

GENERAL

An Insight into Elite Corruption and

DELPINO

Military Dissension in Castro's Cuba

SPEAKS



CUBAN AMERICAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Cuban American National Foundation is an independent, non-profit institution devoted to the gathering and dissemination of data about economic, political and social issues of the Cuban people, both on the island and in exile. The Foundation supports the concept of a free and democratic Cuba.

The Foundation promotes an objective view of Cuba and Cubans, and an objective appraisal of the Cuban government and its policies.

The Foundation supports a general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Cuban concern, to fight bigotry, protect human rights, and promote cultural interests and creative achievement.

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bill before Congress.

When I first met with General del Pino in June 1987, he told me of the internationalistic interferences of Fidel Castro; he told me of the disaffection inside Cuba as the people there see the corruption and greed of the leaders; he told me of the wanton disregard Castro shows for the families of those Cubans who have died in their war in Angola.

General del Pino speaks with first-hand knowledge. Radio Martí's interviews with him should be read by all who may still doubt that Castro is a threat to world peace and security — and to peace and security in Central America.

—Vice President George Bush

General del Pino's insights reveal the tragedy that is today's Cuba — pervasive corruption, disillusionment among the people, and costly foreign adventures. This is required reading for anyone who still believes Castro's Cuba is a socialist paradise.

—Senator Lawton Chiles (D-FL)

General del Pino is living proof that Fidel Castro's oppressive hold on the Cuban people can be broken. There are many more del Pinos — Cubans willing to risk their lives for freedom and democracy.

—Congressman Jack Kemp (R-NY)

GENERAL DEL PINO SPEAKS

**AN INSIGHT INTO ELITE
CORRUPTION AND MILITARY
DISSENSION IN CASTRO'S CUBA**

**The Cuban-American National Foundation
1987**

INTRODUCTION

On May 28, 1987, a twin engine plane requested permission to land at the Boca Chica Naval Air Station at Key West, Florida. The plane was piloted by Brigadier General Rafael del Pino Diaz, deputy commander of the DAAFAR, the Cuban Air Force. This was the modest beginning of one of the most surprising and damaging events the Castro regime has faced.

General del Pino is a hero of the Cuban Revolution. As a teenager he fought in the underground against Batista. He went into exile in Venezuela and was wounded and imprisoned for his participation in the revolution against Perez Jimenez. After the overthrow of Perez Jimenez in January 1958, he returned to Cuba and went to the *Sierra de los Organos* where he joined a rural rebel force led by Dermidio Escalona.

After the overthrow of Batista, del Pino joined the Air Force. He downed two planes at the Bay of Pigs and was subsequently portrayed as a revolutionary hero by Cuban propaganda in articles and television programs. He was trained in the Soviet Union as a MiG pilot, served two years in Angola, and eventually rose to the position of brigadier general, a position he occupied at the time of his defection.

One has to ask what led a man who had such a brilliant career within the Cuban regime to take such a step and risk, not only his life, but that of his family who accompanied him on his flight to freedom. The following interviews with Radio Martí, obtained by the Cuban American National Foundation from media sources in South Florida, provide a good insight to the general's reasons.

First, there is war fatigue. The general and his colleagues in the Cuban armed forces are convinced Cuban lives are being wasted unnecessarily and irresponsibly in the war in Angola. According to del Pino, they are convinced the war cannot be won.

Second, his comments reflect great resentment for the callousness in risking lives and dealing with casualties; in particular, the practice of not returning the remains of the dead to Cuba and allowing families to mourn their losses.

Third, there is the increasingly unacceptable contrast between the privileges of Castro's intimate circle and the austerity being imposed on the people as a consequence of the economic failures of the Revolution.

Finally, there is the personal experience of having had a son beaten by a lieutenant colonel and then seeing the corrupt legal system cover up the incident.

The significance of this defection cannot be ignored. Rather than retire in silence del Pino chose to go abroad and talk so that the Cuban people can know the true opinions of the armed forces. General del Pino's interview reveals a state of public opinion previously unknown due to Cuban censorship. One has to wonder how many more del Pino's there are who do not have access to an aircraft. One can assume Fidel Castro does too.

In the last two years several senior officials of the Cuban government have defected to the West. A common characteristic of these individuals is that they were adolescents at the time Castro came to power. They were inspired by the initial euphoria and idealism of the revolution. They are dedicated men who worked hard and were successful.

Another common thread in their stories is that they fell under the spell of Castro's charisma. That charisma is fading away. It is being replaced by the image of an aging, traditional dictator beset by failures in international affairs, in the economy and in the provision of the most basic needs to the Cuban people.

The defection of men like General del Pino shows the doubts of his generation. The younger generation, those born after Castro came to power, are even more disillusioned with the regime.

In any event, General del Pino has taken a step that has opened a completely new perspective on the Cuban situation. One thing is certain, Cuba is not the monolith many thought it was. In welcoming General del Pino and his family to freedom we should extend that welcome to those silent ones from whom we have not yet heard.

The Cuban American National Foundation

To them, anybody who stands up to them, anybody who does not share their ideas, anybody who represents a danger to the regime, is a traitor. I believe that those who have risen on our shoulders, those who have used our Fatherland as a pedestal to raise themselves up on, those who have turned the country into their private estate, they are the ones who have betrayed the Revolution.

I believed that it would be here in the U.S. that I would be able to strip the veil from the reality of what is happening in Cuba.

