

FOCAL Chronicle on Cuba

April 2002

Domestic Affairs

April 1: Luxembourg's Grand Duchess Maria Teresa toured Havana's historic center during her first visit back to her native Cuba since the 1959 revolution. Maria Teresa arrived with two of her five children for a private visit. (AP, 1/4/02)

April 2: Fidel Castro inaugurated the Preparation Course for Young People at the Celia Sanchez Manduley Square, in Manzanillo, in Granma province. He expressed that the country starts "a revolution of social and educational character". Youngsters attending these schools were not studying and unemployed. (AIN, 2/4/02)

April 4: Cuban children under three years of age have received their first dose of anti-polio vaccine, announced the island's Health Ministry. In this first stage, two drops of the vaccine have been administered to nearly half a million children from 30 days old to two years, 11 months and 29 days. The second stage of the national anti-polio campaign will take place from April 26 to May 2. Polio was eradicated in Cuba in 1962. (Radio Habana Cuba, 4/4/02)

April 20: In central Cuba thousands rallied to voice opposition to an anti-Cuba resolution approved at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. At the Santo Domingo municipality, in Villa Clara province, some 60 thousand people rallied against the resolution, denouncing it as a document imposed by the United States through pressure and blackmail. The mass rally at Santo Domingo municipality, in central Villa Clara province, was attended by Cuban Vice President and Minister of Defense Raúl Castro as well as local government leaders. (Radio Habana Cuba, 21/4/02)

April 22: The Cuban Ministry of Labour and Social Security has implemented new regulations to further restrict self-employment. Adding to the extreme taxation and recurrent fines that self-employed Cuban citizens must endure, the new measures provide that their operating license be revoked should they move to another municipality. As for those who run itinerant businesses, they will not be allowed to operate outside their home municipality. New licenses will no longer be issued. (El Nuevo Herald, 22/4/02)

April 22: The 27th Regional Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization was inaugurated in Havana. During the FAO Regional Conference ministers of agriculture will review the regional activities of the UN agency over the past two years, with a special emphasis on the trends and challenges in agriculture, forests and fishing, as well as issues related to food security. (Venpress, 22/4/02)

April 25: It is reported that Cuba's Masons have seen their ranks more than double since the 1980's, to 29,000 members in more than 316 lodges across the island. Jesús Armada Pena, a 33rd degree Mason who presides over Cuba's Supreme Council at a Scottish Rite Masonic temple in central Havana, said that earlier this year, the Cuban government gave permission for two new lodges, the first since 1967. "We have always existed in Cuba," Armada said. "But after the revolution there was a decrease in membership. So many left the country, while others thought the Masons no longer had a reason for being because our principles and foundation as an institution were overtaken by the political process." He added: "Now we have found an echo among the young. They are looking for answers to their worries, which the state could not give them." When the Communist revolution came to power in 1959, the Masons' ideas were seen as a threat. Membership plummeted from 39,000 in 1959 to 14,000 by 1980, as the group was treated as a clandestine counterrevolutionary sect. (The New York Times, 25/4/02)

Economy

April 1: It was reported in Cuba that investors of the European Union make up most of the economic associations on the island. Fifty two per cent of the 403 economic associations using foreign capital, are with members of the EU. Figures published by the Cuban Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Ministry indicated that of the economic block's 15 members, Spain is the principal investor with 104 companies. A local radio station reported that some 5 billion dollars are currently committed in various investments and other projects in Cuba including from Canada and Italy. Also making an important contribution to the Cuban economy are investments from Mexico, Britain, China and Germany. Among the 32 economic activities that receive foreign capital are the island's Basic Industry in oil and natural gas prospecting, mining and pharmaceuticals. French investment, was also deemed substantial. (Radio Habana Cuba, 1/4/02)

April 3: The Chamber of Commerce of Cuba said that it will soon send trade delegations to a number of African and European countries to promote trade with them. The countries are Namibia, South Africa, Italy, Portugal, Britain and Trinidad and Tobago, said Antonio L. Carricarte, head of the Chamber of Commerce. Carricarte told reporters that the island will also receive trade missions from Argentina, Chile, China, Colombia, France and Germany. (Xinhua, 3/4/02)

April 3: International Barytex Resources Ltd. (Barytex) and Northern Orion Exploration Ltd. (Northern Orion) announced that a financing proposal is being negotiated to establish a copper mine at the Mantua Project in western Pinar del Río province, Cuba. Discussions are underway for funding the entire project through to production by way of a debt facility. Currently Barytex has an option from Northern Orion to earn a 100% interest in Minera Mantua Inc. that in turn holds a 50% interest in the Mantua Copper Project. Geominera, a Cuban company controlled by the Cuban government, has the remaining 50% interest. Laboratory tests were run in September 1997 and larger scale pilot plant tests have also been completed on the Mantua ores at the Placer Dome laboratories in Vancouver. A recent market forecast by analysts from a leading brokerage firm indicates that copper prices are expected to average US\$0.80 per pound in 2002 and US\$0.90 per pound in 2003. (Market News, 3/4/02)

April 4: According to official newspaper Granma the rise in oil prices has placed a major burden on the Cuban state, which ends up paying USD 50 million per year every time the oil price goes up a dollar. This is compounded by the "embargo premium" it has to pay, as oil tankers have hiked up their transportation fees to offset the losses caused by the 6-month penalty period they have to wait before they are allowed to dock at U.S. ports following every delivery to Cuba. (Granma, 4/4/02)

April 4: The Empresa Logística de Carga Aérea Sociedad Anónima (ELCA S.A.) first air terminal devoted exclusively to the processing of in transit merchandise without contamination during its handling was inaugurated with the presence of Cuban Vice-president Carlos Lage. (AIN, 5/4/02)

April 10: A fire that burned for more than 10 hours destroyed the sugar cane planted in about 500 acres by the 'Fabián Cabrera' Basic Unit of Cooperative Production in the city of Güines, south of Havana. The burnt cane was assigned to the 'Osvaldo Sánchez' sugar mill and the loss is estimated at 100,000 hundredweight. A source linked to the Ministry of Agriculture said the environmental damage to the surroundings could not be estimated immediately. (Grupo Decoro, 10/2/02)

