

INDEPENDENT FROM WHAT?

néstor baguer sánchez galarraga

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The Dean is writing a book. He asks us to hasten the interview, for he has written a mere 50 pages and, at his age, has very little time to spare. In August he will turn 82 and hopes to tell, in his own words, everything he experienced within the world of Cuban “political dissidence”, a world he got to know as well as the palm of his hand, and of which he can doubtless furnish us with astonishing anecdotes.

Néstor Baguer Sánchez Galarraga, perhaps the oldest active agent of Cuba’s State Security, wants to avoid an introduction in an interview where time promises to fly. Here it goes, then, without much further ado.



AGENT OCTAVIO

Why did you choose the name of Octavio?

I chose it after Octavio Sánchez Galarraga, an uncle of mine who would have loved doing that sort of work.

What did your uncle do?

Octavio Sánchez Galarraga was a lawyer; he defended people of modest means. Another renowned Sánchez Galarraga was my uncle Gustavo, who was a poet and a journalist, one of the few that stood up against Machado's dictatorship. He gave a speech at the Vedado Tennis Club (now the José Antonio Echevarría Social Club), speaking against Machado, on a December 31, and the dictator called my aunt María, the mother of the Galarraga family. "Listen, see what you can do with that boy, because Crespo — the thug — is after him, and I can't always protect him."

There's something interesting. The Sánchez Galarraga family is of Basque origins. That's why we've preserved the beret, like the one I have on.

Luis Ortega and Max Lesnik, two Cuban-American journalists who live in Miami, were friends of your father and told us that the last time they saw him was in Mexico.

Yes, my father went into exile because his second wife — my mother had divorced him when I was two years old — had a hysterical fit and decided to leave Cuba. My father went after her. My brother emigrated along with him

Your father was also a journalist...

He wrote a column for *El Crisol*, which was a newspaper put out at noon. The press was on the corner of Manrique and Virtudes, in Centro Habana. He wrote reviews of shows. His name was Francois Baguer.

When did you start out as a journalist?

I wrote my first article when I was 14 years old. A number of students and I founded the magazine *Siboney*. Of course, I was in charge of the entertainment section.

During your interview with the prosecutor that was held before the trial and was aired on television, you said that you owed your anti-imperialist views to your family.

If there's someone who taught me to be that way it was my father. He used to quarrel with my uncle Gustavo Sánchez Galarraga, who

wrote for the society pages. During the days of the Spanish Republic, Gustavo would say that if they wanted to kick him around, that they do it with 50-dollar boots. My father would answer that he preferred being kicked around with sneakers, because they would hurt far less.

My father was the first Cuban journalist to be given a cultural award by the Soviet Union.

Before the triumph of the Revolution?

Yes. When the first Soviet movies were brought over, my father wrote excellent reviews. When everyone was saying that they were garbage, he was saying that they were works of art and that people should see them. The embassy gave him a cultural award.

What happened to your father?

Just think of it: the man, at his age, he had to work as a reporter in the Mexico City airport in order to survive. He would go to the airport at around three or four in the morning to meet with people. Nevertheless, he had been an extremely renowned professional in Cuba, a master journalist. I wrote him a letter, but my brother returned the sealed envelope to me, so I know that my father never found out what I wrote him. He died in 1986 and I got the news a year later.

He had no need to leave Cuba. He had two pensions, one as an officer in the Navy and another as a journalist. He lived alone with his wife. He had both of us to help him, and that would have been more than enough to lead a perfectly comfortable life, but that woman's ambitions were something terrible.

What were you doing at the time of the triumph of the Revolution?

I lived in the Mulgoba district, in Santiago de Las Vegas, which was a rich people's neighborhood at the time. They put me in charge of organizing the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs). Then came the Bay of Pigs invasion, and when I reported to the Militias, the officer in charge told me that I was needed here, that I should stay behind and carry out political functions, founding more CDRs and helping wherever help was needed. They needed someone trustworthy at the José Martí Airport, so they put me to work there, to guard it as a militia member.

Afterwards, I was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, where they needed a journalist. The Ministry put out a daily bulletin that had a list of prices, financial analyses, economic plans.

You have a degree in journalism?

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Yes. When I started out as a journalist, there were no schools of journalism here. I worked at *El Crisol* and I wrote. That was my school. Then the Marquez Sterling School was founded, and my father was a teacher there, but I had already gotten a taste of journalism and no one could tear me away from the presses. Writing was my thing.

When the Revolution came to power, I got a call from Elio Constantín, who was an extraordinary sports journalist and the secretary of the commission established to validate the degrees of journalists. He asked me if I wanted to go to school or take an exam. I told him to give me a full examination. No mercy. I took the exam the following day and they gave me the degree.

Nonetheless, in a Reuters dispatch that was published in The New York Times this past April 10, they refer to you as an "alleged journalist." "Alleged journalist Néstor Baguer" were the exact words... How strange! When I was a "dissident", the American press never thought of calling me an "alleged" journalist or an "alleged" dissident... No one would have thought of it. I'm going to give you a copy of my degree, so you can publish it in the book and dispel all doubts.

When did you start working for Cuban State Security?

At the time when I started working for the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

How did it happen?

It was an institution that was much sought after by the enemy, as you can well imagine. I had done a number of articles on Cuban products. For example, a study aimed at managing the export of Cuban bee honey. I studied the markets, the cost. In Cuba, honey can be produced year-round; the finest honey in the world can be made here.

I was all caught up with my work on bee honey, when one fine day they started talking about the need to dredge Cienfuegos Bay

and Havana Bay, and to buy the necessary equipment. It wasn't easy to get our hands on it, after the U.S. had declared the blockade against Cuba. But I had an English neighbor who facilitated the purchase.

Armando Pérez Roura

Born in Ceiba Mocha, Matanzas, and currently residing in Miami. He was a spokesman of the Presidential Palace during the Prío government, and kept this post during the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. He was also a newscaster for *Radio Reloj Nacional*. During that same period, he was Dean of the School of Newscasters until 1961.

In 1969, he sought asylum and took up permanent residence in the United States.

He was a member of the terrorist-linked counterrevolutionary organization Alpha 66, and a correspondent of CORU. He was also one of the main directors of radio station WRYZ, or *Radio Centro*, which was bought by the CIA to broadcast anti-Cuban programs.

He traveled to Venezuela on a number of occasions to interview the terrorists Orlando Bosch Ávila and Luis Posada Carriles, who were in prison for their participation in the blowing up of a Cubana Airlines plane over Barbados in 1976. He was involved in Posada's first prison escape plan of 1982.

He also had ties with dictator Anastasio Somoza.

In 1984, he joined the counterrevolutionary organization known as the Cuban Liberation Movement (Movimiento Libertador Cubano).

Currently, he is the director in chief of the station *Radio Mambi* in Miami, accused of using "laundered" money, due to his son's known involvement in drug trafficking. The latter was caught attempting to enter a shipment containing millions of dollars worth of cocaine into the state of Florida in the early 1980s.

He is the head of the terrorist organization known as Cuban Unity (Unidad Cubana), which has close ties to the Council for Cuba's Freedom (Consejo por la Libertad de Cuba), composed of terrorists from the paramilitary arm of the Cuban-American National Foundation (Fundación Nacional Cubano Americana, FNCA).

Who was he?

The manager, in Cuba, of the Lloyds Company, from London. He was a very English Englishman. Every afternoon, when I got home from work, he would say to me: "Bager, your whiskey." It was an unflinching ritual. It couldn't be at a quarter after five, nor at a quarter to five, but at five o'clock.

When he heard me say that a dredger was needed, and that both Holland and Japan had refused to sell us one due to pressures from the United States, he proposed that we buy it in England. "That sort of dredger is built in Scotland," he said, and he gave me a card and even paid for my trip. He asked me for a commission. And that's how it happened.

I took off for London with a fellow who worked for State Security. When we got there, we met a very friendly gentleman staying at the same hotel. He sat beside me. It was customary for regular visitors to be introduced to one another at the bar, and since I always sat in the same spot and he would always choose the same seat, they introduced us.

He was an American; without much preamble he started to ask me about my business there. His insistence caught my attention, and I started to ask around. I found out he had gone there precisely because of my visit.

That English company is the one that sets the prices for export?
It is one of the largest companies in the country. I managed to get them to accept a seven rather than a five-year payment period for the Cuban government. I left for Scotland, to the shipyard, but they informed me that they could sell absolutely nothing to Cuba, for they would be placed on a blacklist. We proposed opening a London-based company with my English neighbor as head, and me as secretary. They agreed to that.

The following evening I ran into the American. He introduced himself as a CIA agent, shook my hand and said, "You won, I lost. I respect you for that." That's how the famous dredger found its way to Cuba.

Of course, when I got here I reported the incident to State

Security, and ever since that time — the year was 1969 — I've been collaborating with them. I haven't stopped doing it since then.

You continued working for the Ministry of Foreign Trade?

No, I transferred over to the radio station *COCO*, as head journalist. Afterwards, I worked for *Radio Metropolitana*. When I began work in defense of the Spanish language, they called me up from the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* to write a column, to which I gave that very title: "In Defense of our Language." After this I worked at the newspaper *Trabajadores* and at *Radio Habana Cuba* and the *Cadena Habana* radio network, and led a very active life in journalism, until I declared myself a "dissident".

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Why did you declare yourself a "dissident"?

State Security asked me to establish contact with the mercenaries and I went to see Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, who was the window into that world.

How were you received?

I got to his house and when I asked for him his wife asked, "Are you referring to the President?" "Well," I said, "if he's the President of Cuba, all the more reason to talk to him. Tell him that Néstor Baguer is here."

Their Minister of Information...

Who was just starting out, don't forget that... I went into the living room while they went to get the "President", and they brought me a glass of whiskey and a tray of seasoned olives. "Damn, they sure live well in the Palace!", I thought.

That was the year 1993...

The worst time of the Special Period, with terrible shortages everywhere. Elizardo came into the living room, he hugged me and told me: "Welcome! We really need you here, because my brother-in-law, Yndamiro Restano, doesn't know how to write, and I need a good journalist to take charge of the Independent Press in Cuba." I accepted on the spot.

Right there and then...

He was desperate. He suggested that I go on a scholarship to

Costa Rica first, to a certain institute of journalism there, I don't recall the name. "You can go there for two or three months, and we'll cover all of your expenses." I answered: "Look, Elizardo, after so many years of work for the Cuban press, I can't accept being sent to Costa Rica to learn journalism. Costa Rica is a piece of shit, I know the place. Send someone else there." That's what he did, and the man he sent there didn't come back.

He then told me that he would find someone to buy my articles first. He spoke of a magazine that was published in Puerto Rico, *Disidente*, where he had invested some money. He is a partner in that business. Afterwards, when we were closer, he asked me to go there everyday, whenever I wanted to, to read the latest news and get suggestions from him.

Did you do it?

No. I wasn't going to let them do with me what they did to the other poor bastards...

What did they do?

They used them for serving coffee more than writing.

I told Elizardo that I couldn't take a bus to his house everyday, that I would write the articles and that he should tell me who to send them to. That they could pay me afterwards and everyone would be happy. Do you know what he answered me? "We can't work it that way, because I need to have everything under control." "Well, Elizardo, then I think we can't go on working together."

Elizardo is a sharp guy.

Yes. He was a philosophy professor at the university. He has a speech which he hasn't changed in 20 odd years. He doesn't touch it. He's a real snake; he declares in public that he doesn't take money from the Americans, forgetting to mention: "unless they send it from Europe." The people who send him the most money are the Swedes, the French and the Spanish, and he's never been short of money. He has an ego that's out of control, he's someone who flies in and out of the country as he pleases. He's a very special case.

He had a public “falling out” with the Americans over issues of funding. You have to hear him and his buddies go on about that. It’s circus, my friends, with puppets and all.

You lost touch with Elizardo, then...

Not completely, but I managed to tear loose from his grasp because I already had links in Miami. The other “journalists” would tell me: “Listen, don’t be stupid, you’ll get to eat anything you want there, and drink whiskey.”

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Where were those things coming from?

From the Spanish embassy, they send him a hundred dollars’ worth of food every month, and I know this, because on one occasion, when I was there, the car from the embassy came with the month’s quota. The bag came with a number of bottles of cognac and very fine Spanish wine. Month after month. He’s never lacked for anything since he became a “dissident”. He also receives money from other places.

For example...

From the Swedish Liberal Party, who were also over at my place. I don’t recall the names at the moment, but I have all of their cards.

Speaking of which, I have a very interesting anecdote about the Liberal Party. One day, Osvaldo Alfonso, who is now in jail, came over to my place to ask me to join the Liberal Party. I asked him: “Tell me something, are you from the Cuban Liberal Party? With all its tradition?” “Yes, of course...” he told me. “Damn, the party of Machado and all his murderers?” “No, no, hold on,” he answered. “We have to get something clear: Machado was a Party mistake.” I broke out laughing: “Give me a break, man, I don’t buy it. Look, if you’re from the Liberal Party, then I’m from the Conservative Party. So take a hike...”

When did you establish the Cuban Association of Independent Journalists (APIC)?

With Elizardo. I got congratulations from Miami, tokens of love and affection. They thought I was the bravest of patriots. Reporters Without Borders praised me everywhere and sent me money. That was incredible. As soon as news got out that I was in charge of the Agency and was handing out money, the “journalists” started

descending on my house like ants. Do you know I had no idea that Cuba had so many “journalists” hidden in the most unlikely jobs and professions? I had a correspondent who was a railway worker in Cienfuegos, who had spent his life hammering away at the railway lines. He’s in jail now.

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But they know how to write, no doubt, because there are so many newspapers and websites that publish their articles?

If they made “spelling” errors while talking, can you imagine how well they wrote? It was very painful for me to have to fix up some of that rubbish.

