

I AM STILL INSIDE THE SKIN OF MY CHARACTER

MANUEL DAVID ORRIO DEL ROSARIO

67

He had polio as a child and walks with a limp as result. But this didn't stop him from riding all over Havana on his bicycle, his cane strapped on the side, visiting people and thinking over the article he would write that week for Cubanet, the Miami-based agency established to promote "independent journalism". "I was their star journalist," he mischievously declares, making it clear that he was fully aware of all the tricks behind this business.



He is driven and rigorous, painstakingly verifying information and dates. And all his careful research leads to the same conclusion: the dependence of these "independent" journalists on the money and the whispered instructions from the U.S. Interests Section. It doesn't take much to figure this out; and he is able to attest to the inner workings of the business of news, the profitability of relentless criticism of the Revolution, the dirty tricks aimed at denying the Cuban people of their daily needs, particularly in the most difficult years of the so-called Special Period.

Manuel David Orrio del Rosario, a 38-year-old accountant, toiled in a complex world where he had to struggle to avoid being shoved aside by the more ambitious, where he was obliged to undertake actions that did not always meet with the approval of his superiors, and where he had to study, like never before in his life, to learn everything possible about the inner workings behind the so-called "opposition" in Cuba, and above all, the opposition "journalists".

AGENT MIGUEL

How did you first come into contact with these counterrevolutionary elements?

Late in 1991 a friend asked me to go with her to the home of Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, who was also a friend of hers. It turned out eventually that her friendship with him was a way to help her get a visa to the United States, something she finally managed to do. That was how I met this gentleman.

Did it go beyond simple greetings?

On that particular occasion, no. But on January 31, 1992, I went to a party at the house of some friends of mine, and something interesting happened.

What?

After I'd had a few drinks, I started chatting with Enrique Patterson, a former professor of the history of philosophy at the University of Havana. During the conversation he showed me a document outlining a democratic social program that had been released a few days earlier by a number of individuals, one of whom was Elizardo.

And why did he show this kind of trust in you?

I was with Elizardo's friend again, and she vouched for my trustworthiness.

Did you read the document?

Yes, I read it.

What did you think of it?

I found it interesting.

Did you meet again?

Yes, and I was also introduced to some other people.

Who were they?

Rolando Prats, the president of the Cuban Democratic Socialist Current (Corriente Socialista Democrática Cubana, CSDC), Carlos Jesús Menéndez, and others. Eventually, Prats moved permanently to the United States.

69

These meetings led to a kind of recruitment process. They were looking for new members for the group, and wanted people of a certain intellectual level. This started to worry me. I talked about it with a cousin of mine, who's an officer in the Ministry of the Interior, and I asked him what I should do.

What did he tell you?

He told me to write a report for State Security, and he would take care of getting it to them.

Did you get a response?

In February of '92, my cousin informed me that an officer specializing in this area was going to visit me. That was how the first interview came about.

What did they tell you?

They just asked me if I would be willing to cooperate with them.

What did you answer?

I told them that in principle, yes, but that I would give them a definitive answer later.

Why in principle?

At that particular point in time I was going through a really difficult period in my personal life. I had even stopped working in my profession.

What is your profession?

I'm an accountant?

Why did you leave your job?

Because of problems in the workplace.

What did you live on?

I was working as a night watchman in a farmer's market in Cerro (a neighborhood in Havana). Just imagine, from an accountant to a night watchman! Aside from all my other problems.

What were those other problems?

My father had recently died, and I was in the middle of a long and drawn-out custody battle for my son. My life was a mess.

What did you decide in the end?

In September I called the officer and told him I was prepared to cooperate.

What led you to make this decision?

I had come to the conclusion that if I didn't get involved in a good cause, I was going to get completely lost in all the turmoil of my life.

What were the first tasks you were assigned?

Joining the Cuban Democratic Socialist Current (CSCD). I went to see Elizardo on October 25, and he informed me a few days later that I had been officially accepted into the organization. I will never forget the date: November 3, 1992.

During that period, important meetings were held every Thursday evening at Vladimiro Roca's house. By December 10 I was already involved in my first operations.

What were those first operations?

The CSCD carried out a variety of propaganda activities after Álvaro Prendes' defection from the ranks of the Revolution. In response, a series of acts of repudiation were held outside Vladimiro's house, and this led to fragmentation within the CSCD. I took advantage of this opportunity to gain a foothold within the organization.

I began to visit a number of people. I earned the trust of many of these individuals when they saw that in spite of facing a difficult situation, I didn't lose my nerve.

This paved the way for the executive of the CSDC to meet in my house on March 29, 1993. The meeting was authorized by State Security, which set up filming equipment.

Around this time, Prats went abroad. This led to conflicts within the Socialist Current. As would be expected, Prats used the trip to serve his own personal interests.

71

Could you expand on that?

It should be remembered that within the Cuban Democratic Socialist Current there was a marked struggle among Vladimiro, Elizardo and Prats. Each one represented a tendency. Prats started to make statements abroad against the blockade, and got a lot of publicity. He started to gain influence.

He even made statements in which he said that he would rather negotiate with a reformed communist party than with the extreme right-wing exile sector in Miami.

Elizardo, who is a chameleon, could not contain himself, and prepared a trip abroad as well. Vladimiro stayed behind in Havana, undermining the position of both Elizardo and Prats.

It was a very turbulent time. Full of intrigues. With time, I came to realize that this is what predominates in that world: intrigues, dishonesty, betrayal.

What happened when Elizardo returned?

When Elizardo got back from the United States, he prepared a file on Prats, portraying him as a social menace. He removed him from the presidency of the CSDC, named himself the new president, and took absolute control.

I confronted Elizardo on all of this, which made me a marked man as far as he was concerned. He set out to marginalize me.

It was a difficult period. It was around this time that I finally resolved the problem of the custody of my son. More than one person tried to convince me to use political manipulation to deal with this conflict, but I chose to find a solution through legal channels, like any average citizen of the Republic, without getting politics involved, which is what the counterrevolutionaries wanted me to do.

But it was becoming more difficult for me to get deeper into the group, because of the situation with Elizardo. That was when I discovered there was another possibility open to me; not even I could have guessed the way it would change my life.

72

Carlos Alberto Montaner

A Cuban, now living in Madrid, he calls himself president of the Cuban Liberal Union. He left Cuba on May 24, 1961, and in 1963 joined a select group created by the CIA and trained in Fort Benning, Washington.

In 1970, he moved to Spain, where he founded, with the financial support of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Playor publishing house and Firmas Press news agency, which publish anti-Cuban literature and supply biased information about Cuba to the Latin American, European and U.S. press. He also participates in propaganda campaigns against our country in the international media.

In August of 1990 he founded, in Madrid, the Cuban Democratic Platform (Plataforma Democrática Cubana), a coalition made up of the Cuban Liberal Union (Unión Liberal Cubana) and counterrevolutionary organizations such as the Social Democratic Coordinator (Coordinadora Socialdemócrata) and the Cuban Christian Democratic Party (Partido Demócrata Cristiano Cubano). This organization was created by the CIA to influence European and Latin American political sectors and to foster pressures against the island.

He backs the U.S. policy of tightening the blockade against Cuba, is against foreign investment in Cuba, and promotes the international isolation of our country.

In December of 1991, he organized a seminar called "The Present and Future of the Cuban Economy", aimed at discouraging foreign investors from entering into business with our country, and using veiled threats for this purpose.

He supports the activities of counterrevolutionary groups by sending them material supplies and communications equipment, as well as funding. He has even proposed that these items be sent to Cuba through the diplomatic pouch of the Spanish Embassy in Havana.

What was it?

Writing. I had always liked to write, but I had never pursued it before. I felt a need to express my views. Since I was still working as a night watchman, I had 12 hours every night to do whatever I wanted from an intellectual point of view.

What did you write about?

Economics and historical research.

When did you start out as a journalist?

On instructions from State Security, I joined the Cuban Association of “Independent Journalists” (APIC) in the summer of 1995. I was responsible for helping to revive the association, because it was almost non-existent at the time. I started to write about the economy, and had a few initial successes.

Who were your first contacts?

I took my first works to Néstor Baguer.

Once you were inside this world, what did you find?

A crazy world, full of gossip and intrigues. The ones who worked the least were the ones paid the most. The APIC offices were in the home of Yndamiro Restano, Sr., better known as Julio Suárez, who founded the association with Pablo Reyes in 1988. In fact, Robert Ménard, a representative of Reporters Without Borders, came to Havana to question Suárez about money that he was supposed to have distributed, but had kept for himself instead.

Did you have any contact with Ménard?

Not with him, but with one of his emissaries, a Canadian named Gregory Barker. I went around Havana with him, to put together a report. He conducted a very long interview with me, and kept pressing me about the situation of so-called prisoners of conscience. He told me that he had also visited Raúl Rivero and Jorge Olivera Castillo.

What happened later with Suárez?

At one point a plot emerged aimed at removing Baguer from the agency. Suárez harassed him relentlessly, and ended up calling a meeting to eliminate his rival.

Baguer found out and showed up at the meeting with a copy of the *Diario de las Américas* that contained a lengthy account of Suárez' activities as a prosecutor at the trials in the province of Matanzas during the first months after the triumph of the Revolution. According to the article, he had requested the death penalty for numerous individuals. The same newspaper also reported on the background of Elizardo, who had been a professor of Marxism, a Cuban diplomat, and above all, a fanatical extremist.

Did Baguer get kicked out in the end?

No way! When Baguer pulled out the newspaper, the meeting ended right then and there.

I understand that a pool of agencies was created.

Yes, on September 8, 1985, the day of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre (the patroness of Cuba). They named it the Cuban Independent Press Agency. Its members included APIC. There were a very small number of journalists who had actually worked in the media, like Raúl Rivero, and a handful of pseudo-journalists. Incidentally, that night, Rivero received 100 dollars; he got roaring drunk and founded his own agency, Cuba Press.

Where did you publish your first work abroad?

In the *Nuevo Herald*.

What was it about?

It was a historical research piece on Eduardo Chibás.

When did you begin to be paid regularly?

In January of 1997, when I began to get a salary from *Cubanet*. That same year, I was also sent money by Frank Calzón, through Carlos Gerb, a U.S. citizen.

How much?

Frank sent me 100 dollars. My name started appearing on *Cubanet*, and as of May they were paying me 100 dollars a month. They also sent me a computer and a digital camera. I was paid more than the others were. This was *Cubanet*, and they considered me their star journalist.

How did you send in your work?

I dictated it over the phone to Rosa Berre, who was working as the director of *Cubamet*. We made contact twice a week, and every Wednesday I would submit three or four news stories, which weren't necessarily about the problems of the opposition, but also about Cuban society. I sent them articles, reports...

75

Brothers to the Rescue (Hermanos al Rescate, HAR)

Founded on May 15, 1991, under the pretext of aiding rafters. Its active leaders are José Basulto León, William Schuss and Arnaldo Iglesias, all former members of CIA infiltration teams and the 2506 Brigade.

This organization is primarily made up of pilots of Cuban origins, although it also includes pilots from Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico and the United States.

Its headquarters are located in Opalocka, and consist of a hangar rented at 5,000 dollars a month, a sum its members are able to pay thanks to the donations of various organizations, the Cuban-American National Foundation among them.

Under the cover of their activities in rescuing rafters, they carried out a survey of our coasts and the movement of Cuban vessels and tracked Cuban communications with the aim of supporting paramilitary groups and Cuban terrorists and drawing up plans to sabotage high-voltage towers within the country.

They have violated territorial borders and carried out extremely low flights over our territory, dropping propaganda leaflets in the northeast sector of the Cuban capital, in the hopes of provoking a direct confrontation between Cuba and the United States, and thus reverting whatever progress has been achieved in the relations between both nations. Repeated provocations of this nature were responsible for the downing of two light aircraft belonging to the Brothers to the Rescue organization on February 24, 1996, after the Cuban government had issued numerous warnings.

Where does Cubanet's funding come from?

From the National Endowment for Democracy.

In addition to Cubanet, where else did you send your work?

To Radio "Martí".

76 *How did you become connected with Radio "Martí"?*

Through Carlos Quintela, Rosa Berre's husband. I wrote them reports on the economy, agriculture, the sugar harvest.

Did you come to hold important positions within the dissident community?

Yes. I was the president of the Cuban "Independent Journalists" Cooperative and of the Cuban Federation of Journalists. I started out at the bottom, but I managed to earn a place for myself thanks to the quality of my work, the fact that I was a regular and reliable collaborator, and a series of landmarks that attracted attention.

For example...

In this milieu, it is taboo to criticize the opposition. I broke that rule, and I got into trouble for it.

What kind of trouble?

They threatened to beat me up.

Who?

Different elements tied to the dissident community. There were lists of people drawn up who were not supposed to be allowed to work as "independent journalists". It was really quite funny. On the one hand, I was attacked by the government, and on the other hand, by the "dissidents", who would never allow anyone to have a truly independent stance, one that was critical of what was going on.

What about the freedom of expression?

These groups have no concept of it, even though they talk about it incessantly. I broke that barrier. I did an investigative report on the so-called Cuban Council, where I unmasked all of the lies behind this group. I called my article, "Is the Cuban Council in its Death Throes?" That did it. I also denounced the corruption of people like Héctor Palacios.

What was the Cuban Council?

The joining together of numerous grouplets — 140 “opposition” organizations, they said — upon the instructions of the Cuban-American National Foundation. And it was connected, from the beginning, with Brothers to the Rescue and its head, José Basulto; with the Center for a Free Cuba, Freedom House, the Institute for Democracy in Cuba, and others. And also with Carlos Alberto Montaner and Hubert Matos. In reality, it was a council joining the inside and the outside, under the direction of the Interests Section, which organized a parallel event to the Ibero-American Summit held in Havana in 1999.

77

Another organization that gave major support to the Cuban Council was Reporters without Borders. And, of course, the U.S. government fundamentally. But in any event, it was a real madhouse.

How were relations among the “independent journalists”?

They had their ups and downs. It wasn't easy to maintain good relations, because everyone was after the dollars. There were people who only earned 20 dollars a month, and there was an underlying problem among the so-called “independent journalists”. The majority didn't even fulfill the minimum requirements for exercising the profession. That was the case for Gilberto Figueredo, who averaged one spelling mistake per line. This led me to organize a meeting in Chinatown among the founding journalists. I spent a month getting the meeting together.