April 14: Venezuelan Ambassador to Cuba Julio Montes said his country will be sending a ship loaded with petroleum to the island, in what he considers a "significant" move given the good relations between the two countries. Montes made this announcement during a special edition of the Cuban television program "Round Table" (Mesa Redonda), entitled "Victory for the people

and the Bolivarian revolution." In October 1999, Cuban President Fidel Castro and Chavez signed the Integral Cooperation Agreement, in which Venezuela committed itself to provide the island with 53,000 barrels of oil per day. In return, Cuba agreed to pay for the oil over a 15-year period, with a one-year grace period and 2 percent interest. (EFE, 15/4/02)

April 18: Moscow is not currently considering an idea to resume the so-called trilateral oil cooperation between Russia, Cuba and Venezuela. Diplomatic sources told the press that the resumption of "this deal", which used to be quite effective and mutually profitable, is now impossible for purely economic reasons. The sources specified that the oil sector in Venezuela and Cuba is run by the state, while most Russian oil companies are private. The sources recalled that in Soviet times Venezuela supplied Cuba with oil under Soviet obligations and the Soviet Union delivered the relevant amount to Western European countries, including Germany, under Venezuela's obligations. Such a scheme allowed Moscow and Caracas to save on oil transportation costs. This trilateral cooperation lasted for over a decade, but now it is "difficult to find a Russian oil supplier that could benefit from this cooperation". The sources said that under President Hugo Chavez's initiative, Venezuela is currently delivering oil to Cuba "at a lower price", which is another deterrent for Russia's private oil companies to join in such deals. (BBC, 18/4/02)

April 24: The Mexican Secretariat of the Economy has denied that the differendum with Cuba hinders national foreign trade development since commerce with the island currently reaches volumes averaging USD 250-280 million per year. In 2001, Cuba had a negative balance of trade with Mexico of about USD 150 million. (AFP, Notimex, 24/4/02)

April 30: Cuba's seven-year recovery from the crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, has come to a halt, analysts say, blaming declining tourism and reduced imports for putting the brakes on the economy. "Cuba appears to be entering a recession due to the first trimester performance of the economy's determining sector, tourism," the French commercial office in Havana said in its monthly newsletter. The commercial office added that 2002 forecasts for relatively high oil prices - Cuba's biggest import - and low prices for the island's leading export - sugar - did not bode well for the rest of the year. Representatives of other Western commercial offices said they were convinced an economic downturn was under way, although it was impossible to determine its seriousness due to a lack of information from the government or state-run media. (Reuters, 30/4/02)

Exile Community

April 5: A Coral Gables theater has decided not to host a play featuring Cuban actress Verónica Lynn saying it couldn't deal with possible protests by local exiles. The Yamaha Concert Hall at Hale Piano Theater notified the organizers of La Ma Teodora's 2002 film and stage season that it would not host the play *El último bolero* (The Last Bolero), featuring Lynn. "We're sorry, but we don't have enough security to protect ourselves, and no one can assure us that the building won't be damaged," manager Manny Pérez said. (The Miami Herald, 6/4/02)

April 23: After two years, Elian Gonzalez the boy who survived a shipwreck is news again. Before a packed courtroom of people who opposed Elian's return to his father in Cuba, lawyers for former Attorney General Janet Reno asked a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Miami to dismiss two separate lawsuits brought against Reno. One was filed by Donato Dalrymple who had taken credit for helping rescue the Cuban-born boy from the sea. Two years ago, during the raid to rescue Elian, federal agents had seized 6-year-old Elian from the arms of Dalrymple. The second action was brought by Elian's great uncle Lazaro Gonzalez, his wife, Angela, and his daughter, Marisleydis, against Reno and two other government officials on charges that the gun-wielding agents used excessive force to seize the boy. The judges didn't indicate when they would rule. (Miami Daily Business Review, 25/4/02)

Foreign Affairs

April 1: Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Angel Dalmau has met in Athens with European Union associate foreign minister Tasos Yanichis, in order to strengthen economic, political and cultural ties. The Cuban official stressed the importance that the European Union holds for the Cuban economy as the island's largest trading partner. (Radio Habana Cuba, 1/4/02)

April 2: Fifty Mexican parliamentarians announced that they are considering traveling to Cuba to help make amends for problems that have arisen between Mexico and the island. Headed by Sergio Acosta, of the lower house's International Relations Commission, and by Marti Batres of the Democratic Revolution Party, (PRD), 50 of that party's Legislators were to meet with Cuban Ambassador, Jorge Bolaños. (Radio Habana Cuba, 2/4/03)

April 2: UNICEF's representative in Cuba, Françoise Gruloos-Ackermans, presented UNICEF report The State of the World's Children 2002, to national authorities and the press in Havana. The UNICEF representative emphasized that Cuba is an example of the fact that successes and difficulties in social policies for the protection of children are not necessarily related to the country's economic level, but are clearly tied to the existence or lack of a political commitment to make children a high priority on the political and social agenda. (Granma International, 2/4/02)

April 2: Cuba and Lesotho signed cooperation agreements in health, sports, agriculture and water resources. (Radio Habana Cuba, 2/4/02)

April 3: The Chilean government confirmed that it will maintain its position to abstain at the Geneva Convention with regards to the vote on a Cuban human rights resolution, said the Chilean General Secretary of Government, Heraldo Muñoz. (Emol.Com, 3/4/02)

April 3: A Canadian businessman was convicted of violating the U.S. embargo against Cuba. James Sabzali, 42, whom U.S. authorities described as the only foreign national ever prosecuted for alleged infringement of the Cuban embargo, was found guilty by a federal jury on 20 counts of violating the U.S. Trading With the Enemy Act (TWEA) and one count of conspiracy. Two of his fellow business executives, both U.S. citizens, were also convicted, along with their Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania-based chemical company Bro-Tech Corp. Sabzali faces a maximum sentence of 205 years in prison and over \$5 million in fines. Bro-Tech Vice President Donald Brodie faces 330 years in prison and \$8.3 million in fines after being convicted on 34 counts. His brother, company President Stefan Brodie, could spend up to five years in prison and pay \$1 million in fines for a single-count conspiracy conviction. However, before the trial began on March 15, prosecutors had already recommended prison sentences of 41 months to 51 months based on the indictment. The verdict could result in the forfeiture of the company, which was convicted on 45 counts carrying a maximum penalty of \$44.5 million. (Reuters, 3/4/02)

