

**THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
AND CASTRO'S  
POLITICAL PRISONERS**



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CUBAN-AMERICAN DEMOCRATS

## **THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND CASTRO'S POLITICAL PRISONERS**

Cuba and Castro's political prisoners are major issues in the 1984 presidential campaign. Vice President Walter Mondale and Senator Gary Hart have both outlined positions on the "Cuba issue." The Reverend Jesse Jackson proposed a number of policy changes and went to Havana to meet with Fidel Castro.

The "Cuba issue" is not only important, it is also complex. Castro's involvement in Central America, the deployment of thousands of Cuban troops in Africa, and the leading role Havana plays in the anti-Israel campaign in international organizations are only some of the facets of the problem which must not be ignored by our decision-makers. Equally important aspects include: the indictment of Cuban government officials charged with participating in the narcotics traffic into the United States, the mentally ill and common criminals Castro shipped to the United States in the last months of the Carter Administration, and Castro's support of violence in Puerto Rico.

Despite the importance of these concerns, the purpose of this booklet is to bring an even more fundamental issue to the attention of our fellow Democrats: the plight of thousands of political prisoners and the lack of human rights in Cuba. In doing so, we join many human rights organizations, as well as governments of other democratic countries [France, Spain, Costa Rica, and Venezuela among them] who have appealed to Castro to release political prisoners.

What does all this mean to the Democratic Party? Why should the Democrats be concerned about these issues?

The obvious answer is that it is the morally right thing to do. The Democratic Party has always been the party of human rights. We must not allow conservative elements in the Republican Party to take the moral highground and claim that the Democratic Party is only sensitive to the victims of right-wing dictatorships.

There is no freedom of speech, no right to peaceful assembly, no freedom of worship, no independent labor movement in Cuba today. More than one million Cuban-Americans in the United States attest to the repression and terror imposed by Castro's government during the last 25 years. The Democratic Party must stand for an even-handed, fair policy; human beings have the right to live in freedom wherever they are.

In the long run every government, from Castro's to Pinochet's, is temporary. We must look to the future and realize that the people of Cuba will exist after Castro has gone. As Democrats, we must do all we can to bear witness to the plight of those in Cuba and elsewhere who share our beliefs in democracy and human rights.

Castro's political prisoners serve 15-, 20- and 25-year sentences for the ideas we Democrats hold so dear. Amnesty International has reported that many of them are not set free even after completing their sentences.

Executions for political acts still occur in Cuba. From five to ten thousand Cubans languish in Castro's political prisons and workcamps. Many young people go to jail for refusing to serve in the Soviet-led expeditionary forces in Africa.

Castro's jails hold writers, religious dissidents, union activists, and hundreds of other citizens whose only crime has been to attempt to escape the island without official exit permits.

**The focus of the Democratic Party's concern ought to be the Cuban people — not Castro.**

In doing all we can for the victims of tyranny, let us make certain we do not give aid and comfort to the executioners.

As *The New York Times* editorialized on July 6, “. . . most of the 26 Cubans selected from 5,000 political prisoners for delivery to Mr. Jackson had already served out cruel 20-year sentences.” *The Times* added: “Most Cubans and Soviet prisoners . . . are not victims of American policy, no matter how unwise it may be.”

As Andres Vargas Gomez, the Cuban poet and diplomat who served a 21-year sentence and who was among those turned over to Jesse Jackson in Havana, said: “To go to Cuba to join in a moral offensive with Fidel Castro is more than morally offensive, it is a moral offense.”

It is true that each of the cases included in this booklet is a personal tragedy for the men and women in Castro's political prisons and for their families; but more than that, their stories highlight the true nature of totalitarian repression in our time.

We hope that by making their names and circumstances known, they will not be forgotten when the "Cuba issue" is once again on the agenda of the Democratic Party.

**Luis J. Lauredo**  
**President**  
**Cuban-American Democrats**



**Gustavo Arcos, Castro's ambassador to Belgium, presenting his credentials in 1959. He is currently serving a 7 year sentence for trying to emigrate from Cuba.**

Ambassador Gustavo ARCOS Bergnes is a former ambassador to Belgium for the revolutionary government. He was wounded at Fidel Castro's side on July 26, 1953 during Castro's attack on Batista's army barracks. He is serving a seven-year sentence for attempting to leave Cuba in 1981 to see his son, who was left semi-comatose by a traffic accident in Florida. Arcos was sentenced to seven years imprisonment in 1965 due to his criticism of the Marxist direction of the revolution. On July 26, 1983, 21 U.S. Senators and 56 Congressmen petitioned Castro to set him free and allow him to join his family abroad. The letter was initiated by Senator Lawton Chiles (D-FL), and Congressman Michael Barnes (D-MD).

