

## FOCAL Chronicle on Cuba October 2002

### Domestic Affairs

**October 1:** Hurricane Lili swept across Cuba, where it uprooted trees and destroyed homes. It has cut a swathe of destruction through Cuba, damaging buildings and farmland and disrupting communications, all in the space of 90 minutes. Some 360,000 people were evacuated from their homes on the island as winds picked up a speed of more than 85 mph. Schools in the capital, Havana, and in the western Pinar del Rio province closed down, planes were grounded and rail services suspended. Fidel Castro, visiting the province, said the cash-strapped country had the foodstuffs and building materials to deal with the damage. The hurricane caused one death and destroyed thousands of homes and tobacco drying sheds, Cuban officials said. The Civil Defense authority said Modesto Pozo, a food services worker, was killed during the storm in La Pedrera, outside San Juan y Martinez, in the tobacco-growing province of Pinar del Rio. [For more on this, see section Economy.] (BBC News, Reuters, 1,2/10/02)

**October 3:** Vimang, a product made in Cuba from an extract of the bark from certain varieties of mango tree, is improving the quality of life of people with HIV/AIDS and could turn into an effective complement to antiretroviral treatments, says a study conducted by a group of Cuban scientific and medical organizations. The new report summarizes the findings of investigations conducted in 2001 involving volunteer patients, and concludes that the Vimang formula, already proven to fight oxidant stress, is effective in reducing the physical deterioration that tends to become chronic in persons with AIDS. (IPS, 3/10/02)

**October 6:** Fidel Castro has decided he wants to be reincarnated as the image of his close friend and Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez. "In my next reincarnation, I want to be a writer. And I want to be one just like Gabriel García Márquez," said Castro, in a letter published in Colombia's Cambio magazine. Praising the Colombian author, ahead of García Márquez's launch of his memoirs, Castro said he idolized his friend's "obstinate and persistent attention to detail that supports, like a philosopher's stone, all of the creativity of his dazzling exaggerations." (Reuters, 8/10/02)

**October 8:** Cuba has abandoned plans to hit tourists with a new surcharge — dubbed the "welcome tax" — for carry-on and other luggage weighing more than 20 kilograms. In a "clarification" issued to Canadian tour operators, the Cuba Tourist Board said sun seekers will be exempt from the new tax, which kicks in November 1 and would result in a charge of \$25 (US) for every kilogram of carry-on and other luggage that together exceed 20 kilograms. "There will be no change to the current conditions which are: Tourists are allowed to take their personal effects without weight limitations and duty free," said a notification from Andrés González, director of the Cuba Tourist Board. Cuba is the first country to have tried to charge tourists twice for overweight luggage — once as the vacationers board their plane and again when they arrive at their destination. (The Toronto Star, 9/10/02)

**October 9:** Fidel Castro said his government will respond to Varela Project organizers "in due course." "Yes, they have the right to present a petition, but not to change the constitution," Castro told ABC News' Barbara Walters in an interview. "Anyone has the right to present a petition (...) yes, and they will receive the response from the National Assembly," said Castro. (AP, 10/10/02)

**October 14:** A new brain surgery technique from Cuba can provide long-lasting relief from the stiffness and pain suffered by Parkinson's disease patients, which conventional medicines treat only with difficulty, researchers said. Significant improvements were apparent immediately in

most patients after their operations and have lasted as long as two years, the researchers said. The surgery also reduced by 70 percent the need for the drug levadopa, which patients took daily, greatly alleviating side effects of such therapy. Jorge Juncos, a neurologist at Emory University in Atlanta, and colleagues presented the Cuban findings at the American Neurological Association's annual meeting. The Cuban research team was unable to attend due to a combination of hurricane damage and difficulty obtaining US visas. (UPI, 14/10/02)

**October 14:** A band of people arrested in the killings of five people -- including a Hialeah Gardens couple -- late last year on a central Cuban highway went on trial in Havana, police sources confirmed. The provincial court hearing was closed to news media. Most details were unknown, but the husband of one of the victims, Carlos García Leyva, who lives in the city of Santa Clara, told the press that the defendants numbered eight. Police officers stationed outside the court in the Diez de Octubre district, in Havana, confirmed only that the defendants were being tried in the December slaying of the five people and that the hearing would take several days. (The Miami Herald, 17/10/02)

**October 14:** Answering Fidel Castro's comments on the Varela Project during a US television interview, Cuban dissidents called for an open debate on political changes of the island's one-party communist state and the publication of their reform petition seeking greater rights. The interview was broadcast on Cuban state-run television. "Fidel Castro is lying or saying half-truths," said dissident Vladimiro Roca. "The government is not obeying its own laws. They should have replied long ago." Roca said Castro should have allowed publication of the Varela Project for Cubans to discuss its merits. Roca said the dissidents were not seeking to amend the constitution but rather laws to allow rights guaranteed in the constitution. "We are asking for a referendum to adjust the laws so that Cubans can enjoy the rights recognized in the constitution," he told the press. The Varela Project, which got a boost from endorsement by former US Christian Democrat Oswaldo Payá, called again on the Castro government to publish the petition so that Cubans can decide on the Project for themselves. "It is hard to believe, after the constitutional amendments, that they will allow freedom of expression in the country," said Martha Beatriz Roque (of ICEI - Cuban Institute of Independent Economists). "They do not even allow religious freedom, let alone freedom of expression," she said, adding that the Catholic Church and other denominations have not been allowed access to radio and television, or any involvement in education. (Reuters, 14/10/02)

**October 17:** Prosecutors have asked that an ex-police officer be executed for masterminding the murder of six people, including an 8-year-old, sources said. Pedro Giovanni Céspedes, and several accomplices were found guilty at a municipal court in the 10th of October district of Havana, according to diplomatic sources and Mexico's La Jornada newspaper. The suspects were accused of killing a Spanish businessman. They also murdered five others: a Cuban-American couple from Florida, their daughter, her son and a friend, the sources and newspaper said. The apparent motive in both cases was robbery. (The Dallas Morning News, 19/10/02)

**October 17:** Fidel Castro voiced some harsh criticism against the former health minister removed three months ago and said that some "mercantile vices" had emerged in the health sector. Though he gave no details, reference seemed to have been made to the black market trade in medicines which worsened in the 1990s. (La Jornada, 22/10/02)

**October 19:** Fidel Castro inaugurated the 18th International Ballet Festival of Havana, which brought together ballet dancers and companies from 13 countries. Castro said that the invitation to inaugurate the festival, which he called an "extremely important" event and a "dance fest," was an honor for him. (EFE, 20/10/02)

**October 20:** Cuban voters will choose municipal council members in local elections with the government urging eligible citizens to mark their ballots for the "most able and the best" candidates. More than 8.2 million voters are to choose almost 15,000 councillors from among the

32,576 hopefuls who were picked by the population for their "merits, prestige, ability and personal values" according to electoral officials. (EFE, 20/10/02)

**October 21:** The Cuban Government announced it would hold a conference next spring to bring together Cubans living on and off the island. The third "Nation and Emigration" conference sponsored by the Cuban government will be held April 11-13 in Havana, said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Aymee Hernández. Cubans living off the island, and their descendants, will be invited to attend, she said. It was unclear exactly how those exile participants would be chosen, although Hernández said they would have to "love Cuba, and defend it as free, independent and sovereign." Hernández, reading a prepared statement to reporters, said that this was the first conference of this type to include the sons, daughters and grandchildren of Cuban exiles, along with the exiles themselves. [For more on this, see section Exile Community.] (Sarasota Tribune, 21/10/02)

**October 22:** Cuban authorities indicated that 95.64% of registered voters cast their ballots during the municipal elections of last October 20th. That would mean that close to 8 million Cubans turned out to vote, according to the President of the National Electoral Commission (CEN) and Justice Minister, Roberto Díaz Sotolongo, speaking at a press conference. (World Data Service, 22/10/02)

**October 23:** Osvaldo Payá Sardiñas Payá, coordinator of the Varela Project, accepted the European Parliament's 2002 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in the name of all dissidents. "The European Union now sympathizes with Cuba's struggle," Payá, 50, said by telephone from Havana. "I accept this in the name of all those, inside and outside of Cuba, who fight for peaceful changes. Other government opponents within Cuba also were delighted with the honor. "This is exceptional news," said Héctor Palacios of the Democratic Solidarity Party, another dissident group. "It's a recognition of a peaceful struggle to bring solutions to the grave problems in this country. It reinforces our optimism and gives our struggle worldwide recognition." Vladimiro Roca, who was released from jail in May after serving nearly five years on charges of sedition, said the award gives credibility to the dissident movement on the island. "It puts us on a high level and summons the government to respond to Project Varela," Roca said. "Its puts the issue on an international platform." [For more on this, see section Foreign Affairs.] (The Miami Herald, 24/10/02)