April 3: A top Cuban diplomat has defected in Panama. Orlando Brito Pestana, his wife, and their two young daughters, defected in Panama, where he worked for five months as a commercial attache at the Cuban embassy. Cuban diplomats have reportedly asked the Panamanian government to cancel Pestana's diplomatic immunity and his driver's license. The Panamanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Alemán, said that the Cuban embassy in Panama City reported "the disappearance" of Brito Pestana and his family fifteen days ago. The minister added that Panamanian security agencies have concluded that Brito Pestana was not linked to any criminal activity. In 1994, Brito Pestana and consul Adelfo Martin, of the Cuban consulate in Montreal, were two of three diplomats declared persona non grata by Canada for espionage. Brito Pestana knew most of the Cuban spies, moles and sleeper agents in Canada and the U.S. (El Nuevo Herald, Toronto Sun, 3, 7/4/02)

April 4: Mexico didn't pressure Fidel Castro to leave a U.N. conference early, and the United States didn't ask Mexican officials to ensure that the Cuban leader was gone when U.S. President George W. Bush arrived, Mexico's foreign secretary said. In a television interview on the program Zona Abierta, Foreign Secretary Jorge Castañeda said Castro decided on his own to leave shortly after giving his speech during the U.N. International Conference on Financing for Development. "Fidel Castro was not pressured for one moment by any Mexican official to leave early," Castañeda said. He added that Castro had already informed Mexican President Vicente Fox that he planned to leave the conference on March 19, less than a day after his arrival. "From what we know, he left when he had the foresight to go," Castañeda said. (AP, 5/4/02)

April 4: Two Cuban specialists arrived to the Chilean capital to collaborate with sanitary authorities of that country, dealing with the avoidance of the dengue at the Pascoe Island, in the Pacific Ocean. Doctors Jorge Zaldívar, Chief Department of Vectors of the Health Ministry of Cuba and Francisco Zamora, expert in dengue, stated they will help in the organization of services to respond to the epidemic and control of the mosquito *Aedes aegypti*. (AIN, 4/4/02)

April 4: Mexican President Vicente Fox said that Mexico would consider its vote regarding a UN resolution on human rights in Cuba at the Geneva Convention. "Our decision will be made once a draft is made known, or a resolution is brought to a vote." (Notimex, 4/4/02)

April 5: A delegation of leaders and parliament members of the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) arrived in Cuba to meet with Fidel Castro and express their support of Cuba in the face of diplomatic tensions between the two countries. (Radio Habana Cuba, 6/4/02)

April 5: Cuba has called on the Inter Parliamentary Union to urgently do everything in its power to end Israel's acts of aggression against the Palestinian territories and promote "effective solidarity" with the Palestinian people. (Radio Habana Cuba, 5/4/02)

April 5: A Mexican abstention at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva would be regarded as positive and consistent with traditional Mexican foreign policy, said Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque. (Notimex, 5/4/02)

April 5: Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, criticized in Havana the position of the presidents of Argentina, Costa Rica and Uruguay, who have announced that their countries will support a condemnatory resolution against Cuba at the UN Commission on Human Rights, and called them "subservient" people who "bow" to U.S. pressure. (Comcosur, 5/4/02)

April 6: Uruguayan Foreign Affairs Minister Didier Operti, speaking on behalf of his government, rejected his Cuban counterpart's "offensive" remarks. Operti told the local media that "Uruguay does not rule out retaliatory measures in response to Pérez Roque's offensive statements." Uruguayan Ambassador to Cuba, Enrique Estrázulas, has been summoned by his government for consultations. (Notimex, EFE, 6,7/4/02)

April 6: According to poll results released by a Mexican newspaper, most Mexicans believe that Castro should abdicate but reject any involvement by their government in the issue of political change in Cuba. The government-sponsored survey showed that 73% of the participants said "Fidel Castro is a dictator and should relinquish power;" 66 %, however, expressed disapproval of a possible Mexican involvement in Cuban human rights issues. (EFE, 6/4/02)

April 6: Fidel Castro's government expressed solidarity during a huge anti-U.S. rally for a Canadian convicted in the United States of violating Washington's trade embargo by selling water-purification chemicals to Cuba. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, addressing 140,000 Cubans including Castro and other senior members of the ruling Communist Party on

the outskirts of Havana, ridiculed the guilty verdict by a jury in federal court in Philadelphia against businessman James Sabzali. (Reuters, 6/4/02)

April 8: A donation to the people of Uruguay of 200,000 doses of a Cuban vaccine against meningitis B, arrived in Montevideo. The vaccines are part of a donation of 1.2 million doses that Havana is giving "to the people of Uruguay", Cuba's ambassador to the South American nation, Jose Alvarez Portela, said. President Jorge Batlle insisted on deducting the cost of the vaccine from the island's debt to Uruguay. But Havana rejected the idea and stated that it is a donation. (EFE, 8/4/02)

April 8: Mexico has not decided how it will vote on a U.N. motion condemning Cuba for its human rights record, Mexico's foreign minister Jorge Castañeda told Mexican lawmakers. Amid controversy over his position toward Cuba, Castañeda met with five members of Congress to talk about Mexico's position on the motion and hear their views, a statement released by his office said. He said Mexico would decide how to vote once the text of the motion was set. (Cubanet, 8/4/02)

April 8: Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Guatemala will not censure Cuba outright at a U.N. rights meeting in Geneva this month, as Washington wants, but will call on it to improve its act and to grant the U.N. rights chief access to the island, Peruvian media said. La Republica newspaper said Peru had drafted a four-point document, which had the backing of the four other countries. The report was echoed by El Comercio daily. A foreign ministry spokeswoman declined comment. (Reuters, 8/4/02)

April 8: The VIII Session of the Joint Commission for Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation between Cuba and Zambia began in Havana. Deputy Minister of Finances and National Planning, Patrick Kalasa headed Zambia's delegation and Foreign Investment Minister, Marta Lomas, represented Cuba. (Radio Habana Cuba, 10/4/02)

April 9: Pax Christi Netherlands is very concerned about the imprisoned blind Cuban human rights activist, lawyer and president of the Human Rights Foundation in Cuba, Juan Carlos González Leiva. He is accused of "public disorder" and incarcerated at the State Security Prison in Holguin, Cuba. He denies any food and liquid in protest for the accusations against him of committing common crimes. Pax Christi Netherlands calls for the international attention to the ongoing violations of human rights in Cuba. (Cubanet, 9/4/02)

April 9: The Peruvian Congress agreed, by a 67-2 vote, to cast an abstention vote when the case of Cuba is brought up for discussion at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. (EFE, 10/4/02)

