

In its assault against the informal economy, the government also admitted defeat in the economic front, given the vitality exhibited by Cuban micro-entrepreneurs. Like nature, the economy cannot withstand a void. In spite of harassment and government control at all levels, Cuba’s informal economy satisfies people’s need for many services and products, a need that is not met by the State sector, even though the latter owns all of the country’s resources.

In January, the government launched an assault against all private initiatives, under guise of a law allegedly adopted to address drug trafficking and the catch-all category "other illegal activities." In Cuba, what is not explicitly sanctioned is considered "illegal activity." Independent journalists called a spade a spade, and revealed the true purpose of the operation. The government responded by enforcing its laws against civil society, moving against independent journalists and peaceful activists.

Repression against civil society

Between March 18 and 24 2003, the Cuban government enacted the most arbitrary and unfortunate wave of repression in its long trajectory of crimes against civil society. It broke into the homes of more than 75 peaceful opposition activists and independent journalists, arrested them, and subjected them to summary trials that ended in prison terms of between six and 28 years. Search-and seizure operatives against their homes took over eight hours in some cases.

On March 18, Cuba's televised evening news broadcasted an official note informing the public of "the arrest of counterrevolutionary leaders who will be brought to justice."

Meanwhile, people watched in dismay the deployment of repressive forces in the streets, agents dressed in distinctive black vests whose presence meant to neutralize any demonstration of support for the detainees.

The trials were held behind closed doors when they were supposed to be open to the public. The "public" was made up of informers and secret police agents. No friends or colleagues were allowed in the courtrooms, only two close relatives per defendant. Neither were they allowed to

meet with their lawyers or review the trial documents or indictments prior to the start of their trials. When the guards took the detainees out of their cells at Villa Marista—headquarters of Cuba’s secret police—they had no idea were they were being taken. They learned about the trials when they reached the courthouses.

Immediately after their conviction, Amnesty International pronounced the activists prisoners of conscience. The government confined them to several high state security prisons among violent criminals and convicted killers. It also made sure that prisoners were sent to prisons located as far away from home as possible.

From the beginning, the convicted activists were subjected to cruel punishment: tiny cells with dismal sanitary conditions; inadequate, poorly cooked and often rotten food; delayed or undelivered medical attention. They were brought outdoors handcuffed and locked in cages. As a result, independent journalist José Ubaldo Izquierdo was injured at Kilo 5 1/2 Prison in Pinar del Río. Prison officers were escorting a handcuffed Izquierdo down a staircase with no handrail; Izquierdo slipped and fell down the stairs. He suffered a double fracture in one wrist, and required nine stitches for a head injury.

Many people wonder why the government of Havana took such desperate measures precisely at a time when the scales of U.S. policy were tipping toward a lifting of the trade embargo, when more American politicians and businessmen were visiting Cuba, and everything seemed to usher in a more favorable and friendly approach – at least where trade was concerned — between the U.S. and Cuba.

The answer lies in the environment prevalent in Cuba around December 2002, when an emerging civil society was gaining ground on its own.

The regime's brutal reaction to the development of civil society was so grossly out of proportion that most of the leftist intellectuals condemned the repressive wave on the island, especially after the April 11, 2003 execution of three young men who tried to flee Cuba in a ferry boat just as international criticism of the wave of repression was mounting.

Lorenzo Enrique Copeyo Castillo, 31, Bárbaro Leodán Sevilla García, 21, and Jorge Luis Martínez Isaac, 43, were executed by firing squad before dawn only a few hours after their summary trial. They were only allowed to appeal their death sentence as a mere formality. Their plea was a moot point.

The execution of these three young men of humble origins confirmed the generally-held notion that the propaganda staged by the Cuban government was nothing more than a feeble façade to hide the assault waged against the population.

It was too great an affront to the world. Sectors of the intellectual left, until then blind or complacent to Cuba's antidemocratic government, condemned the repressive wave. Nobel laureate, author and communist militant José Saramago's words echoed around the world: "I've come this far, but no more."

The European Union, whose support propped up Cuba's deteriorated economy for a long time, decided it could no longer continue to support Fidel Castro's government. Political leaders and intellectuals began issuing

statements condemning the Cuban regime. Amnesty International declared the 75 prisoners of conscience, and Reporters without Borders described Cuba as the largest journalists' prison in the world.

Meanwhile inside Cuba, the government failed to secure silence or bring the opposition to a halt. Independent journalists and opposition activists, albeit wounded by the wave of repression, regrouped immediately, making the regime's latest fiasco even more evident. Journalists who had not been arrested were not the only ones doing the reporting now: from prison, articles from the convicted leadership continued coming, and new voices filled the spaces left empty on the outside.

A dark week

The break-ins at the homes of independent journalists and peaceful activists began at 4 p.m. on March 18. One independent journalist in the central province of Villa Clara remembers those days:

The wave of repression started with the arrest of 32 members of Cuba's emerging civil society on Tuesday, March 18th. It was like a Hollywood movie, R rated for language. Dissidents, independent journalists and librarians, poets, and human rights advocates were among the arrested. They were taken away after long and excruciatingly thorough search of their homes that lasted for several hours.

Next day "Take 2": same film, same script. Thirty-three activist homes searched. The cast of main characters was completed during the following days: over 90 people were subjected to

the terror script. Shooting of the film came to an end in a few hours: arrests, indictments, trials, sentences, activists confined to Castro's dungeons for terms as long as 28 years –freedom denied for 28 years!– summary trials not held in Cuba since the 1980s.

The state's case argued that the defendants, peaceful human rights advocates, were providing information to a foreign power, destabilizing the country and provoking domestic unrest. For those reasons they were formally charged with participating in mercenary actions that served the interests of the United States, and with actions against the independence and territorial integrity of the Cuban nation. These crimes are stated in Law 88, better known as the "gag law," that dates to 1999 and which remained un-enforced until now. Havana argued more: that the mercenary actions relied on allies at the U.S. Interest Section office in Cuba; that this office was a veritable incubator of counter-revolutionaries, and that it functioned as headquarters for all subversive activity in the country, under the personal direction of Mr. James C. Cason..

However, the real crimes committed by the peaceful activists had to do with Cuba's non-violent struggle for democracy after 44 years of dictatorship; the study of democratic concepts and values; the use of an alternative language to that of the government's; reading publications from the free world; freedom of association regarding projects that run parallel to Castro's own; developing a culture of free speech; distributing medicines or copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; promoting a new civil society; navigating the Internet; using a few faxes, computers or telephones to tell the world about the trials and tribulations of the Cuban people, and about violations of human rights inside an oppressed and silenced Cuba.

The secret police searched every inch of the dissidents' homes carefully, going through each photograph, each document and letter looking for evidence that could incriminate the victims and fit the trumped-up charges against them. They wanted to prove a conspiracy with a foreign government to destabilize revolutionary power. It was a waste of their time, but they did confiscate every piece of office equipment that seemed valuable.

In her testimony from Havana, Claudia Márquez Linares, director of the independent press group Grupo Decoro and wife of opposition leader Osvaldo Alfonso, describes the search conducted in her home:

An authoritarian fist knocked at the door. It was State Security police with a search warrant that enabled them, they said, to look for "elements that constitute a crime."

Twelve agents, two of them armed, confiscated hundreds of stories, news, articles and journalism books.

They found 150 books on politics, law, economics and social sciences; more than 50 envelopes containing information taken from the Internet. That was their bounty after a 10-hour search one old laptop and 36 diskettes bearing stories told by folks who are themselves victims of the arbitrary laws of the Cuban government: all this ended up in the crowded storage facilities of Cuba's Secret Police.

Let us remember that it's been two months since the operatives against drug trafficking "and other illicit behavior" have also witnessed massive confiscations that affect the common citizen. These confiscations have nothing to do with drugs. Independent journalists have written about this kind of harassment and the testimonials can be found online.

The police officers read all the love letters that my husband Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés wrote me eight years ago. He is president of the Liberal Democratic Party. Now Osvaldo, my most treasured jewel, was taken away by the police officers to the cells at Villa Marista, State Security headquarters here in Havana province.

Six compact discs, among them those containing the material for De Cuba magazine, the Manuel Márquez Sterling Society of Journalists, and the European Union Encyclopedia for Young People, have been carted off to State Security warehouse, along with a video recorder and a digital photo camera, to have its contents unscrupulously inspected.

They listened to my German language lessons, and they took all the Internacional Liberal newsletters. IL is an international umbrella organization for all Liberal Parties the world over, including my husband's.

While we listened to those mediocre charlatans of the official televised Round Table calling us traitors, the police went through my drawers and checked the family photographs.

On March 31, independent lawyer Wilfredo Vallín Almeida, director of the Center for Liberal Studies, made public a document in which he details several violations of the Penal Process Law, the Penal Code and the Cuban Constitution in effect during the break-ins and arrests March 18-30.

After visiting all the homes searched by the secret police and after speaking to witnesses and seeing the state of the homes after the searches, attorney Vallín reported:

FIRST: In my opinion, in conducting these searches State Security Department has violated several aspects of the PENAL PROCEDURES LAW that are incredible not only procedurally but also in that they show a total disregard for socialist law. I have not visited all the homes that were searched, but for those that I have inspected, there is a violation of Article 218 paragraph 2 of the PENAL PROCEDURES LAW, which states: "When home dweller refuses consent to search, police must obtain a search warrant from the court approved by the prosecutor's office, copy of which must be presented to dweller before search can commence..."

In the cases I have documented, NO such consent was asked of the home dwellers, for in fact the police broke in to the homes. Clearly, where the search warrant was presented, consent was not required, but in some instances no such search warrant was produced, neither was the service of a copy of the warrant to the home dweller fulfilled.

Therefore, the officers used by State Security Department for these searches have violated Article 218 Paragraph 2 (first part) of the PENAL PROCEDURES LAW.

PENAL PROCEDURES LAW, Article 218, end of Paragraph 2, states: "When home dweller refuses consent... the search cannot be conducted between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m..."

In several instances, the search went on like a marathon during 10 hours or more, ending in the early hours of the morning, some close to dawn, and the home dwellers were kept out of their homes for the duration of the search. And yet, there can be no doubt or interpretation of the law because it clearly states that, when no consent is given, "the search cannot be conducted between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m."

Therefore, State Security officers who conducted these operations violated the last paragraph in Article 218 of the PENAL PROCEDURES LAW.

PENAL PROCEDURES LAW, Article 219: “The search warrant that authorizes entry and search shall determine the SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, the reasons that justify such measures and the inaccessible premises where such verification shall take place.”

Of course, if no search warrants were shown, and no copies of warrants were served on the dwellers, the “specific objectives” of the search could not be clear. What is clear is that every search has a “specific objective.” It is obvious that the officers were searching for books. I shall not question the legitimacy —legally speaking— of regarding as “enemy propaganda” or any such thing a book on Martin Luther King, or the U.S. Declaration of Independence, or La clave de la prosperidad (The Key to Prosperity) by Carlos A. Montaner. Neither do I see a difference between a book like Freedom to Choose by Milton Friedman, perhaps seized in the course of a search, and a Manual written by Colin Powell and read —by his own admission during a televised conference— by the president of Cuba’s Council of State and Council of Ministers. But the problem isn’t that. The problem is that some people have stated that among the books confiscated from them were titles they purchased during the most recent Havana Book Fair, and they have the sales receipts to prove it!

Let me cite an example that illustrates further: At the home of Mr. Roberto de Miranda, a collection of children’s drawings was confiscated. Mr. de Miranda had hung them in one of the rooms of his house.

I had an opportunity to see this collection before it was confiscated. I repeat: it was a collection of loose drawings, scribbles

done by preschoolers, and first, second and third graders. Mrs. de Miranda was not shown any "search warrant", if there was one. However, had there been a similar document, I doubt that any serious and responsible prosecutor would approve issuance of a warrant whose "precise objective" is the confiscation of harmless children's drawings. If I am not mistaken, and let any of my colleagues prove me wrong, in my opinion, the officers who searched de Miranda's home, in confiscating the children's art work, violated the required "precise objective" clause as stated in Article 219 of the subject law.

PENAL PROCEDURES LAW, Article 220: "The search shall be conducted in the least onerous manner, refraining from useless measures and from extending its duration unreasonably or its reach to other individuals unrelated to the strict objectives of the criminal investigation."

There are photographs and witnesses. There are many people who are willing to come forward, or who have already testified in statements sent abroad. It is evident that, at least in some cases, Security officers also violated Article 220 of the subject law.

Because the secret police found no evidence that could link the independent journalists to the alleged conspiracy of which they were accused, the judges presented arguments that attributed a sinister purpose to their reporting. According to the judges –and specifically Judge Alicia Valle Díaz, in the proceedings against Jorge Olivera, Julio César Gálvez, Edel José García and Manuel Vázquez Portal– the sinister purpose was "to convey [their] subversive opinions."

18 The evidence presented against the defendants during

the summary trials included such ridiculous items as a computer or a typewriter. In some instances, not even that. The ruling against Manuel Vázquez Portal states that he received from U.S. diplomats “a portable TECSUN short-wave radio... and a battery charger... is what was found in his home during a search at the time of his arrest, as well as documents, articles and writings filled with seditious and aggressive statements against our revolutionary process.” They also confiscated Vázquez Portal’s bank account, an account that held funds sent by his relatives to cover expenses for his definitive exodus [the Cuban term: “salida definitiva”] from Cuba with his wife and son. Nothing more was presented, but it was enough to sentence him to 18 years in prison, as planned.

Access to the Internet, a courtesy extended to the independent journalists by the U.S. Interest Section in Havana, was a favorite reason for sending them to prison. Ernesto Roque reported:

An undercover agent’s statement was the evidence presented against independent journalists brought to trial in Camaguey. “The undercover State Security agent’s sole proof was that Mario Enrique Mayo had gone with him to the U.S. Interest Section to access the Internet,” said Maydelín Guerra Alvarez, journalist Mayo’s wife.

The journalists brought to trial in Camaguey were Normando Hernández González, director of the independent press agency Cooperativa de Periodistas Independientes de Camaguey, who faces a 30-year sentence at the request of the prosecutor; independent journalist Mario Enrique Mayo, facing a 20-year term; and opposition activists Alejandro González Raga

and Alfredo Manuci Pulido, who face sentences of 18 and 15 years, respectively.

The officers confiscated all activists' bank accounts, as well as the cash on hand found during the searches.

Independent journalist Miriam Leiva, wife of Oscar Espinosa Chepe, states:

A whole life's savings from the hard-worked earnings of Oscar Espinosa Chepe and mine, his wife Miriam Leiva Viamonte, have been confiscated. It is laughable, compared to over 30 years of work on Oscar's part, and 25 years on mine. Our neighbors know that those savings are the result of the legal sale of our then-new car, his various stamp collections and remittances from our relatives abroad. Only a fraction came from the fees we both received for articles and essays written, Oscar's work written in his capacity as economist and independent journalist.

Independent journalist Victor Rolando Arroyo's sentencing to 26 years in prison included confiscation of his family property, left by the police "in storage" at the house where he resided with his wife. The items include: a television, a dining room set, a bed and other personal belongings typical of a married couple's home. When Arroyo was arrested, the police confiscated all the tools of the trade: fax machine, a computer, a photo camera and cash, as well as Arroyo's bank card and that of his mother's, Martha Carmona. Funds in the amount of US\$100 in Arroyo's bank account were confiscated as well.

During the trials—as would occur later during prison visitations—only the closest relatives were allowed in:

wives, children, brothers and sisters. Independent journalist Miguel Saludes wrote:

Omar is my sister's son, hence he is my nephew. Above and beyond categories, we grew up like brothers. We are brothers. However, during this ordeal I learned a whole different family classification.

On the day of the judicial farce staged against the group that included Rodriguez Saludes, only his wife and sister were allowed to be present. As for me, I discovered that there are artificially-created categories that only separate you from your loved ones. The new category is based on consanguinity (being of the same blood or origin).

For example, parents and grandparents are in the first group. Children are in the second group, spouses and siblings in the third. I belong to the fourth group, for I am an uncle. Therefore I had to be present at the trial, according to this absurd regulation. This also happened to the families of other detainees, as in the case of Antonio Díaz with his sister-in-law.

When I went to visit Omar at Kilo 8 Prison in Camagüey, I was quite upset, although not surprised, when I learned that the damned decree reached me even in there. Only family up to the third level of consanguinity can visit the prisoners.

Miriam Leyva reported that two nieces of Oscar Espinosa Chepe were barred by the authorities from the trial room, and that the same had happened to the oldest son of independent trade unionist Pedro Pablo Alvarez.

The public brought to the trials by the authorities was composed of Communist Party militants, military personnel, State Security officers and members of the paramili-

tary "Rapid Response" brigades. Also present were those agents the government had infiltrated into the ranks of opposition organizations and the independent press. The informants were the only witnesses. The informants testified what numerous readers around the world already knew: that the journalists wrote for the Internet. As for the opposition activists, the crime was signing their own names to the reports on human rights violations in Cuba. None of the defendants was involved in covert actions, and many people question why State Security bothers to infiltrate organizations that act in the public eye.

Yolanda Huerga Cedeño, wife of Manuel Vázquez Portal, reported:

In Manuel's particular case, I came out of the trial very hopeful, and proud of his courage and character, because he didn't let himself be intimidated by the prosecutor. The police case worker, a lieutenant colonel by the name of Robert, agreed with the prosecutor that the defendants were traitors to their homeland, lackies [of the U.S.], etc. But in my opinion there wasn't much evidence against them, for not even agent Miguel [Orrió] had much to say. That's what I thought, 40 years listening to everyone speak of justice only gave me false hopes deep in my subconscious.

The police placed operatives around the courts to prevent the activists' colleagues from showing their solidarity. On other occasions, the police had been forced to disperse demonstrators, during the trials of other opposition activists. Now, neighbors were told that dangerous criminals were being tried, not the advocates of Cuba's civil society. More than a hundred police officers and State

Security agents surrounded the building where independent journalist José Ubaldo Izquierdo, from *Grupo de Trabajo Decoro*, was tried together with Miguel Galbán, another journalist, and peaceful opponent Héctor Raúl Valle. Neighbors were told that it was a trial against the perpetrators of a multiple murder that had shaken the community only a few months before.

The streets around the courthouse in the municipality of *10 de Octubre*, where the trials against peaceful opposition activists Oscar Elías Biscet, Orlando Fundora and Angel Moya were held, were closed by police; they also staged a spectacular State Security operative in the area.

Also during the weeks the activists were held at Villa Marista, State Security headquarters, the authorities staged a heavily armed operative around the perimeter and its adjacent streets, packed for the occasion by plain clothesmen and the paramilitary "Rapid Response" brigades.

The defendants had no adequate defense. Independent journalist Fara Armenteros, director of UPECI, reported that the announcement of summary trials against the independent journalists and peaceful opposition activists had caused a great commotion in the public lawyers' offices:

The relatives of some detainees complained that they could not retain the services of a defense lawyer due to the hasty nature of the trial arrangements and the short time they had to contract an attorney.

When referring to the difficulties she encountered in retaining a defense lawyer for her uncle, Omar Pernet, who faces a

prosecutor's petition of 25 years in prison, Bertha Antúnez Pernet said: "No lawyer wants to deal with this. I retained one who then called in sick. We had assurance of the police case worker who said that if we didn't name a lawyer the court would appoint one."

Antúnez added: "We accepted the court-appointed lawyer because it didn't matter: the defendants are special government hostages, and their conviction was decided long before they were arrested."

We learned that many of the relatives of the detainees had no resources to hire a defense lawyer, since the cost of legal services for cases that are political in nature —between 500 and 700 pesos— is five to seven times more expensive than regular legal services.

Attorney Amelia Rodríguez Calá, who agreed to defend several of the activists, suffered a hypertension attack as a result of the extraordinary stress generated by the caseload. She had to discontinue her services. The cases she was handling were distributed among other lawyers.

In addition, attorney Wilfredo Vallín Almeida certified that the legal proceedings being waged against independent journalists and peaceful opposition activists are illegal in the context of Cuban laws, since the authorities themselves violated the penal procedures law, which in turn invalidates the actual process.