**October 25:** The Cuban Catholic Church welcomed a Cuban government sponsored US Agribusiness Fair in Havana. According to an article published in Palabra Nueva, a publication of the Havana Archdiocese headed by Cardinal Jaime Ortega, the fair "could initiate a new period in the tense relations between the two countries". "Any measure whether political, social or economic that contributes to the improvement of Cubans life and national peace and progress is welcomed", read the publication. (World Data Service, 25/10/02)

**October 27:** A second electoral round was conducted in the districts where none of the candidates obtained more than 50% of the votes or finished tied in the municipal elections that took place on October 20th. (Granma, 27/10/02)

**October 27:** The beginning of production of a national plant of cytostatic vaccines for cancer treatment promises to put an end to the critical situation of oncology services due to the scarcity of drugs in the island. (Juventud Rebelde, 27/10/02)

**October 28:** More than 300 Cuban dissident groups have formed a kind of opposition parliament, forming a huge coalition of opponents of Fidel Castro's government, leaders of the umbrella organization said. Lead organizer Marta Beatriz Roque said the Assembly to Promote Civil Society pulls together 321 dissident organizations representing everything from human rights groups to independent libraries to labor and press unions operating outside Cuba's communist

system. Among those who have not joined are lead organizers of the Varela Project. Roque is among those who do not support the Varela Project, saying it doesn't go far enough. But Varela Project organizers can join the assembly if they want, said René Gómez Manzano, another assembly leader who does not back the referendum campaign. "It is inclusive, not exclusive," he said. The refusal of dissidents including Roque, Gómez Manzano and Felix Bonne to back the Varela Project has caused a major split in Cuba's opposition. (AP, 28/10/02)

**October 30:** Cuba's National Assembly will meet in its first regular session since a scheduled gathering in July was suspended without explanation. The suspension came after petition drive organizers delivered more than 11,000 signatures to the unicameral parliament seeking a reform referendum. An agenda for the meeting was not provided in the short notice that appeared in the Communist Party daily Granma. (AP, 30/10/02)

**October 30:** Cuban Minister of Culture Abel Prieto has tried to resign his position twice, according to a source in the Ministry of Education who asked not to be identified. Prieto, said the source, alleges health problems, but "it is not public knowledge that he is ill." Fidel Castro has twice refused to accept Prieto's resignation, saying this is not a good time for changes in the Ministry, but nevertheless rumors are beginning to circulate concerning possible replacements. The strongest candidates mentioned are Carlos Martí, president of the National Union of Writers and Artists, Rafael Acosta, who has occupied posts with the Ministry of the Interior and the Cuban Institute of Cinematography, and Soledad Cruz, a long-time culture official. (Cubanet.org, 30/10/02)

**October 31:** Supporters of the opposition Varela Project tabled a petition to the Cuban Parliament and the Council of State demanding its mass spreading, informed the President of the project's Managing Committee, Oswaldo Payá. (AFP, 31/10/02)

**October 31:** Cuban dissident Oscar Elias Biscet was released after completing a three-year prison sentence. Biscet was released from a prison in the eastern province of Holguin. The 41-year-old doctor was arrested on November 3, 1999, after taking part in a news conference with other dissidents. Leader of the banned opposition group Lawton Foundation, Biscet was sentenced by a Havana court in February 2000 on incitement and disorderly conduct charges, among others. Biscet was accused of permitting three upside-down Cuban flags to be hoisted over the house where the press conference was held and of calling for a protest march in Cuba. (AFP, 31/10/02)

## Economy

**October 2:** Cuba has been identified as a potentially major participant in the Malaysian Biotechnology Project, or Bio-Valley, because of its advanced biotechnology sector, especially in healthcare. Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng hoped researchers and manufacturers from the Caribbean nation would relocate themselves in the Bio-Valley to carry out research, product development and technology transfer. "Cuba's participation will not only serve Malaysia, but the Asean market very well," he said after witnessing the signing of a joint venture agreement between Bioven Holdings Sdn Bhd, a Malaysian company, and Heber Biotec S.A., the commercial arm of the Cuban Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology. (The Star, 2/10/02)

**October 2:** The high price of oil on the world market will cost over US\$ 100 million more than Cuba planned for this year, according to experts on the daily broadcast roundtable discussion (Mesa Redonda). In the program, experts explained that the increase in oil prices seriously affects Cuba's financial possibilities. Cuba imports over 50 percent of its oil needs. (Prensa Latina, 2/10/02)

**October 2:** Several Cuban enterprises involved in biotechnology and other areas plan to participate in a technology forum in Sao Paulo, the official Agencia Brasil news agency reported. During the event, the companies will have an opportunity to showcase their innovations in biotechnology, telecommunications, computer science and medical equipment, as well as to attract the support of businesspeople and investors. Brazilian Science and Technology Minister Ronaldo Sardenberg, meanwhile, visited Havana to sign an agreement to strengthen bilateral cooperation in these areas, Agencia Brasil said. (EFE, 3/10/02)

**October 2:** The Cuban state owned oil company Cupet has associated with Trafigura and TotalFinaElf to replace the use of kerosene for liquefied refinery gas. The partners are expanding the distribution infrastructure, while Cuba produces only 70,000 mtpy of liquefied gas, and imports 90,000 mtpy to meet demand. (El Nacional, 2/10/02)

**October 3:** Spanish exports to Cuba were down 18.1 per cent at 205.5m euros during the first five months of 2002. A Cuban business magazine highlights that the reasons for the fall in Spanish exports to the island are the slowdown of the Cuban and the global economy and soaring US exports to Cuba. Events such as a Cuban agricultural trade fair which is reserved exclusively for US companies contribute to the boom of US exports to the island. [For more on this, see section US-Cuba Relations.] (Financial Times, 3/10/02)

**October 4:** Two hurricanes that hit western Cuba in quick succession have destroyed thousands of curing sheds for tobacco leaves used in the island's famous hand-rolled cigars, officials said. They said bundles of tobacco from the last harvest, tightly packed in polyethylene, may have gotten wet and been damaged during the heavy rainfall, although it was too early to say. "Everything was cut to pieces by the winds," said Edelberto González, director of the local tobacco company in San Juan, where 3.5 million pounds (1.6 million kg) of wrapped-up tobacco leaves were lying under tons of wooden planks and zinc sheets. "There is a risk that water could have damaged some of the stocks," González said in statements published by the Communist Party daily Granma. "Ninety percent of the tobacco sheds were damaged," the first secretary of the Communist Party in San Juan y Martinez, Roberto Lopez, said on Cuban television news. He said more than 3,000 houses were destroyed in the area, adding to 4,000 houses damaged in the Isle of Youth off Cuba's south coast where Hurricane Lili first hit. On Cuba's Isle of Youth, the storm shattered windows, damaged roofs and cut power supplies at tourist resorts, which have been empty of visitors since the last hurricane, Isidore. Citrus plantations in Pinar del Rio and the Isle of Youth were damaged, with more than 40,000 tons of oranges and grapefruit lost in the two storms. (Reuters, 4/10/02)

**October 4:** Cuban Minister for Foreign Investment and Cooperation, Martha Lomas, signed an agreement with China by which the Shanghai Bank grants the Sino-Cuban joint venture 'Shanghai SunCuba' a \$72 million credit for the construction of a hotel with 700 guest rooms in Shanghai's District of Pudong. (Europa Press, 4/10/02)

**October 4:** Toronto-based Sherritt International's energy subsidiary Sheritt Power will complete the 75MW expansion of its 98MW Varadero thermoelectric plant in Cuba by year-end, a spokesperson told BNamericas. The completion of the expansion was initially scheduled for commissioning in mid-2002. "The delay is the result of several unforeseen events, including the disruption of air transportation subsequent to the events of September 11, 2001, which resulted in a temporary construction shutdown," Sherritt said in its first half earnings statement. Others factors include the two month delay after 2001's Hurricane Michelle, and the bankruptcy of one of the equipment suppliers, the spokesperson added. (BNamericas, 4/10/02)

**October 8:** A Brazilian mission is to visit Cuba and Dominican Republic aiming to boost trade. The main business with Cuba mainly involve the sugar & alcohol mill sector, through US\$50mil credit lines to be provided by the The Brazilian Development Bank BNDES. This bank currently studies projects funding worth US\$200mil. US\$25mil will be granted for the Brazilian Buscar, for

the sale of bodies, chassis and buses. The company has a plant in Cuba. US\$25mil will be used in the export of equipment and services in the nickel mining area, US\$63mil in a mobile phone services and equipment by Ericsson and Cubatel, besides US\$50mil in projects for the sugar industry. (Gazeta Mercantil, 8/10/02)