—Rafael del Pino

An Interview with Brigadier General Rafael del Pino

RADIO MARTI: General, what can you tell us about the position you held in Cuba at the time you left, and about the Cuban government's statement to the effect that you had been put on permanent suspension because of problems with your eyesight and repeated conditions of stress?

GENERAL DEL PINO: It seems that when I got here, there was an error in interpretation by the first officials that we talked with, due to the fact that our military structures are quite different from those in this country.... In actuality, my position until May 28th was that of "Alternate" assigned to the commander of the DAAFAR [*Defensa Anti-Area y Fuerza Area Revolucionaria*, Revolutionary Air Force and Anti-aircraft Defense].

"Why, if I have mental problems, was I sent on April 20th to the Soviet Union to coordinate with their military the annual draft of our pilots?"

As for the communiqué...that was the logical reaction to expect. As regards my mental problems, I would just wonder one thing, and I know that my colleagues in Cuba would also: Why, if I have mental problems, was I sent on April 20th to the Soviet Union to coordinate with their military the annual draft of our pilots? Either we are all crazy in Cuba, or else there is no respect for the Soviet military if we send them a schizophrenic. But, in addition to that, if my repeated written denouncements to my superiors concerning what was being perpetrated in Angola — the way the lives of our young men were being gambled with — means that I am mentally ill, then I am.

RM: *About your visit in April to the USSR, what observations did you make*

about the changes to be observed there, and your experience on your return to Cuba?

GDP: This subject is discussed very persistently in various military circles in the Soviet Union and even in Cuba. What is being done in the Soviet Union right now is not understood. There is great confusion among...our students there. They see the Soviet government, after seventy years of socialism, reverse itself and adopt a variety of reforms — private medicine, private restaurants, small private businesses — in contrast to what is happening in Cuba, where some unfortunate cripple, for instance, who makes milkshakes at home so that the schoolchildren can have a snack, has his beater taken from him.

“There is great confusion among...our students there. They see the Soviet government, after seventy years of socialism, reverse itself and adopt a variety of reforms....”

Even in the midst of tragedy, though, the Cuban never loses his humor...the jokes start right away.... They tell one where the Cuban government...and the Cuban Communist Party were carrying on important talks with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in order to move Lenin’s Tomb to Havana because Fidel Castro was going to turn himself into the savior of communism in the world. The Cuban students themselves tell that one. Cubans never lose their humor, though, in general, jokes of this sort are forbidden.

RM: *So, in Cuba no discussion is permitted.*

GDP: In Cuba, the approach is that it cannot be. You see the whim of imposing a personal, capricious socialist model. The fear of the Cuban students in the Soviet Union is that...we are going to be involved in this process of rectification ten, fifteen, twenty years, and at the end of that time, when we are all old folk, we are going to rectify the rectification. Thus, we will take the course that the Soviet Union has taken when the country may be totally ruined, when the people may be totally destitute.

“The fear...is that...we are going to be involved in this process of rectification ten, fifteen, twenty years, and at the end of that time...we are going to rectify the rectification.”

RM: *When did you get back from your last trip to the Soviet Union?*

GDP: I got back on May 7th.

RM: *On returning to Cuba, did you discuss with anybody the differences between what was happening in the USSR and what was taking place in Cuba?*

GDP: I discussed it with many of the officers, even though it is forbidden. The Soviets themselves want this to be published in Cuba. Once, I found myself with Aldana, from the Revolutionary Orientation Office there at the DAAFAR, and he said that this could not be published in Cuba because people would turn anti-Communist. So, the leaders of the party itself and of the Cuban government are censoring Soviet Union issues.

RM: *...The communiqué from the Ministry of the Armed Forces acknowledges that you distinguished yourself as a pilot with the Revolutionary Air Force in combat at the Bay of Pigs, that you had performed an internationalist mission in Angola and that you had a meritorious service record. We also know that you took part in the uprising against Batista — in the clandestine struggle — and were exiled in Venezuela, that you received recognition as a hero of the revolution, and that you worked high up within the revolutionary government. Naturally, there is great interest in knowing the reasons that led you to decide to run the risk of leaving Cuba with your family.*

GDP: I have always tried to act in accordance with the dictates of my conscience. I started the struggle against Batista when I was 17 years old. I was jailed and, when I got out, had to go into exile in Venezuela. In the months that I was in Venezuela, I made friends with a group of medical students at the University of Caracas. At first, I did not want to join them, as I had enough problems of my own. But a time came when I saw that I had to help them. I helped them in practicing how to use explosives and a variety of other revolutionary actions. I took part in the rising against Marcos Pérez Jimenez on January 23, 1958. I was wounded and taken prisoner in Venezuela. I was imprisoned at the *Seguridad Nacional* until Pérez Jimenez fell. Afterwards, we organized the “26th of July” movement in Caracas. We fought several campaigns. During the Bolivar campaign, we collected funds for the purchase of arms for the Sierra Maestra.... With Admiral Wolfgang Larrazabal, quite a lot of arms could be obtained to send to Cuba....

...I returned secretly to Cuba in June, 1958, on a ship called *Sandiud*. I stayed in Havana a few days and then went to the *Cordillera de los Organos*, under the orders of Commandante Emilio Escalona.

“When the Bay of Pigs episode took place, I took part, fully convinced it meant Batista’s return....”

After the revolution succeeded, I was sent to Ciudad Libertad because I was better-educated than other rebels, and since flying planes is a technical and difficult process, young men were needed who had some education. There, in Libertad, I started my pilot's training.... When the Bay of Pigs episode took place, I took part, fully convinced that it meant Batista's return....

