

Department of Foreign Affairs again exposed on Cuba policy

How did a flat and persistent refusal on the part of the Middle East Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs to view a film containing evidence of Israeli brutality directed against Palestinian pilgrims and Irish observers at a checkpoint in Bethlehem last October manage to expose the department's hostility towards Cuba?

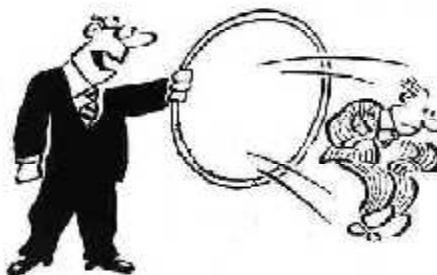
Repeated requests to have the department look at the Bethlehem film were flatly refused. However, when the film was presented to the Americas Section of the department as having been filmed in Cuba the response was entirely different. Immediately, the department wanted to see the film and requested written additional information on the background to the "incident" in Cuba, the outcome, et cetera.

When the *Irish Times* contacted the Department of Foreign Affairs for a comment on an article being written by Eddie Holt on this issue, suddenly the department changed its position. The officials in the Middle East Section would be delighted to watch the film, to meet representatives of the group involved, and to make representations to the Israeli embassy.

A meeting did take place, at which all manner of excuses were offered as to why the section refused to view the film when first approached. However, in relation to Cuba the really scary bit emerged when one of the officials at the meeting, explaining why the department was so adamant in declining to view the Bethlehem film, and so eager to see the "Cuba" film, declared that there was "no conspiracy against Cuba" in the department. The Cuba Support Group has no problem accepting that statement. The problem is that there is no conspiracy against Cuba; if there was a conspiracy we might be able to deal with it. It is worse than that. Hostility to Cuba in the department requires no conspiracy: it is ingrained as a matter of policy, and the expression of that hostility requires only the slightest catalyst.

Be sure to be sure to be assured

Responding to claims made in a report by the European Parliament on the issue of so-called rendition flights, and Ireland's role in facilitating those flights, Dermot Ahern, Minister for Foreign Affairs, had the perfect answer. "I looked at the great President Bush and I said to him that I wanted 'to be sure to be sure,' and he assured me."



Well done Dermot One more time now...

To be sure to be sure, the great President Bush assured our cringing, pathetic and grovelling Minister for Foreign Affairs that all was well, and our cringing, pathetic and grovelling Minister for Foreign Affairs went on to assure the European Parliament committee that Ireland was the only European country to receive such an assurance from the great President Bush. What about that!

Sections of the Irish media described Ahern as "gullible," in an apparent attempt to explain his predicament. Ahern is not gullible. The Irish Government are not gullible: it's a lot more serious than that. In matters of foreign policy they are bought and sold by the North Americans. In their attempts to deny this position they emerge, individually and collectively, cringing, pathetic, and grovelling. It's hard to know whether to laugh or cry.



Cuba after Fidel? No problem

Ever since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, successive US regimes and the right-wing Cuban exiles have eagerly awaited the moment when Fidel Castro would lose power—by whatever means. At that moment it was expected that the Cuban people would erupt, reject the Revolution, and bring about the economic and political changes so longed for—it was argued—inside and outside Cuba.

Even those who allowed for the natural departure of Fidel Castro, whether through retirement, illness, or death, engaged in endless and frequently mindless speculation on what would happen in Cuba after his departure, and who would replace him.

Now that Fidel Castro has, at least temporarily, passed his powers to the First Vice-President, Raúl Castro, the questions have largely been answered: the First Vice-President took over as the Constitution required, there has been no eruption or rejection of the Revolution, not a single violent episode, no mass exodus, and the government and the people are getting on with their lives. Not a single surprise in sight.

Fidel Castro himself appears relatively well, while the hordes of so-called political commentators and "Cuba experts" have been consigned to the graveyard that accommodates those stupid enough to do Cuban horoscopes based solely on wishful thinking or on unrestrained vindictiveness. Fidel Castro never claimed to be the Revolution: he is just a significant part of it. Those who do not understand that understand nothing about Cuba, its people, or the strength of the Revolution.

Prone to being wrong

Irish media coverage of issues related to Cuba really does expose the depth of ignorance on the part of the journalists, and the lack of standards of their editors.