Yolanda Huerga reported that when she finally was able to hire a labor issues lawyer, she asked if he could meet with her husband on the eve of the trial:

He answered that he could not because he had another hearing, but that surely he would see him moments before the trial. And

so it went: moments before the start of the hearing he introduced himself to Manuel.

The same thing occurred with all the detainees. Independent journalist Ana Leonor Díaz, of Grupo Decoro, reported:

The mothers and wives of the detainees barely had 48 or 24 hours to hire a lawyer for the summary trials, that is, swift trials (a single session) without witnesses for the defense or support evidence.

Laura Pollán, wife of political dissident and independent journalist Héctor Maseda, tried to retain the services of a renowned criminal lawyer in Havana to represent her husband on charges for which the prosecution was asking 20 years in prison. The lawyer refused to take the case, saying that to represent a defendant in a political trial was a case lost beforehand.

Due to the scarcity of criminal lawyers, the head of a public lawyers' offices (collectives as they are called, "bufetes colectivos") in Old Havana forced its team of lawyers to take on the cases of the political prisoners when the only lawyer who had taken on seven cases suddenly became ill and was ordered to bed rest. They had barely one day to prepare a defense. None of the defendants was able to meet with his lawyer. All the lawyers had to go on was the family statements and what evidence they could muster.

Yolanda Huerga, wife of dissident poet and journalist Manuel Vázquez Portal, for whom the prosecution requested an 18-year sentence, was able to hire a lawyer only the day before the summary trial, to be held in the Marianao municipal building all

the way at the other end of town.

Some of the defendants instructed their families not to bother with finding a defense lawyer, for it was useless. Independent journalist and community leader Victor Rolando Arroyo, who faced a term of life in prison, said to his wife that his sentence “came from above,” and therefore he didn’t want a lawyer. Arroyo was sentenced to 26 years, one of the longest sentences. This is the third time he goes to prison. In 1996 he was sentenced to 18 months after publishing an extensive and in-depth analysis of tobacco crops. In 2000 he was sentenced to six months for distributing toys to poor children in Pinar del Rio. The toys were seized by police and never returned.

There were other irregularities during the trials. According to Laura Pollán, Oscar Espinosa Chepe said to the members of the court: “When I was taken out of my cell, I thought it was for questioning; then I found out I was going to trial.” Pollán, wife of independent journalist Héctor Maseda, also reported that her husband learned of his 20-year sentence through her, during a brief visit. The police case worker interrupted their conversation when Pollán was telling her husband that she had retained a lawyer in order to file an appeal.

As for appeals, many of the sentenced activists refused this option; they felt it another useless step. In effect, all the appeals that were filed were denied on grounds that guilt had been proven during the trials.

The government showed extreme cruelty not only in the long prison terms to which it sentenced these civilians,

but also in the “parallel measures” enacted against them. All were sent to prisons far from their homes. This means that their relatives are also subjected to harsh punishment, especially when one considers the dismal condition of public transportation.

The jails chosen by the authorities to imprison most of the dissidents are maximum state security facilities, and are the worst among the numerous prisons in the country. Victor Rolando Arroyo, an independent journalist and a very respected leader in Pinar del Rio, Cuba’s western-most province, was sent to Guantánamo Prison, the eastern-most area of the island, more than one thousand kilometers from his home.

People -civil society- mobilized immediately and in each city where there was a prisoner of conscience imprisoned nearby, people offered their homes to welcome the relatives who come from afar to visit their loved ones. They provide overnight housing to the families, and a place to prepare the foods they will take on the visit.

A report from the independent press informed on the following:

Laura Pollán, wife of independent journalist Héctor Maseda Gutiérrez, sanctioned to 20 years and confined at the Manacas prison, in Villa Clara, expressed that [her husband] is in good health both physically and mentally, and firm in his political convictions.

She stated, moreover, that it is difficult to reach that prison due to shortage of transportation. “One has to appeal to private “gypsy cabs” or to horse-drawn cars in dilapidated conditions. More than once I thought that the car that was taking us would

turn over”, expressed Maseda Gutiérrez’s wife. She added: “But the solidarity and the support I found among the opposition activists who live in different parts of Villa Clara makes those difficulties seem insignificant.”

Opposition activists who live in Pinar del Rio, Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Camagüey provinces have offered their homes to the wives, mothers and sisters of the prisoners. There they can cook the foods they will take on their visit to prison, and rest for a while. The relatives of the imprisoned activists and journalists in the eastern provinces require a total of four days between the actual visit and travel time.

The Catholic Church and the Brotherhood of Freemasons also have offered their help in several locations.

For her part, Yolanda Triana Estupiñán, wife of political prisoner Orlando Fundora Álvarez, expressed the following: “Solidarity with the political prisoners and their relatives has manifested itself in diverse forms for many years now. And occasionally it is extended to the regular prisoners. At present, that solidarity shines in an ostensible way because the government massively imprisoned tens of opposition activists and independent journalists, and in confining them to jails far from their homes, it punishes also the mothers, the wives, the children and the brothers and sisters.”

Orlando Fundora Álvarez was sentenced to 18 years in prison and is confined at Combinado del Este Prison in the Cuban capital.

The prison conditions are terrible in all cases. Poet and journalist Manuel Vázquez Portal describes his cell and the conditions in which he lived at Boniatico, the maximum state security section at Boniato Prison in Santiago

de Cuba, where he began to serve out his sentence:

The cell (Number 31) measures approximately a meter and a half wide by three meters long. Door has heavy bars, semi-walled-in with a steel plate. A barred window faces east of the building. Sun, rain and insects enter through it. A bunk bed made of steel bars, a large board of compressed wood and a dirty old mattress made of hard wadding. The toilet bowl is a plain basin that regurgitates a foul stench 24 hours a day. Directly over it there is a faucet to drink from and wash in. There is neither table, nor chair, nor shelves to place personal objects on. There are no bed sheets, no pillows, no mosquito net, no blankets. No radio, no television, no newspaper, no books. No eating utensils, no drinking glass, no cup. All we have is plastic and was brought by our family. There is no towel. [The guards] violate the privacy of our mail. The cells are flooded every day with the residual waters from the hallway. The plaster on the ceiling is falling, and it leaks profusely when it rains. The building is surrounded by an 8 or 9 meter wall. This Section of the prison is called "Boniatico;" it is the harshest Section of the prison. Inmates sentenced to life imprisonment and those on death row are kept here; some of the inmates have AIDS. Since the building is more than 60 years old it is filled with vermin, a real zoo: rats, roaches, scorpions, several types of ants, flies and mosquitoes.

We are taken separately to the yard for one hour each day. They remove our handcuffs in the yard and put them on again to return to the cells. To receive medication they take us handcuffed as well. There is no yard Saturdays or Sundays. We spend almost 60 hours without leaving our cells.

The food cannot be described. I will make an imagination and investigation effort: Breakfast: bread (I still cannot guess

what it is made with) and “chorote”, a linguistic and culinary contribution: corn flour that is toasted and then cooked with abundant water and sugar. I don’t eat that either. Lunch: soup (water, wheat flour and some unrecognizable herb). Rice or corn flour or elbow macaroni, in each case without oil or other additives. These alternate some days of the week occasionally with soy hash or with “private cow parts” (the other inmates call it by a more vulgar name) which consists of a white paste-like mush made with wheat flour and unrecognizable ingredients. Once or twice a month they give us a so-called special meal: a piece of chicken, rice, a starchy vegetable, and a beverage they claim is coffee. Supper: the same thing but in the evening. Of the rest of the prison I have only seen the barbed wire fences, the pits, and the guard posts, twice when they took me to the hospital to check my blood pressure.

The guards treat us respectfully because that is how we treat them. Only Juan Carlos Herrera, from Guantánamo, was beaten severely in one eye, and I met him through the window that faces the yard —the solarium— when his face was swollen and bruised.

The activists were allowed at the beginning a family visit every three months —only three close relatives in each visit— and one marital visit every four months, plus delivery of a 30-pound food bag every four months. Later, the authorities changed their mind about the food-only content of the 30 pounds bag, including in this limit all personal hygiene articles and writing supplies.

The prisoners did not falter in spite of these regulations, and they remain faithful to their ideals and proud of

their stand. From prison they send letters and information.

Poet and journalist Manuel Vázquez Portal continued to send poems, letters and articles periodically. His prison diary traveled around the world.

The authorities respond by hardening the special penitentiary regimen designed for prisoners of conscience: the 30 pounds food bag was modified to include personal hygiene products and other items like paper and pencil. This means a reduction in food items, lowering the nutrition value of the "food bag" when these prisoners are already malnourished. Also, they spaced out even more the family visits: now relatives can visit every four months, and the marital visit is every five months.

Eventually, groups of prisoners of conscience go on hunger strikes demanding better prison conditions, and they obtain slight improvements: some television-viewing hours; and food that is not rotten, although quality and quantity are kept at a minimum.

The international reaction to the assault against the independent press and the opposition was almost immediate.

Amnesty International declared all the imprisoned activists prisoners of conscience, and numerous international celebrities and governments condemned the wave of repression in Cuba, among them: César Gaviria, Secretary General of the Organization of American states; Robert Menard, Secretary General of Reporters without Borders; the Secretary of State of Nicaragua; the European Union; Bill Graham, Canada's Secretary of State; the Secretary of State of Poland and Portugal; Anna Lindh, Sweden's Foreign Minister; Bill Rammell, Minister of Human Rights

for the United Kingdom (FCO); Koichiri Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO; the Government of Chile; Luis Ernesto Derbez, Mexico's Foreign Minister; Mariano Rajoy, First Deputy of Spain's Prime Minister; France's Secretary of State; former U.S. President Jimmy Carter; Lydie Polfer, Secretary of State of Luxembourg; Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State; José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director of the Americas Division of Human Rights Watch; and the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Chilean author Carlos Franz refused the "José Martí" Prize awarded to him by Cuba's *Prensa Latina*, in protest against the wave of repression and the imprisonment of dissidents, particularly of journalists, in Cuba.

The Cuban government's attempt to suppress civil society—including the informal economy—was not successful. The peaceful opposition continued with their activities in defense of a democratic transition in Cuba. In November 2003 several leaders of the opposition—prisoner of conscience Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet among them—made a public statement, a declaration of principles that defined the democratic character of the struggle against Castro's dictatorship. Their position is widely supported both inside and outside Cuba.

The informal economy has continued functioning, although more discreetly than prior to January 23, 2003. The government has not stopped harassing the self-employed. In October 2003, the Holguin Province People's Assembly banned the sale of farm products within the boundaries of the province or outside the province to state agencies or private producers who fail to fulfill the compulsory sales contract with ACOPIO, the state distribution

agency. The resolution justified the restrictive measure using the drought as an excuse, and stated that producers are only motivated by financial interests to sell their products, reason enough to “adopt measures that prevent this and other pernicious practices that increase the supply of goods available to the population.”

Among the repressive acts enforced in October 2003, 28-year-old Alexis Carvajal, a fisherman from the Havana township of Baracoa, was fined 8,000 pesos when police searched him in the middle of the street and found in his possession 15 pounds of fish and four lobsters. In a haul against florists in the vicinity of a church in Havana, police officers seized all the flowers, scissors, tubs and stands and fined over a dozen florists whose licenses have been revoked. In August, 2003 more than 20 searches were conducted in the town of Guines, including the homes of seven seamstresses whose Singer, Union and Berita sewing machines were confiscated. Also, police dismantled underground home-base factories where bottled drinks, ham and home-made ice cream was produced.

Meanwhile, the reputation and professionalism of the independent press were definitively established. Not only did journalists who were not arrested in March continue to file their reports, but also new journalists have joined the ranks.

The stand taken by poet, journalist and prisoner of conscience Manuel Vázquez Portal has breathed new stamina into Cuba’s free press movement. Vázquez Portal has become a symbol of strength and encouragement to Cuba’s independent journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) acknowledged the merits of Cuba’s inde-

pendent journalists when it awarded one of the four 2003 international "Freedom of Expression" Prizes to Vázquez Portal. David Laventhol, CPJ board chairman, said that the four chosen journalists "have endured hardships, violence and deprivation for carrying out the most fundamental function of journalists: to inform with honesty and accuracy that which they witness every day. None aspired to become heroes, but that is indeed what they have become."

Cuba's dictatorship is facing what all dictatorships face toward the end: every attempt to suffocate resistance awakens new adversaries, people who realize that they can no longer remain indifferent.

Cycles of Terror: Control and Repression

José L. Solís

1959 - 1965

Mussolini used to say: "Everything must abide by the State, nothing beyond the control of the State." Hitler indicated that it was vital to achieve total subordination of the individual to the State and complete obedience of the masses to the Fuhrer. Lenin considered the use of terror a "completely useful and indispensable" method.

"Why do we need weapons?" The audience applauded. Then the revolution proceeded to disarm Directorio Revolucionario 13 de Marzo's guerrillas, and everyone else who could disagree with the radical turn the revolution was taking.

Those were the early days of the victorious armed struggle in Cuba.

On April 22, 1959, Fidel Castro stated in the United States of America that in his country there would be neither one-man dictatorships, nor dictatorships of castes, classes or oligarchies. He said there would be freedom with bread in Cuba, without terror. Moreover, he said there would be free elections in the island within a four-



year period. In 1960, in a speech before a crowd that celebrated May 1st, International Workers Day, he rhetorically asked: "Why must we hold elections?" The audience applauded. And elections were called off because the people voted in the public plazas by waving their arms and chanting slogans.

Dozens of newspapers, allegedly, the immense majority "have been accomplices of Batista's tyranny and prior corrupt governments." Now in those same pages "dissenting voices and criticism of the revolution's leadership" were being published...and thus would be expropriated slowly. The only paper to remain open was *Noticias de Hoy*, the old communist daily, and the recently emerged *Revolución*, the underground paper of the 26 of July Movement. For a few years, the daily *El Mundo* was allowed to circulate, as an example of the revolution's "democratic flexibility," although its director had to answer to a government censor. *Bohemia* magazine was also published, and circulation of *Mella Magazine*, the Socialist Youth (renamed Rebel Youth Association) publication, increased. A handful of other publications were short-lived, for the revolutionary groups that published these were not part of the *máximo líder's* agenda. Those groups eventually were fused into a single one.

Likewise, and for the same reasons, all radio and television stations were expropriated (106 radio and 5 television stations). By mid-1960, all mass media outlets were part of the government's propaganda apparatus.

Some firing squad executions were aired (Cornelio Rojas and García Olayón's executions, for example). After all, they were dictator Batista's henchmen. Twenty thou-

sand deaths were attributed to his regime (although some estimates total some two thousand deaths, but the propaganda multiplied them). People –the majority of people—applauded the firing squad proceedings without knowing how case investigations and trials were conducted. In his testimony during the trial for the Moncada army garrison attack, a text he titled, “History Will Absolve Me,” Fidel Castro stated: “I shall not seek revenge for my dead comrades.” Seventy-two army officers from the Moncada garrison were executed by firing squad on Jan. 10, 1959 in Santiago de Cuba. In those very days, Che Guevara sent 55 prisoners to the firing squad at La Cabaña garrison in Havana. Different studies estimate that between 200 and 500 people were executed in this fashion.

The trial of army colonel Jesus Sosa Blanco was televised. One could see the man, standing handcuffed on the central stage of the Sports Palace, facing the judges while thousands of people sitting on the stands screamed at the top of their lungs.

“This seems like the Roman Circus”, exclaimed the colonel smiling. He was very pale, standing there in front of the cameras. The revolutionary leaders interrupted the broadcast. It was too rough. It is not good that all the details be known. It will suffice that people hear the echoes of “revolutionary justice” and are assured that it works and will continue to work. Months later, on Dec. 2, 1959, Commander Hubert Matos, Sierra Maestra hero and military director of Camagüey province, is brought to trial and sentenced to 20 years. His crime? Differences of opinion between him and the revolutionary left. They also sent to jail on a 30-year sentence for alleged conspiracy a fellow

comrade from the Moncada garrison attack. Mario Chanes de Armas had also joined Fidel Castro in the Granma rebel expedition. In the same manner, many officers and soldiers of the Rebel Army are executed by firing squad accused of conspiracy, as are three trade union leaders employed by the Cuban Electric Company who were accused of sabotage.

First it was off to the firing squad with Batista's henchmen. Then it was off to the firing squad with disaffected revolutionaries and also with counterrevolutionaries. And then...

Pay raises, rehiring of fired workers, a ban on firing workers on account of the economic situation, rents are lowered, so are transportation fees, medicines, electricity and phone rates, and on with an agrarian reform that first limits private ownership of land to 400 hectares and later to 67. Urban workers were urged to donate one percent of their salary to the agrarian reform initiative. The alleged "worker-farmer alliance" was firmed up. Popular support was officially encouraged. The National Institute for Agrarian Reform (INRA, by its Spanish initials) was founded with Fidel Castro as its president. Most of his leadership came from the ranks of his army.

With such overwhelming popular support, the government made strides in achieving economic control. By the end of 1960, 80 percent of the labor force was employed by the State. The Central Planning Board —*Junta Central de Planificación*, JUCEPLAN— was born. Fidel Castro was its first president.

"He who is an anti-Communist is against the revolution" proclaimed the government on June 27, 1960. In July

all U.S. enterprises were expropriated. On Sept. 2, Castro issued the "Declaration of Havana", which called for "Latin America to be defended against the voracious intentions of the Yankee imperialists." On Oct. 13 the government confiscated all Cuban-owned businesses. It doesn't call the measure "confiscation," but "nationalization."

The urban reform initiative will get under way, and the government will expropriate every house and building in every town and city in the country. Hundreds of thousands of citizens will become the owners of their dwelling. The Urban Reform Institute (*Instituto de la Reforma Urbana*) will ban the sale of all real estate and moving from one dwelling to another will be hereon permitted only through official exchange that must be legalized by the government.

On December 15, 1959 the government began purging the trade unions. Trade unionism, once militant and rebellious, was turned into an amorphous and docile mass to serve the totalitarian project. Many union leaders, victims of repressive measure that were personally guided by Fidel Castro, were sent to prison or forced into exile. When in November 1961 the national workers federation (Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC) convened its 11th Congress, it is already an instrument of the government for exerting control. At that congress, Castro joyfully summoned Cuban workers to forfeit willingly most of the rights they had won before the revolution, and state that for socialist Cuba the future looks bountiful because by 1981 the great Soviet Union would have achieved production volumes twice as large as all capitalist countries put together.

Government control took over the streets. On Sept. 28, 1960 the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution was born. The enemy hydra must be watched at all times. Like the seven-headed monster of Lerna Lake, the counterrevolution has many heads, which is why the eyes of the government must remain on the alert in each and every neighborhood block throughout the nation.

The Catholic Church was accused of siding with the counterrevolution. The state took over all private schools, many of which belonged to the churches. Havana's cemetery, *Cementerio de Colón*, built in 1862 and owned by the Catholic Church, was made a municipal entity. The government interfered with a massive street procession in observance of Cuba's patron saint, Our Lady of Charity. A young Catholic worker died, and we saw the emergence of paramilitary units that many years later would return under another name: the Rapid Response Brigades.

One hundred and thirty priests and nuns were ordered to leave the island in the Spanish ship *Covadonga*. Repression against religion became generalized. Protestant churches were also persecuted. Between 1960 and 1962 about 4,800 Cubans of the Jewish faith left the island; Cuba's Jewish community decreased from 12,000 [in 1959] to about 2,000 by 1965.

The "military units to assist in production" (UMAP, by its Spanish initials) were organized in 1965 to use in agricultural work those allegedly untrustworthy Cubans whose ideological posture disqualified them from inclusion in the revolutionary army. Thousands of believers, especially Jehovah's Witnesses, were concentrated in UMAP camps together with many other people, especially

homosexuals and individuals who exhibited a “socially improper conduct.”