Subsequently, I devoted myself to perfecting my military and professional training. I believe that I had a very successful professional career. This was one of the reasons I was appointed chief of the Cuban Air Force units in Angola. I was also fully convinced that I was acting for a just cause....

At the time of our arrival in Angola, there were South African troops and Zairian troops there. Most of us thought at the time that our mission in Angola was to help prevent any intervention in the internal affairs of that people, in order that they may freely elect whatever form of government they most desired. Time proved the opposite and we gradually realized that things were not what we thought at first.

“Most of us thought at the time that our mission in Angola was to help prevent any intervention in the internal affairs of that people, in order that they may freely elect whatever form of government they most desired. Time proved the opposite....”

In Angola, I had my first experience in seeing the reality of Cuba; as I said earlier, I have always tried to act in accordance with the dictates of my conscience. At first, our action was greatly limited, everything had to be referred to Havana. I saw that there were many matters that, naturally, had to be referred to Havana. Indeed, I considered it logical that we should not be the first to enter into direct combat against the South African troops,

“In Angola, I had my first experience in seeing the reality of Cuba....”

because a large conflict could be started which in the long run would be unproductive for us. However, this did not mean that at a given instant we could not go to the aid of any of our fellow soldiers.

A very specific case took place on February 4, 1976. One of our scouting groups, made up of thirteen Cubans and two Angolans led by Lieutenant Artemio Cuza, penetrated the southern front about 60 kilometers behind the South African line. They were surprised by UNITA and by the South African troops. They were cut off on a hill, and I, being at the southern front command post, heard them when they began to call desperately by radio. They were fighting practically hand-to-hand, and were asking us to please

help them with helicopters. They were totally surrounded. I asked permission to take an aircraft at least. They said no,...that there had been an order from Cuba that it could not be done. At that instant, I called the helicopter pilot and told him, "Look, we're getting those men out tomorrow". ...We coordinated the whole action. I went back to Luanda that same day at dawn. From there, I took an aircraft, a MiG-21 with three tanks of fuel, since the location was outside the radius of action of the aircraft.

I could not suggest such an action to any pilot, because it was a mission in disobedience of a command. I saw in that instant, and my conscience told me, that I must assume the entire responsibility. I made the flight; we reached the location and I overflew the group cut off there and made an attack. In the midst of the confusion, the helicopters came in and we managed to rescue our troops. When I got back to Luanda, they sent me to the air base with orders to stay there until Cuba said what steps were to be taken against me.

RM: *Who took the step of sending you to the air base?*

GDP: It was Colome Ibarra who was leading the Cuban troops at that time. Indeed, as soon as I landed, I went and reported to him. Three or four days later, a wire came which said that, taking into account my record, nothing was going to be done at that time, but that if I disobeyed an order again, I would be degraded and sent back to Cuba under arrest. I was unable to understand. A cable had to be sent to Cuba and an answer awaited, since...Fidel Castro made these decisions personally. Had we waited maybe three or four hours more, the men who were fighting would have died.... When I made the overflight in the aircraft, there were about 300 UNITA

"I could not conceive that, knowing that those men were on the point of death, they were to be cut off, and that I would be forbidden to do anything for them."

troops on the road. What is more, they were firing on them; they had already put 60 mm mortars in place.... Our troops could not hold out there much longer. It all affected me greatly. I could not conceive that, knowing that those men were on the point of death, they were to be cut off, and that I would be forbidden to do anything for them.

RM: *And, to that argument, what were you told about the fate of those troops?*

GDP: That it was their funeral. That, as a scouting group, they ought to have hidden themselves, that they ought to have acted like a real scouting group. I remember that I said, "All right, let's say they made a mistake, that they were

discovered, how is it possible that they have to pay with their lives for a mistake"? That was one of the things which began to have a big effect on me.... The war in Angola was a great school for opening my eyes, and not only mine, but those of many officers in Cuba.

RM: After that experience, were there any other circumstances that aggravated your feeling that your identification with the regime was now in conflict with your principles, and perhaps other instances that led you to make your decision?

GDP: It would be interminable to relate all the circumstances that gradually had their influence on me, which caused me to open my eyes and realize that above us, rising on our shoulders, on our bayonets, [the Castro regime] had led our people into a dead-end street. I have started writing a more detailed book.

...I had to go to Angola to investigate every time that there occurred any setback, any catastrophe, whether in combat, when we were turned back or lost a pilot, or when there was an accident.... I realized later how people were being deceived in Cuba. They were told that their sons fell in the line of duty, dying heroically, when in actuality they were sending them to their deaths.

A pretty recent example: Lieutenant Raul Quiala Castaneda was a young pilot with a great future ahead of him, a boy who adored flying but had not yet learned to fly at night. Then the chief of the DAAFAR in Angola shows up one night at the Luena aerodrome and suggests an irrational and absurd mission to the kid. He was to go out at night to bombard anywhere in the vicinity of Luanda where he saw a fire lit; the assumption was that UNITA would be warming itself around any such fire. But that was absurd. First of all, the irrational aspect: Let's suppose that the kid came back, he's throwing bombs away, because there's no specific objective there. But what was most criminal was to send a kid on the mission who had never flown at night. The upshot was that the kid crashed and died. His family was told afterwards that he died heroically in combat.

"Then the chief of the DAAFAR in Angola shows up one night at the Luena aerodrome and suggests an irrational and absurd mission to the kid. He was to go out one night to bombard anywhere in the vicinity of Luanda where he saw a fire lit.... The upshot was that the kid crashed and died."