Why did they approach an agency that was allegedly made up of serious journalists?

There were two main things that attracted them.

Firstly, the visa they would automatically obtain. It sufficed to have been writing in the agency for a month to be put on the first plane to the United States. They were spared the line-ups, the unpleasant moments and the humiliation one endures in the U.S. Interests Section.

Secondly, the pay. Something from 20 to 40 dollars a month, just for twiddling their thumbs. There was a time when so many people showed up that I could hardly manage it. During that time, Raúl Rivero decided to leave the APIC and found his own agency.

How was your relationship with Rivero?

It was very good. I felt for Raúl Rivero. He was the one true journalist that I knew in that world, a man who had had prestige at one point or other, because of his poetry, because he had fought at the Bay of Pigs. A man who owed his life to the Revolution.

In what sense?

I was the closest friend that he had and we knew each other well. He was an alcoholic and suffered greatly. Everyone turned their backs on him, he had no money, his house fell down. He became seriously ill, and he was placed in a hospital under the Revolution. He got to be so well that he quit drinking.

And what happened to him?

He was bought. Raúl Rivero has thousands of dollars deposited in the United States thanks to the awards that he's received. All of the leaders of subversive groups also have money outside of Cuba, because they obviously wanted to keep it safe, at a distance from the greed of others and from the interventions of the government, for reasons I needn't explain. Even a child can realize that the life of a "dissident" in Cuba is great business.

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How would you receive the money?

Through Transcard; I refused to receive anything from those messenger-people that are continuously coming over from Miami or other places. That's why I was the one who received the least money and gifts.

Why?

My dissident articles were different from others. My articles were respectful. For example, I would refer to the Commander in Chief by saying, "the President of Cuba, Fidel Castro," while others would refer to him as "the dictator" or this and that.

Even the Americans were surprised. "Mr. Baguer, you don't hate Fidel Castro," they would tell me, and I would answer them, "I have no reason to hate him."

Who among the Americans told you that?

The one who was in charge of the press and cultural affairs at the time, the fat guy, Gene Bigler. He became a very good friend of mine. When he left, Bigler wrote me from Rome, telling me that should I need anything I should write him immediately.

What did you answer Bigler, when he made these kinds of comments on your articles?

That I was a member of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, and I couldn't bring myself to write insults. I wasn't prepared to have them expel me from there.

An "independent" journalist pointed out that I never used the word *gendarme* to refer to policemen. What a blockhead! "Look, buddy, they have *gendarmes* in France; here we have policemen," and I would write it like that.

What sorts of news would the correspondents send to the APIC?
If I hadn't taken it to heart so much, I think I would have had a lot more fun. I remember a day, for instance, when one of them called me on the phone to dictate an alleged news story, it was very urgent. The man wrote something along these lines: "In Manzanillo, there are 10,000 people on a street corner protesting because a family is being evicted from their home." I remember yelling at him, "Look, hold on a second. What street corner in Manzanillo, or anywhere else for that matter, can fit a group of 10,000 people? And also, why are they doing it?" And he answers: "See, this family wanted to live in Manzanillo and this other one in Bayamo, and they started moving furniture from one place to the other, without papers or anything." "Please, my good man, tell me of a place in the world where you can exchange homes without legal papers. Look, I'm sorry, but bring me another story." It was like that every single day.

Can you think of another example?

A person showed up telling me that his father had told him that a cousin of his had been beaten up in jail. I asked him if his father had seen this, and he told me no, he had heard it from someone. I told him, "The first thing a journalist has to do is verify the source," and I sent him on his way.

You never caught anyone's attention with those opinions of yours?
They saw no connection between the government and myself, and I did make criticisms, but very elegantly and correctly. That's why journalists kept leaving for other agencies, which spread like fungi, where they made different kinds of attacks and were, because of this, better paid.

Around that time, we got the news that the U.S. government was going to hand out much greater sums of money through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). I continued to work earning a modest 50 dollars a month, as head of the APIC, but part of that money started coming in and people became interested in it, especially those in Miami. I can tell you that 80 percent of those millions of dollars stayed in Florida.

You know this?

Of course I do. The stream of money would shrink from Miami to

Havana, and from here to the provinces also. Our representatives would keep the biggest piece of the pie, then came the heads of subversive groups, then the others.

In order to get a hold of the hundred and so dollars that *Cubanet* owed me, I had to go to the U.S. Interests Section to denounce the head of the agency, who had pocketed the journalists' money.

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Did it work?

Did it work? The Public Diplomacy officer at the Interests Section called them on the phone and gave them a deadline to pay up the debt. They tried making excuses on the other end, saying they had no money at the time... The man from the Interests Section gave them an order: "You have to pay Baguer immediately and cancel the debt. I'm going to call him at the end of the month to see that he's gotten the money." That did it.

Cubanet

From the time of its creation in 1996, *Cubanet* has been a website devoted to publishing the "journalistic works" created by counterrevolutionaries, addressing the purported violation of human rights in Cuba. From the start, it has received federal funding from the U.S. government through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). In 1999, it received 99,000 dollars for that fiscal year.

In the year 2000, it began to experience financial difficulties, and at the end that year, 15 "journalists" were expelled from the website, resulting in conflicts between the agency's organizers and the counterrevolutionaries, combined with a number of scandals over the lack of "professionalism" of the articles published.

In August of 2002, *Cubanet* was struck by a financial crisis and could not keep up its former publishing capacity, having to suspend the payment of the "salaries" of 25 "independent journalists" in the City of Havana who had already published their articles.

This situation led to quarrels among its collaborators, who registered their complaints with the U.S. Interests Section.

How did you become involved with Cubanet?

It's a culinary story. Rosa Berre, who invented *Cubanet*, would record the articles that I dictated to her. She had the phone in the kitchen of her tiny apartment. She would receive the stories while she cooked and would pass them on later. She led a very modest life, and at first received a very small commission. One day she tells me she is moving to the heart of Miami, because she had bought two apartments there. One was to be her place of residence and the other would house the *Cubanet* offices. She was also able to buy a car that cost thousands of dollars, all of this with her modest "savings", poor girl, she was very thrifty, you know.

Did her work conditions change after this?

Yes, because by the looks of it she received more money as more and more people joined the cause of "independence." It was so easy to earn a few dollars that you would hear of a new press agency and people quarreling over money almost every day. The people that stole the most money were the ones from the *New Cuban Press* (Nueva Prensa Cubana), *Free Press* (Prensa Libre), and Rosa Berre. All of them were Cuban and they were stealing money from the journalists.

I remember a young man who had worked at a printing press and pretended to be a journalist. He got to be head of an agency, then grabbed six month's pay and disappeared. There was a change in the payments around that time, also. From the 50 dollars that they were paying, it went down to 15 or 20, even when more or less the same sums of money were coming in for the "bosses" to distribute. They would get 50 dollars to give out and would hand over only 20. It was shameless theft. And everyone knew about the quarrels that went on because of this.

Anyone could open a press agency?

More than 30 of them were opened. The more capable you were with your insults, the higher you were on the scale of values in Miami and the Interests Section. The more groups of alleged journalists, the better. The more they yelled, the better.

You would review the articles and then send them to Cubanet?
That's why I gradually lost all of my clients. Anyone with a minimum of education and professional experience who was forced to spend a half hour with those people would end up sick, my man.

What was the reaction of the Interests Section?

If no one like myself went over there and put up a fight, they would turn a blind eye. They were more concerned with other things.

With what, for instance?

With the conspiracy to promote the "persecuted independent journalists" before international public opinion, and with supplying them with awards and the best of possible conditions to work in. And with ensuring that they weren't short of visitors and diplomats they could cry to.

Tell us about some of those visits...

The year 1995 was very intense, for instance. I have more than 60 activities I participated in jotted down in my notebook, all of them promoted by the U.S. Interests Section, which acted as a public relations center, to facilitate encounters with American visitors of every ilk, and with the representatives of the international media and journalists' organizations.

For example...

January 15: A meeting in the house of the head of the U.S. Interests Section, Joseph Sullivan. An interview with American editors.

July 20: A meeting with the American delegation that attended the immigration talks. I won't tell you what we discussed, because it's obvious.

August 12: A meeting in diplomat Gene Bigler's house, where a group of officials from the U.S. Interests Section are given details on the creation of the College of "Independent Journalists", which had been founded in my home some days earlier.

August 30: a meeting with the State Department Committee on Immigration Issues. It was announced that 20,000 visas would be handed out in 1996, distributed in the following manner: 12,000 would be given to regular citizens who requested a visa; 7,000 to

political refugees; and 1,000 to be handled by the U.S. Interests Section.

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September 20: Presentation of a donation from Reporters Without Borders, an organization based in France. Robert Ménard, the secretary-general, and Andrés Buchet presented me with paper, typewriter ribbons, a dozen pens and 1000 dollars to fund my so-called press agency.

September 20: I was summoned by the official Robin Diane Meyer to be reproached, along with Yndamiro Restano, Olance Noguerras, Julio Martínez and others. She was very upset over a document that had been sent to the U.S. Congress without prior consultation with her, which had the signatures of 127 Cuban citizens.

September 27: Cuban-American journalist Roberto Fabricio, who was then the executive secretary of the Freedom of Press Committee of the Inter-American Society of Journalism (SIP), met with a group of people that included myself. This man had been director of *El Nuevo Herald*. We met in the home of Yndamiro Restano's parents, and he asked us to draft a fierce denunciation he could formally present to the SIP.

November 7: Robert Witajewski and Robin D. Meyer call us to meet in the home of the former to explain why some of us hadn't signed the Cuban Council project, to which we answered, with the best face we could muster, that we were "independent journalists" and we couldn't get mixed up in politics. She thought this was reasonable.

I won't go on with this because this interview will become very boring. I had to visit the U.S. Interests Section so many times that you wouldn't be able to fit all of the meetings in one book. I have to confess one thing: every time I set foot in there, I would ask myself: "What sort of independent journalists are we? Independent from what?"

Ernesto F. Betancourt

He traveled to the United States in 1948 and studied advertising and marketing at the American University of Washington (1953-56). From 1957 to 1958, he was a representative of the 26th of July Movement in Washington, and registered himself with the State Department as a “foreign agent”.

During the first months of the Revolution, he returned to Cuba. He was named Director of Foreign Exchange Control for the National Bank. He decided to return to the United States in 1960.

He worked in the Organization of American States (OAS) for a period of 16 years, where he was given the position of budget administrator. There he met the counterrevolutionary Frank Calzón, with whom he maintains close ties to the present day.

From the time of the creation of the Cuban-American National Foundation (Fundación Nacional Cubanoamericana, FNCA), Betancourt served as an adviser for the organization. In July of 1983, he participated in the Cuba Project conference sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) of the University of Georgetown, in the United States.

In June of 1985, he was named provisional director of *Radio “Martí”*, and was replaced early in the year 2000.

He has devoted himself to drafting memorandums and other defamatory documents aimed against the Revolution and its leaders, and has promoted different campaigns to exacerbate existing tensions between Cuba and the United States, on such sensitive issues as bioterrorism and the alleged threat that Cuba represents for that country.

On a number of occasions he has been quoted as an intelligence analyst.

Talk to us about the last time you set foot in the U.S. Interests Section or its official premises...

The Day of the Cuban Press, on May 14. A workshop was held at James Cason’s home, with all of the “independent journalists”. They paid homage to my career in the “independent press” and gave me a diploma. They had the bad idea of asking me to direct the

discussion on the issue of Ethics. There were representatives of the U.S. government there. I told them that a single conference would not suffice to cover the issue, and that we needed a whole course on ethics, because the vast majority of those gathered there claimed to be journalists and hadn't the slightest bit of education. Their texts were not even up to a sixth-grade standard. I apologize to all children in the sixth grade.

You also set up a section in Cubanet devoted to language issues, no?

I would go out and harvest examples. There were so many atrocities that I had more than enough for my section. They would be presented as though they had been taken from the Cuban press, but in truth they were written by the "independent journalists."

For example, do you know that once I saw a headline that claimed that an earthquake in Turkey had caused enormous destruction in the island of Samoa? The writer had no concept of geography. The island that was destroyed was the Greek island of Samos, the land of Pythagoras. My God, what ignorance!

It's difficult to imagine a member of the Royal Academy stuck with such duties...

Sometimes I would tell my official that nothing could pay for the suffering I had endured listening to those idiots talking and reading their stories and all of the things they did. Listen, not even a fourth-grader could write that badly.

The renowned "independent journalist" Tania Quintero has no idea what it is to write, but if you look her up in American newspapers, she is identified as one of the great, founding members of the "independent press" in Cuba.

There was a person there who was illiterate even in speaking. He was a *santero* (a practitioner of the Afro-Cuban religion *santería*), he lived in San Miguel del Padrón (a neighborhood in Havana) and you should have seen the things he wrote. The saints were definitely not with him. You couldn't even make out what he was saying.

Would the U.S. Interests Section tell you what to write?

They didn't dare do that, because they knew me well.

You would propose the topics, or were they the ones who chose them?

Not me. The U.S. Interests Section chose the topics for the mentally retarded, pseudo-journalists... And not only that, but also, after they were done writing them, before putting them out, they would go to the Interests Section so they could go over them in case there was something in there that was politically inconvenient for them. They would submit them after they had been approved. They complained about censorship in Cuba and I watched them bow down to the censorship of the United States.

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Open Eyes (Ojos Abiertos)

On January 16, 2003, the launching of the book *Ojos Abiertos* was held in the home of Héctor Palacios Ruiz, a member of the Center for Social Studies. The event was attended by a group of counterrevolutionaries and several members of the diplomatic corps accredited in Havana. James Cason, head of the U.S. Interests Section, was the highest ranking diplomat in attendance.