The new army grew. The old army of the Republic, defeated and demoralized, no longer existed; many of its officers have been shot or imprisoned; others have fled into exile or have been retired along with their soldiers. The Rebel Army welcomed the People’s Militia in October 1960. Military schools opened and began to train tens of thousands of militia and political commissars. Compulsory conscription was authorized in 1963 by Law Decree 1129, and was called “compulsory military service.” The revolutionary army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*, FAR) boasted hundreds of thousands of soldiers. In 1964, the U.S. Department of State regarded Cuba’s armed forces as the most powerful in Latin America. At the same time, tens of thousands of young Cubans were drafted after being identified as “anti-social” by the local CDR, and sent to do farm work for a two-year period earning 7 Cuban pesos a month. Thus was born the Youth Labor Army.

G2, the first repressive apparatus engaged in intelligence and counterintelligence, had risen from the ranks of the Rebel Army. This original nucleus functioned for the first couple of years, and then in June 1961 the Ministry of the Interior (MININT, by its Spanish initials) was set up; it housed the secret police, a.k.a. state security. The Soviet Union’s KGB and the East German Stasi trained and organized this department. MININT employs about 100,000 people; state security ranks as one of the most efficient agencies of its kind in the world.

A national literacy campaign is launched. In 1961, the Conrado Benítez literacy brigades mobilize 100,000 stu-

dents recruited throughout the country.

On April 16, at the funeral of soldiers killed in the preliminary air attacks the day before the Bay of Pigs invasion, Fidel Castro revealed the socialist character of the revolution. Dozens of raids were conducted and hundreds of thousands were arrested, people who for reasons related to social class, place of residence, or professional affiliation could be potential opposition activists of the established order. They were held in sport stadiums, schools, theaters and police stations. The arrests achieved their goal: to abort the resistance movement that could offer support to the invading forces. Fifteen resistance leaders were executed by firing squad at La Cabaña garrison. During the Bay of Pigs confrontation, which ended in defeat for the expedition forces on April 19, hundreds of soldiers died on both sides. Nine of the Cuban invaders who were captured died of asphyxiation inside a drag that was taking them to prison; another five were shot to death.

In June 1961, Castro defined the rules of the game for the intellectual community: "What rights do revolutionary writers and artists, and those who are not revolutionary, have?" asked Fidel Castro rhetorically. His answer: "Within the revolution, every right; outside the revolution, no rights."

The National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC, by its Spanish initials) and the Union of Journalists of Cuba (UPEC, by its Spanish initials) were founded.

By March 1962 each Cuban had a ration card. The CDRs had conducted a population census. Soap and other personal products, as well as oil, rice, meat and then gradually, underwear, and even pins and needles and thread,

became rationed products sold under state controls.

The revolution built dozens of new jails. Several analysts estimate that by the mid-1960s there were 60,000 political prisoners on the island. A great number of them were serving 20-to-30-year terms, and many were doing hard labor. From among these political prisoners a group that called itself "*plantados*" emerged. The *plantados* were prisoners that refused to wear the regular blue uniform common criminals wore, insisting on wearing only their underwear. For that they were particularly mistreated and humiliated, but their courageous stand in the beginning of this ordeal was an example to future generations of Cuban political prisoners.

Volunteerism started willingly with people; then it turned into a repetitive, compulsory obligation. To do or not to do volunteer work became a defining element in one's life... proof that you were – or were not — a true revolutionary.

From 1962 until mid-1966 there was fighting up in the mountains and in several of the rainforest areas around Cuba. There was counterrevolutionary guerrilla fighting in the Sierra de los Organos mountains, in Pinar del Rio province; in the Sierra Maestra mountains, in Oriente province; and quite heavily, in the Sierra del Escambray mountains, in Cuba's central region. Several rebel groups made their way south of Havana and onto the coastal areas of Matanzas and Las Villas provinces. The government engaged in huge military maneuvers, encircling the guerrillas until all resistance was defeated. Hundreds of rural families from the Escambray Mountains were removed and banished to the westernmost part of the

island. Forty members of the insurgent guerrillas were executed.

The Rebel Youth Association became the Union of Young Communists (UJC, by its Spanish initials). Three members of its national board —Joel Iglesias, secretary general of the organization and the youngest commander in the Rebel Army; Adolfo Rivero Caro and César Gómez— were expelled from the organization for “discrepancies with the maximum leader” of the revolution. Then, in solidarity with his comrades, Carlos Quintela resigned from his post as national secretary for propaganda, and also his position of director of Mella Magazine. Those were the first signs of an opposition between those revolutionaries that came from the ranks of the old Marxists, and the authoritarian nature of the Commander-in-Director.

Several revolutionaries were sanctioned afterwards in what became known as the “*microfracción*” affair, literally “the small schism.” In 1980, Quintela sought political asylum in the Peruvian embassy in Havana, and Rivero Caro went to prison, accused of complicity with the incipient Cuban Committee for Human Rights. Two other figures went to prison with Rivero Caro: Ricardo Boffil and Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, both important dissidents who came from the ranks of the revolutionary Left.

The Union of Journalists of Cuba was founded, along with the Union of Young Pioneers of Cuba (UPC by its Spanish initials), and Federation of University Students (FEU, by its Spanish initials). The latter adopted the revolution’s slogans, as Havana University forfeited its autonomy.

Farmers were grouped as well, in close contact with

the revolution. The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP, by its Spanish initials) was founded, with farmers who had received land during the agrarian reform. But then, land distribution stopped and the government started organizing farm co-ops, and later the government decided that People's Farms would be a more productive arrangement, and besides, farmers would gain ideological fortitude, and become workers.

The 26 of July Movement, the old People's Socialist Party (PSP, by its Spanish initials) and Revolutionary Students Directorate (*Directorio Estudiantil Revolucionario*) merged into one umbrella organization: Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI, by its Spanish initials). In 1962, ORI's components were purged —after Fidel accused them of sectarian favoritism toward old militant communists— and once cleansed, ORI re-grouped into the United Party of the Socialist Cuban Revolution (*Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista Cubana*, PURSC). Finally, in 1965 the Cuban Communist Party was founded (PCC, by its Spanish initials), with its Central Committee and its Politburo. Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, Fidel Castro was elected unanimously to the post of First Party Secretary. Sixty-three of the 100 members of the Central Committee belonged to the military.

In a letter to Celia Sánchez written in 1958, Fidel Castro expressed that “his true destiny” in life was to wage a long war against the United States. But that war was not waged against a specific U.S. government, but against all of the United States, a country that Castro defines as the highest manifestation of inequality, individualism, materialism and imperialism.

In 1962, as the “Cuban Missile Crisis” was brewing (caused by Soviet placement of intercontinental nuclear missiles in Cuban territory) the governments of the United States and the USSR signed an agreement of [U.S.] non-aggression toward Cuba contingent upon [USSR] withdrawal of the nuclear missiles from the island.

In reality, neither the Eisenhower nor the Kennedy administrations ever contemplated a U.S. invasion of Cuba. Eisenhower’s actions were limited to economic pressure when Castro began his ostensible overtures toward an anti-democratic, leftist position. Kennedy went no further than his initial covert support of the 2506 Brigade, the group of Cuban exiles who landed on the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. In fact, Kennedy later aborted the military air support he had promised, which led to the Brigade’s defeat.

Outside of this, one can only speak of the covert support the CIA provided for a brief period of time to urban and guerrilla groups that fought against the Castro government between 1960 and 1965.

However, as early as May 1960, Fidel Castro began to mention in his speeches the imminence of a direct U.S. attack against Cuba. The Cuban government had detailed knowledge of what Cuban exile groups were planning with tepid support from Washington.

The threat and imminence of a “direct U.S. attack” continued to justify massive population and military mobilizations, even after the signing of the Kennedy-Kruschev Agreement in 1962, when clearly there was no empirical foundation to justify said rhetoric. Why? Because said rhetoric was part of a clear objective: organizing

a formidable army and a gigantic police network charged with intelligence and repression—in collaboration with the CDRs— to achieve a two-pronged goal: on the domestic front, to control militarily all aspects of Cuban society; on the international front, to promote revolution and subversion initially in Latin America and later, with the help of the Soviet Union, in Africa.

Six years passed since the triumph of the revolution that the Maximum Leader proclaimed as “humanistic” at the onset, wearing a crucifix around his neck and a beautiful medal of Our Lady of Charity. And now after a subsequent stage “nationalist” development—the Cuban revolution is, by all standards, proudly communist.

1966 - 1976

Toward the end of 1965, the newspaper *Granma*, the official daily of the Cuban Communist Party, was launched. *Granma* emerged from the merger of *Hoy* and *Revolución*. The name of the boat with which Fidel Castro landed in Cuba in 1956 to launch a guerrilla war in the Sierra Maestra Mountains that would thrust him to power in 1959, was the name given to the daily paper of the PCC, itself the only political party allowed to exist and which would lead the masses from struggle to struggle until socialism achieved economic victory.

A political party, was wrought with iron discipline, a semi-military organization, with its Commander-in-Director at the helm, always dressed in olive green fatigues, as an example to emulate.

It was forbidden to erect statues in his honor, but his

effigy appears in millions of photographs, posters and billboards, and it goes from hand to hand on the one and ten *pesos* bills (Curious, how criticism of the personality cult and the crimes committed by Stalin issued by the XX Communist Party Congress of the USSR were never mentioned in Cuba). His almost daily speeches lasting several hours are chain-broadcasted by all radio and television stations in the country. Mouth to mouth roll all sorts of formidable anecdotes; hearsay of unknown origins that are repeated over and over again: Fidel is "the horse"; he can eat more oysters than anyone; he is the one who can cut more sugar cane; the one who catches more lobsters while underwater fishing; the one who can read entire books in minutes; the one who never rests, who never sleeps, the one who is everywhere leading all the struggles... omniscient, omnipotent.

People talk about "official Party lines" but within the Party no one discusses things like they should. From the Marxist-Leninist concept of "democratic centrism" the only thing that works is "centrism" but not the part about "democratic." And then, it is "centrism" with a "center" that leaves no doubts: the Party line is Fidel's line.

This generates uneasiness within revolutionary ranks, especially among Marxists. An edition of 300,000 copies of Regis Debray's "Revolution within the Revolution" is published; it calls for the dissolution of communist parties in Latin America and their replacement with guerrilla groups. No such thing as peaceful transitions. As an alternative to self-financing, let there be centralized budgeting and moral incentives. Material incentives thwart the development of a revolutionary conscience; they are "cap-

italism's dented weapons." Let there be more volunteer work; fewer private small farmers, greater controls, more People's Farms.

Toward the end of 1966, nine militants in the Communist Party nucleus at the *Granma* newspaper — seven journalists and two administrators— are expelled from the paper (among them Fara Armenteros, who later became an independent journalist in Havana). Newspapers say nothing. Then another group of workers at the same newspaper are fired, and in unbroken silence about 200 dissenting revolutionaries are arrested.

They are threatened with the firing squad; finally, in 1967 they are tried and 38 of them are sentenced to long prison terms ranging from 8 to 15 years.

In 1968, Fidel and Raúl Castro reveal the "microfracción" affair. They are described as "a group of ambitious individuals, very close to the Soviets and followers of Aníbal Escalante—the old PSP cadre, who had been expelled from the ORI organization secretariat in 1962 for alleged sectarian politics— were conspiring against the Party lines and against the Party's top leadership."

Granma dedicates dozens of pages to the "sinister conspiracy," but it says nothing about the purge that is being conducted throughout the country, where countless revolutionary cadres are being fired from their state posts and from the party itself, for disagreeing with the "party lines" that had been imposed without discussion.

Nobody was involved in any conspiracy, really. It is true that many had allowed themselves to think with their own heads, and even express their disagreements. Let the misunderstanding stand corrected: there will be no discus-

sions or discrepancies.

Former Batista supporters, revolutionaries from the Right, the middle class, the *petit bourgeoisie*, class enemies and, finally, dissenting Marxists, were all “put in their places”... and now that the house was in complete order, let’s return to the issue of “conscience.”

From October 1967, with the death of Ernesto “Che” Guevara —director advocate of centralization, moral incentives, volunteer work and guerrilla warfare— in the Bolivian mountains, the climate was ripe for elevating Che’s image to the altar of the sacrosanct.

Alive, Che shone much too much —as a figure, as an individual, with his fits of anger and his desire to be the ranking theoretician —for the personal taste of Fidel Castro. But dead, Che was the perfect symbol, the heroic guerrilla, the highest moral icon of the Cuban revolution (of course: on top of Pico Turquino in the Sierra Maestra Mountains).

There was talk of the parallel construction of socialism and communism, of money disappearing; a new concept of “conscience-based responsibility” being established; all accounting controls discarded; and the so-called “revolutionary offensive” began.

In March 1968, more than 58,000 small businesses that still operated outside the state’s direct control were confiscated. Retail stands, home-based factories that made useful gadgets, small repair shops, all disappeared, and so did the services they rendered.

Fidel announced that “Cuban agriculture will, in a short period of time, become the most mechanized, technical and productive agriculture in the world.”

The Christmas holidays would cease to exist officially. July 26th remained the only holiday.

Now, the country's whole effort concentrated on agriculture and discipline —given that “conscience-based responsibility” didn't seem to work and absence was on the rise. It will be the key factor in the “battle for production” launched in July 1968, which will lead directly to the 1970 sugar harvest whose goal is the production of 10 million tons of sugar. (It should be noted that during that very long period of time, a “Dry Law” was enacted, a virtual Prohibition, during which rum and beer disappeared from every store and market).

The struggle started with a phase named “Girón Initiative.” Tens of thousands of industrial workers were organized into platoons, squadron, battalions and companies. So were 40,000 communist youth and 60,000 soldiers brought from the regular army units, as well as from compulsory military service.

In August 1968 there were already 350,000 workers doing agriculture duty under the command of 100 FAR officers, eight members of the Communist Party Central Committee, and Juan Almeida, member of the Communist Party Politburo.

Greater efforts had to be made in Camagüey and Oriente provinces, where the levels of absenteeism among agricultural workers reached epidemic proportions.

The great struggle, the Ten Million Tons Sugar Harvest of 1970, launched a couple of years before through increased cane cropping in detriment of other agricultural staples, required adding contingents of thousands of sol-

diers to the cane-cutting effort. This initiative was called "Operación Mambí." Also, the enormous effort required to complete this harvest paralyzed or greatly slowed the rest of production nationwide. Lieutenant Borrego, Sugar Industry Minister was fired and completely ostracized for daring to disagree with the Commander-in-Director and express doubt about meeting the 10 million ton's goal.

In the end, some 8,800,000 tons of sugar were harvested. The price paid was generalized deterioration in all aspects of production that could not be estimated. But the social cost was even greater. Far from increasing worker productivity, the military discipline actually reduced it; there were no accounting controls in sight and all of society is completely discouraged.

Immediate Solutions?

In 1970, once the sugar harvest ended, carnival was held, the sale of alcoholic beverages was restored, the compulsory "identity card" for all citizens of the country was enacted, and in 1971, a law against vagrancy was passed. The fundamental aim of this measure was to reverse the growing absence by sending off to jail anyone who stayed away from work for long periods of time or anyone who simply quit work.

In 1965, Fidel Castro authorized the departure of Cubans via the Port of Camarioca for a period of a month, and 2,979 people left Cuba for the United States. Later, President Lyndon Johnson negotiated with the Cuban government the so-called "Freedom Flights," which brought to the United States 260, 561 Cuban exiles. In August of

1971, Richard Nixon put an end to the “Freedom Flights.”

Also in 1971, after 38 were arrested and interrogated in the secret police dungeons at Villa Marista, poet Heberto Padilla staged his *mea culpa*, a self-deprecating public admission of guilt held at the writers and artists’ union headquarters before hundreds of his colleagues. Padilla’s “crime” was an award-winning collection of poetry titled *Fuera de Juego* –out of the game— which didn’t meet with the approval of the ruling elite.

After the failure of the 1970 sugar harvest, the Cuban government appeared to lose interest in the economy. No new plans were announced. Instead, all efforts concentrated on repairing the damage done on a national scale to the entire production apparatus. One sensed the growing collaboration with the Soviet Union. The Soviets finished building a naval base in Cienfuegos Harbor, Las Villas province, where, in 1971, several Soviet nuclear submarines docked. Also, Cuba increased its military presence in Africa; in 1975, Cuba landed thousands of regular troops in Angola.

In reality, what the Cuban government was forced to face during these years is the Soviet Union’s demand for institutionalization. Other countries from the “socialist camp” requested the same thing: a reorganization of the Cuban government to put Cuba on equal footing with the rest of the member countries in COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation).

In 1976, Cuba fully adopted the Soviet Model of centralized direction and planning of the economy, and promulgated a socialist constitution. This constitution abandoned the traditional principles of the rule of law. As Dr.

Beatriz Bernal, author of several books on the history of jurisprudence, and law professor at Complutense University in Madrid, stated: “[the 1976 Constitution] doesn’t meet the requirement for the rule of law as the expression of the will of the people...neither does it allow for judicial authority over the legality of the administration’s actions, nor over the constitutionality of the laws... nor does it provide for a balance of powers, or juridical guarantee of people’s fundamental rights and freedoms...”

Dr. Bernal added: “With respect to the rule of law, in present-day Cuba, both the political elite and the Communist Party have powers over and above the law, as stated in the Constitution own Preamble and in Article 5.”

There were those in the power elite who argued against the new system of economic planning and against the Constitution, and who advocated for some degree of decentralization, at least financially, *vis a vis* government control of production.

At the same time, in 1976 Ricardo Bofill, a former political prisoner who had been sent to jail during the “*microfracción*” affair, began to raise his voice among colleagues and peers in Havana, and started distributing copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In time, his solitary voice gained many followers and transcended beyond all expectations.

1977 - 1986

Of course, the very existence and continuity of a police state relied on the use of terror, in an all-reaching control over people, and in repressive measures. When it came to

the economy, centralization was its natural *modus operandi*. There could be no privately-owned production or private enterprise, no individualities liberties... But it so happened that the state take-over of all the means of production, distribution and marketing, turned out to be absolutely ineffective; it slowed down development; it inevitably generated shortages, corruption, social discontent and a black market. That is why among the power elite there was always some call for decentralization reform; and it is why the Cuban state has at times accepted, albeit reluctantly, the rise of private producers and a free market here and there to channel portions of privately-produced crops to satisfy some of the needs of the people.

Then, in 1975, the government inaugurated the San Rafael Street Boulevard in Havana, for selling items privately produced, and later Havana's Cathedral Square became a site for artisans to sell their wares, showing the high-quality craftsmanship that can be achieved by self-employed artists.

The return of "the Cuban community abroad" on family visits to the island started in 1978, creating a social shock wave. Welcomed with warm embraces by relatives and neighbors, the travelers who returned to the Motherland brought beautiful clothes, watches and shoes. They told countless success stories and behaved in a generous, healthy and brotherly fashion. The travelers brought dollars, a currency the government needed. But also they bore the seeds – the virus — of the capitalism and a strong sense of individuality. For the first time in almost 20 years, people spoke freely about the United States in a context other than the traditional war slogans.

The government began to watch the situation with fear, and on Aug. 23, 1979, in a speech at the anniversary celebration of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC, by its Spanish initials), Fidel Castro mentioned in passing the existence of “a true Cuban people” suggesting the existence of another “Cuban people”. The implication was that those “other Cubans” must be watched cautiously, because, although they were born in the same country, they are not true children of the revolutionary Cuban nation.

In December, police patrols were on the rise in the cities; pedestrians were asked to show ID; one had to show the identity card on demand, and be prepared to say where you came from and where you were going.

For Party militants —especially those who work in hotels and restaurants— the situation was embarrassing, for now they were asked to treat yesterday’s “*gusanos*” —the enemies of the revolution, literally the “worms”— as honorable guests and to address them as “mister” or “sir” —not “comrade”— when waiting on them.

In April, 1980, a group of young people riding a bus broke into the Peruvian Embassy in Havana and requested political asylum. The Cuban police guarding the entrance started shooting, and in the cross fire, one of the officers was fatally wounded. The Embassy accepted the political refugees and in retaliation, the Cuban government withdrew its police protection. In the 24 hours that followed, nearly 11,000 people sought shelter inside the Peruvian embassy. Special Interior Ministry forces surrounded the building and the embassy perimeter and stopped thousands more from seeking asylum.