**October 14:** Cuba's world-famous tobacco industry was devastated by hurricanes, raising the prospect of supply shortages next year. "We're talking about a very serious problem," said Simon Chase, marketing director at Hunters & Frankau, the UK's exclusive importer and distributor of Cuban cigars. "At the moment everything looks pretty bad. It's early days yet, but this could have an impact on prices next year." (BBC, 14/10/02)

**October 14:** Cuba has significantly reduced imports from key trading partners such as Spain and Canada, due to dwindling hard currency revenues and the first US food sales to the island in four decades, diplomatic sources said this week. Spain and Canada, among Cuba's top-five trading partners in 2001 at more than \$700 and \$500 respectively, reported exports to the Communist-run country fell 19 percent and 38 percent during the first half of this year, compared with the same period in 2001. "Cuban imports from France were down 9 percent through June, and from Italy 30 percent through May," a European diplomat said. "Our exports to the region were down around 20 percent for the first semester, and to Cuba 38 percent. You could say the difference has to do with their decision this year to buy US food," a Canadian diplomat said. (Reuters, 15/10/02)

**October 15:** Swedish Match AB said it has agreed to give up using the 'Wilde Havana' cigar brand as part of a settlement in a case brought by Cuban cigar producers. The Swedish company said it reached an agreement with Cubatabaco and Habanos SA and recognizes that the prestigious appellation of origin 'Havana' should be reserved for cigars that are manufactured in Cuba from only Cuban tobacco. Cubatabaco, Habanos and some of their distributors have launched several proceedings in different European countries against subsidiaries of Swedish Match claiming that the use of a name including the term Havana for cigars which are not made in Cuba with only Cuban tobacco constitutes an infringement of the appellation of origin Havana. This claim has been upheld by the Belgian courts. (AFX, 15/10/02)

**October 15:** The tourism complex of Jardines del Rey, north of Ciego de Avila province, is the second Cuban beach resort to allow the use of the Euro in order to facilitate tourism activities with Europe. (Prensa Latina, 15/10/02)

**October 16:** Cuban Central Bank (BCC) Minister-President Francisco Soberón and his Chinese counterpart Dai Xianglong held intensive talks on financial topics in Beijing. Soberón also met with Tang Ruoxin, Chairman of the Chinese Insurance Company (SINOSURE), with close ties with the Caribbean island. The Cuban Minister will meet with several Chinese financial and economic officials, and representatives from various governmental entities. (Prensa Latina, 16/10/02)

**October 16:** Long haul routes from Germany to Cuba and Bangkok will be stopped entirely. Thomas Cook AG's charter airline Condor is to ground eight of its aircraft next year in response to the downturn in the German tourism sector, Bild-Zeitung reported, citing internal documents. It said next year only 39 of the company's 47 aircraft will fly. (AFX, 16/10/02)

**October 17:** The Honorable Susan Whelan, Canadian Minister for International Cooperation, announced a \$2.9 million contribution over three years to the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology to help train industrial workers in Cuba. "Trained and qualified workers are the backbone of a strong economy," Minister Whelan said. "By recognizing the importance of better training for its workers, both men and women, Cuba is moving towards a more advanced industrial stage." Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is helping the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology work in cooperation with the Cuban National

Industrial Certification Centre to train Cuban instrumentation mechanics, industrial mechanics, electrical engineers, and millwrights. (Canada News Wire, 17/10/02)

**October 21:** Fidel Castro insisted that the proposed restructuring of his country's sugar industry will not cause a "major trauma" and will save the island more than \$200 million per year. In a speech, Castro said "a new, very promising era is dawning for the sugar industry," adding that the restructuring would be "useful" and "valuable" to the national economy. Castro kicked off a training course for sugar-industry employees that will be offered to 84,271 people, some of whom will have to change jobs. (EFE, 22/10/02)

**October 21:** The effects of the September 11 attacks on the Cuban tourism industry are beginning to wane. Cuban authorities hope that by the end of this year 1.7 million tourists would have visited the island, a figure similar to last year's, said the Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR). (AFP, 21/10/02)

**October 21:** Cuba has fallen chronically behind on repaying its estimated US\$100 Million worth of debts with Panamanian companies, with a Cuban Government bank even "bouncing" US\$6 million in payments, Panamanian businessmen say. Some merchants have stopped extending new credit to Cuba, and others have traveled to Havana in hopes of persuading the Government to make more timely payments, the businessmen added. The Panamanians' complaints reinforce reports that Cuba is having increasingly severe problems this year making payments on its debts. (Caribbean Update, 21/10/02)

**October 21:** Pebercan, an oil exploration company based in Montreal, has finished digging the Canasí 8 well in Cuba, announced the company in a press release. Test trials show that this 3,800m long well will produce between 2,500 and 3,400 barrels a day (b/d) of oil. (Business News, 21/10/02)

**October 25:** The Cuban Central Bank has told a consortium of private Japanese creditors that a \$750 million debt agreement, signed in 1998, must be rescheduled, and is ignoring a more recent \$400 million accord with Mexico. "They told us food, fuel and repairing homes came first and there was no way they could make the scheduled payments next year," a Japanese business source said. Japan is the Caribbean island's largest creditor. The Cuban Central Bank reported in 2001 that of an \$11 billion hard currency debt, close to 20 percent was owed to the Asian country's government and private sector. (Reuters, 25/10/02)

**October 26:** The Mexican Ambassador to Cuba, Roberta Lajous, will reinstate negotiations for the payment of the \$380 million that Cuba owes Mexico. In a written statement to the Mexican Senate, Lajous also points out that bilateral trade during the first half of this year has decreased 30% compared to the same period last year. She also calls for the promotion of Mexican investments on the island as well as for cooperation agreements in the energy, fishing, telecommunications and tourism sectors and for the promotion of scientific, technical, educational and cultural cooperation between the two countries. (La Jornada, 26/10/02)

**October 28:** Cuban economy authorities informed the population that a solution to public transport evils will not be possible in the short term, due to high oil prices in the world market and to the lack of spare parts. (World Data Service, 28/10/02)

**October 29:** Cuba plans to buy 150,000 tons of rice from Vietnam in 2003 with long-term payment terms and no interest charged under an agreement signed during Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai's three-day visit to the Caribbean island nation. Another deal was also forged for additional purchases with private credit at market prices. Vietnam, Cuba's main supplier of rice, sold 250,000 tons of rice to the Caribbean country this year, accounting for more

than half of Cuba's rice imports, Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Phan Thvy Thanh told reporters. (Xinhua, 29/10/02)

**October 30:** Spanish Ambassador to Cuba, Jesús Manuel Gracia Aldaz, said in Havana that trade relations between the two nations "are very strong and will not be affected" by the recent U.S. Agri-business Fair on the island. Gracia Aldaz added that while Spanish investments in Cuba have diminished, "it is not an exception" since that is a worldwide tendency. (Europa Press, 30/10/02)

**October 31:** Mexican Grupo Domos is in negotiations to exact payment from the Cuban government on the US\$400 million debt for telephone services, said Domos President Javier Garza Calderón. Garza said that to date the government of Fidel Castro had only made minimal payments on the debt. "Our company's participation in Cuba has ended. Cuba has an important debt to pay to us, just over US\$400 million," Garza said. (Mexico Analytica, 31/10/02)

**October 31:** The Cuban Chamber of Commerce (CCC) and the Mexican National Chamber of the Industry of Transformation (CANACINTRA) signed a cooperation agreement that seeks to promote trade and economic links between the two countries. (Prensa Latina, 31/10/02)

## Exile Community

**October 2:** Rigoberto Sánchez-Velasco, a Cuban immigrant, was given a lethal injection at a Florida prison after state-appointed psychiatrists ruled that he was competent to make the decision over his death. Having come to the US in 1980 along with thousands of other Cubans in the Mariel boatlift, he murdered the daughter of his girlfriend and was sentenced to death in 1988. (BBCNews, 2/10/02)

**October 21:** Death and the law have combined to erase the criminal conviction against reviled Cuban torturer Eriberto Mederos, tumbling the fight over his legacy into the US Congress. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Republican-Miami), will introduce two bills next month, one to change the federal law that allowed overturning of a guilty verdict against Mederos and another to strip the former nurse posthumously of his US citizenship. (Sun Sentinel, 21/10/02)

**October 23:** It is reported that Cuban exile opposition organization members of the Mesa de Reflexión en el Exterior (MRE), held a workshop on the Draft Charter on Fundamental Rights and Responsibilities of Cubans (Anteproyecto Carta de Derechos y Deberes Fundamentales de los Cubanos) which is being promoted on the island by the Mesa de Reflexión de la Oposición Moderada (MROM). This event is part of joint efforts between the MRE and the MROM. The objective of the workshop was to present the Draft Charter "to the largest possible number of Cuban exiles" and to collect "their opinions and recommendations" to forward them to the organization on the island, said a note of the MROM. (Encuentro en la Red, 23/10/02)

