

FOCAL SUMMARY OF NEWS ITEMS REPORTED ON CUBA January-December 2004

This resource is a compilation of news items on Cuba listed in FOCAL's monthly Chronicle on Cuba throughout 2004

EXILE COMMUNITY

CUBAN GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS FOR CUBANS LIVING ABROAD

January 9: According to Lt. Col. Lamberto Fraga, head of a department with the Cuban Immigration Directorate (DIE), new procedures are currently being implemented whereby, as of April 2004, Cubans residing abroad would be exempted from acquiring a visitor entry permit, a decades old consular requirement for those travelling to the island. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 10/1/04)

February 26: Most Cuban natives living outside the island can visit the country of their birth without a visa starting June 1, if they have a valid Cuban passport, the communist government confirmed. In order to validate their passports, Cuban-born people should present them at the Cuban consulate where a stamp free of charge will be placed. The Cuban Foreign Ministry announced the upcoming change last fall, but had not said exactly when it would take effect. Lazaro Hernandez, spokesman for the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, told the press the change would occur June 1. (*AP, Encuentro en la Red*, 26/2/04)

March 2: The Cuban government announced that it will ease entry visa requirements for Cuban exiles who want to visit the island, and once again condemned the travel restrictions imposed by the United States. As of June 1, most Cubans living abroad who want to visit Cuba will be able to do so with just a valid passport approved by the Cuban government, the Cuban Interests Section in Washington announced. The measure excludes the "small minority" of Cubans who have taken part in "terrorist and/or repugnant activities to destroy their country," Dagoberto Rodriguez, head of the mission, said at a press conference. (*EFE*, 2/3/04)

April 7: The Cuban government has confirmed that from June, Cubans living abroad will no longer need to apply for a visa to visit the Caribbean island. They will require a Cuban passport to visit the Communist-led state. The move, announced by Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, appears designed to increase tourism. (*BBC*, 8/4/04)

May 18: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque announced in Havana that the 3rd Nation and its Emigration Conference will get underway. The minister said that dissident leader Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo has been invited to the event. "Menoyo has been invited, but still there isn't a decision about his legal status in Cuba", the minister added. One year ago, Menoyo, former leader of the exile organization, Cambio Cubano, decided to return to Cuba where he has stayed. (*El País, Radio Habana Cuba*, 19/5/04)

May 22: Cuban government officials and some 450 representatives of the more moderate factions of the Cuban exile community are attending the 3rd Conference on Nation and Emigration. "Who said that the Exile is not part of the Nation? We are all one nation," affirmed Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo. While speaking on the issue of Cuban diaspora investment and business on the island, Menoyo said that local residents should be allowed to invest. (*El País*, 22/5/04)

May 23: Wrapping up a major immigration conference with moderate Cuban exiles, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque blamed aggressive US policies for the island's remaining restrictions on Cubans living abroad. Perez Roque said that a US trade embargo against the island for more than four decades, as well as new restrictions and increased hostility from Washington, have made it necessary to maintain policies such as stripping the property rights of emigrating Cubans. "These are defensive measures to protect the country from aggressive measures," Perez Roque told a news conference. Emigrating Cubans also lose their inheritance rights and cannot return later to retire on the island. Much of the three-day discussions in Havana dealt with the US restrictions on Cuban-born people living in the United States, who number about 1.3 million. (*AP*, 23/5/04)

August 5: The University of Havana has announced several summer courses in September for Cubans and their children overseas, indicated the local press. The announcements coincide with statements made during the Third Conference "the Nation and the Emigration," which gathered 200 Cuban émigrés from 40 different countries for a dialogue with Cuban authorities in Havana. (*EFE*, 5/8/04)

December 28: Beginning in 2005, Cuba will increase to \$350 the cost of issuing a passport to Cubans living abroad -- a three-fold increase compared to current rates. The new rates will enter into force on January 1st and will affect all Cuban residents outside the island. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 28/12/04)