For days, in an area of about 100 square meters, those

thousands of people piled on top of one another and slept on muddy ground while they listened night and day to the revolutionary slogans over the loudspeakers the government set up, fearful that the bayonet-clad soldiers surrounding the embassy would storm into the compound.

After several days, the government granted safe conduct to some of the political refugees, promising to let them leave the country when the time came. After Peru, Spain and the United States committed themselves publicly to accepting a few thousand refugees each, people began to leave the Embassy. On the street, they were greeted by club-carrying mobs, groups that were soon to be known as the "Rapid Response Brigades," more of the same repressive paramilitary groups that harassed Catholics back in 1960. Now these strategically-placed and well-organized mobs went after the refugees — "*escoria*" they called the refugees: filth— beating them, throwing stones at them at their houses, all out in the open under the passive eye of the police. Over 100 people are wounded, and a handful is killed. Stories of cruel beatings abounded.

Dozens of boats traveled from Miami to the Port of Mariel to rescue their families. Havana released a statement saying that anyone who wished to leave could do so, and President Jimmy Carter took on the challenge, opening the gates of the U.S. to the Cuban refugees. Fidel Castro made good use of the occasion to include among the thousands of legitimate refugees a few thousand jailed criminals and mental patients from Havana's psychiatric hospital. It was a raid with human missiles against American society.

In those days a group of dissidents was sent to prison,

among them Ricardo Bofill, the man who had been speaking about human rights since 1976.

Then in July, a boat carrying 60 people attempting to reach the ocean by way of the Canimar River was intercepted and sunk by Cuban coast guards. Forty people were killed in the ruthless attack.

That same year, the government legalized the Farmers Free Markets. (Could it have been a reaction to social pressure?)

From 1981 until 1986 these markets flourished, and smaller state markets opened up. The semi-private cooperatives and the private farmers that still operate in the country filled the free markets to the brim with their produce, and the government took advantage of the occasion and sold various items, beverages and food imported from socialist countries. A civil society began to emerge from this new economic activity, from the buying and selling activity, from the comings and goings of farmers, salesmen and consumers. At the same time, from prison, the Cuban Committee for Human Rights was gaining strength and momentum. The values and resistance of early political prisoners had set an example and now found its way into the non-violent opposition and into the ranks of former Marxists turned dissidents who now longed for the establishment of the rule of law in the country.

1987 - 2002

Toward the end of 1986, the totalitarian government of Cuba closed Farmers Free Markets and returned to the totally centralized economic model. The police imple-

mented wide repressive operatives (Operation “*Pitirre en el Alambre*” [bird on the wire] and “*Adoquín*” [cobblestone]) and seized goods and arrested several people. There were no more free market of arts and crafts.

From 1985 on, with Mikhail Gorbachev at the helm of the Soviet Union, the winds of glasnost and perestroika were starting to circulate. The winds of reform were blowing hard and they were shaking things up in the socialist countries. Cuba found it necessary to tighten all controls, feeling that on the home front, civil society was growing unchecked. In addition, Cuban civil society was reaping the benefits of a special ally: broadcasts from a free press, an objective source of international information the likes of Radio Martí, launched on May 20, 1985. Radio Marti could be heard on the island, thus breaking the information blockade of the official government press.

On April 30, 1988, the “Law Against Dangerousness” went into effect. It regarded as a crime “all actions, direct or by omission, that could be considered socially dangerous.” In its various Articles, the Law called for sanctions of between one and eight years in prison for any action that “...incites against the established social order, international solidarity or the socialist state, by oral or written propaganda, or propaganda by any other means.”

In the next years, terror would take its bloody toll. Saturn will devour his own children again.

General Arnaldo Ochoa, Cuba’s most decorated military figure, a hero of several “internationalist Cuban interventions,” director during the notorious and victorious battle against the Somali army in Ogaden, is removed from his post, and subsequently arrested on June 12, 1989.

Along with Ochoa, were twin brothers Patricio and Antonio de la Guardia. They were accused of corruption, trafficking in ivory, narcotics and political influence and were accused of treason against the Fatherland.

Colonel Antonio de la Guardia had fought side by side with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and his brother, General Patricio de la Guardia had been Director of Special Forces of the Interior Ministry in Angola.

On June 30, a Military Court went into session. On July 9 it issued its verdict against Arnaldo Ochoa, Antonio de la Guardia, Jorge Martínez and Amado Padrón—all army or Interior Ministry officers. They were sentenced to death.

On July 13, in a grazing field west of Havana, the four were executed by firing squad. Old horses still roam around those meadows, grazing.

Extraordinary efficiency: 18 days of cross-examinations, detention and trial preparation. Nine days for the actual trial and for sentencing. Four days to “handle” the appeals, and to carry out the sentence.

Everything was taken care of in a month.

Patricio de la Guardia and five other officers were sentenced to 30 years in prison; another three got 25 years. Then, on July 24, in a separate case, Transportation Minister, General Diocles Torralba was sentenced to 20 years; and on July 30, General José Abrantes was arrested. For 20 years Abrantes was director of Castro’s personal escort and later Interior Minister.

The Interior Ministry was purged; dozens of officers were fired, transferred or arrested. The Armed Forces Ministry took over MININT.

On the forefront of this drama: the details, the jealousies, the alibis, the images. In the background: the obvious influence of perestroika among the soldiers, the army officers, the secret police and others among the government leadership.

In a speech delivered in January 1987 Mikhail Gorbachev advocated openly in favor of perestroika. In March 1989 Boris Yeltsin was elected to the Russian congress. In October the Berlin Wall came down. In 1990, divided Germany was reunited. In that same year, exports of other products from the USSR to Cuba were down. In 1991, with the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the “socialist camp,” the Cuban economy went into crisis.

From 1989 until 1993, Cuba’s gross internal product fell 35 percent. In an attempt to find solutions in light of the dangerously serious state of the economy, the government decriminalized the US dollars in 1993. (Possession of US dollars was a crime up to that moment, and thousands of peoples had gone to jail for it). At the same time, the government gave unregulated markets another try, and in 1994 authorized 100 different categories of self-employment and allowed the Farmers Free Markets to openly sell their produce.

But the economic crisis and the rise in prices for basic products ordered by the government on May 23 resulted in what is known as the ‘boatpeople’s crisis’ — *Crisis de los Balseros*— in 1994. Despair thrust thousands of Cubans onto makeshift rafts and crowded the ocean in an attempt to cross the Strait of Florida.

Between June and August 1994, 34,544 Cuban boatpeople reached the United States. An estimated three thou-

sand died or failed in their attempt.

On July 13, 23 people —20 children among them— were murdered at sea. They were part of a group of 70 people who tried to escape from the island aboard the “13th of March” tugboat. Cuban coastguard speedboats were sent in pursuit. The deck of the tugboat was swept by powerful jets of water; adults and children were hosed off the deck to their death. The tugboat capsized under the magnitude of the assault and the whirlpool effect created by the coastguard speedboats. Cuban authorities picked up the survivors.

On August 5th, hundreds of Cuban youths, frustrated by their inability to leave the island, took to the streets of the capital, and ran down the avenues that run parallel to the oceanfront boulevard —the Malecón— shouting: “Freedom!”

The Rapid Response Brigades followed suit, with steel rods rolled up into newspapers. The paramilitary hordes broke heads, appeased the protests and arrested dozens of people.

The economic reforms produced a slow recovery. The economy began to come out of the crisis caused by the disappearance of Soviet subsidies and dwindling trade with other socialist countries. Inevitably, however, these openings catapulted civil society. The reopening of markets, authorization of self-employment, small-scale production and services, the newly-approved circulation of US dollars which now went from hand to hand, and the spontaneous “wisdom” that market freedom generated, all converged to strengthen the veteran human rights organizations, and

spurred the rise of other peaceful dissident organizations. The independent journalism movement found avenues for distribution of news and articles; it established telephone connections with other Cubans in Miami that circulated their writings on the Internet.

Independent journalism grew, and the journalists eventually owned faxes and computers, and organizations were founded abroad to receive their writings and distribute them throughout the world.

Independent libraries, trade unions, workers' cooperatives and other organizations emerged, and for a time, the police harassed this civil community slightly with brief arrests, verbal threats and confiscation of materials. If there were to be prison, sentences were short, nothing like the long sentences of the Sixties and Seventies imposed on anyone found guilty of dissident activity against the government.

The political opposition tried to join forces in a forum that could analyze and find solutions to the country's severe crisis. Concilio Cubano successfully gathered over 100 activists from across the country in Havana. Concilio's principal leaders —Leonel Almagro and Lázaro González— were arrested and sentenced to 18 months and one year, respectively.

In February 1996, following orders from the highest levels of government, Cuban supersonic combat MiGs shot down two civilian aircrafts belonging to the humanitarian organization from Florida Brothers to the Rescue. The shooting took place in international airspace. Four Brothers pilots, who had saved the lives of so many rafters in the Strait of Florida, were pulverized by the Cuban war

planes. Four death sentences were thus carried out.

A year later, the four authors of a document titled, "The Fatherland Belongs to All," were arrested. The text is a call for peaceful change towards democracy on the island. The four arrested, interrogated and imprisoned were Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, Vladimiro Roca, René Gómez Manzano and Félix Bonne Carcassés. They were eventually sentenced to three, four and five years in prison, respectively.

The last of the four to be released from prison was Vladimiro Roca, the son of the old communist leader Blas Roca, author of the present Cuban Constitution. Vladimiro served out this sentence to the last day, and was released on May 5, 2002.

A new cycle of repression seemed to be in the air for that emerging civil society, reluctantly allowed to grow, with its small farmer and independent peddlers, with its 12-seat restaurants, and its rooming houses, with its spontaneous outbursts that negate the slogans, and its dissenting actors and independent journalists, with its independent trade unions and libraries, and its pro-democracy organizations crafting democracy projects that aspire to a national aperture without violence. In 1999, Law 88 was promulgated. People call it the "Gag Law"; it calls for long prison terms for anyone convicted of writing or speaking critically about the government, or collaborating openly with radio, television, newspapers or other media abroad.

Brief Obituary

From 1959 to 2002, the period that encompassed these four cycles of terror in Cuba, thousands of people were assassinated: shot, without the right to appeal; killed in combat; blown to pieces in mid air; killed trying to flee Cuba, both on the shore and out at seas; died in prison and in concentration camps.

There are also those who lived scared to death. Alive, but dead. There were victims of stranger accidents, like the well-liked Commander Camilo Cienfuegos, once Director of the Revolutionary Army; there were men who allegedly committed suicide, like former Cuban president Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado; or former minister, Commander Albert Mora; and the revolution's heroine, Haydee Santamaría. Then there was Eurípedes Núñez and Xavier de Varona, whose lives were suspended from a bullet to the temple and a brief note. There were the fabricated deaths, some even facilitated with a special touch of perversity, as were those of dissident lawyer Aramis Taboada, who died of a heart attack—totally unexpected and unattended—amidst the silence of his cell; or like the death of student leader Pedro Luis Boitel, who was left to die in the course of a hunger strike. And a final infamy, among many, for future epitaphs:

“José Abrantes was Interior Minister for many years. Fidel wanted to silence him because he was an exceptional witness to his involvement in all drug trafficking operations conducted in Cuba. In his book *Narcotráfico y tareas revolucionarias: el concepto cubano*, Norberto Fuentes reveals that the physicians at the Interior Ministry informed him

that for months and from the onset of his prison term, Abrantes was treated orally with Digitalis, administered to him under the guise of sedatives. This treatment, combined with an injection of diuretics, was the cause of Abrantes' death. The injection was administered a day after an argument between Abrantes and Patricio de la Guardia during which Abrantes informed Patricio that he kept Fidel informed about all aspects of the drug traffic. Abrantes did not die of natural causes: he was assassinated in prison following Fidel's orders." (Ernesto F. Betancourt. *Perspectiva*. El Nuevo Herald, July 19, 2003).

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Attachments

Search warrant

Claudia Márquez Linares, Grupo Decoro

Testimonial

Yolanda Huerga Cedeño, wife of independent poet, writer and journalist Manuel Vázquez Portal.

Our life-savings confiscated

Miriam Leiva

Verdict against Victor Rolando Arroyo

From Prison: A Diary

Manuel Vázquez Portal

International reaction



Search warrant

Claudia Márquez Linares, Grupo Decoro

Havana, March (www.cubanet.org). An authoritarian fist knocked at the door. It was State Security with a search warrant to locate, according to them, “elements that constitute a crime.”

Twelve agents, two of them armed, confiscated hundreds of stories, news, articles and journalism books. They found 150 books on politics, law, economics and social sciences; more than 50 envelopes containing information taken from the Internet. That was their bounty after a 10-hour search.

One old laptop and 36 diskettes bearing stories told by folks who are themselves victims of the arbitrary laws of the Cuban government: all this ended up in the crowded storage facilities of Cuba’s Secret Police.

Let us remember that it’s been two months since the raids started, aimed at finding illegal drugs among the population –that also includes operatives against “other illicit behavior”— and there have been massive confiscations affecting the common citizen. These confiscations have nothing to do with drugs. Independent journalists have written about this kind of harassment and the testimonials can be found online.

The police officers read all the love letters that my husband Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés wrote me eight years ago. He is president of the Liberal Democratic Party.

Oswaldo, my most treasured jewel, was taken away by the police officers to the cells at Villa Marista, State Security headquarters here in Havana province.

Six compact discs, among them those containing the material for De Cuba magazine, the Manuel Márquez Sterling Society of Journalists, and the European Union Encyclopedia for Young People, have been carted off to State Security warehouse, along with a video recorder and a digital photo camera, to have its contents unscrupulously inspected.

They listened to my German lessons, and they took all the *Internacional Liberal* newsletters. IL is an international umbrella organization for all Liberal Parties the world over, including my husband's.

While we listened to those mediocre charlatans on the official televised Round Table calling us traitors, the police went through my drawers and checked the family photographs.

It was 4:10 pm when the leader of the search party came in, a guy by the name of Captain Pepe, who showed no respect at the fact that I was in my underwear. He stood there watching me and I had to throw him out of the room so I could get dressed. He said that I should get dressed quickly because he had a search warrant.

What are they afraid of? I ask myself this question, while in our conscience and in the conscience of scores of journalists and independent organization leaders who themselves were also the target of confiscations and arbitrary arrests, there is hope for a free and democratic Cuba where reading Vargas Llosa and Milan Kundera cannot be made into "elements that constitute a crime."

Testimonial

Yolanda Huerga Cedeño, wife of independent poet, writer and journalist Manuel Vázquez Portal.

Havana, April (www.cubanel.org) When on March 19, 2003, between 5:30 and 5:45 pm I opened the door to the secret police, I knew that my family would be mutilated and my little 9-year-old son subjected to humiliations.

That afternoon will be unforgettable for us, and above all for our child. My husband, Manuel Vázquez Portal, and I were in the bedroom talking, when they knocked at the door. They weren't strong knocks, in fact they were gentle, which doesn't match with the show of police force neighbors tell me happened when State Security officers reached the building. Many of them commented that it seemed they were coming to capture Bin Laden: three cars, two motorcycles. Fourteen men dressed in civilian clothes came up to my apartment with cameras, video equipment and other pertinent –or not– items required to carry out their orders.

The head of the search party shoved a piece of paper in front of my eyes and pushed opened the door I had barely kept ajar. They followed me to the bedroom where Manuel was waiting, and showed him the search warrant.

From that moment on, they split into four groups: one remained with Manuel in the room where he was writing; another came with me into the other bedroom; a third group went into the living room with the director, who sat

at our table to compile the “evidence”; and a fourth group kept going in and out of the house without stopping. There was another group downstairs, around the building, but I didn’t know it then.

Our boy was at that moment at a neighbor’s home and I asked the director to let me go to his house to ask that he keep my son as long as possible so he would not be present in our house during the search. They agreed, emphasizing that they were not monsters nor did they want to hurt a child. They let me go without my identity card, and I was able to notify someone who then spread the word.

They checked in detail, with true skill, every piece of furniture one by one, drawer by drawer; they leafed through the books, scrutinized our clothes, read every paper, they looked at the photos and even gave an opinion about the photograph on the cover of the book by Alexis Díaz Pimienta “*Prisionero del agua*.”

Our son arrived after four hours, because the neighbor could not keep him amused any more. He watched with terrified eyes what transpired in our house, didn’t understand and asked what those men were doing here. Manuel and I tried to soothe him and give him some explanation. He curled up in his father’s arms, trembling like a leaf. When he saw the passports he asked Manuel “Papá, what is that?” And Manuel answered: “Those are the passports we won’t be able to use now.”

Around 10 o’clock they finished searching and they took Manuel. When he said good-bye, our son asked where he was going. “I am going to take a walk with these gentlemen, take care of you mamma and be a good boy. I

will be back." He was taking his toiletries bag so we would understand it would be a long "walk." Days later my son said to me: "Definitively, I should have gone with daddy so he could come back sooner."

I was heartbroken, but I didn't cry. I felt lightheaded, as if I had lost the capacity to reason. This was still not the time to think about our broken dreams, about my imprisoned husband in his jail cell, about the sad look on my son's face. This was still not the time to know, as does the poet, that "the day will be ancient history", and that in a not too distant future we will be reunited, and the three of us will play at "the lady is in danger" and my son will rescue me as he rides on his father's back. I know that God will bring us together again, but meanwhile we must travel a road that will leave deep scars in our lives.

A few good friends came to my house that night. They tried to console me and later left me with my son sleeping in my arms.

Next morning the pilgrimage began. Manuel's sister and I went from one place to another. This is a journey started a month ago by the wives and relatives of the independent opposition activists and journalists imprisoned.

First we went to Villa Marista, headquarters of the secret police in Havana, where you are not permitted to stop in front of the building. They check your purse before you go in. Then for some reason that I ignore, once in the building, they scanned our bodies with a gadget that looked like a metal detector. Then an officer talked to us and said that my husband was awaiting indictment and maybe in a week, next Wednesday, we could meet with the police case worker. This didn't happen until after the trial

where Manuel was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

For four consecutive Wednesdays we waited two to three hours in the waiting room at State Security, to be granted the 10 minute visit with Manuel that the officer in charge would agree to, depending on the mood he was in. The first visit lasted only 5 minutes, in spite of the fact that I explained to the officer that the next day Manuel and I had to give an answer on whether our son should undergo a very delicate operation.

Friday, April 28, they called us to Villa Marista. There, after midday, a certain colonel who did not identify himself spoke to my sisters-in-law and me. He said that we should retain a lawyer, because Manuel would be prosecuted. When I asked on what charges, and what was the crime, he responded: "He will be tried for violation of Law 88." I insisted: "But, which articles?" "Don't worry, the lawyer will tell you," he replied.

During the weekend, we ran all over Havana, my sister-in-law Xiomara and I until finally on Monday the 31st we retained attorney Amelia Rodríguez, from the lawyers' office in Carlos III Boulevard. The next day, Tuesday April 1, Xiomara called me at home to tell me that the lawyer had suffered, suddenly, a flare of hypertension and had quit the case.

Desperate as I was, I looked for a telephone to call anyone who could guide me. I went to a neighbor's house, but she refused categorically. She was afraid.

Wednesday the 2nd the lawyers' office gave the case to another lawyer, Antonio Lorenzo Hernández, who told us his *forte* was labor issues. Here we were, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon we were meeting my husband's future defense

lawyer.

I asked the lawyer if he could see Manuel on Thursday, as the trial was set for Friday the 4th. He said no, because he had another hearing, but assured us he would see Manuel moments before the trial. That's how it was: moments before the beginning of the trial is when he met Manuel.

So it was that we got to April 4, 2003, the day when Manuel and another three activists were tried.

Xiomara and I got up very early that day and we got to courthouse located at 100 and 33rd at about 6:30 A.M. That's where the trial would be held.