Where in Chinatown?

In the apartment of Estrella García, right on the main street of Chinatown, above a *paladar* (small privately run restaurant).

What was the primary objective?

There was a lot of anger towards Raúl Rivero. He hadn't adhered to the old saying, “The shark swims in the water, but it splashes the others.” He became too greedy for his own good. He wanted everything for himself. He also hadn't properly channeled the concerns and problems put forward “to the group”. He felt that he was

above everyone else, and was even convinced that he was untouchable. He didn't have the guts to attend the meeting.

78

We took advantage of the meeting to draft a document that was signed by the majority of the participants, in which we described the enormous difficulties we had to face with the institutions that managed our resources abroad. When the news reached Miami, a scandal erupted. Then came the pressures, and people started backing off. They accused me at the Interests Section, where I was summoned to be interrogated by an official.

What happened?

I presented myself there, very calmly, and told the official dealing with me, "Look, here are the original and a copy of the document and the signatures, and here is a copy of the recording of the discussion." Before I left, I had to answer a questionnaire, apparently to test me. The matter was left there. The problem led to fighting among the different groups, it was a moment of crisis. From that point forward, the officials at the Interests Section stayed in closer contact with me. I was instructed by officers to avoid conflicts. The objective was to gain space.

Did you meet with any U.S. political figures?

One of the most important, in terms of interventionism, was Charles Shapiro, the head of the Cuba Desk of the State Department at that time. During his visit, he gave us instructions to organize a parallel summit to the Ibero-American Summit that was going to be held in Havana. I also met with members of Congress, economists and other personalities.

When was your first contact with the U.S. Interests Section?

In May of 1997.

With whom?

Judith Bryan, deputy officer. At that point I had already made a name for myself in the "independent" press. During our conversation she tested me to try to get to know me better. She even asked me if I wanted to leave the country. I told her that I didn't, because I wanted to be here to see my son grow up, and I was doing well economically.

Did this contact take place on a regular basis?

Yes. I was given precise instructions and supplies to carry out my work. Just to give you an idea of how intense this relationship was:

between early 2002 and March 28, 2003, when my true identity was revealed, I went to the Interests Section 21 times.

Did you have any difficulty getting into the Interests Section offices?

80

Not at all. They gave me an open pass. I could go inside and use their computers to go on the Internet and send and receive e-mail.

What did the Interests Section officials ask you for?

Information on the economy, on the personal lives of our leaders, on the sociopolitical situation. We were given instructions to attack the government, indications as to the most vulnerable areas of the country in terms of news, and training for the exercise of the profession (journalism courses), as well as the means to carry out our missions (computers, printers, tape recorders, cameras, video cameras, etc.).

At around this time, at the end of the year 2000, the Interests Section had a greater interest in me, especially after another conflict erupted, when *Cubamet* expelled around 20 people with no explanation. Shortly before this happened, I had created the Federation of Cuban Journalists, and I used the group to try to unite people in the face of this problem. It was through this union of sorts that I was able to put up a good fight in the Interests Section.

This caught the attention of Vicky Huddleston, who visited me at my home. I eventually developed a very fluid relationship with her. I told her about what was happening: that people wanted money, that *Cubamet* had to change its payment system... That was in February or March of 2001. After that, she went to Miami, met with the people at *Cubamet*, and something happened that changed the payment system around May of that year. In other words, she gave instructions with regard to what I had asked for on behalf of the other "journalists". After that, I began to visit the Interests Section more regularly.

Could you tell me about some of those meetings?

For example, on the afternoon of February 12, 2002, there was a meeting that lasted about three hours at the residence of the head

of the Interests Section, Vicky Huddleston, where she instructed us to maintain contacts with the embassies of Belgium, Germany and Spain.

It was a luncheon meeting, and sitting at the table, among others, were Elsa Morejón Hernández, Magalys de Armas Chaviano, René Gómez Manzano, Isabel del Pino Sotolongo, Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés, Odilia Collazo Valdés, Luis Osvaldo Manzanera Cucalo, Julio Luis Pitaluga, and myself. Vicky sat with us, and asked about obtaining a list of counterrevolutionary prisoners. She asked us if we agreed that there were around 200. Of course, everyone claimed that the number was higher, around 250.

At around three, when lunch was ending, she took a microphone and welcomed everyone present to her home. She said that we truly represented the Cuban people, and that our country would have to recognize the “dissidents”, free the so-called political prisoners, allow freedom of the press, and make other democratic changes.

Jeffrey de Laurentis asked about repression of “dissidents”, while Louis Nigro said he had visited a number of “independent libraries” in Camagüey, and noted a shortage of literature. At the end of the meeting, all of the participants were given small Tecsun brand radios as a gifts.

You have a good memory.

It's not that I have a good memory; I was able to take notes, because of being a journalist.

Did officials from the Interests Section visit your home?

Yes, of course. I remember that on April 11 of 2002, between 11:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., I was visited at my home by Maryann McKay, the deputy public affairs officer, who also asked me for information on the Cuban informal economy.

Before leaving, she told me that she was very pleased with her visit, and that on the next occasion Vicky might participate as well.

And did you visit the homes of Interests Section officials?

Yes. For example, on April 15 I visited the residence of Gonzalo Gallegos, public affairs officer at the Interests Section, accompanied by Raúl Rivero, Ricardo González Alfonso, Oscar Espinosa Chepe, Carmelo Díaz Fernández, Pedro Pablo Álvarez Ramos, Edel José García Díaz and Luis García.

On that occasion, Maryann McKay explained that there were two reasons for the meeting: to gather opinions on the possibilities of investment in Cuba and on whether these investments would help the process of transition towards a democracy. The “dissidents” voiced their disagreement with this.

Do you still have your notes from these visits?

On June 6, I attended a lunch hosted by Vicky, along with another seven officials from the Interests Section and 21 members of the so-called “independent press”. It was a farewell lunch for Mary Ann Mackay, whose posting in Cuba was ending.

Sitting with the Interests Section head were Raúl Rivero, from Cuba Press; Mario Enrique Mayo, from the “Félix Varela” Press Agency, based in Camagüey; Luis García Vega, from the “Independent Journalists” Cooperative; Julio César Gálvez, from the Cuban “Civic Press” Agency; and Pedro Pablo Álvarez Ramos, from the United Council of Workers of Cuba.

Vicky read a message to the participants, where she spoke of the “importance that had to be given to the speeches made by U.S. President George W. Bush on May 20.” She finished by expressing thanks for the work carried out during her term as principal officer of the Interests Section, and told us that all of us present there were very courageous people.

Gonzalo Gallegos, the Interests Section public affairs officer, announced that as part of his government’s initiatives regarding Cuba there was a program for two years of schooling in the United States for Cubans between the ages of 17 to 25, aimed at academic upgrading in the United States in the fields of small business management and administration. He handed

out application forms, but I don't know if this project was ever actually carried out.

As we were leaving, the Interests Section officials gave each of the participants a carrying case. These contained materials for our work as journalists, three Tecsun brand portable radios (they said we could have more, if we wanted), a waterproof solar-powered flashlight, and copies of the application forms for the scholarships offered by the Interests Section, stressing that the applicants must be individuals disaffected with the government.

83

I have more notes here. On July 1, I went to a working breakfast at Vicky's residence. I was accompanied by Manuel Vázquez Portales, Oscar Espinosa Chepe and his wife. On the U.S. side, in addition to the hostess, it was attended by diplomatic officials Louis Nigro, Gonzalo Gallegos and Ryan Dooley.

You were also invited for breakfast?

And really good breakfasts!

What did they want this time?

They were interested in our opinions on constitutional amendments. The participants voiced their concerns over the possible breaking of relations between Cuba and the United States, the immigration agreements, and the closure of the Interests Section in Havana.

The Interests Section officials commented on opinions regarding a possible mass exodus to the United States, and people looking for speedboats that would come to Cuba to help them emigrate. Vicky commented on the presence of large numbers of police officers on the beaches, at which point Vázquez Portal jokingly commented that "they had to be careful the police didn't leave Cuba as well."

Espinosa Chepe and Vázquez Portal maintained that the speech given by Carter at the University of Havana was the one that did the most damage to Fidel, and not the speech by President George W. Bush. Their argument was that the former president had been intelligent, moderate and courageous, while Bush was too aggressive.

Democracy Movement (Movimiento Democracia)

Founded at the beginning of 1995, and composed of members of the terrorist organization known as the Cuban National Commission (Comisión Nacional Cubana, CNC).

The top leader of the group is Ramón Saul Sánchez Rizo. He was born in Colón, Matanzas. He has a post-secondary degree in electronics. His address is 7105 SW 8th Street, Suite 101, Second Floor, Miami, FL 33144 (2000), Brickelave, Miami.

At an early age, he was already a renowned terrorist and a fierce anticommunist. In 1978, he was suspected of having participated in a terrorist attack against four Americans who were traveling to Cuba in an airplane that disappeared. He was the head of the organization known as Jóvenes de la Estrella.

In 1979, US authorities identified him as the second in command of the organization known as CORU, presided over by Cuban-born terrorist Orlando Bosch. That same year he was tied to the assassination of Carlos Muñiz Varela in Puerto Rico.

He participated in attacks on Cuban fishermen in the Bahamas and on the Mexican embassy. He has also taken part in plans for the kidnapping of important figures in Florida, New York, Venezuela, and Mexico, seeking to extort funds through the use of blackmail.

Since 2002, his organization has begun to give public support to counterrevolutionary groups in Cuba, and particularly to the so-called Varela Project, which it supported publicly during the recent visit to Miami by Oswaldo Payá.

Finally, we were invited to participate in the reception on July 4 to commemorate the anniversary of U.S. independence. And once again we were given supplies: in addition to documents with recipes for democracy, plastic bags with four radios each. The “opposition” members were driven home in an Interests Section car, except for me, because I had come on my bicycle and I rode it home again.

Did you attend the Fourth of July reception?

Of course.

What happened there?

The reception was held at Vicky's residence. There were around 35 of us "dissidents" in attendance. There were also diplomats from other countries, foreign correspondents, and a few guests from the Cuban cultural world.

They threw colored balloons from a balcony overlooking the grounds of the house, where the reception was held, and the participants were given U.S. flag pins and other similar souvenirs. Vicky dedicated a poem to us — specially dedicated to the "human rights activists", or something like that — and then went on almost immediately to read the speech given by U.S. President George W. Bush for Independence Day. It was all very patriotic.

On a more informal footing, Vicky's assistant, Peter Corsell, asked about the possible successors to Fidel and the consequences for Cuban society. During the conversation, he presented himself as an "enemy of the extreme right in Miami and Havana," and stressed the need to protect the immigration agreements between the two countries.

Ryan Dooley, who was responsible for attending to us, talked to a very small group of us about the desire to leave the country of many of the people present. He was clearly bothered by the harassment he was subjected to throughout the entire reception for these purposes, particularly by Jorge Olivera Castillo and his wife, and Magalys de Armas Chaviano's son. Entertainment was provided by a pianist from the United States and Fernando Sánchez López, from the Democratic Solidarity Party, who very "patriotically" accompanied him.

And there were gift bags, of course: a radio, a battery re-charger, a booklet on various political and legal subjects and the Constitution of the United States, a Bacardi rum brochure, and two small leaflets, one with the speech made by former President James Carter in Havana — they had taken what was said at the last meeting very seriously — and another with statements by Bush on the policy towards Cuba.

A few weeks later, on August 14, I once again attended a lunch at the home of Gonzalo Gallegos.

They certainly seemed to keep you people well fed.
It's part of our payment.

What was the occasion this time?

86

To introduce Nicholas J. Giacobbe and Richard Cason, new diplomats at the Interests Section.

What happened at the lunch?

Cason called on us to share our views and opinions on the current situation in the country. Manuel Vázquez Portal, Julio César Gálvez Rodríguez and Oscar Espinosa began. They commented on the pessimistic outlook following the signatures given by the Cuban people in support of the Constitutional Reform project. They claimed that all Fidel cared about was staying in power, and that the U.S. economic blockade was of no importance to our government, emphasizing that in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, all of the officials wore masks.

On addressing the issue of the “independent press”, what became clear was the need for more resources in order for us to carry out “better quality work”. This was a unanimous demand. There were various suggestions to improve our work. Vázquez Portal said that the press and Radio and Television “Martí” should focus on the values of the Cuban people: homeland, family, religion and freedom.

Less than two weeks later, on August 26, to be exact, I attended another function at the home of the Interests Section chief.

What was the occasion?

It was a farewell party for Vicky Huddleston. There were gifts for the hostess. I remember that Elsa Morejón Hernández, the wife of Oscar Elías Biscet, after falling over herself in praise for Vicky, recited a poem in her honor and then presented her with a painting of a Cuban country landscape. Marta Beatriz Roque emotionally spoke of the enormous help that Vicky had given to the “opposition”. Others gave her a religious picture and a letter addressed to the State Department, praising her work. Vladimiro Roca, from

the Social Democratic Party, predicted that within two years we would have the democracy we yearned for and suggested that Vicky's replacement "follow the same line that she had, or an even harder one."

Later, we commented on the subjects that were addressed at the different tables.

87

Such as?

Louis Nigro asked about Alcibíades Hidalgo, who had occupied very important positions in the government. He asked Miriam Leyva Viamontes, from the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, about her opinion of this man, who had apparently gone to the United States illegally with considerable ease.

Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, from the Christian Freedom Movement, spent his time trying to convince the people he spoke with of the need to step up pressure on the Cuban government to acknowledge the "Varela Project".

Baguer got into an argument with diplomat Ryan Dooley after saying that Payá was a failure and a loser, which drew an angry response from the U.S. official.

What kind of relationship did you have with Payá?

Distant. That of a journalist, a political observer, who also happens to be critical of his project. There was something very interesting about Payá: he didn't invite the "independent journalists" to his press conferences. Only the foreign press.

How did Vicky's farewell party end?

When lunch was finished, she called for everyone's attention by clinking her glass. She recalled how the beginning of her posting in Cuba coincided with the visit to our country by Governor George Ryan, and she declared that was a special pleasure to have us as guests at her farewell.

She noted that at that point in time, the "opposition" was divided into two sides, those on the left and those on the right. She

said that this was not important, because it was all a question of fighting for democracy. As usual, on our way out we were given radios and copies of a book entitled *Outside Cuba*, published in collaboration with the University of New Jersey, with paintings by Cuban artists.