POLITICAL PROPOSALS

February 20: Cuban-American congressional leaders and members of anti-Castro exile organizations unveiled one of the most comprehensive proposals to date of how to proceed with a transition to democracy and a social market economy in a post-Castro Cuba. It calls for the privatization of joint ventures between the government and foreign investors, endorses the right of urban property dwellers in Cuba to remain in their homes as long as old private owners are properly compensated, and suggests that government-owned land be redistributed to small- and medium-sized private farmers to help foster a middle class. Republican US Representatives, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and brothers Lincoln and Mario Diaz-Balart, championed the already formed Cuban Socio-Economic Reconstruction Commission as a necessary step in planning for a post-Castro Cuba. US Representative Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, sent a letter of support. Antonio Jorge, a Cuba expert and professor at Florida International University in Miami, will head the commission. The plan is in direct contrast to dissident movements such as the Varela Project, which is pushing for deep changes within the socialist framework, such as freedom to assemble and representation in the National Assembly. (*AP*, *KRT*, 22/2/04)

July 7: Miami's powerful Cuban exile community has welcomed a call from the most prominent member of the internal opposition on the communist-ruled island for an inclusive dialogue to chart a peaceful, vengeance-free transition to democracy in Cuba. Acceptance of the proposal from dissident Oswaldo Paya marks a change for some exile groups who earlier criticized him for his

"Varela Project," a petition drive aimed at pushing the Fidel Castro regime to hold a referendum on political and economic reform. "That's the result of an arduous effort we've developed over months with organizations in Cuba - including Paya's - and in the exile community about a broad proposition that has been circulating for months in Cuba," Luis Zuñiga, director of the Cuban Liberty Council, told the press. "That's why Paya changed," he said. The CLC maintained that the Varela Project "validates the communist regime by not calling for free elections but ones under the communist constitution" and because "it excludes the exile community." "This time Paya's call is inclusive and seeks deeper changes than simply putting dissidents in the communist parliament," said Zuñiga. (*EFE*, 8/7/04)

July 13: The Democracy Movement vessels joined a Memorial Flotilla, with a dozen planes, jets and helicopters, in a series of air, sea and land activities, to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the "13 de Marzo" tugboat massacre by the Cuban government. Jorge A. Garcia remembered the loss of 14 of his relatives that day. 41 civilians, among them 10 children, were sent to sea graves when three Cuban boats, chased, rammed and sank the "13 de Marzo", the old wooden tugboat in which they were fleeing the island. "In speeches, the Cuban government always was saying how it protected women and children," Mr. Garcia says today. This massacre "laid bare the true nature of Cuba's government." (*Movimiento Democracia, The Miami Herald*, 13/7/04)

July 20: Cuban exile and Spanish organizations have called for a demonstration in front of the Cuban embassy in Madrid requesting the release of political prisoners in the island. The groups' spokesman, Miguel Angel García Puñales, made the call trying to summon Plataforma Cuba Democracia ¡Ya! to the protest. The wife of imprisoned dissident, Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet, warned one of the organizations involved in the call that her husband's health is at risk due to bad conditions in jail. (*Europa Press*, 20/7/04)

July 28: The organization Cuba Democracia Ya!, made up of Cuban exiles residing in Spain, has asked Spanish President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to reconsider his decision to pursue a "constructive dialogue" with Havana. (*Europa Press*, 28/7/04)

September 19: A summit of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba attended by representatives from a number of Cuban exile organizations came to an end after 3 days of sessions. The Cuban Democratic Directorate (DDC) sent several delegates while the Washington-based Center for a Free Cuba, whose Executive Director is Frank Calzón, was also represented. Carlos Alberto Montaner, from the Liberal Union, took part in a panel discussing proposals made by the Committee. Angel Garrido, international representative of the Lawton Foundation, led by political prisoner Oscar Elías Biscet, submitted before the Summit an open letter from his organization, demanding the release of Elías Biscet and all other prisoners of conscience. [For more on this, see also Foreign Affairs] (*El Nuevo Herald*, 19/9/04)

December 19: After four years of planning, work is set to begin on an airport memorial for the anti-Castro aviators who died in the Bay of Pigs invasion. Cuban Pilots Association president Amado Cantillo, who fought with the invasion force on the beach, said the idea came when he realized that the Liberation Air Force was the only group from Brigade 2506 that didn't have its own memorial. "We came back and there were monuments for the infantries and monuments for the Navy," Cantillo said, "and no monuments for the pilots." When construction begins, likely by next spring, a four-column monument made of white Carrara marble will be erected. It will stand 20 feet tall and 30 feet long and wide. Inscribed on the columns will be the names of the fourteen men who died fighting Cuban forces -- along with the other pilots from Brigade 2506. (*The Miami Herald*, 19/12/04)