On the street in front of entrance to the building there was a patrol car. We walked across the street, and imploring God's protection, we went up to the entrance walkway. Already there were many plainclothesmen with walkie-talkies. More policemen continued to arrive, as well as MININT officers and others I assumed were State Security agents. A lieutenant colonel also arrived, appearing to be the one in charge outside. From where we were sitting we could see on the walk on 100th Street a group of people that seemed to be relatives of the defendants.

I remember that one of the officers asked another who we were, and he responded in a low voice: "Relatives," I got the impression we were in the wrong place.

From where we were seated at a bench under the courthouse portico, we saw the prisoners being brought in, each in a separate car flanked by two policemen and the driver. They were handcuffed as if they were highly dangerous criminals. I blew Manuel a kiss which he answered with a smile.

The trial should have started at 8:30 a.m. but due to the fact that the lawyers arrived late (Uh, those buses!) it began much later. First they let the relatives into the room: mothers, wives, children, sisters and brothers; then they let in a group of people I did not know. All the seats were taken. I was alarmed because I knew that Manuel's two other sisters were coming from Morón to witness the trial. I walked out to inform the usher about the missing relatives. First I spoke to a tall young man with a walkie-talkie, who wasn't too friendly. He asked if their names were on the list. "What list?" said I much surprised. He sent me over to another guy, who turned out to be the usher. I walked diligently toward him and explained. He assured me there would be no problem with my sisters-in-law. There wasn't.

With the arrival of the lawyers, the trial began.

In Manuel's particular case, I came out of the trial very hopeful, feeling proud of his courage and character, because he didn't let himself to be intimidated by the prosecutor. The police case worker, a lieutenant colonel by the name of Robert, agreed with the prosecutor that the defendants were traitors to their homeland, lackies [of the US], etc. But in my opinion there wasn't much evidence against them, for not even agent Miguel [Orrio] had much to say. That's what I thought, 40 years listening to everyone speak of justice only gave me false hopes deep in my subconscious.

I was dumbfounded when three days later the provincial court, after a long wait, handed down a guilty verdict with an 18-year prison sentence for Manuel.

All this time we have lived in a daze of fruitless ac-

tions. We, the wives, assemble like sheep to speak about our husbands; we go around in groups to protect each other from being terrorized; we distrust everything and everybody, but a force more powerful than us pushes us and gives us courage to forge ahead, in spite of the fear. It is a force that cannot be imprisoned: love. We spend long hours in the reception area at Villa Marista, long hours in lawyers' offices, in the court, and also long hours comforting each other, telling each other that there will be a miracle and that soon we will be hugging our husbands and telling them that ours was also a horrible nightmare. Thus we will soothe our pain and our rage: when the arms of our heroic men protect us once more.

A few days after his father's arrest, my son began to weep suddenly. I calmed him down as best as I could and said to him: "What has mamma always told you about papá? Why must we be proud of him?" And he answered me with a broken voice, and very very softly: "Because he is a hero."

The moment I've feared for nine years had come.

After Manuel left the official press and began to work as an independent journalist, I lived in endless worry. Whenever someone knocked at the door, I thought it might be State Security agents coming to threaten him with jail; if Manuel came home later than usual, I worried.

When in the mornings he left to do his work, I would blow him a kiss and follow him with my eyes thinking I could protect him and defend him from those who harassed him.

But the most painful thing of all was the contradictions in my son's education. For one, the constant barrage

of slogans in school, which he fortunately doesn't quite understand. In addition, there is his father, fighting for a better society with his written word in hand.

His school teacher told me other teachers were questioning if my son was imbued with his father's ideas, something which she denied. I am thankful for that communist teacher who chose to protect my son against the perfidy of others.

Another time, a neighbor told my son that his papá wrote against Cuba. Gabriel didn't want to go down to play, he was embarrassed. I said to him: "Your papá doesn't write against Cuba, he writes against the Fidel Castro government, tell him that. My son responded: "Mamma, to say that is even worse." I never told this to Manuel.

At my insistence, Manuel decided to ask for political asylum in the U.S. which was granted on October 24, 2000. But on November 28 of that year our son and I received our exit permits; Manuel did not. His permit was retained until October 18, 2002 after refugee flights were suspended. We were still waiting, when the shocking events of March 19, 2003 occurred.

Our life-savings confiscated

Miriam Leiva

Havana, April (www.cubanet.org) In a press conference on April 9, Cuba's Foreign Minister, Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, spoke for the first time about the summary trials of 75 peaceful human rights activists, independent journalists and economists, and peaceful opposition activists, carried out between April 3 and April 7.

The arrests began on March 18. Only a short communiqué was issued to inform the population in a concise press release that dozens of dissidents were being arrested.

The Foreign Minister manifested that the defendants knew the charges in advance, that they had the right to retain lawyers, and to be heard in trial. Let's recall that these procedures were carried out with no warning or advice. The prosecutor's petitions were given to the defendants when they were already under arrest, and could only give them to their relatives during the programmed visits. Therefore, the defendants hardly had sufficient time to retain lawyers. Those lawyers had to study the case summaries and prepare in a hurry, which did not allow them, in most cases, to confer with their clients in the jails while where they were held. They could only speak to their clients for a few minutes before the start of the trials. Evidently, the rush made it impossible to present witnesses for the defense. However, the prosecutors had more than 10 days to prepare their cases.

Each trial lasted anywhere between 6 hours and 18 hours. Approximately two days after, the verdicts were handed over to the relatives at the provincial courthouses, and not given personally to the defendants personally in court. Most of the statements given by the defendants were disregarded, as evident in those documents.

The Foreign Minister indicated that the trials had been public and that about 100 people were present at each trial. Yes, the courtrooms were full of unknown persons brought there by the government, most likely members of the CDRs, the Communist Party, State Security, and others. Friends and acquaintances of the defendants were not permitted to attend. As for the relatives, the numbers went limited.

The oldest son of Pedro Pablo Alvarez was not allowed access, neither were two nieces of Oscar Espinosa Chepe. They had to remain on the sidewalks of the courts, and were kept away by agents of State Security and police.

The witnesses for the prosecution generally were not able to clearly identify the defendants and the evidence and testimony they gave were inadequate. For example, someone stated that he had seen the defendants conversing with U.S. congressmen, senators and other Americans. But then they said they had not listened to the conversations nor did they speak English. The majority of the defendants don't speak English either. In fact, the activists always spoke in Spanish and many times, I was their interpreter during those conversations.

Mr. Pérez Roque referred to the amount of money they received through Transcard Agency, a money-transfer company that operates with State banks. Also, he men-

tioned cash found in their homes. Attention! Don't fall into the trap of adding both figures.

If you are an agent of a foreign power, the first thing you would do is hide the evidence of your crime. The discrete amount of cash was easily accessible, not carefully hidden, as expressed by the Minister. It was right in our homes, discreetly put away. Moreover, from now on, who will trust the bank system of the government of the Republic of Cuba?

A whole life's savings from the hard-worked earnings of Oscar Espinosa Chepe and mine —his wife, Miriam Leiva Viamonte— have been confiscated. It is laughable, compared to over 30 years of work on Oscar's part, and 25 years on mine. Our neighbors know that those savings are the result of the legal sale of our then-new car, his various stamp collections, and remittances from our relatives abroad. Only a fraction came from the fees we both received for articles and essays written, Oscar's work written in his capacity as economist and independent journalist. Who can get rich with the \$15 and \$25 paid by *CubaNet* and *Encuentro en la red*, respectively?

For his weekly program "Charlando con Chepe" (Talking with Chepe) and other programs transmitted by Radio Martí, he never received a penny. In first place because he did not want it. His only interest was that people in Cuba —that large permanent audience— could get to know his objective analysis and his constructive proposals that the present government could very well implement in order to palliate the on-going crisis, now in its 13th year, known as the Special Period.

The Foreign Minister referred to our improved stan-

dard of living. Oscar Espinosa Chepe cannot have raised his standard of living; he is an austere man. But fundamentally because from the cradle up in the midst of a hard-working family, he learned about property: pharmacies, houses, buildings, money, all acquired by hard and honest work. The government confiscated his parents' property in the Sixties. Notwithstanding, Chepe remained in his country and did his part to improve the living conditions of the Cuban people and the general prosperity of Cuba.

Oscar became a diplomat, but didn't work in the Foreign Ministry, like Minister Pérez Roque suggested. He was for many years the head of the department of the State Committee for Economic Collaboration, and was economic adviser to Cuba's embassy in Yugoslavia (1984-1987). Also, he traveled a lot, and negotiated and signed on behalf of the Cuban State many credit agreements worth hundreds of millions of convertible rubles. He was never known to waste money nor be capable of embezzlement. The audits conducted in his Belgrade office were impeccable.

When in 1992 the government expelled him from Cuba's National Bank for his opinions on the economy, and expelled me from the Foreign Ministry and the Communist Party for not leaving "a counterrevolutionary individual," all we had was an account at the People's Savings Bank of Cuba. With that money we survived with austerity. For years, I have taught English as a licensed self-employed tutor to supplement our budget and that of my family. The money seized now represents our life's savings, money we saved to ward off an uncertain future. At least half of that money belongs to me.

I invite anyone who wants to corroborate the alleged luxuries we have enjoyed during 28 years of marriage to visit my tiny apartment, and verify the truth about our modest lives, our real lives not something staged. Our address is: Calle 39-A, #4212, Apartment 3, between 42 and 44 Streets, Municipio Playa, Havana, Cuba. Nothing has changed since they took Oscar Espinosa Chepe off to the dungeons at the general headquarters of the secret police, in Villa Marista.

Attachments

Verdict against Victor Rolando Arroyo

Excerpted from Verdict #1, 2003 against independent journalist Victor Rolando Arroyo and peaceful opposition activists Horacio Julio Piña Borrego, Fidel Suárez Cruz and Eduardo Díaz Fleitas, dictated on April 5 in the city of Pinar del Río.

FIRST CONCLUSION: It has been proven that defendant, Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, presently under arrest, 52 years of age, whose other personal data appears at the heading of this resolution, from the early nineties broke his ties with the Cuban revolutionary process in which he had participated, and betrayed the very principles he once defended, with the sole and deliberate aim of changing our socialist project that was recently confirmed at a referendum that reflected the will of eight million Cubans, and that he carried out in this very province of Pinar del Río, particularly in the Pinar del Río municipality, the following actions:

In 1992 he joined several counterrevolutionary splinter groups from where he was expelled due to his egocentric and unstable conduct, until in 1998 he proclaimed himself an independent journalist, joining a Puerto-Rico-based news agency called "CUBANET", from where he launched an intense defamatory campaign against the Cuban Revolution, through ill-named Radio Martí, Radio Mambí and Voice of America, located in U.S. territory, thus making himself known within the leadership of internal and inter-

national counterrevolutionary circles, that earned him a congratulatory letter from Jorge Mas Santos, current director of the reactionary and terrorist Cuban American National Foundation. He developed close links with the U.S. Interest Section in Cuba, and most especially with its director, Ms. Vicky Huddleston lady, whom he welcomed in his home in the month of February 2000, from whom he received money, literature, communication equipment and computers to carry out his work, along with thirty nine high frequency short-wave radio receivers. Also, he welcomed recently in his home, together with a group of counterrevolutionaries, the current director of that [U.S.] office, Mr. James Cason, who has furnished him with financing, literature and powerful radio equipment to listen to the above-mentioned foreign radio stations. The accused has distributed this equipment to several people in this province. Also, he has kept close working and personal relations with Omar López Montenegro, an active member of the Cuban American National Foundation, who has supplied him with cash and other portable media such as high frequency radios, earphones, batteries, battery chargers, fax equipment, a photocopier and food items. They call each other "brother" in their periodic correspondence; with Janisset Rivero González, head of the Miami-based counterrevolutionary group "*Directorio Democrático Cubano en el Exilio*", from whom he also has received money and books; and with Frank Hernández-Trujillo, head of the so-called "*Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia*" from whom he has received money and specially medicines he has distributed through the Guane-based independent clinic and other counterrevolutionary entities. All

this has permitted Arroyo Carmona to change substantially his standard of living because with the money he gets for his reports and the financing he receives from the U.S. government through the aforementioned organizations, he acquired a red motorcycle, a Jawa Model 354 license PRD206 that he and his colleagues use for their antisocial activities, as well as various domestic appliances and furniture. He also made repairs in his house. In the last years he has labored against the revolution in such magnitude that the Miami-based counterrevolutionary organization Human Rights Watch awarded him recently the "Hellman Hammett" cash prize for his services to the [U.S.] Empire.

That in the year 2002 and with the help of the U.S. Interest Section in Havana and the above-mentioned organizations, he created a so-called "independent library" at the home of his mother, located at Adela Azcuy Street #10, in the city of Pinar del Río, named the "Reyes Magos" library, endowing it with more 6,000 titles, magazines and other publications, whose content aim to discredit our political and social system and our leaders; and he managed to distribute regularly in all of Pinar del Río province, subversive literature to other [independent] libraries that have opened, through his valuable contacts in the [U.S. Interests Section]. The distribution has accomplished this *via* a car with diplomatic license plates.

Moreover, because of his personality, he joins and cooperates with every anti-Cuban project that will give him money or is advantageous to him or to the U.S.

Also, HORACIO JULIO PIÑA BORREGO, 36 years of age, EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS, age 51, and FIDEL CRUZ SUAREZ, age 32, whose other personal data appears at the

heading of this resolution, hoping to undermine the foundations of the political system of the State democratically-ratified by the Cuban people, and encouraged by the hostile and aggressive politics of successive American governments and its effort to foment internal subversion [in our country], and knowing that the accused VICTOR ROLANDO ARROYO CARMONA had the same counterrevolutionary goals, decided to associate with him and all three began to furnish [Arroyo] articles, chronicles and other texts that distorted Cuban reality, mainly in the fields of public health, education, the environment, and attached the prestige of our leaders and of our economic, political and social infrastructures. The accused Arroyo Carmona took it upon himself, through his contacts, to disseminate the information to the different unaccredited press agencies, in keeping with the goals of the United States government to promote and organize counterrevolutionary activity inside and outside of Cuban territory.

Also, HORACIO JULIO PIÑA BORREGO and EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS, together with ARROYO CARMONA established relationships and contacts with the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, and participated in meetings and discussion groups with principal officials of recent [U.S.] administrations who contributed to financing and provided material means for the development of this activity and guided their questions about how to conduct U.S. projects aimed at destabilizing the Cuban revolution. These projects were carried out at Adela Azcuy Street #10, where [Arroyo Carmona] had set up the above-mentioned library. Our investigation proved that PIÑA BORREGO and DIAZ FLEITAS made periodic visits to the U.S. Inte-

rests office to obtain information and news copy of newspapers, and to receive instructions to carry out activities that guaranteed U.S. interference in our country.

At the same time that the accused FIDEL CRUZ SUAREZ provided information to the accused ARROYO CARMONA for subversive activities, he organized another [independent] library in the town of Cayuco, located in Manuel Lazo in the municipality of Sandino, Pinar del Río province. He named it "San Pablo", and as with the others, all subversive and counterrevolutionary materials were provided by the above-mentioned U.S. Interests office. As for PIÑA BORREGO, he provided supplies systematically to Guane's independent medical clinic medicines sent from the U.S. to ARROYO CARMONA by counterrevolutionary [agent] Frank Hernández-Trujillo.

During the investigation, police found material equipment, books and literature in their homes –especially in ARROYO CARMONA's home- supplies they needed to achieve their objectives. Police also found a bank account with a balance of \$200, that had been deposited at the 1540 Branch of Banco de Crédito y Comercio of Pinar del Río *via* check #032538; and Transcard #6017811962599351 that had a balance of \$115.03, for a total cash reserve of \$315.03 in U.S. currency.

VICTOR ROLANDO ARROYO CARMONA severed all socially-useful activity, did not socialize with neighbors nor took part in activities organized by the local mass organizations. He has a criminal record, Case #132-1996 for assault, tried at the Pinar del Río People's Court, for which he was sanctioned to a year and six months in prison; and Case # 100-2000 for the crime of speculation

and hoarding [of consumer goods], for which he was sentenced to six months in prison.

The accused FIDEL CRUZ SUAREZ openly expresses disaffection with political and mass organizations and engages in acts of disobedience and defiance against his local authorities; he is issued several official warnings for speaking against our top leadership, and is sanctioned for the crime of disobedience (Case #70-2000, at the People's Municipal Court in Sandino) to six months in prison (later appealed and revoked).

The accused HORACIO JULIO PIÑA BORREGO, severed from all socially-useful activity, did not socialize with neighbors nor took part in activities organized by the local mass organizations. He was sanctioned in Case #1000-1991 for the crime of unlawful appropriation, and tried at the Pinar del Río People's Court, for which he was sentenced to three years in prison

The accused EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS is small farmer, did not socialize with neighbors nor took part in activities organized by the local mass organizations. He was sanctioned for the crime of public disorder in Case #20-2000, tried at 10 de Octubre Municipal Court, and sentenced to a year in prison (later suspended); and previously for other counterrevolutionary crimes no longer listed on his criminal record.

SECOND CONCLUSION: That the Court to in order to corroborate the proven facts took into consideration the oral trial; the statements of witness Juan Padrón Camejo, Pinar del Río delegate of independent libraries movement, who explained how all the representatives of the U.S. Interests office supply periodically a diverse bibliography

and articles, and how they gathered to discuss human rights and democracy, and how they received radio transmitters so they can listen to foreign radio stations, among them, of course, Radio Martí, and furthermore, how he and the accused Arroyo Carmona bought a Jawa Model 354 motorcycle which, at first belonged to him and was meant for use in the group's operations. The witness made public that he is opposed to the revolutionary government, a statement taken as true and relevant to the present case. Witness René Oñate Sixto, director of one of the [independent] libraries, reaffirmed the method of acquisition of the texts the libraries hold -the U.S. Interests office- and admitted that he took part in meetings with representatives of that office in Arroyo Carmona's home to discuss democracy and human rights.

Doctor Janoy Humberto Hernández Piñero, calmly explained how he founded and how he works in an independent clinic out of his home in Guane township, in Pinar del Río, how the idea is financed by residents of United States who send him periodically medicines and supplies, technical equipment to carry out his work on a parallel basis with the Cuban public health system, He explained how defendant Arroyo Carmona is backbone of the process, and attorney Piña Borrego supports the project although he is not a member of *Colegio Médico Independiente* (Independent College of Physicians), all of which is clear, evident and publicly known, and also demonstrates again the above-mentioned defendants participate in several simultaneous projects and that all have the same goal which is, without doubt, to create expectations of political and social change and to influence the process of internal

destabilization of the country.

Witness Jesús Floro Pérez Hernández and Jesús Domínguez Hernández, in a precise and clear way, explained details about delivery of envelopes and other items regularly taken to the home of defendant Arroyo Carmona at Adela Azcuy #10 in Pinar del Río, and how they were delivered by official vehicles bearing diplomatic license plates, which confirms that they originated at the U.S. Interests office. The defendant agrees on this, and therefore the testimony becomes part of the evidence without question. For their part, witnesses Margarito Guzmán Pérez, Avilio Manuel Garceron Lazo and Miguel Puebla López, who reside at Entronque de Herradura and who have known the accused Eduardo Díaz Fleitas for several years, testified that Fleitas himself distributes medicines that he receives from the United States, that it is known in the area that he directs a human rights opposition group that conducts activities and meetings, using our national flag and showing posters that ask for freedom for political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, in what constitutes an open challenge to our judicial, political and social system[s], all of which generates discontent and disapproval among the local population because these activities create extreme situations that affect the social order and urge local residents to engage in them, which under no circumstances can be permitted or tolerated.