Printed in Mexico in November of 2002 and presented at the Book Fairs in Guadalajara, Mexico and Madrid, Spain, the book is the fruit of a contest sponsored by counterrevolutionary organizations in Miami. It is 248 pages long and gathers the writings of 20 counterrevolutionaries and the works of various Cuban artists residing abroad.

This contest was preceded by another held in the year 2000, marked by scandalous manipulation of the selection and award process, which was overseen by Raúl Rivero, as president of the jury, Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, and Héctor Palacios from the Center for Social Studies. The latter received the top prize.

Between this and the moronic things they were saying, it was all becoming unbearable. The Americans put some effort into raising the standard of the “independent” journalists, who were the butt of jokes and a cause for quarrels within the ranks of the “dissidents”. They proposed to both Raúl Rivero and myself that we establish a school within the U.S. Interests Section. Neither of us accepted. Later on, Ricardo González Alfonso asked me for the same thing: to give the journalists lessons.

When was this?

This happened not so long ago. Ricardo was already the head of Manuel Márquez Sterling Journalists Society.

A school open to everyone?

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No. Only for his people. It was going to be over in Miramar (a neighborhood of Havana), where he lives. I accepted and asked him how much he was going to pay me for giving the lessons. He asked whether I expected to earn more than Raúl Rivero and himself. I told him, "Why not? Rivero is a journalist, but you don't even know how to write your own name." He promised to tell me how much he would pay me, but then the Comandante showed up and the party was over (*Translator's note: This is a line from a Cuban song*).

What was Raúl Rivero's opinion of those people?

He thought they were all idiots. He was in complete agreement with me. When the U.S. Interests Section wanted us to give lessons, he said, "No, no, how can we get involved in that? They're all idiots, ignorant people. They don't know anything about grammar or composition, they don't know anything, period. We're going to bust our heads with those imbeciles, for nothing. Let's turn them down." That's what we did.

Did you ever interview a U.S. high official on the request of the U.S. Interests Section?

The last was my friend James Carter. I call him "friend" because, when he was president, he invited me to the United States to give Spanish classes at the university where he had studied. When he came to Havana, he sent for me to have lunch with him.

In private?

No, there were other people there. He had me sit close to him, with a single person between us, to talk with me. He asked me about the "Varela" Project, and I spoke to him in all honesty.

What did you tell him?

That it's a failure. That Oswaldo Payá is nothing more than a frustrated altar boy. No one in Cuba pays attention to him. Payá would constantly show up at my place: "Hey, Baguer, do an

interview with me.” He would show up a month later with the same story, and I would send him on his way.

Roberto Rodríguez Tejera

In 1985, he worked as a commentator on Miami TV’s *Channel 51* and later as editorial and news director.

In 1988, he worked as a journalist for the *Cadena Azul* network.

In 1990, he acted as director of *Television “Martí”* in Miami.

He has ties with the counterrevolutionaries Hubert Matos Benítez and Ramón Saúl Sánchez Rizo.

He is closely linked to the Miami extreme right wing. He is one of the sources of funding for the “independent journalists”, notably Raúl Rivero Castañeda.

I knew him from the Cerro neighborhood, where we both lived. I used to see him walking around in ripped pants, and now he goes around like a president, in a minivan. He claims the Church gave it to him, but we all know he bought it himself. One day I told him straight what most of the “dissidents” were saying: that he paid for the signatures (on the “Varela” Project).

And what did he answer?

That it wasn’t true, that it was something made up by the communists. It was the counterrevolutionaries themselves who had told me this, that this is what he had done in eastern Cuba. Furthermore, I know of “dissidents” whose signatures have appeared on the project when they have not actually signed it, because they can’t stand Payá. That’s the case with María Valdés Rosado.

Those people just go on cheating one another and fighting among themselves to become the leader who finally gets a hold of the cake, to start handing out scholarships, money, positions, exactly what takes place everyday in almost every country of the world.

With Payá, that’s two “future presidents” of Cuba that you know. Were they the only ones who presented themselves as such?

No way! You have to include that other gangster, Ricardo Bofill, on the list of candidates for president of the New Republic of Dependent Cuba. There are many aspiring candidates, really, many press agen-

cies and many political parties. The only thing missing is people to follow them. Just like that new press agency I ran across in Santiago, made up of a mother and son, neither of them journalists.

What can I say about the political parties? I know of four members that make up the Christian Democratic Party, for instance.

174 Oh, and I was forgetting about another “president”: Vladimiro Roca.

Why do you say that?

Because he had delusions of grandeur. Vladimiro’s wife — his former wife, not his present wife — was a friend of mine. I would pay her visits and she invited me to lunch on more than one occasion. If I visited that house, it was because of her, she was a good person.

I’m going to say something blasphemous: may Blas Roca forgive me, but how annoying and idiotic his son is! He’s unbearable. One day, I told him something I just couldn’t keep inside: “If your father could hear you, he would rise up from the grave and spit on you.” Blas was a man who was loyal to the Revolution and a good person all in all.

Do you know what his son told me about him? That his father had been an idiot, because when the Revolution triumphed he had handed his party over to Fidel, who gave him a worthless little position in turn. Just think! I had known the old man. Just look at the mind of this little scoundrel!

When you met up with the other agents, now their true selves, who surprised you the most?

Tania was my biggest surprise.

Why?

I would have never thought it. She was my friend, but she was one of the oldest and fiercest “dissidents”. A real tigress.

Who else?

Orrio, or Agent Miguel. We would have quarrels of Olympic proportions, and when we saw each other then, at the moment of truth, we hugged each other and I couldn’t help telling him: “Look at you here, and you were such a bastard! And we’re even having a drink together, damn it!”

I TOOK MY ORDERS FROM THE U.S. INTERESTS SECTION ALONE

ODILIA COLLAZO VALDÉS

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Minutes before the trial, Odilia absently took out a CD of songs by Fito Páez. She was tense. In a few minutes, she would be giving evidence in front of several of alleged “dissidents”, after having been one of them until just a few hours earlier.

Not that she was afraid; she was just unsure whether she’d be able to throw off completely the guise and vernacular of the hard-line counter-revolutionary, which the real Odilia Collazo Valdés, Lily — otherwise known as Agent Tania of the State Security Service — had been hiding behind.

She opened the CD case and, to while away the minutes before they called for her, she started to read the insert. There was one song, set to music by Fito, with words by an anonymous poet. She read: “I offer you my yesterday / my before / my after / my always / my perhaps / and my already.” “It can’t be,” she said to herself, and from that moment her doubts evaporated.



Those lines didn't come to her by chance. Her last words at the trial, after one of the most devastating depositions ever heard in the Supreme Court, were those very words: "I offer you my yesterday / my before / my after..." Her voice was strong and clear. "Here," she said, looking at the accused, "is what Odilia Collazo thinks. And I want to dedicate this poem to Fidel."

AGENT TANIA

What sort of schooling did you have?

I learned crafts from a very early age. When my children were eight and nine, I started working at an army base, in the artillery. The officers there told me I should study, that it was a shame that I didn't. Then there was a recruitment drive by the local authority, and I went along.

Really, I would have liked to be a doctor or a nurse. Or a journalist. In the end, the Revolution rewarded me.

In what way?

In 1988, State Security in the San Miguel de Padrón district approached me and said they needed me to get in with some people in the human rights groups operating in the area. San Miguel is a district that's had its problems. Ricardo Bofill was living in the neighbouring Mañana district. After a spell in jail, he worked in the canning factory and started recruiting people there.

What did you say to them when they asked you to do this?

That I couldn't. But they talked me into it. That year, I was managing a grocery store very near where they were holding their meetings.

Who did you make contact with?

I was living next door to the mother-in-law of Roberto Bahamonde Masó, the counterrevolutionary who's now in the United States. I'd known the family from when I was a girl.

Was that the birth of Tania?

No, that was the birth of Betty. Betty was my first codename. Tania

came later, in honor of Tamara Bunke, Che's comrade-in-arms in the guerrilla war in Bolivia.

On May 20, 1988 I joined the Cuban Pro Human Rights Party (Partido Pro Derechos Humanos de Cuba). In 1993, I was elected its president.

How did this promotion come about?

It all started because of a telephone. I was the only activist in the Party who had a phone. So in 1991, I became the spokesperson on the National Executive. Where I lived had other advantages: it's in the basement and its got a patio at the front... All these things made the work easier.

Juan Betancourt Morejón, who at that time was party secretary, started visiting me with Carlos Orozco and Nelson Torres Pulido. My home became the scene of anti-government plotting, and there were a lot of frictions, because I'd taught my children from an early age to love the Revolution, and they didn't understand this sudden change. My family slammed the door on the counterrevolutionaries, set the dogs on them, did all kinds of unpleasant things to them.

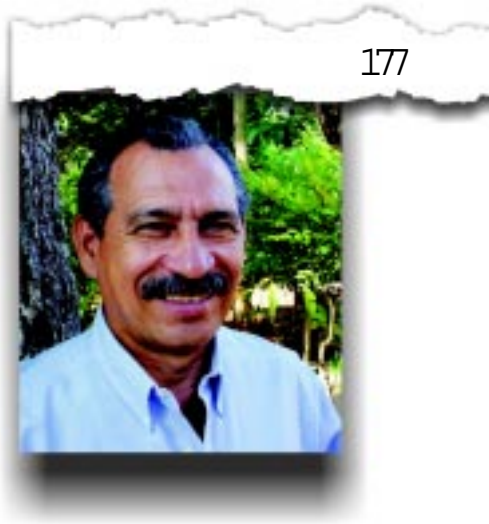
How did you resolve the dilemma?

Sometimes I had to go out on urgent assignments for headquarters; at home they thought I was in love with a State Security agent, who they had seen me talking to occasionally.

He was much younger than me and they asked me if I realized I was cradle-snatching. I was single at that time and this situation was a real problem. They disconnected the phone cable so the phone wouldn't work. Things improved later, after I met my present husband, Roberto Martínez Hinojosa.

How come?

He's more my age and his support and affection have been fundamental. He's also a State Security agent.



Roberto Martínez

What operations were you involved in?

In 1991, I helped get Bahamonde out of the country. That was one of the most difficult jobs, because the man's paranoid and imagined all kinds of things. When he finally got on the plane on September 28 that year, I could hardly believe it. I've since found out that he's in Miami and is suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Was there anyone representing the Pro Human Rights Party in Miami?

Yes: Samuel Martínez Lara and Evelio Ancheta, who were both members of the Cuban Democratic Consensus (Concertación Democrática Cubana) which included several groups: the Independent Medical Association (Colegio Médico Independiente), November 30 Party (Partido 30 de Noviembre), Harmony Group (Grupo Armonía), Cuban Democratic Directorate (Directorio Democrático Cubano) and others. They sent me my instructions, until one fine day I started getting them directly from the U.S. Interests Section.

Through whom?

Victor Vockerodt and Timothy Brown.

What did they want you to do?

They told me they needed surveys. We did one of people's attitudes to the embargo, whether they were for it, against it, or abstained from answering. We set up a team: Horacio Casanova, other people and me. We sat around a table with a map of Havana and started the survey in San Miguel del Padrón, then in the Cotorro district, in Havana Vieja and Centro Habana... without leaving my place. We invented all the information, from one end of the city to the other. Casanova told me to avoid even numbers, that odd numbers were more convincing. So we decided that 71% were in favor of lifting the embargo, 17% were against, another group abstained from voting and the remaining fraction refused to speak at all. All the numbers we quoted were odd.

What were relations like with the U.S. Interests Section officials?

One day in 1991, Jeffrey De Laurentis — the vice consul at the time — was talking with counterrevolutionary Nelson Torres. I walked into the office with Horacio Casanova and Nelson Pérez Pulido to deliver one of those famous surveys. De Laurentis started abusing Nelson Torres and Horacio. He was a cold man, a real tyrant, who always looked down his nose at us. I faced him and said, “Look, I’m out there in the streets with State Security on my trail day in, day out. You should respect us; this is our country,” and a few more things. He took off his glasses and asked me what I wanted. “I don’t want anything,” I said, “You’re the ones who wanted the survey and now you’ve got it.”

After that, whenever I went to the Interests Section, they called me in first, ahead of all the other counterrevolutionaries sitting there waiting to talk to him. That’s how I got in with them.

Did they ever suggest that you emigrate?

Yes. Before I started bringing them information and surveys. In 1992, they gave me an immigration form to fill in. I was in a terrible state, because I didn’t want to go. They told me I had to fill it in and send it off. I filled in the form, because I was sure they wouldn’t give me a visa. I knew several people in my neighborhood who wanted to emigrate for family or economic reasons and had lined up outside the Interests Section offices; none of them got a visa, even by mistake. I got the reply straight away. I’ll never forget it; the appointment for my interview was for December 12, with Mr. De Laurentis again. He approved my application on the spot. But I didn’t want to go.

Did you also provide endorsements for people who wanted to get visas?

Loads of them.

Were you paid for them?

Of course not.

Council for Cuba's Freedom (Consejo por la Libertad de Cuba, CLC)

Established on October 9, 2001 and registered on August 22 of that same year as a non-profit organization. It is directed by a board of eight members, made up of Luis Zúñiga Rey, Alberto Hernández, Diego Suárez, Elpidio Núñez, Horacio Salvador García Cordero, Ninoska Pérez Castellón, Feliciano Foyo and Ignacio Sánchez.

Its political stance consists of an unshakable refusal of all dialogue, working principally with the counterrevolutionary movement in Cuba. It has actively lobbied against our country in the U.S. Congress.

It is against all negotiations with Cuba and it declares the elimination of the present government of President Fidel Castro and his followers, be it through peaceful or violent means, to be its first priority.

The chief leaders of the organization have been linked to the terrorist activities carried out by the FNCA during the 1990s, particularly to Luis Zúñiga, Alberto Hernández and Horacio García, who directed the organization's paramilitary arm and supplied the means and the funding for the violent actions they secretly carried out through other organizations.