RM: Do you want to add anything else concerning your decision to leave Cuba with your family?

GDP: Look, you don't have to be very intelligent to see that they have

utilized our country as a pedestal in order to raise themselves up. They have utilized us to ruin our people. I saw this situation and chose to take my whole family, my children, and leave for the U.S. This time, I decided not to continue being an accomplice of those who have led the country into a quagmire.

RM: You returned to Cuba from your visit to the Soviet Union on May 7th, and you left Cuba for good on May 28th. Can you tell us what happened during the days of your final decision?

GDP: I had already made my decision, but it was strengthened even more on seeing the degree of confusion that exists in the military, and the dead-end street into which our people have been led. I didn't tell anybody in my family until...the last minute. It was a very sensitive action which would have great consequences for the regime and I had to act with great caution. If I failed, not only were my wishes going to be thwarted, but all these things I am aware of would remain unknown. Let me say that, before going to the Soviet Union, I had the intention of resigning and surrendering my commission — surrendering everything.

“If [my defection] failed, not only were my wishes going to be thwarted, but all these things I am aware of would remain unknown.”

I talked about this with a colonel who was a companion of mine, a man who shares the same ideas as I do, and he told me, “You're crazy; you're going to go down there, they're going to retire you, they're going to stick you in your house, they're going to pay you a salary, they're going to efface you. The people of Cuba are not going to truly know what the existing situation is, all these matters that you and I know about, and it's going to be in vain...you're going to retire to your house, you're going to sit there”, and then he told me, with a smile, “You're going to start ‘Plan Go’”.

“What do you mean, ‘Plan Go’, what's that?” I asked him.

“Go to the store, go get the bread, go take the girl to school.”

So, given that advice, I decided to take the other road. I knew that they were going to use the entire propaganda apparatus and the diabolical control over all the media to discredit me. But that didn't worry me in the least. The people of Cuba know me, the officers know me, and they know that I have always acted professionally and honestly.

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discredit me. But that didn't worry me in the least. The people of Cuba know me, the officers know me, and they know that I have always acted professionally and honestly."

RM: That leads us into the Ministry of the Armed Forces communiqué in which your action is characterized as "a repugnant betrayal". What are your thoughts on that?

GDP: I am not surprised by the communiqué. To them, anybody who stands up to them, anybody who does not share their ideas, anybody who represents a danger to the regime, is a traitor. I believe that those who have risen on our shoulders, those who have used our Fatherland as a pedestal to raise themselves up on, those who have turned the country into their private estate, they are the ones who have betrayed the Revolution.

RM: To make good use of this unique occasion, since so far in Cuba anybody who has left has had no chance to tell his side of the story, would you care to explain the case of your 15-year-old son who left Cuba with you and whom you were accused by Cuban propaganda of having kidnapped?

GDP: I want to remind all the officers who know these intimate things of a specific event that happened to my boy, but first I want to tell them that the boy is very well. I could not tell him of my decision because he ran a great risk. He is a child. Afterwards, I told him that if he wanted to go back to Cuba he could do so. I even said to him, "Look, my conscience is clear as regards my at least having brought you over here to save you. Now, if you want to go back, I will speak to officials of the U.S. government and you'll be on your way back to Cuba tomorrow." He told me, "No, dad, I'm staying with you, I don't want to go back to that nightmare." If the Cuban government says that it is so humanitarian, I can defray his mother's expenses to come yearly to see him here. It all depends on the Cuban government.

"I told [my son] that if he wanted to go back to Cuba he could do so. I even said to him, 'Look, my conscience is clear as regards my at least having brought you over here to save you. Now, if you want to go back, I will speak to officials of the U.S. government and you'll be on your way back to Cuba tomorrow.' He told me, 'No, dad, I'm staying with you, I don't want to go back to that nightmare.'"

However, what I do not want at all is for my son to be used as cannon

fodder, nor for my son again to suffer the violation of human rights that he suffered on December 26th of last year. At 7 a.m., he was on his way to school. The bus pulled up very full. He tried to get on at the back of the bus and almost didn't fit. At that instant, this colonel by the name of Aranda, from the DAAFAR, assaulted the boy and beat him up in the middle of the street because he felt like it. The bus...stopped and everybody inside it started to shout at him, "Blackguard, scoundrel, bully", because he was laying into the boy with his fists in the middle of the street. Two women, Mrs. Clara Pacheco and Mrs. Luisa Nuñez, got off the bus, confronted this colonel and put my son on. They tried to encourage him to go to the police station. After having gone about 10 blocks...as they were crossing 31st Street, Mrs. Clara Pacheco said to the policeman at the traffic light, "Please call a patrol car; there is a serious problem with this colonel." The patrol car arrived, everybody got in and the [colonel] says "Look, let's go to my unit for a minute so I can report to my superior officer that I am going to the Fifth Police Station so he knows that I am going to be late." The police agreed.

When they entered the unit, the [colonel] said, "All right, I'm the boss here and it's all over right now." They isolated the boy there and kept him separate. The boy acted as I have always told him, namely to never say that he was a general's son, not to pull his father's rank to obtain any favors. They then took the two women aside and pressured them not to make a complaint. The head of the unit joined in with the colonel as his accomplice. Colonel Aranda even went as far as to tell Mrs. Clara Pacheco that if he had had a pistol there he would have used it on the boy, and he also said — and look at the ideas some leading officers of the military have — "The youth of Cuba are incorrigible; the only way to cure them is by beating them. The police are too soft, blows and the boot are the way to control them." The women got out of there like a shot; there was nothing they could do.