Witnesses Celso Estanislao Salgueiro Pausa, Adalberto Jesús González Rodríguez, Alfonso Camejo Cruz, Pedro Manuel de Celis Maza, Francisco Peraza Viamonte, and Lorenzo Calzada Sánchez, all residents of Las Martinas township in Sandino and Manuel Lazo township in Gua-

ne, also in Pinar del Río province where Piña Borrego and Suárez Cruz conducted their activities, explained decisively how both defendants exhibited a specific and public conduct that manifested their opposition to the revolutionary system, that their work was aimed at recruiting members for their purpose, organized activities of this nature, and summoned people to engage in acts of civil disobedience that the people themselves obstructed. They testified how in the home of Suárez Cruz there was an "independent library" with publications of all kinds and where periodically a car bearing the diplomatic license plates of the U.S. Interests office brought literature of the kind we will review later on.

The aforementioned witnesses remarked that the defendants' conduct was most unpopular because it meant to destroy the accomplishments of our people in a most unworthy and opportunistic way, pretending to be paradigms of human rights and public service, camouflaging their intentions by lending books that were ideologically contrary to the revolution, and delivering medicines supplied by the very Empire that refuses to trade medicines with Cuba or allow third countries to do so. For delivery of specialized attention and medicine to young Cubans is made difficult in light of the Helms-Burton Law. The witnesses felt it was ironic and contradictory that if the U.S. is concerned about the social well-being and the economic prosperity of Cubans, why then does the U.S. only supply medicine through opposition groups? Is it perhaps a way to play with the needs of human beings and inoculate the twisted ideology they proclaim, and their eagerness to serve the Yankee imperialists in every way?

Another clear and transparent witness was Orlando Baños Martínez, president of the People's Council in Las Martinas when the hurricanes flogged Pinar del Río province in 2002. This witness validated the testimony of the former witnesses against Piña Borrego and Suárez Cruz, and contributed an interesting angle, which is to have seen Arroyo Carmona in the disaster areas after the hurricanes. The witness did not know the defendant at the time, but he stated that together with Piña Borrego, Arroyo Carmona gathered information about the government's attention to the disaster areas and about other topics, for the purpose of reporting to their contacts abroad in ways that would question and discredit the revolutionary process. The witness indicated that he emphatically asked the defendants to leave, which they did; he said they had a small tape recorder as proof of their investigation. Tape recorders are yet another item supplied by the U.S. government for this purpose.

Finally, the Court listened to witness Antonio de la Cuz Hernández Argudin, who stated that he was present when defendant Arroyo Carmona's testimony during the investigation was read, testimony that coincides with the one on file. The witness testified that the defendant refused to sign the statement that he gave during the investigation. There being no possible contradiction, his testimony becomes proven fact and consonant with Arroyo Carmona willingness to testify. In addition we listened to witness Bernardo Fernández Hernández, a psychologist, who stated the Arroyo Carmona refused a psychological examination saying that he enjoyed perfect mental health, all of which demonstrates that there was all dispositions

regulated by the Penal Procedures Law were met.

Interesting without doubt was the expert verification conducted by the Documents Department during the oral trial. The examiner was Manuel Cantón Ploder, who showed in detailed and with professionalism that the documents confiscated from the defendants had been prepared by them. The defendants did not deny the conclusions of the expert verification and therefore the documents were submitted as irrefutable evidence.

An innovative, interesting and serious expert-verification method was used by Pinar del Río University professors, all holding Masters of Science degrees and extensive professional experience. They were: Efraín Echevarría Hernández, Juan Albert Blanco Rivera and Rolando Acuña Velásquez. The team explained in a didactic and simple way that after reviewing almost the entire collection at the "Reyes Magos" library directed by Arroyo Carmona, and some 699 articles authored by him, they confirmed what is stated in the case documents regarding the sensationalist and opportunistic nature of Arroyo Carmona's writings, his lack of professionalism and logical structure. But the experts also clarified that the defendant's actions, lacking in scientific data and laden with information proved to be false, is cause for criminal sanction in most courts the world over, because it constitutes a way of controlling journalistic excesses and maintaining balance and truth in reporting. It was also demonstrated that the majority of the texts confiscated from the library were of a reactionary character, much like it is with other [independent] libraries. They showed examples of book passages that assault the prestige of the history of the Cuban nation, the

reputation of top figures like Martí and Che Guevara, and are disrespectful and irreverent. They also pointed out that these texts idealize the model of American democracy in detriment of the true history and development of democracy, and thus posit themselves not as historical and progressive texts but clearly as political and pro-U.S., which proves the true objective of the literature confiscated.

Major Iván Blanco Canals explained in his conclusive report every detail of the indictment and how he determined participation of the defendants in the actions for which they are charged. He was clear, concise and professional, and gave operative and configurative descriptions of the acts that were committed, which was vital to the Court's understanding of the events.

Another witness that was brought to the stand at the behest of the prosecutor and with the Court's approval in accordance with Article 340 Section 2 of the Penal Procedures Law, was State Security agent, Saúl, -in real life, attorney Pedro Serrano Urra- who was close to Arroyo Carmona for two years and testified about Arroyo Carmona's counterrevolutionary actions and about the activities of the other defendants of which he had direct or indirect knowledge. [He testified that he knew them] as members of opposition groups, and stated precisely that the objectives of their actions was to destroy the social accomplishments, to adamantly criticize the revolutionary system and to help the U.S. government achieve its aim to keep under its reins the destiny of the Cuban people. Agent Saúl also testified to the lucrative character of Arroyo Carmona's activities, saying that he received payments in cash from newspapers agencies where he sent his

insidious reports.

All this detailed analysis was reason enough to disqualify the statements made by defendants VICTOR ROLANDO ARROYO CARMONA, EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS, HORACIO JULIO PIÑA CRUZ and FIDEL SUAREZ BORREGO, because although they clearly and strongly admitted their actions that are corroborated in this very decision, all said actions being chronometrically demonstrated in the investigation, they [the defendants] wanted to demonstrate that in no way was their goal to advance the objectives of the Helms-Burton Law, the economic blockade or the economic war against our people, neither was it their goal to subvert the internal order, destabilize the country, or crush the socialist State or Cuba's independence. Their position is neither exact nor logical, for all their actions were aimed precisely at achieving such objectives. Their actions were patiently monitored and scrutinized by State Security, until that prudent moment in which it became untenable to let them continue, and in the name of the Cuban people they are rounded up and indicted. One aspect that was proven was the vulgar show of opulence on the part of defendant Arroyo Carmona, whose standard of living skyrocketed, going from a modest worker to a man with high sums of money he used for his personal benefit. Several luxury items were found in his wife's home which he acquired with the money he received as payment for the risks he was taking as the person charged with distributing money to the other opposition groups. This in turn contradicts defendant Piña Borrego's statement that he received no money for his counterrevolutionary activities, proven further when the judges

presented a receipt for US\$10 prepared in his own handwriting and bearing his signature, evidence of U.S. payment for his activities. Another example in the case against Suárez Cruz showed that this defendant received \$100 from the U.S. allegedly to fix the damages suffered by his house during the hurricane. Doesn't this money make him richer? Doesn't he receive it in compensation for his activities? For the judges these facts are clear, and represent only a few examples.

The above is supported by the extensive and detailed documentation that exists on these activities. For example, the inventories of confiscation and storage of the items found in the defendants' homes, all of which came in one form or another from the money assigned to them by the U.S. for the activities in question. This includes description and confiscation of other personal properties in the case of Arroyo Carmona, who increased his personal patrimony using funds from the same source, thus demonstrating the funds were payment for services rendered to the Empire, a highly lucrative and risk-proportionate business given a society that repudiates him and rids itself of him immediately. Other interesting documents resulted from technical inspection of radio equipments confiscated from the defendants, which demonstrates they were in perfect working condition and capable of receiving radio signals from abroad. That is the reason they were distributed by representatives of the U.S. Interests office: to spread its doctrines and political line. The Court reviewed also the experts' report on Arroyo Carmona's computer and typewriter, which proved that it was the same equipment used by the defendant to write his reports; this confirmed what

was already determined during the investigation.

The Court also consulted the certificates issued by the financial corporation CIMEX, S.A. and reviewed Western Union's financial transaction database where all money transactions effected by defendant Arroyo Carmona are recorded. This was one of the channels used by the defendant to receive U.S. funds for his activities. The Court also reviewed the defendant's operations with Transcard Agency, an alternative channel for receiving money from the U.S. The Transcard record shows that between 2001 and 2003, the defendant received a total of \$2,060.10; the funds left were US\$ 115.03, found in his home during the search. The Court also reviewed a proof of delivery that corresponds to Arroyo Carmona's receipt, through CUBA-PACK, of medicines valued at US\$ 486.20. The above provides documentary proof about the flow of money and medicines from the U.S. to Arroyo Carmona to fulfill his mission in Cuba. Also reviewed was a proof of delivery from CUBAPACK that attests to a package consigned to defendant Eduardo Díaz Fleitas containing medicines from the U.S. This reaffirms his statement, as with defendant Horacio Julio Piña Borrego, that said package arrived through the same channel. A Panasonic fax machine in perfect working order, used for communicating and for sending information fast, was found in Piña Borrego's home, proof of which is recorded in the confiscation and storage inventory.

The exhibit tables prepared for the trial were clear and precise, and they illustrated the procedures followed in order to demonstrate, through the Documents Department's expert's reports, that the writing samples sent to

the lab were the defendants'. The defendants admitted this was true; the documents were submitted as irrefutable evidence. Other exhibit tables were made specifically for each defendant, showing *via* photographs their homes, the items confiscated, the visually identifiable benefits they reaped from their activities, and eloquent photographic documentation of several counterrevolutionary meetings where we can identify the former and present First Secretary of the U.S. Interests office in Cuba at the home of defendant Arroyo Carmona. Notice the defendant's relevant standing among the group, showing that people of high rank are his personal friends and visited his home. The photos also show samples of the literature confiscated and the most significant titles.

The judges also consulted the Inventory of Confiscation and Storage pertinent to the extensive literature that was classified by title and author, and several brochures, writings etc. that indicates the magnitude of this activity. At the home of Arroyo Carmona's mother, several thousand books alone were confiscated. This made possible a detailed and scientific study of these texts by experts recommended by the prosecutor. Such study had been done before and served to corroborate the contents of the expert report in the case file. This report is a summary of what the investigation's scientists recorded during the oral trial and demonstrates the actual ideological vision of such literature, a vision that is totally divorced from truth, social justice and other ideological and revolutionary tenets concerning democracy, and only refers to the U.S. Model as impeccable paradigm and as a goal to achieve at all costs.

The judges also reviewed several collections of docu-

ments that are attached to the case file, personal documents that tell of counterrevolutionary activity. Significant among them, for example, are those published by international agencies that highlight the person of Arroyo Carmona; his personal correspondence with Miami-based counterrevolutionary leaders like Omar López Montenegro who calls him "my brother;" copies of messages from of the Cuban American National Foundation calling for civil disobedience; letters from Madam First Secretary of the U.S. Interest office addressed personally to Arroyo Carmona in recognition of the risks he is taking; letters of congratulations from the U.S. on receiving a prize for selling his soul to the devil and giving false information about our country that could undermine the very foundation of the revolution in the eyes of the international community; several invitations from counterrevolutionary sources; and other proclamations of this type, etc. In the cases of HORACIO JULIO PIÑA BORREGO and EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS there are more than enough of these types of documents: several counterrevolutionary texts and forms related to the Varela Project, a project designed against the constitutionally established legal order in our country that through an apparent social purpose for opening our society has in fact sought to divide the people, to discredit the People's Power organization and Cuba's electoral system and cause instability and confusion among the population, to achieve his supreme goal of aborting years of efforts, of revolutionary accomplishments and lead our revolution down a neo-liberal and treacherous roads, all the while showing an apparent preoccupation for his fellow man and of material and spiritual cooperation that are totally

false. A document that stands among those confiscated from defendant Piña Borrego is one titled "*Constancia de Hostigamiento*" (Proof of Harassment), a form he would sign in his capacity as provincial delegate of the Human Rights Party when a person was interrogated or put on notice by [someone] in the Interior Ministry. This placed the defendant in a position of authority as opposition leader in the eyes of anyone who received such a document, attesting to the importance of his signature and of his actions in his counterrevolutionary organization. The Court also reviewed documents sent by Fidel Suárez Cruz to the Culture and Press department of the U.S. Interests office in Havana, which proves his links with that country, regarding books and money to carry out his activities in his "independent library", which makes him an accessory to Piña Borrego in the conduct of counterrevolutionary activities analyzed above.

Another document consulted, also submitted as evidence, was a manual that simulates a ration card of the kind all Cubans hold in order to receive the subsidized consumer quota that the Cuban State assigns to each person in this country. The "card" was evidently designed so it could be carried by anyone without attracting attention, and it includes a manual that explains in detail how to react during public actions such as searches, arrests, or when being given an official warning. Thus the recipient of said brochure is trained to obstruction [the law] in a calm and professional manner. The manual explains how to act during opposition and counterrevolutionary activities and to be cognizant of the Penal Procedures Law, the Penal Code and Law 88 (1999) all of which proves the distinct

reactionary character of the brochure and its clear training purpose regarding civil disobedience, the attainment of social disorder and destabilization of our country.

The prosecutor provided another overwhelming documentary evidence, a video from the oral trial, where a specialist of the Interior Ministry explains the development of counterrevolutionary activities in Cuba, the conduct of the Cuban American National Foundation, the implicit dangers and the urgency of stopping this type of domestic defiance, in addition to revealing the meetings, discussions and conferences, including the celebration of the first anniversary of Guane's independent medical clinic in Pinar del Río, wherein the opinions, goals and objectives of the different groups were explained, and all defendants play a role, and Víctor Rolando Arroyo Carmona is seen as leader and central figure of the activity.

The judges thought it wise to consult the certifications of the respective verdicts as related conduct reports of each defendant, as well as the pertinent complementary investigations, which allowed [the judges] to formulate a uniform criteria about theme that is in agreement with the one reflected in this decision. Another important set of documents that was consulted dealt with the information that the defendants, with the exception of Suárez Cruz, sent to the various press agencies on their own, albeit under the direction of Arroyo Carmona, who in turn took this information from the other defendants, including Suárez Cruz, and without verifying facts would send it all over the world, thus damaging the prestige of the revolution in every respect.

The mammoth collection of documents reviewed

meets requirements of the Law for accepting them as valid evidence, and for their complete efficacy.

(...)

FIRST CONSIDERATION: That the facts that have been proven constitute a consummate and intentional crime of **acts against the independence or the territorial integrity of the State**, as stipulated and sanctioned in Article 91, Section 9.2 and Section 12.1 of the Penal Code, evidenced in that the accused executed actions in the interest of a foreign power, in this case, the United States of America, by providing distorted information, by promoting civil disobedience, by fomenting reactionary and parallel projects –self-titled “independent”- to those of the established order, by receiving in return clear financial profit, in cash and personal goods and for their counterrevolutionary activities, for the sole purpose of damaging the independence of the Cuban State and the integrity of your territory. This is a consummate and intentional crime stipulated in Article 4, Sections 1 and 2, Sub-Sections (a) and (b) of Law 88 (1999) as related to Articles 9 and 12, Section 1 of the Penal Code, and Section 3.1 of the same law, evidenced in that the accused, in conjunction with two or three other persons and bent on securing profit and compensation, provided directly -or through third parties- to the government of the United States of America, its agencies, organizations, representatives or officials, information to support the objectives of the Helms-Burton Law, the economic blockade and the economic war against our people aimed at subverting the internal order, destabilizing the country

and destroying the socialist State and Cuba's independence. This is a consummate and intentional crime stipulated in Article 6, Sections 1 and 3, Sub-Sections (a) and (b) of the aforementioned law as related to Article 9, Section 2 and Article 12, Section 1 of the Penal Code, and Article 3, Section 1 of the same law, evidenced in that the accused, in conjunction with two or three other persons and bent on securing profit and compensation, secured and distributed subversive material to the government of the United States of America, its agencies, organizations, representatives or officials, that supported the objectives of the Helms-Burton Law, the economic blockade and the economic war against our people aimed at subverting the internal order, destabilizing the country and destroying the socialist State and Cuba's independence. This is a consummate and intentional crime stipulated in Article 7-1-3, of the aforementioned law, as related to Articles 9-2 and 12-1 of the Penal Code, evidenced in that the accused, bent on securing profit and compensation, collaborated with radio stations, newspapers and magazines distributed abroad, to support the objectives of the Helms-Burton Law, the economic blockade and the economic war against our people aimed at subverting the internal order, destabilizing the country and destroying the socialist State and Cuba's independence. Finally, this is a consummate and intentional crime stipulated in Article 11 of the amply referenced Law 88 (1999), as related to Article 9-2 and Article 12-1 of the Penal Code, evidenced in that the accused directly, or through third parties, received and distributed financial, material and other resources received from the government of the United States of America, its agencies, organi-

zations, representatives or officials, and also from private entities.

SECOND CONSIDERATION: That the accused VICTOR ROLANDO ARROYO CARMONA is responsible under criminal law for committing the crime of **acts against the independence or the territorial integrity of the State**, as contemplated in the Penal Code; and the accused EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS, HORACIO JULIO PIÑA CRUZ, and FIDEL SUAREZ BORREGO are responsible under criminal law for committing crimes stipulated Article 4, Sections 1 and 2, Sub-Sections (a) and (b); Article 6, Sections 1 and 3, Sub-Sections (a) and (b); and Article 7, Sections 1 and 3, and Article 11 of **Law 88 (1999) titled Law for the Protection of National Independence and the Cuban Economy**, for having committed all the acts for which he is charged, as contemplated in Article 18, Sections 1 and 2.a of the Complementary Penal Law.

THIRD CONSIDERATION: That in the commission of these acts certain aggravating circumstances regarding penal responsibility concur and are evident as stipulated in Article 53, Sections *e* and *n* of the Penal Code in effect, because the defendants, having been placed on notice officially by the competent authorities, committed the acts that are being tried; but moreover, they committed these acts by taking advantage of the criminal blockade that the U.S. has maintained against our country for more than forty years, and whose sole aim is to destroy our socialist system. This has compelled us to implement the Special Period in Times of Peace as the only road to survival and development. The Court has not heeded the extenuating circumstances invoked by the defense attorneys for Piña

Borrego and Díaz Fleitas that could modify penal responsibility as contemplated in Article 52, Section *ch* of this very set of laws, because the volume of evidence presented against them by State Security left the defendants no alternative but to admit to their participation in these acts; moreover the defendants did not cooperate with the authorities in obtaining clarification because at all time they denied the real objectives they pursued.

FOURTH CONSIDERATION: That penal responsibility carries with it the civil obligation to indemnify for damages caused by the illegitimate actions of the person committing the crime, as stipulated in Article 70 of the Penal Code, as related to Article 82 of the Civil Code, which will not be required in this case.

FIFTH CONSIDERATION: That the Court at the time of writing its decision, has guided itself by the content of Article 47 of the Penal Code, and has taken into consideration in the first place the extreme gravity of the acts committed by the defendants, and their personal characteristics. Notice how four individuals, with profound ambition and egocentrism, placed themselves at the service of Imperialism and through the U.S. Interests office in Cuba and other counterrevolutionary organizations directed and financed by that country's government and by the Miami Mafia, such as the Cuban American Foundation, *Grupo de Apoyo a los Disidentes* and *Directorio Democrático Cubano*, among others, received financial help to support internal splinter groups, and abundant literature, books and magazines whose content is subversive and bent on undermining the ideological foundation of the revolution by organizing the so-called "independent libraries". They

also received modern communication equipment such as fax machines, computers, printers and photocopiers that they used to send distorted and false reports to CubaNet abroad, and to Radio Martí and Radio Mambí, which then broadcast them. Theirs was an attitude and actions that are consonant with U.S. policy against Cuba which is designed to subvert and destroy the revolution from the inside by means of strengthening what they call civil society and promoting allegedly "independent" activities. Note that the four defendants had sanctioned by the courts before; in Arroyo Carmona case, what aggravates the punishment are his prior offences as stipulated in Article 55, Sections 2 and 3, Sub-Section *ch* of the Penal Code; and for the rest of the defendants, aggravation due to prior offences follows the stipulations in Article 55, Sections 1 and 3, Sub-Section *c* of the same law. Also, the presiding judges understood that the accused Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona acted as main protagonist of the actions and man-in-charge of most of the much-mentioned projects of the counterrevolutionary organizations; he was promoter and financial and intellectual support through his contacts in the U.S. Interests office in Havana and in Miami. It was particularly repugnant to watch how he attracted young professionals trained by the revolution's unparalleled education system, and to hear them call him godfather and protector. This merits a different approach, one that calls for more rigorous sanctions. In the other cases, the presiding judges decided to impose a longer sanction on Díaz Fleitas for his prior participation and association in activities of similar penal scope before these particular actions; faced with that evidence they felt that the overall objective

of a particular punishment can only be reached in severe internment conditions, and it is by virtue of this that the Court decides as follows:

OUR VERDICT: That we must and do sentence VICTOR ROLANDO ARROYO CARMONA to 26 years in prison, for committing **acts against the independence or the territorial stability of the State.**

We sentence EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS, HORACIO JULIO PIÑA CRUZ and FIDEL SUAREZ BORREGO for committing crimes stipulated in **Law 88 (1999) titled Law for the Protection of National Independence and the Cuban Economy**, as follows:

EDUARDO DIAZ FLEITAS is hereby sentenced to 12 years in prison for the crime stipulated in Article 4, Sections 1 and 2, Sub-Section *b*; to 5 years in prison for the crime stipulated in Article 6, Sections 1 and 3, Sub-Section *b*; and to 4 years of in prison for the crime stipulated in Article 11, to be served concurrently in a single term of 21 years in prison, as stipulated in Article 56, Section 1, Sub-Section *b* of the Penal Code.