The ties between Alberto Hernández and the terrorists detained in Panama — Luis Posada Carriles and Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo — are well known; with the support and guidance of the CLC's principal directors, these terrorists have planned several assassination attempts against the Cuban president during his trips abroad, including the one intended for the 10th Ibero-American Summit held in Panama.

They have increased their ties to leaders and members of counterrevolutionary groups in Cuba, systematically supplying them with significant financial resources, promoting the creation of clandestine organizations and encouraging them to assume ever more aggressive positions in their actions against the Revolution.

At the time there were rumors that political endorsements for visa applications were being sold, weren't there?

That's right. In fact, I told De Laurentis something that was very true: that people were saying the Interests Section was involved in this business, and I said I knew which people were selling their signatures at that time. One of them was Carlos Orozco. Then he asked me why I'd filled in the form to see him, and I told him that was the only way I could get to talk to him.

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At the second interview, they started playing with me, saying they didn't know what "vocera" (spokesperson) of the Pro Human Rights Party meant. They looked the word up in a dictionary and asked me why I had applied to join the Political Refugee program if I didn't want to emigrate. I explained that what I wanted was to talk to Mr. De Laurentis, to tell him about all the scams that were going on. They told me my application was approved and then started laughing, "No, no it isn't approved," because they needed me at the Interests Section to continue passing them information.

Didn't they find it strange that a "dissident" was coming to them with tales against her cohorts?

They saw it as a positive sign for their work. They knew I was quite well placed in the Party and decided it would be a good idea to keep me close. In the end, they sent me a letter turning down my visa application, and they were left convinced that I was a genuine defender of human rights, that I hadn't been going to the Interests Section to hustle a visa.

Those were the toughest years of the Special Period ...

In 1993, the situation was pretty tense, what with the power cuts and the shortages; there were problems, social, political, as well as economic. On instructions from State Security, I went on feeding the Americans the message they wanted to hear, or that my government wanted them to hear.

Horacio Salvador García Cordero

One of the top leaders of the counterrevolutionary organization known as the Council for Cuba's Freedom (Consejo por la Libertad de Cuba).

He left the country in 1960. He had ties to the terrorist group known as the Student Revolutionary Directorate (Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil), with which he promoted different terrorist acts against Cuba. He was one of the leaders of the Cuban-American National Foundation (Fundación Nacional Cubanoamericana, FNCA) until August of 2001.

During his membership in the FNCA, he was tied to its most recalcitrant terrorist group, substituting Luis Zúñiga Rey in 1995 as head of the paramilitary arm of this organization.

He continued facilitating funding for similar actions on behalf of the Foundation.

He has been involved in the illegal smuggling of artworks into the United States and the introduction of counterfeit dollars into Cuba.

He is the millionaire co-proprietor of García Menéndez Enterprises Inc. and a McDonald's chain in Miami.

He has participated in the recruitment of counterrevolutionaries within Cuba, who have received instructions from him to organize clandestine cells and to carry out acts of sabotage and terrorism.

In the year 2001, he gave orders to carry out such activities to members of counterrevolutionary groups, who established a conspiratorial structure and received systematic funding for their purposes.

He supports the activities of counterrevolutionary leader Félix Navarro Rodríguez, who lives in the province of Matanzas, sending him financial aid on a regular basis.

In June or July of 1994, I was talking to Robin Diane Meyer, the second secretary at the Interests Section, and I told her I was going to make a prophesy: "If you keep on refusing visas and boats keep getting stolen, there's going to be a revolt." I just wanted to

know how she'd react. "This country's a pressure cooker and the only escape valve is emigration," I said. She told me her government wouldn't allow it. I told her firmly that whether Washington liked it or not, there was going to be a mass exodus. She answered, shouting: "Clinton won't let it happen!" After that came the rafters crisis and the U.S. government had to rethink things.

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Did the Interests Section ask for your cooperation at that time?
Yes. They wanted me to hand out leaflets saying that the people who were leaving on rafts were going to the Guantánamo naval base, and that they weren't going on to the United States from there.

Did they explain why they wanted you to distribute the leaflets?
Look, they didn't want to believe there would be a mass exodus due to the policies Washington had applied up to that time. They were obsessed with the publicity the crisis was getting and were sure it would wear down the Cuban government. We wanted them to do something to discourage the people planning to risk their lives at sea and hoped they would agree to migration treaties.

I invited her to my place. The neighbors were doing some carpentry and repairs, and it was really noisy all the time. She asked me about the hammering and I told her, "They're making rafts," and gave her a story about all the people in the neighborhood getting ready to leave. She was horrified. So a couple of days later, there was Odilia Collazo, the faithful servant, handing out leaflets in Cojímar.

The Americans were presumably grateful to you ...

They put their seal of approval on my appointment as president of the Pro Human Rights Party when Nelson Torres Pulido left, on September 2, 1994. And I've been president ever since, up until a few days ago.

How did you make contact with the counterrevolution in Miami?
By radio, over the Internet, by phone ... I was a regular on the roundtable discussions broadcast on *Radio "Martí"* Tuesday and Thursday nights, with Luís Aguilar León, a writer whose stuff appears quite often in the *Nuevo Herald* and is heard on the radio

in Miami. In spite of being totally hostile to the Revolution, he is always saying that it's a mistake to underestimate Castro. I was also on this program with Omar López Montenegro. They were always phoning me.

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What other radio stations called you?

La Cubanisma, Radio Mambí, La Poderosa ... I've lost count. Through Nancy Pérez Crespo, I started working with Agustín Tamargo, on a program broadcast every Monday, called "Round Table". I worked with him for years.

Joe García

A member of the Cuban-American National Foundation (Fundación Nacional Cubanoamericana, FNCA).

In 1988, he was the coordinator for the FNCA Exodus Program, which re-located to the United States nearly 10,000 Cuban émigrés who had been living in Spain, Panama, Peru, Venezuela, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, among other countries. He traveled to more than 20 nations to carry out this mission.

In late 1992 and early 1993, he traveled to Moscow, accompanied by Roberto Martín Pérez, to organize a similar re-location of Cuban émigrés residing in Russia. Both met with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Immigration, and the Russian Vice-Minister of the Interior.

On May 19, 2000 he was named executive director of the FNCA, with a salary of 120,000 dollars a year. He replaced the terrorist Francisco José "Pepe" Hernández Calvo.

His designation was considered one of the steps taken by the organization to salvage the tarnished image of the Foundation, brought about by its participation in the kidnapping of Elián González.

On the radio in Miami, Agustín Tamargo called you "the Mariana Grajales of the dissidents." Why?

He himself used to tell me I was his Mariana Grajales. He fell in love with my image as a tough fighter against the "Castro regime". Whenever something happened in Cuba, or at election time, or in

the run-up to Geneva, Agustín would always put on a special program with me. He loved to hear me talk tough, shoot my mouth off. All I did was tell him and his Miami audience what they wanted to hear. He would tell me beforehand what the topic was going to be, of course. They would play the first notes, and I would sing the rest of the song for them, you could say.

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When was the last time you talked to Tamargo?

A few hours before my cover was blown, in March. They had just arrested Raúl Rivero, Omar Rodríguez and the rest of them. I still didn't know that my real identity was going to be revealed. On the programme, I said, "The people who've been arrested in Cuba are not terrorists. They are fighters whose weapons were pen and paper; their bullets were medicines." Between the lines I was rubbing in the fact that everyone knows, whether they are "opposition" members or not: that smuggled medicines are being supplied to the "dissidents" to demoralize the Cuban public, thanks to Frank Hernández Trujillio, Democratic Action (Acción Democrática), the Democracy Movement (Movimiento Democracia), New Generation Cuba (Nueva Generación Cuba), Cuban National Resistance (Resistencia Nacional Cubana), Lincoln Díaz-Balart and the rest of the "exiles".

Did you write as well?

Yes. I wrote denunciations. Those reports on human rights violations in Cuba, the ones the Interests Section sent to the State Department, were written by me. At the beginning, I wrote them by hand; they must have a lot of reports in my handwriting and with my signature stored away. Later, I started using a typewriter and finally a computer. They arranged the copying. Things developed to the point where I was practically the secretary of Ricardo Zuniga, the political/economic chief at the Interests Section.

How did that come about?

He came to trust me so much that I would write the reports they asked for on the computer, send them in by e-mail, and he would pass them along to the State Department without changing so much as a comma.

Where did you learn to use a computer and the Internet?

There in the U.S. Interests Section. A Cuban woman there taught me. It was part of her job to help us “independent journalists” with our work, although she actually hindered it a lot of the time.

Luis Zúñiga Rey

He left the country illegally through the Guantánamo Naval Base in 1970. He was arrested and sentenced in 1974 when he attempted an armed infiltration of the Island. Out of the country once again, he became the vice-president of the counterrevolutionary organization known as the Association for Continental Peace (Asociación por la Paz Continental, ASOPAZCO), based in Spain and funded by the Cuban-American National Foundation (FNCA).

During the 1990s, he began to play a more active role within the FNCA as a member of its paramilitary arm.

He sought out, recruited and supplied Cuban citizens temporarily visiting the United States, whom he instructed to sabotage economic targets in Cuba.

He has also maintained ongoing ties with the heads and members of counterrevolutionary organizations, whom he has attempted to involve in violent acts against Cuba. In April of 1994, he was removed from the leadership, although he continued his involvement in violent activities aimed at Cuba.

He subsequently directed the FNCA project known as the Human Rights Foundation (Fundación para los Derechos Humanos), and was accredited for numerous consecutive years as a member of the Nicaraguan delegation, in order to intervene against our country at the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

He left the FNCA in August of 2001 and joined the terrorist organization known as the Council for Cuban Freedom (Consejo por la Libertad de Cuba), maintaining an intransigent and violent stance.

What sort of information about human rights did the Section ask for?

About social, political and economic problems; what was happening to the prisoners; what the general gossip was about.

After my success as a “forecaster” of the rafters crisis, in December they wanted my predictions about what would happen the following year. You can imagine what sort of workload that created for my comrades in Security.

This monitoring was confined to Havana?

No, no. It was coast to coast. On my visits to the Interests Section, they would sometimes ask me to show them on a wall map which region had the most problematic political scenario. They usually ended up deciding to visit the place I picked, and took me along so I could tell them who to get in touch with.

Officially, the visits were to check if the migration treaties were being observed. That was the pretext, but they really went to see for themselves what was happening in those provinces. They wanted to confirm what they were being told.

Did they pay you at the Interests Section offices?

No. I never got money there. Meals and bags full of all sorts of things, but money, never. My pay arrived via Frank Hernández Trujillo and Democratic Action. At the trial, I was able to show the court all the equipment they had given to me as “gifts”, the documentation for medicines, clothes and money that arrived from Miami. The month when I got the least money was when they sent me 100 dollars.

How did the money arrive?

By Western Union, using a Transcard card. They also sent it with “mules”, people who came from Miami and got a commission for bringing us our money.

Did you have meetings with officials at any other embassies?

Plenty. In fact, my last “job” as a dissident was on March 12 of this year, at the Spanish embassy. I met with José María Fernández López de Turiso, who had just arrived in Cuba to begin work at the embassy. The Interests Section instructs you to visit other diplomatic missions, and not just the EU, Poland, Canada. They send you to the Caribbean, Latin American and African embassies as well.

Why?

To inform these embassies about the reports of human rights violations, so that this wasn't seen as something done solely by the Americans, or the people at the Interests Section, in particular; our job was to give them a "local" veneer. The idea was to put on a show to convince them that the denunciations were coming from us, the Cubans. There were some cases of genuine interference...

For example?

On January 6, 1995, Ryan Stevenson Jr., an official from the Canadian department of foreign affairs, asked for a meeting with some of us at the Canadian embassy. The people who participated were Héctor Palacios Ruiz, Aida Valdés Santana and me. He didn't just want to know about everything we were doing, but also the numbers of counterrevolutionaries, what the Americans thought, if they supported us; it was a real interrogation. At the end, he asked us what Canada could do to help the "opposition" and assured us they would keep up this kind of contact until we had achieved "real democracy" here. Meetings of this kind with visitors and accredited diplomats were pretty frequent.

More examples?

Go ahead.

A lot of these documents travelled in the Spanish Embassy's diplomatic pouch. Support from Spanish diplomats has been consistent, at least up to when I stopped being president of the Pro Human Rights Party. The present ambassador is particularly obliging. He told us we could count on him for anything we needed. His people were also very nice to us: they copied documents for us, gave us pens, paper, typewriter ribbons ... In reality, they were a significant factor in supplying what we needed for our work.

Were your instructions from the Interests Section to visit embassies just to report on human rights violations?

No. Sometimes they would ask us to go there to promote particular individuals, who were up for awards. I saw this myself from inside the Interests Section, so no one can tell me any different: the awards,

all the awards, originally come from there. I saw how they set things up for the ones presented to Payá, to Oscar Elías Biscet, to Elizardo, to Vladimiro Roca ... These people were nobodies, who were transformed overnight into “generals without armies”. The Americans are experts at manufacturing “celebrities,” especially out of people short on charisma or whose egos need a boost. The same thing happened with certain “journalists” and a few magazines.

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Such as?

Such as *Vitral* magazine. I learned of its existence at the German embassy. At a reception, Wilfried Krug, an advisor there who looked after us “opposition” members, told us the embassy would be donating computers, printers and other supplies to the church in Pinar del Río, so it could start a magazine. Naturally, it would challenge the Havana regime. I remember asking him, “And you think the government is going to allow that?” “Yes of course,” he replied, “They won’t try to stop it now, just before the Pope’s visit. We have to take advantage of the present circumstances.” And that’s how it worked out.

I heard similar arguments when the Cuban Council (Concilio Cubano) and the “Varela” Project emerged, but that was in a different diplomatic setting.

