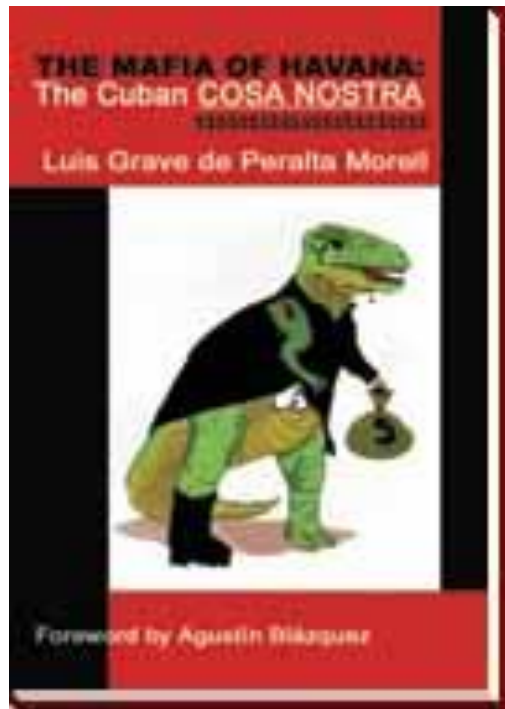


THE MAFIA OF HAVANA: The Cuban Cosa Nostra



Luis Grave de Peralta Morell, Ph.D.

Translated from the Spanish by
Agustín Blázquez and Jaums Sutton

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Dedication

To my sons Gabriel and Cesar and to the new generations, so they will not forget what happened in Cuba in order to prevent from ever happening again.

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Foreword

Having written about Luis Grave de Peralta Morell, I finally had the honor to meet him early in the afternoon of Friday, November 9, 2001.

I was in Miami to begin taping interviews and visuals for a future documentary I was planning. Previously, I had learned that his 9-year old son, Cesar, was finally going to be allowed by Castro's regime to reunite with his father after a five-year separation. I wrote to Grave de Peralta and asked for an interview for my documentary and to allow me to tape his encounter with his son.

He graciously gave me the interview and the opportunity to be with him for that emotional moment.

A mutual friend, Ana Margarita Martinez, who put us in touch, drove with Jaums Sutton and me to the Miami International Airport for our first meeting. There we found Grave de Peralta, sitting alone, waiting for what we all thought it was the end of his odyssey.

I waited for flights from Havana at the Madrid airport in Spain many years ago and a rollercoaster of happiness and sadness overwhelmed me once again. Happiness, because you were finally free from communist oppression. Sadness, because you have to leave your country, relatives and possessions behind. Cubans began to emigrate after Castro for political, not economic reasons. The call for freedom is a very important one when you do not have it.

But, all the flights coming from communist tyrannies never depart on time. Therefore, you never know the time of arrival. All that is part of the game they play with you until the very last second. So Grave de Peralta had no clue as to when the plane would land in Miami. And worse of all, if his son and former wife would be on it, as promised. So it was a matter of sit and wait, an excruciating, tense wait.

Meanwhile, we talked about his experiences in Castro's jails, he showed us photos and drawings of his son in Cuba and gave me his book *THE MAFIA OF HAVANA: The Cuban Cosa Nostra*, the same one that a few months later I found myself translating with the help of Jaums Sutton.

The reason I decided to do it was because I was captivated by the book and impressed by my friend, Luis. His idea about the Cuban Mafia – not the Miami Mafia as the Cuban exiles in Miami have been unfairly labeled by the Castro government and that the U.S. media so promptly incorporated to their litany of derogatory epithets to discredit that community – was also mine.

Grave de Peralta's book expressed exactly what I thought about who the real Mafiosos are. And his simplicity and directness reflected my style of writing directed to the regular American citizen, most of whom are very ill-informed about the reality of Cuba under Castro's boot due to the twists of the U.S. media.

Grave de Peralta impressed me as a low key and unassuming person. A scientist. Regular folk, who, because of his honesty and personal honor, has been involved in an extraordinary circumstance. He told me that as a political prisoner in Castro's Cuba he was thrown in a cell with two mentally insane (paranoid schizophrenic) common criminals. (Thousands of political prisoners in Cuba have reported similar situations as part of their ordeal in the Cuban prisons.)

But in the case of Grave de Peralta, he found that they were also illiterate. So, to pass the time and improve his relations with them, he taught them how to read and write.

In the Miami airport, close to 10 p.m., we continued our wait with Grave de Peralta waiting for the arrival of his son. After the two flights from Havana arrived and all their passengers eventually completed the immigration process and were free to leave and exit to the waiting room to reunite with their families, there was no sign of his son. To my surprise the U.S. immigration authorities at the Miami airport were not helpful at all in providing any information as to whether his son arrived or not.

Finally, and mainly because I was taping Grave de Peralta with my video camera, one immigration officer concerned with my presence there documenting what was happening, decided to go back inside the immigration area and investigate.

Eventually, she returned. The news did not appear to be good judging by the disappointed expression on Grave de Peralta's face through the glass. I walked close with my camera taping their conversation and was able to hear that his son Cesar and his former wife were not among the people who arrived that day.

But that happens often in Cuba, where people are frequently ordered out of the plane for any excuse. And in Grave de Peralta's case, it could have been to punish him further. That's the way it is. Castro is known to be unforgiving of his enemies – anybody that does not go along with him pays a price.

With the difficulties of communicating via telephone with Cuba, there was no way to find out what happened to them. So after that long day, we all left the airport disheartened.

A day later, after finally talking to his relatives in Cuba, he found that they were pulled out of the airplane in Cuba by an American employee of ABC Charters, William Boehmer, the "American" tour agency in charge of the trip, using the flimsy excuse that a document had a wrong stamp! Grave de Peralta immediately called the offices of some politicians in Miami and was interviewed a few times in local radio and television. (He understands by his own experience the power that public international pressure can exercise on the Castro regime.) The end result was that his son and former wife were told that they would be allowed to leave Cuba the next Friday, November 16.

Unfortunately, Grave de Peralta could not be present to greet his son. He had to return to his job in Texas. But I promised him that I would be there with my camera to document his arrival to freedom.

On November 16, Ana Margarita, Jaums and I were again at Miami's airport about mid afternoon. There we met Grave de Peralta's brother, Carlín. And with him we waited and waited again, not knowing if they would arrive on the flights from Havana.

After 9 p.m. we were very worried again. And all of a sudden, here they were. A little boy with a worried but curious look wondering at his

new world and a very tense but relieved mother. I turned on my camera and began to tape.

There were other local media waiting for their arrival who turned their lights, camera and mikes on them. It wasn't easy to open up after a lifetime of repression and lack of freedom of speech. With their eyes they scouted around for Castro's informers as they learned do in Cuba. But I told them, not to worry, "you are free and safe in the U.S." Jaums was the first American to welcome them to the U.S.

It was a very emotional reunion. Ana Margarita got Grave de Peralta on her cell phone and gave it to little Cesar, who beamed with jubilation to be able to freely speak with his father, who he has known only through letters and some previous phone calls in Cuba. We couldn't hold back our tears.

And here I am a few months later involved with this intriguing book which depicts what Fidel Castro's revolution became, laid out for you to easily understand, by a "child of the revolution," that is, by someone who was born into, educated and indoctrinated in and finally, after much personal struggle, attained freedom from Castro's revolution.

The fate of Cuba after 1959 is a reflection of the real nature of Castro. He was a gangster since the beginning and will be to the end. His Mafia type regime took over a highly successful developing country that during the first half century of his existence made extraordinary progress in all fields. And by 1957, in per capita income figures, Cuba became number two in Latin America and the fourth highest in the Western Hemisphere. Now, after 43 years of Castro, Cuba has descended to the levels of Haiti and Bangladesh.

One of the many reasons for this descension is Castro's destruction of the population of Cuba by forcing a division with 11 million Cubans on the island and as many as 3 million in exile distributed all over the world. The 11 million not permitted to leave are held hostage by a complex political, economical and emotional plan that leaves them essentially helpless and dependent on their families in exile for monetary support, the side effect of which is dollars for Castro.

Exiled Cubans that have to ask and pay for permission to visit their own country. They are forced to pay for a Cuban passport even when they have another nationality. That they are forced to pay for their hotel rooms and restaurants even though they stay and buy the food to eat with their relatives in their homes.

It is an organized-crime operation, an extortion of money, taking advantage of family relations and needs. Castro and his Mafia don't care about people. They care about extorting the monies to stay in power to perpetuate their personal privileges.

Thanks to Castro, Cuba became an island prison with 11 million inmates kept as hostages and reduced to work in almost slave conditions for his Mafia and their ventures with foreign exploiters. Castro's design created an apartheid society in which Cubans cannot independently enjoy facilities reserved for the foreign visitors and cannot participate in any money making venture. Cubans have been made destitute by Castro's crushing oppression. And in addition, Castro has made Cuba into a terrorist state recognized by the U.S. State Department's List of Countries Supporting Terrorism.

In the book *CUBA IN REVOLUTION – Escape From A Lost Paradise* by Miguel A. Faria, Jr., M.D., there is a revealing anecdote on page 209 about what happened when Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were executed at the hands of the Rumanian people. Dr. Faria: "A western journalist was in the presence of the Maximum Leader [Castro] when he watched the televised fall and collapse of the Ceausescu regime. According to the reporter, Fidel jumped from his chair irate and exclaimed, *Ceausescu es un maricón; si me hacen eso a mi saco los tanques a la calle y los mato a todos* ("Ceausescu is a queer; if they were to do that to me, I would bring the tanks to the streets and kill them all"). Castro screamed loudly so that everyone within earshot, particularly the military leaders in the house, could hear him. They needed to know what he was prepared to do to remain in power."

This shows who the real Fidel Castro is: a person who does not care about anybody but himself. And Grave de Peralta's book will give you the right perspective of the workings inside Fidel's world.

Then, in June 2002, Castro's "no-alternative referendum" scheme lies once more about the legitimacy and approval of his totalitarian regime making it "untouchable" within the text of what he euphemistically calls the "Cuban Constitution of 1976." I say "euphemistically" because that "constitution," deprives the citizens of all liberties and human rights for just expressing any disagreement with the dictums of the revolution (Castro).

Castro was so sure that no one would dare to challenge him that his "constitution" includes a passage that says the citizens can make a request for constitutional changes if a petition with at least 10,000 signatures is presented. And now (26 years later), immediately after the Varela Project presented over 11,000 signatures asking for changes and a referendum in accordance with his "constitution," Castro's answer is an amendment to guarantee the perpetuity of his corrupt Mafioso-type rule. Hopefully this ruse will serve to open the eyes of his many admirers in the U.S. and abroad, and help them realize that he will not change.

It is frightening that a monstrosity like this has been thriving for 43 years and 90 miles from the U.S. border. And it is also frightening how ignorant and insensitive the American public has been kept about this by the U.S. media and the academic circles in the U.S.

But after this book, the American public must demand accountability.

Agustín Blázquez
Silver Spring, Maryland
July 4, 2002

Prologue

As everybody knows, Cuba is the belly button of the world. Indeed, we live on a small island, but as Christopher Columbus said, “Cuba is the most beautiful island that human eyes have ever seen.” Therefore we are the center of the world and this center does not need to be as big as what revolves around us. Since we are the chosen people - chosen by ourselves - living on the Pearl of the Antilles, it is not surprising that the Spaniards, the Americans, the Russians and even the British, have each tried at different times to annex our beloved island.

The Cubans are just a few million, but have given the world the best of the best. The Russians have very good chess players, but the best chess player of all times was Cuban José Raúl Capablanca. No matter what the Americans say, it was Cuban doctor Carlos J. Finlay who discovered that it was mosquitoes that were transmitting yellow fever. Yes, it is true that the Spaniards have given to the world great writers and poets, but if we have to select a model writer and poet in harmony with his time, that is our apostle José Martí.

Cubans don't stay behind in anything. It is true that the Italians were the ones who invented the Mafia and that the Americans surpassed them during the times of Al Capone. It is also true that the Colombians gave the world cocaine czar Pablo Escobar, but the Cubans have bestowed to the world an entirely new breed of Mafia that took total control of a whole nation.