"Colonel Aranda even went as far as to tell Mrs. Clara Pacheco that if he had had a pistol there he would have used it on [my son], and he also said (and look at the ideas some leading officers of the military have), 'The youth of Cuba are incorrigible; the only way to cure them is by beating them....'"

After a time, the boy got out and the first thing he did was to telephone me. At first, I thought that the boy had said something to him, had been disrespectful, because in Cuba these days the young do not respect the military. They do not respect them for these very reasons, because of the arbitrary actions they commit. I went to the unit. The [colonel] had already gone on duty and I could not manage to see the head of the unit. I then called Mrs. Clara Pacheco and she told me that the boy had not been disrespectful

at any time. "Look here, General, it was the greatest abuse I have ever seen. All the child was doing was hanging on to the door, and the colonel beat him up as if he were a man."

Then I thought, let me see how justice and the law operate in this country. I took the boy and we went to the police station. There, the boy gave a full account of what had happened. The police told me that since a colonel was involved, the matter would have to be referred to the Judge Advocate General's corps. That same day, the Judge Advocates came to see me, the [boy] recounted everything, they filled in the forms and left.

When a week and a bit had passed, I spoke to the Judge Advocates and asked them what's going to happen. They told me, "What is going to be attempted is to bring [Aranda] before a 'Court of Honor' in order to teach him a better lesson."

"But aren't you aware of the offenses he has committed?", I asked. "Well, first of all," I continued, "misuse of authority; second, disturbing the peace; third, undue influence. Here, the first two offenses mean a month in jail, or in less serious cases, a fine of 300 or 400 pesos. But the third offense, undue influence, that's 2 or 3 years. But then we have a breach of military secrecy, because three civilians were brought into a supersecret military unit, which the Central Command Post of the DAAFAR Troops is, in order to remove him from the reach of civil liability."

So, then, the day of the famous "Court of Honor" arrived. I went to Cacahual, where Mrs. Clara Pacheco works, and gave her a lift in my car, with my son, to the Headquarters of the DAAFAR, where the "Court of Honor" took place. At that point, I entered a theater. The officers of the same rank as this man were there and, well, the President of the Court explained what a "Court of Honor" is, that it is a new wrinkle to give experience, since in the Revolution "men must not be destroyed, they must be helped to reform". And then they called in my son. My son stated exactly, to the letter, what I have recounted here. However, it seems that the matter had already been decided, because the colonel stood up and, as we say, "committed harakiri": "Yes, I did wrong, I ought not to have done it, but anybody can have a bad day, I got up that morning, things went badly at home...." Then, at that point, the show started.

I said, "But look, here is a woman who is able, who is impartial, and who saw it all. It is no longer a matter of my son's word nor of the colonel's word, but that of a woman who was present and who is also an official of the **Ministry of the Interior**. She is not going to take sides, nor is she a counter-revolutionary." Then they said, "No, no, there's no need to give her a hearing" — meaning that she could not testify there! Then one man stood up and said, "Aranda is a good family man, Aranda did a tour of duty in Angola, he is an internationalist, he was there for two years, Aranda is a good soldier,

he is a militant of the old Party, he has been a Party leader here....” Then I riposted, “Yes, but he is a Party leader who, if he had had a pistol, would have shot a 15-year-old child, and, what’s more, he savagely beat him up in the street and left him lying on the ground.”

Then the various officers started jumping up. When I saw that show, that Roman circus, I had to get a hold of myself, and I said to myself, “...Be patient, hold on, swallow this, don’t do anything crazy, stay calm...”, because I was on the verge of standing up and saying everything I felt and everything I had inside me. But I contained myself.

The whole thing was a farce. The end result was that the colonel was called to order: “Look here, you are to understand that this Court penalizes you by calling you to order”; they didn’t even issue an admonition, because an admonition goes on the record. That man had acted in such a way as to be expelled from the military at least. Because a colonel who runs away, who runs up 42nd Street from two women and a child, would surrender on Grenada, or anywhere else!

RM: What were your thoughts on all that, and how did you react after that session of the Court of Honor?

GDP: At the time, when I witnessed it, I thought, “Well, is this socialist legality?” And when I saw those DAAFAR officers stand up and defend a man who had besmirched his uniform by abusing a child in the middle of the street, committing several offenses, I thought, “Are these the kind of people that I have to live with here? Are these the armed forces that claim to be the most democratic and humanitarian? The whole thing is a farce.” I’ve told you all this, because I know that the child’s mother will hear this report. She knows that everything, absolutely everything that I have mentioned here is strictly the truth, and Mrs. Clara Pacheco and Mrs. Luisa Nuñez are there who can bear witness to all of it. In Cuba, anybody can go to their houses and question them. At the time, I said to myself, “Nonsense, I can’t go on living among people who violate human rights like this.”

“And when I saw those DAAFAR officers stand up and defend a man who had besmirched his uniform by abusing a child in the middle of the street, committing several offenses, I thought, ‘Are these the kind of people that I have to live with here?’”

RM: General, let’s continue our conversation, this time on the subject of Angola. We know that many Cubans have lost their lives there; we also know that the media in Cuba provide few details of the situation. Why are the Cubans in Angola? Could you give us specific examples of the reason that you believe

can be given to the people as to why Cuba has sent its troops to this remote land?

