

[The Republican candidate \(Part Two\)](#)

One of the most hostile U.S. newspapers when it comes to Cuba, headquartered in Florida, offers the following report:

"Taking advantage of the negotiations to free the Bay of Pigs' prisoners, the CIA tried to use a key person in the talks, American lawyer James B. Donovan, to deliver a lethal gift to Fidel Castro: a wetsuit contaminated with a fungus that lacerates the skin and an underwater breathing device infected with tuberculosis...the gear in fact was given to the Cuban leader in November 1962.

"The revelation is one of many anecdotes in *After the Bay of Pigs*, a book on the negotiations held between the Committee of Relatives for the Liberation of Prisoners and Havana from April to December 1962.

"The 238-page book, published late last year, was written by Cuban exile Pablo Pérez-Cisneros with businessman John B. Donovan, son of the late negotiator, and Jeff Koenreich, a veteran member of the Red Cross who has promoted humanitarian missions between the United States and Cuba.

"Pérez-Cisneros is the son of Berta Barreto de los Heros, who was coordinator in Cuba of the Families Committee and interceded with Castro to trade off the 1,113 prisoners from the failed April 1961 invasion.

"Barreto de los Heros started the book but died in March of 1993. Her son, who spent eight years researching and finishing the book, was the person who bought the wetsuit and scuba gear at the end of 1962, not knowing that both were destined for Castro.

"In June 1962, Pérez-Cisneros visited James B. Donovan's office in Brooklyn for the first time to request his intervention in the negotiations with Cuba. The meeting was arranged by Robert W. Kean, son of a former congressman and brother-in-law of Joaquín Silverio, a jailed member of Brigade 2506. Donovan agreed to work for the Families Committee at no charge.

"Two months later, Donovan made the first of 11 trips to Havana for mediation with the Cuban government.

"When Donovan returns to Cuba in October 1962, Castro tells him he wants to have an aqualung (scuba gear) and wetsuit for diving," Pérez-Cisneros told *El Nuevo Herald* in an interview to expand on the case. "So, Donovan tells me he wants to get quality equipment for a person, but without telling me they are for Castro."

"Pérez-Cisneros, who had been a champion underwater spearfisherman in Cuba, bought a \$130 wetsuit and scuba equipment for \$215 in a well-known store in Times Square, New York.

"Castro received them in November 1962, and some weeks later, on another one of Donovan's trips, the Cuban President told the lawyer that he had used them.

"Only months after the negotiations had concluded did Pérez-Cisneros learn all the details about the real story.

"During World War II, James Donovan had worked for the Office of Strategic Services, which preceded the CIA. He was later named one of the prosecutors in the Nazi war-crimes trials in Nuremberg. In

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February 1962, he was the chief mediator in the most spectacular spy trade of the Cold War: the trade of Russian Col. Rudolf Abel for Americans Frederick Prior and captured U-2 pilot Gary F. Powers.

"When Donovan informed the CIA that Castro had requested diving equipment, the U.S. agency said it would take care of it. But the lawyer rejected any involvement in the proposal to contaminate the wetsuit and scuba equipment and preferred to give Castro the equipment bought in Times Square.

"In May of 1963, Castro invited Donovan and lawyer John E. Nolan, who represented then-Justice Secretary Robert Kennedy, to a day of diving in the Bay of Pigs area and again used the U.S. equipment.

"In late 1963, "Donovan told me that the idea of an attempt against Castro gave him goose bumps, and he refused to take the equipment from the CIA, thinking that if Cuba detected the operation, all the negotiations could be ruined and that he could be executed," ...

"The book, sprinkled with curious and unexpected events, is a tense story of how love, determination and cleverness made possible the exchange of the Brigade 2506 prisoners for \$53 million in food, medicine and medical equipment.

"The efforts of Donovan and the Families Committee came at a moment of uncertainty over the prisoners' fates...

"The committee's first meeting with Castro took place in Barreto de los Heros' house in Miramar on April 10, 1962. Four days later, 60 wounded Brigade members were flown to Miami.

"Donovan's entry into the negotiations accelerated the release process.

"Knowing that Barreto de los Heros' telephone was tapped, Donovan arranged a secret code for communications.

"In mid-December, Castro agreed to an exchange and handed over a 29-page list of food and medicine that was to be sent to Cuba by the American Red Cross. The last 10 days of negotiations were very intense because Donovan brought in a group of 60 lawyers in order to ensure all of the donations promised by 157 American companies.