From the German people came a leader of a new stature: Hitler. The Russians produced Stalin and the Cambodians engendered Pol Pot. But we have Fidel Castro. History did not give the Cuban capo the opportunity to make decisions that caused the deaths of millions of human beings as his Russian, Chinese and Germans colleagues did. But he demonstrated to be as tough as both of them during the Missile Crisis of 1962, when he asked Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev to launch a nuclear attack against the U.S.

Fidel Castro, like the rest of us, is an intelligent guy. His kingdom is small, though, because Cuba is not a giant like Russia or China. While Pol Pot could not resist his primitive-style killing, Castro was able to display a humility and appear content with ordering the killing of just some tens of thousands of Cubans when his influence was in check. Not even the illustrious duet of rascals formed by the Peruvian-Japanese president Alberto Fujimori and his security assistant Vladimiro Montesinos can compete with the ingenuity of the famous capo of our **Cosa Nostra**.

Fujimori managed to become the president of Peru despite his immediate Japanese ancestry and Montesinos had a field day filming Candid-Camera-style the multitudes of people they bought and paid for. But neither Fujimori nor Montesinos was clever enough to last more than 40 years, all the while stealing from and lying to everyone, as our ingenious “leader” has been doing.

The stuff of our **Cosa Nostra** is what this brief book is all about. The purpose of this book is to celebrate and to exult the Mafia of Havana, so no one doubts any longer the ingenuity of the Cubans. It is to educate the new generations of Cubans, so that we never forget that we, the Cubans, are in fact the belly button of the world.

Luis Grave de Peralta Morell
Lubbock, Texas
2001

Our kind

Hollywood, the American film Mecca, has long glorified the tough guys of the Mafia of the Prohibition era. People feel a morbid curiosity and even an admiration for those tough guys who were able to impose their will upon their adversaries without remorse. It doesn't matter that the gangsters are violent and outlaw characters: that is precisely what the rest of the people admire the most about them.

The people want to know the history of the Mafia . . . , and Hollywood films like *The Godfather* have given them what they want. And the Americans are proud of their Mafioso heroes, and the Italians marvel at the feats of their **Cosa Nostra** while the Colombians feel pride in the legend of Pablo Escobar. Well, it's time that we, the Cubans, begin the task of exulting our own kind.

The history of the Cuban **Cosa Nostra** is filled with episodes worthy of the big screen. Perhaps a good beginning for our film would be the times of Fidel Castro at the University of Havana.

During those times, Havana's university enjoyed – like most Latin American universities – total independence from the government. Two Cuban presidents of the 1930s and its generation, Ramón Grau San Martín and Carlos Prío Socarrás, initiated their political life in tandem with the student's civil movement at the university. In 1945, when young Fidel Castro entered the School of Law at the University of Havana, some rival student factions were in dispute over control of the positions to represent the university students.

Adamant not to follow the orders of others, Fidel, the son of a wealthy landowner from the eastern province of Oriente, ran as a student leader at the School of Law. Other student gangs were not accepting him and the freshman was forced to abort his pretensions. But young Fidel, accustomed to imposing his will on his father's workers since childhood, made a decision that will mark his life forever: from that point on, whenever he entered the university, he was always carrying a pistol. That's the way

tough guys are, they don't ask, they take what they want while pointing a gun at you.

And to further demonstrate his toughness, as part of a student delegation visiting the President of the Republic of Cuba, Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín, at the Presidential Palace in Havana, Castro proposed to his fellow students that they throw him off the balcony of his office and declare a student revolution. The other students rejected his crazy and violent idea.

Raúl Menéndez Tomassevich, who went on to become one of the most notorious military chiefs of the Cuban **Cosa Nostra**, belongs to the hall of fame of the *heroes* of Boniato Prison in Santiago de Cuba. Tomassevich and his friend, also a notorious criminal known under the alias *Perro Chulo* [Pretty Dog], performed a spectacular escape from that prison and found refuge in a place where the police could not reach him: the Sierra Maestra Mountains. Tomassevich was always a tough guy, he was tough among the common prisoners of Boniato and he continued being tough during his military adventure, years later, commanding the mercenary Cuban troops in Africa.

The chief of the “July 26 Movement,” in charge of clandestine terrorist operations in the cities, Frank País, died of multiple gun shot wounds in an encounter with Batista police. Frank was a young religious guy, but not a saint, not like a guy who turns his face and gives you the other side after receiving a hit, so you can hit him again, no, nothing of that sort, our Frank was a true tough guy.

On one occasion, in the beginning of the use of terrorism as a violent way to fight Batista and after the political police of his regime killed one of the members of Frank País' band, Frank retaliated as only tough men know how: he ordered his gang to go to the streets and kill the first policeman they found, no matter who he was . . . , and they did. Frank personally directed the vendetta. They jumped into a car and went into the streets and shot the first policeman they saw walking by.

If it wouldn't have been for softy Nikita Khrushchev, the Russian chief at the time of the 1962 Missile Crisis, the world would have known once and for all that Fidel Castro is the toughest guy in history. When the situation was getting red hot with Yankee warships surrounding our little

island to prevent the Soviet Union from importing more troops into Cuba while our country was filled with missiles with nuclear warheads pointing at the United States, Castro wrote that infamous letter to Khrushchev asking him to immediately launch a nuclear attack against the Yankees. That's the way real tough guys are.

The reaction of Nikita Khrushchev to Fidel Castro's letter clearly demonstrated that the Russian leader realized who he was doing business with And that he didn't have the same stuff to deal with the capo of our **Cosa Nostra**.

In difficult times a tough guy has to be capable of making extreme decisions. Facing the tremendous danger that the Yankees might use force to interfere in his affairs, Fidel Castro didn't hesitate to annihilate to all his enemies, even if it meant the death of all his followers and even his own death. It is clear that if he was risking his own life there was no room for insignificant little things like the possible death of millions of innocents or the total extermination of mankind as a result of a nuclear Holocaust.

Nikita Khrushchev exposed his own weakness when, immediately after receiving the letter he decided to contact President John F. Kennedy personally, and retire his nuclear missiles from Cuba. In his letter answering Fidel Castro's proposal he said that the Soviets were fighting for the betterment of mankind, not to exterminate it, confirming his weakness.

Not long afterward Khrushchev was removed by the Soviets, Kennedy was assassinated – and there are lingering questions by whom – leaving the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** as the only one victor thanks to the deserving prestige he acquired as the guy with the balls that somehow won this nuclear battle. And he is still alive and kicking.

Courage, valor . . . and ability

Many detractors of our **Cosa Nostra** have tried unsuccessfully to deny the personal courage of its members. For those who lack personal courage, it is very difficult to recognize it in others.

Some, while against all historic evidence, dare to say that best proof that Castro is a coward is that he was never wounded in battle. They are confused about his good luck and ability to get out of the most perilous situations, with a lack of valor.

It is true about the precipitous escape of Fidel Castro when he realized that his forces could not take over the Moncada Barracks in 1953. But that only demonstrates that he was not suicidal. The best soldier is not the one who dies for a cause, but the one who kills his enemies for it, or just kills his enemies.

The Moncada assailants made evident their valor from the moment they attacked the barracks. To undertake a surprise attack of a military barracks requires a great amount of courage by the assailants and that's what that poorly armed group of young men had plenty of, by attacking that military post in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba. But, not all of them were as cunning as Castro, and many paid with their lives on that gutsy day.

No one in their right mind would say that a bank assailant is a coward because of running away from the police. You have to have courage in your gut to assault anything and an acute instinct of self-preservation to recognize that the situation is not working out as planned.

The Granma crew that accompanied Castro by sea from Mexico to Cuba had more than enough valor. Each one of them knew that they were risking their lives in that enterprise. But what the group of Granma rebels really needed when Batista's army caught them by surprise in a sugar cane field near the village of Alegría de Pío in 1956, was not just valor, but a lot of luck and a very well developed sense of survival. It is very well known that Castro survived thanks to his capacity to concentrate on whatever was

necessary to survive, this time by staying still while hiding in the middle of a sugar cane field until the danger had passed.

Another excuse to deride the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** is when he was detained by the Mexican police while he was in Mexico City plotting the Granma expedition. Immediately after Fidel Castro's detention, a sizeable group of would-be comrades-in-arms was also detained on the farm they were using for their target practice and the police confiscated all their armaments. Castro's foes say that soon after his captivity he denounced his comrades, which proves, according to them, his lack of valor.

But again they are mixed up between lack of valor and his cunning ability to survive and get out of trouble. Giving presto the information that the Mexican police was looking for facilitated a resolution of the incident favorable to his own interests.

Valor and the ability to come out on top in the most difficult situations are characteristic qualities of not only the leader but the rest of the members of the Cuban **Cosa Nostra**. Perhaps it was one of those rare moments during the 1983 Grenada incident in which one of the lower echelon members of our **Cosa Nostra** had the opportunity to clearly exhibit those qualities.

Grenada is a little Caribbean island that wouldn't have captured so much attention from the big news agencies if it were not for the fact that the Russians decided to construct a strategic airport there to facilitate the transference of Cuban troops to Angola.

In 1983, due to internal discrepancies with the ruling party, the Grenadian leader was assassinated, creating a situation that permitted the U.S. a justified military invasion of that tiny island. At that time, a large contingent of "Cuban civilian workers" was busy constructing the airport runway.

Once the U.S. task force war ships left port to accomplish their mission, the future of Grenada's airport was already decided. Anybody else would have conformed to the reality that there was no way to salvage the fate of the airport due to the overwhelming superiority of the invading force. But Fidel Castro, with his familiar ability to turn things around to his own

benefit, realized that the Yankee invasion to Grenada was bringing him another wonderful propaganda opportunity.

Fidel Castro sent Colonel Tortoló to Grenada when the U.S. Navy was in route. He had precise orders to organize an armed defense resistance to the taking of the airport by the Yankees. Tortoló's mission was to arm the "Cuban civilian workers" with Russian AK-47s and organize their defense of the airport. The orders he received were strict and specified that no one could surrender and everyone must fight until victory or the death of the last of the combatants.

Our **Cosa Nostra** was confident of their men. The order of self sacrifice was given, and Tortoló and company were counting on its unequivocal fulfillment. In Cuba, the news of the dutiful heroic death of the last combatant embracing the Cuban flag was already carefully written.

When the armed Yankee helicopters landed on the runway, which was under construction, the order to fire was given and the AK-47 bullets ricochet against the bulletproof helicopters of the Yankees. Radio Reloj (the 24-hour time and news station in Havana) interrupted their regular broadcast to inform the Cuban people of the latest news coming from the Grenada front. The whole Cuban population vibrated with emotion to learn of the glorious deaths in the line of duty of the latest group of Cuban "workers." Everybody in Cuba was listening to the news that the radio station anchorman claimed was coming directly from Grenada. But there was a hitch . . .

What was not planned was the extraordinary survival instinct and the ingenuity of Tortoló. Not even his superiors knew how to calibrate all of his valor. Tortoló was given a suicidal mission, but by nature the members of our **Cosa Nostra** were not fools, they were courageous and sometimes even gutsy, but what they indeed had was that something extra that distinguishes those destined to survive. Tortoló managed to endure that extremely difficult situation, a situation as difficult as surviving the 1953 Moncada Barracks attack and another near fatal experience, the 1956 Alegría de Pío village debacle.

Fundamentally, Tortoló enforced the orders he received: the arms were distributed among the "Cuban civilian workers," the defense of the

airport was organized and the order to fire against the Yankees was given. Tortoló received his military training in the Soviet Union, and as a career military knew very well that there wasn't the slightest possibility to survive the powerful fire force of a Yankee helicopter division with a few AK-47 rifles.

After the resistance was initiated his acute survival instinct successfully guided him. He managed to break the Yankees surrounding his group and get the hell into the nearby mountains. Finally he sought refuge inside the Embassy of the Soviet Union in Grenada.

After a few days, the people in Cuba learned that the Cuban "workers" in Grenada hadn't died and that they were taken prisoner by the Yankees. They also saw Tortoló arriving by plane in Havana from Grenada, coming down on the tarmac and telling Castro, who was there to receive him, "Commander in Chief, your order was executed."