**Luis Leonardo B. ARROYO Ramos** was sentenced in September 1960, to 30 years imprisonment for "not being a communist sympathiser." He has had progressive neuritis for several years and is almost blind. He also suffers from an irritation of the colon but receives no medical care. Arroyo has participated in several hunger strikes and has been wounded by prison guards. He is not allowed visits or mail. He is currently imprisoned at Boniato Prison.



**Ricardo BOFILL Pages**, a former Marxist professor at the University of Havana, was accused of "ideological deviationism." He sought protection at the French Embassy in Havana. And, according to the *New York Times* (Sept. 29, 1983), the Cuban Ambassador in Paris was summoned to the Foreign Ministry to discuss Bofill's case. As a result, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, Cuba's Vice President, gave personal assurances to the French government that Bofill would be allowed to go into political exile in France. But, after giving an interview to two French journalists, Bofill was sent to Havana's Psychiatric Hospital. At a secret trial a few weeks later he was sentenced to 12 years. He is currently imprisoned at Combinado del Este Prison in Havana Province.

**Carlos CABRERA Adorna** was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment in 1977 for distributing anti-Castro propaganda at the University of Havana. He is reported to have gone on a hunger strike and is now a semi-invalid.

**Victor Miguel CANTON Gomez** has been serving a 30-year sentence since 1962 and his parents and sister have also been incarcerated. Canton has refused the "rehabilitation plan" and is not allowed visits, food from the outside, correspondence or medical treatment. He suffers from high blood pressure and allergies. He is being kept in solitary confinement in darkness at Boniato Prison. Canton has previously been held at La Cabana, Isla de Pinos, Pinar del Rio and Combinado del Este prisons.

**Mario CHANES DE ARMAS** was sentenced to 30 years in 1961. He is very ill after an abdominal operation which never healed. He was an old comrade of Fidel Castro both on the "Granma" expedition and the attack on the Moncada army barracks. Castro is said to be particularly harsh on his old friends who no longer support him. Chanes is presently at Boniato Prison.

**Pedro Francisco CORDERO Marrero**, an ex-military official, was sentenced in 1970 to 30 years for a political offense. He is presently being held at Combinado del Este prison. It is reported that he had been the victim of torture and physical abuse. Cordero is permitted occasional visits but receives poor medical attention.

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## HOSTAGE IN HAVANA



**Angel CUADRA Landrove** is a poet and a lawyer, whose works have been smuggled out of Cuba and published abroad. Arrested in 1967, he was accused of having "worked against the security of the State." Amnesty International adopted Cuadra as a "prisoner of conscience," and he was released in September 1976. In March of 1977 he was again arrested for continuing to write poetry considered subversive by the authorities, and was finally released from prison in April 1982. He is now a virtual hostage in Havana, for the Cuban government refuses to grant him the required exit permit to emigrate from the country. Cuadra's poetry has been translated into several languages. Some of his poetry which was smuggled out of prison was published by *Index on Censorship* (Autumn 1973). We reprint here one of Cuadra's poems, which is dedicated to the "many Cubans who have died while escaping from the island."

## **This man**

*(We shall never know how many  
Cubans have died while escaping  
from Cuba by sea.)*

At night, a man,  
his tragedy so small no one perhaps will ever know.  
For days on end this fear was in his dreams—  
long sleepless hours reviewing hopes and terrors.

He had distributed cordial smiles,  
digested the slogans, made political concessions  
and mutely kneaded his helplessness.  
He had to dodge the daily reefs, and still he carried on,  
a simple man who went to the cinema  
and walked along the streets with his commonplace  
name.

But there was a light that hurt,  
small, behind his breast and his temples.

He did not think of the wider implications  
that dragged him down: a sea  
in which he sank day after day.  
And one night, any night,  
this man shouldered his terrors and his hopes.  
The moon, always mentioned in such cases,  
picked him out on the beach,  
his small light shining out.  
Every single eye, every accusing finger,  
was lifted in the shadow to denounce his flight.  
He became a major fugitive amidst the loneliness,  
this simple man who left his name behind him.