Hector Ó hEochagáin, rambling on in the *Irish Independent* about his interview with Aleida Guevara while she was in Ireland “to check out her roots” (while the Cuba Support Group was under the distinct impression that we had invited her on a solidarity tour), went on to tell us that while at La Coppelía in Havana “they have these stupid rules to keep foreigners and Cubans apart, so that there’s one queue for locals, one for tourists.” He then describes how he decided that he was going to go into the Cuban queue, and that nobody was going to stop him.

It would be all right if Ó hEochagáin was just a visitor and did not know anything about the system in Cuba, but he was there to make a documentary. He complains about his “minder” from the International Press Centre, but it never occurred to him to ask his “minder” whether there was any reason for two queues. He would have found out that the ice cream in the Cuban queue costs a small fraction of what it costs in the tourist queue; but he was not interested. He would also have found out that he would not even have had the currency to pay for his attempted purchase. Bearing in mind that this article was written four years after his experience at La Coppelía, it is clear that he is still not interested.

His “documentary” on Cuba for RTE was dreadful, but he is still getting mileage out of it from anybody stupid enough to listen to him.

Terry Prone would probably consider herself an intellectual step above Hector Ó hEochagáin, but it took just one line in the *Sunday Tribune* for her “depth” of knowledge to expose her. She wrote a comment piece on the money squandered by the United States in “promoting democracy in Cuba.” However, it was hard to take the piece seriously when her introduction pondered on the likelihood of there being a “transition from socialism to democracy” in Cuba. Ms Prone appears to be an expert on most subjects, but somebody should save us from having to see her nonsense printed in a so-called quality newspaper.

International Work Brigade to Cuba



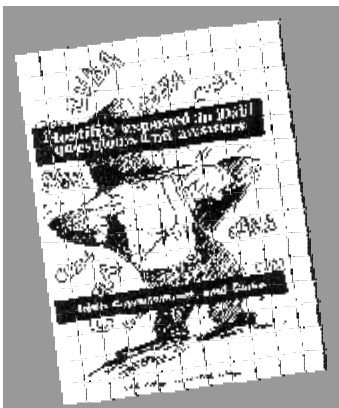
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For further information contact the campaign chairperson:

Eleanor Lanigan, 282 Clontarf Road, Dublin 3.

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Ireland-Cuba-CIA connection! What could it be?

The Cuba-Irish connection of the directors Roberto Ruiz and Bernie Dwyer has teamed up once again on a documentary—*One Man's Story: Philip Agee, Cuba, and the CIA*—which deals with the dark side of US foreign policy.

The 33-minute film, which had its premiere at the Havana Film Festival in December, allows Agee to tell his captivating story.

In all, Agee worked for twelve years in the CIA, joining in 1957 and working

You can see a screening of the documentary followed by a question-and-answer session with Philip Agee in early April.

Further details are available from the Free the Miami Five Campaign and from Bernie Dwyer.

in the United States, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Mexico, until he resigned in 1968. He has since become one of the most important whistleblowers about US support for the installing and maintaining of brutal dictatorships throughout the Western Hemisphere and beyond.

For years Agee has also been an outspoken critic of the US blockade of Cuba, encouraging American citizens to find a way to continue doing business with the island and traveling there.

Bernie Dwyer is an Irish filmmaker, journalist and veteran solidarity activist who lives and works in Havana as a reporter for Radio Havana Cuba. Roberto Ruiz works extensively making documentaries for Cuban television.

The duo has now made five documentaries: *Che: The Irish Legacy* (1998), which traces Che Guevara's Irish links; *Che in Ireland* (2001), on Che's visit to Dublin in 1964; *The Footprints of Cecilia McPartland* (2002), about the Irish mother of the Cuban revolutionary martyr Julio Anotonio Mella; *Mission Against Terror* (2004), on the case of the Miami Five; and now *One Man's Story: Philip Agee, Cuba, and the CIA*.

Inside Cuba...Inside Cuba...Inside Cuba...

Cuba has trained more than 45,000 Third World professionals

In 1961 Cuba began to host young people from all continents in studying and so guaranteeing the future development of their countries. Since then more than 45,000 foreign students have graduated from Cuban higher-education institutions as well as at the basic and medium levels.

The scholarship scheme of the Cuban government aims to provide free high-level professional training to students of the Third World, more than 70 per cent of whom come from Africa.