April 10: The issue of human rights in Cuba, although not included in the agenda, was discussed during the Río Group Summit after Costa Rica endorsed a draft resolution to be submitted by Uruguay before the UN Commission on Human Rights, whose contents have been released in Geneva. (AFP, 11/4/02)

April 10: Leftist parties and labour unions took to the streets to exert pressure on the Peruvian government to prevent its support of a condemnatory vote against Havana at the UN Commission on Human Rights convening in Geneva. (AFP, 11/4/02)

April 10: A delegation of Young Communists of Cuba arrived in South Africa to strengthen ties with the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) and look at broadening co-operation on the challenges facing the youth. The areas of co-operation include sharing ideas on matters such as information and communication technology, culture, education and political education. (All Africa.Com, 11/4/02)

April 10: Fidel Castro strongly criticized the countries whose politicians are stealing all their people's money and call Cuba non-democratic and a human rights violator. Cuba is a country free from corruption, he assured. In a televised speech yesterday, Castro said that in Latin America, Europe, and other parts of the world, presidents, politicians, and governmental officials are enriching themselves more than ever by illegal procedures. (Prensa Latina, 11/4/02)

April 11: The Guatemalan Congress requested the government to abstain from voting against Cuba at the UN Commission on Human Rights, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. With an 83-11 vote and 19 absences, the legislative body carried a motion urging President Alfonso Portillo's government not to endorse a possible condemnatory resolution against the Cuban regime. (EFE, 11/4/02)

April 11: The Argentinean Chamber of Deputies, after long deliberations, approved an abstention vote by their government when the case of Cuba is brought up for discussion at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. (EFE, 11/4/02)

April 11: Venezuela will not add its name to a growing list of Latin American countries that will vote in favor of a U.N. Human Rights Commission resolution to be presented in Geneva at the U.N. body's 58th annual assembly, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Luis Dávila told the press. (EFE 11/4/02)

April 11: Cuba has condemned the resolution sponsored by a group of Latin American countries in Geneva. The Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque said the resolution is the handiwork of the United States. He added that Cuba has rejected the suggestions of a visit from a human rights monitor. "They're having vain illusions if they think that Cuba would let an inspector in the service of the United States government come here under these conditions," Foreign Minister told reporters earlier this week. (AFP, 12/4/02)

April 11: Peruvian Prime Minister Roberto Dañino described as "unacceptable" and "impertinent" the Cuban government's statements following the Peruvian endorsement of a UN draft resolution on the situation of human rights in Cuba. Meanwhile, Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo said that Peru "is no one's puppet" --not Washington's or Havana's-- and would not be adopting either country's position at the UN Commission on Human Rights convening in Geneva. (AFP, 12/4/02)

April 12: The official Cuban newspaper Granma condemned Hugo Chávez's ouster from the Venezuelan presidency as "a coup orchestrated by corrupt politicians and business interests". (Granma, 12/4/02)

April 12: About 500 Venezuelans, chanting and blowing whistles, demonstrated outside the Cuban Embassy angered by Cuban leader Fidel Castro's support of ousted President Hugo Chavez and claiming four of Chavez's lieutenants were hiding inside. Demonstrators vandalized at least three cars in front of the embassy, breaking windows, puncturing tires and pouring white paint inside. The protesters also reportedly cut telephone and electrical wires leading to the embassy. (AP, AFP, 12/4/02)

April 13: Speaking in a massive rally at an "Open Tribunal of the Revolution" (Tribuna Abierta de la Revolución) attended by Fidel Castro, Bruno Rodríguez, the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, announced that measures were being taken to guarantee the physical safety of civilian Cubans on cooperative missions in Venezuela and that their orderly and secure evacuation would be underway, with the exception of medical personnel, "if the coup regime decides not to deprive the Venezuelan people of their noble and humane services." (El Nuevo Herald, 14/4/02)

April 14: President Hugo Chávez's return to power in Venezuela continued to dominate headlines as Cuba's state-controlled media which closely followed the aftermath of the two-day

overthrow of Fidel Castro's strongest ally in the Western Hemisphere. "The Bolivarian Revolution Triumphs", the Communist Party newspaper Granma said in a front page story about Chávez's return to the capital. Over the weekend, Cuban TV broke repeatedly into regularly scheduled broadcasts to keep citizens updated on what was happening in Venezuela. (AP, 15/4/02)

April 15: Mexico said that it would support a U.N. resolution censuring Cuba for its human rights record. A news release issued by President Vicente Fox's office noted that the government will support this year's Uruguay-sponsored resolution, which "instead of containing the condemnation of past years, assumes a constructive and cooperative focus." Mexico has traditionally abstained from the annual vote. (AP, 15/4/02)

April 15: Speaking in the border city of Tijuana, Mexican president Vicente Fox said the Uruguay-sponsored resolution censuring Cuba for its human rights record at the UN Commission of Human Rights was "not a condemnation, but a positive declaration for human rights." He added that Mexico is also supporting the measure because it condemns the U.S. economic blockade against Cuba. (AP 16/4/02)

April 15: Chile decided to support the Uruguayan submission before the United Nations regarding the human rights situation in Cuba, to advance the recognition of citizen's rights by the Cuban regime, said Chilean Foreign Affairs Minister Soledad Alvear. (AFP, 16/4/02)

April 15: During a press conference, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez expressed his gratitude for the support of the Cuban people and media during the aborted attempt to overthrow his administration. (Granma, 16/4/02)

April 16: Grenada's Prime Minister Keith Mitchell arrived in Havana for a state visit. Mitchell will hold bilateral discussions with Fidel Castro during which the two leaders are scheduled to discuss improving technical cooperation in education, housing and health, the Grenadian government said in a release. (EFE, 17/4/02)

April 16: Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, began a diplomatic visit to Venezuela, accompanied by the Cuban ambassador to that country, Germán Sánchez Otero, and the Venezuelan ambassador to Havana, Julio Montes. (Unión Radio, 16/4/02)

April 16: Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Jorge Castañeda, said that his country's decision to endorse a human rights resolution on Cuba is not a hostile act against the Island, despite it being the first time that Mexico votes for an exhortation to Cuba. "Firstly, (the resolution) is consistent with President Fox's position on human rights and democracy (...); secondly, it is not a censure of Cuba, therefore it does not constitute a hostile act and is consistent with the preservation of good relations," Castañeda said. (Reuters, 16/4/02)