December 30: Representatives of the platform Cuba Democracy Now presented a document comprised of 15 points to the Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos during an hour meeting to discuss human rights under Fidel Castro's regime. It was the second such meeting following one in October with the opposition platform, which links groups of dissidents and Cuban exiles. On that occasion, Moratinos urged the opposition to have confidence in the new policy of detente with Castro conducted by the government of Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. But members of the opposition group presented the Spanish foreign minister with a major programme of support for Cuban dissidents. (*AFP, Europa Press, 28/12/04*)

RELATIONS WITH THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

[See also, US-Cuba Relations/ Embargo, travel ban, remittances and radio and TV transmissions]

February 26: President Bush gave the federal government new powers to keep American boats out of Cuba, a step in which some people have smelled politics: "This administration is clearly interested in the Cuban-American vote," said Joe Garcia, executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation in Miami. "Many Cuban-Americans had a lot of expectations about this White House, and unfortunately, most of them have not been met. And now the administration is scrambling to put together some type of comprehensive policy." [See also, US-Cuba Relations] (*CNN, 26/2/04*)

March 2: A survey shows that more than one-third of South Florida Hispanic voters -- a group consisting primarily of GOP-leaning Cuban Americans -- disapproves of the job president George Bush has done "promoting democracy and regime change" in Fidel Castro's Cuba. Those results, compiled for Univision Channel 23 by Washington pollster Rob Schroth, are the latest indication that Bush could be hurt politically by complaints from some exile leaders that he has failed to deliver on campaign promises to crack down on Castro. (*The Miami Herald, 2/3/04*)

March 11: There are growing indications that Cuban exile voters will once again play a key role in November's presidential elections: Pollsters say Florida's estimated 500,000 Cuban voters could be a deciding factor in the state's election, which in turn may -- as it did in 2000 -- decide the national election. "The Cuban exile vote will be as important, if not more, than in the past," pollster Sergio Bendixen told me Wednesday, a day after the Democratic Party primary in Florida. "As long as they continue voting as a bloc, and as long as Florida remains one of the closest elections, the Cuban vote will play a key role." According to several pollsters, South Florida's Cuban exile voters will be courted heavier by both parties than in the 2000 elections, mostly because they tend to turn out in huge numbers, and because the Bush-Cheney campaign can no longer take them for granted. (*The Miami Herald, 11/3/04*)

March 18: A large majority of Hispanic Republicans in Miami-Dade County support President Bush in his reelection bid, but almost as many feel that he needs to get tougher on Cuba or risk losing their support, according to a new poll. The findings suggest that while the president remains popular among Cuban Americans, there is room for the Democrats to take advantage of their frustrations and siphon off some of their votes, the pollster says. "The dissatisfaction with Bush shows that people are unhappy with his Cuba policy," said Florida International University Professor Dario Moreno, whose company, Campaign Data, conducted the poll for BellSouth. Senator John Kerry, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, "has not announced a plan for the democratization of Cuba and has not released what his Cuba policy is. Until now, Cuban Americans don't have an alternative." The questions on Bush and Cuba were part of a larger poll that Campaign Data conducted on state legislative issues -- such as healthcare and

education -- for BellSouth. In response to the question, "How likely are you to vote for the reelection of President George W. Bush?" about 88 percent of respondents said they were likely or very likely. Then another issue was raised: "In August 2003, Miami's 11 Hispanic legislators sent a letter to Bush urging him to take a tougher line toward the Castro regime. The letter warned the president that if he did not toughen his stance toward Cuba, he could not expect the strong support of the Cuban community in the presidential election." Seventy percent agreed or strongly agreed. (*The Miami Herald*, 18/3/04)