88

Did you have contact with James Cason?

From the moment he arrived.

When did you meet with him for the first time?

On September 17, at the home of Gonzalo Gallegos. We met in the library. The main reason behind the meeting was to introduce us as the principal “dissident” leaders.

Was there anything noteworthy?

No. It was more of the same. The people there asked for money — “support” — and once again we heard about the “independent libraries”, and the press-related projects. With the exception of Carmelo Díaz from the “Independent” Trade Union Press Agency, who praised the station, the participants were very critical of *Radio “Martí”*. They talked about the poor quality of programming, its lack of objectivity, describing it as simplistic, and therefore of little interest to the people. I myself commented that there had been a obvious “shift to the right of the station and programming problems,” opinions that were generally backed by a number of those present.

Did you participate in the activities of the various groups?

My position as a journalist helped me get invited to their activities. On October 10, I was at Marta Beatriz Roque’s house for the establishment of the Public Relations Committee for the so-called Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba project.

At this meeting, they agreed, among other things: to distribute literature describing their work to the embassies of Italy, Germany and Sweden. To draft a request for international aid for the dissidents affected by Hurricanes Isidore and Lili. To congratulate Vladimiro Roca and Gustavo Arcos for their Civic Courage awards, equivalent to 50,000 and 5,000 dollars, respectively.

Did you accompany them on their visits to embassies?

At the Italian embassy, Marta Beatriz and other “dissidents” were received by Raffaella Pavani. We told her about the main lines of work to be undertaken to promote this project.

We also visited the British embassy, where we were received by the second secretary, Susannah Payne. After we had explained the reason for our visit, she asked about the motives for the disagreements between Marta Beatriz and Oswaldo Payá. 89

In response to her questions, Marta explained that these disagreements were the result of Payá’s attitude of contempt towards the other opposition members, which he justified through accusations of supposed links between these groups and Cuban State Security Agencies.

Did you meet with Cason again?

On a regular basis. On October 30, we met at his home to work on the project headed up by Marta Beatriz, and he announced the upcoming visit, in December, by the head of the Cuba Desk at the U.S. State Department, Kevin Whitaker.

Did he come in the end?

Yes.

Did you get to meet him?

On December 18, between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., along with another 12 dissident leaders, I met with Mr. Kevin Whitaker at the home of Gonzalo Gallegos.

For what purpose?

He congratulated us on the work we were doing and said that this kind of contact was very beneficial and should be repeated in the future.

Susan Archer, the second secretary for political and economic affairs at the Interests Section, took advantage of the occasion to introduce Whitaker to Aleida Godínez Soler, the leader of the independent unions, with whom the high U.S. official had an animated conversation.

Were your contacts with the Interests Section maintained in the new year?

In 2003 they were not just maintained, they were increased and reinforced. Sometimes we visited them, and other times we met in our homes.

90

Cason's activity became more active and much more provocative. He went so far as to tell us that we were not alone, and that we had the support of his government. I remember that when a foreign correspondent asked him about the possibility of the Cuban government interpreting his participation in these activities as an unfriendly act, he responded that "he was not afraid."

How did the idea come up of holding a workshop on journalistic ethics?

This was an idea we had had for a long time. We agreed to hold it on March 14 at Cason's residence.

Who informed the foreign correspondents?

I did. Jacobbe gave me the phone numbers.

How exactly was the workshop organized?

When I joined the Assembly led by Marta, she appointed me to the Press Committee, where I was immediately elected president. I met with Ricardo Zuniga two or three days later, because there were new conflicts brewing, and he practically begged me to work at ending this fighting.

There was a second meeting of the Press Committee, where we discussed the request for withdrawal from the Assembly from a group in Camagüey. The people there complained about conflicts of interest and excessive politicization, and said they did not want to be involved in all this.

Marta tried to have this group condemned for having left the Assembly, and she wanted the condemnation to come from the journalists themselves, but they refused to go along with it. I took advantage of this opportunity to propose to these people, who were pure Miami, the idea of reflecting on ethics, and holding a workshop. The result: Marta got up, went to the phone, and came back with the instructions from Gonzalo Gallegos to hold a meeting at his house,

supposedly because they wouldn't be able to fit everyone into Marta's house. They talked about 60 "independent journalists", and then the Americans, who certainly knew from the very beginning that it would be impossible to gather 60 "opposition" members, came up with a brilliant plan: to hold the workshop at Cason's residence, which was big enough to also hold the foreign journalists accredited in Cuba.

91

How many "independent journalists" participated in the end?

There were 35 of us, plus five Americans.

What happened at the workshop?

We organized it in five commissions: photojournalists; interviews; analysis, conflicts and interests; relations between journalists and editors; and journalistic language. Once the discussions had concluded, the participants received a diploma certifying their attendance at this "event".

Whose signature was on the diploma?

The signature of dissident leader Manuel David Orrio del Rosario, who was actually Agent Miguel of the State Security agencies.

Why Miguel?

It's my son's name.

When was your last article published abroad?

In late March. It was an amusing report I entitled "Living on Fear". I described the fear felt by the "dissidents", I mean, the counter-revolutionaries.

Why the correction?

I still have the counterrevolutionary stuck inside me. I had to train myself to assimilate all of the language used in this setting, to the point where one day my officer was talking about the blockade, and I told him: "Listen, you have to say embargo when you talk to me, because if I get mixed up out there, I've had it."

Now you have to get the character you were playing out from under your skin...

Yes, now I have to rebuild my life, my family. I want to work as a journalist and write a book, maybe a novel.

In the beginning, did you have doubts, did you regret taking this step?

I never had any doubts, I was only worried that I wouldn't be able to take on a task like this in the midst of all my personal problems, but I managed to overcome these conflicts. I don't regret any of it.

92

On the contrary. When I was informed that my true identity was going to be revealed, I was against it, because I felt that I had reached my peak: I was well-positioned, I had the full trust of the head of the Interests Section, and I was one of the leading "independent journalists". I thought that there was still a lot more I could do, but I am disciplined, and I understood the reasons. Of course, in personal terms, I feel a huge relief.

Why?

Can you imagine just how badly someone can want to be himself?

THE EVIDENCE WAS A BOMBSHELL

pedro serrano urra

93

It was a difficult interview at first. We had trouble breaking the ice, and getting Agent Saúl to speak to us comfortably, without having to tear the words from his mouth.

Little by little, the conversation begins to flow and we discover a man with a prodigious memory, who can recount his past choosing the most essential details and most precise adjectives, in such a way that we can almost see the situations he speaks of.

Who is Pedro Serrano Urra? Why did he choose Saúl as his code-name? The answer lies in a book: "Saúl is the name of a character in a Cuban detective novel that was published in the 1980s. I liked the book, and I turned that character into the lawyer of the 'dissidents' in Pinar del Río". What follows is that new story.

AGENT SAÚL

When did you become an agent?

In 1999. I'm a lawyer, and at the time I had to quit my practice at the col-



lective law firm because of administrative issues. Some members of the “opposition”, who were in need of legal aid, had gotten in touch with me. I met almost everyone in Pinar del Río that was involved in counterrevolutionary activities, including some people that left the country later on.

Exactly how did you begin to collaborate with them?

They came to my home to ask me to denounce my case abroad. I spoke with an official from State Security and he suggested I join the group. Almost immediately, the people who had come to see me introduced me to Víctor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, who was collaborating with the press agency known as the Union of “Independent” Cuban Journalists and Writers (Unión de Periodistas y Escritores Cubanos Independientes, UPECI), and was the top leader of these groups in Pinar del Río. He urgently needed a legal adviser he could trust. I went on to be “Víctor’s lawyer”.

They would introduce you like that, as a lawyer only?

No. My front was that of the director of the Center for Trade Union Studies, which was part of the United Council of Cuban Workers (Consejo Unitario de Trabajadores de Cuba). I had contact with René Laureano Díaz, Joel Brito and Víctor Manuel Domínguez, from the Trade Union Federation of Electrical Power Plants (Federación Sindical de Plantas Eléctricas), in Miami.

What tasks were you given as the lawyer of the counterrevolutionary movement?

I served as adviser in all legal proceedings, and in any situation that required taking a lawsuit to court. I would also present reports on judicial violations. I had to attend trials, see how the judicial processes were being carried out, to see if there were any violations.

I would give lectures to inform counterrevolutionaries on these issues. We studied what constituted an act of disobedience, assault, resisting arrest, defamation of President Fidel Castro and the officials of the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers, what constituted a breach of privacy and correspondence. The Center that I was running organized these lectures every Saturday.

Were you in contact with the U.S. Interests Section?

I never visited the Interests Section. We had planned some visits, but they were all cancelled for one reason or another. But I did attend meetings with representatives of the Interests Section.

Where?

At Víctor Rolando's home. I met there with two of the heads of the Interests Section, Vicky Huddleston and James Cason.

What were those meetings like?

They were quite blunt. They didn't beat around the bush. They were interested in all of the activities being organized by the "dissident" groups in Pinar del Río. They would ask for details, and they would tell us we needed to grow in numbers, that we had to organize ourselves, unite all of the "opposition" groups. They even borrowed some ideas from our Revolution: "Strength is in unity," "Everyone united," etc...

The part everyone was interested in was when they asked what resources we had and what we needed. They would always promise to help us.

When were you visited by James Cason?

In March of this year (2003), during the time that President Fidel Castro was doing a tour through a number of Asian countries. He was extremely interested in knowing what we felt about that visit, if it was going to have some repercussion in Cuba, if Fidel was going to return with new political ideas to apply to his country. He was obsessed with those details, which were far outside the scope of our knowledge and our interest.

He also asked us if we had ties to other members of the diplomatic corps...

Did he suggest anything in particular with respect to this?

In his opinion, it was very important for us to have them hear our denunciations. He was interested in knowing if any other diplomat had visited Pinar del Río, if we were getting aid from any other country. He told us other embassies were interested in offering aid to "dissident" groups. He spoke of Spain, Panama, the Czech Republic, Canada, Mexico... He mentioned five or six countries.

And what else did he tell you?

He promised to make long-distance courses available to us, including graduate studies, Master's degrees and doctorates, aimed at "dissidents" who had some level of education. He was speaking to me and to another lawyer in the meeting when he mentioned this. He promised to send us a bibliography for us to prepare ourselves, and to send the exam later on, in coordination with Latin American universities. He had a very persuasive and conciliatory tone.

Why conciliatory?

He was speaking a lot about Cubans from here and there, that we were all one family, that Miami was not as terrible as they painted it. That the first thing we had to do, with the help of those Cubans in exile, was to obtain as much of a political space as we could, because only then would there be a transition in Cuba.

How long was the meeting?

About two hours.

What is the address of Víctor Rolando's home?

The meeting was in the Jacinto district, at Víctor's mother's house. Around ten of us met there, the bulk of the "opposition" in Pinar del Río. Víctor carried out most of his activities at his mom's place; he only did a bit of writing in his own home.

Did you have a selection process to choose the participants in the meeting, or were you ten in total, the members of the "opposition" in Pinar del Río?

There aren't many more members. In truth, the opposition groups are not even groups. Imagine, I was the municipal coordinator in the city of Pinar del Río for the United Council of Workers and, at the same time, the delegate for the province. There were five or six of us in the United Council. We would always say it was made up of 300 people from every municipality, but those people didn't exist.

And Cason accepted this illusion?

Luckily for the leaders of the "dissident" movement, Cason never thought to ask about the number of people in the groups. I always suspected he never asked because he knew perfectly well what the answer was, and he wasn't up to hearing more lies.

The other officials didn't ask either?

No. They had one theme: to grow and to unite. They were always pushing the same thing. They must know the "dissidents" better than we do, because they are constantly dealing with them. That story that two million out of the 11 million people in Cuba are dissidents, as Víctor loved to say, is something that only people ignorant of Cuban reality could believe, outside of Cuba. It's not something the Americans were going to buy, because they know the dissident movement well.

Was the head of the Interests Section defending one group in particular?

The "Varela" Project. He asked us to lend it support. He said that it had a lot of international backing and that it was going to continue having it. It was the step toward "democracy". He said something along those lines, without stopping to mention the huge legal stumbling blocks of the project.

What were the expectations of the ten dissidents for Cason's visit? Before Cason arrived, we discussed asking him if the remittances from Cuban families in the U.S. were going to continue coming, if the direct flights from Miami to Cuba were going to be maintained, and if the blockade was going to be lifted. We were especially interested in knowing how the money was being distributed, the famous 8,099,181 dollars from USAID in 2002, of which very little had reached our province.

Internal Dissidence Support Group (Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia Interna)

Appeared in the early 1990s. Forms part of the Institute for Democracy in Cuba (IDC), comprising 10 counterrevolutionary organizations based in Miami and beneficiaries of a million-dollar budget from Washington "to promote democracy in Cuba."

Its director, Frank Hernández Trujillo, has close links with U.S. politicians. The group's basic mission is to supply "dissidents" with money and materials, as a tool of the U.S. government in applying the so-called Track II of the Torricelli Act.

It currently heads the list of organizations supplying materials and money to the internal counterrevolution, with which it also has the most frequent contacts by telephone (to the point that it even allocates funds for telephone calls).

It will supply any internal faction, notably the families of former "political" prisoners, masons, followers of the Yoruba religion, etc., with the aim of inciting internal subversion.

Since 1997 the IDC has received a large operating budget, including fixed salaries for its leaders.

As a member of the IDC, it uses the latter's airtime on *Radio Miami International*.

It produces a bulletin printed by the IDC called *Somos uno* (We Are One), and uses various channels to attempt to circulate it in Cuba.

The members of the “opposition” were interested in maintaining the remittances and the direct flights?

Some of us were in favor, others were against them. Víctor was one of the members who wanted them to suspend the remittances and the direct flights. He was a hard-liner. Cason kept quiet about these issues.

99

Did he mention the money you would receive?

He made no comments about this. We were all very anxious waiting for him to address the economic issue. We thought that, following this visit, the dollars would start falling from the skies.

They also talked to us about the “independent libraries”. There were three fundamental projects being carried out in Pinar del Río at the time, which were the hopes for a more robust “opposition”. One of them was mine — the Center for Studies — which, incidentally, interested Cason immensely. Another was an art gallery, “Interior Space”, where works by “dissident” painters were exhibited; most of the paintings made you want to run out of the place. They were of such poor quality that the gallery’s promoter decided to give a few lessons to the “independent artists”.