Where the sea put out the light  
will not be known.  
He is no longer on the beach  
where the winds sing through flutes of salt.

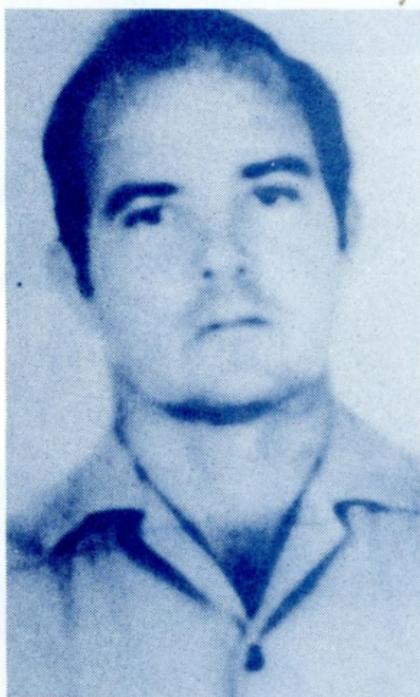
Reprinted from *Index on Censorship*  
(London) March 23, 1973

**Martha DE LA CARIDAD Regueiro** is a 20-year old student who was sentenced on December 7, 1981, to 5 years for trying to leave the country illegally. She is incarcerated at Nuevo Amanecer prison (Havana Province) and is allowed visits only once every 4 months.

**Cecilio Emiliano DE LA FE Mirabal**, imprisoned before 1962, is continuing to serve a 30-year sentence at Combinado del Este prison. He is a "plantado" and wears the yellow uniform of the political prisoners.

**Felix FERNANDEZ Batista**, a 39-year old driver, was sentenced in 1983 to 12 years for conspiring against the State. He refuses to participate in the "rehabilitation-indoctrination" plan. He is allowed one visit every six months and receives no medical attention.

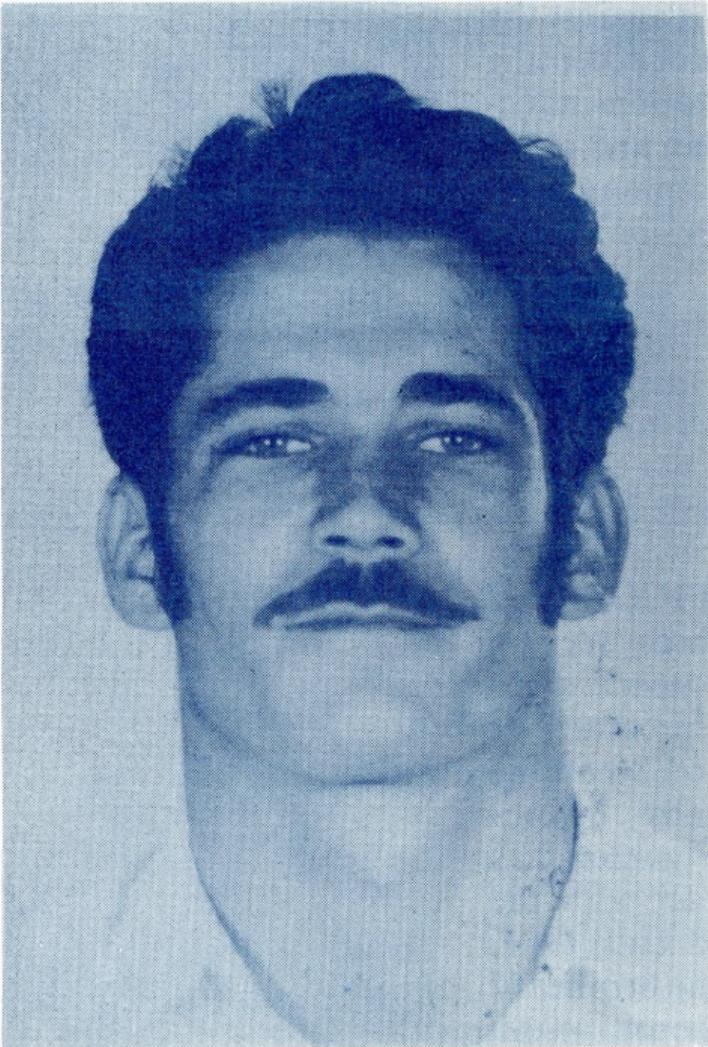
**Oswaldo FIGUEROA Galvez** has been serving a 30-year sentence since 1964 for conspiring against the State. He is not accepting the "rehabilitation-indoctrination" plan and is being kept incommunicado at Boniato Prison.