March 19: Six in 10 Cuban-American voters say they are likely to vote for President Bush in November, a substantial drop from the votes he received in 2000 and a possible reflection of long-simmering tensions between exiles and a White House that some in the community feel has fallen short of its tough anti-Fidel Castro rhetoric. Bush is estimated to have garnered about 80 percent of the Cuban-American vote in the 2000 election, thanks in large part to anger over the Clinton administration's return of Elian Gonzalez to Cuba. But in a recent poll of Cuban-Americans in Miami-Dade and Broward counties, only 58.4 percent of registered voters said they would definitely or probably vote for Bush in November. About one-quarter said they were undecided, with the rest saying they would probably not or definitely not vote to re-elect the president. Bush won Florida by just 537 votes after a disputed election in 2000, so any drop in support or turnout among Cuban-Americans is a cause for concern among Republicans. "There is no Elian to kick around anymore," said Guillermo Grenier, a sociologist at Florida International University and the author of the poll. The survey was conducted January 30 through March 16 by Florida International University in partnership with the South Florida Sun-Sentinel and Miami's WTVJ-Channel 6. The survey of 1,807 Cuban-Americans included registered voters and nonvoters and has a margin of error of 2.4 percentage points. (*The Miami Herald*, 20/3/04)

March 18: A large majority of Hispanic Republicans in Miami-Dade County support President Bush in his reelection bid, but almost as many feel that he needs to get tougher on Cuba or risk losing their support, according to a new poll. The findings suggest that while the president remains popular among Cuban Americans, there is room for the Democrats to take advantage of their frustrations and siphon off some of their votes, the pollster says. (*The Miami Herald*, 18/3/04)

April 21: A Washington-based Cuban-American organization has condemned the United States policy of embargo toward Cuba. The Cuban American Alliance Education Fund (CAAEEF) has demanded the end of the travel restrictions that prevent US citizens and Cuban-Americans from freely traveling to the neighboring country, and expressed its rejection of putting limits in remittances Cuban-Americans send to their relatives in Cuba. The CAAEEF is also demanding the reopening of immigration talks between US and Cuba, Washington unilaterally suspended early this year. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/4/04)

May 5: A survey recently conducted by the Latin America Working Group Education Fund (LAWGEF) points out that 70 percent of Cuban Americans feel misled by politicians on Cuba policy, and 55 percent want a change toward a more moderate strategy. These moderate voices are being ignored by politicians with a different agenda--one created by hardliners. The majority of the Cuban-American community is in favor of dialogue between Cuba and the United States, in favor of easing travel restrictions, and in favor of rethinking the failed strategy of the embargo. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/5/04)

May 6: In Miami, the reaction to Bush's announcement of new measures against the Castro regime generated varied responses. "He's forcing and reinforcing the same failed policy, but this time you are really punishing the Cuban family," said Silvia Wilhelm, an activist who favors closer ties to Cuba. She said the new restrictions will ban her from continuing to send money to three cousins in Cuba. Under the new rules, remittances can go only to grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, children and grandchildren. Ninoska Perez-Castellon, spokeswoman for the conservative Cuban Liberty Council, said Cuban Americans who send remittances are helping to prop up President Fidel Castro's government. Joe Garcia, executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, said the group was especially supportive of Bush's pledge to spend \$36 million to support the dissident movement in Cuba and buy an aircraft for Radio and TV Marti. Carlos Saladrigas, chairman of the moderate Cuba Study Group, called the president's new policies "a mixed bag" and said that politicizing the issue does little to help Cubans on the island. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/5/04)

May 11: Four days after President Bush's announcement, leaders of five organizations said at a press conference they will encourage exiles to work against the president's reelection -- putting them at odds with other exiles who support Bush's new policy. "Some 140,000 Cuban exiles visited the island last year; 100,000 of those lived in South Florida," said Andrés Gómez, head of the Antonio Maceo Brigade. "This will mean many of those who can't travel to the island will vote against Bush -- and for a candidate who allows travel to Cuba." The group of exiles called the new restrictions "a violation of their civil rights." The restrictions will be a blow to the Cuban people who depend on money from relatives in Miami-Dade and elsewhere in the United States to get by, they said. Without their ragtag humanitarian aid, their relatives, not Fidel Castro's government, will suffer, they said. "This is a political mistake and it's inhumane," said Max Lesnick of the Alianza Martiana. "This will boomerang" on the administration. (*The Miami Herald*, 11/5/04)