**October 23:** The announcement that the Cuban government plans to invite Cuban-Americans to a conference on the island next spring was seen as a desperate measure by some in South Florida's Cuban community, while others saw it as an opening for change. Mariela Ferretti, spokeswoman for the Cuban American National Foundation, said that the people who accept the invitation to go to the conference will either be naive or Castro sympathizers. The whole thing is a public relations ploy, she said, "and one of very little creativity and imagination." Alfredo Durán, secretary and former president of Cuban Committee for Democracy, which favors dialogue with the Cuban government as a way to bring about transition, said it is a positive step. "I think that anything that brings into contact Cuban-Americans with people with the Cuban government and people on the island is good," he said. "I think it could accomplish normalization of relations between the Cuban government and its own people." Durán, who was invited to the previous two conferences but declined to attend, said he hoped the conference would go beyond immigration

issues and address civil rights and broader concerns. [For more on this, see section Domestic Affairs.] (Sun Sentinel, 23/10/02)

**October 24:** After three months on a hunger strike, a dissident who is serving time in a Cuban prison has aroused the concern of many Cuban exiles. Leonardo Bruzon was jailed eight months ago on charges of inciting public disorder when he tried to organize a rally in honor of four Brothers To The Rescue pilots who died when Cuban MIGs shot down their aircraft when it flew near Cuba in 1996. Ninoska Pérez, head of the exile group called Cuban Liberty Council and a Miami radio talk show host, said Bruzon deserves "support and solidarity from around the world." Bruzon, according to Perez, was not tried for his crimes and was sentenced to the maximum security prison in Quivicán. Before he was jailed, Bruzon led a dissident group against Fidel Castro's Communist Party. (Crosswalk.Com, 24/10/02)

**October 26:** A group of Pedro Pan youngsters, grown with families of their own, hopes to turn the 21-acre Boystown property in West Kendall into a living memorial to the sacrifices made by their families in Cuba and the open hearts they found in Miami. The Boystown property was a shelter for orphans, a campground for children -- and a temporary home for thousands of children spirited away from Castro's Cuba regime, alone and unaccompanied, as part of Operation Pedro Pan in the early 60's. (The Miami Herald, 26/10/02)

**October 30:** Cuban exile groups in Miami supported the launching of a coalition called Assembly to Promote Civil Society, an initiative of Cuban dissident groups. Omar López Montenegro, of the Cuban American National Foundation said that his organization "supports any initiative aimed at creating freedom on the island". He added that this initiative does not compete with the Varela Project, but "rather they complement each other". [For more on this, see section Domestic Affairs.] (EFE, 30/10/02)

## Foreign Affairs

**October 1:** The Cuban government is waiting for Honduras to approve the island nation's first ambassador to Tegucigalpa in 40 years, a diplomatic official said. Honduras broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba in the early 1960s. On January 26 of this year, on the day before his term ended, then-President Carlos Flores announced he was re-establishing relations with Cuba. A few days later, what had been the Cuban Interests Office in Tegucigalpa became an embassy, headed by former Interests Office chief Jacinto Pablos in the capacity of charge d'affaires. (EFE, 1/10/02)

**October 1:** Former Russian and US high officials are among protagonists expected at a conference in Cuba this month marking the 40th anniversary of the missile crisis. "This was the most dramatic episode of the Cold War, and perhaps of all contemporary history," said Cuban Vice President Jose Ramon Fernandez, a key organizer. Fernandez said he hoped the academic conference bringing together American, Cuban and former Soviet protagonists would evolve in "a cordial spirit of analysis, without tensions, insults or hatred." There will be two days of seminars and a day of visits to sites related to the crisis, including a former missile silo in the western state of Pinar del Rio. (AP, PRNewswire, 1,2/10/02)

**October 1:** President Vicente Fox nominated longtime diplomat Roberta Lajous as Mexico's new ambassador to Cuba, the foreign relations department said in a statement. Lajous would replace Ricardo Pascoe, who was asked to step down. Her appointment must be confirmed by Mexico's Senate. (AP, 1/10/02)

**October 1:** José Ariel Contreras, the ace of the Cuban national team pitching staff, was reported missing during the Serie de las Américas in Saltillo, Mexico, and is believed to have defected. Contreras is best known in the US for the eight shutout innings he pitched against the Baltimore

Orioles during a nationally televised exhibition game in Havana three years ago. Technical adviser Miguel Valdés, a former manager of the Cuban national team, was also reported missing and is believed to have defected with Contreras. (The Miami Herald, 2/10/02)

**October 2:** Tunisia's deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Youssef Mokaddem, arrived on an official visit to Cuba, as head of his nation's delegation to the 4th Inter Governmental Joint Commission meeting. (Prensa Latina, 2/10/02)

**October 2:** Senior Russian and Cuban diplomats met to discuss the current state of bilateral relations and perspectives on an eventual normalization of US-Cuban ties, diplomatic sources said. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgi Mamedov and Cuba's chief diplomat for North American affairs, Rafael Dausá, said both nations wanted to maintain their "traditionally friendly" relations. At their talks, Mamedov and Dausá analyzed the state of relations between Cuba and the United States. They also discussed the possibility that these countries could reestablish ties in the future, the sources added. (EFE, 2/10/02)

**October 2:** Grenada accepted the first Cuban ambassador to this Caribbean island in nearly two decades as the two countries re-establish diplomatic relations, the government said. Humberto Rivero Rosario, a Cuban diplomat serving in Grenada for the past three years, became ambassador after presenting his credentials to Governor General Daniel Williams. Grenada has not yet named an ambassador to Cuba but Prime Minister Keith Mitchell is expected to do so next week, government spokeswoman Nancy McGuire said. (The Washington Post, 3/10/02)

**October 3:** Churches throughout the Caribbean and Central America are responding to damage from two hurricanes that tore through the area. Residents of western Cuba told the press that they could not remember when two back-to-back storms such as Hurricanes Isidore and Lily struck the island nation so close together. The same region was hit by Hurricane Michelle last year, killing 5 and leaving \$1.8 billion in damage. [For more on this, see section Economy.] (LAMNS, 3/10/02)

**October 4:** Saying they'll have no part in discrimination, delegations from Russia, Cuba, South Africa, Colombia and France's overseas territories abandoned an anti-racism conference that voted to exclude whites. The walkout, on the fourth day of the six-day African and African Descendants World Conference Against Racism, held in Barbados, came after a day of negotiations failed. "Cuba will never support any action aimed at segregating a group of people. Furthermore, Cuba believes that such a decision is intolerant and contrary to the purposes of this conference," Maria Morales, the spokeswoman for Cuba's delegation, told the conference reading from a prepared statement. (AP, 4/10/02)

**October 4:** Angel Dalmau, Cuban Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that Cuba will decide shortly whether it will request entry into the Cotonou Cooperation Agreement or not. Dalmau also added that the European Union is applying "an obvious double standard imposed by the US" in spite of the fact that the Group of Fifteen "agrees with Cuba on a larger number of multilateral issues than with the US". (Notimex, 4/10/02)

**October 8:** The Cuban Foreign Ministry denied allegations that Indian citizen Nathu Babu Dhamelia, linked to human smuggling into the United States, is an Honorary Consul of Cuba in India. In a press release, spokeswoman of the Foreign Ministry, Aymeé Hernández, stated "our country has no Honorary Consulate in that nation". (Notimex, 8/10/02)

**October 8:** Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva denied any connection with Colombia's FARC and described as a "very bad joke" allegations that his election as President of Brazil would form an "axis of evil in Latin America", together with Fidel Castro and Venezuela's President, Hugo Chávez. (El Universal, 8/10/02)

**October 9:** The International Red Cross has launched an appeal to help thousands of people made homeless after two hurricanes hit the west coast of Cuba less than a fortnight apart. Cristina Estrada, a regional spokeswoman for the Red Cross, told the press that only the country's prompt and well-organised evacuation procedures ensured only one person was killed. But she added that an estimated 5,300 people were now living in temporary shelters, and many homes were still without electricity and running water. The aid agency's appeal aims to help at least 10,000 people affected by the hurricanes, providing basic roofing materials, bedding and cooking equipment. [For more on this, see sections Domestic Affairs and Economy.] (BBC News, 9/10/02)

**October 9:** Fidel Castro has said on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis that Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev helped create the conflict by misleading US president John F Kennedy – indicating that there were no nuclear weapons on the communist island. Castro's comments, which came in an interview with Barbara Walters for ABC's "20/20" programme, coincided with a conference in Havana bringing together Cubans and Americans who played roles during the real life Cold War drama. ABC, which will broadcast the interview, made the transcript public. "He believed what Khrushchev told him," Castro said during the interview, conducted this week in Havana. "Therefore, Kennedy was misled. That was a very big mistake on the part of Khrushchev (...) one that we opposed vehemently." (Online.ie, 10/10/02)