GDP: As to the presence of the Cubans in Angola, initially the threat from South Africa was spoken of. Now, the Cuban government is saying that they will be in Angola until apartheid has disappeared. So, a new pretext for keeping the troops in Angola is being put forward. However, in my view, and I have analyzed it in this way with many officers of the armed forces,

“As to the presence of the Cubans in Angola, initially the threat from South Africa was spoken of. Now, the Cuban government is saying that they will be in Angola until apartheid has disappeared. So, a new pretext for keeping the troops in Angola is being put forward.”

three basic reasons account for the Cuban military presence in Angola: first, Angola represents a key strategic point for the Soviet Union in the South Atlantic. Its ports and aerodromes can be refurbished to launch any strategic operation. And the Cubans must somehow pay off the 10 billion rubles that the Soviet Union has given Cuba in armaments, and the huge external debt to the Soviet Union; second, the enormous unemployment that exists in Cuba. You can imagine with the situation as it is in Cuba at present...to suddenly take back about 40,000 Cubans into the country would create an immense problem; third, in recent years, Angola has become a place of punishment, or a place to send difficult officers, i.e., first officers or commanders who do not enjoy the trust of their superior commanders or who have morale problems or problems of command and qualification. The choice of Angola as a place of punishment has created great problems. The proof lies in the fact that the officers who surrendered on Grenada, starting with [Pedro] Tortolo, were degraded and sent to Angola as privates.

“You can imagine with the situation as it is in Cuba at present...to suddenly take back about 40,000 Cubans into the country would create an immense problem....”

RM: *Why have they created problems, General?*

GDP: Those officers...who have been punished because of poor qualifications and poor capacity have created problems by sending the young men out to perform irrational missions. They gamble with others' lives. Our young men die uselessly and, more than that, irrationally, as in the case that I

told you of earlier. There are many more examples.

“Those officers...who have been punished because of poor qualifications and poor capacity have created problems by sending the young men out to perform irrational missions.”

I will give you this further one: Colonel Tomas Benitez Martinez was commanding the FAR [*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*, Revolutionary Armed Forces] in Angola. On a single day in September of 1984, he lost three MiG-23s. He was responsible for the loss of innumerable helicopters and planes, including an AN-26 of which, unfortunately, my son was one of the pilots. Well, back in the seventies, this colonel reached the rank of commander of the FAR. Afterwards, he was demoted, and ultimately, to get him out of the way, he was sent to Angola, where he perpetrated all these outrages. All these boys died uselessly, and nevertheless he went back to Cuba, was decorated and assigned to the FAR in Oriente. The saddest aspect of these cases is that the family is later told that their boy died heroically in combat.

“The saddest aspect of these cases is that the family is later told that their boy died heroically in combat.”

RM: *The Cubans in Angola are protecting the Cabinda oil fields. It is also said that the government of Cuba is paid for the troops there by the government of Angola. Is there any talk in the military that the government of Cuba receives economic benefit from the presence of the troops in Angola, or is this not known within the military?*

GDP: Naturally, this is not known among the population at large, but it is known within the military. The Angolan government must pay for the food, clothing, medicines and everything that our soldiers consume. But it also pays the subalterns 600 kwanzas, 900 to the first officers and 1,200 to the superior officers. I believe that — unless the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language has changed the meaning — armies that serve a government or foreign power elite for pay are nothing but mercenaries. And the talk already has it inside our military circles that we are a mercenary army, that we

“I believe that — unless the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language has changed the meaning — armies that serve a government or foreign power elite for pay are nothing but mercenaries.”

are supporting a group in power that is amassing fabulous riches in foreign banks, that is vacationing in France and London at the expense of the people; a group that is being kept in power by our arms, because what the Angolans themselves are definitely sure of, as is the power group at the head of the government, is that if we withdraw from Angola, Savimbi will bid us farewell at the airport.

“...[W]hat the Angolans themselves are definitely sure of, as is the power group at the head of the government, is that if we withdraw from Angola, Savimbi will bid us farewell at the airport.”

RM: *The impression that exists is that many went to Angola of their own free will and with the conviction that they were performing a task justified by history. From what you say, this view has changed. Aside from your own personal position, what is the attitude of your brother officers and of the troops as regards rendering this type of internationalist service?*

GDP: Our first officers perceive that the problem lies in that neither the sons of members of the Political Bureau nor the sons of the principal leaders of the government not only do not go to Angola, but they do not even do their military service. It is very easy to give harangues from the sidelines about the internationalist missions without having to send your son to war. You have to be on the field, as our officers put it. If by any chance the son of any leader, not merely a member of the Central Committee and of the Political Bureau, but any other leader, has to go off for military service, our officers know that things will be arranged for him to stay in Luanda or Luango to do his service, where the worst that can happen to him is to get bitten by a mosquito carrying malaria.... It is out of the question that the sons of members of the Political Bureau or of the Central Committee should go to war. They don't go to Angola and they don't perform military service.

“It is very easy to give harangues from the sidelines about the internationalist missions without having to send your son to war.”

RM: *You have remarked that your sons have done internationalist service in Angola. There is an impression that, in your opinion, the situation has changed as regards internationalist service.... Since you have a 15-year-old son, would you consider it worthwhile for him to go at this stage on a military mission to Angola, or do you consider that, unlike your elder sons, that it is not justified nowadays?*

GDP: It cannot be justified now.... Let me give you an example: At one time, in 1984 or 1985, I went to investigate a big setback we had sustained in Angola. On the aircraft on which I was travelling, a group of boys was being sent to relieve some troops in Luena that had already completed their two years there. These boys were being sent from Luanda. When they had been there for five days, another general who was commanding Luena, by the name of Valle-Lazo, sent a group of them — 13 kids who had been in Angola five days — to mop up a village without having had any prior training, without explaining to them what the situation there was, what UNITA was, what its tactics were, nor allowing them to familiarize themselves with the terrain; all of them were killed. ...Their families were then told that they had died heroically in combat, when, in actuality, they were sent irresponsibly to their deaths.