The third project, for independent clinics and pharmacies, was perhaps the most dangerous.

In what way?

Because it was aimed at subverting the Cuban health system, creating a parallel system. It was extremely aggressive and had a lot of support from abroad.

Do you know how it emerged?

Early in 2002, this project gained some notoriety in the Guane municipality. It was apparently the idea of Dr. Jesús Manuel Cruz Santovenia, from the Human Rights Party (Partido Pro Derechos Humanos), affiliated to the Andrei Sakharov Foundation. Since the doctor got his visa to leave the country, he convinced another doctor, Hanoi Hernández Pinero, to develop it further. This man was crazy to get a visa himself, so he jumped aboard. That’s what was said; nevertheless, everyone knew that the inspiration had come from elsewhere.

Where?

In 2001, Marcelo Cano Rodríguez, a member of the Cuban Commission of Human Rights and National Reconciliation (Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional), and a loyal collaborator of Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, had been sketching out this idea, at first to supply the “opposition” with its own, private clinic. They wanted to obtain equipment and a whole storage room full of supplies, which would also make it possible for them to provide “humanitarian” services to the population in general. In other words, there were signs of interest in the same project showing up here and there.

Did you find out about other similar projects?

Caridad Pérez Gainza, from the 24th of February Movement, also wanted to set up her own “independent” clinic. She wanted to start off using her asthma treatment equipment on her neighbors in Lawton, Diez de Octubre (in Havana). That’s how it got started, until it became a project supported by counterrevolutionaries in Miami.

René Laureano Díaz González

Leader of the Federated Union of Electrical, Gas and Water Plants of Cuba in Exile (FSPEGA), based in Miami.

He began counterrevolutionary activities in 1959 and in the following year took part in a dynamite attack on the Tallapiedra thermoelectric power station. He sought asylum in the Brazilian embassy and left for the United States on March 6, 1961.

In the United States he joined the terrorist organizations December 9 Electrical Commandos (Comandos Eléctricos 9 de Diciembre) and Revolutionary Recovery Movement (Movimiento de Recuperación Revolucionaria, MRR).

He set up FSPEGA as an organization to support the union-based counterrevolutionary factions, voicing his total approval for their activities in the magazine published by his organization, *Lux*, and providing financial aid. He planned terrorist operations for execution by internal clandestine cells.

How do you know so many details?

They would write about this everyday in the “independent” press. This was a movement with a tremendous amount of international coverage. Of course, you could find everything I’ve told you about embellished with all of the adjectives you can think of: “Castro’s hordes impede the humanitarian efforts of Caridad Pérez Gainza”; “violent reactions against Dr. Hanoi...”, etc., etc. The truth is that all of them saw a great opportunity to demoralize and confuse the population.

101

Who was supporting this in Miami?

Frank Hernández Trujillo, from the Dissidence Support Group (Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia). He sent medicine to his employees in Cuba through every channel he could find. And they gave this a huge amount of publicity on the counterrevolutionary radio stations, of course.

Víctor Manuel Domínguez

He became involved in the cultural sector due to his interest in choreography.

He is a radio, film and television producer.

He began his counterrevolutionary activities in 1996 as member of the organizing committee of the so-called Alternative Cuban Art Project (Proyecto Alternativo de Arte Cubano), aimed at grouping together counterrevolutionary artists within the country.

He is currently a member of the Independent National Workers Confederation of Cuba (Confederación Obrera Nacional Independiente de Cuba, CONIC), serving as one of its top leaders.

He is the director of the project known as the National Trade Union Training Center (Centro Nacional de Capacitación Sindical), which is sponsored from abroad by the terrorist counterrevolutionary organization FESPEGA. He has ties with René Laureano Díaz and Joel Brito, counterrevolutionaries who send him supplies.

I remember that in February of this year, *Radio “Martí”* and *La Poderosa* announced the opening of the “Independent” Medical Clinic in Guane, run by Hanoi, in his own home. Some people

showed up looking for medicine. Afterwards, we found out that this abomination had in fact been conceived in the United States. It was a “pilot project” coordinated by Dr. Manuel Alzugaray Pérez, from the Miami Medical Team Foundation, in collaboration with members of the “Independent” Medical Association of Cuba (Colegio Médico “Independiente” de Cuba).

Who is Manuel Alzugaray?

He is a friend of Otto Reich, the U.S. government special envoy for Latin America, who is working to have Alzugaray receive a U.S. government grant to finance counterrevolutionary activities both inside and outside of Cuba.

Were medicines sent to the provincial capital in Pinar del Río?
Víctor Rolando received medicines on many occasions through the Cubapacks International agency, and he shared these with a number of colleagues, who followed the same instructions given to other distributors of medicines.

Only medicine, or did they receive equipment as well?

Frank Hernández Trujillo sent Dr. Hanoi an electrocardiogram, equipment to measure blood pressure, clinical testing instruments, and asthma treatment equipment. This man almost built an entire hospital for himself.

You say that the “independent” clinics enjoyed a lot of international attention...

Yes, and not only through the Miami press. Jesús Melgar, who is a Cuban-American living in the United States, even tried to put together an international conference there, with representatives of all the “independent” clinics, along with doctors from Spain and Latin America.

Representatives from the clinics only?

No, also from the “independent” pharmacies, which they intended to supply with medicines that the state system was lacking or had in very small quantities. Lázaro Lemus González and Alberto Hernández Suárez, from the Union of Young Democrats of Cuba

(Unión de Jóvenes Democráticos) in Pinar del Río, tried to open up an “independent” pharmacy, with the support of Enrique Blanco and Frank Hernández Trujillo. Lázaro claimed that they would distribute the medicines by prescription and *Radio “Martí”* even announced that they had opened a pharmacy in Candelaria. It was all lies.

Maritza Lugo’s dream was well known; she is the former president of the Frank País November 30 Democratic Party (Partido Democrático 30 de Noviembre Frank País), who now lives in the United States. She wanted to set up a pharmacy in every province, to wage a political campaign in favor of counterrevolutionary groups. In an e-mail, she mentioned that Frank Hernández Trujillo keeps an abundant stock of medicine in his home in Miami, to be sent to Cuba, and that he had commissioned a study of the zones most favorable to the project.

Víctor himself told me that he had been to a party at Dr. Hanoi’s place, in Guane, on February 1, 2003, to celebrate the first anniversary of the “Independent” Medical Clinic.

Did you find out what had taken place there?

They spoke of opening two “independent” clinics in the Sandino municipality. Dr. Hanoi practically had a warehouse full of medicine in his home, and he gave out a package of medicine at the party.

Have these clinics ever offered services?

No. They’re merely a place where they hand out medicine. As far as I know, the only pharmacy operating in Pinar del Río was in Candelaria, and it was run by Alberto Hernández Suárez, who’s given out medicine to those who presented a medical prescription and their ID card. This man knows absolutely nothing about pharmacology.

Among the so-called sacred cows of the “dissident” movement, who lent direct support to this project?

Martha Beatriz Roque, and she was getting money from Miami for it. She herself has spoken about this. She mentioned having re-

ceived considerable funding to purchase the necessary equipment and that she had registered the pharmacies as a Commission for Health Assistance (Comisión de Asistencia a la Salud, COMAS).

Víctor is one of the individuals now in jail. Was he shown the evidence against him?

Yes. He was sentenced to 26 years in prison. The principal evidence was found in documents. Documents of every sort were taken from him: receipts for money he had received, some of which had been sent directly from the Cuban-American National Foundation (Fundación Nacional Cubanoamericana, FNCA).

He is man devoid of scruples, who was even looked down on by other counterrevolutionaries, because he was a very aggressive and egotistical man. He owed money to quite a few people, and he would brazenly sell the radios from the Interests Section, and whatever else he could get his hands on.

For instance, if they sent a camera for a member of the group, Víctor would decide to give it to someone else. The “dissidents” didn’t like him one bit, but they tolerated him because he was the one who had ties to the Interests Section. He wasn’t someone very good at giving recommendations.

Did he ever give you any money?

No, just a radio and a pair of jeans. He once gave me a 100 Cuban pesos and I gave it to State Security. I know that it came from funding sent by the United States, that someone here had changed it into Cuban money and given me only 100 pesos, but I don’t know who it was. These things happened on a regular basis.

And your family?

I was an infiltrator from 1999 until April 3, 2003. I have two daughters from my first marriage, and both of them are members of the Union of Young Communists (Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas, UJC). One of them is in the third year of law, here at the University of Havana, and the other one is in the third year of music, at the School for Art Teachers in Pinar del Río.

From the time they were born, I’ve always been a role model

for them. We have always been so close that one day I sat down with them and I told them not to pay too much attention to what people were saying about me.

And your wife?

She didn't know anything. She teaches at a college, she has a degree in mathematics and is a member of the UJC. We have a two-year-old son. We live with my mother-in-law and her husband, who's an ardent revolutionary, and my ties to the counterrevolution led to all sorts of problems with my marriage and the relationship with her family. I was always putting up a front. I wasn't working and this was another problem. They were extremely happy to find out I was working for State Security. It was like a magic trick, where everything changes from one moment to the next.

105

The counterrevolutionaries never suspected you?

No. They didn't have an ounce of doubt about me. So much so that when they saw me at the trial, they thought I was going to be a counterrevolutionary witness. There were witnesses there from "dissident" groups, but, from the very beginning of my testimony, when the prosecutor asked me why I was going to testify, I said I was working with State Security.

Why is that?

They brought me in after presenting the evidence. When the prosecutor is presenting the case against someone, he generally presents the evidence that supports his claim. Of course, the defense lawyer is given the evidence beforehand, and he presents his own evidence based on the latter.

The Criminal Proceedings Law, in the first paragraph of article 340, allows for new and important evidence to be presented during a trial, evidence that has been obtained at the last moment, for instance. The court decides whether the evidence is relevant or not. I was brought in like that.

That's why, when the prosecutor asked me, "Why have you come forth to testify?", I answered him, "Because I am Agent Saúl, from State Security."

What happened with the accused?

They were so surprised and demoralized that Víctor Rolando Arroyo, someone who had been totally overbearing throughout the trial, didn't recover from the shock. He had been certain that they couldn't produce any evidence against him, until I showed up. From that moment on, he sat in his chair and kept his head down the whole time.

106

Did he make any statements to the court?

Not one. Not even when he was asked if he wanted to add anything to what had been declared. He knew that I knew. The evidence was a bombshell.

I WAS THE ONE WHO WROTE THE GENEVA REPORT

PEDRO LUIS VÉLIZ MARTÍNEZ and ANA ROSA JORNA CALIXTO 107

Liborio Noval tells them jokes to get the right photograph for this interview. “Relax, Doctor, don’t get tense, you look like hell in the viewfinder,” and Pedro Luis Véliz laughs, “I’m not tense, I swear.”

When Ana Rosa Jorna joins him, the image that won everyone’s vote appears by itself, without having to look for it. Liborio takes a number of photos and says, “You love each other more now than before, don’t you?”



AGENTS ERNESTO AND GABRIELA

When did you begin your conspiratorial work?

Pedro: In the year 1996. Rafael Santiago Montes lived across the street from me. He was something of a big-shot in *Radio “Martí”*, denouncing human rights violations. He worked with me in the Comandante Piti Fajardo Hospital in Vedado (Havana).

He worked as a doctor?

Pedro: No, as an engineer. He was very qualified because he had studied in the Soviet Union. He would have a 24-hour work shift and then rest for three days in a row; this gave him ample time to carry out his counterrevolutionary activities, and he was a very aggressive man.

In what sense?

Pedro: Doing propaganda campaigns in favor of the Cuban Liberal Democratic Party (Partido Liberal Democrático Cubano), where he held a leading position. He had been detained for a few hours and he had tried to win over to his “side” a number of criminals who were being held in the police station at the same time. Since he was my neighbor and a colleague of mine at work, State Security came to talk to me.

What did they ask you to do?

Pedro: To approach him, to see if he’d swallow the bait, something he did the first time we met one another.

He immediately spoke to you about the Liberal Party?

Pedro: Not only that, he also told me that the leaders of this party would rotate as presidents to avoid detection by State Security. They didn’t want them to identify a leader and take apart the group. He was very proud to tell me that at that moment he was the one in charge. He didn’t give me a chance to say anything. He invited me to a meeting in his home, which was going to be held there the following night. So, practically overnight, I found myself with a number of tasks in a group that’s fairly well compartmentalized.

What tasks did they give you?

Pedro: To create some counterrevolutionary cells in the hospital, to provide medical treatment to leaders of the “opposition” — I actually had a number of counterrevolutionary group leaders admitted to the hospital — and to try to convince people in administrative positions to join my cell. If I managed to attract other people, I would stop being just another member and become a leader of that group.

I also got instructions to write denunciations about the Cuban public health system, to be broadcast by *Radio "Martí"*.

What sort of denunciations?

Pedro: Epidemiological problems, for instance. There was an outbreak of hemorrhagic conjunctivitis at the time, and they set their sights on that. We were always looking for some critical element around us to exaggerate.

109

You would go on Radio "Martí", and speak on their programs?

Pedro: No. I would write them and Santiago Montes or another director would read them as their own. Afterwards, they agreed to come up with a pseudonym for me, so as not to give me away, and my various "noms de guerre" emerged: Arturo Pérez, Pedro Arturo, Arturo Pérez Medina, Pedro Arturo Véliz Pérez.

It was one of these denunciations that allowed me to get to know the man who called himself president of the Cuban Medical Association.

Who was he?

Pedro: His name is Augusto Madrigal Izaguirre, a doctor who was tried and sentenced for corruption. When he came out of jail, he got in touch with counterrevolutionary groups. He knew Rafael Santiago, Héctor Maceda Gutiérrez and Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés, the other "presidents" of the Liberal Party.

What was the objective of the Liberal Party?

Pedro: These people were not even half the patriots they claimed to be. Their true political line was getting out of the country and leading the show to obtain money from the United States, which they would later pocket. That's why all hell broke loose in the Liberal Party. Money was what distanced Maceda and Osvaldo Alfonso from Rafael Santiago.

And what did you do?

Pedro: I followed Rafael Santiago, who left for the Liberal Current (Corriente Liberal). You can't imagine how much I had to study at the time to be up-to-date on European liberalism, social democracy and other matters of the sort.

