

Cuban executed in U.S.-Fidel deal

by Carlos Wesley

The Jan. 20 execution of Cuban exile Eduardo Díaz Betancourt by Cuba's communist regime may have been designed to strengthen Fidel Castro's hold on power, by smashing the resistance within Cuba. The killing was seen as another step in the elaborate ballet between Castro and the U.S., as the U.S. government negotiates the sort of power-sharing arrangement with the Cuban dictatorship which it has already completed with El Salvador's FMLN guerrillas and Nicaragua's Sandinistas.

On Jan. 16, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Cuba's Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca held talks in Mexico at the signing of the so-called peace accords on El Salvador. During the talks, mediated by Sandinista leader Danny Ortega, the former President of Nicaragua, Baker told Malmierca that the U.S. would like Cuba to hold Sandinista-style elections, but Malmierca said no, at least not yet, according to Ortega. "I simply made the point," said Baker, "that the United States would support free and fair elections in Cuba, that we did not represent a threat to Cuba."

Malmierca told the media in Mexico that there have been ongoing talks for sometime between the U.S. and Cuba to resolve the "contradictions" between the two countries. The principal stumbling blocks to improved relations, said the Cuban foreign minister, was the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo and the over 30-year-old U.S. economic blockade against Cuba.

This followed a visit to Cuba by former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. "There is no threat to U.S. security from Cuba today. I say that quite categorically," McNamara said in Havana on Jan 12.

Díaz was captured along with Cuban-Americans Pedro Alvarez Pedroso and Daniel Santovenia Fernández attempting to infiltrate Cuba from the U.S. last Dec. 29. They were carrying arms and explosives, with the intention of launching a terror campaign to bring down the government, Díaz said at trial. The infiltrators allegedly had on them names, addresses, and phone numbers of leaders of the opposition in Cuba.

According to the Jan. 25 *Diario Las Americas*, published in Miami, there were reports "that the government of the United States could be acting as an informer for the Fidel Castro regime regarding the infiltration of commandos into the island." The FBI, CIA, and other U.S. agencies are fully aware of the activities of the anti-Castro groups that deployed

the three men, but did nothing to stop the suicide mission.

In fact, the U.S. limited itself to pro forma condemnation of the Castro government for executing Díaz, a recent emigré from Cuba (the other two, who had long been resident in the U.S., had their death sentences commuted). White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said, "We in no way approve of the activities of these three men." The U.S. will criticize Cuba at the U.N. Human Rights Commission current session, which opened in Geneva on Jan. 27.

But, at the same time, the U.S. and Cuba are conducting talks, supposedly to update an immigration agreement. The State Department said the talks are to "normalize relations in areas that are important to us," reported UPI, although there are no immediate plans to lift the embargo, for fear of alienating the politically influential Cuban-American community in an election year.

Living standards of slaves in the 1840s

The idea that three invaders could overthrow the Castro brothers was ludicrous and doomed from the outset. But it did give Castro an excuse to round up the leaders of the internal resistance, at a time when the collapse of the Soviet Union and his own economic mismanagement has driven the island back to the 19th century—at best.

There has been severe rationing of electricity and fuel since the disappearance of the U.S.S.R., formerly Cuba's principal oil supplier. In the countryside, public transportation often depends on horse-drawn buses, and even ambulances are horse-drawn, according to the regime's own propaganda.

According to an article in the Jan. 24 *Wall Street Journal* by Vicente Echerri, the average per capita caloric intake "is not only inferior to the Cuban diet of the 1950s, but also to the nutritional ration allocated to slaves in the colonial Cuba of 1842." But the blockade is not solely responsible for Cuba's economic mess.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government and media are still silent on the charges made in the interview in the Mexican magazine *Proceso* by Iliana de la Guardia, whose father, Col. Antonio de la Guardia, was executed in 1989 by the Castro regime for alleged drug trafficking. While her father was guilty, she said he was trafficking drugs on orders of the Castro regime to get foreign exchange. In fact, Fidel Castro personally asked him to take care of Medellín Cartel co-founder Robert Vesco, the fugitive financier and former U.S. Republican Party moneybags, who has been given asylum in Cuba.

Leaders of anti-Castro groups complain that the Bush administration is not interested in an opposition that is not controlled by the Anglo-Americans coming to power. Thus the U.S. taxpayer-funded National Endowment for Democracy has upped its budget to "bring democracy to Cuba." The money is being spent to pay for activities such as the Jan. 28 conference on Cuba sponsored by the Republican Party's International Republican Institute.