Where?

The U.S. Interests Section.

How did you become connected with the Cuban Council?

Robin Diane Meyer and her assistant, Hilda Esquivel, introduced me there to Leonel Morejón Almagro, who’d been appointed national delegate ... The two officials themselves gave me the first draft of what became the charter of the Cuban Council, and asked me to read it. There were no signatures of course, and I was probably one of the first Cubans to see it.

Did you agree to join?

Not then and there. I told them I needed to discuss it with my Party executive; you know who I actually had to consult. But they insisted,

“Please, tell us what you think. Now’s the time to put pressure on the Cuban government to sit down with us and the opposition.” I was a witness to the birth of the Cuban Council there in the U.S. Interests Section. I signed its charter a short while later, at the home of Héctor Palacios, who was appointed president. I was a member of Commission 6 of the organization.

What was the Cuban Patriotic United Front (Frente Unido Patriótico Cubano)?

It was created by my party. There was nothing unusual about it. Every time a group was formed and the top positions were divvied up, the people left out formed another group. Aida Valdés Santana created her own bloc; I formed mine. The Cuban Council started going downhill, without needing much help.

What about the Front?

Within two days I had 50 signatures of presidents of different groups. The Americans raved about my charisma and leadership ability, and said that it was amazing how quickly I’d got the signatures. I was laughing up my sleeve, because I knew just how much “help” I’d been getting.

Then one day the Security Service told me to put the brakes on the Front, which was on a collision course with the Cuban Council. Actually, Leonel Morejón called me begging for mercy: “Please, stop the Front. A lot of people are going over to your side and it’s weakening the cause.” The Interests Section gave me a warning too. I was ready to stop anyway, because by that time the Cuban Council was dead in the water. However, I managed to persuade the Americans that the Front also had a role to play in the “democratic transition”.

What was the argument?

Theirs: that several parties should be groomed, to strengthen civil society. I told Robin Meyer, “We’ve already got three camps for a democratic regime: the Communist Party on one side, the Cuban Council — the liberals — on the other, plus the Front, which represents the hard line.” I told her we even had a slogan: “We’re

fighting in the front line.” Robin Meyer got all excited, saying yes, that would be real democracy. And I said to myself: “That’s what *you* think!”

What went wrong with the Cuban Council?

They started stealing the money; there were conflicts of interest. That was why the so-called Group of Seven appeared, which met secretly on February 10, 1996 in Diez de Octubre. Those of us who were left out started to protest. Who had elected Oswaldo Payá, Martha Beatriz Roque, Gustavo Arcos Bergnes, Félix Bonne Carcassés, Elizardo Sánchez, René Gómez Manzano and Jesús Yáñez Pelletier? In reality, they were the ones with the most clout, the ones with the strongest links with Miami and the Interests Section at that time. The “sacred cows”. That created problems among the committees, because no one would accept them, without having been elected, as the representatives of the Cuban Council.

The seven started monopolizing the money and ousted Leonel Morejón Almagro, who was supposed to be the Council’s guiding hand and apparently had the backing of the Interests Section. The way they creamed off the money that came in from the “NGO’s” in exile was outrageous and amounted to thousands of dollars, to judge by the standard of living of those people.

Do you have evidence of how the money was getting through?

The money sent to the Council for the February 24 celebrations was collected by Arcos Bergnes from the Czech Republic embassy. It had already been earmarked: for the festivities (dinner, snacks, drinks) and a sum to be delivered to each member. They said Ricardo Bofill had sent it, but that wasn’t true; he never would have sent it, because he would have kept it for himself.

I went all over the country sharing out the money among the members of the “opposition”, on behalf of the Cuban Council. That gave me the chance to meet people in the provinces who were hurting Cuba and playing along with the Yankees.

Gustavo Arcos Bergnes told me that 30 dollars was to be shared among the prisoners, the ones that Elizardo — who was

notoriously cautious — would never help because he saw them as terrorists. That was true: they were serving time for acts of terrorism, for violence against Cubans and Cuban institutions.

Do you remember any of the operations those prisoners had taken part in?

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I will never forget one of them, who came from Holguín. Batista was his surname. He's in Miami now. He'd lost some fingers. He was jailed for planting bombs in workplaces and had injured people and seriously damaged businesses that way. This man was vicious to the point where he used to burn his own arms with cigarettes. I've never seen anything like it. When I asked him why he did it, he told me he had to prepare himself psychologically for when they started torturing him. That was crazy, because he'd all but finished his sentence and nobody had laid a finger on him.

Who gave you the list of people to be given money?

Arcos Bergnes, who also asked Elizardo for names. Elizardo avoided getting getting his hands dirty, but he had his own private list of terrorists. Money also went to Lázaro González Valdés, Héctor Palacios and Leonel Morejón Almagro. Very little of the money they gave me to distribute was allocated to the passive "dissidents". Most of it was for prisoners who'd been involved in terrorism.

What were your relations with Elizardo like?

Very strained, for one simple reason: when they appointed me Party president, he wanted to get rid of me and used Lázaro González Valdés to split my organization. Lázaro set up another Human Rights Party, affiliated with the Andrei Sakharov Foundation. The president was René Montes de Oca, who's currently in jail. This new group got started at Elizardo's home.

Why was that?

Odilia Collazo didn't let herself get pushed around by Elizardo Sánchez. I've always been assertive. They couldn't get me to do what they wanted. I made a scene that has become legendary. I

turned up at his house with 12 other people, on bicycles, and we knocked him about a bit. I was going to make him respect me, one way or another. He ran out of the house. We went there to give it to him, eight women and four men from the Front.

He was scared of me after that, and started inviting me to all his receptions and distancing himself from Lázaro.

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Why did he want to take over the Pro Human Rights Party?

Because it had been around the longest. It was an offshoot of the Cuban Committee for Human Rights (Comité Cubano por los Derechos Humanos). It's the only one with a certain amount of history. The Committee dated back to 1976. That was why he wanted to get rid of me, there was no other reason. Elizardo tried to give me instructions, but in a world where you could smell crooks a mile away, I only accepted instructions from the Interests Section.

How did you get along with Payá?

Really well, but we were never very close, because he's sexist and racist.

Why do you say that?

Do you know of any close collaborator of his who is a woman or black? Moreover, he accuses the government of being totalitarian, anti-democratic and exclusionary, and says he wants national reconciliation, when in reality, everything he does is completely centralized, he adopts decisions unilaterally, he makes declarations on behalf of a committee that did not elect him as its leader, and which neither knows of nor approves his stances and statements beforehand. As far as I know, there have never been elections in his group.

How are relations between Payá and the other mercenaries?

Abysmal. He is constantly attacking those who don't agree with his project. His favorite insult is accusing them of being State Security agents, and he refuses to discuss any points in common with them to reach a consensus. A classic example is his feud with Martha Beatriz, who hates him. Payá does not accept the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba. He also vehemently

prohibits those who support the “Varela” Project from joining in other initiatives they consider to be viable. He is opposed to those who defend pluralism.

Payá’s image abroad is one of a very austere man...

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They present him as an “average Cuban”. They show pictures of him riding a bicycle, like anyone else on the streets. What the journalists don’t say is that he has a Volkswagen minivan, with nine seats, white, license plate number HS 00712. He drives his family around in it, and takes them to Varadero in it now and then.

Listen, this will give you a good idea of what he’s like: in his living room, where he receives the diplomats, foreign correspondents and other visitors from abroad, he has old furniture and a Russian television. He puts on a real show. But in the rest of the house, he has every modern convenience you can imagine in a very comfortable home: color television, VCR, video games, a top-of-the-line stereo system, computer...

Did you sign the “Varela” Project?

Yes, Vicky asked me to.

Who supports Payá?

The U.S. Interests Section, especially. And also the Spanish government.

But he claims he has never received help from abroad...

He might be able to get other people to buy that story, but not me. He has received economic support from organizations, parties and governments. It’s impossible to carry out a national campaign of the scope of the “Varela” Project relying solely on the salary of an electro-medicine engineer working for the Ministry of Public Health, who also happens to be the only member of the household who works.

Everyone knows he has stable and public ties with the leaders of the Cuban-American National Foundation — namely Joe García, Pepe Hernández, Fernando Canto, Domingo Moreira, Josefina Vento and Ramón Humberto Colás Castillo — and with the Cuban Democratic Directorate. And also with Francisco Zúñiga, Carlos Alberto Montaner and Father Francisco Santana.

The priest from the kidnapping of Elián?

The very same, one of his main public relations agents outside Cuba. This is a man who belongs to the Cuban-American National Foundation.

Do you recall any personal anecdotes involving Payá?

I was a witness, sitting at the same table, with him and Vicky, when she personally instructed him to seek support for the “Varela” Project in the European Union, primarily in the embassies of Belgium and Germany, and especially in Spain, when Aznar was president of the European Union.

I remember Payá telling the head of the Interests Section that “if they touched one of his activists again, the political scene in Cuba would turn very dark.” This is typical of Payá: threatening the Revolution from the shelter of the support he’s getting from the U.S. government. Those poor fools just can’t get it through their heads that we Cubans aren’t afraid of anything.

Incidentally, how often did you go to the Interests Section offices?

Not every day, but quite often. I mean, I didn’t have set days, but I’d go whenever I needed to work on the computer or check my e-mail, or when they called me, or when there was a reception or a party... I couldn’t tell you how many times I went, because I lost count. Like other “dissidents”, I have an open pass; they haven’t taken it back yet.

Did they ever invite you to the United States?

Sure, I got invitations. But I never wanted to go.

What sort of relations did you have with Vicky Huddleston?

Very good.

Samuel Martínez Lara

One-time general secretary of the Pro Human Rights Party.

Former counterrevolutionary prisoner, organizer of demonstrations and conspiratorial meetings; publisher, together with Tania Díaz Castro, of subversive documents. Had links with Gustavo Arcos Bergnes and Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz.

And with James Cason?

Excellent. I got on well with his wife and got the chance to be one of the first members of “the opposition” to meet with him. He offered me the use of his residence for meetings with all the provincial delegates of the Human Rights Violations Reporting Office, or for any other event.

His wife, Carmen, is from El Salvador; she told me how much she liked the old quarter of Havana. She said the Cubans didn’t appreciate their cultural heritage, that she’d been all over the world and that she loved Havana. I realized from the way she talked that she was trying to gain my trust. She’s someone it would be a mistake to underestimate, a very cultured person, perhaps more so than her husband. She was the one who handled protocol, and was constantly trying to win us over.

Did all the officials behave the same way?

No. I must be fair: not all the American diplomats used us and underestimated us. Among all the send-offs of Interests-Section officials I attended, the one for Section Chief Michael Kozack was the only one that made me feel a pang of regret. He had been involved in plots too, and called me to meetings and gave me instructions. He did the same as the rest, but with a lighter touch.

He and his wife hugged me and told me they didn’t want to leave Cuba with hard feelings, that they loved my country, my island. His wife said they had met a people here with values that weren’t common in other countries. She cried. She’s Mexican and she told me she was fonder of Cuba than her own country, because her children were safe and she could let them play with the other kids in the neighborhood without worrying what might happen to them. That goodbye made a real impression on me, because I realized they hadn’t come here just to do a job, and were leaving their hearts in Cuba.

There were subtle differences between the American diplomats?

I also remember Steve Rice, Kozak’s vice-consul, a militant conspirator with close ties to the counterrevolution. He came to

my place several times and once, in April of 1997 if I remember correctly, he told us at a dinner given by Martha Beatriz Roque that the “dissidents” in Cuba were not really all that persecuted, and every time he had to attend meetings with them, he came away dizzy. He preferred talking to us, “the chosen ones”.

Did you meet any CIA officials or agents?

Yes, Timothy Brown. He told me himself, personally. One time he had lunch at my place with my husband and me. We talked about all kinds of things, not just work. He tried to protect me. He would squeeze my arm discreetly to stop me from saying too much and getting myself into trouble, when he thought State Security might be listening in.

Did they think there were Cuban State Security agents inside the Interests Section?

They distrusted the Cubans who worked there. They didn't trust them and set traps for the domestic staff, who were Cuban, so they could tell whether they'd touched their documents.

Often, when they wanted to tell me something that no one else was supposed to know about, they'd write it on a slip of paper; after I answered, they'd keep the slip of paper.

If they were so fearful, why did they keep open house for the “opposition”?

I sometimes got the impression it didn't matter to them that much. The important thing was to have faces and names to put forward for the benefit of public opinion as “opponents of the Castro regime”. They opened their doors to all of us also to show us the benefits of capitalism, like how you could have a big house and lots of possessions, how generous you could afford to be as a master.

Tell us what happened when it came to handing out the gifts at the Interests Section offices or at the American diplomats' residences.

It was a free-for-all, like breaking a piñata. I didn't take part in those scrums. I sent my husband to collect the gifts. People descended

like vultures on the gift bags and the trays of prawns and lobster, to the point where the actual diplomatic corps got nothing to eat. When the gift bags and food appeared, protocol went out of the window. It was like a feeding frenzy among sharks. In the end, James Cason reorganized the receptions: there was one bag per person and that was that.

What was in the bags?

Radios, flashlights, literature, battery chargers, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in huge batches, speeches by U.S. politicians, pronouncements by Bush, counterrevolutionary magazines...

Was it your idea to set up the National Human Rights Violations Reporting Office?

Yes. The Interests Section wanted representation from all sectors of civil society. Since there was already a Group of Four (Vladimiro, Martha Beatriz, Bonne and Manzano) and a Group of Seven, we set up that office, which was joined by a youth movement, the Independent Medical Association and the Pro Human Rights Party. Our mission was to record and expose all violations.