Afterwards, Liberal Current also split up because of quarrels within the group, and I left for another organization once again: to join Dr. Madrigal, this time. That's how I became the national coordinator of the "Independent" Medical Association of Cuba.

Who were the directors of this Medical Association?

Ana Rosa: The neurosurgeon Hilda Molina had been president for

some time, but she wasn't up to the job because she is paranoid in the extreme: she thought everyone who looked at her was an agent working for State Security. She was replaced by Dr. Iraida de León, who was a very provocative person, like Oscar Elías Biscet. Then came Augusto Madrigal, who was somewhat more moderate. And, finally, there was Pedro, who was even more moderate than Augusto.

111

When did they make you president of the Medical Association?

Pedro: Madrigal was sent to Chile by Timothy Brown, a confessed CIA agent, pretending to be a diplomat working at the U.S. Interests Section. Brown set it up for the president of the Association to get in touch with Brown's brother, who was a diplomat in Chile. The idea was to meet with Chilean professionals to get them to support Cuban "dissident" doctors, and to demand free elections in Cuba and respect for human rights.

When Madrigal got the chance to leave for Chile, he had already gotten most of his family out of the country. He left me — provisionally, he said — as president of the Medical Association. This counterrevolutionary organization had a president, a national coordinator and a three vice-presidents.

When did you take up the leadership of the Association?

Pedro: When he left, it created a power vacuum. I was the second in command and I spent close to a year saying that Madrigal was the president and I was the coordinator, until they said to me, "Listen, that man's not coming back, you take charge."

Who told you this?

Pedro: Everyone, State Security and the other members of the national council of the organization. In January of 1998, I was officially made president and at that time Manuel Alzugaray Pérez, from the Miami Medical Team Foundation, presented me with the project called "Awakening Smiles" (Despertando Sonrisas).

Which was...?

Ana Rosa: Perhaps one of the most sinister plans of recent years.

Who was behind it?

Pedro: It's a long story.

Can you summarize?

Ana Rosa: Do you remember the man who went over to Spain and got rich delivering pizzas?

Telepizzas!

Ana Rosa: His name is Leopoldo Fernández Pujals. He was born in Cuba and emigrated to the United States when he was 13 years old. He lived there for something close to 20 years and had ties to the Cuban-American National Foundation. He later went to Spain,

but he remained beneath the shadow of the Foundation, which explains the success of his “pizzas”.

When things started going well for him, he sold all of his shares for millions of dollars and directed a good part of his earnings toward “fighting for human rights and divulging the evils of the Cuban regime.”

113

He founded the Elena Mederos Foundation, named after a former minister of Social Welfare, at the time of the triumph of the Revolution. The star project of this “humanitarian” organization was Awakening Smiles.

Manuel Alzugaray called you from Miami to propose this project to you?

Pedro: Yes, and Leopoldo’s wife called me immediately after that.

What did it consist of?

Pedro: The idea was to take sick children out of the country, along with a guardian, a mother or father, for them to undergo surgical procedures abroad.

What was bad about it?

Ana Rosa: Just look at how “humanitarian” the idea is. It says here: “Principal aim of the project: to carry out surgical procedures on Cuban children, between the ages of 0 and 15 years, that can’t be carried out in their own country and that do not require subsequent treatment or, should this be necessary, that require treatment that may be offered by Cuban institutions.” And, later on: “We will not take on chronic cases. Oncological cases or organ transplants will not be accepted.” Do you see? They were going to administer a few band-aids and make an big publicity stunt out of it. On the other hand, not only was it far from being a “humanitarian” project, it also concealed some monetary interests and a very obvious political maneuver.

Why do you say this?

Ana Rosa: A number of things interact in this project. In the first place, it is quite obviously a political strategy. Leopoldo sold his Telepizza shares and he made no secret of the fact that this foundation was principally concerned with overthrowing the Cuban Revolution.

But, besides this, one of the explicit aims of the Elena Mederos Foundation is to finance itself. Here we have the conferences they promoted, the number of participants, the costs of travel, the cost of materials, the aims to be outlined, the websites they were going to set up.

Look at the list of conferences: “Human Rights. What we defend: Basic documents of international laws on human and workers’ rights. What we abhor: Cuban laws, the Penal Code, the Constitution, Law # 88, Law # 77, and Fidel’s speeches. Human Rights reference documents on Cuba. Amnesty International. Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, the UN.”

All of this costs money. Do we need to say more to show that Leopoldo is neither patriotic nor altruistic?

What other organizations surround the Elena Mederos Foundation?

Pedro: The Hispano-Cuban Foundation, the Cuban-American National Foundation, the Miami Medical Team Foundation (MMTF), Physicians’ Association of Clinics, Hospitals and Annexes, which is also based in Miami. I had contact with directors from all of these organizations and I participated with many of them in a number of programs for *Radio “Martí”*, where Lincoln Díaz-Balart, the priest Francisco Santana, Manuel Alzugaray and others also participated. The whole gang sitting together at the same table.

How did the Awakening Smiles project get to Cuba?

Pedro: They sent emissaries on two occasions. The original idea was to set up a phone line inside a church, with someone to answer it 24 hours a day, so that the person who called could also receive spiritual advice. They left some money behind for a phone connection to Spain or the United States to be established, every so often.

Could this be carried out?

Pedro: Not like that, and when they showed me the plan to put it into effect, as a project of the “Independent” Medical Association, I also tried to hold them off.

What did you do?

Pedro: We told them that we didn't understand it all that well, that we were the ones here in Cuba, and not them, and, for instance, I didn't agree with opening offices in the 14 provinces, but rather felt it should be done by regions. I argued about the salary I was going to be paid, and when we reached an agreement, we started asking for office equipment and for all of the utensils that we could think of and that we felt would be useful to set up the office.

Did they buy them?

Ana Rosa: Immediately: we asked for a fax machine and they bought three of them, as well as typewriters, paper, stamps, everything.

Did someone come around to check up on you?

Pedro: Two Spanish men. We visited a number of provinces.

How much did they pay you?

Ana Rosa: The Elena Mederos Foundation paid 100 dollars a month to each of us working on the project.

What exactly did your work consist of?

Pedro: We made several trips across the country to get in touch with some children. Afterwards, we went to the embassy to get their visas and those of their relatives. They would ask for details of everything we did both in Miami and Spain.

Who was in charge of all this at the Spanish embassy?

Pedro: Most recently it was Pedro Martínez-Avial Martín, an embassy advisor. He told us we would have no problem whatsoever with the paperwork, and even offered us use of the diplomatic pouch, if we ever needed to send documents that could not be sent by fax. We never used it, never.

Why not?

Pedro: We were duty-bound to discourage that insane scheme. Can you imagine another Peter Pan operation, but with sick children! During the time we worked on the Awakening Smiles project, we would do the tours and draft the clinical histories — using real

cases — but choosing ones with characteristics we knew they were going to turn down, those that required post-operative care.

Where were the cases found?

116

Ana Rosa: *Radio “Martí”* waged a heavy-duty campaign, and there were people who wrote to the program or directly to the Foundation. They would send us the letters and demand a follow-up. We had to look for the children, verify that they really had the medical problem they claimed to have, submit them to a medical examination, get them to fill out a request form to be admitted into the treatment program abroad, and send it to the San Rafael Hospital and to a non-governmental organization belonging to Opus Dei, all of this in Spain. They would say, “But, you’re sending us cases that are not eligible,” and we would tell them, “They’re the ones we have.”

Pedro: So then they would say, “Look for other cases.” And I would answer, “Look, I can’t put up a sign outside my house saying: Headquarters of the Independent Medical Association of Cuba, running a project known as Awakening Smiles that takes children out of the country.”

And how did it all end?

Pedro: We got kicked out and we were quite happy about it: the “Independent” Medical Association of Cuba did not send a single child abroad.

What happened with the cases whose families had written to Spain or the United States?

Ana Rosa: They were given medical attention in Cuba. I remember a little girl from Santiago de Cuba, very pretty, who had gone deaf and who was very smart. She was in the fifth or sixth grade, in a regular school. She was extremely bright. She would read the teacher’s lips, and when he turned around, a girl who sat next to her would tell her what he was saying.

Pedro: I showed my official the girl’s clinical history, and she was treated at the Hermanos Ameijeiras Hospital in Havana. She was given a cochlear implant — the nerve used for hearing — and recovered very well. She’s doing wonderfully.

When did Ana Rosa begin to work by your side as an agent?

Pedro: When our relationship was going down the drain, I spoke with my official and I asked him for help. They carried out an investigation and decided they could trust us. Agent Gabriela was born. From that point on, the work became more firmly grounded and my marriage was saved. I felt much calmer with by her side.

Did she know about everything?

Pedro: The essential details, yes. For her own security, we had to omit some details.

How many children do you two have?

Ana Rosa: We have two: Luis Ernesto and Ana Laura.

Why do you say that your marriage was saved?

Pedro: I would get home at 11 at night and I didn't know what story to tell her. Ana was already working at the Héroes de la Moncada Clinic, treating patients just like me, and she would get home early. She couldn't understand my absences, and she was convinced I was having an affair.

When they told her what was actually happening, I was sure that when I got home that night, I wasn't going to have to cook my own dinner ... Because she had applying all of those "cold war" tactics up until then.

How long did you work together?

Ana Rosa: For five years. I joined in the work with the Elena Mederos Foundation.

When did you establish ties to the U.S. Interests Section?

Pedro: When I began to collaborate with Dr. Augusto Madrigal. In June of 1998, the Interests Section summoned us for interviews with three journalists from the *Dallas Morning News* who were interested in Cuban reality. Timothy Brown was the one who gave them our names, and the meeting was held during a work breakfast at the Hotel Nacional.

On December 5 of that same year, we were invited to the home of the head of the Interests Section, Michael Kozak, where a meeting was held with Senator Christopher Dodd to discuss the issue of the U.S. "embargo." Dodd had met with Fidel, and the diplomats had ambushed him and forced him to meet with the "dissidents", in the name of the political "balance" that the United States so fervently defends whenever it finds it convenient.

How did that meeting go?

Pedro: The majority of "dissidents" recommended that the em-

bargo be maintained. Others asked for it to be lifted, but on the condition of supposed democratic and political reforms, and a third group suggested that only the blockade on food and medicines be lifted.

In the midst of that whole controversy, I asked for the blockade to be lifted altogether. And I added, "It breaks my heart every time I have to treat a seriously ill patient and the medicine to save him is not available. Or when I find someone suffering from malnutrition because of a lack of food. Besides, everyone present here lives in Cuba and the idea that the embargo is aimed against the government is a myth. We're the ones who suffer."

119

Things got a bit ugly, and Christopher Dodd came over and hugged me. Of course, to keep up appearances, I told him, "I was invited here and I'm not sure whether I'll still have a job on Monday." And he answered, "If something happens to you, call me up."

Were you fired?

Pedro: No, of course not. Let me explain something to you. Working with children took up a lot of my time, and I wasn't able to cultivate more intense relations with the Interests Section.

At one point or other, my comrades in State Security proposed that I leave the hospital to lighten the load somewhat. Bear in mind that I also had a lot of problems at work, because I had to keep up my façade as a counterrevolutionary among revolutionaries. That was plain hell.

But I asked them to let me continue practicing. My officials respected my wishes, but that meant simultaneously attending patients and making long trips, either on bicycle or foot, to prepare the documentation, to receive and send faxes.

Nevertheless, I kept up my ties with the U.S. Interests Section, particularly with Nicholas J. Giacobbe.

Did they visit you at home?

Pedro: Yes, and not only my home, but also that of Odilia Collazo, that of María de los Ángeles Menéndez, that of Moisés Rodríguez... I have a funny anecdote about that.

On December 10 of 2001, a meeting had been called in the home of Odilia, the president of the Human Rights Party. She invited the entire world — I didn't know how she could do this when her home was so small.

120

State Security had installed a device which prevented people from parking cars in front of her home and somewhat impeded their arrival. When I was about to leave, I got a call from a counter-revolutionary and he told me, "Arturo, State Security is in front of Odilia's place and they're not letting anyone in." I called my official and asked him, "What should I do?" "You have to go over there." And I said: "Hey, and what about the operation?" "Try to get in there anyway you can. Let me handle it." I called him once again, and he told me, "Arturo, I couldn't get a hold of anyone. Everyone's working in the operation. Sneak inside, you have to be there."

I got into my car, I filled it up with people and I left for Odilia's place. I turned in at another street and I went in reverse at full speed. I slammed on the brakes and I yelled at the other people to get out fast. I left the car in the middle of the street, with the doors open. The people inside the house all applauded and yelled, "Another one!"

Shortly afterwards, Victor Vockerodt got there and passed on a message for me: "Tell that crazy doctor to park his car properly; he left the car with the doors open. I'll protect him." He approached me and said, "Look, when I leave, follow me in your car, so you don't get into any trouble." Isn't that wild? Agent Ernesto left under the escort of a car with diplomatic plates from the Interests Section of the United States of America!

Which member of the U.S. diplomatic corps visited your home?
Pedro: Ricardo Zuniga. He came over and told me a series of anecdotes about the tour he and James Cason had done through the country's provinces. He told me, for instance, that he had met with a doctor living in the middle of a mountain, in a remote place in eastern Cuba. When they asked him what medicine he had there, if he needed any money, trying to cozy up to him, he told them in a rather rude tone that he had all of the medicine and all of the equip-

ment he needed to get by. That the only thing he had problems with was transportation, because of the remoteness of the place. But that no one was dying on him, because he would see to it that his patients got the care they needed, be it through mules or carts.

He met up with revolutionary doctors. Zuniga asked me if they were telling the truth, and what I thought. I looked him in the eye, trying to hide how moved I was by the words of my colleague, and I said to him, “Look, don’t put a lot of stock in it. The government sends revolutionaries, the best of the graduates, to the worst places. What do you expect them to tell you?”

Did the Americans ask you for information about the public health system?

Pedro: They wanted to know everything, such as the situation in the hospitals, the clinics, the emergency rooms. They were obsessed with the health of the Comandante, what afflictions he suffered, if I knew what medicine he needed, what foods didn’t agree with him.

Giacobbe even told me — I said this during the trial of the mercenaries — that he was hoping to witness the President’s death in the years he had been assigned to work here.