However, Tortoló was punished because he did not give his life with the rest of his "Cuban civilian workers" according to plan. He was demoted to private and was sent to the war in Angola to regain his military status. The fact that he was not immediately executed proves that in the higher echelon of the Cuban Mafia it was recognized that Tortoló was a prime specimen of our **Cosa Nostra**.

Friend of his friends . . . while they were friends

Friendship is paramount in our **Cosa Nostra**. The small group of old guard knows how to preserve their close relationships and Castro is always actively nurturing them. To give members maximum prestige, their titles were selected carefully. Fidel's brother Raúl copied from the Soviet Union's military and came up with Generals and Brigadier Generals. Ministers, Parliamentarians and Presidents suddenly appeared in Castro's Cuba. But the most envied and coveted of all remains Commanders of the Revolution, which is saved for the tight circle of Castro's loyalists.

A Commander of the Revolution is an untouchable in Cuba. In due time, some, like Guillermo García, decided to retire from the world of politics and join what he really loved: cock fights and the raising of exotic cows. Others, like Juan Almeida, used his time for the delicate task of mediator to solve personal vendettas among disgruntled members, write pop songs and support his personal harem of women. Others dedicated their lives to their only passion, like Ramiro Valdés, who was completely dedicated to the stimulating job of gathering information about everybody else (Secret Police) and to organizing secret operations to entrap the ones perceived as enemies.

We also find characters like Armando Hart, who spent all his life posing as an effeminate intellectual while keeping a close eye on the activities of the virile intellectuals. However, no matter what each one is doing or the unavoidable friction that life provokes among them, from time to time they show up in public around the big boss to clearly dispel any doubt about who was really in charge in Cuba and who had what connections.

Friendship and fidelity were cultivated between the commoners allowed inside the **family**. There was a friend-for-life like María Antonia, owner and grand dame of a magnificent ranch in the municipality of Contramaestre near the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba. Her unexplainable privileges engendered the generalized belief that she was the same "María Antonia" in Mexico in whose house Fidel Castro met the legendary Che Guevara.

The friends are really friends, and since María Antonia had the same taste for exotic cows as former Commander of the Revolution Guillermo García and she was an old friend, she had unusual privileges. Even though in Castro's Cuba private ownership of land and the contract of workers by private owners were forbidden, María Antonia always enjoyed the privilege of owning a ranch and raising her cows. She even had the rare privilege of having the right to import and export directly what she wished from abroad. She had her own salaried workers, who, by the way, were very lucky because María Antonia was very generous with her servants.

But friendship, just like love, sometimes goes with the wind if it lacks the proper nourishment. Worldly men know that and they act accordingly. Not all the assailants of the Moncada Barracks, nor all the Granma men had the required internal fiber to become honorary members of our **Cosa Nostra**.

For example, Mario Chanes de Armas, rode inside the car with Fidel Castro for the Moncada assault and Huber Matos was a Commander in the Rebel Army, but they did not know how to preserve the friendship that their boss offered them.

Capos **who are Capos** had to be capable of foreseeing when the friendship was over, and the most important point: have the obligation to preach their men to respect friendship as a sacred thing. Chanes and Matos didn't have the capacity to give themselves unconditionally to the **family**. And Castro, who could have simply ordered them killed, preferred to lock them in his dungeons together with thousands of his enemies.

There are some who speculate that this action was an unforgivable weakness of Fidel Castro. Some are saying that a capo cannot under any circumstances have the luxury of being weak with his friends because that could affect the whole **family**. And those who try to defame the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** forget that Mario Chanes de Armas has the world's record for being the longest held political prisoner, way ahead that the super-famous Nelson Mandela.

You don't hear those prone-to-defame say anything about the case of Pedro Luis Boitel, who tried to pressure Fidel Castro by staging a hunger strike after he was thrown in jail. Boitel, who used to be the president of the

University Student Federation until he was detained and who knew Castro personally, began his “freedom or death” hunger strike . . . and died.

The British managed to get the whole world to call their former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher “The Iron Lady,” because she let some Irishmen die who were pressuring her through a hunger strike to force her to grant independence to Northern Ireland. So it is long overdue that we Cubans do justice to our martyrs showing strongly to the world the hard line quality of our “Iron Man.”

Being a friend of your friends, being capable of recognizing when a friend is no longer a friend and having the guts necessary to act accordingly are the characteristic virtues of the people of the **Cosa Nostra**. But ours, the Cuban one, reached the highest level of excellence when it was obliged to eliminate its own friends to insure its survival.

It was clear in 1986 that the Cuban economy was in recession. The **family** businesses were not doing well. The Soviets had their own problems and were diminishing their “contributions” to the island primarily because Jonas Sabimbi in Africa kept bothering them with his fight against communism in Angola. And on top of everything, the international banks were insisting on collecting the huge external debt that Cuba had accumulated.

The Cubans are resourceful indeed. And the Cuban government began to sell the Soviet oil they were receiving - with Soviet approval, of course. At the same time a special section of the State Security Department was created dedicated to breaking what they euphemistically called “the Yankee blockade.”

The maximum chieftains of our **Cosa Nostra** commanded their people in that department the special assignment to do all kinds of dirty business in order to obtain the coveted dollars that the **family** loved so much and that they needed now so urgently. Some were dedicated to the contraband of anything they could get with any seedy, boat-owning outlaw in Miami.

Others were dedicated to the illegal trafficking of Soviet arms through Panama – taking advantage that other Mafioso, Manuel Noriega, who

managed to scheme his way to the presidency of that country. And that newly created department even established contacts with the King of the Colombian cocaine, the “respectable” Pablo Escobar, the notorious chieftain of the infamous Medellin Cartel.

By 1989, even though the general Cuban economic indexes were worse than in 1986, the businesses of the **family** were going from good to better. Drug trafficking was bringing in good profits. Aldo Santamaría, the brother of the legendary revolutionary martyr, Abel, was in charge of using the Cuban Navy to protect the shipment of cocaine being launched from small planes on territorial waters. That way the Latin American drug traffickers were conducting business with the **family** and at the same time were out of reach of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in charge of the anti-drug fight.

A State Security General and a Colonel, the identical twin brothers Patricio and Tony de La Guardia, were in charge of making sure the drugs collected in Cuban waters were exported profitably. Meantime, General Arnaldo Ochoa, the chief of the Cuban troops in Angola and a close friend of the Castro brothers, gave his contribution to the **family** business through the illegal smuggling of elephant ivory tusks and precious woods.

Unfortunately, the Soviets made the stupid mistake to put Mikhail Gorbachev in charge. Gorby foolishly opened Pandora’s box with his talk of perestroika. Everybody knows what happened after that. And the Soviets ended up losing the empire that they conquered after the II World War.

In 1988, Gorbachev visited the U.S. and a little bit later, at the beginning of 1989, he came to Cuba. But when he visited the U.S., the Yankees complained to him about the drug-trafficking going on through Cuba. They warned him that if he did not put an end to it, the U.S. would have no other recourse than to do with Cuba what they did later to General Noriega in Panama.

Not long after Gorbachev’s visit to Cuba, the population witnessed an unprecedented trial on television where the criminals were a group of high-ranking Cuban officials. Of course, it was not broadcast live, that would have been very risky even though the outcome was already decided, but

even so, never before had the Cuban **Cosa Nostra** publicly discussed their business.

During the broadcasts the Cuban common citizens learned of the dirty businesses of the **family** that the Yankees had told Gorbachev were taking place in Cuba. The second in command in the **family**, Raúl Castro, couldn't hide his tears when he voted in favor of the execution of such an intimate friend of the **family**, General Arnaldo Ochoa.

Ochoa began his career as a guerilla fighter in the Sierra Maestra Mountains and he rose to the position of Chief of all the Cuban troops deployed in Angola. He received the coveted title of Hero of the Republic of Cuba as a prize for his numerous military victories and he was going to be named Chief of the Cuban Western Army just before the **family** had the imperious need to sacrifice him for the "common good."

What happened later on in Panama demonstrates that Fidel Castro correctly assessed the gravity of the situation. Our **Cosa Nostra** was in danger of being destroyed like Panama, whose capo and business associate of our **Cosa Nostra**, former General Noriega, lost the millions he had stacked in foreign accounts and still is locked in a Yankee prison convicted as a drug-trafficker.

No, it wasn't easy for the Cuban capo who because of circumstances had to issue orders to kill a bunch of his loyals, but the very existence of the **family** was in peril. Well, after all, and as a second thought, they were the ones who were incapable of keeping the **family** business out of the reach of Yankee intelligence.

The obscure death in prison of General Abrantes, who was the former Minister of the Interior (Secret Police) and former Chief of Fidel Castro's personal security, just after he was thrown in the dungeons, put an end to one of the most difficult moments faced by our **Cosa Nostra**.

The Cuban formula

The origin of all **Cosa Nostras** is always found in a group of dispossessed men who have the resolve to take with their own hands the richness negated to them by birth. The Mafia in the U.S. was consolidated during the prohibition era, when a bunch of Italian immigrants saw the opportunity to dominate the black market of alcoholic beverages.

With the money they obtained because of their skills, courage and lack of scruples, the Mafiosos extended their areas of operation and by the 1950s they took maximum advantage of the existing fiscal paradise in the state of Nevada, where they laundered their money in the profitable gambling business. And that's the way Las Vegas, the Mecca of gambling aficionados, was founded. And the ancient Mafiosos became "respectable" businessmen.

The Colombian drug-traffickers built their empire by buying the harvest of the cocaine producers at a better price than they were receiving for any other produce and selling the cocaine to the world community's rich people at prices than only they could afford. With the enormous success of their businesses became the inevitable competition for such a lucrative market, and the infamous Colombian narco-guerrillas were born. And they alone performed the miracle of transforming the fight to control the cocaine market into a fight to "improve" the living conditions of the Colombian peasants.

The Cuban road to enrichment is through politics. Fidel Castro intended to enter politics the legitimate way, that is, as a candidate of the Orthodox Party founded by Eduardo ("Eddie" as he was also called) Chibás. But with Fulgencio Batista's coup in 1952, his ambitions were truncated. Then came his attack on the Moncada Barracks in order to take by force what was unattainable through constitutional means.

The best way to succeed in business is not always by offering the best deal, as many think, it can be because you can eliminate your competition.

In 1959, Fidel Castro, after Batista fled, had the chance of his life, and he took full advantage of it. The bearded ones coming down from the Sierra Maestra Mountains were deservedly received as heroes by the people of Havana when they triumphantly entered the Cuban capital in the tanks of Batista's army. All the power fell into the hands of the ones who had the courage to take it away from the others who possessed it before.

They had the power, the force, but not the money and without it, the power and the force won't last long. So this was the moment to profit from so much effort and construct the economic base to support the **family**.

There are two ways to get rich in a hurry: winning the lottery or stealing the wealth from the rightful owners. The future Cuban **Cosa Nostra** arrived to power by the barrel of the gun instead of by the power of money; therefore, they were obligated to take money away from the rich.

In the Cuba of 1959, wealth was mainly controlled by the rich and the U.S. investors. It wasn't too difficult to steal the properties from rich Cubans, but stealing from the investors of the powerful neighbor of the north was not an easy task. Fidel Castro traveled to the United States in April of 1959 to try to deviate the American public opinion from his real intentions. He corroborated what he was already afraid of: that the Yankees were no fools and that there was no way to convince them to allow themselves to be robbed easily.

Everything seems to indicate that the young Castro was unable to hide the intentions of his trip. His actions provoked Vice President Richard Nixon to realize that he was not what he pretended to be. But Nixon apparently miscalculated a gangster for a communist. As a result, the Yankees decided not to support Castro while supporting other minor little dictators like Somoza of Nicaragua or Trujillo of the Dominican Republic.

Gangsters and communists resemble each other in that they both seek to expropriate by force the wealth of the rich, which contributed to Nixon's confusion. Fidel Castro confiscated the properties of Batista's loyalists right at the beginning of his regime, but without the "cooperation" of the Yankees, it was not enough.