With the opening of the Latin American School of Medicine and also of various sports facilities, the total number of foreign students in the school year 2005/06 reached 31,000, a figure nearly equal to that of those who graduated over the previous forty-five years of the project, according to the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education. The balance has tilted towards countries south of the Rio Grande, as a



● **Cedrick Edwards** The first North American to graduate from the Latin America School of Medicine

result to the co-operation agreements established by the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA).

Bolivia has 4,700 students on scholarships in Cuba, Venezuela has 4,500, while from South Africa, to give one example, there are about 300. There are also students from the Middle East and Asia and even 77 low-income young people from the United States studying medicine in Cuba. Of the Caribbean, Haïti is the country most represented, with 960 students on scholarships.

Although the majority study medical science subjects—general medicine, dentistry, nursing, and health technology—several countries have established accords with Cuba for training specialists in different areas.

Haïti, for example, has students of veterinary medicine, Bolivia of agronomy, Guyana of agriculture and stockbreeding as well as engineering.

One of the fundamental conditions for granting scholarships to foreign students is their commitment to return to their country of origin once their studies are concluded. This guarantees that those countries will benefit from these professionals trained in areas of scientific-technological development most important to the Third World. To guarantee the recognition of Cuban university degrees, the country has signed more than three thousand co-operation agreements with prestigious academic institutions throughout the world. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs negotiates with governments to guarantee full recognition of studies in Cuba. However, in some countries, such as the United States, students have to revalidate their university degree in order to practise their profession.

The grants given cover all expenses for a six-year university career, apart from travel to and from Cuba. Every year the best all-round foreign students can apply to take a master's degree totally free of charge.

22.6 per cent of GDP for social schemes

Cuba will dedicate 22.6 per cent of its gross domestic product in 2007 to guarantee the development of social schemes, including education and public health for all citizens. This figure is far greater than other countries in Latin America.

The Minister for Finance and Prices, Georgina Barreiro, said that financial resources will increase for health care, education, culture, social assistance, and the payment of pensions, as well as for the country's defence and home security. The proposed budget also gives priority to public transport, energy, and water resources, the minister announced.

Important resources will be used to subsidise the population's basic food and personal hygiene supplies, for which Cuba will invest \$1 billion as well as providing a sizeable emergency fund for facing possible natural disasters during the year.

Negotiations offered

Raúl Castro, Minister of Defence and First Vice-President of Cuba, has again

offered the United States the prospect of a negotiated settlement.

“Let me take this opportunity to express our willingness to settle the long US-Cuba



● **Raúl Castro**

disagreement at the negotiating table,” he said in an address to the Communist Party of Cuba.

“Of course, that is as long as they accept that we are a country that does not tolerate any reduction in its independence, and based on the principles of equality, reciprocity, non-interference, and mutual respect.

“Until that happens, after almost half a century we are prepared to wait patiently for the moment when common sense takes root in the halls of power in Washington.”

Life expectancy and infant mortality continue to improve

Life expectancy in Cuba is now 77 years, placing Cuba among the twenty-five countries with the highest life expectancy in the world—a position enjoyed by only 14 per cent of the world's population.

Infant mortality rate in Cuba now stands at 5.56 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Vaccination campaign underway

Cuba is the second country in the world (after France) to develop a children's combined vaccine against five diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B, and haemophilus influenza type B. Under the name Heberpenta, this product of Cuban biotechnology is certified by the National Centre for the Control of Medications and will be administered to babies of two, four and six months old. The vaccination was applied in 494 polyclinics throughout the country to an estimated 50,000 babies during 2006.

High standards in low places

The *Miami Herald's* Spanish-language sister paper has admitted that it manipulated two photographs to make it appear that two Cuban policemen were ignoring (alleged) prostitutes gesturing to a tourist.



The image, which appeared in *El Nuevo Herald*, combined two previously published pictures: one from 1994 of the police by a photographer of *El Nuevo Herald*, Roberto Koltun, and one from 1989 of the women and the tourist by John Moore, then a photographer for Associated Press.

The executive editor, Humberto Castello, said the paper failed to explain to readers that the picture did not depict a real event. AP guidelines prohibit altering or manipulating the content of a photograph.