I wrote down all of the things they wanted to know about in a notebook.

What other things did they want to know?

Pedro: The consequences of the visit of John Paul II and that of James Carter; the attitude of the people and of the opposition toward the U.S. blockade; the economic and social repercussions for the public health system; the attitude of the people towards the possibility of hard-line capitalism, like in the former socialist countries; the possibility of social upheavals.

In the public health sector: medical students and the potential lack of incentive to continue their studies; the program of study at the Latin American School of Medicine; if the models followed are American, French, or Russian; if the programs there are devoted only to the training of family doctors or if they can be trained for other tasks. Everything concerning the intensive training schools for nurses; the effects on the population of public health projects and programs; the family doctor program; results and degree of satisfaction among the doctors as well as the population; if people could seek treatment from other doctors or other institutions; the situation of the public health care centers, including hospitals, clin-

ics, family doctor's offices, equipment, laboratory material, reagents, imaging technology, and so on.

Anything else?

Pedro: The people's level of satisfaction with the pharmacies and the lack of medicines; the national epidemiological situation, especially with regard to cholera, dengue, malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS; the information provided by the Cuban government and health authorities on outbreaks or massive epidemics; if the media disseminated measures to take against outbreaks; the situation of children's health, pregnant women, concern over low birth weight. The infant mortality rate, life expectancy and parameters used to measure the social wellbeing of the population.

123

Did they ask for this information all at once, or little by little?

Pedro: They asked for it on different occasions, though they would sometimes repeat the same questions. The issue of public health in Cuba was primary, then came everything else. They also wanted to know if the statistics presented by the government were true. I answered that there were representatives of very serious international organizations, like the WHO and PAHO, in Havana, and that if they couldn't say that those indicators and rates were untrue, I was in no position to doubt them.

I suggested they direct their questions to them. Nevertheless, I told them: "I have many doubts about those numbers." In brief, I always tried to put them against the wall.

What relationship did they have with the Medical Association you directed?

Pedro: They often asked how many members we had. They wanted to use that number as an index of the situation in Cuba. We would assure them we had 800 members and that we had not only doctors but also paramedical personnel.

You actually had that many members?

Pedro: Of course not. We barely had 20 members, and even the positions on the national board of directors were invented — in fact, my wife and I acted as directors.

Were you given instructions to create an “independent library”?

Ana Rosa: The instructions came through different channels: the U.S. Interests Section, the Miami Medical Team Foundation and Cuban Democratic Action (Acción Democrática Cubana). They came almost simultaneously from the three of them.

Manuel Alzugaray has been a close friend of Otto Reich for many years. Alzugaray met with Reich in Venezuela, when Reich was the U.S. ambassador there, and he met with him also in Nicaragua, at the time of the Contras. They even did television shows together. Alzugaray said that they had dinner together in restaurants in Miami.

Pedro: Otto Reich, who was in charge of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the State Department and was one of the people who authorized licenses to import medicines to counterrevolutionary groups in Cuba, wanted to know how to do this without coming into contact with the government. One day, when I was conversing with Alzugaray, he told me that he was receiving instructions for us to carry out and that the most important thing was to put together the “independent” clinics and pharmacies. They would be responsible for supplying us with everything we needed. All we had to do was take a list to Giacobbe detailing the medicines and other things we were receiving for him to pass on to the State Department. Meaning that Democratic Action had to justify to its true bosses how the money given out by USAID was being used.

Did he tell you how they were hoping to use that money to destroy the Cuban Revolution?

Pedro: I have a recording of a conversation with Manuel Alzugaray from 2002, where he tells me that the creation of the “independent” pharmacies and clinics follows the same principle employed in Nicaragua, Poland and Russia to put an end to communism. He told me that, when I was handing out the medicines, not to discriminate against Party members. “You have to set your sights on winning people over to the cause at the time of the transition in Cuba. After that, we’ll see what happens...”

Can we listen to it?

Pedro: Yes, here it is. This is Alzugaray speaking: "You give it out to anyone who shows up, it doesn't matter if it's a communist, or if they were ever a member of the party or some such thing. Don't worry about it. That's going to be beneficial to you in the long run. We can't be too partisan here, because we have to say we're doctors, a humanitarian organization. We don't discriminate because of color, religion or anything. You have no idea what sorts of benefits this is going to bring to that group of yours, and to the members personally. It was what we did in Nicaragua, in Poland, in Russia, in all of those countries that have left the communist sphere, and that's how we've managed it..."

125

Here, he also admits that Otto Reich was the person who approved the Pilot Program, and the one who drafted the proposal for the U.S. government to approve money that was going to be sent to counterrevolutionary organizations.

What is the Pilot Program?

Ana Rosa: A multilateral project for sending medicines and medical equipment, aimed at exercising a negative influence over the population and medical sector. These materials would be delivered, for the most part, to old age homes and marginal neighborhoods by counterrevolutionaries working in the health care sector independently and parallel to the work of the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP).

Did Alzugaray send you money?

Pedro: A hundred dollars a month, in the name of the Miami Medical Team Foundation, which is registered as part of the Institute for Democracy, which is financed by USAID. The money would be directed to my wife. It came regularly, until they stopped sending it altogether, when we started working with Democratic Action and put together the National Office for the Reception of Human Rights Violations.

You said before that you also had contacts in PACHA...

Pedro: The Physicians' Association of Clinics, Hospitals and Annexes, yes, through its president Vicente Lago. This man supported

the Medical Association, especially the members working in the eastern provinces. It was the same idea: information, posters, magazines, medicine. We also had contact with Dr. Marcelo Cano Rodríguez, who was president of the Medical Association of Cuba, a group working parallel to the Independent Medical Association of Cuba, which later joined Democratic Action in Miami.

Ana Rosa: Just look at the terrorist nature of these organizations:

On August 9, 1998, two of the members of the Miami Medical Team Foundation, Enrique Basas and Luis Orlando Rodríguez, participated with Luis Posada Carriles in the plans to assassinate Fidel Castro during his visit to the Dominican Republic.

Counting the Free Cuban Medical Association in Exile, another group made up of "health care professionals", that makes three organizations of this sort that "aided" us these past years.

What happened with the other Medical Association?

Pedro: Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, who is the head of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, has been the one who has directed and guided all of the activities of Marcelo Cano Rodríguez, the president of the Medical Association, which was put together following the decision of the Miami-based groups to establish another, more aggressive front parallel to the one I was directing, in order to take apart the Cuban public health system.

These people have recruited doctors with the material and financial aid of Frank Hernández Trujillo, from the Dissidence Support Group.

They had a very clear line of action, which consisted of getting in touch with health care professionals interested in emigrating to the United States. They incite them to sign a counterrevolutionary document opposing the Ministry of Public Health regulations for travel abroad. They tell them to carry out acts of provocation.

In exchange for what, you ask? A visa to travel to the United States and the support of the U.S. Interests Section to obtain the permission to leave the country.

Who is Alzugaray?

Ana Rosa: A man who left at the beginning of the Revolution and who has put together a very impressive curriculum vitae as a terrorist since then. He provided medical attention to deserters from former socialist countries, he was in the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo during the rafters crisis. There are magazines and posters he sent us over there somewhere.

What sorts of medicines were sent from Miami? How did they get them into the country?

Ana Rosa: They would send medicines that didn't require a medical prescription, because that complicated matters. They weren't urgently needed. They didn't save anyone's life, although there's always a need for them, especially analgesics that reduce fever, anti-inflammatory medicines, vitamins, minerals... Now, drugs such as anticoagulants, or medicines used intravenously, those were never sent.

They would be brought by "mules", and we met with a very special one.

Who?

Pedro: A state senator from North Carolina, Henry William Barker, who was supposedly bringing a humanitarian donation from the Love Valley Presbyterian Church. In fact, he had come here following instructions from Lincoln Díaz-Balart and the Miami Medical Team Foundation. We have photocopies of all of the documents that he brought.

What do they say?

Ana Rosa: For example, this is a letter written by Ana Carbonell, head of Lincoln Díaz-Balart's office, explaining how he can get in touch with Pedro, giving him our phone number, and telling him that Alzugaray can give him the names of "opposition" doctors who live in rural areas of the country. Also, a letter he had sent to the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the Treasury Department, explaining that he was bringing medicine to the island, donated by the people of North Carolina, by its churches in particular, and that

the names of doctors he would be visiting had been recommended by Congressman Díaz-Balart, something that his assistant, Ana Carbonell, can verify.

Does he mention who he is?

128

Ana Rosa: He introduces himself as a 56-year-old attorney, honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy, who has served as an Assistant District Attorney for eight years and in the North Carolina Senate for two terms. In reality, this man behaved like a classic CIA agent.

Why do you say that?

Pedro: There are many elements, everything from his behavior to the documents he was carrying. For example, the letter where he lists the medicines he had to deliver to us reads, in Spanish:

“Operation USA is pleased to donate the products listed below to the Cuban people, to be used in pediatric hospitals in the attention given to children and the poor...” The words Operation USA have been crossed out, and, above, an arrow indicates that it is in fact the Love Valley Presbyterian Church that is making the donation, a letterhead superimposed on the official letter. Something put together rather shabbily and hastily.

This man returned to Cuba with more medicines, gifts and money. He would always stay at our place. When he trusted us a bit more, the last time he came, he brought with him a weapons catalogue, and asked us which guns we would prefer. I remember it was kind of a fold-out catalogue. We were horrified; we told him that our opposition to the government was peaceful, that we were against the shedding of blood, and asked him how he could forget that we were doctors.

Were you already working at the time for the National Office for Gathering and Reporting Human Rights Violations, along with Odilia Collazo?

Pedro: That was afterwards. I started to work with her there developing the reports she would later present to the government of the United States, as proof of the violation of human rights in Cuba.

Did they make phony reports?

Pedro: We would exaggerate the facts, and many cases came to us from people whose only aim was to leave the country — they had family in the United States or wanted to get ahead economically — and who had been turned down again and again by the U.S. Interests Section. Don't forget that the granting of visas began to go down dramatically, to the point that this year they've given out just a handful.

How would you carry out this work?

Pedro: I was in charge of reworking everything that was put in my hands, as well as everything that came from our own imaginations. Everything related to the issue of public health was written by Ana Rosa and me.

What would you do with this report?

Pedro: It was sent to the U.S. Interests Section and they would pass it on unchanged to the State Department. In reality, as you know, the touching up of the contents was done in advance.

You submitted the report for 2002 this year?

Pedro: Yes, before the discussion at the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

The document you put together was the one used for the political maneuvers against Cuba in Geneva?

Pedro: The same one, without omitting a single point. It is also the one that's been circulating in all the recent slander campaigns against Cuba. If you read it carefully, you realize that the essential points are very clearly stated: "In Cuba, no one is tortured in prisons, there have been no reports of political assassinations, nor reports of people having been disappeared for political reasons" — something which is entirely true.

Of course, what the U.S. government wanted to hear is there also, everything they've worked so hard for these past years — we have to grant them that, Cason in particular.

Just look at how ironic this is: I saw the representative of Costa Rica on television, reading an amendment in English with the in-

formation that we had put together for that report. And to top it off, the representative of the United States had no qualms about stating publicly that what that despicable man had read there had been submitted by the United States. He was right about that, except for one detail.

130

Which was?

Pedro: That I was the author. I was the one who wrote that report, Agent Ernesto from Cuban State Security.

FROM MAMEY TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF GÜINES

YAMILA PÉREZ REYES and NOEL ASCANIO

131

MONTERO

They are two very different people, an ideal couple to take on the pressures of working within the “dissident” groups. Yamila is someone visceral, emotional, she can hardly sit still. Noel is someone with a sharp and thoughtful wit, who has a quiet and ironic manner to him. They’ve known each other since they were children, playing together in Mamey, the neighborhood in Güines that saw them grow up, fall in love, and bring a child into the world.

Their relationship was on the verge of ending. Yamila never mentioned she was an agent of State Security, and Noel was suspicious of his wife’s friends and meetings, until he was secretly summoned and the truth was made known to him. This other life they shared, that began quietly in Mamey, came to an end the day the delirious members of the “dissident” movement in the province of Havana decided to establish the Mayor’s Office of Güines.



AGENTS CELIA AND ABEL

One of you is an agent and the other an assistant?

Yamila: No, both of us are agents.

When did you begin to work as an agent and why?

1 3 2 Yamila: I begin to work for State Security in the year 1993. They gave me this assignment because they believed I was in a position to get inside the counterrevolutionary groups working in Güines.

What were you working as at the time?

Yamila: I was a laboratory technician.

For which laboratory?

Yamila: In the Piti Fajardo Hospital, in the Güines Municipality, in the province of Havana. That's where I started with this whole hustle and bustle.

What organizations did you become involved with?

Yamila: With the Human Rights Party (Partido Pro Derechos Humanos), as a municipal delegate. The president was Odilia Collazo. By the middle of 1996, I went on to the "Independent" Press Agency (Buró de Prensa Independiente). I also took part in the Cuban Liberal Current (Corriente Liberal Cubana), in the Party for Human Rights (Partido por los Derechos Humanos), run by Tania Díaz Castro, in the "Independent" Medical Federation (Federación Médica Independiente), the National Center for Independent Agricultural Studies (Centro Nacional de Estudios Agrícolas Independientes, CENAIC); I was also a provincial delegate for the Latin American Federation of Rural Women (Federación Latinoamericana de Mujeres Rurales, FLAMUR) and secretary of the Francisco Riverón Hernández "Independent Library".

Weren't they far too many responsibilities for just one person?

Yamila: Not for a "dissident".

You two were the ones who wrote a letter to the director of the National Library, Eliades Acosta, when he published an article in Juventud Rebelde about the "independent libraries"?

Yamila: That was in March of 2002. It was written by Jadir Hernán-

dez, and Noel, my husband, was one of the people who signed it. The only library that was operating in the Güines Municipality at the time was the one in my house.

How was it sustained?

Yamila: That library was equipped, from the beginning, with what the U.S. Interests Sections gave us. We would pick up books there and they would send us others. They would bring all sorts of things, from *Disidente* and *Hispano-Cubana* magazines to samples of universal literature.

133

Who was your first counterrevolutionary superior?

Yamila: Rolando González Yáñez, who was the provincial delegate for the Human Rights Party.

Where would you go? What things would you do?