Seeing this, I, of course, do not want my son to go through that. But what causes the most grief in the whole situation is that these boys die and are buried over there and their bodies are never given to their families. And nobody has the right to dispose arbitrarily of the mortal remains of our loved ones. Even the body of a criminal who has been sent to the electric chair or shot is later given to his family. Of course there has been talk that when we leave Angola for good the remains of the fallen will be returned to Cuba. But that is a fallacy. For instance, my brother-in-law, Antonio Diego, died in Guinea-Conakry on February 19, 1973, while performing his internationalist mission. It's been a good number of years since military assistance to Guinea was withdrawn, but the remains of my brother-in-law and the remains of other fellow soldiers who lost their lives were left abandoned there. And the same will happen with our heroes, that is, with our fallen in Ethiopia, in Nicaragua, in Angola and elsewhere in the world.

“...[W]hat causes the most grief in the whole situation is that these boys die and are buried over there and their bodies are never given to their families.”

RM: *What figure is named among the high military command in Cuba concerning personnel losses and what is the reaction among these officers?*

GDP: The exact figures are kept in great secrecy. All I can tell you is what is said among the high command of the military and by the “invisible press”. It is said that between the wounded, the dead in action, the dead of illness and the missing, we have had losses of about 10,000.

“It is said that between the wounded, the dead in action, the dead of illness and the missing, we have had losses of about

10,000.”

RM: *What does the high command say about this? Is there concern in case these losses become known? Have you ever had a chance to learn the opinion of Raul and Fidel Castro on the losses, or maybe some commentary, without providing specific data, as to the fact that they are sustaining heavy losses?*

GDP: No, the actual losses sustained are kept under strict secrecy. However, there seems to be no great concern about the lives of our young men being so readily gambled with in Angola.

“...[T]here seems to be no great concern about the lives of our young men being so readily gambled with in Angola.”

RM: *Taking this issue one step further, General: Among the officers of the high command in Cuba, what is the opinion as to the future of Angola? Is there any perception that this is, as the Cuban people say, a war without end, or is it maybe a correct/incorrect optimism that leads them to believe that there may be a victory?*

GDP: Angola is a dead-end street. Angola — many of us military men have discussed this — is Cuba's Viet Nam. If there is anybody at all who has any faith in victory, it's only Fidel and Raul Castro. I have spoken with officers of my own rank, and among us there is the utter conviction that there is no solution to the case of Angola. It is a lost cause and our presence there is causing our people a great problem.... Families in Cuba are profoundly affected and feel that their sons are going to die uselessly. Among the high command of the military (there may be one or two who do not say so for fear of reprisals), it is said that this war is lost and that we have become, as I said, a mercenary army.

“Angola is a dead-end street. Angola... is Cuba's Viet Nam. If there is anybody at all who has any faith in victory, it's only Fidel and Raul Castro.”

RM: *That leads me to a further question. As regards the relations of the Cuban troops both with the military of Angola and with the civilian population, how does the Cuban soldier, the Cuban officer, feel inside Angola? Does he feel that he is well regarded by the people, that the people see him as a liberator who has come to help them defend themselves, or have the people of Angola changed their perception of Cubans just as the Cubans, like you, have changed their perception of the role they are playing there? What is that relationship, and*

what have you to say about it?

GDP: There has been a complete change in the attitude towards the Cubans in Angola from that which existed in 1975, 1976 and 1977. In those first years, they took well to us, they looked kindly on us. They thought, just as we did, that most of us were there temporarily; that our presence was designed to help them freely elect the government that they considered most suitable. A complete change has occurred; relations have been getting worse.

Everybody who has been in Angola realizes what frightful poverty there is in that country. Naturally, it is ascribed to the war, but basically the entire responsibility lies with the government of Angola, the pigheadedness of the power elite, who look out only for themselves and don't seek a negotiated solution to the problems in Angola.

The [Angolan] people do not want the Cubans in Angola. We feel bad. The Angolan officers and troops themselves no longer want us there, because they see what I mentioned earlier: the poor qualifications of our troops there. And also that our troops will leave them high and dry at the time they most need us, as happened at the Battle of Cangamba. When the Battle of Cangamba began, our troops were alongside theirs, but there was a spell of quiet in the battle in which the UNITA troops fell back a bit. We then pulled the Cubans out of the siege by helicopter, leaving the Angolan troops to their fate, and they were wiped out later by UNITA.

The Angolan officers see this, feel it and know it. The Cuban is there not to die at their side but to keep the current group in power. He is there to maintain the fundamental base of the Soviet Union in that area of the Atlantic. There is no longer the mission of 1975 and 1976.

"The Cuban is there not to die at [the Angolans'] side but to keep the current group in power."

RM: *When did your last mission to Angola take place?*

GDP: I've been there so many times! Well, I think it was in February of this year. I would go to Angola regularly to investigate accidents, setbacks, etc.