**October 10:** American protagonists during the Cuban missile crisis arrived in Havana for a conference examining events 40 years ago that nearly plunged the world into nuclear war. Key figures in President Kennedy's administration, including former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and special presidential aide Arthur Schlesinger Jr., were in the first of two planeloads of Americans that arrived for the three-day conference. Also among those who arrived were Richard Goodwin and Ted Sorensen, the men who helped write Kennedy's speeches in those tense times, and ex-CIA analyst Dino Brugioni, who analyzed the now famous American spy photos of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Fidel Castro is expected to participate, and also former USSR officials. (AP, 11/10/02)

**October 11:** Botswana is to build a medical school at the University of Botswana (UB) with the assistance of Cubans, Public Affairs director, Samuel Moribame has disclosed. Moribame said the involvement of Cubans is in line with a convention signed by the two countries in 1989 on Economic, Scientific and Technical Co-operation that established a Joint Permanent Commission. (The Reporter, 11/10/02)

**October 11:** The discovery of massive stones in oddly symmetrical square and pyramid shapes in Cuba's territorial waters has sparked speculation about Atlantis, the fabled lost city first described by Plato in 360 B.C. Paul Weinzweig, of Advanced Digital communications (ADC), a Canadian company that is mapping Cuba's ocean bottom said much more study was needed before such a conclusion could be reached. Atlantis-hunters have long argued their competing theories that the lost city was off Cuba, off the Greek island of Crete, off Gibraltar or elsewhere. Several Web sites have touted the ADC images as a possible first sighting. (The Washington Post, 11/10/02)

**October 12:** Fidel Castro closed an International Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis that took place in Havana. Castro said the debates were open and respectful and criticisms did not stem from bitterness, but rather as an expression of personal opinions with the sole objective of seeking the truth. (Granma, 14/10/02)

**October 14:** The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) announced an emergency relief operation in Cuba to help the families most affected by the recent devastation of Hurricane's Isidore and Lili. According to WFP, the hurricanes completely destroyed more than 5,000 houses, partially destroyed another 39,315 houses and left 5,350 people homeless. Additionally, the hurricanes destroyed schools, health care clinics, agricultural crops, livestock, tobacco fields, and

food warehouses. WFP said they will provide a supplementary food ration of rice, beans and oil to the most vulnerable families, including pregnant women and children under the age of five. (AGWeek News, 14/10/02)

**October 15:** At a farewell audience in the Presidential Offices, the Emir de Qatar, Sheik Hamad Bin Khalifa, received outgoing Cuban Ambassador Jorge León Cruz and awarded him with the Medal of Honor with Merit, in recognition of his efforts in strengthening ties between both nations, informed the Qatari Embassy in Havana. (Granma International, 16/10/02)

**October 15:** Health minister Brig. Jim Muhwezi said he would discuss the possibility of manufacturing anti-retroviral drugs in Uganda with the Cuban government. "I am happy to learn that Cuba has already acquired the technology to manufacture AIDS drugs. It would be good and cheaper if these drugs were manufactured here," he said. Muhwezi, who met the Cuban Ambassador to Uganda, Ricardo A. Dawza, at the ministry headquarters in Kampala, accepted an invitation to visit Cuba. "During my visit, I will discuss how this technology (to manufacture AIDS drugs) can be transferred here," Muhwezi said. (All Africa Global Media, 16/10/02)

**October 16:** Cuba celebrated the World Food Day after a statement from the FAO warning that the island "is undergoing a nutritional decline". The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) informed in Rome that the number of people who suffer from hunger in Latin America has decreased with the exception of Cuba, Guatemala and El Salvador. (Notimex, 16/10/02)

**October 17:** International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge is scheduled to visit Cuba next November, as the first stop of his Latin American tour, according to reports. Sandrine Chappuis, of the IOC Communication Department, said Rogge's stay in Havana will coincide with the celebrations of the National Day of Physical Culture and Sport, the International Baseball Cup, as well as the Havana Marathon. (Xinhua, 17/10/02)

**October 17:** The Attorney-General's Offices of Cuba and Vietnam signed a cooperation agreement to exchange experiences in professional training and the fight against crime. (BBC News, 17/10/02)

**October 21:** Ten more Cuban doctors and their families have allegedly sought political asylum in Spain, raising the number of doctors to flee South African working conditions in the last month to 26. Most of the doctors who fled the country worked in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape, and reportedly said they would rather work as construction workers in Spain than practice as doctors under their existing contract with South Africa. (News24, 21/10/02)

**October 21:** A choir from Britain's aristocratic Eton College sang in Cuba to start a month of cultural events to mark the centenary of diplomatic relations between Britain and the island, and Scottish troops' taking of Havana 240 years ago. The events were to include a visit by former Beatles manager George Martin, historian Hugh Thomas and the granddaughter of Winston Churchill, who smoked Cuban cigars now named after him. Cuban government officials said the British occupation of 1762-1763 sowed the seeds of an independence movement from Spanish colonial rule that took more than a century to bear fruit. Churchill's granddaughter will speak in Havana in November about his two visits to Cuba, in 1895 and 1946. (Reuters, 22/10/02)

**October 22:** The International Book fair held in the Mexican state of Guadalajara, considered to be the most important one in the Spanish American world, will host Cuba as guest country this year, said the organizers. "This is the largest delegation of artists that has ever come from Cuba" said Fernando Rojas, an official of the Cuban Ministry of Culture, in a press conference that took place in Mexico City. (Reuters, 23/10/02)

**October 23:** The European Parliament has given its annual human rights prize to Cuban opposition leader Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas for his peaceful efforts to bring reform to the communist nation. The political leaders of the EU assembly announced Payá was their choice for the 2002 Sakharov Award for Human Rights and Freedom of Thought. [For more on this, see section Domestic Affairs.] (AP, 23/10/02)

**October 23:** A Cuban priest has reopened a controversy in the Catholic Church on the 22 young Catholics who defected during the World Youth Day celebrations in Canada last July. In an issue of the Camaguey Diocesan Bulletin, Willy Pino, of the Archdiocese of that province, attempts to give a reasoned explanation of the decision taken by the group. (Encuentro en la Red, 23/10/02)

**October 23:** Reporters Without Borders, headquartered in Paris, has published the first worldwide index on freedom of the press. The ranking shows unsymmetrical results among Latin American countries with Costa Rica placing above the United States and Cuba at the bottom of the list. (AFP, 23/10/02)

**October 24:** The Honourable Susan Whelan, Minister for International Cooperation, announced that Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), will provide \$75,000 in emergency assistance to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), to come to the aid of Cuban victims of hurricanes Isidore and Lili. "Canadians are concerned about the devastation caused by the recent hurricanes in Cuba," Minister Whelan said. "Canada extends its support and sympathy to the victims and their families." (Canada News Wire, 24/10/02)

**October 24:** The Member of the European Parliament and President of the Group of Friendship and Solidarity with Cuba, Miguel Angel Martínez, has expressed "concern" and "deep discontent" over the decision of the Presidents of the European Parliament to grant the Sajarov 2002 prize to Cuban dissident Oswaldo Payá. (Europa Press, 24/10/02)

**October 24:** Political groups in the Latin American and Caribbean region opened a regional forum in Havana to tackle regional poverty. About 80 delegates from 31 political groups attended the three-day meeting which is sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Permanent Conference of Political Parties (COPPPAL), with the participation of representatives of political forces from Aruba, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico and El Salvador. (Xinhua, 24/10/02)

**October 24:** Fidel Castro said publicly that his Venezuelan counterpart, Hugo Chávez, knows how to deal with the obstacles imposed by his opposition. "There is much hatred (...) in this small group of the rich who is trying to make things unbearable (for Chávez)", said Castro at the opening of a forum of Latin American centre-left parties in Havana. (AP, 24/10/02)

**October 24:** Fidel Castro said that "there is no war" with the government of President Vicente Fox and that Cuba "has not done a bit" to damage relations. However, he confirmed Mexico has put many hurdles to grant visas to the members of the Cuban delegation that will attend the International Book Fair of Guadalajara. Castro held talks with six former Mexican ambassadors participating in a forum of Latin American centre-left parties in Havana. (La Jornada, 24/10/02)

**October 25:** Fidel Castro welcomed Pascoal Manuel Mocumbi, Prime Minister of Mozambique, who arrived in Cuba on an official visit. (Granma, 27/10/02)

**October 25:** The Cuban Foreign Ministry "strongly" condemned the taking of hostages in a Moscow theatre and called the act an "aggression against the Russian people". (World Data Service, 26/10/02)