The problems with the montage were first reported in the *Miami New Times*, an alternative weekly. *El Nuevo Herald* then published a long explanation, along with the original photographs. While *El Nuevo Herald* said it would offer a seminar on ethics and design to its photographers, graphic artists, and editors, the owners of the rag, the McClatchy Company, took no action against any of the staff members involved in this particular "incident." The same week, another McClatchy paper, the *Charlotte Observer*, fired a photographer who altered the colour of the sky in a photograph.

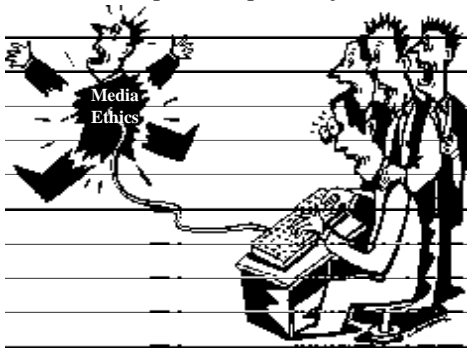
In another development, the *Miami Herald* fired reporters and columnists who were exposed as having been secretly receiving payments from both Radio Martí and TV Martí (both financed by the US government to "promote democracy in Cuba"). After an investigation, the ethical *Herald* promptly re-hired them.

Allow yourself a little giggle

Amid all the reports of misappropriation of funds by those involved in the distribution of the US Agency for International Development's dirty money intended to "promote democracy in Cuba" there was no criticism levelled at the scheme itself.

All sorts of funny business were exposed in an audit conducted to assess the effectiveness of the various schemes. For instance, more than \$7 million was spent in the last decade "to train Cuban journalists, teach Cubans English, study property-rights issues and educate the children of dissidents at US colleges." By all accounts, the results were disastrous.

However, that's their problem. The interesting thing is that even those who protested loudest about the squandering of this money failed to condemn the practice of such interference in Cuba's affairs and instead concentrated on the utter failure of the schemes, or the pilfering and misappropriation that were exposed. Still, there is a funny side to the story. Oscar Corral, writing in the *Miami Herald*, complained bitterly about all the carry-on and went on to report the following: "John Virtue crammed everything a reporter needed to know into a clandestine workshop for independent journalists in Havana four years ago. But he just couldn't



squeeze in the ethics lessons." *Ethics?* Poor Oscar. He didn't intend that statement to be funny, as we're sure he didn't find the next part of his exposé funny either.

"Manuel David Orrio, a student with a limp, eagerly volunteered to teach the ethics class for Virtue, director of Florida International University's International Media Centre. On March 14, 2003, Orrio taught the course at the Havana home of then US Interests Section chief James

Cason. Orrio, it later emerged was really a Cuban agent. "He'd been under cover, an independent journalist for 12 years," Virtue lamented.

All sorts of sordid activities were going on for a decade, but not a single one of these highly trained, ethical, independent journalists managed to pick up the story of the pilfering and misappropriation.

Sorry, nobody's listening

The following is part of an editorial that appeared on 23 December 2006 in the *Chicago Tribune*:

"The most popular sitcom on the world's least-watched TV station is 'La Oficina del Jefe' ('The Boss's Office'), brought to you by US taxpayers. The show is a satire about life in a fictional government office run by a bearded leader who dresses just like Fidel Castro.

Last year, only one out of 1,000 Cubans reported seeing TV Martí within the previous week, and eight out of 1,000 had watched in the previous year, according to a US government survey. Only 1.2 percent of the Cuban market tuned in at least weekly to its counterpart, Radio Martí. But that hasn't stopped the US government from sinking more than \$530 million into the Martí's over the last 21 years.

"US guidelines say the programming must be objective, accurate and balanced. Yet a review this year by the federal International Broadcasting Bureau found an anti-Castro bias and a reluctance to air news that reflects badly on the administration that sponsors the shows or the Cuban exiles who produce them.

"The broadcasts have done little to hurt Castro or to help the US cause, probably because Cubans don't find it worth the effort to tune in. For their \$530 million, US taxpayers have little to show but a nest of patronage jobs in Miami....

"A better way to expose Cubans to the delights of a free society would be to lift the restrictions that keep Americans from travelling to Cuba and spending money there. Instead, the Bush administration is throwing even more money at Radio and TV Martí.... With Castro rumoured near death, the reasoning goes, it's time to turn up the volume. There's only one problem: Nobody's listening."