Yamila: I would travel with him to San José de las Lajas, where Odilia Collazo's right hand man lived, José Manuel de la Paz. I would also visit Odilia Collazo at her place every two weeks, to submit reports on violations and to get instructions from her. We visited prisons, and picked up medicines and food from the counterrevolutionary groups, to take them to the so-called political prisoners.

You were allowed to visit the prisoners?

Yamila: Yes, of course.

What year did this take place?

Yamila: What I'm talking about took place during my first years in this work. Afterwards, in mid-1996, I started at the Independent Press Agency, with Luis López Prendes.

What happened to López Prendes?

Yamila: He left the country. I went to see him off at the airport before he left for the United States.

And what happened afterwards?

Yamila: We continued working with Gilberto Figueredo, from the "Independent" Press Agency, with whom I spent entire nights going around the entire city of Havana, through different municipalities. Through Vedado and Centro Habana, for the most part. He

said that's where you could find the most problems, but, in fact, we'd make up the problems. For instance, he would say that at such and such a time, a patrol car had come by — this was true — and that the police officers had gotten out of the car and beaten up a citizen. That last part was a lie.

134

Noel: All of those little trips at night almost cost us our marriage...

Yamila: True, but you bought all of the excuses I gave you...



Where would those reports be sent?

Yamila: To *Radio "Martí"*.

Where did Figueredo come from?

Yamila: He told me he was a journalist, but he never showed me his diploma, and he never even mentioned where he had worked in the media. After that, I spent some quiet time at home, until Jadir Hernández showed up.

135

Explain...

Yamila: He's in the United States now. He was one of the people who became a "dissident" to get a U.S. visa. Actually, it was Noel he approached, because some people in Havana had told him we were human rights activists. He proposed that we join Tania Díaz Castro. This took place in August of the year 2000.

Who was this person?

Yamila: He's a lawyer. He came with Miguel Galván.

And who is Miguel Galván?

Yamila: He's an engineer, who has a Master's degree thanks to the Revolution. He wasn't working by the time we met him, because he was getting some 80 dollars every month for writing false reports about Cuba.

How were they getting that money?

Yamila: Through some of the groups in Miami. They would use "mules", people who came from the United States. The money was sent to us by Diosmel Hernández.

Where did he come from?

Yamila: He's the sponsor of the CENAIC. This Diosmel will probably come up at other points in this conversation.

Let's talk about Miguel...

Yamila: Miguel Galván was from Jadir and Noel's group; they later created the Cuban Civic Alliance (*Alianza Cívica Cubana*). The name of this organization was originally the South Havana Civic Coordinator (*Coordinadora Cívica Habana Sur*), and we founded it on September 12, 2002. I was the secretary for Social Issues and Noel was the secretary for International Relations.

Noel: We made up the members of that alliance, with a pen and paper, quite literally... It was made up of 35 ghost organizations.

Tell us about it.

Noel: We were sitting at a table, in a library... Some groups had names, but no members. The truth was that all of us in total added up to 18 people, and we would claim there were 600 of us.

Jadir would say, for instance, "We're weak in the list of trade unions. Let's make up a name related to that first..." That's what happened with the youth group, the women's group... We would sign ourselves up in many groups, but sometimes, when it was time to vote, one of us would change their mind and we had to start from scratch. It was a circus.

And after the organization had been established?

Yamila: That information was sent abroad.

Noel: The Cuban Civic Alliance was established with the aim of demonstrating that Güines had a solid "opposition", and that it was united. What sort of an opposition was that, with three or four tiny groups fighting among themselves? Give me a break. Even the name "Alliance" had its catch – it made you think that it involved a huge load of people, that collective decisions were made and, consequently, you had to consult with it for any decision to be adopted by the "opposition" leaders in the City of Havana. It's not the same thing for Oswaldo Payá to say that something was signed by so-and-so, as compared to saying, "This was signed by the Alliance." This was Jadir Hernández's idea, and it's even set down in the statutes of the organization. We were painting Güines as the home of a strong counterrevolutionary movement with many groups.

Yamila: Let me give you another example: I was the leader of the group FLAMUR, and I would claim there were 30 people on the executive. Nothing but lies! It was me, myself and I. Things got to the point where Miguel Galván and Jadir were not satisfied with the 35 groups and wanted more. They wanted to put together a children's group and they set their sights on our little boy. That's when we put our foot down: "Hey, give it a rest, will you! Aren't you

ashamed?” The last thing we needed was to turn the poor boy into the leader of the “dissident” pioneers.

Noel: They wanted to attract children to start inculcating them with ideas against the Revolution, in exchange for gifts. They had already held Christmas parties and they had spent some money, but not much, because the gifts weren’t worth a dollar each: a little doll, a toy car, that sort of thing.

137

When did you first visit the U.S. Interests Section?

Noel: When Miguel Galván approached me and told me he needed a secretary for the Association of “Independent” Engineers and Agronomists of Cuba (Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrónomos Independientes de Cuba, CIAIC) — just take a look at the name! What he was really after was an interview with someone from the Interests Section, to get himself known. We went to the Interests Section on March 12, 2001.

Who did you have the interview with?

Noel: With an official named Patricia French, from the Human Rights Office there. She asked about the plans for the Association of Engineers, its membership, and its potential for economic profit. She gave us a few magazines — *Cubanet* and *Disidente* — and made an appointment with us for another meeting there.

Miguel was extremely nervous and kept dropping things. His idea had been to take something to them that would really impress them. And it worked; she arranged another meeting at the Interests Section, for July of 2001.

You were received by the same official?

Noel: We went there, but to deal with another issue, the “independent” libraries. We were received by Maryann McKay, who was responsible for the press and culture. She asked about our “independent library” and its activities, its public acceptance and its plans for the future. She asked about the people of Güines and their reading habits. I wrote everything down. She also gave us books, pamphlets and counterrevolutionary magazines. There were nearly 40 publications. It was too much for us.

Cuban Democratic Directorate (Directorio Democrático Cubano, DDC)

Founded at the beginning of the 1990s following the collapse of Socialist bloc in Europe. The chief objective of the organization is to exercise international influence and persuade countries in Europe and Latin America to lend their support to counterrevolutionary movements within Cuba.

It is the counterrevolutionary organization that enjoys the most substantial funding from the government of the United States, in its unfaltering mission to destroy the Cuban Revolution.

Its present political agenda is centered on obtaining international support for the "Varela" Project.

As such, it was the publically acknowledged organizer of Oswaldo Payá's visit to Miami in January of 2003.

The delegations of the DDC in third countries call themselves Solidarity Committees, and are comprised of Cuban immigrants and nationals of those countries who back these anti-Cuban projects.

The DDC has close ties to universities in Russia, Prague and Warsaw, as well as to political figures such as Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel and Mark Laar of Lithuania.

In Latin America, they run the so-called Support Committees which have representatives in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Chile, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

In Mexico, the Committee is known as the International Promoter of Human Rights (Promotora Internacional de Derechos Humanos, PIDH).

They run a center of ideological subversion known as the Center of Studies for a National Option (Centro de Estudios para una Opción Nacional, CEON), which administers copious resources aimed at the production of subversive materials directed against Cuba in every forum that presents itself.

This center receives funding from the U.S. government to finance trips to other member countries of the DDC, and to pay the salaries of counterrevolutionary leaders who devote themselves to analyzing the experiences of the transitional processes that took place in Eastern Europe, in order to apply them to Cuba.

Yamila began working as an agent first, and Noel came later... Tell us about how you started to work together...

Yamila: At first, when I started out, we had a lot of problems at home. Noel would notice I was traveling to Havana and to different provinces a lot, and he thought I was cheating on him with another man.

Noel: I decided to ask for a divorce...

Yamila: He said to me, "Either you tell me what's going on or this is over." It was natural, but I wasn't prepared to tell him anything, unless I was instructed to do so by my official. He knows it very well: the Revolution comes first, then comes everything else, including my own marriage. I sat down to talk with my officials, and they wanted to know my opinion. Just imagine: I've known him since we were kids, and we even lived on the same block. He's a revolutionary, from a decent family, and, at the time, a member of the Union of Young Communists... They did the necessary research, and here he is.

Noel: We complement each other because we have very different personalities. Her façade was useful to me, and I started to work on my own.

Yamila: He would carry me and I would carry him, and it was very beautiful working together. Do you understand?

Noel: Because of our personalities, there were times when things got a bit ugly.

Why is that?

Yamila: We had very intense arguments.

Noel: At one point or another, someone even got slapped.

Why?

Yamila: Tania Díaz Castro kicked Miguel Galván out of the vice-presidency of the Human Rights Party, and she decided to give me his post to keep me under control. I have a very strong character, similar to hers, and to avoid having problems with me, she promoted me. Galván was so furious when he found out that he showed up at my place and told me I had been kicked out of the Cuban Civic Alliance, in Güines, where I was vice-president. We had a big argument and I said to him, "You didn't put me there and you're not kicking me out; I'll leave when I want to leave, not when you want me to."

Noel: There was a lot friction around because of jealousy and power struggles. Yamila was getting more and more recognition and he tried to discredit us, to distance us from everything.

140 Yamila: Galván circulated an e-mail saying that Noel and I were agents working for State Security, along with other gossip. I found this out from other “opposition” members. They came to my place to bring me the message. I asked for permission to give him what he was asking for.

And Noel?

Yamila: He understood. He wanted to go after him. We kept going over the problem in our heads and on the morning of January 28, the group known as 10th of December tried to place a floral wreath in José Martí Park, in Güines. I went to the park and found him there. It was a Sunday, they were dispensing beer and the place was packed. He was with another counterrevolutionary, Virgilio Marante Guelmes.

I waited for him to get close to me and I punched him in the nose and kicked him in the testicles as hard as I could. I didn't give him a chance to react. He shrank back, got on his bicycle and rode off, and I went after him, yelling everything that crossed my mind, from the Park to Mamey, where Noel and I live. I yelled at him for four or five blocks, things I can't exactly repeat here, and that he wasn't really a man, that he had no dignity, no morals, nothing.

What happened after that?

Yamila: He left Güines for a while. After that, if we ran into one another on the street, he would cross over to the other side. He was completely demoralized and alone. He's a sinister figure in the history of the counterrevolution in Havana, with ties to every single conspiracy in existence, capable of cheating his own mother if the situation called for it.

Did you participate in the hunger strike at 34 Tamarindo?

Yamila: As a journalist, yes. That was in June of 1999. I went there twice, with Gilberto Figueredo. On the first and last days of the strike. The home of Migdalia Rosado is at 34 Tamarindo Street, in the (Havana) neighborhood of Luyanó.

But you didn't take part in the strike?

Yamila: Gilberto took me there because he wanted me to learn

how to make a denunciation to send to the Miami media. I went as part of my apprenticeship as an “independent” journalist.

Noel: Figueredo gave you a pseudonym, Gretel, for you to avoid detection by State Security.

Yamila: Yes, but I actually used it on very few occasions.

Frank Hernández Trujillo

Top leader of the counterrevolutionary organization known as the Dissidence Support Group (Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia). Between the years 1962 and 1963, he was an active member of the U.S. army, specifically of the so-called Cuban Special Units. Hernández Trujillo is one of the most active members of the Institute for Democracy in Cuba (IDC), a group composed of 10 counterrevolutionary organizations which have received more than one million dollars from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in recent years. In 1995, he became the principal leader of the Dissidence Support Group, an organization which carries out subversive activities against Cuba and receives funding from USAID. The organization claims to have established either direct or indirect contact with more than 400 members of counterrevolutionary groups and to have sent material and financial aid to more than 100 of them.

He has played a leading role in providing material aid to counterrevolutionary groups within Cuba, sending food, medicine, subversive literature, electronic agendas, ink pads, radios and tape recorders, among other goods.

The main recipients of this aid in Cuba are Martha Beatriz Roque, Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, Raúl Rivero Castañeda and Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés.

What did you see in the house on Tamarindo Street?

Yamila: A farce. You went into the living room, then continued on to the bedroom, and there were a number of beds set up, side by side. Lying there, pretending to be fasting, there were a number of people trying to look like they were suffering, especially if you told them that you were a reporter. They fed the press this whole propaganda horror story: that they were living in subhuman conditions, that there was a sewer water leakage, and so on. And everyone knew that no one ever went on a fast there.

Someone told you this?

Yamila: Figueredo himself told me that when all the other people left, in the evenings, they would prepare themselves snacks and eat them. Also, when they had no visitors, in the afternoon. They themselves admitted that they ate when no one else was around.

142 And they had plenty of condensed milk, plenty of sweetened malt drinks to keep them going, jars of baby food, soup mixes... People even said they had put a roasted pig through the blender to have a strictly liquid diet. It was an insult to our intelligence. And in front of the foreign correspondents, they played victims.

I remember that Oscar Elías Biscet walked into the living room with Figueredo — I was walking ahead of them — and, in a loud tone of voice, he called on the journalists to take photographs and yelled: “Now we are free, now we have democracy, long live human rights.” Biscet put on a big show in front of the cameras.

Afterwards, the details about what actually went on there became well known, and there was no way they could deny them.

Noel: Tell them, Yamila, tell them what flag you saw there.

Yamila: The American flag.

Where exactly was it?

Yamila: It was in the living room, next to a photograph of some prisoners.

Noel: And a photograph of Jorge Mas Canosa, no?

Yamila: Yes, it was next to the photograph of a prisoner, one of the people that had just been put in jail around the time and there was a huge international campaign in support of him. You saw it as soon as you went in, practically facing the door. They were putting on a show, you know what I mean? A big show.

What were your principal tasks most recently?

Yamila: My work with FLAMUR.

How did FLAMUR get started?

Yamila: It was group put together in the United States, headed by Magda Edilia Hidalgo. She used to live in eastern Cuba. She left for the United States and founded this group. The first president here in Cuba was Leticia Martínez, who was Magda's sister-in-law.

They were hoping to organize women from the countryside to

have them receive medicine, food and materials for making baskets to send to hospitals, with propaganda in them. The “gifts” were delivered by an “independent journalist” who would carry a tape recorder and a video camera with him, to tape or to record the mother receiving the diapers, the medical gauze, the bottles of milk, and the pins from the basket. In exchange for all this, the mothers had to say that they were truly grateful to FLAMUR.

143

The recording would be sent to Magda and she would put it out on *Radio “Martí”*, in a program she had at four thirty in the afternoon.