It was then that the close inner circle that comprised our **Cosa Nostra** decided to do as Hernán Cortés did when he invaded Mexico – he burned all his ships to force his men to fight to the end since he left them with no way to retreat. So all the great companies – Cuban and foreign owned - capable of overshadowing the **family** businesses were expropriated (stolen). It was an equal opportunity feast, since along with Cuban businesses, those of the Yankees’ and other foreign citizens were stolen as well.

The “civil war” in Cuba supposedly concluded in January of 1959, but the real civil war for control of all the wealth of the country began with the massive confiscations decreed by Castro’s new Cuban government - that he called “provisional” - at the dawn of the triumph of the revolution in 1959.

The motto, “the enemy of my enemy is my ally,” produced the liaison in Cuba between the directing nucleus of Castro-controlled July 26 Movement and the Cuban Communist Party headed by Blas Roca and Carlos Rafael Rodríguez. Anyway, the communists wanted a piece of the pie. This liaison reinforced the characteristic will, energy and fighting spirit of our **Cosa Nostra**. Meantime, the Cuban **Cosa Nostra** was striving for what the American Mafia got in Las Vegas: the legitimacy of their activities.

The alliance of the **family** with the communist party was very productive and everlasting. It is true that neither Blas Roca nor Carlos Rafael Rodríguez was able to get the coveted title of “Commander of the Revolution,” but what the heck, both enjoyed enormous powers while they were alive. Carlos Rafael was the point man in Cuban-Soviet relations and Blas Roca was the architect of the Cuban draconian penal code that gave legitimacy and facilitated all the businesses of the **family** during Castro’s reign.

For his part, Castro and his closest friends filled all the key positions of the Cuban Communist Party from 1965 on. They accomplished what no other **Cosa Nostra** had: make all state machinery a function of the businesses of the **family** all the while being admired for it by a big rainbow coalition of intellectuals and organizations all over the world. The American Mafia in the 1930s was powerful, but it had to spend a fortune to buy the police, but fortunately not all of them.

Pablo Escobar, the king of the Colombian cocaine, was very powerful, but he died perforated by the bullets of the Colombian police. Not even the famous Peruvian crooks, Fujimori and Montesinos, could match the success of our **Cosa Nostra**, in cahoots with the Cuban Communist Party. Certainly Fujimori and Montesinos didn't have to hide from the police while they were governing Peru, but neither one of them enjoyed the same popularity while stealing as our **Cosa Nostra** while doing the same thing.

Because the war was going on for control of Cuba's wealth, it was utterly necessary to use overwhelming force to quash the hapless victims of the looting (oops, expropriations). But that wasn't a difficult problem to solve. It just meant giving a very small portion of the "expropriated" goods to the noisiest underdogs to insure the support of the majority of the populace. The populist demagoguery and the alliance with the communists facilitated the operation. The gross boot of the loot constituted the original capital that the **family** needed to consolidate their businesses and power.

Once all the competitors were eliminated, the only thing to do was to carefully organize the scheme to obtain the juiciest dividends. Karl Marx, the maximum prophet of Communism, was right when he said of Communism that "it is the work of the fountain of all richness." In other words, the day-to-day hard work of the millions of Cuban laborers was the main source of income for the Cuban **Cosa Nostra**. It was so simple, it didn't even matter how unproductive was the organization of labor imposed by the communists on the Cuban economy, the knitty gritty of the business was to pay the laborers with paper money, money printed by the **family**.

Meanwhile, the "revolutionary" laws gave a monopoly of the foreign commerce to the **family**. So they specialized for years in the safe business of selling abroad everything produced in Cuba at the best possible price. They also bought abroad strictly what was needed to keep the machinery running.

Selling in U.S. dollars what Cuban laborers were producing and paying for their labor in paper *pesos*, was a great business. Selling for Yankee dollars and paying using paper bonuses that only could be exchanged for something useful in the "communist" stores of the **family** was an even greater business. Even though it didn't produce a 100% profit because they still had to buy certain items abroad to keep things going. But

to maximize their profit margins, the ever-resourceful **family**, resorted to buying the worst quality products they could find in the market. This is the free lunch that communists provide for their subjects.

Throughout the years the Cuban citizens have been complaining of the horrible quality of the bread that the government assigns to each person in the ration books. Hundreds of explanations were given in the mass communication media, totally controlled by the **family**. They blamed the bread makers for stealing the lard assigned to them for breadmaking. They blamed the fabric bags that were not appropriate for transportation, and a litany of this and that.

But they never say that the simple truth was that the bread for the common citizen was so bad because it was made with a horrible quality flour. And when the business with the Soviets went kaput, *capisca*, finite, over, because of Gorby's foolishness, the **family** didn't have any other alternative than invest a little of their money to buy a better quality flour.

Miraculously, from one day to the next, in spite of the ongoing economic crisis, the same bread makers that were accused of "stealing the lard," began to make bread of much better quality. Although, only for those who were able to pay in real U.S. dollars.

Buy cheap and sell expensive, demand your payment but try not to pay your account payables. Those business tactics were the key factor for the construction of the economic empire of our **Cosa Nostra**.

To understand the practice let's analyze why *chícharos* [green peas], rice and eggs were so predominant in the average citizen diet in Castro's Cuba. Just visit any supermarket in the U.S. to discover that *chícharos* and rice are the cheapest grains and the eggs are the cheapest source of animal protein that anybody can buy. "Milk" made from beans is the cheapest, that's why when the Germans stopped trading powdered milk for sugar the **family** had the idea to substitute milk with "yogurt" made from beans.

While the Cuban communists were busy convincing the whole world in and out of Cuba by propagandizing that all the expropriated goods belong to all their citizens, our **Cosa Nostra** in reality was taking maximum advantage of its privileges. The **family** held the exclusive monopoly of the

internal Cuban market. Eleven million Cubans were forced to buy all their needs from the **family** businesses and at the prices that the **family** set. The **family** was also the only authorized employer in Cuba. There was no way out but to work for the **family**, if not, the communists classify you as a vagrant and force you to work for the **family** anyway.

The communists were happy with the status quo. The official fixed prices were really low, at the level of everybody's pockets. And that's the great genius of our **Cosa Nostra**: keeping the people at sustenance level at such a low cost. Before and after Gorby, the people spend their lives in lines, ration books in hand, at the **family's** stores to exchange the paper pesos received for their labor for the crummy products available.

But for the **family**, which owns the stores, and prints the money, why bother to conduct this exercise of exchanging *chícharos*, rice and eggs for paper pesos that everybody knows is valued at zilch? Because it's the communist thing to do. Discount a big chunk of the profits for the **family** (Castro and his closest friends), calculate how much it costs to buy the bare necessities from foreign merchants while keeping the people and the communists quiet.

The salaries of the people have been calculated all along in this simple manner: first it was decided the minimum amount of *chícharos*, rice and eggs necessary to keep the people alive and the business functioning, then decide the price and finally a little six grade arithmetic was handy to decide how much paper money was necessary to give each one so they can go to the grocery to purchase what was assigned to each individual in their ration book. Sort of a designer economy.

It is **true**, unfortunately, that Cuba is not a great oil producer like Mexico or diamond producer like South Africa, but it is also true that Cuba is a small island. But, having schemed a way to keep the gross of the profits coming from the foreign sale of everything that is produced in Cuba, our **Cosa Nostra** has managed to accumulate all the wealth needed to consolidate its power.

Fidel Castro, who entered the University of Havana supported by the wealth of his landowner father, was able to become a powerful businessman. He was so infamous that the famous American Fortune Magazine,

specializing in bragging about the wealth of the very rich, has to finally do some justice to the Cubans and so they included the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** on the list as the owner of the biggest business network in the world.

The business of war

Fidel Castro visited the United States in April 1959, not long after his triumphal entrance into Havana. During his visit, Castro knew that his absolutist plans were not going to be supported by his powerful neighbor. But without any hesitation he saw the alliance to another power as a way to help consolidate his own regime.

The businesses and properties of the Yankees, Spaniards and Cubans were expropriated in order to eliminate all possible business competition. Our **Cosa Nostra** knew that they were deeply involved in a bloody battle to control all the wealth accumulated in Cuba.

You cannot unfairly take away private property and expect the injured victim to passively tolerate the robbery, especially if among the victims were a bunch of powerful American companies. You cannot decree the executions of thousands of unfortunate people as a result of summary kangaroo trials and expect that their thousands of relatives and friends are not going to be disgusted about such a violent and arbitrary action. Therefore, based on the saying, “the enemy of my enemy is my ally,” a very important three-way alliance was developed. First was the alliance between the chieftains of the July 26 Movement (controlled by Castro) and the Cuban Communist Party. And they both sought an alliance with the Soviets.

With Soviet arms bought through Czechoslovakia, Castro’s army easily crushed his opposition that copied Castro’s technique against Batista and went to the mountains to fight back the new tyranny. Fortunately for Castro, in 1961, the new administration of John F. Kennedy made the unforgivable mistake of doing things half-way and in the moment of truth, he betrayed the Cuban Assault Brigade at the Bay of Pigs.

After the scare, Fidel Castro publicly embraced the Soviets. A few months after Bay of Pigs, Castro accepted the Soviet offering of placing on Cuban territory – very close to the Yankees – a bunch of missiles with nuclear warheads. More than forty thousand Russian soldiers landed on the island without shooting a single bullet, more than four times the number of Yankee soldiers involved in the Spanish American War of 1895.

With the help of the communists, Fidel Castro managed to hide the arrival of the Soviet troops even from the Cuban citizens. But there was no way to keep it a secret from the Yankees right under their noses. When they found out, all hell broke loose.

During those times, the Soviets had a chieftain that would have sent Gorbachev to hell if he had even just hinted of “perestroika.” Nikita Khrushchev was one of those communists that appears to believe in everything that his own propaganda says.

When he was appointed, the first thing he did was to reveal the horrors that the great Joseph Stalin committed in Russia, but he kept hidden one of the most infamous: the secret treaty Stalin signed with Adolf Hitler in which Russia and Germany agreed to share Poland.

Khrushchev revealed that Stalin ordered the killing of I don’t know how many people and a thousand other menial little things. It seems that Nikita Khrushchev, knowledgeable about the good relations between the Cuban communists and Fidel Castro, made the same mistake Richard Nixon made about the capo of our **Cosa Nostra**. And Khrushchev thought of Castro as a disciplined communist, one that is always ready to follow the guidelines of his “big brother,” the Soviet Union.

The highly confidential letter that Castro sent him – “earth to Khrushchev” – brought him back to reality. After reading Castro’s request that he shouldn’t hesitate to launch a preemptive nuclear attack against the Yankees, Khrushchev got in touch right away with U.S. President John F. Kennedy. And through negotiations, the October 1962 Missile Crisis was over very soon, and not long afterward Khrushchev’s mandate was over too, because the Soviets decided to put a more realistic chieftain in charge of their empire.

Nevertheless, the end result of the nuclear incident was advantageous for the **family**. Since, our **Cosa Nostra** had the total support of the Soviet Union. The nuclear missiles were removed but more Russian soldiers remained on Cuban soil than the total of all of the Yankees that ever landed on that island. With Russian troops protecting the **family** businesses from the Yankees, Castro could devote all his waking moments to directing the

extermination of the revolt against his regime that was fighting in the Escambray Mountains.

It's not good to try to dance on a spinning top. So Castro, who had spent two years with his guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra Mountains prior to Batista's escape, was not going to repeat the same errors committed by Batista's army with his enemy now fighting against him in the Escambray Mountains. Guerrillas have to be uprooted like a malignant tumor.

Long before the Yankees begin to learn how to fight against guerrilla insurgencies, Cuba was already an advanced practitioner. Thousands of soldiers armed with brand new Russian arms were sent to the trouble spot to encircle and clear the entire Escambray Mountains from one side to the other.

To cut off the support that the area farmers were giving to the rebels, like it or not, Fidel Castro resorted to copying what the Spaniards did in the XIX century to the *mambises* [Cuban freedom fighters]. Castro ordered the deportation of the entire Escambray rural community to the remote, extreme western province of Pinar del Rio.

Years later, after the guerrillas were completely exterminated through that massive scorched-earth operation, these towns, more correctly known as "captive towns," are still in existence in Pinar del Rio, populated mainly by the descendants of those unfortunate farmers from the Escambray Mountains who were forcefully evicted from their land.