It should be noted that the *Chicago Tribune*—enjoying the "delights of a free society"—fails to alert its readers to the fact that the Radio Martí and TV Martí broadcasts are also illegal. The real problem for the *Chicago Tribune* is that the broadcasts are ineffective, not that they are illegal. Spending taxpayers' money illegally is fine; spending it ineffectively is the real crime. Where would we be without a free press?



Record UN General Assembly vote against US blockade

The UN General Assembly has again condemned the US blockade against Cuba in a resolution adopted for the fifteenth consecutive year with near-unanimous support. The vote was a record 183 to 4, with one abstention, on a resolution submitted by South Africa. Voting “no” with the United States were Israel, Marshall Islands, and Palau. Micronesia abstained. Nicaragua and Iraq did not vote.

Australia attempted to amend the document by adding a paragraph saying that the US measures were motivated by “valid concerns” about the “lack of freedom in Cuba” and calling on Havana to release political prisoners. This amendment was defeated by 126 to 51, with 5 abstentions.

The European Union shamed itself once again by supporting the Australian amendment but voted for the resolution on lifting the blockade, “because of US regulations that punish

UN General Assembly voting pattern on the Cuban resolution demanding an end to the US blockade from 1992 to 2006

Year	FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT	ABSTENTION
1992	59	3	46	71
1993	88	4	35	57
1994	101	2	33	48
1995	117	3	27	38
1996	137	3	20	25
1997	143	3	22	17
1998	157	2	14	12
1999	155	2	23	8
2000	167	3	15	4
2001	167	3	16	3
2002	173	3	11	4
2003	179	3	7	2
2004	179	4	7	7
2005	182	4	4	1
2006	183	4		1

foreign firms,” according to Kirsti Lintonen, the ambassador of Finland, representing the European Union.

The European Union cannot bring itself to vote against the effects of the blockade on the Cuban people but only out of self-interest, in that aspects of the blockade legislation (though suspended) interfere with the capacity of European enterprises to trade with and operate within the United States.

But when offered the feeblest pretext to attack

Cuba, the European Union never denies itself the opportunity. Mustn't upset the United States too much! At least twenty UN agencies have also condemned the US blockade of Cuba as a unilateral policy that is blocking economic and social co-operation with the country.

Political developments in Latin America

There are still those who comment, with surprise, on the inclination to the left these days by the Latin American countries. In reality the process is the logical and expected result in a region that has been brutally looted for decades by imperialist finance-capital, especially in the last thirty years, according to Ángel Rodríguez Álvarez of the Cuba News Agency (AIN).

“The well-manipulated ‘phantom’ of divine communism, among other resources, was the ideal pretext to contain or distort the aspirations of the social movements that appeared and would later disappear, always overcome by events.

“But times are different and the reality has come to impose itself. With the Cuban Revolution, prejudices, fears and myths have begun to disappear and the consciousness of a different possibility has acquired material force. That, like an undeniable historical truth, and the vile neo-liberal plundering, has taken its toll.

“What is happening in Latin America is the natural civilised response of the people to savage capitalism, when the situation has got to the point at which the mechanisms of bourgeois democracy are turning into a powerful weapon against its creators.

“The lesson is clear and confirms, once more, that there are advances and retreats in the social terrain, victories and defeats, but the movement towards development marches in just one direction: towards progress,” Rodríguez concluded.

Medical breakdown in Iraq

After almost four years of occupation, Iraq’s medical system has sunk to levels lower than during the economic sanctions imposed after the first Gulf War in 1990.

The World Health Organisation has said that Iraqis are now extremely vulnerable in their health needs. “Several wars and 13 years of economic sanctions left a heavy toll on the nutrition of the



population, on the social structure, on the economy and on the health infrastructure and services,” according to a statement on the WHO web site.

The Iraq Medical Association announced this month that out of 34,000 Iraqi physicians registered before 2003, more than half have fled the country, while at least two thousand have been killed.

Despite more than \$1 billion claimed to have been spent by the United States on Iraq’s health system, health needs are one of the biggest problems for Iraqis under the occupation. According to one doctor “the whole ministry is controlled by clerics, who brought their militiamen along to divert the ministry into a death squad headquarters. Many of my colleagues resigned, were expelled or abducted by those who should have provided protection for them.”