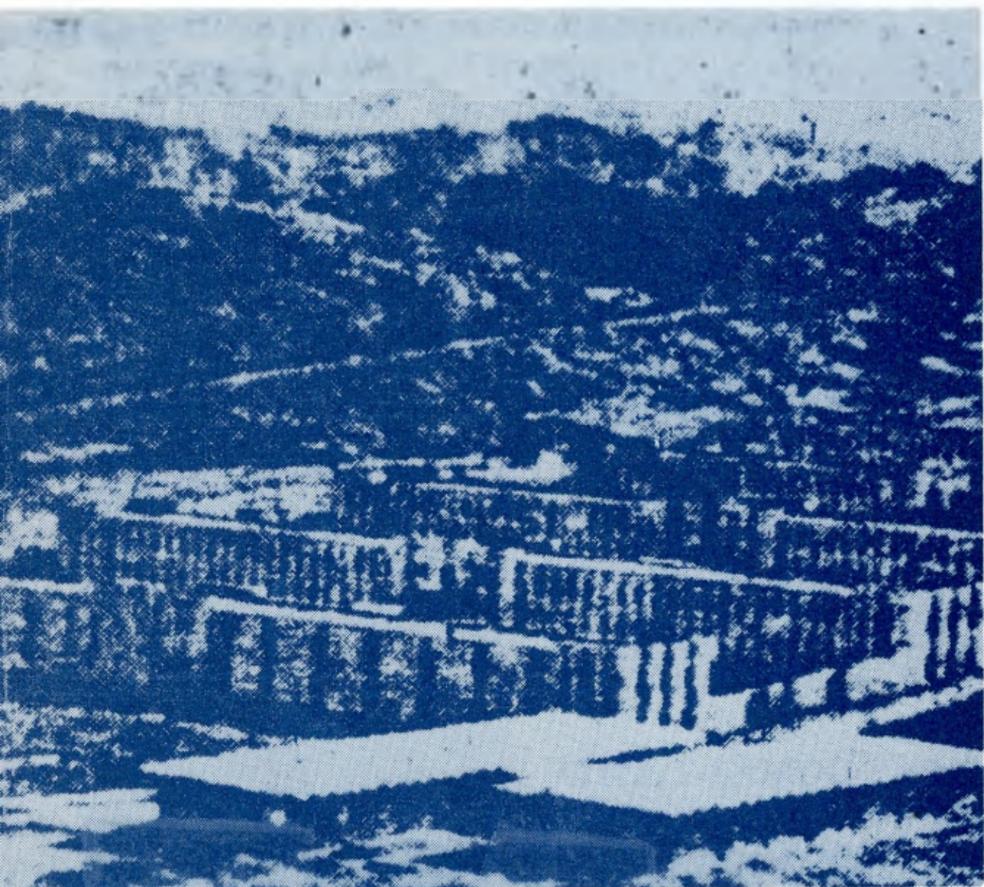


**Reinaldo FIGUEROA Galvez** has been serving a 30-year sentence since 1965. He is presently at Boniato prison where he is kept totally incommunicado. Figueroa has had no contact with the outside world since 1981. Reinaldo is the brother of Oswaldo Figueroa.



**Boniato Prison** in Oriente Province where many political prisoners are kept after they complete their sentences.





## Where Prisoners Are Confined In Cuba



**Armando Hernandez Gonzales** was executed along with his brother-in-law on October 1, 1982. His wife and sister-in-law along with other family members are serving long prison terms. In a scrawled note to his family, smuggled out of prison before his execution, Hernandez wrote: "When I die, I want the flag as my roof, the earth as my mother and for air—Liberty."

**Jose Carmelo GARCIA Estevez**, a former military official, was sentenced on April 11, 1959 to 30 years imprisonment for "military excesses" (court case #1152). Various revolutionary military personnel attended his trial and declared the charges to be unjust. At last report his state of health was "delicate" following major surgery in January 1983. He is allowed one visit every month.