Once all internal opposition was crushed, thanks to the protection offered by the Soviet troops stationed on Cuban soil, and with their financial situation solved by the complete monopoly of the internal and external commerce of the country, the **family** had consolidated their empire by the end of the sixties.

It was time to cosmetically "institutionalize" the regime. After taking power in 1959, Fidel Castro promised the Cuban people that he would hold free elections. Well, people are easily fooled by demagogues. But by 1970, the people were unhappy. The country's economic situation left a lot to be desired, the Soviets were demanding the delivery of all the sugar contracted with Cuba and the idea of centering all the propaganda toward the unrealistic

goal of the “Ten Million [*tons*] Harvest” of sugar cane had resulted in a major fiasco.

All the loot that the **family** had to distribute among his cronies was already given: the houses and personal goods of the Cubans who left for exile, the lands that were not incorporated to the patrimony of the **family** and the government posts. So they had to invent something new. They got the idea of the “institutionalization of the revolution.”

On one hand, the **family** was pleasing the Russians and the Cuban communists by accepting the Soviets as the real communists and declaring that the Chinese were traitors. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, the utmost guru of the Cuban communists, was named Ambassador from Cuba in the Soviet Union. And Blas Roca, the historical leader of the Cuban communists, was inducted into the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party, which following the Soviet example, held its first congress in 1975.

In exchange for all the benefits given to the communists, the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** reappeared officially bestowed with numerous titles: First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, President of the State Council and Ministers, Commander of the Armed Forces, and after the first “elections” – don’t worry, there is NO way to lose since he would be the ONLY candidate – Castro also added to his multiple titles the one of “Honorable” Comrade President of the Republic of Cuba.

And in case all these multi-appointments were not enough to control all the strings, his brother, Raúl Castro, was appointed “First” Vice President and Chief of the Armed Forces. All the loyal and closest-to-Castro members of the **family** were given key positions in the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party and all other institutions that control and direct the Cuban State. There was no escape, the **family** was supreme and in total control.

In exchange for big loans to reactivate the Cuban economy, the brand “new” directors of the “institutionalized revolution,” accepted the Soviet proposition of sending Cuban troops to Angola. The **family** will surely provide the soldiers and the Soviets will provide the arms and cover the costs of the operation, as well as extra loans so that the Cuban communists can build some projects to propagandize the superiority of their “socialism.”

They built an additional central railroad, a national highway and a nuclear plant in the seismic area of Juragua – what a great idea!

By 1979, after 20 years, the “proletarian dictatorship” that the Cuban communists talk about so much, now converted into an “institutionalized revolution,” was engaged in the same shenanigans and corruptions as our first Cuban Presidents who came from the XIX century *mambises* after 1902.

The trains were now running at a turtle’s pace on the much-ballyhooed ultra-modern central railroad. The national highway was never finished. And Juragua’s nuclear plant became the biggest iron and concrete monument to futility in the world. Nevertheless, what was successfully completed was the taking of all the monies loaned to complete these projects and of course, sink the island in debt. That is, by the way, the materialization of the other simple rule that brought a sure triumph in business to our **Cosa Nostra**, which, as I pointed out before, is to take all the money that the loan sharks give you and use your talent to never pay it back.

In 1986, the **family** had reached the pinnacle of its power. But what no one even imagined, the moneymaking deals with the Soviets were about to come to an end. Things were not marching well for the Russians in their own businesses and the perestroika airs were about to become a huge windstorm. And the Soviets stopped their usual payments to the **family**. Of course, where there is no pay, there is no service. And the **family** started to get out of the African wars and to look for ways to preserve what they had conquered.

Those were the years of Ronald Reagan’s presidency. The Yankee President was applying everything he had learned in Hollywood in order to promote his Star Wars plan and he was driving the Russians crazy with all the defense expenditures that such a plan implied. Under these circumstances, Castro was informed during his visit to the Soviet Union that the Soviet troops stationed in Cuba couldn’t be used against the Yankees in case they were to invade Cuba.

The ever-resourceful Castro, immediately upon his return, created the “Territorial Troops.” They were designed to form a human shield – Castro’s version of Star Wars – to protect the **family** from the Yankees. Years later,

another great man, Saddam Hussein, in Iraq, successfully used the human shield program to avoid further destruction of his palaces by the U.S. forces.

To end up “honorably” in the business of the war in Angola, the mercenary Cuban troops were engaged in violent combat to create a single, face-saving victory. Cuito Canavale’s resulting victory allowed the **family** to avoid the shame of retreating from the battlefield without conquering a definitive victory; the over-all failure was blamed on the lack of economic support of their Soviet boss.

This lack of support resulted in the Cuban **Cosa Nostra** closing down their war business despite the fact that they had proved they were quite good at it. This lack of support was instrumental to the liquidation of the armed conflicts in Central America. Only the Colombian narco-guerrillas remained active because they have their own sources of money.

Cuba became the country with one of the largest, or probably the largest foreign debts in the world. Lenders having inside knowledge of the state of business between Cuba and Russia, began to show their nervousness by recalling their millions in loans. So, Fidel Castro took maximum advantage of his New York Times’ fame as a Robin Hood that his alliance with the Cuban communists propitiated. To appease his creditors, the **family** organized an international conference to denounce the foreign loan creditors.

Castro, in the flesh, accused the international banks of lying to the world by loaning to anybody without regard to their means of fulfilling their financial obligations – which is exactly what they did when they loaned to Cuba. And he made calls to the debtor countries to tell them not to pay back their loans. Cunningly, Castro used the Russians as an example of a good lender because they had loaned a great amount of money to Cuba with extremely generous terms – according to him. Years later when the Russian businesses were failing, the Russians were the ones who couldn’t find a way to make the **family** honor their debts.

But you have to be flexible in business, so, in spite of the fall of the communists in Russia and the alliance between the **family** and the Cuban communists, the relations between Cuba and Russia never broke down. Not even in the beginning of the 90s when the Russians retired the bulk of their

troops stationed on the island which was done even through the Guantanamo Naval Base was still owned and occupied by the Castro-hated Yankees.

The **family** continued renting Cuban soil to the Russians who were very interested in maintaining the Lourdes electronic spy facility near Havana until recently. But life goes on and Blas Roca died. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez retired to enjoy the last years of his life with his young wife until his death a few years ago. And the influence in Cuba of the old communist guard was minimized. And, Vladimiro Roca, the son of Blas Roca, the historic leader of the Cuban communists, was sentenced to 5 years in prison for criticizing the capo of our **Cosa Nostra**.

Wisely, Fidel Castro was always opposed to the unipolarity of the world, especially if the only pole in existence was against him. The business of war requires the existence of two fighting sides, one of which could be interested in contracting the **family**, a great expert in warmongering activities, in order to pressure the other side.

Other businesses of the family

After that, because of Gorbachev, business with the Russians went sour, so the **family** had to totally change their way of doing business. While the Russians were paying the Cuban **Cosa Nostra** for their services, the **family** could afford most everything they needed to keep their businesses going. But, when everything changed, our **Cosa Nostra** was forced to buy on the open market what the Russians used to provide. With the inconvenience, of course, that those damned capitalist merchants always require payment in good hard currency, and not in those worthless little pieces of paper that the **family** invariably used to pay to the unfortunate Cuban workers and that they could so easily print.

For modern times, new ideas. If the business with the Russians was over, it was necessary to look for other sources of income. The **family** was forced to distance itself from all the communist jargon in order to break into two new promising businesses: international tourism and monies coming from the Cubans in exile abroad.

In 1959, after Batista left Cuba, the U.S. Italian Mafia had plans to make great investments in hotels and gambling casinos in Havana. These plans disappeared into thin air when our **Cosa Nostra** decided to eliminate all possible competitors. As a matter of fact, as soon as Castro made his entrance into Havana he installed his headquarters in the new and luxurious Havana Hilton Hotel, which very soon after became the Havana “Libre” (Free) Hotel. (The “Free” really referred to what Castro paid for the hotel rather than for “freedom.”) So tourism was of no interest for the **family** as long as the Soviets were paying well for their satellite. But when the Soviet payments ended, the **family** reestablished the old ideas of the American Mafia.

Because the hotel business only produces great profits if the guests pay for their rooms with good hard currency, the **Cosa Nostra** geared their efforts to capture only international tourism. This brought some problems for the communists, because it wasn't easy to convince the Cuban people that reserving the best accommodations, food and sex for tourists that come from a decadent capitalist country, was the best way to build “socialism.”

A Cuban saying goes, “whatever happens is convenient.” In this case what happened next became very convenient for the **family**. In the beginning of the 90s, more than two million Cubans were living in exile – the great majority in Yankee country. For decades, the Cuban exiles living abroad were badly regarded by our **Cosa Nostra** and their allies, the communists. That the exiles abandoned the wonders of socialism to go back to the capitalist exploitation of one man by another wasn’t appreciated at all by the communists and much less the **family**, who stood to lose the cheap labor contributions of those who left.

But people were abandoning the island in anything they could find that would float, so “illegal exit of the country” was added to the penal code. Thus thousands of Cubans served time in one of the numerous jails for their failed attempts.

Meanwhile, thousands of Cubans served time in jail for the crime of “possession of foreign currency.” That “crime,” with no connection to communism, had a lot to do with the businesses of the **family**, who were always extremely intolerant of any competition or loss of any possible profits.

I repeat the saying, “whatever happens is convenient.” And those over-two-million Cubans in exile all over the world roughly represent much more than 4 million relatives trapped in Cuba. A Cuban worker in exile makes more in one day than what the **family** pays to any of their laborers for an entire year. Therefore, the exiled relatives are overqualified to help their needy families in Cuba. Necessity is the mother of all invention, and the need of new sources of income due to the lack of Russian money, caused a spark in Castro’s head.

Putting the communists in a difficult situation again, Fidel Castro promoted the new juicy business of family remittances. He even made it legal again in Cuba to possess foreign currency – especially if they were U.S. dollars sent by exiled relatives. The mass communication media, totally controlled by the **family**, stopped all kinds of derogatory labels and inflammatory comments against the exiled Cubans, except against those who were fighting effectively against the interests of the **family**. And to top

everything, the Cuban government declared that it would allow family remittances from abroad without the imposition of taxes.

To make these transactions easy, the **family** encouraged the creation of several small companies in several foreign countries to handle the sending of money and packages from the Cuban exiles to their needy relatives in Cuba. The deliveries were guaranteed by Cuba, which meant that the **family** gave their word to these companies that the deliveries would not be confiscated, although, in exchange for a commission to the **family** by these companies. Because of the logical laws of the market, these commissions actually ended up being paid by the Cubans in exile through the high cost of the shipments. And, he built the only places to use these American dollars: dollars-only stores. So, the money ended up in his pocket in the end.

Once more, with his characteristic ability, the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** found the way to use in his favor what everybody thought one of his greatest problems: the existence of a large highly successful Cuban exile community that was very unhappy about what was going on inside Cuba. So now the **family** quieted down so as not to hamper their sending of money to their families and ultimately to Castro.

The monopoly of the island market assured the success of this ingenious business. The average Cuban needs the money for daily necessities and in Cuba you have to spend it in a new type of dollars-only store that conveniently proliferated in tandem with the family remittances in dollars from the U.S. These stores were different from the typical empty-shelved communist stores. These “*choping*,” [shopping] the common pronunciation used to refer to the new stores, are establishments that sell much better quality products than the ones offered at the traditional Castro stores before Gorbachev. The only catch was that the goods were sold in U.S. dollars only and at monopoly prices imposed by the **family**.

This was a great big business but the downside was that the Cuban people rapidly lost interest in the increasingly useless paper pesos that the **family** was printing just for them. And they learned to differentiate between the deplorable quality of the products for sale in the regular government stores verses the items available in the new “*choping*” of the **family**. Again, the communists were in the embarrassing situation of explaining to the ordinary citizen how they could build the communist paradise using the evil

Yankee dollars. Fortunately, the China example helped a lot with the explanations they provided for doing the same things.