April 17: According to Spanish newspapers, after the aborted coup against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, President José María Aznar disclosed having received a Cuban request to assist Chávez in leaving his country. Aznar said he had received two requests for assistance from the Cuban government the previous weekend: one to contribute to Chávez's exit from Venezuela, and another to help prevent violence against the Cuban embassy in Caracas. (Juventud Rebelde, 17/4/02)

April 18: Three Cuban businessmen and a Dominican pilot disappeared in the Dominican Republic while traveling in a small plane from Santiago in the northern part of the country to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Civil Aeronautics Board spokesman Pedro Alberto Hernandez told the press that the plane's crew had reported a change in route to the control tower at Santiago's Cibao International Airport due to bad weather. According to Hernandez, members of the Dominican air

force and civil defense troops have been working on rescue operations, which have been hampered by heavy rain in the area. (EFE, 18/4/02)

April 18: After hours of debate, the Mexican legislature's lower house passed a resolution asking President Vicente Fox's government to abstain from a U.N. vote on the human rights situation in Cuba. Legislators from the leftist Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) and the former ruling party (PRI) allied with two small opposition factions to pass the measure recommending abstention over the objections of lawmakers from Fox's National Action Party (PAN). (AP, 18/4/02)

April 18: Ecuadoran Foreign Minister Heinz Moeller said that his country plans to abstain from the vote on a Uruguayan-sponsored resolution to condemn Cuba before the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. During a news conference, Moeller said that "beyond domestic or external pressures," the administration was reaffirming the policy of abstention it has followed since 2000. "Ecuador acknowledges the efforts Cuba has made in regard to economic, social and cultural rights despite an adverse international environment, while at the same time it hopes that (Cuba) will continue to advance in regard to civil and political rights," the minister added. (EFE, 18/4/02)

April 18: Iranian Vice President Mohsen Mehr Alizadeh arrived in the Cuban capital beginning an official, four-day visit to the island. Cuba and Iran established diplomatic relations in February 1979, following a popular uprising that overthrew the Shah of Iran in January of that year. (Radio Habana Cuba, 18/4/02)

April 18: The European Union (EU) member countries will once again vote on a Cuban resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights, as they did last year. The resolution, submitted by Uruguay, will be co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland and Holland. (Notimex, 18/4/02)

April 19: The U.N.'s main human rights body backed a Latin American call for Cuba to improve its rights record. The motion, the first in which Latin America has taken the lead in criticizing Cuba at the Geneva-based Commission on Human Rights, was approved by 23 votes: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Check Republic, France, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Korea, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain, and Uruguay. Twenty one nations voted against it: Algiers, Bahrain, Burundi, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Indonesia, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Togo, Venezuela, Vietnam and Zambia. And nine countries abstained: Armenia, Brazil, Ecuador, Kenya, Senegal, Sierra Leona, Swaziland, Thailand and Uganda. The motion urged Cuba to put as much effort into strengthening human rights as it had into improving social policies and asked U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson to send a representative to the Caribbean island state to monitor its progress.

April 19: Cuba has called the vote against the island at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva a "mockery" and an "insult", insisting that its promoters "lack the moral authority" to sponsor such a condemnation. Terming as "inconceivable" the attitude of some Latin American countries, the government of Cuba insisted that the vote is "a moral victory" for the island, and that "the Cuban Revolution feels strengthened in its resolve to continue struggling against the US's genocidal blockade" against the island. (Radio Habana Cuba, 19/4/02)

April 19: Fidel Castro confirmed he sought help from various countries to rescue friend and ally Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez as a coup unfolded in the South American country. Castro said Havana's attempt to come to Chavez's aid was out of fear he was ready to die defending his presidency. (Reuters, 19/4/02)

April 19: The Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs expressed disapproval of its Ambassador to Cuba, Ricardo Pascoe's statements recommending that his government abstain from voting on a Cuban resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. (EFE, 19/4/02)

April 19: Mexican Foreign Undersecretary Gustavo Iruegas said that Mexican ambassador to Cuba, Ricardo Pascoe, ignored instructions to support the Mexican vote on a Cuban resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. (Notimex, 19/4/02)

April 19: Cuban Construction Minister Juan Mario Junco del Pino traveled to the old dividing line between communist North Vietnam and the US-backed south to visit Cuban engineers rebuilding the communists' wartime supply route. A company of 13 Cuban sappers first concreted the same section of jungle trail in Quang Tri province in 1973 to lay the ground for the North's triumphant 55-day offensive two years later. The JIC Construction joint venture is now asphaltting the 90 kilometre (55 mile) section as part of a prestige project to turn the wartime Ho Chi Minh Trail into a 1,690 kilometre (1,050 mile) trunk highway linking north and south. (AFP, 19/4/02)

April 19: Senators from the two most important Mexican opposition parties (PRD and PRI) have said that the Mexican vote in favour of a Cuba resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva was "mistaken" and "unfortunate." (Notimex, 19/4/02)

April 21: Iranian Vice-President and Head of the Organization for Physical Education Mohsen Mehr-Alizadeh in Havana held talks with Fidel Castro on ways to develop bilateral relations. Mehr-Alizadeh conveyed a message from President Mohammad Khatami to Castro. (IRNA, 21/4/02)

April 22: Haitian Foreign Minister Antonio Joseph Philippe and Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque signed a bilateral agreement on cooperation. Perez Roque called cooperation between the two Caribbean nations "an example for countries of the Third World." (Radio Habana Cuba, 23/4/02)

April 22: Fidel Castro released an audio tape of a phone call in which the Mexican president Vicente Fox tried to persuade him to cancel or cut short his attendance at the United Nations development summit meeting in Monterrey. Castro, at a news conference read what he called "A Political Statement" and made public his private conversation on March 19 with Fox. (The New York Times, Notimex, 22, 23/4/02)

April 22: During a press conference, Fidel Castro insulted Jorge Battle, the president of Uruguay, calling him a "stale and abject Judas" for its sponsorship of the UN Human Rights Commission resolution against Cuba. Castro challenged Battle to sever diplomatic relations with Cuba, and pointed that, despite such an act, Cuba will send the South American country a much-needed batch of meningitis-B shots. "Really, to such threats (of a diplomatic rupture) we can only say, what are they waiting for to do it?" said Castro. In a verbal attack on the Uruguayan government, whose policy he described as "vile" and "shameful," he accused the Health Minister of that country of being a "murderer" who, Castro said, "allowed children to die to avoid purchasing the Cuban vaccines." (Notimex, 23/4/02)