**Isaac GOMEZ-CAMEJO** was sentenced in 1959 to 30 years imprisonment for various military offenses. His physical condition is critical. He suffers from diabetes, muscular atrophy in the hands and feet and has prostate problems. He has had ten operations for gangrene and in January 1983 one of his legs was amputated.



**Teodoro GONZALEZ Alvarado** was sentenced on August 28, 1962, to 30 years for counter-revolutionary activity (court case #372). He is being kept completely incomunicado at Boniato prison. He has not seen his family for three years and has received no correspondence for two years. His state of health is unknown.

**Ramon Pedro Ernesto GRAU Alsina**, a 60-year old former Cuban Congressman, was charged on January 21, 1965 of working with American intelligence. Sentenced to 30-years, he is presently a "plantado" prisoner at Boniato Prison. He is allowed no visits, no medi-

cal assistance, and virtually no mail. It has been reported by those Cubans recently released to the Reverend Jesse Jackson, that Grau is being subjected to psychological torture, including threats of execution, and sleep deprivation. Grau is a nephew of the former Cuban President, Ramon Grau San Martin.



**Alberto GRAU Sierra** was sentenced when he was a student in 1965, to 30 years for conspiring against the State. He is now 37 years old and suffers from nephritic colic and other kidney ailments for which he receives inadequate medical attention.

**Eloy GUTIERREZ-MENOYO**, a revolutionary leader during the struggle against the Batista dictatorship, has been in prison since mid-1966, serving a 60-year sentence. Reports filtering out of Cuba indicate that he has been beaten and that he might be seriously ill. Gutierrez-Menoyo is the last surviving son of

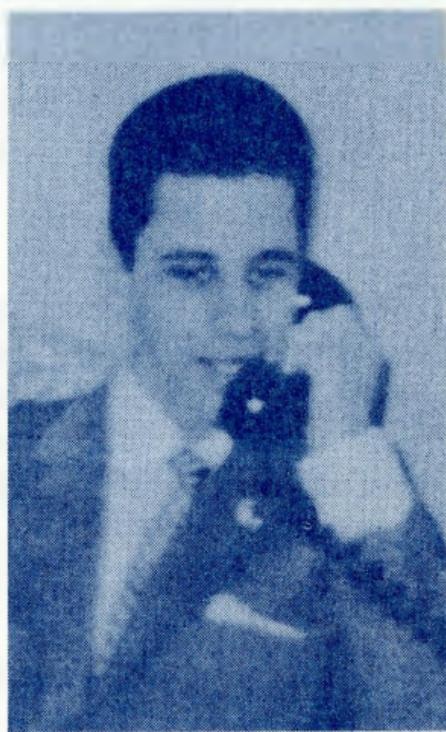


a Spanish family that emigrated to Cuba after the Spanish Civil War. His father was a political prisoner under Francisco Franco. His elder brother bled to death in battle fighting for the Republican army. After the family moved to Cuba, Eloy's surviving brother joined the student movement against Batista and was killed during the students' attack on the Presidential Palace in 1957. Eloy joined the guerilla forces in the mountains, and became a well-known revolutionary leader. After the revolutionary victory, however, he disagreed with the Marxist takeover of the regime. Eloy went to the United States, to return later — as Castro had

done earlier — to lead a guerrilla uprising. Eloy has been held totally incommunicado at Boniato Prison for many years where he has been tortured.

**Vicente HURTADO Martin**, a former military official, was sentenced on May 31, 1959, to 30 years for counter-revolutionary activity (court case #989). He is presently in a fair state of health at Camaguey Prison.

**Alberto C. JANE Padron** is a 44-year old former radio operator who was sentenced to 30 years on May 2, 1965 on charges of conspiring against the State (court case #157). He is a political prisoner at Boniato prison, where he is not allowed visits or medical attention and little correspondence.



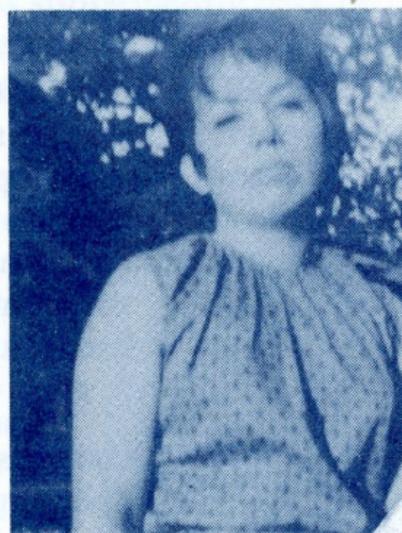
**Reynaldo LOPEZ Lima**, 45 years old, has been serving a 21-year sentence since the mid-1960's for conspiring against the State. He is a "plantado" being held at Boniato Prison with no visits, no medical attention, no food from the outside, and limited mail.