"On Dec. 23, 1962, the first five planes left for Miami, carrying 484 members of the brigade. A day later, the 719 prisoners that remained flew in nine more flights."

I have literally transcribed the article's words. I wasn't aware of some of the specific information. Nothing that I remember is far from the truth.

My relationship with the Cienaga de Zapata (Zapata Marsh) began very early. I learned about the place thanks to some American visitors who would talk to me about the "black fish", a very dark trout that was very abundant in the Laguna del Tesoro, at the heart of the marsh, at a maximum depth of 6 meters. In those days we were considering the development of tourism and possibly 'polders' like the land reclaimed from the sea by the Dutch.

The spot was famous from my days as a high school student, when the marsh was populated by tens of thousands of crocodiles. Indiscriminate catch had almost exterminated the species. It was necessary to protect it.

We were impelled above all by the desire to do something for the charcoal burners of the marsh. That was how my relationship with the Bay of Pigs began, a bay that is so deep it reaches almost a thousand meters. There I met old Finalé and his son Quique, who were my teachers in underwater fishing. I used to go all over those keys. I came to know that area like the back of my hand.

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When the invaders landed there, three roads crossed the marsh, some facilities had already been built and others were being built for tourism, even an airport in the vicinity of Giron Beach, the last stronghold of the enemy forces which our combatants took by assault on the evening of April 19, 1961. I have told that story before. We were at the point of recovering it in less than 30 hours. Diversion maneuvers by the U.S. Marines delayed our crushing tank attack in the early morning of the 18th.

In order to deal with the issue of captured prisoners, I met Donovan, who seemed to me –and I am pleased to confirm it with his son’s testimony– to be an honorable man; I indeed once invited him to go fishing, and without a doubt I talked to him about a wetsuit and diving equipment. I cannot remember the other details too clearly; I would have to make some inquiries. I was never concerned with writing my memoirs, and today I understand that was a mistake.

For example, I was not able to remember the exact number of wounded so precisely. What stayed in my mind was the memory of those hundreds of our wounded; quite a few died because of a shortage of equipment, medicines, specialists and the lack of suitable facilities in those days. The wounded men who were sent earlier surely required rehab or better care, but that was not available to us.

From our first victorious battle, on January 17, 1957, it became our tradition to look after the enemy’s wounded. The history of our Revolution records that fact.

In the book of memoirs called “Faith of my Fathers”, written by McCain with the omnipresent help of Mark Salter, technically very well written, the main author states:

“I was often accused of being an indifferent student, and given some of my grades, I can appreciate the charity in that remark. But I was not so much indifferent as selective. I liked English and history, and I usually did well in those classes. I was less interested and less successful in math and science.”

Further along, he assures us:

“A few months prior to graduation, I had taken the Naval Academy entrance exams...did surprisingly well, even on the math exam.

“My reputation as a rowdy and impetuous young man was not, I’m embarrassed to confess, confined to Academy circles. Many upstanding residents of lovely Annapolis, witnesses to some of our more extravagant acts of insubordination, disapproved of me as did many Academy officials.”

Earlier, upon describing some of the events of his childhood, he tells us that:

“At the smallest provocation, I would go off in a mad frenzy, and then, suddenly, crash to the floor unconscious.

“The doctor prescribed a treatment that seems a little severe by modern standards of child care. He instructed my parents to fill a bathtub with cold water whenever I commenced a tantrum, and when I appeared to be holding my breath to drop me, fully clothed, into it.

Upon reading this, one has the impression that the methods that were applied to us in those days –both in my case, living in that pre-war era, just as in his –were not exactly the most fitting to deal with children. In my case, there was no doctor advising the family; they were ordinary people, some were illiterate, and many of them only applied traditional treatments.

Other episodes narrated by McCain relate to his adventures as a cadet on training trips. I am not mentioning them because they stray from the contents of my analysis and they have nothing to do with personal matters.

Naturally, McCain was not in the Congress hall on the night of Bush’s speech last January 28th, because

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some things in this man's policies are compromising to him. He was in Little Havana, at the Versailles Restaurant, where he received the tribute of the Cuban community. It is just as well that we don't look too closely into the background of several people who were there.

McCain supports the war in Iraq. He believes that the threat of Afghanistan, Iran and North Korea and the growth of Russia and China oblige the United States to strengthen its attack force. He would work together with other countries to protect the nation from Islamic extremism and continue in Iraq until victory.

He recognizes the importance of keeping strong relations with Mexico and the other Latin American countries. He is in favor of continuing the current aggressive Cuba policy.