April 22: Presidential spokesman Rodolfo Elizondo read an eight-item declaration issued by the Mexican government deploring Castro's "inappropriate" disclosure of a private telephone conversation between President Fox and himself. The Mexican Presidency argues that "as the Cuban recording itself shows, the Cuban President accepted the arrangements offered for his attendance, which he could have rightfully rejected at any time (...) both heads of state ended the conversation 'as friends.'" Mexico maintains that it will not break diplomatic ties with Havana. (El Universal, 22/4/02)

April 23: Uruguay breaks diplomatic ties with Cuba. The announcement by President Jorge Batlle came as the Uruguayan leader accused Cuba of a series of "insults", following a Uruguay-sponsored UN resolution in Geneva against Cuba. Batlle told a news conference that insults by Cuban leaders forced Uruguay to act. He said: "The rupture will remain until it is clear that the Cuban people have peace and liberty." Mr Batlle said he instructed Foreign Minister Didier Operti to carry out the necessary steps to formalise the break in relations. (BBC News, 23/4/02)

April 23: Fidel Castro learned that Uruguay had severed diplomatic relations with Cuba in the course of a second live TV appearance and pointed that "in eight or ten years, no one will remember" his Uruguayan counterpart, Jorge Batlle. Castro read a news report of the diplomatic rupture with Uruguay and asked: "What's his name?" in reference to President Batlle. (EFE, 23/4/02)

April 23: During a second TV appearance, Castro described the Mexican reaction to his so-called political declaration as "precipitate and irresponsible." "I feel no animosity toward Fox," he explained but blamed the Mexican President for his lack of political savvy and for his total reliance on his Foreign Secretary Jorge Castañeda, who acts as "a sort of a cultural advisor" to Fox. (World Data Service, 23/4/02)

April 23: Former Presidents Eduardo Frei and Patricio Aylwin, from Chile, and Ernesto Samper, from Colombia, condemned Castro's disclosure of a private exchange with his Mexican counterpart, Vicente Fox. The three former presidents, attending a regional meeting in this capital, criticized Castro's decision of divulging the conversation he held with Fox prior to the Monterrey Summit. (Notimex, 23/4/02)

April 23: Mexico's latest embarrassing row with Cuba has deepened divisions between President Vicente Fox and the Mexican Congress. Leftist lawmakers accused the Mexican leader of pressuring Fidel Castro to leave a U.N. development summit in Monterrey and then lying about it. (AP, 24/4/02)

April 23: Unknown individuals hurled a Molotov cocktail at the Cuban embassy in Mexico. No one was injured and the building was not damaged. (El Universal, 23/4/02)

April 23: In a live radio interview, Mexican Foreign Secretary Jorge Castañeda alleged that Fidel Castro released the taped conversation with Fox to divert attention from his growing diplomatic isolation. "Internally, it does enormous damage to the antidemocratic and human rights-violating regime of Fidel Castro to know that the government of Mexico no longer supports the absence of democracy and lack of respect for human rights in Cuba," Castañeda said. The Minister said the government has a request from Cuba to buy oil products. Castañeda said he will ask President Vicente Fox whether or not to authorize the shipment. Mexico was the only Latin American nation that refused to cut ties with the island after the 1959 revolution that brought Castro to power. (CNN, Dow Jones News Wires, 24, 25/4/02)

April 24: The Chairman of the Central Bank of Cuba, Francisco Soberón, impugned Mexican Foreign Secretary Jorge Castañeda's statement that Cuba had requested from Mexican banks a line of credit for the purchase of oil by-products. (El Universal, 25/4/02)

April 24: Uruguayan former Health Care Minister, Luis Fraschini, announced that he is pondering the possibility of filing a damages suit for slander against Fidel Castro, who called him a "murderer" and criticized his advisors, which included the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Uruguayan medical corps. (AFP, 25/4/02)

April 24: Salvadoran President Francisco Flores said his country would not resume diplomatic relations with Cuba during the remainder of his term, which ends in May 2004. Castro's recent

behavior, in particular his recording – and later divulging - of a private telephone conversation with Mexican President Vicente Fox, "break all norms of responsibility, discretion and respect that should exist in relations between two leaders," Flores told the press. The Salvadoran president also referred to the escalation of tensions between Cuba and Uruguay, which culminated when President Jorge Batlle announced that his country had decided to break ties with Havana. (EFE, 24/4/02)

April 25: Guatemalan President Alfonso Portillo stated that the absence of popular elections or democracy in Cuba is the reason why his government endorsed the Uruguayan-drafted Cuban resolution in Geneva that, he said, does not condemn Castro's regime. "I may admire Cuba and Fidel but I can also admit that it is the only country today without democracy and a free popular electoral system, and that was why we decided to vote in favour of the Uruguayan submission," said Portillo to the media. (AFP, 25/4/02)

April 25: Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique expressed his support for Mexico and Uruguay in a political spat with Cuba and insisted the row would not derail a European Union-Latin America conference planned for May in Madrid. "I want to express my solidarity with Mexico and Uruguay and with their presidents," Pique told a news conference. He said that if any leader were not to attend the May conference in Madrid it need not disrupt the meeting's agenda. "Of course, we would regret any absences from the conference but the delegations of different countries will still have the opportunity to contribute and benefit from the desire to improve strategic relations across the Atlantic," Pique said. (AFP, 30/4/02)

April 25: Former Spanish President Felipe González criticized Fidel Castro for disclosing a private conversation with his Mexican counterpart, Vicente Fox, and praised the latter "for not severing diplomatic relations with the Island." He held the view that the Mexican government "did well" by not ending diplomatic ties with Cuba. The ex-President expressed regrets that "the open discussion on this issue currently taking place in Mexico would not occur in Cuba today." (EFE, 25/4/02)

April 25: The Cuban authorities should release a group of human rights activists and independent journalists who were arbitrarily detained by police in March, Human Rights Watch said today in a letter to President Fidel Castro. According to information received by Human Rights Watch, six human rights advocates and two independent journalists were beaten and arrested on March 4, 2002, at a provincial hospital in Ciego de Avila, Cuba, where they had staged a peaceful protest. (EFE, 25/4/02)