**Manuel MARQUEZ Trillo**, a 54-year old former shopkeeper, was sentenced on September 30, 1964, to 25 years for "attempts against the security of the State." He is allowed no visits or food from home and, according to relatives, mail addressed to him is not answered.



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## THREE SISTERS IN PRISON



**Clockwise from top left: Maria Estervina, Susana, and Consuelo Amelia LOPEZ-CUE, all sentenced to 15 years for attempting to leave the country without government permits. Also pictured is Noe AGUILAR-GONZALEZ, Susana's husband, serving a similar sentence.**

**Maria Estervina LOPEZ-CUE, Susana LOPEZ-CUE, Consuelo Amelia LOPEZ-CUE, and Noe AGUILAR-GONZALEZ, are all serving 15-year sentences for attempting to leave the country without the required exit permits. Maria, Susana and Consuelo are currently detained at the Nuevo Amanecer Prison in Havana Province. Noe is married to Susana and in mid-1983 was kept at Boniato Prison in Oriente Province. Several of them have children who are being cared for by relatives.**

**Santos O. MIRABAL** was sentenced to prison in 1966 at the age of 12 and completed his six-year term in 1971 at the age of majority. He remains in prison after 16 years. *The Chicago Tribune* reported on July 3, 1984 that Mirabal was initially included by Cuban prison authorities among the group to be turned over to the Reverend Jesse Jackson during his Cuban visit but was taken off the bus at the last minute. As Mirabal was being taken from the bus he said: "I am going on a hunger strike. Please tell the world about those of us who have been left behind." He is currently at Boniato Prison.

**Roberto Mertin PEREZ Rodriguez** was sentenced to 30 years in 1959 for conspiring against the State. After refusing to undergo political "reeducation," Perez is being held at Boniato prison where he is not allowed to wear anything but underwear. He has been badly treated, has received no medical attention and is not allowed visits or correspondence. He suffered a near fatal wound during the Boniato Massacre in 1975. Perez has no family in Cuba.

**Arcenio PIREZ Gonzalez**, a former sargeant in Batista's government, was sentenced to 43 years in 1959 (court case #1720). He is presently a "plantado" prisoner at Kilo 7 prison in Camaguey Province. He suffers from emphysema and has ulcers. He is allowed a one-hour visit every six months but no mail. He has been held at several prisons, among them Nieves Morejon, Sandino, Boniato, etc.

**Jose PUJALS Mederos**, an agronomist, has been imprisoned since August 8, 1961. He is now serving a 30-year sentence at Boniato Prison. His case was reported to be among those on Reverend Jesse Jackson's list of Cuban political prisoners, but he was not released. Pujals has not been allowed visits or correspondence during the last four years.



**Roger Fernando REYES Hernandez** is a 46-year old radiologist who began serving a 20 year sentence on June 26, 1966. He was accused of conspiring against the State. Reyes is a "plantado" at Boniato prison where he receives no mail, no food from the outside, and no medical attention despite a severe ulcer problem.

**Silvino RODRIGUEZ Barrientos** has been serving a 30-year sentence since 1962. He is a "plantado" prisoner at Boniato prison.

**Bruno SALAS Ledo** was sentenced in 1965 to 30 years. He is a "plantado" prisoner and is allowed to only wear underwear. He was operated on for injuries received from a beating by prison guards. He suffers from impaired vision, but his present state of health is unknown since he has not been allowed to receive visitors for the last two years.

**Ramon SAN ROMAN Novo** is a 72-year old farmer who was sentenced on February 2, 1964 to 30 years for conspiring against the State. He is a "plantado" at Combinado del Este prison and is being denied visits, mail and medical attention. He suffers from chronic ulcers.

**Miguel SARDINAS Rodriguez**, 24 years old, is serving a five-year sentence at Quivicán Prison, Havana Province. He had sought refuge in the Peruvian Embassy on June 2, 1980 and was issued a Government Safe Conduct that would have allowed him to go home and prepare his bags. He was subsequently detained, however, and sentenced "Because he had not completed the military service," and the Government Safe Conduct was not honored.