Corruption has made the crisis worse. Earlier last year a \$200 million reconstruction project for building 142 primary care centres ran out of funds, with only twenty likely to be completed, a situation the WHO described as “shocking.”

The Iraqi government estimates that \$8 billion is needed over the next four years to finance the ailing health service.

The campaign group Medact has reported that “easily treatable conditions such as diarrhoea and respiratory illness caused 70 per cent of all child deaths,” while “of the 180 health clinics the U.S. hoped to build by the end of 2005, only four have been completed—and none opened.”

Different armies compete

President George W. Bush authorised the training of military personnel from eleven Latin American and Caribbean countries as well as from ten countries in other regions “in the face of the recent increase of left-leaning governments in the region this year.”

The Bush regime expects the training to strengthen relations with countries in the region and to “make the left-leaning tendency disappear.” Such training had been banned since 2002, because some countries had not guaranteed immunity



• This....

that “the impact that this decision had was the same as if we had shot ourselves.”

In the 1970s and 80s “Plan Condor,” brainchild of Henry Kissinger, fused the military dictatorships of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil for repression beyond their borders. For anyone in those countries the phrase “to make the left-leaning tendency disappear” has the ring of blood and death.

As Eduardo Dimas points out in *Progreso Weekly*,

Latin America is the region with the worst distribution of wealth in the world. Ten per cent of the population receive 35 per cent of the wealth, while the poorest 40 per cent—some 220 million people, 84 million of them in extreme poverty—get hardly 10 per cent.

It is safe to assume that Bush and his military trainers have no intention of solving these problems, having done so much—as have previous US presidents—to create the conditions in the first place.

Meanwhile another army, this time from Cuba, heavily armed with knowledge, experience, and equipment, has taken up positions in a large number of Latin American countries for the purpose of saving lives and improving living conditions. In addition, two large training facilities operate in Cuba for training medical professionals who will then return to their own countries to provide medical services.

Fearful of these truly frightening developments, the Bush regime—not content with merely militarising the region further—is working on plans to entice Cuban health professionals working abroad to desert their post and join the elite private army of “health-care providers” in the United States, where they are really needed.

The word “evil” comes to mind.

to the American military in case of indictment for war crimes.

The banning of the training led to a loss of US influence in the region. The Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, declared

...or this?



United States finances attempts to oust Chávez with secret funds

The US government has been trying to undermine the Venezuelan government by financing various groups by means of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Millions of dollars have been provided in a “pro-democracy programme” through its “Office of Transition Initiatives” in a covert attempt to bankroll an opposition to defeat the government.

Information about the grants has been obtained following a request by

Associated Press under freedom of information legislation. USAID released copies of 132 contracts but obscured the names and other identifying details

of nearly half the organisations. More than \$26 million has been given in grants to groups in Venezuela since 2002. Among the grants described are one for \$47,459 for a “democratic leadership campaign,” \$37,614 for citizens’ meetings to discuss a “shared vision” for society, and one of \$56,124 to analyse Venezuela’s new constitution.

“What this indicates is that there is a great deal of money, a great deal of concern to oust or neutralise Chávez,” said Larry Birns, director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington. “The US is waging diplomatic warfare against Venezuela.” He said that while the United States had accused President Chávez of destabilising Latin American countries, the term “destabilisation” more aptly applied to what the United States was trying to do to Chávez.

“It’s trying to implement regime change,” Eva Golinger, a Venezuelan-American lawyer and author of *The Chávez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela*, told Associated Press.

President Chávez has also accused groups of taking American money and predicted that the United States would seek to use its influence in Venezuela’s elections in December.

Earlier last year the Bush regime announced its “transition” plans for Cuba (with some sections obscured), with \$80 million available for groups seeking to bring about US-inspired change in Cuba.

Twin spier

The US Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte has appointed a conservative specialist on links between national security and economics to head a kind of one-stop shop for the “intelligence community” on Cuba and Venezuela. As “mission manager” for the two countries, Norman A. Bailey will oversee three to five staff members who will pore over information from sixteen US government agencies “to spot information gaps, help craft intelligence strategies and track the implementation of those strategies,” according to the *Miami Herald*.

The post was announced by Negroponte amid rising concerns in the United States over the two countries. Bailey is well known in Washington’s community of Latin American specialists as a conservative Cold War expert.