April 26: Canadian Ambassador to Mexico, Keith H. Christie, divulged that the foreign ministers of Mexico and his country held talks in which Ottawa gave President Fox its total support and declares itself to be "positively impressed" by the Mexican government's decision to endorse the Uruguayan-drafted resolution in Geneva. The diplomat censured Castro's actions and pointed that the Canadian government finds it "intolerable and unjustifiable" that conversations between heads of states be recorded without authorization and later publicly released. "In spite of certain noticeable improvement in the field of social rights" (...) "and despite the international context" (...) "there is a lack of respect for certain fundamental political rights (in Cuba)" (...) "it is simply an invitation to the Cuban authorities to reflect on how the fundamental political rights can be better implemented." (El Universal, 26/4/02)

April 26: The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that it shares the Mexican position regarding the human rights situation in Cuba. "Mexico seems to be motivated, like ourselves, by a concern for the advancement of human rights, without detriment to our opposition towards the embargo" on the Island, said Ministry spokesman, Francois Rivasseau. (Notimex, 26/4/02)

April 26: OAS Secretary General, César Gaviria, affirmed that the Mexican government's decisions concerning Cuba are guided by the principles of respect for democracy and human rights. He acknowledged Cuba's advancement of social rights, but pointed that issues such as freedom of expression are held sacred in the Americas. "We are willing to work together, to join forces, to make whatever decisions are required when the freedom of expression, or of the press, are at stake in any of the countries of this hemisphere," he added. (Notimex, 26/4/02)

April 26: A Montevideo survey showed that 40% of the Uruguayans do not approve of the diplomatic rupture with Cuba and 35% would favour less extreme measures. Only 8% expressed support of President Batlle's decision. (La República, 26/4/02)

April 27: Uruguay's President Jorge Batlle said his country will maintain consular relations with Cuba, despite a deep row between the two countries in recent weeks. "We aren't going to ask any other country to look after our concerns," Batlle said. (AP, 27/4/02)

April 30: A former Canada-based Cubana Airline regional manager, Leonardo Haza Martínez, is in police custody in Buffalo, New York, pending deportation to Canada in compliance with an order issued by an Immigration judge. Haza Martínez walked away from his duties as the Cuban airline's manager for Ontario, and crossed the U.S. border in the Niagara Falls area. Haza's disappearance from his office in Ontario spurred the defection of then-Cubana's general manager for all of Canada, José Iván Lurbe Alonso. (El Nuevo Herald, 30/4/02)

Security

April 20: Colonel General Li Jinai, Political Commissioner of the General Department of the Popular Liberation Army in China, arrived in Havana. Colonel General Li Jinai is heading a Chinese military delegation on a visit to Cuba. The high-ranking Chinese military officer was met at the airport by General Sixto Batista Santana, the head of the Political Division of the Cuban Armed Forces and by other Cuban military leaders. (Radio Habana Cuba, 21/4/02)

April 24: Pentagon planners have carved Cuba out of the rest of Latin America in a new defense plan that concentrates on homeland defense from headquarters in Colorado. Under the new Unified Command Plan, established in response to the September 11 attacks, the Southern Command, based west of Miami, will be responsible for territory south of Cuba starting in October. A Northern Command will have jurisdiction over U.S. military activities from Canada to Cuba, including the U.S. Navy base at Guantánamo Bay. (The Miami Herald, 24/4/02)

Terrorism

April 18: The US Senate moved to bar visitors from countries formally declared sponsors of terrorism, and tighten control over foreign students coming to the United States. The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act, passed unanimously (97-0) by the Senate, prohibits admission of people from Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan and North Korea unless they are coming to the United States as immigrants. (AFP, 19/4/02)

April 23: A U.S. Congress committee pointed that the Colombian FARC guerrillas have undergone training by IRA members and, possibly, by Cuban, Iranian and ETA Basque "terrorists," and recommended that the anti-narcotics assistance provided to Colombia be extended to help in the counter-insurgency effort. (AFP, 25/4/02)

US-Cuba Relations

April 2: The United States denied visas to at least 60 officials with the Cuban food importing agency who had been invited by U.S. agricultural producers, a U.S. State Department spokesman said. "We have a kind of blanket restriction on issuing visas to Cuban government officials and members of the Cuban Communist Party that goes back to the mid-eighties, and while we've waived that restriction in the past we decided on this occasion not to waive that, so they were not given visas," said Chip Baker, spokesman for the Western Hemisphere Department of the State Department. The spokesman refused to discuss the reasons for denying the visas this time. (AFP, 3/4/02)

April 2: Seven Cuban migrants were rescued from an orange raft about five miles east of the Fowey Rocks Light in south Biscayne Bay, the US Coast Guard said. A second raft was spotted 10 miles north of the first a short time later. It was empty, but a Coast Guard rescue boat and a helicopter have begun a search for other migrants in that area. The Coast Guard rescued or intercepted 777 Cuban migrants in 2001. (Sun Sentinel, 2/4/02)

April 3: According to participants on the Cuban nightly "Round Table" TV program, the Cuban Government protested to Washington about activities by American diplomats on the island that it considered "subversive". The formal protest was presented charging that the U.S. Interests Section in Havana had passed out 500 small portable radios around the island in recent months, so Cubans could listen to the U.S government's Radio Marti programs. The Cuban government also stepped up its criticism of Cuban activists it accuses of working for Washington. (AP, 3/4/02)

April 3: It is published that a group of 21 Cuban migrants, including four children, landed on Loggerhead Key, Florida, in what authorities believe was a smuggling operation. "We have some possible leads on what smuggling vessel was used, and we're following up on it," said Cameron Hintzen, U.S. Border Patrol supervisory agent in Marathon. (Keynoter.Com, 3/4/02)

April 5: U.S. farmers could be hurt by the State Department's decision to deny travel visas to key Cuban food import officials who need to come to the United States to purchase American grain, Senator Pat Roberts says. "Future sales of grain to Cuba are put in jeopardy by the decision to revoke travel visas for Cuban officials who make grain purchasing decisions," Roberts, a Republican from farm state Kansas, wrote to Secretary of State Colin Powell. He urged Powell to reverse the decision made by Otto Reich, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs, to deny the visas. (AP, 5/4/02)

April 5: Cuba's foreign minister accused the United States of attempting to force a Latin American nation to sponsor a U.N. resolution condemning Havana's human rights record. Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque held a news briefing to show the press a "secret State Department document" purporting to be the proposed resolution to be debated at the annual meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission. (NBC News, 5/4/02)

April 6: Warning "our patience has limits," Cuba's foreign minister lashed out at the United States over allegations that U.S. officials are distributing radios so Cubans can listen to pro-American broadcasts. Speaking before tens of thousands of people at a weekly government rally, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque also accused the United States of conducting "electronic espionage" at its office in Havana. The head of US Interest Section in Havana Vicki Huddleston attended the rally together with a group of US diplomats. (AP, 6/4/02)