**October 26:** Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque met with the six former Mexican ambassadors who are in Cuba on a visit. The ambassadors promised to meet with Roberta Lajous prior to her taking the post of Mexican ambassador to Cuba. Former ambassadors Mario Moya Palencia and Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá confirmed that Fidel Castro met with them to follow-up on the talks he had held previously with the President of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), Roberto Madrazo, and other leaders of that Mexican party. (La Jornada, 27/10/02)

**October 26:** Political leaders from 22 Latin American countries strongly criticized neoliberal policies and globalization at the end of the Latin American and Caribbean Political Parties' Permanent Conference (COPPAL) that took place in Havana. (Uno Más Uno, 26/10/02)

**October 27:** Mozambican biologists are preparing to travel to Cuba to take part in specialist courses at the Cuban Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, according to Mozambique's Deputy Health Minister, Aida Libombo. (Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique, 27/10/02)

**October 27:** Zimbabwe's health ministry has suspended a Cuban doctor from a referral hospital in Bulawayo after complaints of numerous surgical removals of uteruses from labour patients without their knowledge. The Cuban doctors at Mpilo Hospital are reported to have removed more than 100 wombs from unsuspecting women in the last five months, raising suspicions among Bulawayo residents of a hidden agenda. Bulawayo United Residents' Association chairman Edward Simela demanded that the ministry of health dispel people's fears by explaining why these surgical removals had gone unchecked for the past five months. "If they keep quiet then we will start asking questions as to why this is taking place in Bulawayo and not other parts of the country. "We should not just point fingers at the Cuban doctors. Maybe there is a much bigger hidden hand which has authorised the use of our women in some experiments," said Simela, without elaborating. (Johannesburg Sunday Times, 27/10/02)

**October 27:** A Cuban delegation led by Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, Minister of Government, attended the 12th Meeting of Ministers of CARIFORUM, which was held in Kingston, the capital city of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. (Opciones, 27/10/02)

**October 28:** Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai began his official visit to Cuba at the Varadero tourist center, located in the province of Matanzas. Meetings with Fidel Castro, Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon and Government and Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration ministers Ricardo Cabrisas and Marta Lomas, are included on Khai's agenda. (Prensa Latina, 28/10/02)

**October 28:** During a press conference, the new Mexican Ambassador to Cuba, Roberta Lajous, acknowledged that relations between Mexico and the island are "closely watched by the United States". (World Data Service, 28/10/02)

**October 28:** The present state of Russian-Cuban relations can be qualified as "very positive," said First Deputy Foreign Minister of Cuba Fernando Remires de Estenos and his Russian colleague Vyacheslav Trubnikov. Trubnikov is on an official visit in Havana at the head of a delegation of the Russian Foreign Ministry. (TASS, 29/10/02)

**October 29:** The 58th General Assembly of the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) demanded "the free exercise" of independent journalism in Cuba. The Assembly, which took place in Lima, Peru, focused on the situation of press freedom in the continent as well as the current political situation in Latin America. (El Nuevo Herald, 30/10/02)

**October 29:** A coalition of Cuban dissident groups requested that the upcoming 12th Ibero-American Summit show some solidarity on behalf of the Cuban people who - according to this organization - have been deprived of their liberties by their own government. In a message to the Ibero-American Summit, this year in the Dominican Republic, the so-called Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society (Asamblea para Promover la Sociedad Civil) urged the heads of state and of government to look beyond the Cuban-US conflict. [For more on this, see section Domestic Affairs.] (BBC, 29/10/02)

**October 30:** Evangelical churches from Latin America met in Havana in order to find ways "to better serve the peoples of Latin America". According to sources from the (Concilio Internacional de Iglesias) CIC, organizer of the event, the meeting will be devoted to "celebrating, for the first time in Cuba, the 485th Anniversary of the Protestant Reform". (World Data Service, 30/10/02)

**October 30:** Tourism journalists and writers from 30 countries have met in Cuba to analyze the current international situation and its impact on that economic sector. (World Data Service, 30/10/02)

**October 30:** Cuba welcomed Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's election as Brazil's new president, predicting that his rule as a leftist leader would be positive for Latin America's largest country and the region in general. "We have been watching Lula's victory with satisfaction and happiness," Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told a news conference. "He has received a wide popular mandate. "I think it will be positive for Latin America," Perez Roque added. (The Miami Herald, 30/10/02)

**October 30:** Cuba announced it has once again presented a resolution to the General Assembly of the United Nations demanding Washington lift the economic embargo imposed 40 years ago. The U.N. General Assembly is due to convene on November 12 to analyze the Cuban proposal, which describes the embargo as a violation of international law. (Central European Times, 30/10/02)

**October 31:** A sentencing date for James Sabzali, the man convicted of violating the American trade embargo against Cuba has been postponed for the fourth time. Sabzali was scheduled to be sentenced November 7 in a Philadelphia courtroom for his part in the sale of chemical resins to be used in Cuba for water purification. However, the date has been put off because Justice Mary McLaughlin hasn't ruled on the post-trial motions by Sabzali's lawyers to overturn his convictions or give him a new trial. McLaughlin hasn't set a new tentative date for sentencing. It's possible the sentencing won't be needed, if McLaughlin sides with the defence, said assistant US attorney Joe Poluka. (Calgary Herald, 31/10/02)

## Security

**October 15:** A US intelligence analyst, who confessed to spying for Cuba throughout her 16 year-career, harshly criticized American policy toward Fidel Castro and was sentenced to 25 years in prison. "Our government's policy toward Cuba is cruel and unfair, profoundly unneighborly, and I felt morally obligated to help the island defend itself from our efforts to impose our values and our political system on it," Ana Belén Montes, said in a five-minute speech to US District Judge Ricardo Urbina. Montes allowed in her remarks that her action "may have been morally wrong." "I can only say that I did what I thought right to counter a grave injustice," she said. Urbina responded to Montes' statement by describing her action as a "betrayal." (AP, 16/10/02)

**October 18:** In Cuba's first comments about a US intelligence analyst who confessed to spying for the communist island for 16 years, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque expressed "profound respect and admiration" for the convicted spy. Answering questions on a live Internet forum, Pérez Roque said he hoped someday "it will be unnecessary for men and women of the moral

stature of Ana Belén Montes and of the five Cuban heroes -- also unjustly imprisoned in the United States -- to sacrifice their lives, their families and their personal interests." The five Cubans Pérez Roque referred to were sentenced in Miami last year on espionage charges. Perez Roque said his government is not spying on the United States, a country with which Cuba would like to have normal relations, but admitted that it had to seek information on "the sinister terrorist plans of Miami-based extremist groups". (AP, BBC News, 18,19/10/02)

## **Terrorism**

**October 3:** The trial against Luis Posada Carriles, accused of planning a failed attempt against Fidel Castro two years ago in Panama, has been postponed until December 5th, said judicial sources. (Notimex, 3/10/02)

**October 5:** The Cuban Ministry of the Interior (MININT) has declassified some documents to support its accusations on the terrorist and subversive acts of the United States against the island. The Cuban Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, José Ramón Fernández, made public the first book of a collection on the operations carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) against Cuba. The book titled "Operation Mongoose: Prelude of a Direct Invasion Against Cuba" includes documents declassified by both the United States and the Cuban intelligence which illustrate covert actions of the CIA and other anti-Castro groups from November 1961 to March 1962. (Notimex, 5/10/02)

**October 8:** Since Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Foraker vanished more than two weeks ago from Guantánamo Base, the most plausible explanation for his disappearance has been he climbed down a cliff and drowned. Foraker's wallet, military ID and civilian shorts and T-shirt were found folded and stuck in a rock crevasse outside the Camp America barracks, just yards from Camp Delta where 598 detainees accused of links to the Taliban or al-Qaida are being held. Authorities suspended the search but said they would keep looking during routine sweeps. Cuban officials also were informed. (AP, 8/10/02)

**October 9:** A Rhode Island National Guardsman stepped down as commander of terror suspect operations at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and was replaced by a two-star general who specializes in military intelligence. Army Major General Michael Dunlavey, a Pennsylvania judge mobilized to service after September 11, 2001, is now in charge of a new bureaucracy that has interrogators and prison guards answer to the same commander. Previously, Dunlavey had been in charge of intelligence operations. (The Miami Herald, 10/10/02)

**October 9:** Fidel Castro invited the international community to inspect biotech research facilities in Cuba to counter US charges that his country may be developing biological weapons, according to an interview with ABC. "We are willing to invite the international scientific community to come and take a look at (...) those places where hypothetically we are conducting such research," Castro told ABC's Barbara Walters in excerpts released by the network. Castro said Cuba, a small nation 90 miles from Florida, would have to be "absolutely insane" to commit any terrorist acts against the United States. (The Chicago Tribune, 10/10/02)