All this was done in the wake of the arrival of Bill Barker, a Presbyterian, who wanted to see an office represented by young people “who are the ones who’ve changed things throughout history,” as he used to say. They chose my party because it had the biggest membership and branches all over Cuba, including the Isle of Youth.

Bill Barker admitted to us in confidence that he had been sent by Lincoln Díaz-Balart. He told us they could give us what we needed, that we could even choose what sort of weapons we wanted.

At that time, my representative in exile was Democratic Action (Acción Democrática), which supplied me with clothing and equipment.

Some of us also met with Spanish economists. They wanted to work with the economists to lay the foundations for a change in

the future. They asked Martha Beatriz and me to make a call to businessmen and ask them not to invest in Cuba.

They respected me for many reasons.

Nancy Pérez Crespo

Born in Cueto, Holguín. She is the representative in Miami of the counterrevolutionary group known as Cuba Press, run by Raúl Rivero. She is a CIA agent, executive director of the Florida Israeli Cultural Institute, and an announcer for the radio station *Voice of the National Democratic Affinity Party (Voz del Partido Afinidad Nacional Democrático)*.

She sends money on a regular basis to the head of the Havana Press group, Jorge Olivera, and his family, as well as to Raúl Rivero, through his wife, Blanca Reyes. She has also sent money to Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz.

She is the editor of a magazine called *Nueva Prensa Cubana* (New Cuban Press), which publishes articles written by so-called "independent journalists". This publication has circulation in Spain, Panama and Miami. She has also traveled to Europe to coordinate new actions.

She has used foreign and Cuban-American emissaries to send instructions, as well as money and materials, to members of the counterrevolutionary press.

She works for the subversive radio station known as *Radio "Martí"* and runs her own gallery, which features works by so-called "disident" Cuban artists.

She is a member of the International Society of Journalism (Sociedad Internacional de Periodismo, SIP).

She has friendly ties with the terrorist Orlando Bosch.

She has organized, along with leaders of the Cuban American National Foundation, the Cuban Democratic Directorate and other counterrevolutionary organizations, hostile actions against Cuba at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

Such as?

They all knew my father had been locked up in the Cabaña with the “political” prisoners for six years. As far as the counterrevolutionaries in Miami and the ones who knew him in Cuba were concerned, he was a hardliner’s hardliner. For me, that was a major endorsement. They respected me not just because of my position in the Party, but because of my father too.

Who was your father?

He was in the Cuban Navy for 31 years and fought with the U.S. Army in the Second World War. He fought in the Bay of Pigs, and during the October Crisis they discharged him for conspiring with some of his fellow Navy members. He was stripped of his rank and treated as a traitor to the nation. He was jailed on July 12, 1963.

What was his rank?

He was a sergeant and used to give classes on navigation. He had been a sponge diver, of very humble, rural origins. He had a very difficult life before the Revolution.

What do you remember about that time?

He left the house one day and never came back. They put him in jail. I was very young, 12 years old, but I’ve always been pretty sharp. It stuck in my mind that before he went, he picked out three songs from the records we used to play and told me to listen to them and think of him. That really intrigued me, also the fact that he left me his diary; it was as if he was leaving to fulfil some sacred duty.

What were the three songs?

One was “Reloj” (Clock); it goes, “*Clock, don’t mark the hours...*” It was as if he wanted time to stand still. The second was “La Barca” (The Boat): “*My beach is a sorrowful place today, because your boat must sail...*” And the third, a ballad sung by Barbarito Diez: “*Birds fly home to the nest, but when those you have loved depart, they never return...*” I felt he was trying to tell me not to stop loving him, not to forget him. And I didn’t, of course.

Did you visit him in prison?

Yes. He'd left me the key to where he kept money and his tools. Bit by bit he told me where all his things were.

I should explain, there were four of us children, but I was the oldest and the closest to him.

I went to visit him in the Cabaña. We would talk through the bars; I went every three months. He always asked me how I was doing at school, what I did with myself. He kept a bit of wire in his belt, which he used to pass me notes, because talking was so difficult. I would write back and he would hide the bit of paper under his dental plate.

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What did he say?

In his notes he always told me never to stop loving the Revolution, to be a good girl at school and to listen to the songs, because one day I'd understand why he'd left them for me.

A "political prisoner" telling you to love the Revolution ...?

That used to confuse me a lot.

What did you do?

I often asked my comrades in State Security. I told them I didn't understand about my father.

And what did they tell you?

Nothing. My mother and brothers and sisters had no answers for me either. As far as they were concerned he was a traitor to his country. Full stop. To give you an idea: my mother is from the countryside and is a real revolutionary. Luckily she lives in Batabanó, well away from my work among the "dissidents". If she and my grandmother had found out what Odilia was mixed up in, I don't think I'd be here telling you all this.

Whenever I mentioned my father, my officials always gave me the same answer: that there were things that couldn't be discussed, that the files were classified and they had no access to them. But something inside me made me keep trying to find out more.

Ruth Montaner (Chuni)

Her maiden surname is Morán. She was married to Ernesto Montaner, brother of Carlos Alberto Montaner. She prefers to use her ex-husband's surname. She is known as Chuni. She is currently the director of radio station WQBA and has close ties with extreme right-wing groups based in Miami. She is in favor of the blockade. In 1997 she was the top representative in the United States of the organization known as the Internal Dissidence Work Group (Grupo de Trabajo de la Disidencia Interna, GTDI).

She lobbied intensively to prevent President Fidel Castro from being invited to the 7th Ibero-American Summit held in Margarita Island on November 8 and 9, 1997. In all of her efforts, she has had the support of anti-Cuban congresspeople Lincoln Díaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

She waged an aggressive propaganda campaign targeting diplomatic missions accredited in Cuba, demanding that they distribute the counterrevolutionary document entitled "La Patria es de Todos" (The Nation Belongs to Everyone), released on June 27, 1997.

She has close ties to Félix Antonio Bonne Carcassés, René Gómez Manzano, Vladimir Roca and Martha Beatriz Roque.

In June of 1999 she took part in an anti-Cuban campaign during the summit meeting between the European Union and Latin American countries, held in Río de Janeiro, with the aim of denouncing alleged human rights violations in Cuba.

She has received significant sums of money from U.S. government federal funds. She has been accused of embezzlement on more than one occasion, which has led to her removal from the Dissidence Support Group (Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia, GAD). She shares the political stances of her former brother-in-law Carlos Alberto Montaner.

Félix Rodríguez Mendigutía

Colonel of the CIA. Known as “El Gato” (The Cat), he also called himself Félix Ramos. Of Cuban origins, he pretended to be a captain in the Bolivian army in order to capture guerrilla fighters. He claims to be the assassin of Che Guevara.

He is now an insurance agent and consultant; he is a trusted employee of Trident Investigative Services Inc. The agency is represented in Argentina by John Battaglia Ponte, a naturalized U.S. citizen of Uruguayan birth who is a former CIA agent and participant in the so-called “Condor Plan” in the 1970s. He later worked in Central America, where he helped Anastasio Somoza flee from Nicaragua.

He took advantage of his contacts in El Salvador to use the runway at the Ilopango air force base as an operations center for a number of aging planes that would deliver weapons to the Contra forces; the planes belonged to the Corporate Air Services company. The owner of the company was a former major-general of the U.S. Air Force, Richard Secord, a friend of Oliver North.

During the Iran-Contra operation, he worked alongside José Basulto in Ilopango to deliver “humanitarian aid”. Together, they took part in the execution of all the actions under the command of Oliver North. A DEA agent once said in an interview with *The New York Times* that he had compiled convincing evidence in Guatemala that the Contra supply operations carried out at the Ilopango air force base in El Salvador — where Félix Rodríguez Mendigutía and José Basulto were working — were also a front for the smuggling of cocaine and marijuana.

In this home in Miami, Félix Rodríguez Mendigutía keeps two trophies from his assassination: a GMT Master Rolex and pipe that belonged to Che.

He is a friend (and was his subordinate in the CIA) of Donald Gregg, a security adviser to former president George Bush.

A few months ago, when things got really tense in my secret work, I told my official that if I died, he would have it on his conscience that he'd held back the truth from me. And that I would go on loving my father no matter what. I was sure he loved me too, and had let me know it in many ways. I kept asking over and over.

A few days later we talked about it again. It's like I can see his face right now. He had spoken to his superiors, and he told me, "Odilia, you're going to have to keep this secret close, because it could cost you your life. Your father was one of us." We both wept. My heart hadn't deceived me.

How did your mother react?

You can imagine! She found out from me, and so did my brothers and sisters, when they heard me speak on television during the trial.

And your father really never told you anything?

Never. This work is just too risky. He came out of prison in 1969 and died in 1988. He took his secret with him to the grave.

THE “DIPLOMACY” OF JAMES CASON

MANUAL FOR MANUFACTURING “DISSIDENTS”

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Chronological list of the activities of the Principal Officer of the United States Interests Section in Cuba (from September 10, 2002 to March 14, 2003)

2002

September 10:

He arrived in Havana at 3:30 p.m. He was received at José Martí International Airport by the Deputy Principal Officer of the Interests Section, Louis Nigro. During the welcoming ceremony, at 4:40 p.m. that same day, he announced to his employees that the aim of his mission was to accelerate the transitional process towards a democratic Cuba, and exhorted them to support anyone working toward that transition.

September 16:

Between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., he held a meeting in his home with 17 counterrevolutionary leaders: Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas (Christian Liberation Movement, Movimiento Cristiano de Liberación);



Héctor Palacios Ruiz (Center for Social Studies, Centro de Estudios Sociales); Gisela Delgado Sablón (Independent Libraries Project, Proyecto de Bibliotecas Independientes); Gustavo Arcos Bergnes (Cuban Human Rights Committee, Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos); Víctor Rolando Arroyo Carmona (“Independent Journalist”); Raúl Rivero Castañeda (Cuba Free Press Agency); Félix Antonio Bonne Carcassés (Cuban Civic Current, Corriente Cívica Cubana); Juan Carlos Herrera (Young Democrats Movement, Movimiento de Jóvenes Democráticos), Rafael Ernesto Ávila Pérez (Young Cuba People’s Party, Partido Popular Joven Cuba); Julio Ruiz Pitaluga (former counterrevolutionary prisoner); Pedro Pablo Álvarez Ramos (United Council of Cuban Workers, Consejo Unitario de Trabajadores de Cuba); Vladimiro Roca Antúnez (Social Democratic Party of Cuba, Partido Social Demócrata de Cuba); Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés (Cuban Liberal Democratic Party, Partido Liberal Democrático Cubano); Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello (Manuel Sanchez Herrero Institute of “Independent Economists”, Instituto de Economistas Independientes Manuel Sánchez Herrero); Odilia Collazo Valdés (Cuban Human Rights Party, Partido Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos); René Gómez Manzano (Agramonte Union of Cuba, Unión Agramontista de Cuba); and Reynaldo Cosano Alen (Cuban Democratic Coalition, Coalición Democrática Cubana).

Also present were the Interests Section officials Louis Nigro, Deputy Principal Officer; Gonzalo Gallegos, Public Affairs Officer; Ricardo Zuniga, Deputy Political/Economic Chief; Francisco Sainz, Political/Economic Chief; and Susan Archer, Deputy Political/Economic Chief.

Cason expressed that his intention was neither to instruct nor lead the activities of the opposition, but rather to work toward implementing the policy announced by President George W. Bush. He asked what he could do to help the “opposition” and how beneficial the assistance provided by his office had been to that moment.

He declared that he was willing to grant access to both his home and the U.S. Interests Section headquarters to facilitate

the meetings of “dissident” activists with diplomats from different countries. Félix Bonne Carcassés and René Gómez Manzano told him that no other diplomatic mission attended them the way this one did.

The head of the Interests Section expressed that he would continue with the work of his predecessor, and that he was planning a tour through the country to get to know, up close, the situation of the “opposition” groups. He also wished to take part in political activities, such as the Public Forums (Tribunas Abiertas), and to exhibit, in the offices of the consulate, the photographs and names of so-called political prisoners, so that visitors would see them and become aware of their situation.

He added that no proposal put forth by the “opposition” would be ignored, and that all of their concerns would be passed on to Washington.

At the end of the meeting, the participants were offered soft drinks, mojitos, steak sandwiches and ground beef turnovers.

The participants were also given copies of a book entitled *Martí Secreto* (The Secret Martí), containing 51 allegedly new reflections of the National Hero and contradicting the dictionary on José Martí recently published in Cuba by the Editorial de Ciencias Sociales. All visitors received white and yellow envelopes which had been previously marked with the names of participants. The counterrevolutionaries were finally taken to their homes in Interests Section vehicles.

September 17:

Between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., Cason met with 18 mercenary counterrevolutionaries in his home, all of them involved with the “independent press”: Manuel Vázquez Portal (Decorum Work Group, Grupo de Trabajo Decoro); Carmelo Díaz Fernández (Independent Trade Union Press Agency, Agencia de Prensa Sindical Independiente); Oscar Espinosa Chepe (“Independent” Economist); Miriam Leyva Viamontes (wife of Espinosa Chepe); Gilberto Figueredo Álvarez (*Cartas de Cuba* magazine); Manuel David Orrio del Rosario (“Independent” Journalists Cooperative,

Cooperativa de Periodistas Independientes); Luis García Vega (“Independent Journalists Cooperative”); Julio César Gálvez Rodríguez (Cuban Civic Press Agency, Agencia de Prensa Cívica Cubana); Beatriz Pedroso León (Cuban Civic Press Agency); Edel J. García Díaz (Centro Norte Press); Aleida Godínez Soler (Lux Info Press); Alicia Zamora Labrada (Lux Info Press); Claudia Márquez Linares (Decorum Work Group); Ángel P. Polanco Torrejón (Noticuba); Ángela Salinas Battle (wife of Polanco); Tania Quintero Antúnez (“Independent Journalist”); Omar Rodríguez Saludes (New Press Agency, Agencia Nueva Prensa); and Ricardo S. González Alfonso (Manuel Márquez Sterling Journalists Society).