Just what’s needed to understand political and economic developments in Latin America today: a Cold War expert.



Our rights will not be a gift from others

Addressing the 16th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, Carlos Lage Dávila, vice-president of the Council of State of Cuba, concentrated on the issue of emigration and exploitation.

“To emigrate is a right that must be respected. To be forced to emigrate, to abandon one’s homeland and family to guarantee food, health care and education for one’s children, is unjust and cruel. To remit money to one’s family is a noble endeavour that must be made easier. For a nation to be forced to live from remittances is a humiliation.

“For the rich countries to increasingly adopt more restrictive, abusive and xenophobic measures against immigrants is morally unacceptable.

“The wall on the border with Mexico and the hunts of emigrants that take place there are proof, if any proof was needed, of the contempt that the powerful feel towards all those who are not [powerful], even if those governments are their allies.

“Along with this emigration there is another, no less insulting trend. Doctors, computer specialists, teachers, nurses and other professionals and technicians are encouraged to emigrate to the rich countries with all kinds of facilities, with offers of wages and conditions that they cannot obtain in our countries. For them there are no walls or forcible

repatriations; on the contrary, there are plans and programmes to entice them. A Latin American person has to wait in his country for permission to emigrate to the United States.

“If he’s an illegal emigrant, he is repatriated. If he is Cuban, once he arrives in the United States, by virtue of the Adjustment Act he is immediately granted residence and work permits, and one year later he automatically receives permanent residence.”

“About 240,000 college-trained professionals emigrated last year from Latin America. The cost of educating them was no less than \$5 billion. [The rich countries] should indemnify us, and I propose that we raise such a demand.

“The émigrés whose rights we justly defend today are the consequence of plunder, exploitation, and the uneven



● **Educated professionals are not required to risk their lives crossing the US-Mexico Wall**

distribution of wealth. Nothing will stop emigration as long as underdevelopment and poverty exist, as long as the current neo-liberal policies are imposed upon the nations of the South, as long as the current international economic order is not transformed.

“There is a truth I wish to state without equivocation. In most developed countries there is neither the political will nor an economic or human interest to change this situation.

The opulent and spendthrift North uses immigrants and discriminates against them. The South provides the North’s raw materials; it is the warehouse from which [the North] extracts resources of all kinds, from minerals to talent.

“A single example will confirm these words. The objectives and goals of the Millennium, which were only a modest palliative for the current problems of the undeveloped countries, will not be met. The developed world had not even the intention of making the minimum financial effort required from it, and thousands of millions of people continue



● **Carlos Lage with Evo Morales**

to live without access to food, health care, or education.

“The expenditure on weapons and wars already exceeds one trillion dollars; another trillion dollars is spent on commercial advertising, which, in the case of medicines for instance, means that their price will be multiplied tenfold. Debts are never paid off, and official aid for development is increasingly more conditional: advisers from the North must live in the lap of luxury; purchases must be made in the donor countries. And less and less co-operation is extended for health care and education, while more and more [funds] go into the war on drug trafficking, into governability and counsel on human rights.

“Far from working towards transforming the current situation, the United States certifies “good conduct on the issue of migration.” Good conduct means allowing [Latin American] professionals to emigrate, restricting the emigration of those who are non-professionals, and agreeing

“About 240,000 college-trained professionals emigrated last year from Latin America. The cost of educating them was no less than \$5 billion.”

to repatriate those who are undesirable, after they have earned a postgraduate degree in crime on the streets and in the prisons of the United States.

“The United States, which depended so much—and still depends—on the immigrants for its economic development, and the European Union, which always was an exporter of emigrants, are now the harshest persecutors of emigrants in the world, the governments that apply the most restrictive policies.

“The free exchange of goods that [the rich countries] want to impose, and the free flow of capital that they demand, are a trap if they are not accompanied by the free transit of people. On this subject, as on others, we see the hypocrisy and double morals of the world in which we live.

“The topic of migration in relation to Cuba deserves special mention.

“A Latin American person who moves to the United States is an emigrant. If he’s Cuban, he is said to be a political exile fleeing from the communist regime.

Reform (the economy) or else

Just a little economic reform would do the trick. At least that is what political commentators in the United States seem to be implying. According to Paolo Spadoni, assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, writing in the *Sentinel*, control of the economy by the government in Cuba leaves him with a heavy heart.