**October 16:** The Panamanian Supreme Court decided that the detention order for Santiago Alfredo Alvarez Fernández-Magriñá is legal. The Cuban government recently requested Alvarez' capture and extradition. According to the decision, the Cuban Foreign Affairs Ministry through its Embassy in Panama, asked the Panamanian Foreign Ministry for Alvarez' arrest on May 20 so that he can be extradited to the Island, where he is wanted for a number of crimes, including terrorism. Alvarez is one of the organizers of the defense in Miami of Luis Posada Carriles. (Prensa Latina, 17/10/02)

**October 19:** A Qatari lawyer representing 92 terror suspects detained at the Guantánamo Bay US Naval Base said he plans to file a lawsuit in Cuba demanding the release of his clients. "US courts said the case doesn't fall in their jurisdiction as detainees are not US citizens and are held in Cuba, so we have decided to bring the case to Cuban courts," Najeeb Al-Nauimi, a lawyer and former Qatari justice minister, told the press. Al-Nauimi said a Cuban lawyer had already started procedures for filing the suit. "I am waiting for my visa to go there and we hope that the court agrees on examining the case by the end of this month or early November," he said. Al-Nauimi expressed hope that the Cuban court would not handle the suit as a political case. (AP, 19/10/02)

**October 20:** US religious leaders asked Panama's President, Mireya Moscoso, to pardon Luis Posada Carriles and three other accomplices accused of planning to assassinate Fidel Castro two years ago. (AFP, 21/10/02)

**October 24:** In a letter, the US chairman of the House international relations committee, Representative Henry Hyde (Republican-Illinois), told President George Bush that he feared President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva might join with fellow leaders Fidel Castro of Cuba and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela to form "an axis of evil" in the Americas. (The Miami Herald, 28/10/02)

**October 26:** Cuba will not compete in the Central American and Caribbean games next month in El Salvador, the island's communist government announced, saying exiled groups planned to kidnap Cuban athletes and assassinate their top Olympic official. A government statement said Cuba would not take part in the regional games to be held in El Salvador November 23-December 7 and would instead organize its own Cuban Olympics on the island. "With the complicity of its highest authorities, El Salvador has been the main center of operations of the terrorist mafia of Miami against our people," the statement said. Cuban intelligence services had detected plans to kidnap athletes and assassinate the president of the Cuban Olympic Committee, Jose R. Fernandez, the statement added. "The government of El Salvador has neither the will nor the capability to control the actions of terrorist groups and elements that operate there, residents of the country or coming from Miami," the statement said. (Reuters, 26/10/02)

**October 28:** El Salvador lashed out against Cuba for its decision to not participate in next month's Central American and Caribbean Games because of security concerns. "Cuba turned its back on us" and "Cuba boycott" topped national newspapers while Salvadoran President Francisco Flores said "there is no reason" for the cancellation. "It's strange," Flores was quoted as saying in the newspaper, El Diario de Hoy. "A week ago everything was fine and now this has come out." Flores said sporting events are like art or culture - something which leaders "are obligated not to politicize." (Dallas Morning News, 28/10/02)

**October 29:** Four people being held at a US naval base in Cuba for suspected links to al-Qaeda and the Taliban have been released, while more than two dozen others have been taken in, Pentagon officials said. The new arrivals - the first in nearly three months - takes the total number of detainees at the Guantanamo Bay naval base to approximately 625, Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke said. (AFP, 29/10/02)

**October 30:** A Canadian teenager captured by US forces in Afghanistan has been transferred to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he is being detained with more than 600 other suspected al-Qaida fighters, sources in Ottawa confirmed. Omar Khadr is the first Canadian citizen to be shipped to the prison camp. The Toronto-born 17-year-old was among 30 "enemy combatants" that arrived at the makeshift US military prison, officials said. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs said it was still awaiting confirmation from the US State Department. "We did not receive official notification yet, but we're still checking," said Reynald Doiron, a department spokesman. (The National Post, 31/10/02)

**October 31:** US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Otto Reich, reiterated that Cuba is trying to equip itself with biological weapons. In a speech at the Heritage Foundation, Reich said: "It has now been four of us who have made this statement: Cuba has at least a limited biological warfare research and development program, based on information we have". (AFP, 1/11/02)

## **US-Cuba Relations**

**October 2:** Ricardo Alarcón, President of the National Assembly of Cuba, said that the opening of the US market "is still far in the distance", and he referred to the US Agri-business Fair in Havana as "limited US sales to Cuba because as long as the island cannot sell to the US there does not exist a US Market". (Europa Press, 2/10/02)

**October 4:** Three Mississippi companies expect to sell pork, poultry and manufactured goods to Cuba in what is being described as a one-time event. American Poultry International of Jackson, Bryan Foods of West Point and Kitchens Brothers Manufacturing Co. of Hazelhurst all expect to sign contracts to sell products to the Cuban government, although Hurricane Lili threw some kinks in the schedule. Officials with the three companies participated in a four-day agricultural trade fair in Havana. (AP, 4/1/02)

**October 4:** Democratic congressional candidate Annie Betancourt has issued a strong critique of US policy toward Cuba and says she would work to change it if elected, drawing a clear line on a controversial policy issue between herself and her Republican opponent, Mario Diaz-Balart. In a letter posted on her website, Betancourt, a state representative running for the US House in District 25, suggests the United States should increase trade with Cuba and allow US citizens to travel there. She said current policy has "failed miserably" to topple Fidel Castro. (The Miami Herald, 4/10/02)

**October 5:** The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dennis Hastert, voiced some harsh criticism against Fidel Castro from Miami and warned that "we should be very cautious" when dealing with the Cuban dictator. The Republican leader said that a man like Castro who "exports tyranny and sponsors narco-terrorism should not be granted credit to purchase US products", in reference to the Agri-Fair that concluded in Havana recently. (El NuevoHerald, 6/10/02)

**October 6:** The popular offshoot of the Buena Vista Social Club had to postpone its November dates in San Francisco and Berkeley. These performers and many others have been unable to obtain visas to enter the United States because of the strict new rules under the Homeland Security Act that require a 90-day background check. The visa requirements have created a huge back-up in the approval process and resulted in the cancellation of concerts and the loss of millions of dollars in bookings. (San Jose Mercury News, 6/10/02)

**October 7:** Cuban security agents often spy on those who worship in churches on the island, and the government of Fidel Castro continues to keep a tight grip on religious activity, the State Department said in a report on religious freedom around the world. The report, which covers respect for religious worship in 190 countries, cited "no change" in Cuba's treatment of religious freedom in the past year. (The Miami Herald, 8/10/02)

**October 7:** Star Cuban pitcher José Contreras was released on bond after seeking asylum in the United States. Contreras, who defected in Mexico, posted \$2,000 bond and was freed in San Diego, where was held by the Immigration and Naturalization Service for a week, spokeswoman Lauren Mack said. Coach Miguel Valdés and his 19-year-old son, who defected with Contreras, also posted bond and were released, Mack said. The three are free to remain in the United States while their asylum requests are being considered. [For more on this, see section Foreign Affairs.] (AP, 8/10/02)

**October 7:** The State Department has denied a visa for a top Cuban government official who had been planning to visit the United States to promote a book he has written, a US official said. The official, asking not to be identified, said the visa request by Enrique Oltuski, deputy minister for Fisheries and the Merchant Marine, was received too late to be processed before his scheduled time of arrival. Processing takes longer than before because of stricter security requirements involving applications from countries on the State Department terrorism list, the official said. (AP, 7/10/02)

**October 8:** Cuban dissident Vladimiro Roca Antúnez, received The Civil Courage Prize and a \$50,000 cash award at a reception hosted by the Northcote Parkinson Fund at Harold Pratt House in New York City. He becomes the third recipient of the annual Prize, which is awarded for "steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk." Mr. Roca, an opponent of the regime since the 1980s, was himself a political prisoner for five years, following his co-authorship of an opposition document, "My Homeland Belongs to All." This year, an additional special prize of \$5,000 will be awarded to another Cuban dissident, Gustavo Arcos Bergnes, for his steadfast resistance to the Castro regime since the mid-60s, despite imprisonments, torture and intimidation. He founded the Cuban Committee for Human Rights in 1983 and also formulated the Arcos Principles, a set of well-known guidelines for doing business in Cuba. (CANF News, 8/10/02)

**October 8:** US officials who traveled to Cuba were surprised by the amount of deals done at the first US Food and Agribusiness Exhibition in Havana. "It was a tremendously successful trip," said Patty Judge, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. "We made a lot of contacts and I believe there will be a lot of opportunities for us to sell to Cuba in the near future." Peter W. Nathan, one of the main organizers of the US food and agribusiness exhibition in Havana is already planning to repeat the experience within 12-18 months. (Agri News, Granma International, 8/10/02)