HORACIO JULIO PIÑA BORREGO and FIDEL CRUZ SUAREZ are hereby sentenced to 10 years in prison for the crime stipulated in Article 4, Sections 1 and 2, Sub-Section *b*; to 5 years in prison for the crime stipulated in Article 6, Sections 1 and 3, Sub-Section *b*; to 4 years in prison for the crime stipulated in Article 7, Sections 1 and 3; and to 4 years in prison for the crime stipulated in Article 11, to be served concurrently in a single, 21-year term in prison, as stipulated in Article 56, Section 1, Sub-Section *b* of the Penal Code.

The defendants will serve out their sentences in a pen-

itentiary to be designated by the Interior Ministry.

Moreover, we rule as additional sanctions the withdrawal of the Rights stipulated in thirty Article 37, Sections 1 and 2 of the Penal Code for the duration of the principal sanctions, as follows: the right to active and passive suffrage, the right to hold executive posts in the political infrastructure of the State, in the State's economic and mass organization infrastructure; and those stipulated Article 43, Section 1 of the Penal Code, which calls for expropriation of items seized as listed below, whose destination is explained below.

Following these instructions, items seized and presently in official storage will be distributed as follows:

The amount of US\$ 315.03 shall be deposited in the State Treasury via the State's fee collection department.

Surrender to the province division of equipment and spare part sales (DIVEP, by its Spanish initials) a red motorcycle Model Jawa 354, license plate PRD206.

Surrender the following to the People's Power of Pinar del Río province: 11 audio cassettes; one Panasonic fax, Serial # 80RBKC43162; a battery charger Model BK345A; three TECSUN portable radio receivers, one with Serial # 1200205018, the other two without serial number; a SONY TCM323 cassette recorder; a IWIN-JX25 mini cassette recorder; a PANASONIC telephone answering machine, Serial # KVTM100LXB; a GRUNDIG portable radio receiver Serial # YB300PE; a CANON photocopier and accessories Serial # TVD68612; an OLIVETTI typewriter; a SARAR battery charger; a TRANSCARD credit card Serial # 60178119625999350 made out to defendant VICTOR ROLANDO ARROYO CARMONA, and another Serial

#60178117009621130 made out to Beatriz Carmona Vena, mother of this accused; an Epson LX 300 grey printer Serial #1W70X015679 Serial # CN9ATICJ9PN, with Chinese-made power cord; a grey Genius computer mouse with Chinese-made power cord; a grey Omega computer mouse base; a white Chinese-make keyboard Serial # C0U11210979; a brand new keyboard with power cord; a Chinese-made computer monitor Model 244L2, Serial # 177021013 with screen protector and power cord; a Chinese-made grey Super Power computer with power cord; two multimedia computer speakers; a Power CDM surge protector with outlets, Serial # 10133075; a green computer mouse base; three used printer ribbons; a new IKCHTE white desk lamp in good condition; a black Silver computer battery Serial #11099; a used grey multimedia computer microphone; a computer extension cord; five Maxell computer disks; two Imation compact disks, two Verbatim, one Hewere, plus various others made by Ahead, Pixel and Tomch Monager; 48, 3 ? computer disks in their cases; a black Ericson cellular telephone; a white waste basket full of discarded documents; a gray Audio Songe double cassette radio-recorder, Serial #6318, in good condition; 13 cassettes in a cassette case; a Chinese-made SONY micro tape recorder Model M450; a cassette case with four mini cassettes; an Indonesian-made Aiwa recorder Model TP615; a TECSUN radio receiver, Model R970; another with two rechargeable batteries; a digital charger with cord, antenna, headphones and transformer; a grey Sangean clock-radio Model AST404 with rechargeable battery; a black portable radio Model KA989, Serial # 205631, 11 radio batteries; 3 pairs of earphones and anten-

Attachments

nas; a DM3070 personal organizer; a black and grey n Olympus camera Model TRIPMD-3 in its case; a Chinese-made MINALTA camera Model 200-M in its case and a roll of film; a Japanese-made CANON video recorder Model NTSC R42 in its, bearing a card inside with the name of Frank Díaz with a Miami address and 6 unused cassettes in their cases; one instructions manual for the CANON R42 video recorder; a black Japanese-made Panasonic video battery charger with audio-video and camera power cords, Serial # EOSA36815; a black Chinese-make SONY dual battery charger and transformer, Serial #632239, Model ACL10B; a Chinese-made battery charger for the Ericson cellular phone, Model 420AS4400, Serial # 33B; a Chinese-made Canon video battery charger-transformer with power cord Model CA500, Serial # 9158510 with audio-video power cord and carrying strap; a black Chinese-made, 3-Volt desk lamp; 3 VHS-C cassettes, two of them TDK and one Maxel, and a Maxel Hocio cassette case; one Pansonic video cassette player and one KONKA television set; 13 VHS video cassettes in their cases; a white six-outlet extension cord with red switch; a black DUCAL Power calculator; a grey RADIO calculator Model KD-8012V and another CAS calculator with its case; a jeweler's screwdriver set in its case; one 1.5 Volts, Chinese-made, bone-white Radio Shack battery charger, Model CAT23405; one Daytron rechargeable lamp Model DL20-Basic; one 4.5 Volts transformer Model E165847 Series N064-Plus with its base; one mauve stapler; two rolls of red and white Scotch Tape; two SAFEBET cardboard boxes (red, white and mauve) with plastic tops; nine reams of white paper, different types; 47 yellow file folders in their

factory packaging; six white pencils; one blue eraser; one SAKR digital charger, Series E218224; three blue Digital batteries; one TECSON headphones; four dual ceiling fan-ceiling lamp fixtures in good condition; twelve wall paintings; two floor carpets; one KAMA SONY clothes iron; one VINCE washing machine; one TROPICO fan; one SUPER DELUX fan; twelve white plastic chairs with table; one Panasonic video player; one Panasonic television; one Sanyo radio-tape recorder; one ASTOS floor fan; one Sanyo refrigerator. Also, the following confiscated items, found in good condition: one Canon video remote control; an extension cord; one electrical outlet; three audio and video connectors with one, two and three channels respectively; one video camera connector for computer; one audio-video power cord; one phone power cord; one Panasonic fax machine; one colonial-style bed; one BK500 air conditioner; 45 bottles of medicines and loose tablets; 57 video cassettes; 11 audio cassettes; five mini-cassettes; 48 computer diskettes; 42 ball-point pens with four refills; one Centropen; 14 markers; one black rolling table with three shelves; 18 various-size personal notebooks, seven of them brand new; one black binder with different cards inside; a package of toothpicks in a nylon envelope; seven unused yellow envelopes; one package of six writing pads and one loose pad, unused; three photo albums; one desk box with office supplies (paper clips, Scotch Tape, etc); one, three-outlet extension cord; a 110-Volt surge protector; one GITRON power generator; one GAMA SONY video cassette rewinder; one cassette adapter; one NINITOS video camera tripod; TECSON radio receivers; two Cuban flags; one José Martí bronze bust..

From Prison: A Diary

Manuel Vázquez Portal, sentenced to 18 years. Boniato Prison, Santiago de Cuba.

March 19

House searched; I am arrested.

April 4

Summary trial. Had not met or talked with my defense lawyer.

24 April

Leave Villa Marista for Boniato Prison.

April 25 (Early Morning)

We arrive at Boniato Prison. We are placed in insolation cells. Cell #30. Toilet, clogged. No water. Dirty mattress on the floor.

April 25 (Afternoon)

Moved to cell #31. A toilet. Water. The cell floods every day with residual water from the corridor. High blood pressure. I am taken to the hospital with shackles and handcuffed. Mattress made of wadding, dirty, broken, old, hard.

April 27

It rains a lot. I discover leaks in the roof of the cell. 117

Plenty leaks.

April 28

I remain in isolation cell. They shave my head and cut my beard. Later I shave. Like every day, the food is indescribable. We are taken out in the sun, together (Normando Hernández, Próspero Gainza, and I). They take our fingerprints.

April 30

Visit. Yoly, Xiomy. 30 minutes. We are not given any privacy.

5 May

Today is my son Gabriel's operation. The day passes slowly. I read a lot.

May 8

On the eight-meter wide wall, I witness a terrible act. The Cervantes brothers, Agustin and Jorge, are shouting slogans against the government. The guards can't get them down. They send other inmates to push them off that wall. They must have hit themselves hard. Haven't heard anything more about it.

May 12

They take my picture; fingerprints, again.

May 14

The prison director, accompanied by the head of prisoner re-education and the head of our ward, informed us

that, as mandated by the nation, we will be kept under the strictest prison regimen (first phase). They give us the calendar of visits, food bag deliveries and marital visits that we are allowed, as follows: VISITS: May 31; August 30; November 29. FOOD BAGS: June 30, October 30. MARI-TAL VISITS: June 18, November 17.

May 15

HIV and blood tests. Syringes are non-disposable.

May 15 (Afternoon)

A lieutenant colonel from Villa Marista and a major from State Security in Santiago de Cuba, accompanied by Mr. Arrate (the prison case worker assigned by State Security). Ugly argument. They complain about my wife and try to threaten me. The lieutenant colonel called me a liar. I responded that I don't work for [the Daily] *Granma*.

May 16

High blood pressure 150/100. They inject me with Furosemide. Still no access to newspapers. No access to television. The food remains dismal. They haven't changed my mattress in spite of the fact that I have asked every department head on several occasions. They installed magnetic-card telephones in our ward.

May 17

We continue in isolation cells and in the strictest plan. On the weekends, we don't go out in the sun. Blood pressure, normal.

May 19

On three occasions I asked the prison directors to let me call home to inquire about my son Gabriel's operation. I was not allowed to do so, although they all promised. I didn't accept dinner.

We were taken out to the yard separately. Normando with an inmate who is serving a life term; Edel and Juan Carlos; Villarreal and Nelson; Próspero and I. They say it's an order from the top.

May 20 (101 Anniversary of Cuba's Independence)

I didn't accept breakfast. I went out to the yard. I alerted my colleagues about the call to my family. I didn't take my medicines (Vitamins C and E). I didn't accept lunch, either. Immediately, Sabino my re-education "counselor" called me to his office. He said he had spoken to my sister Xiomara, that my son's operation had been postponed until June. Don't know the reason. Afterward, we spoke about politics for two hours (at least it seemed we were talking about politics). It is a pity his level of indoctrination. He seems like a good man. About 5 of the afternoon we had a pretty, serene, silvery rain shower (the first May shower here in Boniato); I slipped my hands through the heavy bars to feel the rain). It was as if Nature, with its simple hermeneutics, were saluting the 101 anniversary of the proclamation of the Cuban Republic, while at the same time it wept for these 44 years of imprisonment. I remembered my wife's grandfather's hardware store, nationalized by Castro's government; it was called "*Ferretería 20 de Mayo.*" Normando gave me some candy. I thought about writing some prison chronicles, but it's better to keep a

Diary.

May 21

I feel calmer. I am comforted by the knowledge that Gabriel and the rest of my family are well. Already I fixed it so that the cell doesn't flood. I found two plastic bags and put them between the floor and the cell bars. Sometimes water gets in, but just a bit. With yesterday's rain shower we had some ceiling leaks. They have not changed my mattress. My body aches all over. I hardly sleep, but I won't complain. When I make a decision it will be final. The food is still from Hell. Today a psychologist interviews us. Poor thing! She goes by the manuals and is a bit presumptuous. A hick! She gave us a very basic test, and asked me to draw a person of each sex. I drew some child-like doodles. She wanted to do a personality profile through a word-association game. I had a lot of fun. I constructed philosophical sentences or proverbs (pseudo-philosophical, I should say), and although I was honest, I did make fun of her. They'll have to bring back Sigmund Freud, or at the very least, Pavlov. She is another of the MININT robots, a lieutenant. If they don't have a mind of their own, how do they expect to master the minds of others? I wonder what opinion Dr. Rafael Aviza or Dr. Licea would have of them. I spoke to them about this topic on several occasions. These people have no original thoughts due to so much indoctrination and fear. They are incapable of taking an analytical detour from the immutable truths that are constantly validated by those in power. Power protects them, and it is also theirs. They are more than Aristotelian. They never hear of *mayeutica*, and as for their

heuristics, they are very particular. They cannot see past their referents. I am going to have a lot of fun in the future. My only weapon is this sagacious hoax. I know their weakness: they want me to think they have culture. They don't know what they are up against, although I don't underestimate them. It will be fun. They can pretend like no one can imagine.

Have little news: we still have no access to the newspapers, no radio; no television. Nothing! I am getting used to it. I read almost the whole day. At night it is impossible. There is no light in our cell. I still think War and Peace is a monumental novel. I like Bomarzo again. I read Perfume: The Story of a Murderer and it was good. I was hysterical with *Juegos para mortales* and *El corazón de la serpiente*. It is science fiction from when the Soviets believed in the globalization of Communism. Now that was fiction! I haven't read anything as funny as that. History debunked those writers. Poor things! Who thought it would happen so quickly? I read the Bible a lot; I have a dilapidated copy that someone lent me. I am reading Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, now. It is a pity I have already seen the films. I read also a very interesting book on the Christian idea of the origin of the universe and Man. It's titled *Un creador se preocupa por nosotros* (The Creator Worries about Us). Although it's addressed to the Jehovah's Witnesses, it was interesting. I learned things that are good also for Catholics. Well, I have read more things, but I am not keeping inventory. In the afternoon before I take a shower I exercise. In spite of the terrible food, I stay in shape. I have sunburn. For a week now they have been taking me to the yard at high noon; between the ultraviolet and the infrared

rays, I'll get skin cancer, or end up with Santiago de Cuba color.

My bowel movements are like a nursing baby's. Thank God my family brought me milk, or else I would have died of hunger! My family also had to bring me bed sheets, a blanket, a towel, toothpaste, a mosquito net, etc. Prison provisions consist of a pair of shorts and a sleeveless, collarless shirt. Miguel Hernández was right when he quoted Dante and wrote in his cell: "Abandon all hope." And that was under Franco. If it had been "our guy" he would have died of tuberculosis having written nothing, not even his poem "*La nana de las cebollas*".

But not all is bad. At night I see the stars in between the cell bars... although I also spend my days "looking at the stars", i.e. daydreaming. I think of Cesar Vallejo a lot when he wrote *Trilce* while jailed in Peru. Here the roar doesn't let you think, and one can get very depressed. The best part of the day is when our jailers lend us the sun for an hour and we watch the birds in flight. I didn't accept the food. Disgusting! The hogs would vomit.

May 22

Very interesting: we went out in the sun today with Edel García. I have become his personal psychotherapist. I didn't accept lunch today, either. Disgusting again! Normando Hernández goes from one bout of diarrhea to the next. Próspero Gainza and Antonio Villarreal keep strong. I haven't spoken to Nelson Aguiar. We haven't met up in the yard with Juan Carlos Herrera, the guy from Guantanamo. If Joseíto Fernández knew him he would write another song for him. I have talked to him only through

the cell bars that face the yard. He is an amusing guy. I wonder how the 68 are doing, spread all over the country in other jails? I will hear about them when my relatives come to visit. The other inmates, though we have no contact with them, express their solidarity and criticize the system more than we do. We have chosen to leave it to the world to defend us. Under the pressure of prison almost everything is impossible, although one can always do something. The guards treat us with respect. They do what they are told and I sense that they are afraid.

Already I discovered a way to control the stench from the toilet with an empty plastic oil bottle. I filled it with water and placed it over the nauseous spring; the diameter of the hole and that of the bottle are the same. What a relief! My nose gets a rest, although there are certain times of the day when not even my unusual "toilet stopper" can protect from the noxious fumes. What would my distinguished "colleagues" of the Round Table say if they discovered a prison in the U.S. with these magnificent sanitary conditions? Let us not forget that this jail is over 60 years old. Fidel Castro, Indamiro Restano —and now I— have passed through here. It's a miracle the place has not sunk without a trace in the Puerto Boniato valley.

I refused dinner. Disgusting! Disgusting! I've read all the books I had. At least I have the Bible I borrowed, and my "toilet stopper" stops the rats from parading around my cell.

May 23

124 I went out on the yard. I took my vitamins. Normando gave me candy, again. Captain Vázquez —is that his

name?— is concerned because I keep refusing the food. I said it was very bad. He said I should make an effort. I said it was revolting, and told him to do something about it. He tried to explain the country's predicament. I said I was imprisoned precisely because I wanted to improve the country's predicament. Things could get rough —is it because of the food?— between Vázquez and me. Neither I nor my stomach can handle this garbage. I turned down lunch. Let us not forget my description of this so-called food. Not surprising; if out there, where I am allegedly free, it's the pits, what can we expect in here?

There was slight improvement in the afternoon. I ate the bread —I already described it— and a piece of chicken. Applause: they served cold water! Why not do that every day instead of making us drink from the faucet? Today they gave us that concoction they call coffee. I have thought of the reprisals when these pages are published. I am prepared. If for practicing journalism I was sentenced to 18 years, nothing else can be more unjust or excessive. I watched with amazement the expulsion of Cuban "diplomats" from the U.S. It looks as if they didn't want to follow in Castro's footsteps by imprisoning opposition activists and journalists. One would think that there is space there for people who think and write from a different perspective.

May 24 (Saturday, No sun)

The day is grey and humid. Last night it rained. I finished reading *Till Death Do Us Part*, by John Dickson Carr.

May 31

The early morning hours were filled with anxiety. I was waiting for my family's arrival. It is the first visit that I will have time to really talk to them. What joy! My daughter Tairelsey and my son Gabriel came. How pretty they are! Who do they look like? Truly, I had good taste when I selected their mothers. Yoly is the true heroine. What a great woman! What wives has God granted me! I am so proud of her. I should have never known other women. Sometimes I think I don't deserve her, I think that God has been too generous with me. I will do all that I must to continue to be worthy of her love. Gabriel brought me photos of all the people I love. A certain Moisés from State Security was at the house harassing Yolanda. He threatened her with prison and to take Gabriel away as a "son of the Motherland". How low can a dictatorship sink? They will crash against a wall. Yolanda has an iron will. I never wanted to involve her in my ideas or activities, but these thugs won't take into account that all she is doing is defending her husband from injustice. It is good that the world knows what's going on. The cruelty of tyrants has no limits.

The visit was stimulating. And what a surprise when I returned to my cell: they had changed my torn, dirty, hard mattresses for another made of foam rubber. My bones will get a break! Ah, my old, old, tired bones! I didn't sleep well. There's too much heat, too many mosquitoes, too many ideas and memories crowding my head. I shared the food my family brought me with Próspero and Normando. Morale is high. The other inmates keep showing their solidarity and the guards continue to treat us

with respect.