Communication with the masses

I don't think anyone doubts the extraordinary ability that Fidel Castro has as a communicator. He is as great manipulator of the people, - or the masses as communists prefer to say – as Hitler, Mussolini or Mao. When Castro talks, you have to listen, not just because of the characteristic charisma of the “great man,” but because he makes sure that people are listening. When Castro is talking, all the radio and television stations in Cuba, well in control of the **family**, are all linked in a national chain so Castro is able to convey to everybody his message during the numerous hours that his speeches typically last. There is no alternative; you listen to Castro because you cannot listen to anything else.

For the inhabitants of the eastern capital Santiago de Cuba, their Mardi Gras was very dear. Unfortunately for them, in 1953 Fidel Castro chose the Mardi Gras date for his attack on the Moncada Barracks. He filled that Mardi Gras with bullets and blood and later, after 1959, he took over the occasion for his speeches. Each July 26, the *Santiagueros* [the inhabitants of that city] have to wait for Castro to finish his marathonic speech to begin the awaited celebration. And you are required to listen to him, or read every word, because the next day the complete text is published by all the newspapers of the **family**, which is to say, all of the newspapers in Cuba.

A good communicator knows that by just delivering the message it will not reach its destiny and that reaching is not enough if the message doesn't produce the desired effect. A good manipulator is always looking to produce an effect in the people, and only when they react according to his plan does he feel satisfied.

Hitler did not allow anyone to interrupt a Fascist speaker during a dissertation. To make sure of that, the German national socialists had their specially trained paramilitary groups remove by force any person who dared to attempt a different viewpoint at a mass rally. Fidel Castro, as Hitler, Mussolini and Mao, allows only his own political rallies. And to further avoid the penetration of the airways by a different voice, especially from the exile community, Castro invested large amounts of money in the blocking of

Radio and TV Martí. In the case of TV Martí Castro has been extremely successful in blocking their broadcasts.

Cubans say, “the cockroaches without legs cannot hear.” This is supported by the “evidence” that if you cut off all of a cockroach’s legs and you command, “walk,” he or she does not take a single step.

Equally, the populace has to be prepared by the manipulator, so that when the message is delivered, they proceed as the manipulator wants. The masses cannot be allowed think, they must listen and react in a unified manner to what is presented to them invoking a mass mentality. That’s why all the great manipulators in history have used the technique of organizing the people into a great mass in order to address and control them with the force of their demagoguery.

A single cry of “fire” inside a movie house automatically triggers the fear of being burned alive. The cry passes from one to another and reinforces the feeling of terror among the others. Just like that, the call to valor is inflamed, and goes from one to another and reinforces the valor of others. It is just like when during a bloody battle a valiant military chief becomes the example for his troops and heroically charges against all odds to accomplish what seemed impossible. This is precisely the savage force that a great manipulator must carry and master to prevail and use it for his own benefit.

In Cuba, the “combatant people’s marches” that Castro constantly organizes is one of his favorite tools to manipulate the citizens. There is no alternative: you have to go. There are too many problems and reprisals for the ordinary citizen who decides not to go even though he is sick and tired of all the hollow political propaganda. You have to succumb and be submerged in the middle of those massive marches organized by the powerful state machinery of the **family**. The citizen unhappy with the rulers, becomes the cockroach without legs.

The individual, caged and dispirited, surrounded by the mass, lets go his inner thoughts and at the contagious rhythm of the political slogans, gives his soul to the maddening chanting choir of his fellow citizens becoming part of the surroundings, a huge and uncontrollable river running amok. And the poor, hapless, unhappy citizen ends up a servant of the

purpose and an effect of the genius manipulator's task of controlling all of the unhappy citizens.

When the circumstances call for it, the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** demonstrates that he is not second banana to any Hollywood film director and he knows how to create the proper set to capture Cubans' imagination with his fiery prose. In 1980, a miscalculation rapidly produced a potentially explosive situation in the Embassy of Peru in Havana, which our expert turned into a personal opportunity.

That year everything was fine and dandy, the Soviet's payments for the Cuban troops in Angola were reflected in a relative "economic bonanza" for the **family** which resulted in the delusion that there was no reason to believe in the ghost of a massive exodus of Cubans to the U.S. Things were going so well that Fidel Castro himself had opened a new business: the visits of the exiles to see their relatives in Cuba. This promised to be another highly lucrative business because the exiles were coming full of U.S. dollars to spend in the **family's** stores - that had been exclusively for diplomats, foreign guests and the ruling elite - for all the multitude of needs of the relatives they came to see.

However, the new lucrative business had a weakness that Castro underestimated. The frequent visits of the exiles with their families in Cuba, forbidden until that time, opened to the Cubans inside the island a little crack to the rest of the world.

In 1980 when a few Cubans forced their way into the Embassy of Peru in Havana, Fidel Castro made the mistake of publicly declaring that his government would withdraw the military guards surrounding the embassy. His guards had been stationed at all foreign embassies to prevent Cubans from seeking asylum. After the announcement, thousands of people from Havana immediately entered the Embassy of Peru asking for asylum. That spectacle of public rejection was inexcusable because of the public image so carefully created by the **family** and their communist allies. It was imperative to find the right way out of that embarrassing situation.

Jimmy Carter, the Yankee President, with his characteristic innocence, declared that the United States was willing to receive all of the Cubans that wanted to escape the communist island with "open arms."

Immediately, the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** cunningly schemed a master plan to take maximum advantage of Carter's offer. So, publicly and officially, the Cuban government affirmed that anybody who wanted to leave could do so. And to that effect, opened the port of Mariel so that the exiles in the U.S., especially the ones living in South Florida, could come in all kinds of boats to pick up their relatives. He would let them go, but he would not provide the transportation.

At the same time, the **family** resorted to its favorite weapon: the masses, in order to maintain control of the internal situation that was getting a bit out of hand. The students from various schools in Havana were called to action around the Embassy of Peru. They were given pieces of wood so they could have fun by beating the hell out of anybody that wanted to join the thousands already inside the embassy. All the places of work all over the island as well as all of the so-called Committees for Defense of the Revolution on each city block, were given instructions to organize massive rallies in front of the houses of the people who had officially asked for permission to leave the country.

Using the technique that had been refined four decades earlier with the German national socialist paramilitary mobs, thousands of houses were stoned and the possessions were destroyed and stolen, and the crowds savagely attacked the elderly, men, women and children during those acts of repudiation. The crowds were also used to throw eggs at the citizens in the long line outside the Cuban Immigration offices waiting to file for their permits to leave. This was the way the mobs organized by the **family** had fun during those terrible days.

Using the event totally to his advantage, Castro once again put his dramatic personal touch on the situation he manipulated by ordering his henchmen to set a fire to a children's day care center. This was the climax of the intense public relations campaign directed by Castro to retake control of the situation. He blamed the fire on a nonexistent opposition. And thanks to the "opportune" arrival of the revolutionary firemen, all the children were "rescued" safe and sound.

Everything was over when Jimmy Carter realized who he was dealing with and refused to accept more people. But it was, of course, not until after Castro emptied his jails of his common criminals and offered them a free trip

to the U.S. forcing many of them into the boats of the exiles in exchange for allowing them to take their relatives to the U.S. The capo of our **Cosa Nostra** is a very resourceful blackmailer indeed.

Control of the streets is an obsession of Fidel Castro. When the **family** lost the full support of the Soviets because of Gorbachev, in order to fool the world, Castro allowed the existence of certain dissidents, for as long as they could not reach and use his favorite tool: the masses. All who intended to unite the people in favor of human rights or make public statements about the ongoing abuses, were jailed immediately.

Well, all great manipulators know that the main enemy is the one who is capable of counteracting his influence through a new and stronger cause that stimulates the masses.

Without any doubt, the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** belongs to a select group of men capable of crushing any opposition with a fiery response. Except, of course, a very small group of “deafs” who are difficult to convince, for whom he must use other more persuasive methods. And the most convincing and persuasive method available to him without any doubt was: force.

The Cuban intellectuals receive “especial” treatment from the **family**. The intellectuals always have been the food most difficult to swallow for the great manipulators. The Chinese Mao, almost at the end of his life, didn't have any choice but to concoct a “cultural revolution” to subjugate the intellectuals. Mao resorted to having the masses dump mud over the free-thinking intellectuals. Pol Pot in Cambodia, less gifted with demagoguery, opted to exterminate them. However, as the Nazi experience demonstrated and the Soviets perfected and excelled, there are intellectuals and then there are “intellectuals.” And if you know to choose carefully, you will find the ones who conveniently put their talent at the feet of the mighty lord that is willing to support him.

Everything has a price and there is nothing better than using money to pay a great complement. Since the intellectuals love books and readers, our **Cosa Nostra** gave them both. The 20% of Cubans that were illiterate in 1959, were massively alphabetized as a means of indoctrination (no “See Spot run!” here, rather “See Castro save Cuba!”) and so they read the books

massively produced in the **family** editorial houses. All the writers who complemented and exulted the **family** received very ample distribution. And those who didn't or couldn't were left out and forgotten. Things were easier for the **family** thanks to the communists, because their Soviet teachers have many decades of experience embellishing what they were doing with such techniques.

The majority of the artists and thinkers are not like José Martí, who wrote his beautiful poems in pencil and later on wanted to make them a reality with the sword. Those like Martí are few and they die young. And the majority of the intellectuals don't even know how to handle a sword and for sure they don't want to die young. That's why it is unnecessary to shorten their life as Pol Pot stupidly did. In Cuba, the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** used the Soviet recipe with overwhelming success.

The Cubans inside the island were proud to have the great Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier (who, by the way lived far away and safe in France), the great poet Nicolás Guillén (rest in peace), the great and worldwide acclaimed ballerina Madame Alicia Alonso (a communist since the 1940s), etc., etc., etc.

Castro's Cuba even produced singers like Silvio Rodríguez and Pablito Milanés, who had great success as ambassadors of Castro's revolution in Latin America by singing against foreign dictatorships, once they had been "re-educated" in the **family's** dungeons. An ominous blanket of silence befell those who would not lick the hand of the ones offering them fame and recognition, therefore, they became "non-persons." The intellectual who chose not to sell his soul to the devil (the **family**) had to give up his country for exile and the opportunity to earn his own recognition the hard way.

The crafty Cuban

Never before has Cuban craftiness been better represented than in the figure of Fidel Castro. The art of making his adversary err is one of the abilities in which the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** reached a state of excellence. It is not the classic argument of truth verses lying that the pseudo-intellectuals present. It is raising craftiness to the level of art in order to reach your goal at any price.

Crafty was declaring as one of the first acts of his government in 1959, a salary self-reduction as Prime Minister and later on he declared that he didn't need any salary at all (because the **family** was the absolute owner of everything on the island). Crafty was promising free elections immediately after taking power, while his power was not consolidated and later on never fulfilling that promise.

A touch of genius was managing to get power by saying that he was not a communist so he could reach his goal to later forge an alliance with the communists. And in order to consolidate his power he turned around and said that he "was always a communist." It was a major accomplishment that everybody believed him twice and to take maximum advantage in both cases.

It was delightfully exquisite for him to say in public "I am the Revolution" in one of his speeches during the 1990s crisis. Equally delightful was to enjoy seeing how many people that spent their entire lives believing that they themselves where doing a Revolution with a capital letter, still were not realizing the truth that he was telling them now.

In 1970 there were many unhappy people in Cuba. They had to repeat a million times during that year, "The ten million must go-go!" Everyone got sick of it, even those who did not have to go to the sugar cane fields for the so-called "Ten Million Harvest" in order to appease the Soviets that were demanding their quota of promised sugar. With all the might of the propaganda machinery monopolized by the **Cosa Nostra**, it was a constant hammering day and night that the ten million ton goal was reachable. Skeptics were jailed for disbelieving the official, repetitive triumphantly

propaganda. But finally, the longest sugar harvest in Cuba's history ended and the ten-million-ton goal was not reached.

So then Fidel Castro prepared the stage so he could give the people the news, that in spite of the effort, his enemies were right and the ten million didn't fly. So a massive, combatant and "highly patriotic" event was meticulously arranged to receive as heroes a bunch of fisherman alleged to have been kidnapped. With his characteristic style, slowly, captivately, relentlessly, Castro manipulated the massed congregation. And very far into his long speech, when the hypnotized audience was excitedly screaming "Cuba sí, Yankees no!," the inspired orator, casually changed the theme. And then he smoothly let out the news that the ten million did not materialize. That is a prime sample of his ability. That is to know how to manipulate people.