April 9: Former US President Jimmy Carter has been given permission to go ahead with a visit to Cuba. Washington granted Carter a "standard license to travel," Deanna Congileo of the former leader's Carter Center confirmed. She said the centre was planning a trip for May, which will make Carter the highest-ranking US official to visit the communist country since the 1959 revolution. (BBC, 9/4/02)

April 11: A top Cuban spy who defected in Panama has been brought to the United States for debriefings on Havana intelligence operations in Canada, America and Panama, U.S. and Panamanian officials say. Orlando Brito Pestana was stationed in the early 1990s in Canada. The FBI later blocked his way when Havana tried to appoint him to the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, U.S. officials added. [For more on this, see Foreign Affairs section.] (The Miami Herald, 11/4/02)

April 12: The United States will join the number of countries sponsoring a resolution against Cuba at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights annual gathering in Geneva, officials announced. The U.S. participation brings to 16 the number of countries joining the effort to censure Cuba. "This is the first time Latin American countries have said that human rights issues in Cuba is a matter of concern," said James Carragher, coordinator of Cuban affairs for the U.S. Department of State. [For more on this, see Foreign Affairs section.] (The Miami Herald, 13/4/02)

April 13: Speaking in a massive rally at an "Open Tribunal of the Revolution" (Tribuna Abierta de la Revolución) attended by Fidel Castro, Bruno Rodríguez, the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, accused the U.S. government of conspiracy against Hugo Chávez, the president of Venezuela. (El Nuevo Herald, 14/4/02)

April 17: A leading Senate advocate of easing the embargo on Cuba, wants an investigation of the Bush administration's decision to cancel visas for Cuban officials who planned to discuss buying American wheat and other crops. Senator Byron Dorgan says the State Department told his staff the visas were canceled because it was not administration policy to encourage agricultural sales to Cuba. "This is a brainless policy to be saying that we don't want to sell grain to the Cubans," Dorgan, Democrat - North Dakota, said in a statement. "We sell grain to communist China, communist Vietnam, and it's just absurd to tell our farmers that our government doesn't want to sell grain to Cuba." (AP, 17/4/02)

April 18: Jimmy Carter announced that he will head a delegation to Cuba on May 12-17. "I look forward to this opportunity to meet with Cuban people from all walks of life and to talk with President Castro," Carter said in a statement issued in Atlanta, where his nonprofit Carter Center is based. Carter does plan to discuss human rights with the Cuban leader, said Jennifer McCoy, director of the Carter Center's Americas program. McCoy, a Georgia State University professor, will travel in the delegation. "As a leader who made human rights the centerpiece of his administration, President Carter is looking forward to a full discussion of this issue," McCoy said in the statement from Atlanta. (CNN, 18/4/02)

April 18: California Representative Cal Dooley called for a nonbinding House of Representatives vote in support of private U.S. financing of food sales to Cuba. The rollcall vote was postponed after more than an hour of debate. Such so-called motions to instruct, while they carry no power, are a show of support that may influence negotiations. In 2000, agricultural sales to Cuba were exempted from U.S. economic sanctions imposed four decades ago. "It is an opportunity," to boost U.S. farm income and encourage change in Cuba, agreed Connecticut Representative Rosa DeLauro. (AP, 22/4/02)

April 19: Minnesota and the nation have much to gain if the United States ends its embargo of Cuba, a Havana diplomat told more than 100 business and academic leaders in Minneapolis. "Cuba is not a huge market," said Dagoberto Rodríguez Barrera. "But there's a potential that could be of great benefit for U.S. companies." Rodríguez, chief of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, D.C., cited a recent study that estimated Minnesota alone could expect up to \$130 million in trade with Cuba in the first year an embargo was lifted. The United States as a whole could anticipate as much as \$3.6 billion in trade, he said. (The Minneapolis Star Tribune, 20/4/02)

April 21: Cuban government officials met with Walt Disney World executives at a Euro Disney restaurant. Roberto J. Martí adviser to the minister at Cuba's Tourism Ministry, said: "We had wonderful exchanges," during a recent interview in Havana. "We had magnificent attention, and some [Disney] officials have been to Cuba to exchange points of view, ideas". "But that's as far as we go, because we know the limitation of American companies in doing business. So we do not want to waste our time, and we do not want to waste their time. It is as clear as that." (Orlando Sentinel, 21/4/02)

April 22: U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer went to Cuba with a delegation who brought California-grown beans to Havana. The delegation had a dinner with Fidel Castro. The California Democrat said that was a symbol of the benefits that can be gained when Americans and Cubans cooperate. "There are certain things that pull people together," including food, said Boxer, who criticized the 40-year-old U.S. trade embargo against the island. She suggested increased exchanges and cooperation would do more to improve democracy and human rights in Cuba than the existing restrictions. (AP, 22/4/02)

April 23: A Democratic senator who favors ending the 40-year-old U.S. trade embargo with Cuba is inviting Cuban officials to visit his home state, North Dakota, even though the State Department has revoked their visas. Senator Byron Dorgan sent a letter to Pedro Alvarez, president of Alimport, the Cuban agency that buys food from abroad, and asked him to come to North Dakota to discuss buying wheat and beans. (AP, 23/4/02) April 23: The House of Representatives voted regarding private financing of agriculture sales to Cuba. The House voted on the Dooley "motion to instruct" the House conferees on the Farm Security Act of 2001 (HR 2646). The motion asked the conferees to support the provision in the farm bill to allow the private financing of agriculture sales to Cuba. The motion passed 273 to 143, with 18 not voting. (Jordan Press, 24, 4/02)

April 26: Facing opposition from the Bush administration and House leaders, senators dropped a provision to expand trade with Cuba from a \$73.5 billion, 10-year farm bill. Current rules under the embargo allow only for cash transactions for U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba, but farm-state senators from both parties were pushing for increased trade by allowing private financing by U.S. banks and companies. The Cuba provision "just was not worth fighting for" in a massive bill that includes crop subsidies and new programs that are crucial to agricultural states, said a Capitol Hill staffer familiar with the negotiations on the bill. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Miami Republican, credited President Bush and House leaders for "standing firm on this issue," even though the full House voted 273-143, to endorse the Senate plan for more trade with Cuba. (The Miami Herald, 27/4/02)