**October 9:** NBC canceled Matt Lauer's planned trip to Cuba for "Today" show and accused the Cuban government of failing to deliver a promised interview with Fidel Castro who decided to talk exclusively with ABC's Barbara Walters. "We committed to doing the show down there a couple of weeks ago with the understanding we had an interview with Castro and when the Cuban government reneged on our agreement, we changed our plans and will cover the story from here," NBC spokeswoman Allison Gollust said. The US television networks were interested in speaking with Castro for the upcoming 40th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis. (AP, 9/10/02)

**October 10:** Congressman Cal Dooley introduced H.R. 5616, bipartisan legislation to provide for the "sunset" of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996, known as the Helms-Burton Act, on March 31, 2003. H.R. 5616 would allow for a full Congressional debate on the merits of the Helms-Burton legislation and a reexamination of US-Cuba policy. "I strongly believe that the best way to support democratic change and human rights in Cuba is by promoting trade and travel, which would engage the people of Cuba," Dooley said. "There is strong bipartisan support for a change in policy with Cuba, and I believe that we must once again reexamine our approach." (Press Release, 11/10/02)

**October 11:** A Chicago lawyer was convicted of smuggling thousands of Cuban cigars into the United States in violation of the trade embargo against Cuba. The lawyer, Richard Connors, could be sentenced to up to five years in prison in December. Witnesses testified that in the early 1990's as the cigar fad was building in the United States, Mr. Connors went to Cuba by way of Canada and Mexico almost monthly, bought cigars and took them home. (AP, 11/10/02)

**October 11:** President George W. Bush announced his intention to nominate Feliciano Foyo to be a member of the Advisory Board for Cuba Broadcasting for the remainder of a three-year term expiring August 12, 2004. Foyo was a Partner in Banner Beef Company, Inc., from 1968 to 1998, and a certified public accountant in private practice from 1977 to 1998. Before coming to the

United States, he was President of Inter-American Freight in Havana, an accountant in private practice and an accountant with Crusellas y Cia. Foyo attended the University of Havana, and he received a bachelor's degree from the University of Miami. (The White House Office of the Press, 11/10/02)

**October 11:** The International Broadcasting Bureau awarded Lockheed Martin Naval Electronics & Surveillance Systems, Akron, Ohio, a commercial services contract to maintain the TV Martí radio transmission system that beams the US government's 24-hour/7-day news service into Cuba. (Radio Marti Observer, 11/10/02)

**October 12:** Fidel Castro applauded Jimmy Carter for winning the Nobel Peace Prize, citing the former US president's "admirable" ethics and his work on health programs in Africa. Castro said the award was good news for the whole world and for communist-ruled Cuba, which Carter recently became the most senior US statesman to visit. "He is a man that is truly admirable for his ethics, and important steps were taken during his administration," Castro said, referring to the establishment of low-level diplomatic missions in Havana and Washington, which broke off formal ties with Cuba after Castro's 1959 revolution. (Reuters, 12/10/02)

**October 14:** A group of 45 newspaper publishers and reporters from the United States met with ten Cuban dissidents in Havana. Participants in the meeting discussed Cuba's current situation, the activities of civil society and the prospects of U.S.- Cuba relations. (Cubanet, 14/10/02)

**October 14:** Nobel Peace laureate Jimmy Carter slammed the Bush administration's Cuba policy, urging Washington to lift its 40-year embargo against the island. "I think that there is no doubt that the overwhelming portion of American people now do want to see a reconciliation with Cuba, an end to the restraints on travel and an end to the economic embargo," Carter said in an interview released with Sky Radio. Carter charged that the US government's "ill-advised" policy on Cuba served not so much to restrain Cubans as it did to place "a restraint on the freedom of Americans." (AFP, 14/10/02)

**October 15:** In the race for Congress in newly created District 25, Democratic state Representative Annie Betancourt, said a new approach toward Cuba is urgently needed in Congress -- one that differs from the hard-line approach of US Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, the brother of her opponent Mario Díaz Balart, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. In a policy statement on her Web site, Betancourt, a 55-year-old widow of a Bay of Pigs veteran, argues that the 40-year-old embargo "has failed miserably" to change the political situation in Cuba, where Castro's regime has not allowed democratic elections, alternatives to the Communist Party or free speech. Her stance reflects the growing willingness of some Cuban-Americans to question whether four decades of inflexible tactics toward Cuba are working. (The Sun Sentinel, 16/10/02)

**October 17:** If the regime of Fidel Castro continues its repression of the Cuban people, the United States must accelerate and intensify its efforts to communicate directly with Cuba's "nascent independent civil society, which will become the vital core around which Cuba's democratic transition will take place," says Adolfo Franco, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Franco said the international community must increase its pressure on Castro to allow for a transition to democracy, with full respect for the human rights of the Cuban people. (US Department of State, 22/10/02)

**October 22:** The Cuban government has reported that during the current year 596 illegal Cuban migrants have been sent back to Cuba (577 by the US Coast Guard and 19 by the US Naval Base in Guantánamo). Most of the migrants have had the help of US smugglers who traffic with people wanting to reach US coasts. (Granma, 22/10/02)

**October 24:** With the increased demand for travel services to Cuba, Cuba Travel Services will be opening new offices in Las Vegas, providing travel services for Cuban-Americans and licensed travelers to Nevada residents who qualify under the current US Treasury regulations. Cuba Travel Services operates under specific travel guidelines and criteria established by the US Treasury and the US Department of Transportation. (Business Wire, 24/10/02)

**October 25:** The University of Miami is offering an honorary degree to Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, the island dissident who is trying to bring grass-roots democratic reforms to Cuba. The university said that the top US diplomat in Havana, James Cason, will personally present the invitation to Paya. In it, Donna Shalala, school president, invites the Cuban to receive the award at the school's May 9 commencement on the Coral Gables campus. The announcement comes a day after the European Union honored Paya, with the Sakharov human-rights prize, named for the dissident Soviet scientist Andrei Sakharov. [For more on this, see sections Domestic Affairs and Foreign Affairs.] (The Miami Herald, 25/10/02)

**October 26:** Trade with Cuba would bring \$400 million to Georgia poultry producers alone, Senator Max Cleland said. Cleland is working to facilitate the sale of Georgia agricultural products to Cuba. If Georgia can open the trade door with poultry, he said, the export of other state products, such as cotton and tobacco, are sure to follow. "The sooner we can have open commercial and economic relations with Cuba, the more it will facilitate the sale of our food and fiber to that market that is ready for our products, and they're just a two-hour flight away from here," Cleland said. (The Moultrie Observer, 26/10/02)

**October 28:** The United States is poised to become Cuba's 10th-largest trading partner in 2002, less than a year after food sales began to the island and despite its 40-year-old economic embargo, a Cuban government report indicated. Cuba's latest statistical abstract, made available to foreign journalists, contained the first detailed commercial information for 2001. The report, when combined with 2002 trade information from diplomats, indicated the United States will replace 10th-ranking Brazil among the Caribbean island's commercial partners this year. (Reuters, 28/10/02)

**October 29:** Cuba's unofficial ambassador to the United States visited Milwaukee, sowing discontent over the 40-year-old trade embargo against the island nation. Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera, chief of the Cuban Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy in Washington, D.C., met with city officials, taped radio and television interviews, and spoke at a benefit at the United Community Center. (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 30/10/02)

**October 30:** Saying Americans are also victims of the US trade embargo against Cuba, the communist country launched its annual campaign leading up to next month's United Nations vote to condemn the trade sanctions. "This is not a move against the United States," Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said of Cuba's resolution calling for an end to the embargo. "This is a move against a wrong-headed policy," he said at a news conference. The foreign minister said that Cuba did not blame Americans for their government's policy against the island, in place for decades. "They are also victims of this absurd policy," Perez Roque added. "Everybody benefits from the lifting of the blockade save the Miami minority (Cuban exiles), who have profited from it," Perez said. (AP, Xinhua, 30/10/02)

**October 31:** US filmmaker Steven Spielberg has accepted an invitation from the Cuban film institute (Instituto Cubano del Arte y Industria Cinematograficos) to visit Cuba for a nationwide festival, "The Films of Spielberg: A Festival in Cuba," during which eight of his films will be screened. The trip has been authorized by the US government's Office of Foreign Assets Control (US Treasury Department) under a license granted for non-commercial film-related cultural exchange and exhibition. (AP, 31/10/02)

**October 31:** The US Chamber of Commerce President Tom Donohue said his government should lift the trade embargo against Cuba as soon as possible. Donohue asserted that the 42-year embargo against Cuba has proved useless and commercial sanctions haven't weakened the Cuban regime, but merely isolated the United States from its trade partners. He made the statement during a seminar organized by the Costa Rica-US Chamber of Commerce to promote the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). (Xinhua, 31/10/02)

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