May 11: The Unión Liberal Cubana, a Cuban exile political party based in Madrid, delivered a statement supporting the new US measures against the Cuban government, except the limitation of remittances to the island. The statement is signed by Cuban exiles, Carlos Alberto Montaner, Eduardo Zayas Bazán and others. (*NotiCubaInternacional*, 11/5/04)

May 22: New US policies limiting Cuban-Americans' ability to help their families may hurt President Bush's chances of winning the crucial state of Florida in the November elections, some experts say. "Even losing a small segment of the Cuban-American community could have an impact," said Sergio Bendixen, an expert in Hispanic public opinion research in the United States and Latin America. Mr. Bush won about 80 percent of the Cuban-American vote in 2000 and still has many supporters in South Florida, Mr. Bendixen said. But if his share of the Cuban-American vote drops by just 10 percent, that could mean the loss of some 100,000 votes. And that could be the deciding factor in a state he won by just 536 votes in 2000, Mr. Bendixen said. "It's dangerous for him to alienate those voters," said the pollster, who is based in Coral Gables, Florida. (*The Dallas Morning News*, 22/5/04)

May 30: US Representative Lincoln Díaz-Balart praised president George W. Bush as "Cuban exiles' best friend" when the White House launched its electoral year strategy to withdraw Fidel Castro from power. Parts of this plan --those that aim to support dissidents in the island and Radio and TV transmissions—received wide approval from the Cuban American community. But, Bush's policy includes recommendations made by the Cuban American National Foundation that its president, Francisco "Pepe" Hernández, has said are not those the Foundation proposed. The

CANF's president said that his organization does not want more restrictions to travel nor to remittances, because they may damage family reunification plans, and may take back all efforts to promote democracy in the island. Carlos Saladrigas, president of the moderate Cuba Study Group based in Miami, said that Bush strategy towards Cuba "is opposed to family reunification". (*El Nuevo Herald*, 31/5/04)

June 15: South Florida's Cuban-American community of about 600,000 is divided over the Bush administration's policies, with some hard-line exiles complaining that Bush has failed to take a tougher stance against Castro. A younger generation of Cubans who were born in the United States — or raised here most of their lives — are more likely to support engagement with Cuba. They are not solid Republicans like their parents. Many Cuban Americans abandoned the Democratic Party some 40 years ago, blaming President Kennedy for the debacle of the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. The strong feelings remain, bolstered by President Reagan's anti-communist views and the Republicans' tough-on-Castro message. And, Jeb Bush, the president's brother, made converting Cubans his cause in the mid-1980s, before he became Florida's governor in 1998. The community is expected to vote Republican again on November 2. But if enough switch to Bush's Democratic rival, John Kerry — or decide to stay home on Election Day — the president will have to make up those votes elsewhere in Florida, a growing state of more than 17 million. (*AP*, 15/6/04)

June 20: A few hundred of Cuban Americans rallied in the streets of Miami, protesting against new travel regulations to be implemented on June 30. Demonstrators also made public their protests against limitations to remittances imposed by Washington. One of the participants carried a banner saying, "My family lives in Cuba, where does your family live, Mr. Bush?" (*Encuentro en laRed*, 20/6/04)

June 21: The Bush administration's measures tightening sanctions against Cuba has provoked heated debate in the South Florida exile community. "I'm pleased with the implementation of these measures. The new pressures imposed on (Fidel) Castro's economy reduce the dictatorship's financial resources to continue oppressing the Cuban people," US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen told the press. Concurring in that view were two other South Florida Republican lawmakers, brothers Lincoln and Mario Diaz-Balart. More praise for stiffening the embargo came from Ninoska Perez Castellon, head of the Cuban Liberty Council. "It's not about isolated measures," she said, "but rather a comprehensive plan that includes a diplomatic initiative in favor of democracy in Cuba." Jorge Mas Santos, head of the board of directors of the powerful Cuban American National Foundation, said the plan's most important aspect was the promise of more help for the internal opposition to Castro. (*EFE*, 21/6/04)