In 1994, during the worst of the Cuban economic crisis following the closing of the **family** business of the war in Africa because of lack of Soviet payments, a new exodus of rafters was unleashed from Cuba. President Clinton, knowing former President Carter's experience with the 1980 Mariel boat lift, preferred to end the situation by making a migratory arrangement with the Cuban government. Since then, twenty thousand Cubans per year have been winning a visa lottery and emigrating legally to the U.S. – the place where, according to Castro's propaganda, "bad" people live.

By the year 2000, approximately 40% of the Cubans on the island were receiving some kind of economic help from their exiled relatives and in spite of that reality, Castro staged that year his most famous and successful public relation campaign yet. Using absolutely all the tricks, the **family** enlisted the masses to protest for the facilities that the Yankees were offering to the would-be immigrants to the United States.

Paradoxically, the same people who were forced to participate in those massive demonstrations yelling and repeating the carefully chosen slogans concocted by Castro, or demanding the return of Elián González, were the same ones waiting for the visa lottery with the hope of giving their own children what Elián could have had if he had stayed with his uncle in Miami.

The dramatic qualities of the capo of our **Cosa Nostra** shined once more time during Elián's odyssey. Castro attained what seemed to be impossible after forty one years of tyranny. He used his vast monetary resources and took maximum advantage of the characteristic hunger-for-news of the free press abroad. He sent Elián's grandmothers in private Lear jets to the country of the Yankees and paid for super-star American lawyers. He manipulated again the masses inside Cuba. In other words, he created the news and danced in the house of the spinning top, and managed to captivate the American public with "his story."

And while Castro was having a field day manipulating the Yankee press, the **family** used their monopoly of the mass media inside Cuba to invent and air the so-called "round tables." These are a new series of very lengthy TV shows, under Castro's direct supervision. He sat in silence among a panel of many "official" reporters and intellectuals. Their objective was to find a new way to present - carefully - to the Cuban audience the arguments previously given by Castro alone.

Probably one of the very best acts of craftiness was to include on the Cuban paper money printed by the **family** the claim, "This bill has unlimited legal force throughout our national territory," and having the guts to omit the reality, "except in the *choping*." Even funnier is what the Cuban peso says on the other side, "Interchangeable for its value in gold."

After Castro, the Cubans were most proud of the athletes – all professional, badly paid, but very professional – winning victories and victories over the real amateurs in other countries. The controlling tycoons of the Baseball Big Leagues in the United States never permitted the Cuban **Cosa Nostra** to participate in the business. Unfortunately, the American baseball fanatics were not able to enjoy the Cuban team in action.

The Cubans were the only professional baseball team that managed to play for years in the Olympic Games. They were without doubt the most "economic" of all the high caliber professional teams.

Fidel Castro is a great artist . . . in the annals of craftiness. He is capable of not only making his adversaries err, but do the same to his supporters. The capo of our **Cosa Nostra** gained world fame as a nationalist and independentist leader. By repeating and repeating so many insults

against the Yankee imperialists everybody ended up believing that he was an anti-imperialist and an independentist. But being crafty is the art to say and do effectively what should be said or done to reach your specific goal. And for a crafty person the word is an arm, not a confession.

While declaring that he wanted to avoid a Yankee invasion of Cuba, Fidel Castro quietly and very secretly allowed more Soviet troops to land in Cuba than U.S. troops in the entire history of our country. While claiming the independence of Cuba from the Yankees, Cuba became a dependency of the Soviets. While he became one of the most vociferous members of the Non-Aligned Countries, Cuba was perfectly aligned at the side of the Soviet empire and kept Russian troops in our national territory.

The capo of our **Cosa Nostra** knew how to use the arm of his voice. He said what he wanted to be heard and then repeated it. He kept to himself what it was convenient not to say. He was not a slave of his words, but the master. During the 1980s he traveled to most of the countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He returned exulting the wonderful accomplishments of socialism in those countries.

Those “wonderful accomplishments” were radically exposed as lies and myths after the velvet revolution took place in those countries. And after the fall of the Soviet empire, Castro finally included in his speeches a vivid description of the bad quality of the products that those countries had been sending to Cuba for decades.

In 1975, the Chinese were trashed by Castro’s thundering tongue. It was when the Soviets were paying the **family** very well for the use of the Cuban troops in Angola. The Chinese were bickering with the Russians. The Chinese were supporting the Russian rival guerrillas in Angola. The new experiences the Chinese were having with market economy introduced by Mao’s successor, Deng Xiaoping, were harshly criticized by the **family’s** news media, which gave ample support to Vietnam during their border war against China.

However, in 1989, the suave tongue of Castro defended Deng Xiaoping for ordering the Tiananmen Square massacre in which the Chinese students asking for democratic reforms were crushed and murdered by the tanks of the Chinese People’s Army. Those were the years of Gorbachev’s

perestroika and the Soviets weren't paying any more. So, his rhetoric changed and suddenly the Chinese were no longer the invaders of Vietnam. They were no longer the ones paying the "mercenaries" – look who is talking about mercenaries – in Angola. And were no longer the ones "flirting with the Yankee imperialism with their liberal economic reforms," even though China continued, of course, with the same ruler.

It is funny how the so-called "liberals" in the free world normally encourage, protect and support socialist and communist regimes, as they have done overwhelmingly with Castro's Cuba. However, in those hard-line communist countries like Cuba, having liberal ideas means something very different and very threatening to them and can land you in the best hellhole of the **family** psychiatric hospitals, in their gulag franchise chain or in their unmarked graves.

The capo of our **Cosa Nostra** is a master in the use of the language. He baptized as "special period in times of peace," the deep economic crisis that befell Cuba after the fall of the Soviet empire. The word "crisis" was never used inside Cuba to describe what was happening in the country. He called the ones who opposed his totalitarian rule "worms" and succeeded in having the injured party recognize themselves in the derogatory term. He called the guerrillas fighting his communist regime in the Escambray Mountains "gangs". He called the people who used his techniques to fight against his regime "terrorists" – those using the very same techniques he used with his July 26 Movement to fight Batista. They walked, talked and smelled like ducks, but they weren't ducks unless he said they were ducks.

According to Castro, the hundreds of political prisoners in his dungeons are common criminals, not political. After 43 years in power he still makes everybody call him a revolutionary, even though he remains the same "**family**" he created which is now the only one insisting that nothing change in Cuba. The real revolutionaries in Cuba in the 90s, the ones who want change toward democracy in Cuba, Castro calls a "small groups of counterrevolutionaries." The label stick so well, that many of the pacific pro-democracy and human rights groups were offended when somebody would say to them that in the XXI century they will be the one and only authentic Cuban revolutionaries. But now, looking back to XX century Cuba, democracy and human rights are the revolutionary ideals.

In Castro's Cuba, massive indoctrination was called "education." The mandatory work without pay was called "voluntary." The dictatorship against the people was called "dictatorship of the people." The systematic misinformation was called "information." The generalized academic though fraudulent term used to showcase it to the world became the "excellence" of the Cuban educational system. The **family** properties were called "property of everyone." And the common people say, "what they give me" to whatever they were able to find in the **family** stores.

The common citizen was forced to steal every day in order to survive. To avoid the mocking, this stealing was called "finding" - that was what the corrupt regime was forcing them to do. For the same reason prostitution was renamed by the people with the lesser offensive name of "jockey." And servility began to be considered a virtue. The confusion created was such that there were very few either inside or outside the country who realize that for as long as Castro is alive, what is really happening in Cuba, is what naturally must happen in all countries where organized crime takes total control of the state.

Epilogue

Fidel Castro is without a doubt a great . . . son of a bitch. In the same man were combined an absolute lack of scruples, an incredible ability for intrigue and an exceptional capacity to manipulate people. Being essentially a Mafioso, he knows how to create a legend around himself to serve as a shield.

Castro's case deserves attention because his is not the only one. Tyrannies have been the endemic scourge throughout Latin America and Cuba is not the exception. During the first century of existing as an independent republic, the Cuban people have been under the boot of three military men.

After an uncertain beginning in 1902, the history of Cuba is colored by two U.S. interventions. Infighting among the ranks of the former freedom fighters known as *mambises* created a vulnerable situation. At the end of the 1920s, a former *mambí*, General Gerardo Machado, after being democratically elected, abused the system and changed the rules of the game in order to be reelected.

General Machado's fall was as a result of the push of the new generation composed of people outside the ranks of the historic leaders of the independence war against Spain. Fulgencio Batista, a young Sargent from a poor and racially mixed family, was the military leader of the 1933 revolution that overthrew General Machado. Batista fought for the abolishment of the resented Platt Amendment that gave the United States the right to interfere in Cuban affairs. And Batista gave the Cuban people the 1940 Constitution, without doubt the best and most progressive constitution ever in the history of the Republic of Cuba. But certainly, his domination over the military converted him into Cuba's strongman during his almost twenty five year (1933-1959) presence in Cuba's politics.

During that period of time, Batista traveled the typical trajectory of a Latin American *caudillo*. He began as a revolutionary leader coming from a very humble segment of the population and after being the uncontested leader; he rose to the rank of General. In 1940 he was elected president by

the people and with the support of the new revolutionary generation that toppled the tyranny of General Machado, including the Cuban communists within the political parties. After his mandate expired in 1944, he stepped down from the Presidency, but he never gave up his title as Cuba's strongman, ending up leading a bloodless coup on March 10, 1952, so he could be President again.

That was the beginning of an even longer cycle of *caudillismo* and tyranny in the history of Cuba. Another ambitious young man, Fidel Castro, launched himself by attacking the Moncada Barracks in 1953. Knowing he could not win, Fulgencio Batista did not run for President in the 1958 election, and ultimately, in the early hours of January 1, 1959, fled Cuba with a fortune stolen from public funds, bought an island in Portugal to protect his personal security and eventually died of old age surrounded by his bodyguards.

Fidel Castro, the new military leader of the 1959 revolution, who enjoyed overwhelming popular support because of his promises to restore democracy in Cuba, not long after taking power revealed his real intentions. And he became the protagonist of the longest and most severe tyranny that any Latin American country has endured.

Tyrants are not alike, but all have common traits that have been masterfully portrayed by various Latin American writers. The real wonder in Latin America resides in our literature and in the daily lives of its citizenry.

In spite of the talent of our writers, the typical Latin American patriarchal tyrant does not cover the great variety of tyrants that our people have had to suffer. Not even the most talented of our writers could have imagined that Peru could have been governed for years by the son of Japanese immigrants. Or that in Ecuador, a president elected by the popular vote, months later would be stoned and chased from his throne because of his fondness for visiting the poor neighborhoods to sing and have a good time.

The phenomenon of the "gangsterization" of the tyrants has not been approached by our literates. The typical Latin American patriarchal tyrant portrayed in literature is motivated by a mix of *machismo*, addiction to

power and an embellished patriarchal feeling of the tyrant toward his subjects. But the Latin American reality at the end of the XX century is much harsher than this paternalistic vision of their tyrannies. The people who disappeared in Argentina were not the fruits of the paternalism of the prepotent military in power. Nor the victims of the Caravan of Death the fruits of General Pinochet's paternalism.

The theme of the gangster-tyrant has not been touched in depth by the Latin American literature even though it is the pathetic reality. General Noriega in Panama, posed as anti-imperialist and revolutionary, but in reality he was a great drug-trafficker.

The Cuban reality from the second half of the XX century and the first years of the current millenium clearly shows what happens to a country governed by following the rules of the **Cosa Nostra**. And the Colombian tragedy is perhaps the most horrible example of how organized crime can compromise the future of a whole country even without taking the reigns of power.

Castro's case deserves the maximum of attention since it is not unique or isolated. The phenomenon of an ambitious leader, flattering to others for his own convenience, without scruples, always ready to profit by taking advantage of the naivete of anxious people waiting for an impossible savior, is repeated as a fatalistic theme in our Latin America. Chávez's case in Venezuela has too much resemblance to Castro's case to be idly ignored.