The Interests Section officials in attendance were Louis Nigro, Francisco Sainz, Gonzalo Gallegos, Ricardo Zuniga, Nicholas J. Giacobbe and Teddy Taylor, along with Cason’s wife.

The meeting, whose principal aim was to introduce the counterrevolutionaries and to converse about issues of interest to the head of the Interests Section, was held in Cason’s home library. Gonzalo Gallegos, the Public Affairs Officer at the Interests Section, served as moderator.

The participants spoke about *Radio “Martí”* and the “independent” libraries and press. *Radio “Martí”* was thought to be boring, and the interventions of counterrevolutionaries — who have limited their participation to soliciting material and financial aid — unnecessarily long.

The participants were offered sandwiches, turnovers, soft drinks, natural fruit juices and Cuban cocktails, which were served by the American officials, including Cason’s wife.

At the end of the meeting, the guests were given copies of the “Varela” Project, *Cartas de Cuba* magazine, Amnesty International reports on human rights “violations” in Cuba, and the book by counterrevolutionary Hubert Matos, *Cómo Llegó la Noche* (How the Night Came). Also offered were the books *Escritos Cubanos de Historia* (Cuban Historical Writings), *Martí Secreto* (The Secret Martí), and *El Descubrimiento de África en Cuba y Brasil* (The Discovery of Africa in Cuba and Brazil), by Argentine writer Octavio di Leo.

October 19:

Cason visits the province of Cienfuegos. He was accompanied by Carmen Cason, his wife, and by Ricardo Zuniga. They arrived in the provincial capital at around 10:40 a.m. and toured the city until 11:00 a.m., when they visited the bishopric.

A short time later, they paid a visit to the home of the provincial leader of the Democracy Movement (Movimiento Democracia), Pedro Castellanos Pérez, whom they asked numerous questions: When and how did he join the “opposition”? How is he able to transmit denunciations, is he called from abroad or is he responsible for doing this? How does he think the government will respond should it find out about this visit?

Next, they head to the home of Arturo Hernández (who is also linked to the Democracy Movement in Cienfuegos). They visit his “independent” library, which is located in his own home, and have lunch with both counterrevolutionaries. The conversation centers on the “independent” libraries, the rental of houses, entertainment for young people, the food situation on the island, and the people’s reaction to these difficulties.

The officials address the issue of health. They claim that the Cuban government exports or capitalizes on medical services, alluding to the Cuban medical aid missions around the world.

They donate 20 radios, with their respective accessories, a rechargeable lamp, a number of flashlights, a pocket tape recorder, office materials, toys and a number of books, including some for learning English.

Cason invites the “dissidents” to visit Havana and dine at his home, in order to give them other books. They leave Cienfuegos at approximately 4:20 p.m.

October 30:

Cason receives 26 counterrevolutionaries in his home: Martha Beatriz Roque (Institute of “Independent” Economists of Cuba, Instituto de Economistas Independientes de Cuba); René Gómez Manzano (Agramonte Union of Cuba, Unión Agromontista de Cuba); Félix Bonne Carcassés (Cuban Civic Current, Corriente

Cívica Cubana); Arnaldo Ramos Laucerique (Institute of Independent Economists of Cuba); Francisco Pijuán (Institute of Independent Economists of Cuba); Jesús Zúñiga Silverio ("Independent Journalists" Foundation, Fundacion de Periodistas Independientes); María del Carmen Carro Gómez (Cuba Press); Edel José García Díaz ("Independent" Press Agency); Ramón H. Armas Guerrero (El Mayor Press Agency, from Camagüey); Néstor Bager Sánchez Galarraga ("Independent" Press Agency of Cuba); Luis Viño Zimmerman ("Independent" Press Agency of Cuba); Manuel David Orrio del Rosario ("Independent" Journalists Cooperative); Antonio Femenias Echemendía (Patria Press Agency, Ciego de Ávila); José M. Caraballo Bravo (Free Press Agency of Ciego de Ávila, Agencia Prensa "Libre" Avileña); Farah Armenteros Rodríguez (Union of "Independent" Cuban Writers and Journalists); Angel Pablo Polanco Torrejón (Noticuba); Mayelín Cedeño Constantín (Center of Information on Democracy, Centro de Informacion sobre la Democracia); Orlando Fundora Álvarez (Political Prisoners Association, Asociación de Presos Politicos); Fabio Prieto Llorente (Isla de Pinos Press Agency); Pedro Argüelles Morán ("Independent" Journalists Cooperative of Ciego de Ávila); Alina Rodríguez Carbonell (Santiago Press Agency); Alicia Zamora Labrada (Lux Info Press); Normando Hernández González ("Independent" Journalists College of Camagüey, Colegio de Periodistas "Independientes" de Camagüey); Amarilys Cortina Rey (Cuba Truth, Cuba Verdad); and Guillermo Gutiérrez and José Antonio González (Martha Beatriz' drivers).

They were there for a work meeting on the project known as the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba, organized and promoted by Martha Beatriz Roque. It began at 2:10 p.m. and lasted until 4:30 p.m. Seven officials from the Interests Section were present, Ricardo Zuniga, Nicholas Giacobbe and Susan Archer among them.

Cason welcomed the participants and said he was aware of the difficulties they had in meeting, which is why he offered his home to facilitate the gathering. He assured them that they could

count on his material as well as moral support, as it was the aim of the United States government to bring “democracy” to the island. He regretted not being able to join them, due to other obligations at the Interests Section. The other officials remained at the meeting, as observers.

The officials served them coffee, lemonade and chicken, and handed each participant two bags containing radios, *Cubamet* pamphlets, two *Cartas de Cuba* magazines, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the book *La Conquista de la Naturaleza* (The Conquest of Nature), by Sergio Díaz, which presents a revisionist analysis of Cuban socialism, and various works by Carlos Ripoll.

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November 2:

Cason and Ricardo Zuniga travel to Matanzas to visit the home of Félix Navarro Rodriguez, president of the Pedro Luis Boitel Democracy Party (Partido por la Democracia Pedro Luis Boitel). They were awaited there by Iván Hernández Carrillo, Tomás Fernández Tier, Sergio González Suárez Inclán and another 22 members of this group. Cason spoke of the virtues of the “Varela” Project and interviewed those present to gauge the acceptance and social impact of Oswaldo Payá’s group. He was also interested in knowing the attention paid them by groups in Havana and abroad.

He mentioned he was touring the entire country in order to hear and see the true Cuban reality, not the version of reality promoted by the Cuban government. He felt that the diplomatic corps in Havana had a false conception of various aspects of life in Cuba. At the end of the meeting, he handed over four boxes of books, to furnish the “independent” libraries of Iván Hernández in the Colón municipality, Miguel Sigler Amaya in Pedro Betancourt, and Andrés Gobeá Suárez at Central 6 de Agosto, in Calimete.

November 11:

A meeting with a delegation of 18 American activists who work in defense of black people’s human rights. The meeting, which lasted approximately two hours, was held in Cason’s home, and was attended by Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés,

Vladmiro Roca Antúnez, Oscar Elías Biscet González, and the latter's wife, Elsa Morejón Hernández.

In addition to the head of the Interests Section, officials Ricardo Zuniga and Gonzalo Gallegos were also present.

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At the end of the meeting, the diplomats presented the Cubans in attendance with two short-wave radios and a number of books; they were told by Ricardo Zuniga that they could take any books they wished from a bookcase set up for this purpose.

Lemonade, mojitos, crackers with ham, guacamole and fried plantain chips were offered during the gathering.

November 21:

Martha Beatriz Roque, promoter of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba, called another meeting of her work group in Cason's home. The members of the Public Relations and Coordination and Organization Commissions made up the bulk of the Cuban participants; the American participants were Cason and Ricardo Zuniga.

The meeting began at 2:00 p.m. The diplomats were interested in meeting the members of the so-called Assembly, who presented them with letters of congratulations for the Republican Party's victory in recent state elections in the United States.

The hosts wanted to verify whether short and medium-wave radios were sold in dollar stores in Cuba.

Martha Beatriz asked the U.S. diplomats to contact the head of the United Nations Organization in Cuba, Luis Gómez Echevarría, to solicit a locale where they could celebrate their Human Rights Day on December 10. She complained that the official had refused to meet with her. Ricardo Zuniga said that, although he didn't know this official personally, he would help her get in touch with him to arrange to hold the activity there.

The diplomatic officials gave the participants four boxes containing copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. James Cason asked them to gather photographs of "political" pris-

oners through the Assembly's History Commission, so as to exhibit them on what he termed the "Wall of Shame" located in the Interests Section.

The head of the Interests Section told them that in January of 2003, an official delegation of American doctors would visit Cuba, with the aim of meeting with those present.

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The participants in the meeting were René Gómez Manzano, Félix Antonio Bonne Carcassés, Arnaldo Ramos Laucerique, Francisco Pijuán, Aleida Godínez Soler, Alicia Zamora Labrada, Rogelio Manuel Menéndez Díaz, María Valdés Rosado, Carlos Prades Herrera, Fernando Sánchez López, Yamira Jiménez and Juan Adolfo Fernández Sainz.

November 22:

From 10:20 a.m. until 11:45 a.m., counterrevolutionaries Orlando Fundora Álvarez, Yolanda Triana Estupiñán, José Barrero Vargas (Political Prisoners Association), Israel Picallo Ortiz ("Independent" Press Agency of Cuba), and another four unidentified people met in Cason's home.

They were welcomed by Rebeca Tobey, the wife of consul Laurence Tobey, who ushered them to a drawing room and offered them ham and cheese sandwiches, grapefruit juice, turnovers, coffee and milk. At the end of the meeting, she gave them a number of books and newspapers published abroad.

The meeting was called by Orlando Fundora to ask those invited, with Cason's permission, to gather information on people who had been allegedly harmed by the Revolution. The aim was to promote a legal action that would force the Cuban government to compensate those individuals and their families.

November 26:

Cason visits Camagüey. At 1:30 p.m., Cason knocked on the door of Alberto Hernández Frómata's home. He was accompanied by Francisco Daniel Sainz. He was awaited there by Evelio Heredero, Eduardo Cedeño, José Antonio and someone known as Alexis, who claimed to be a cooperative member from the Sierra de Cubitas municipality. Frómata's wife was also present.

Cason was interested in the following issues: the general public opinion in the province on the country's situation; the province's economic situation; the unemployment level in the province; how people managed to make ends meet if their salaries were insufficient (he proposed that a small, local survey be organized, to determine the unemployment levels in the province); general interest in the situation of "political" prisoners in the province, their numbers, means of communication with them, whether conditions in the prisons had improved, how they managed to get information out of the jails, and the response of the jail system; the support offered by the Catholic church and other churches to "dissidents" in the province, and whether they backed the "opposition"; the attitude of the masons with respect to the situation in the country; if the "opposition" groups in the province were united and gave each other mutual support; if the "dissidents" had grown stronger in the province in recent times; what level of repression was being exercised by the "Castro dictatorship" against the "dissidents", and whether this persecution was extended to their children as well. He inquired about the welfare of counterrevolutionary Humberto Real Suárez, given a life sentence, and the other members of the infiltration team that entered Cuba through Caibarién, as well as those jailed for acts of sabotage, whom he called "political" prisoners (he had a list of 16 names). He also asked those present if they considered the possibility that changes could be brought about; if they knew what had taken place at the University of Camagüey with members of the "opposition"; if officials from the U.S. Interests Section or any other embassy had ever visited their homes; if the group was receiving financial aid; and if they received medication sent from Miami by Frank Hernández Trujillo.

During the exchange held with the participants, the following was proposed:

To devote more financial resources to the cause of the alleged "political" prisoners, and to make photographs of prisoners available to the Interests Section, to be exhibited in its gallery; that the U.S. Interests Section would give them a video camera to film testimonies from the families of these prisoners.

In response to Frómeta's request for pens and paper, the officials said they could offer none at the time, but invited them to retrieve a number of boxes (four) from their car, containing pamphlets, books and newspapers.

December 19:

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A "social" gathering held at the U.S. Interests Section. It lasted approximately two and a half hours. It was attended by James Cason and another 12 Interests Section officials, 10 diplomatic representatives of the embassies of the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Poland, Greece, Chile, Germany and Japan and 52 counter-revolutionaries from different groups: Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona (an "independent" journalist from Pinar del Río); Pedro Pablo Álvarez Ramos (United Council of Cuban Workers); Aleida Godínez Soler; Alicia Zamora Labrada; Carmelo Agustín Díaz Fernández; Giraldo León; Juan Padrón; Arnaldo Pijuán Martínez; Odilia Collazo Valdés; Isabel del Pino Sotolongo; Reynaldo Cosano Alen; Félix Bonne Carcassés; René Gómez Manzano; Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz Pacheco; Marcelo Cano; Héctor Palacios Ruiz; Gisela Delgado Sablón; Gustavo Arcos Bergnes; Félix Navarro Rodríguez; Iván Hernández Carrillo; Jorge Olivera Castillo; Raúl Rivero Castañeda; Manuel David Orrio del Rosario; Julio César Gálvez Rodríguez; Beatriz del Carmen Pedroso León; Tania Quintero Antúnez; María de los Ángeles Menéndez Villalta; Miriam Leyva Viamontes; Oscar Espinosa Chepe; Ángel Pablo Polanco Torrejón; Ángela de las Mercedes Salinas Batle, wife of Ángel Polanco; Vladimiro Roca Antúnez; Ricardo González Alfonso; Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés; Claudia Márquez Linares; Manuel Vázquez Portal; an unknown counterrevolutionary from the Isle of Youth; Edel José García Díaz; Luis García Vega; Héctor Maceda Gutiérrez; Moisés Rodríguez Valdés; Ernesto Roque Cintero; Ana Rosa Veitía; Pedro Arturo Véliz; William Herrera Díaz; Adolfo Fernández Sainz and Elsa Morejón Hernández.