June 21: Some organizations in the South Florida exile community have been critical of the Bush administration's measures against Cuba. The Cuban American National Foundation's Francisco Hernandez pointed out that the group, while urging Bush to adopt "an effective strategy" against Castro, never sought tighter restrictions on Cuban-Americans traveling to their homeland or on the remittances they send to relatives there. Claiming to speak for more "moderate" elements of Miami's exile community, the groups Puentes Cubanos (Cuban Bridges), Cambio Cubano (Cuban Change) and The Time is Now flatly rejected the Bush package. Jose Basulto, president of Brothers to the Rescue, a group that uses small private planes to scour the Florida Strait for Cuban rafters in distress, characterized the latest set of actions as "more of the same." (*EFE*, 21/6/04)

June 28: The Cuban American National Foundation issued a statement criticizing the new rules ordered by the Bush administration, which limit family visits to the island. (*CANF Press Release*, 28/6/04)

June 29: Cuban-Americans who had hoped to take advantage of additional charter flights to Cuba before new travel restrictions go into effect were left in the lurch because the State Department denied the charter companies permission to take those passengers to the island. A few hundred people were unable to fly because news of the State Department denial did not reach many travelers who showed up thinking their flights were confirmed. For hours, the angry travelers gathered in a concourse at Miami International Airport chanting: "We want to fly! We want to fly!" (*Sun Sentinel, AP*, 30/6/04)

July 9: US President George W. Bush has lost significant support in Florida's Cuban-American community which, if the 2000 elections are a guide, could play a decisive role in November's voting, according to a poll released in Miami. The survey of 812 Cuban-Americans in several key south Florida counties shows Bush still claiming the backing of two-thirds of the community. While unusually strong for any ethnic voting bloc, that support is down from the nearly 82 percent of the Florida Cuban-American vote he received in 2000. The survey, commissioned by the William C Velasquez Institute and conducted by MirRam Global, suggests Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry could make serious inroads into the community, particularly by directing his appeal to Cuban-Americans who arrived in the United States after 1980 and those who were born in the country. (*IPS*, 9/7/04)

August 2: Hundreds of Cuban Americans took to the streets of Miami to protest US President George Bush's latest attempts to cut their family ties with Cuba, the daily *Granma* reported. *Granma* said more than 500 demonstrators picketed the offices of anti-Cuban Congresswoman Ileana Ross Lehtinen. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/8/04)

August 16: The Democracy Movement, a Miami-based organization of Cuban exiles, requested President George W. Bush to temporarily lift the sanctions against Cuba to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the island in the wake of the damages caused by Hurricane Charley. The organization asked the White House for an "emergency exception" of the sanctions for 30 to 60 days. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 17/8/04)

August 24: Cuban exile groups praised the US government for using a C-130 military cargo airplane to circumvent Cuban electronic jamming and broadcast US-funded Radio and TV Marti into communist-run island. One of the leading Cuban exile groups in Florida, the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), issued a statement praising the Bush administration for the operation. The TV station "is irrefutably one of the most critical tools at the disposition of US policy to help precipitate a democratic transition on the island," said CANF head Joe Garcia. Feliciano Foyo of another exile group, the Cuban Liberty Council, also hailed the move. "These transmissions will allow Cubans to learn about a world which Fidel Castro has hidden from them, and to learn about the possibilities every human being has in a world where he lives in liberty," Foyo said. (*Chanel News Asia*, 24/8/04)

August 26: Brothers to the Rescue, an organization of Cuban exiles, issued a statement supporting a public letter by the Cuban American National Foundation addressed to President George W. Bush, and his opponent in the coming elections. According to the statement, "most relevant" in CANF's letter is "the intention of CANF to condition its vote (...) to the specific

measures to be taken against Castro". "The present administration still has time to take these measures without further eroding their credibility in our community", the statement adds. (*Netfor Cuba*, 26/8/04)

September 21: Speaking at a Democratic Party rally in Little Havana, a prominent Miami exile figure denounced President Bush as leading "probably the worst administration we've ever had on Cuban policy." The remark by Joe Garcia, former executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, signals what could be an unprecedented battle for Hispanic voters in the upcoming presidential race. "Part of it is our fault," Garcia said. "Because he's been saying exactly what we want to hear -- words like freedom, democracy, liberty. But he hasn't done anything to bring this about in Cuba." Garcia left CANF to accept a post with the New Democrat Network, a recruitment arm of the Democratic National Party that is launching a \$6 million media campaign targeting Hispanics. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/9/04)