José Cohen Valdés

Linked to the counterrevolutionary organizations known as the Cuban-American National Foundation (Fundación Nacional Cubano Americana, FNCA) and New Generation Cuba (Nueva Generacion Cuba).

A deserter, formerly a captain in the Ministry of the Interior, he left the country illegally on August 18, 1994.

From the moment of his arrival in the United States, he has expressed himself publicly against the Cuban Revolution.

Sponsored by the FNCA, he traveled to Washington on January 6, 2000 to carry out the so-called Mission Elián, as part of the campaign against the return of Elián Gonzalez to Cuba. He presented a compilation of information on Cuban families that have been separated.

On January 9, 2000, in the office of Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lethinen, he founded the counterrevolutionary organization New Generation Cuba, which grouped together young Cuban-Americans of the extreme right.

On March 2, 2000 he submitted a report to the Commission on Human Rights on alleged cases of divided families, in order to promote a campaign against Cuba within this international organization.

From March 16 to 18, during a LASA event held in Miami, he took part in acts of provocation and aggression against Cuban scholars. He repeated these some days later during a Cuban solidarity event held at Hunter College, New York.

He has taken part in aggressive actions and declarations directed at Cuban diplomatic personnel at the Cuban mission to the UN and in Washington.

Were there other gifts?

144 Yamila: The strategy was to organize the women around small businesses that allowed them to have an income in the name of FLAMUR. The raw material would come from Miami. There were different projects: sewing clothes, manicures, hairdressing. The important thing was to compete with the government.

In what way?

Yamila: If the government was selling a new dress for 20 pesos, we had to sell ours for 15 or 12 pesos. We made diapers, and we had to deliver them to single mothers, with low incomes, with two or three children. We would give these things away to them, for them to spread the word about how good FLAMUR was.

Noel: They also sent medicines, and asked for photographs.

Yamila: People would bring me the medicines and then tell me to spread them over the top of the bed and have my picture taken with them, for them to be able to verify that I had indeed gotten the delivery.

Who would bring the medicines?

Yamila: Émigrés who were sent by them. Speaking of which, not so long ago, around seven months ago approximately, we got a shipment of fabrics that had been “cannibalized” on the way over. Magda told me over the phone that they had sent 10 meters of each kind of fabric: a yellow one with blue dots, a leopard skin one, and a white one, for us to make dress shirts. We only got the white one, about three and a half meters of it. We got a meter and a half of the leopard skin fabric, and cut across the bias, so we couldn’t even use it to make pot holders. There were two and a half meters of the yellow fabric, and half a big spool of brown thread.

What had happened?

Yamila: The intermediaries in Havana had stolen the rest.

How many women became members of FLAMUR?

Noel: In Güines, there was never a branch of FLAMUR in operation. There were supposed members there, but it never actually did anything, no sewing group, nothing.

And the pictures they asked for?

Yamila: I’d gather together my sister, my mom, all the women in my

family, who didn't have the slightest idea what the whole charade was about.

Noel, what was your role in this?

Noel: In 1995, I began to collaborate with Yamila. I was the man who stamped the documents, who took down the minutes and drafted some reports. They chose me because I had a university degree — I'm an agrarian engineer. Afterwards, when my wife started to work for the Independent Press Agency, with López Prendes, they asked me to do some commentaries for the Miami media. I would write them, but I didn't directly participate on Radio Martí. I kept my distance from that. Until the year 2000, when Jamil and Miguel got me involved with Tania Díaz Castro's party. From that point on, I had a more active participation. They made me provincial delegate of the CENAIC — which had its headquarters in Santiago de las Vegas — and then the FLAMUR sprang up.

145

Who would you meet with in Santiago de las Vegas?

Noel: With Adoración Tulipa Amores. We would hold the CENAIC meetings at her place.

What did you do there?

Noel: Initially, we designed the structure of the group, the code of ethics, a whole apparatus to justify the organization. The delegations were named and the responsibilities were distributed, by province, in order to compile economic information on the situation of the country, in the agricultural sector in particular. We put together reports, also.

Who was commissioning the studies?

Noel: Diosmel and his team in Miami. They had a kind of non-governmental organization, which created the "Independent" Cooperatives project.

What was their significance?

Noel: Noel himself told us that it was an initiative of the Orthodox Renovation Party (Partido de Renovación Ortodoxo). The project was created between July and August of 1997. It was divided from the start. There was one group, talking about "transition", which sprang up in the province of Santiago de Cuba, headed by Diosmel

— who left the country in 1997 and left Jorge Vejar in charge — and another group, calling itself Progress 1, in Guantánamo, headed by Reynaldo Hernández Pérez. This man was also the president of the National Association of “Independent” Farmers of Cuba (Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Independientes de Cuba). The division of these two groups took place in 1997, a few months after the project had been founded.

New Generation Cuba (Nueva Generación Cuba)

NG Cuba appeared on January 6, 2000, during the legal battle over the custody of Elián González. The group made its first public appearance during an Elián-related protest held in front of the Tower of Liberty in downtown Miami.

The group is composed of people under the age of 40 and is designed to carry out anti-Cuban campaigns, related for the most part to migratory issues and aimed at countering some of the negative effects brought about by the extreme right of the Cuban-American community in Florida.

It is run by the traitor José Cohen Valdés and the counterrevolutionary Bettina Rodríguez, a human rights activist.

Its first project was the so-called Mission Elián, whose aim was to study the issue of current Cuban emigration to the United States and other countries of the world, and particularly the alleged irregularities in the migratory laws of Cuba and the restricted freedom of Cuban citizens to travel abroad. They present this as the responsibility of the Cuban government, as part of an international campaign of denunciations made before different forums that address the issue of human rights.

Their chief collaborators have been U.S. Congresswoman Ileana Ross Lehtinen and the Cuban-American National Foundation. The latter has been a source of funding.

NG Cuba has sent money to counterrevolutionaries, including, for example, Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, the participants in the hunger strike held at 34 Tamarindo in the year 1999, and Vladimiro Roca Antúnez.

How did they sustain themselves?

Yamila: They tried to get publicity. Scandal was a means to get money.

Noel: As I remember it, they started doing things to get attention. For instance, the National Association of "Independent" Farmers wrote letters to the government, inviting a number of leaders to participate in the first meeting of "Independent Cooperatives", which would supposedly take place on May 5, 1998, in Loma del Gato, Santiago de Cuba. This was published in the Miami press, stirring up a lot of fuss around it.

147

And the U.S. Interests Section?

Yamila: They were extremely interested and paying close attention to everything we did. Every time we had an interview with an official of the Interests Section, we had to give them a report about what we were doing. They helped publicize these activities abroad and suggested contacting non-governmental organizations with representatives in Cuba, such as Agro-Action of Germany.

Noel: In August of 1998, Diosmel sent a document to the FAO representative in Cuba, Fernando Robayo Rodríguez, asking for financial aid for the "Independent Cooperatives" project in Santiago de Cuba, Guantánamo and Havana.

Yamila: Which, altogether, didn't have more than 10 members.

Noel: The interesting thing is that, before we went to see the FAO representative in Havana, Diosmel paid a visit to the offices of the organization in Washington. He said he was the director of the National Alliance of "Independent" Farmers of Cuba, and advised them that the members of this project would pay a visit to the branch of their organization in Cuba to ask for financial aid, and when this took place, a wave of repression would likely be unleashed.

Did Diosmel explain to you why he was doing this?

Yamila: He wanted to provoke the government, making requests he knew would never be approved. A simple strategy of provocation.

Noel: Diosmel came to Cuba in November of 2002, and he was arrested...

What did he say?

148

Noel: He answered all of the questions they put to him. He said he wanted to build up his "Independent Cooperatives", with very few members, almost all of them in urban areas of cities in the eastern region of the country. His intention was to present a bill to the National Assembly of People's Power, something along the lines of the "Varela" Project.

Yamila: And the Swiss? Remember them?

Noel: He said the Alliance was run from abroad by the International Association of Cooperatives, based in Switzerland, of which he was a consultant in Miami.

What does this organization do?

Noel: They wanted to develop the "Independent" Farmers Cooperatives project in Cuba, subordinated in Miami to engineer Bernardo Pestano. From 1999 onwards, they received a total of 184,000 dollars in the course of four years from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), through monthly bank transactions.

Did this money ever reach you?

Yamila: Diosmel sent us some money, medicines and other things. His plan was to send between 150 to 200 dollars a month to the "independent" cooperative members. He himself told us that if he didn't hand over the money, the NED would not continue giving him money the following year.

Noel: This money had made it possible for him to travel to Geneva, to the sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Of course, he presented his list of human rights violations on the island. He had asked for money from a number of organizations to do this, including USAID. Someone from this agency — David Mutchler — turned him down, saying that his project lacked political objectives. Almost like divine intervention, he received the "gift" from the NED shortly afterwards.

What other organization was supporting him in Miami?

Yamila: It sounds like a joke, but Diosmel told us that he was considered by many in Miami — the hard-liners, mostly — as a “leftie”.

Noel: In reality, this was a project of Frank Hernández Trujillo from the Dissidence Support Group, who has a good feel for the business of “dissidence”. He knows that the more organizations he puts together, the more money he gets.

Who did you have to deal with here, in Cuba?

Yamila: Miguel Arcángel Camejo Planes, the “president” of the CENAIC in Havana.

How did this organization come to approach you?

Noel: Diosmel came into contact with someone in Miami who had studied agronomy with me in Cuba. That helped my façade a lot. His friend assured him that I was a born “dissident”, as well as my wife.

Diosmel started little by little. He started by asking for trifles, then he started giving me written instructions, that were delivered by the directors of the CENAIC.

Do you still have the messages?

150

Noel: Yes, take a look, this one says: "Hello, my friend, I'm glad we can communicate this way, and go about perfecting it little by little. I'm working on the last report again. I want it to be on the website tomorrow. I may not be able to set up the graphics for the time being, but the report is very good. Speaking of other things, because of the work you've done, I think you should be the one taking center-stage [...] A good friend of mine will be there in November, and he may have the time to pay you a visit. His name is Juan Alonso and I'll be giving him the information for him to write you this way. A hug, Diosmel."

We would check our e-mail, which was the principal means of communication, every time we went to the Interests Section.

When was the last time you set foot in the U.S. Interests Section?

Noel: Around six months ago, more or less.

Yamila: I was there on March 28, that was the last time I went to the Interests Section.

What sort of a relationship did you have with the U.S. Interests Section?

Yamila: It was very close, so much so that they gave us a survey about *Radio "Martí"* with the letterhead of the Cuban Commission, from Güines, to make it look like our own initiative. Maryann McKay asked us about everything, to the last detail.

What were they interested in knowing about Radio "Martí"?

Noel: Everything, if it had transmission problems, in what areas, which was the most popular program, suggestions...

Yamila: Opinions...

Noel: Do you see? That title up there, Cuba Commission, that's the group in Güines, the one headed by Miguel Galván Gutiérrez. Supposedly, it had just been established, and the U.S. Interests Section was so well informed about it that they had a survey form

printed up with the letterhead of the group, to do surveys in support of *Radio "Martí"*.

Yamila: Everything was connected. The U.S. Interests Section knew everything we were up to, in detail, thanks to Diosmel and company. The official from the Interests Section would then show up and they would take it for granted that we were about to carry something out, because they themselves had commissioned it. That's the way it was, as shameless as that.

151

Noel: The Cuban-American National Foundation was involved in this, quite deeply. And they made no secret of it. I have an e-mail from Diosmel that reads: "Allow me to congratulate you first for the great work you've been doing despite all the obstacles. The people at the Foundation were very much impressed with the quality of the work you've sent and with the relevance of the information..." This is from 2003. There, they give me the good news that I have to found the Cuban Civic University, and they suggest that if I behave and do everything they order me to do, I can aspire to an important position in the Ministry of Agriculture. They were the ones who invented this ridiculous thing, the project to create the Mayor's Office of Güines.

What Mayor's Office was that?

Yamila: In the home of Miguel Galván, on January 28 of this year, the Mayor's Office of Güines was founded. A very elderly man, José Orta Acosta, was proposed for the position of Mayor. This man is 87 years old, I think, and they use him like a rag doll.

Noel: It all happened like that comedy show on television, "San Nicolás del Peladero". Do you remember the Mayor's Office of San Nicolás and that character, Cheo Malanga? The same thing was happening here.

Yamila: It seemed like a joke, they were going to pay the Mayor 10 dollars and five dollars to every councilor. The monthly budget for the office would be 40 or 50 dollars.

Who was behind this?

Yamila: Diosmel, who even admitted that things had gone too far this time. Everyone who found out about the "Mayor's Office of Güines" killed themselves laughing..

Why is that?

Noel: They were desperate. They didn't even have five people and they expected to have less in the future. Miguel and Orta had the support of a couple that were waiting for their visa to leave the country. I think there was one more person.

Yamila: They didn't want to get into too much trouble, only to create something to keep the counterrevolutionaries in Miami happy, and above all, to get money. They were forever thinking up schemes, "We're going to go on a march, we're going to draft a denunciation, we're going to organize a vigil, a hunger strike..." And they looked at the old man and changed their minds.

Was the Mayor's Office ever founded?

Noel: Yes, of course. Diosmel even sent a declaration on behalf of the Cuban-American National Foundation. They would grab onto anything. They said it was a brilliant idea. Eight Mayor's Offices were going to be created around the country, as well as publishing houses, newspapers...

Yamila: Even a strategic team, no doubt...

Noel: And just when they were most enthused about this, Galván wrote an e-mail to Diosmel, saying, "We have serious problems."

What did he say? That they were the victims of "repression"?

Noel: Not a chance. Didn't I tell you that this was "San Nicolás del Peladero"? They made Orta sign a piece of paper that said, "The elected Mayor informs your excellencies abroad" — Diosmel and his bosses — "that we are unable to maintain this Mayor's Office for the common good of the City of Güines, in desperate need of a good patriot. The circumstances impede it." Something along those ridiculous lines.

So what was the excuse?

Noel: That with 40 or 50 dollars they could pay the elected representatives, but — and you had to see the angelic face that Miguel Galván would put on — "What if a citizen comes along with a problem and asks us for money?" And there was Orta saying, "No one's going to touch my 10 dollars!" The Mayor's Office lasted an hour.

Yamila: They consoled the poor Mayor, "Don't worry, old man, when we form the national government, we'll find you a job..."