**Samuel TEJERA Milian**, a former mechanic, was sentenced on April 4, 1966 to 21 years on charges of "conspiring against State security." He suffers from ulcers and a hernia, but receives no medical care, visits or mail. He is held at the punishment section of Boniato Prison known as "end of the world."



## THE TOLEDO FAMILY

**Margarita de TOLEDO** is a 41-year old housewife serving a 15-year sentence for "conspiracy against State powers." Her husband **Ramon TOLEDO**, charged in the same case, was executed with 29 others on October 1, 1982. **Odalis TOLEDO**, 28 years old, a housewife, and **Ana TOLEDO**, were also sentenced in the same case. They are currently being held at Nuevo Amanecer Prison in Havana Province.

Odalis's husband, **Armando HERNANDEZ** was also executed along with **Pedro RODRIGUEZ**, another family member, in October 1982.

Other family members imprisoned include: **Alberto ALVAREZ Marquez**, serving a 20-year sentence; and **Mateo TOLEDO**, serving a 30-year sentence at Combinado del Este Prison.

**Armando HERNANDEZ** and **Odalis TOLEDO's** two children, ages seven and eight, are presently under the care of their grandmother, Dolores, who is both physically and mentally ill. She is one of the few members of the TOLEDO family not charged in the original case. The TOLEDOS, a peasant family, were reported to have made and distributed anti-government pamphlets.

**Jose Manuel TORRES Regueiro**, 22 years old, began serving a 15-year sentence in March 1983 for attempting to leave the country without a government permit. he is allowed two visits a month.

**Jose Ramon UGARTEMENDIA**, a 62-year old former male nurse, was sentenced in May 1959, to 30 years for his service in the military of the previous government. In 1974 he was retried and acquitted due to lack of evidence, but still remains in prison. He suffers from hypertension, gastric ulcers and circulatory problems. He also suffers from partial loss of movement in his lower limbs due to a stroke in 1980. He is allowed visits every four to six months, and is presently at Kilo 7 prison in Camaguey Province.

**Juan A. VALDES Teran**, a 67-year old former driver, was sentenced on September 17, 1963 to 30 years for conspiring against State security. He suffers from prostate problems and scoliosis but receives no medical attention. He is being kept completely incomunicado in Combinado del Este Prison, Havana Province.



**Jose Antonio ZARRALUQUI Pena**, a 40-year old writer, was sentenced on November 23, 1982, to four years imprisonment for writing subversive literature. He has cardiovascular problems, but his present condition is unknown. He is presently being held at Combinado del Este Prison, Havana Province.

For additional information please contact:

**Cuban-American Democrats**

P.O. Box 49-0097  
Miami, FL 33149

**Of Human Rights**

Georgetown University  
Box 2268—Hoya Station  
Washington, D.C. 20057  
tel: (202) 342-1586

**Amnesty International**

10 Southhampton Street  
London WC2E 7HF, England

**Americas Watch**

36 W. 44th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10036

**Organization of American States**

**Inter-American Commission on Human Rights**  
19 & Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

**Cuban-American National Foundation**

1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007



CUBAN-AMERICAN DEMOCRATS



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January 28, 1985

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Dear Fellow Democrat:

With the beginning of this new year and of a new administration, we want to share a few thoughts with you. Now is the time to reappraise the policies of the Democratic Party -- of our party -- and to chart a course that will restore the Democrats to the White House in 1988.

One area of great concern is the question of human rights and the deprivation faced by the thousands of political prisoners being held in Cuban jails.

The Democratic Party historically has championed the cause of human rights. In recent years, however, we have given the impression of being less concerned with the repression of human rights suffered under left wing dictatorships than that experienced under right wing dictatorships.

The repression of human rights is to be deplored and opposed be it by the right or left. In fact, it is morally and politically reprehensible not to denounce the same crime equally.

The Cuban community is playing an integral role in American politics, a role that is growing in importance. A million Cuban Americans should have a place among the constituency of the Democratic Party if the Party is to remain true to its traditions and ethics.

We hope that you will read the enclosed booklet, give serious consideration to the Cuban issue and introduce it into the agenda of the Democratic Party.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope to count with your support.

Cordially,

Luis J. Lauredo

Encl.

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