Tomorrow I will try to write to my brothers, Darío and Arturo, to my friends Ernestico and Oscar Mario, to my friends Anita, Betty and Maité. Writing letters keeps my love for people alive, amidst all the misery I see in this place. The guards inspected all the letters I wrote and sent. Such respect for human privacy!

June 1

Since I have photos of the people I love, every morning I greet them. Afterward, I say the Lord's Prayer and read some passages from the Bible. Then I read literature. I am almost finished reading *A Personal Matter*, by Japanese author Oë Kenzaburo. It's an existentialist novel *a la* Camus about the aftereffects of the atomic explosion at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It's a good novel, but a bit sordid for my taste. Thank God that Yoly brought me some books. I have reading material for at least a month. Among the books she brought me are the complete works of Yeats, an Irish poet I admire a lot. What a pity not to have Quevedo, so the two of us could have some fun.

I indulged in a small pleasure today. I wore a pair of brand new jockey shorts that Yoly brought me. Very sexy! I could do a strip tease to the tune of *Patricia*. The other advantages resulting from their visit: I can drink coffee (Yoly brought me instant); I can combat the stench (Yoly brought air freshener); I can clean my cell (Yoly brought me a floor mop); I can write (Yoly brought me more paper); I can eat (Yoly brought me plenty of goodies); I can live (Yoly brought me her love and my children). If it weren't for Castro, I could say I was happy. It has been a better

Sunday than previous ones. It was cloudy in the morning, but it didn't rain. It got very hot. I know nothing of the prison food since yesterday.

June 2

I woke up with many longings. I thought of my customary first phrase in the morning: "Pucha, give me a little coffee." When I realized Yoly wasn't there, I made myself some instant coffee. I drank it. I smoked a cigarette. I prayed and read a passage from the Bible on Jesus. I finished *A Personal Matter*. It has a beautiful ending. Man's love for his descendants wins. The novel is a good platform for the fight against nuclear proliferation. I didn't eat any prison food today, either. I think I will not eat it while the provisions Yoly brought me last. They took me to the yard by myself under the midday sun. They took our picture again today, and the military doctor checked us with the stethoscope. I continue to have high blood pressure. They gave us shots against the leptospirosis and meningo-encephalitis. It was about time. There are rats all over, not to mention other insects. *Gusanos*, true *gusanos*, there are seven of us. I hope we don't get annoying reactions from the vaccines. All that's left for them to do to us is sew a license plate on our asses. We are so dangerous! It rained. The hill I see from my west window was beautiful engulfed by all that grey. Ha! I say "west window" as if I had another one. My cell is like Polyphemus: it has a single eye to the world, and the world for her ends on that barren hill that's been felled without mercy. The lightning storm was worse than rain itself. It left a cold mist that cooled the afternoon. It was too hot. Morale among the

“Boniato Seven” remains high. Nelson and I crossed paths at the photo-and-checkup session. We hugged each other. Villarreal, Normando, Juan Carlos Herrera (who suffers from vitiligo) and I shout to each other across the yard that flanks their windows. In the evening I got a headache. I took Tylenol. I fell asleep late.

June 3

My arm hurts a little. It must be the vaccine from yesterday. How good it feels to have coffee! I drank it. Too bad I had no hot water. It would taste better. I prayed and read a passage from the Bible, about Peter resurrecting Dorca from the dead and his trip to Cornelius’s house, the Italian captain. Then I started re-reading Carpentier’s short stories. Yoly brought them to me. I could not stop thinking about the afternoon I met Baguer. It was at the tea room over at the Union of Journalists, 23rd Street and Avenue I. I was a newcomer to Havana and my mentors —*mis cicerones*— were Raúl Rivero and Bernardo Marques. Raúl was then Director of Public Relations and Information at the Union of Writers and Artists. He was a celebrity. Bernardo was a staff writer at Bohemia Magazine. We arrived and there was a commotion in the room. All of Raúl’s ass kissers got up to greet him. Among them was “Mr. Beret” himself, Néstor Baguer. At that time Baguer lavished all kinds of invitations on Raúl, wining and dining him in order to get Raúl to publish his [poorly written] book about poet and journalist José Z Tallet. In the end, Baguer got Raúl to publish the book at the UNEAC publishing house. When we sat at the table, “Mr Beret” —a consummate opportunist— managed to sit on the fourth chair.

Raúl introduced us: "This is Néstor Baguer, journalist and member of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language." The old man –he was already an old man— greeted me with a courtly gesture. I knew that the real member of the Academia was Dulce María Loynaz; but in those days it was dangerous to speak her name. But good, in the absence of Dulce María Loynaz, Baguer was the next best thing for a literary afternoon. What a fiasco! The old man feigned such Hispanicity that he seemed more Spanish than Cervantes. He even pronounced the "z" with ridiculous affectation. I don't know how the conversation veered toward Carpentier, and that's when I saw right through this "academic genius." His sole contribution to the conversation was to say that Carpentier spoke with a French accent, reason enough to not like him. Of course, the old man didn't know that Carpentier suffered from a speech impediment. I realized he had nothing to say about Alejo. I provoked Bernardo. I asked him if he considered that the beautiful and passionate Sofía in *The Age of the Enlightenment* seemed too French. Bernardo bellowed, and with his squinty eyes and red cheeks he answered: "Sofía is as French as Ti Noel in *The Kingdom of This World*." Raúl, who didn't want to miss out on the prank, added: "She is as Parisian as the son of Salvador Golomón in *Concierto Barroco*." The old man spoke very little afterward. We all realized that Baguer had barely read the flap notes of Carpentier's books. Raúl then made an ominous joke: "Baguer: for your report today, remember that Vázquez is spelled with "z". We finished the tea and rum and we left. What memories! Some day I will take time to write them, and I will calmly recreate all their charm. Maybe I can

write a third of *Memorias de la Plaza* if this cell doesn't destroy my brain.

The rest of the day has been tedious, long. If I only had a typewriter! Man cannot live by readings alone. Sometimes I get impatient waiting for the Interior Ministry to lend me an hour of sun. The yard is a good interlude to the despair that such small lodgings can cause. It alleviates the nose, warms the bones, energizes the muscles, it's therapy for the nerves. This is truly h-Orrio-ble. Norges Cervantes, a blind inmate who has been here for over four years, rants against the guards. Alberto Díaz Sifonte, a young man from Morón who's about 24 years old, is on death row for staging a massive break-out at Ciego de Avila Prison, screams at the top of his lungs 'cause they are taking him to the hospital. (Several guards were killed during that break-out). A gay man sings out a tune imitating Shakira; an inmate near Normando, by the front cells near the corridor (Normando occupies cell number 2) bangs on the steel gate of his cell hoping that some guard will heed his request for an analgesic. It's like Dante's inferno; I have to make a superhuman effort to concentrate on reading. How many jails are there in Cuba? What is the total inmate population in this country? I have really thought that if education were inversely proportionate to the number of jails and inmates, why, with the way the Cuban government shows off its education system, there shouldn't be any jails or prisoners. Something is wrong, but I have no data to prove it. What I do know, from the small sample I've seen, is that both the penal population and the prison guards exhibit poor cultural levels and a poor education, which is something else entirely.

Sabino, my re-education “counselor,” brought me the magnetic cards for the telephone. Yoly had given him money so he could buy them for me. He said he still didn’t know the date of the marital visit, which we are trying to have earlier due to my son Gabriel’s imminent operation. On the day of visitation (May 31), I suggested to Yoly that she and our son travel to the United States to have the operation there. Both of them said no. They don’t want to travel without me. Our son was very funny: “Daddy, they’ll have to fry me here with you!” I held back the tears. He was teary-eyed when he saw me, and I made a joke about having some dust in his eye. He smiled and changed his expression. But, when he said those words to me, it was I who wanted to cry. He makes me so proud, I was deeply touched. I made an effort to control the “dust” in my eye.

At night before going to sleep I thought about the methods employed by the secret police. I learned that they went to the neighborhood and to Gabriel’s school. They can’t use what they know about me to slander the dissident movement. I know that the neighbors spoke well about me; it couldn’t have been otherwise. I know that they got the same answer at my son’s school, maybe better than what they anticipated. It’s not coincidence that my two oldest kids are two brilliant university graduates. When will they stop trying to demonstrate to the world that opposition activists are morally deviant or social misfits? How far can their own lack of values take them?

June 4

I woke up with stamina. I took down the mosquito net (that Yoly brought me). I organized my prisoner’s quar-

ters. I cleaned up. I prayed. I read the parable of the butler who abused his master's trust, and how Jesus explained to his disciples that one cannot serve God and wealth. The more I read the Bible the more I think no wiser book can be written, unless God himself dictates it. How much nonsense results from writing without a divine mandate; how exaggerated is our tendency to believe ourselves apostolic when we write about truths we think are eternal. Somebody said it before me: human stupidity has no limits.

It's been two months since the farcical trial that sentenced me to 18 years in prison. The court room seemed like a television studio, nothing close to a court. It is a pity they haven't been able to show the videos on the Round Table. Forget it! The virility of independent Cuban journalists is not what they want to flaunt on television. It looks like I messed up the script they had prepared. Some day I will talk about "the trial." For now, some short notes will have to do. That wasn't even a skillfully conducted trial. It was a military order the State tried to legitimize with the help of lackeys that are a disgrace to jurisprudence. A ruler that must resort to such treachery to remain in power is in very bad shape. I felt pity for the defense lawyers, bearing witness of their revolutionary zeal so as not to end up on trial themselves. Their main preoccupation was to prove they were revolutionaries even though they were defending us. What a shame! Now I can say, like T.S. Eliot: "April is the cruelest month." For me, April 4 is terrifying. It was April 4 when the Union of Pioneers was founded. That's how it was called when I was a child. My mother hit me on the head 18 times for joining the pioneers without her approval. This past April 4 I was sentenced to

18 years in prison for “writing without approval.” The first time, I was a child; this time, I am practically an old man. Either punishment doesn’t give good results, or I am too stubborn. It’s a miracle I have not become an unyielding anarchist. I still believe in democracy, although I haven’t lived in a democracy in my whole life. Maybe before I die I will help bring democracy to my country.

Today I obtained—for the modest price of a package of cigarettes—the list of inmates with whom I share this experience. With such a list in hand we can arrive at some conclusions. Take note:

Cell 1: Alfredo Rondón Duarte. 29 years old. Murder. Pending. Capital punishment.

Cell 2: Normando Hernández. 33 years old. CR (counterrevolutionary). In reality, an independent journalist. 25 years.

Cell 3: Norges Cervantes Doscal. 36 years old. Murder. Pending. Capital punishment. Blind for the last 4 years.

Cell 4: Fernando Núñez Guerrero. 37 years old. Murder. Life imprisonment.

Cell 8: Francisco Portuondo Medina. 37 years old. Murder. Pending. Capital punishment.

Cell 13: Lamberto Hernández Plana. 34 years old. 12 years.

Cell 14: Próspero Gainza. 44 years old. CR (counter-revolutionary). In reality, a peaceful opposition activist. 25 years.

Attachments

Cell 10: Lorenzo Boll Reliz. 36 years old. Murder. Life imprisonment.

Cell 17: Urbano Escalona Borba. 26 years old. 8 years. HIV positive.

Cell 18: Andrés Núñez Ramos. 41 years old. Life imprisonment.

Cell 19: Juan Carlos Mores Figuerola. 41 years old. Life imprisonment.

Cell 21: Miguel Quirot Gerón. 20 years old. 8 years. HIV positive.

Cell 16: Yanier Osorio Hernández. 26 years old. Life imprisonment.

Cell 23: Carlos Luis Díaz Fernández. 33 years old. Attempt to leave the country illegally. 8 years.

Cell 25: George Ochoa Leyva. 37 years old. Murder. Pending. Life imprisonment.

Cell 26: René Mustelier Savigne. 32 years old. Pending. Murder. Capital punishment.

Cell 28: Alberto Díaz Pérez. 24 years old. Murder. Capital punishment.

Cell 31: Manuel Vázquez Portal. 51 years old. CR (counterrevolutionary). Independent journalist. 18 years.

Cell 32: Antonio de la Cruz Argote. 37 years old. Forceful robbery. Pending. Life imprisonment.

Cell 36: Ovni Bárzaga good-looking. 29 years old. Murder and forceful robbery. 38 years.

Obvious conclusions:

All the criminals, except me, are younger than Castro's revolution; i.e., they are the children of the Revolution.

This ward is where the most dangerous prisoners are kept, and serves as Death Row.

We are mixed in with inmates who are diagnosed HIV positive, although the cells are isolation cells.

We share recreation time in the yard (with these people). Every day it's someone different.

The name given to this ward is "Boniatico." It is used, as has been noted, for a special regimen: maximum security. Shackles around the ankles and handcuffs for everything: for going to the yard, for making phone calls, for going to the hospital, for taking medicines, etcetera.

What would Felipe Pérez Roque say about all this?

International reaction

"The protection of public liberties and human rights in Cuba is a goal that we all share." **César Gaviria, Secretary General of the Organization of American States.**

"The Cuban State continues with its policy of suppressing groups or individuals that aim to exercise their rights. The Commission expresses its profound preoccupation with these facts which constitute violations on the part of the Cuban authorities of the fundamental rights of the population as outlined in the American Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man." **Inter American Commission on Human Rights.**

"The accusation that they work with the U.S. Interests Section of the United States is only an excuse, since the struggle of dissidents for human rights and democracy is supported by many embassies in Cuba, including some from European countries." **Robert Menard, General Secretary, Reporters without Borders.**

"When violations to human rights are carried out in a serious, massive and systematic way, no matter where it occurs, all the countries of the world worry, and we have a collective special interest to protect them as universal values and principles that govern all nations under the United Nations as one." **Foreign Minister, Nicaragua.**

“The wave of arrests in Cuba is contrary to the principles of freedom of expression, a principle that the European Union is anxious to promoting among non-member countries. The EU condemns the arrests and demands that those individuals considered as prisoners of conscience be freed without delay. The recent events highlight the common position of the EU on Cuba, specifically concerning the call to democratic reform and a greater respect for the human rights.” **The European Union.**

“The Canadian government is extremely worried about this potential reduction of Human Rights and freedom of expression in Cuba, and is profoundly disturbed about the severity of the sentences.” **Bill Graham, Foreign Minister, Canada.**

“The recent trials and sentences imposed on the activists of the opposition and on independent journalists confirm unequivocally that the fundamental principles of democracy and civil liberties — the right to freedom of expression and to political convictions — are systematically violated in Cuba.” **Foreign Minister, Poland.**

“We cannot accept summary executions nor trials that are a farce.” **Foreign Minister, Portugal.**

“Allegedly, the trials that have begun are public, but until now neither the personnel of our embassy nor representatives of other European countries have received permission to attend. This is unacceptable. The government of Sweden condemns the actions of the Cuban authorities and adopts the position that all political prisoners must be freed immediately.” **Anna Lindh, Foreign Minister, Sweden.**

“The recent wave of arrests in Cuba is deplorable. We condemn the absence of fundamental freedoms and rights in Cuba, including freedom of expression, and we call once more on the Cuban government to respect the international norms established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” **Bill Rammell, Minister for Human Rights, United Kingdom (FCO).**

“There are questions about the legality of the summary processes that were closed to the public and to observers, and I make a call for transparency.” **Sergio Vieira de Mello, High Commission for Human Rights, United Nations.**

“I am very concerned because the arrests and the trials represent a serious violation of the rights and principles that were created and that must be defended by the United Nations and UNESCO.” **Koichiro Matsuura, Director General, UNESCO**

“What occurred yesterday is further aggravated by the fact that it transpired without the minimum guarantees of due process. Our country cannot remain indifferent in the presence of summary trials that are far from a true administration of justice. Notwithstanding, the defendants accused of these crimes have the right to a fair trial, to an appropriate defense, and, in the event they are found guilty — to punishment that is proportionate to the crime.” **Government of Chile**

“Undoubtedly the recent events in that country (Cuba) worry us profoundly from the viewpoint of our position on human rights and definitively will have an impact in the decisions

of our country.” Luis Ernesto Derbez, Foreign Relations Minister, Mexico.

“I hope that the international community will condemn these events and that all those who believe in freedom and human rights, and who believe that there should be no tyrants in the world, will do the same.” Mariano Rajoy, First Deputy of the Spanish Prime Minister.

“France is profoundly worried for the reports from Cuba on the arrests of dozens of persons. It seems that the operation has as its objective the many independent journalists, and members of the opposition and scholars that it has arrested for their opinions. Such wave of arrests is contrary to liberty and democratic pluralism, principles that France and the European Union want promote in its relations with other countries.” Foreign Minister, France.

“I am profoundly worried about references of the arrests of Cuban citizens known for their support of the Varela Project, for promoting human rights and for practicing independent journalism.” Jimmy Carter, former U.S. President.

“[We call for] the immediate liberation of all persons who have not given up the exercise of their most fundamental rights.” Lydie Polfer, Secretary of State, Luxembourg.

“In the past decade the OAS has sent more than 40 delegations to observe and validate fair elections in our hemisphere. I know that we all hope for the day that we are sent to observe free elections in Cuba.” Madeleine Albright. Former Secretary of State, United States.

“By their devastating nature, the harsh measures seemed designed not only to repress the dissenting voices, but to refuse the very possibility of a civil independent society. The denial of basic and political rights is written unto Cuban laws. The legislation of the country restricts tightly the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, association, freedom to organize and of the Press; the courts lack independence and impartiality and criminal procedures violate the rights of defendants to due process of law.” **José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director, Americas Division, Human Rights Watch.**

“These persons, whom Amnesty International fears have been arrested only because they peacefully exercised their fundamental liberties, have been condemned after clearly unfair trials done expediently and secretly. (This is) a giant step backward for human rights.” **Amnesty International.**

“We are shaken by the knowledge that many Cuban independent journalists we consider colleagues and friends have been subjected to intimidation, house searches and seizures, arrests and incarceration.” **American Society of Newspaper Publishers?**

Chilean writer Carlos Franz confirmed his refusal of the “José Martí” Prize, awarded by Prensa Latina, in protest for persecution and imprisonment of dissidents, particularly of journalists, in Cuba:

“I could not accept a journalism prize, a prize to freedom of expression, when among the 78 dissidents sent to prison for 30 years in Cuba, there are numerous writers and at least 20 jour-

nalists. It is impossible for me to accept a prize of this nature in these circumstances."

Mr. Franz, in a letter addressed to Prensa Latina, wrote: *"The day there is a free press in Cuba maybe I will have the opportunity to criticize from their pages, and close to other Cuban voices, the affronts of any type of imperialism. For now, I thank the jury for selecting me, but the very name of José Martí which you invoke in your prize, does not allow me to accept it."*

Note of the Editor: Six of the 27 journalists condemned in April 2003 were released between June and November 2004: Oscar Espinosa Chepe, Edel Jose Garcia, Jorge Olivera, Raul Rivero and Manuel Vazquez Portal. Rivero and Vazquez received the required exit visas and now are living in Madrid, Spain and Miami, USA, respectively. Also were released the pacific activists Osvaldo Alfonso, Margarito Broche, Orlando Fundora, Marcelo Lopez, Roberto de Miranda, Martha Beatriz Roque, Julio Valdes Guevara and Miguel Valdes Tamayo.

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In Cuba, 2003 began with an unprecedented wave of repression perpetrated by the government of Fidel Castro. Behind the facade of a crackdown on drug trafficking and similar widely repudiated crimes, hundreds of men and women, laborious builders of an expanding informal economical sector, went to prison. This repressive campaign culminated with the arrest of 75 members of the Cuban peaceful opposition and independent journalists, who where quickly condemned to long prison terms of 6 to 28 years.

Repression in Cuba: A battle against the people, contains three parts: Repression against civil society (Rosa Berre), a detailed summary of what happened in 2003; Cycles of terror: control and repression (Jose L. Solis), an account of previous cycles of terror; and testimonial accounts and documents of the repressive wave of 2003.

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