The common denominator of all tyrants is their restless need for more power. In order to maximize the power in his hands, the tyrant deceptively hooks his subjects with a fictitious enemy. The future tyrant must convince all his future subjects that under his one and only guidance they will be able to survive future upcoming cataclysms and reach the utopian society they all are yearning for.

Tyrannies are born from sick societies. Tyrannies are the cancer of the democracies. Hitler reached power helped by the economic hardship and frustration of the German people after Germany's World War I defeat. Castro initiated his career as a fighter against a coup that created a crisis in the democratic institutions in Cuba. Pol Pot in Cambodia rose to power fighting against a foreign invasion.

After the tyranny is firmly consolidated, it is very difficult for the people to get rid of the person that was considered “the savior.” That is why the people enslaved by tyrannies need the help of the free world. And the people blinded by the tyrant are in need of a friendly voice to let them understand the trap into which they are falling.

The German people, fascinated by Hitler and the National Socialism, in addition to the trappings of the war, was only able to liberate themselves from the evil of their *caudillo* by the total defeat of Fascism in Europe as a result of World War II. The Cambodian people, pushed to barbarism and savagery under the Khmer Rouge regime led by Pol Pot, was able to get rid of their nightmare only after the Vietnam invasion of Cambodia. The Spaniards had to wait for the death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco in order to return to democracy.

A sound and healthy society doesn't need a savior. A country with a solid economic structure and democratic institutions does not desperately look for a tyrant to fix what could be remedied by the balanced battle of the multiple interests characteristic of all democracies. No freedom lover asks a tyrant to do what he knows is his un-declinable obligation as a free citizen.

Tyrannies exist because freedom assigns major responsibilities to the citizens that servitude does not. Each human being must conquer and exercise his freedom every day or resign to becoming subdued by those to whom he delegated his powers. Democracy is, by excellence, a form of government that assigns freedoms to the citizens. Totalitarianism is the opposite. It is a form of government where the victims proliferate.

The common denominator of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia was totalitarianism, the negation of democracy. Perhaps the most important aspect of the XX century was the ideological battle between the admirers of totalitarianism and the believers in the strength and validity of democracy. Lenin and Russia's Bolsheviks, Mussolini and Italy's Fascists, Hitler and Germany's National Socialists, put totalitarianism in fashion in Europe. They and their surrounding ideologues embellished the totalitarian doctrine. Each one in its own right enlisted millions of followers.

Fortunately, social practice, which is the maximum criteria of the truth, even according to communist prophet Karl Marx, inflicted a terrible blow on communism, when, unexpectedly for many, that criteria brought to light the ugly face of totalitarian doctrine after the fall of the Soviet empire almost at the end of the prior millennium.

But before the fall, out from the shadows of the Soviet empire and its embellished totalitarian doctrine crawled a bunch of little satraps. They covered up their servitude to the Soviet empire and their ambition for power under the flags of what totalitarian doctrine called “proletarian internationalism” and “proletarian dictatorship.” Cuba’s satraps started out as an armed gang of outlaws who instituted one more typical tyranny, this time with a Latin American twist.

The renewed impulse of democratic ideas after the fall of the Soviet empire and the bankruptcy of its totalitarian doctrine put those satraps - that flourished under the shadow of the empire - in a very difficult position. The fact that the gang in power in Cuba was characteristically Mafioso became evident when the Cuban Mafia, terrified that the ideological discredit would bring the loss of their privileges, modified (for cosmetic purpose only) their political discourse.

Fidel Castro quit calling his tyranny “proletarian dictatorship” and despite his extraordinary success meeting his personal goal to maintain absolute power, was unable to convince the world that his tyranny was compatible with one of the cornerstones of modern democracy: the respect for human and civil rights of all the citizens.

The task facing the tyrant Hugo Chávez in Venezuela is even greater than the one faced by his so-called “friend” Fidel Castro in 1959. Castro was extremely lucky to take power at a time when the totalitarian doctrines of Mao and Stalin were in fashion. That is precisely what permitted him camouflage his personal efforts to acquire total control of power in his fight to institute in Cuba a “proletarian dictatorship.”

Lacking a beautiful doctrine that justifies his tyranny, Chávez has done everything possible to embellish the totalitarians left in the world, from the gangster tyranny of Fidel Castro in Cuba, to the cruel tyranny of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and even the “market totalitarianism” currently flourishing

in China. But perhaps Chávez, revealing his intentions too early, made an ill-timed error before having absolute power in his hands. This error was not committed by his admired Fidel Castro, who did not talk about “proletarian dictatorship” until after his Mafia had absolute control of the country.

I have faith in the Venezuelan people and their democratic institutions. And they will find ways to reform their country without having to request the lethal services of one more Latin American tyrant. I have faith that Chávez will not get his way. I have faith that the freedom of the press that will follow the eventual unavoidable demise of the Mafia in power in Cuba, will help the people of Venezuela and the rest of Latin America realize what was really going on in Cuba for more than forty years.

I have faith in the people of our America. The tyrannies are the cancer of the democracies as a result of poverty. Poverty is the fundamental cause of the cancer that has invaded Latin American democracies for many years. Poverty produces despair and desperate people yearn for an impossible savior. We don't need any more of those kinds of saviors. What we need are men and women committed to making sure that each American is in condition to fight to rise above poverty.

We need men and women committed to service, not those expecting the servitude of others. We need democratic institutions that promote the best human resources available. We need truly committed individuals to serve the people. To serve and step down after their mandates expire to give the opportunity to other good people. We need democratic institutions that make sure that crafty individuals cannot become leaders-for-life over the people that they pretend to serve. We need democratic institutions that offer protection to the poor as well as the rich. And that help to distribute the wealth among all without killing the chicken that lays the golden egg that produces the wealth. To distribute the wealth, first, you have to have it.

The tyrannies are great . . . for the tyrants. The totalitarians are great . . . for all the crafties and delinquents roaming around. The tyrants are like the lottery: they promise an easy way out and only one among millions really satisfies expectations. There is no such a thing as an easy way out for our problems. And anyway, the way out is never a tyranny.

The people should give an irrevocable time frame to any one who says they want to help them. They have to make sure that they are in condition to force that person to honor the time frame and his promises. The people should never permit, never, anyone who says he is helping, “help” longer than the appointed period of time. Nor they should put a power in the hands of an individual that is larger than the power of the citizenry. If somebody wants to help beyond the established maximum time allocated, let others help. And don’t let that individual work alone – make him work with others so that all have the opportunity to contribute to the common good.

Totalitarian socialism was what the Soviet empire euphemistically used to call “proletarian dictatorship.” It’s the same thing that engendered the current monarchy in North Korea, the genocidal Pol Pot in Cambodia and the same thing that put the Mafia in power in Cuba. It has proved to be as lethal as the “national socialism” of the German Fascists. Its main defect is the consecration of dictatorship as a form of government.

All dictatorships are bad because they monopolize power. And in the long run they always end up producing many more hardships than benefits for the subjugated people, no matter if the dictator is Augusto Pinochet, Nicolae Ceausescu, Anastasio Somoza or Fidel Castro.

Cuba, in particular, a Caribbean country with a racial mix and a diverse society, was selected by the local Mafia under the umbrella of the Soviet empire and gave birth to a new type of Latin American tyrant: the gangster tyrant, the Mafioso satrap.

Cubans say, if Castro is as good as he says he is, why after more than forty uninterrupted years of his dictatorship, are the Cubans poorer than before? Castro has demonstrated to be very good . . . to himself.

Cubans say, if Castro is as good as he says and the Cubans misery is due to the United States refusal to have normal economic relations - as Castro always says - why didn’t Castro do us the favor to retire and permit Cuba and the United States return to normal economic relations?

“That’s strange!” Cubans say. Because according to Castro all the people who oppose him are horrible people and his supporters are like little angels. It’s strange that Castro, being so good, has so many people wanting

to eliminate him! It's strange that, being so good, Castro always has to be surrounded by a huge number of bodyguards!

Cubans say, if Castro is as humble as he pretends, if he isn't as ambitious as the facts demonstrate, if he doesn't feel such an irresistible attraction for power, why, after more than forty uninterrupted years exercising his absolute power, doesn't he give a chance to any of his supposed followers?

According to Castro, he is a saint. According to his oppositors, he is another communist tyrant. According to stubborn historical facts, Fidel Castro, is actually a Mafioso.

To the ones with ears: listen. To the ones with eyes: look. And to the blind and deaf, take our friendly hand and advice: beware of the mermaid's songs. They could be lethal. Let's open all our senses and offer an eternal repudiation to the unscrupulous manipulators that profit from the sorrows and naivete of our people.

About the Author

Born in November 1957, in the eastern city of Holguin, Luis Grave de Peralta Morell was president of the official Castro government University Student Federation of the Physics-Chemistry-Mathematics Faculty at the University of Oriente, where he graduated as a Physicist in 1982.

He was Professor of Theoretic Physics and Biophysics at that university until 1989, when he was expelled from the faculty after his voluntary resignation from the Cuban Communist Party.

In 1992, he was apprehended and accused of “rebellion through pacific means” for being the author of the book manuscript *Cuban Themes or Recreative Dialectic*. Because of this unpublished manuscript, he was sentenced to thirteen years in a maximum-security prison.

After four years, in 1996, thanks to an international effort to gain his release along with other political prisoners, he was deported directly from jail to the United States in an U.S. Air Force plane. In exile, he resumed his work as a scientist and in 2000, he received his Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from Texas Tech University.

In 1997, his book *The Magic of Love*, a collection of short stories written for his children from his jail cell, was published in Mexico. Grave de Peralta decided to make these stories public as part of his tireless effort for over six years to gain freedom for his sons and for his family reunification, which had been prevented by the Cuban government.

In 2001, his second book, *The Mafia of Havana*, was published in Spanish with a cover designed by his son, Gabriel.

Grave de Peralta lives in Lubbock, Texas with his older son Gabriel, his Cuban wife, María, and his younger son, Cesar, who finally arrived from Cuba on November 16, 2001.

References/Notes

When Agustín Blázquez and Jaums Sutton finished the English translation of my book *The Mafia of Havana*, they asked me to include the bibliographic references to support my presentation and to foster a better understanding for the English speaking readers that are not familiar with Cuban issues. Actually, I felt the same necessity when I originally published the book in Spanish.

Because of my academic background, in 1991, the first time I wrote about the reality of my country, I included numerous bibliographic references intended to demonstrate to the reader that what I was putting in black and white was not the product of my imagination, but real and irrefutable historic facts.

The result of my investigative effort was my first book, *Cuban Themes or Recreative Dialectic*. This book was thoroughly documented and irrefutable. So irrefutable that to prevent my book from ever being read, the Cuban government, after confiscating my manuscript, decided to reward my efforts by sentencing me to spend the following thirteen years of my life locked in the Cuban prison system.

Each one of the affirmations made in *Cuban Themes or Recreative Dialectic* was supported by one or more bibliographic references - the majority of them taken directly from the Cuban press that is totally controlled by the Cuban government. The great majority of the stories that I refer to in *The Mafia of Havana*, appear in one way or another in the book that sent me to jail.

The original *Cuban Themes or Recreative Dialectic* manuscript is probably waiting for better times in the archives of the Cuban political police. Unfortunately, I currently do not have access to the Cuban libraries that I visited in 1991 when I was craving for information, nor the time that I would need to reconstruct my old bibliographical notes.

Thus, always loyal to the maxim “perfection is the worst enemy of the good,” (or, more specifically here, “it is better to publish an imperfect book than not publish a perfect book”), I decided to say the same thing that put me

in jail but in a way that is much easier to read and without the continuous interruptions to my discourse provoked by the use of the references to support each of the things I said.

Each and every one of the facts that *The Mafia of Havana* refers to can be widely supported by documents and testimonies. The majority of the events are widely known. My only contribution is to put one beside the other so that the reader can appreciate them in the proper perspective, relevance and implication of what has been taking place.

So, finally, I had to apologize to my friends Agustín and Jaums, and promise that as soon as my life gives me a chance I will contact them to work together on the “academic” version of this compilation of truths that is *The Mafia of Havana*.

Luis Grave de Peralta Morell
Lubbock, Texas
May 11, 2002

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