He would reinforce security on United States borders, not just for the entry and exit of people, but also for the products that enter the country. He thinks that immigrants ought to learn English and the history and culture of the United States.

He wants the Latino vote, unfortunately most of these don't vote or do it exceptionally; they are always fearful of deportation, of their children being taken away or of losing their jobs. On the Texas wall, more than 500 continue to die each year. He is not promising an 'adjustment act' to those who go after the "American dream".

He supports Bush's "The No Child Left Behind Act". He supports the allocation of more federal funding for low interest scholarships and university grants.

In Cuba we offer everyone solid knowledge, an artistic education and the right to graduate from university without paying any tuition. More than 50 thousand children with learning disabilities receive special education. Computer science is extensively taught. Hundreds of thousands of well qualified people are employed in these tasks. But Cuba must be blockaded to free it from such a terrible tyranny.

Like any other candidate, he has his little government platform. He promises to reduce dependence on foreign energy. It is easy to say, but these days it is difficult to do.

He opposes subsidized ethanol production. Fantastic: I suggested just that to Brazilian President Lula Da Silva, that he demand the United States to suspend the hefty agricultural subsidies for corn and other cereals destined for the production of ethanol from foods. But that is not what is being proposed, on the contrary, it's to export U.S. ethanol to compete with Brazil. Only he and his advisors know it, because ethanol from corn can never compete in cost with that of Brazil which comes from sugarcane as the raw material, at the expense of the tremendous efforts of its workers who in any case improve their lot without the U.S. tariff barriers and subsidies.

Many other Latin American nations were set on the path of producing ethanol from sugarcane by the United States. What would they do with the new decisions coming down from the North?

And we can't miss the promises ensuring quality of air and water, the suitable use of green areas, the protection of the national parks that would become just a memory of what once used to be the nation's natural splendor, victim of the unrelenting dictates of the market laws. The Kyoto Protocol, nevertheless, would not be signed.

These sound like the dreams of a castaway in the middle of a storm.

He would reduce taxes for middle class families, keeping the Bush policy of cutting back the permanent taxes and leaving rates at their current level.

He wants greater control over the costs of Medicare and Medicaid. He thinks that families should be in charge of their healthcare dollars. He would carry out health and prevention campaigns. He supports

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the plan of the current President allowing workers to move money from social security taxes to private retirement funds.

Social security would suffer the same fate as the stock market.

He is in favor of the death penalty, the growth and build-up of the armed forces, and the expansion of the FTAs.

Some McCain maxims:

"Things are tough now, but we're better off than in 2000." (Jan 2008)

"I'm well-versed in economics; I was at the Reagan Revolution." (Jan 2008)

"To avoid recession, stop unchecked spending." (Jan 2008)

"Loss of economic strength leads to losing military strength." (Dec 2007)

"Republicans have forgotten how to control spending." (Nov 2007)

"Certify border is secure; only then allow guest workers." (Jan 2008)

"2003 'amnesty' didn't mean rewarding illegal behavior." (Jan 2008)

"Round up and deport two million aliens who committed crimes." (Jan 2008)

"Do everything I can to help all immigrants learn English." (Dec 2007)

"No official English; Native Americans use own languages." (Jan 2007)

"Immigration reform needed for national security." (Jun 2007)

"Bipartisanship shows preparedness for presidency." (May 2007)

"Maintain Cuban embargo; indict Castro." (Dec 2007)

"Cuba: No diplomatic and trade relations." (Jul 1998)

"Naive to exclude nukes; naive to exclude attacking Pakistan." (Aug 2007)

"War in Iraq 'we have diverted attention from our hemisphere and we have paid a price for that'." (Mar 2007)

He promises to visit his properties on the continent. He said that after being elected to the White House in 2008, his first trip would be to Mexico, Canada and Latin America to "reaffirm my commitment to our hemisphere and the importance of relations within our hemisphere."

In his entire book, an obligatory reference in my Reflections, he states that he was good in history. There is not one single reference to any political philosopher, not even to one of those who inspired the Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies on July 4, 1776; in 4 months and 23 days it will celebrate its 232nd birthday.

More than 2400 years ago, Socrates, the famous Athenian wise man, celebrated for his method and martyr to his ideas, conscious of human limitations, said: "One thing only I know, and that is that I know nothing." Today, McCain, the Republican candidate, proclaims before his fellow citizens: "One thing only

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I know, and that is that I know everything.”

I shall continue.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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