The meeting began without recourse to formalities as on previous occasions. No words of welcome or farewell were spoken, and each participant walked discreetly into the diplomatic venue

where the reception was being held. They were free to eat and drink the food and beverages there, with no restrictions placed upon them, and to converse just as freely amongst themselves.

At the end of the meeting, each guest was given a bag containing the following items: three VHS tapes, with the three parts of *Una Fuerza Poderosa* (A Powerful Force); the digital version of the book *Cómo Llegó la Noche* (How Night Fell), by the terrorist Hubert Matos; *Temas Clásicos* (Classic Themes), by the counterrevolutionary Carlos Franqui; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a portable radio with accessories.

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January 9:

A trip to Pinar del Río had been planned. Cason was to travel with a group of officials from the Interests Section, but the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations denied authorization for the visit. Regardless, at 1:50 p.m., a white station wagon with license plate number E(201)031, carrying two Cuban citizens and traveling on the Seis Vías highway toward Pinar del Río, is seen to turn onto the bridge at Las Ovas, headed toward the city.

—3:32 p.m.

They park outside the bishopric of Pinar del Río. The driver delivers a cardboard box and two packages. Dagoberto Valdés was inside the bishopric when the visit took place.

—3:45 p.m.

A cardboard box is delivered to a private residence, with material to furnish the “independent” libraries of Reynaldo Núñez Vargas — known as the Ileana Ros-Lehtinen Library — and of René Oñate. They delivered 1,000 copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 50 books and two thousand sheets of paper.

—4:12 p.m.

The car stops outside the home of counterrevolutionary Víctor Rolando Arroyo Carmona’s mother. They unload a medium-sized box. They delivered 1000 copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 60 books and one thousand sheets of paper.

January 16:

Cason takes part in an activity held at Héctor Palacios Ruiz's home to present the book *Ojos Abiertos* (Open Eyes), an expressly counterrevolutionary work which gathers some of the award-receiving pieces from the *El Heraldo* contest for the so-called "independent" libraries. Twenty-three "dissidents" attended the activity: Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz Pacheco; Vladimiro Roca Antúnez; Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés; Claudia Márquez Linares; Raúl Rivero Castañeda; Blanca Reyes Castañón; Félix Bonne Carcassés; Ricardo González Alfonso; Omar Rodríguez Saludes; Diana Margarita Cantón; Isabel Ramos Martínez; Héctor Palacios Ruiz; Gisela Delgado Sablón; Adela Soto Álvarez; Jorge Olivera Castillo; Víctor Manuel Domínguez García; Miguel Galván Gutiérrez; Pedro Pablo Álvarez Ramos; Oscar Espinosa Chepe; Juan Padrón; Gustavo Arcos Bergnes; María de los Ángeles Menéndez Villalta and officials from the accredited diplomatic corps in Cuba. Three Swedish emissaries who were visiting our country, as well as a CNN representative, also attended.

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The presentation, which began at 3:00 p.m., was organized by Rivero Castañeda, Gisela Delgado Sablón, Víctor Manuel Domínguez García and Hugo Araña.

January 20-23:

A tour through Santiago de Cuba. James Cason and Ricardo Zuniga visited the homes of four leaders of counterrevolutionary groups, and met with a total of 18 individuals, including nine group leaders, three representatives of the so-called "independent" libraries and press, and six active members of the following groups: Christian Liberation Movement (Movimiento Cristiano de Liberación), Voice of the East Press Agency (Agencia de Prensa La Voz de Oriente), Independent Libraries Project (Proyecto de Bibliotecas Independientes), Transition to Democracy Group (Junta de Transición a la Democracia), Followers of Chibás Movement (Movimiento de Seguidores de Chibás) and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Group (Junta Carlos Manuel de Céspedes).

During their meetings, Cason and Zuniga said that the Span-

ish embassy had recently received a container with more than 5,000 books that would be distributed throughout the country; that Cason's trips throughout the island, and all of his movements, had to be coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Relations, reporting the time, date, place, and route to this ministry, or otherwise these trips could not be undertaken, which is the reason why they established the same regulation in the United States; that the U.S. officials needed to know the present situation of the "opposition" to be able to offer aid; and that they were satisfied and impressed with the great amount of propaganda posted on the inner and outer walls of the home of "dissident" Jesús Mustafá Felipe (a member of the counterrevolutionary group Christian Liberation Movement), since this was a clear indication that the group is working.

Cason made offensive remarks about President Fidel Castro and mentioned the expulsion of four Cuban diplomats in Washington. He offered the use of his own home for anything they needed and instructed the participants to carry out acts of civil disobedience. They delivered four boxes of books, radios, crayons, pens, toothpaste and toothbrushes, office materials and subversive pamphlets.

February 2:

Cason held a "Cuban cultural evening", which was attended by representatives of the accredited diplomatic corps in Havana, members of the foreign press, representatives of the Cuban cultural sector, and a select group of counterrevolutionaries. Also present were representatives of U.S. businessmen based in Washington and other Americans who attended the Havana International Book Fair.

Among the counterrevolutionaries present were Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, Vladimiro Roca Antúnez, René Gómez Manzano, Martha Beatriz Roque, Gustavo Arcos Bergnes, Félix Bonne Carcassés, Oscar Espinosa Chepe, Pedro Véliz and Odilia Collazo Valdés.

February 7:

A reception is held, attended by representatives of the Cuban cultural sector, members of the accredited diplomatic corps in Ha-

vana, and 21 counterrevolutionaries: Elsa Morejón Hernández, Vladimiro Roca Antúnez, Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, Martha Beatriz Roque, Félix Bonne Carcassés, René Gómez Manzano, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, Oswaldo Alfonso Valdés, Manuel David Orrio del Rosario, Luis García Vega, Julio César Gálvez, Beatriz del Carmen Pedroso León, Odilia Collazo Valdés, María de los Ángeles Menéndez Villalta, Arnaldo Ramos Lauzerique, Oscar Espinosa Chepe, Miriam Leyva Viamontes, Claudia Márquez Linares, Marcelo Cano Rodríguez, Francisco Pijuán Martínez and Pedro Véliz Martínez.

The activity was of an informal nature. Sausage rolls, pizza, soft drinks, pastries, mixed drinks, rum, beer and juice were offered.

February 24:

Between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., the 24th of February was commemorated at the home of Martha Beatriz Roque. Forty-four people participated, including U.S. diplomats James Cason, Ricardo Zuniga and Gonzalo Gallegos, seven representatives of foreign press agencies, and 34 members of counterrevolutionary groups: Martha Beatriz Roque, René Gómez Manzano, Félix Bonne Carcassés, Manuel S. Cuesta Morúa, Juan C. Linares Balmaseda, Noris Durán Durán, Isabel Ramos Martínez, William Toledo Terrero, Raimundo Jorge Martínez, Elsa Morejón Hernández, Nelson Aguiar Ramírez, Delia Leal Francisco, Fernando Sánchez López, Adolfo Fernández Sainz, Ángel P. Polanco Torrejón, Ismael Salazar Agüero, Tania Quintero Antúnez, Alicia Zamora, Nelson Molinet Espino, Belkis Bárzaga, José A. González Torriente, Manuel D. Orrio del Rosario, Jesús García Leyva, Nelson Vázquez Obregón, Edel J. García Díaz, Yamira R. Jiménez Casal, Frank Delgado Macías, Manuel León Paneque, Manuel Fernández Rocha, Mijail Bárzaga Lugo, Armando Barreras, Marcos González, Orlando Rubio and Carlos Grandal.

The meeting was started by Martha Beatriz, who thanked the foreign press and the officials from the U.S. Interests Section for their presence, and regretted the absence of the European diplomats she had invited.

She explained that the meeting was held to celebrate the 108th anniversary of the War of Independence, as well as the anniversaries of the downing of the planes belonging to the organization Brothers to the Rescue (Hermanos al Rescate) and of the Cuban Council.

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Without prior announcement, the head of the U.S. Interests Section, James Cason, offered a sort of press conference to the foreign and “independent” journalists present, where he affirmed that: “the revolution towards democracy is underway, and we want you to know you are not alone, that the whole world supports you.” On being asked by a journalist about the possibility that the Cuban government could interpret his participation in the activity as an unfriendly gesture, the head of the Interests Section answered that “he was not afraid.”

March 4:

Cason visits the province of Pinar del Río. He was accompanied by Ricardo Zuniga and Nicholas Joseph Giacobbe. In the morning they visited the bishopric, where they delivered two packages of paper, and the home of counterrevolutionary Víctor Rolando Arroyo Carmona’s mother, where they delivered nine cardboard boxes and a package.

After having lunch in a *paladar* (privately run restaurant), they returned to Arroyo Carmona’s mother’s home and then went with him to his own home. Here they met with another 10 counterrevolutionaries previously summoned.

The meeting began at 1:30 p.m. Cason spoke of his experiences during his tours through the central and eastern regions of the island. He mentioned that Fidel was now touring Asian countries that perpetuate socialism in their own way, which made him suspect that he might alter his policies on returning from those countries.

He urged those present to seek aid at other diplomatic missions (without indicating which), “because the will to aid and support you exists, and you are not taking advantage of it.”

He mentioned how he recognizes that the Cuban government is coherent in some respects: for instance, the flexibility it shows

in allowing the Interests Section and its guests to meet counter-revolutionary groups. He cited the examples of the visit paid to Oswaldo Payá by two congresspeople and his personal relationship with Martha Beatriz Roque, although a container of books was seized on one occasion.

He was also interested in their use of the Internet, their contacts with their “brothers in exile”, and the number of young people who spoke the English language. Once again, he touched on the changes that the Cuban president could bring about on returning from China.

He was concerned about the different projects being undertaken at the moment, the medical supplies being received, and the work carried out by the Dissidence Support Group (Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia, GAD). He also asked for a list of the medicines most urgently needed in the country. He mentioned that a more severe crisis was nearing for Cuba, and that his government was circulating a document claiming that millions of dollars were invested by the former Soviet Union and no one knows what they were used for. He spoke of long-distance education courses offered to “opposition” members through the Internet and of human rights issues. He concluded by saying that radios and other work supplies would continue to be sent.

At the end of the meeting, they distributed a box of books among those present and took a group picture.

Afterwards, accompanied Víctor Arroyo and the painter René Oñate Sixto, they headed to the home of the latter, where they took photographs of some his works. They returned to Havana at 3:30 p.m.

March 12:

Orlando Fundora Álvarez and other members of his group visited the home of head of the Interests Section to discuss the status of the project known as “I Demand” (Yo Demando). They were there from 11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was held at the apartment adjacent to the home of the American diplomat, and they were received by Rebeca Tobey, wife of the consul Laurence Tobey.

The activity began with a presentation by “independent” journalist Israel Picallo Ortiz, who explained in detail what the aforementioned project consisted of. Forms were handed out to gather signatures in support of the project.

The American limited herself to listening in on the meeting and gave each of them two books, one on Cuban history and another on the Constitution of 1940, as well as a portable short-wave radio. Natural fruit juices were served.

At the end of the meeting, the participants were clearly unhappy and unsatisfied with the treatment they had received. They complained that no official from the Interests Section had attended the meeting, and that only juice had been offered despite the remoteness of the meeting place; they had apparently expected to be served lunch.

March 14:

A Workshop on Journalistic Ethics, promoted by Manuel David Orrio and Martha Beatriz Roque, was held at the home of James Cason. Thirty-four counterrevolutionaries linked to the so-called “independent” press were present, as well as 21 journalists from ten accredited foreign press agencies and five officials from the Interests Section.

Between 9:30 a.m. and 10:25 a.m., the “independent” journalists arrived at Cason’s home. All of them came in taxis (Panataxi) and rented cars. They were received by Rebeca Tobey, who was monitoring the arrival of the participants, supervised by the deputy public affairs officer, Nicholas J. Giacobbe.

Before beginning the activity, the participants were offered a snack consisting of: coffee (of poor quality), milk, cupcakes with raisins, water and lemon-flavored soft drinks.

Before the “work sessions” were started, Public Affairs Officer Gonzalo Gallegos ratified their “willingness to collaborate with and support not only the ‘independent journalists’, but rather all those who, in one way or another, defend their rights as citizens of this country full of restrictions and censorship.”

At approximately 11:00 a.m., the guests divided themselves into four work commissions: the Photojournalism Commission, run

by Alicia Zamora Labrada and Israel Picallo Ortiz; the Interview Commission, with Jesús Zúñiga Silveiro and Olga Rita Ramírez Delgado as leaders; the Analysis, Conflicts and Interests Commission, headed by Manuel David Orrio del Rosario and Aleida Godínez Soler; the Commission on Relations between Journalists and Editors, directed by Néstor Baguer Sánchez Galarraga and Adela Soto Ascuy; and the Commission on Journalistic Language, with Luis García Vega and Ángel Pablo Polanco Torrejón.

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After the work sessions, they broke for lunch, which included buttered white rice, rice and beans, roasted pork chops, beef stew, pasta salad, tomato salad, lettuce, carrots, sautéed eggplant, pudding, turnovers, water and soft drinks.

Finally, the conclusions arrived at by each commission were announced, the agreements reached were adopted, and the situation with *Radio "Martí"* was discussed once again. Apparently, Nicholas Giacobbe made a telephone call to the U.S. State Department to express the concerns of the participants.

At the end of the discussions, the participants received a diploma for having participated in the workshop, which was signed by the journalists Manuel David Orrio del Rosario, from the Federation of "Independent" Journalists of Cuba (Federación de Periodistas Independientes de Cuba), and Farah Armenteros, for the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba project.

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