“Since the early 1990s, Washington’s stated goal with respect to Cuba has been to hasten a democratic transition on the island, which eventually would lead to the abandonment of the current state-controlled communist system in favour of a multiparty democracy with free and fair elections, freedom of speech, press and association, and a market-based economy. However, in recent years Cuba has been moving in the direction exactly opposite to the one envisioned by the United States. Havana’s authorities have reverted some of the capitalist-style economic reforms they had implemented between 1993 and 1994 to ensure the survival of a system on the verge of collapse. They have also stepped up government control on the overall economy and exhibited greater intolerance of political dissent. Thus, from a US standpoint, Cuba is farther from democracy today than it was a decade ago.”

The *Chicago Tribune* quotes a Miami radio presenter, Francisco Aruca: “Each day that passes without Castro in power and without revolt is evidence to Cuban exiles of Cuba’s stability. I would like to see that, within the context of stability, certain changes take place in Cuba. I happen to believe the first changes that will ever take place in Cuba, now or a little bit later, will be in the economic arena.”

Meanwhile Eugene Robinson in the *Washington Post*, while acknowledging that “not even the dissidents believe that Castro has done a Baby Doc or a Mobutu and stashed millions abroad in numbered bank accounts,” laments: “I used to wonder why Castro, assuming he was never going to allow multiparty elections, didn’t at least follow the Chinese leadership’s example and open up the economy while retaining absolute political control.”

If only the Castros and their supporters would just sell to the highest bidder, take a few bob for themselves, and enjoy a little bit of “absolute power,” this entire mess could be sorted out in no time.

Chávez announces a “new era”

Immediately following his landslide victory in the presidential election, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela announced the start of a new socialist era for the country. As soon as the preliminary results were announced, Chávez came out on the balcony of the presidential palace and told thousands of euphoric supporters who were braving the rain that “this is the starting-point on Venezuela’s road to socialism. A new era is beginning for our Bolivarian national development project, and the fundamental strategic idea is the expansion of the revolution, of revolutionary democracy.

“Those who voted for me—more than 60 per cent of Venezuelans—did so for the Bolivarian socialist project, did so for all of you. It is the people who are in charge, and I recognise that, and I also recognise those who voted for another option,” said Chávez.

President Chávez was the fourth left-wing leader to win an election in Latin America in a five-week period towards the end of 2006. Rafael Correa won a run-off in Ecuador after promising sweeping political reforms, while Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua also won recent presidential contests.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

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Address: _____

Tel: _____ e-mail: _____

Minimum Contribution: Waged €20 / Unwaged €10



WHO SAID THAT?

●“They had not expected that a peaceful succession was possible. A peaceful succession has taken place in Cuba.”

Roberto Fernández Retamar, writer and member of the Council of State of Cuba, commenting on US expectations after President Fidel Castro handed over his duties to the First Vice-President.

●“The revolution continues with or without Fidel. Fidel is a leader, but there are many leaders here, like his brother.”

Santos Pérez, a resident of Havana.

●“You have to do things one step at a time. You must remember that the machine being repaired is eighty years old.”

Fidel Castro, on the pace of his recovery.

●“Another world is necessary, urgent, and possible, but war is not necessary to achieve it.”

Carlos Lage, Vice-President of Cuba

● “Capitalism slips in gradually, then charges ahead like a brave bull, the way it did in Russia and eastern Europe before and after the Cold War.”

The *Boston Herald*, on why Cuba should “liberalise” its economy.

●“It has to be very tough for the American diplomats. Imagine the loneliness of this defeat.”

Felipe Pérez Roque, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs, commenting on the record General Assembly vote condemning the US blockade of Cuba.

●“The only substitute for Fidel can be the Communist Party of Cuba.”

Raúl Castro.

●“What is WSF [World Social Forum]? Is it something that will bring me medicine? My husband is also sick; so is my first-born, aged eighteen, together with her two children. None of us is working. The landlord does not want to know that we are sick; he expects his rent at the end of every month.”

Grace Akinyi from Nairobi, on being asked her opinion of the World Social Forum.

●“The lesson is clear and confirms, once more, that there are advances and retreats in the social terrain, victories and defeats, but the movement towards development marches in just one direction: towards progress.”

Ángel Rodríguez Álvarez of the Cuba News Agency, on political developments in Latin America.