RM: *Regarding those accidents that you mentioned earlier — an Antonov-26 aircraft piloted by your son that landed in Zaire — can you give us any more information on that mysterious incident in which the aircraft landed and it was not known what cargo it was carrying...? Then, after a stay of several weeks in Zaire, the government lets it leave. It might be interesting to know why and what happened in that accident.*

GDP: It is interesting. That accident took place, to be exact, on December 1, 1985. Unfortunately, my son was one of the pilots on that aircraft. Their mission was to transport some Cuban troops who had concluded their tour of duty in Angola from the city of Luena to Luanda. They took off at 2:45 p.m. In December it is summer in the southern hemisphere and in Angola the summers are very intense. A big chain of clouds of vertical development, cumulus, storm clouds, had formed. As soon as they took off, they went into the clouds and virtually from their take-off the aircraft's navigational system malfunctioned. Thus, although their instruments indicated on the navigational system that they were heading at 310 degrees for Luanda, in fact they were flying with a heading of 350 degrees northwards. When they realized that the navigational system had broken down on them, they turned the nose in the direction of the setting sun, since by flying in that direction they would get closer to the coast. But when they had five minutes worth of fuel left, flying over a mountainous region near a town called Quengue, in Zaire, they spotted a small clearing on a plateau and made an emergency landing. The aircraft was completely undamaged. They believed that they were on Angolan territory, and since the UNITA commanded the entire countryside, they thought that at any moment they might be confronted by them. They burnt the aircraft and all their documents and commenced to march through the forest in search of the frontier.

I was notified of the accident on December 2, with orders to go to Angola fast, that my son was on an aircraft that was missing. We started the search from the city of Malange, because the last aircraft to make contact with them at 5:45 p.m. was over Malange. I calculated the approximate radius within which their aircraft might be found and we started the search.

After a week, I reported to the commander of the mission that in my opinion they were all dead. I have a lot of experience investigating accidents. Since there were no signs of life, and no remains of the aircraft had been found, then as far as I was concerned they were dead. It was that night that we heard, over the BBC from London, that they were in Zaire.

In the course of my sojourn there, with the search already over, talks started with the government of Zaire for their return. I started to uncover a variety of very unusual things. Among them, the fact that this famous commander of the FAR had changed all the radio frequencies to communicate with the different airports. That was why my son's plane was unable to establish contact with anybody. (Plus a number of other gross stupidities which he had perpetrated.)

Furthermore, when I was at the airport to go back to Cuba, I was approached by an officer of the place and he said to me, "General, search closely, because you are being sold mutton dressed as lamb. It has been five years since the navigational systems here have been inspected...." That

alerted me. I took the aircraft's records and discovered that they made the mistake of entering in them, as the date of the regulation work on the navigational system, a date on which the person who signed, Navigator Risquejo, was on furlough in Cuba.

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After I returned to Cuba I sent him a letter telling him to explain how it was possible that while on furlough in Cuba he had signed the records on that date. He then answered my letter, saying that he was compelled by Colonel Benitez and Colonel de la Paz to sign the book. Indeed, they had forbidden him in no uncertain terms to answer me. However, he disobeyed the order and sent me a letter, which I have in my possession, in which he explains what happened. I made a copy of the letter and sent a complete report to my superiors as to the true causes of this accident and all the unusual events which occurred, including the deceptions practiced, and how the lives of the men there were or are being gambled with.

To date there has been no answer. It was left at that, and I repeat that when these two men got to Cuba they were decorated; one of them is commander of the FAR in Oriente, and Colonel de la Paz is commander of the Cienfuegos helicopter regiment. Let me tell you, the Cuban Penal Code characterizes as air piracy any change to what is set forth in the records of an aircraft that causes an accident. And in one of its sections — if my memory serves me, Section D — the penalty for this crime is 20 years to death. And nobody even had the tact to give me an explanation of this matter.

RM: How do career officers view the Party and the political leadership of the Revolution? What is their reaction to events like the process of rectification that has taken place in the last months? Is there a greater or a lesser influence from the Party? As a result of this, General, do you think that there is a lack of trust between career soldiers and political commissars?

GDP: The large majority of the officers belong to the Party, because they know that if they are not militants they cannot rise in rank, limiting their

career development. Those are the rules of the game under this, let us say, “tropical socialism” of Fidel Castro. You are worth nothing for your ability, you are worth nothing for your qualifications or initiative, you are only of value for your degree of submission, servility, and for your skill in “socialismo”, or the socialist old boys’ network.

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Forgive me if I hold forth a bit on this, but I consider it necessary to explain properly something of a new phenomenon which we have come to call the “invisible press”, which has arisen. Fidel Castro himself spoke of this on one occasion, without realizing that it was going to boomerang against him. The “invisible press” arose immediately on the outbreak of the war in Angola, at the end of 1975. I do not know whether people will remember Fidel Castro’s speech of April 19, 1976, in which he mentioned how the Cuban people had come to know everything about the war in Angola without anything having been published openly in the press or any other medium of communication. On that occasion, he praised the enormous capacity of Cubans to learn of and relay news in secret. And he had no idea what that was going to lead to. To me, the “invisible press” is Newton’s third law carried over into human thought. That is to say, against the action of muzzling arose a reaction of outflow of equal or greater force.

What Fidel Castro never thought was that this force would come to attain such a magnitude that it could keep the officer class informed of all the corruption present in the high levels of government and of all the absurdities and whims of both him and his brother.

“What Fidel Castro never thought was that this force would come to attain such a magnitude that it could keep the officer class informed of all the corruption present in the high levels of government and of all the absurdities and whims of both him and his brother.”

Sometimes I was so involved in my work that I was ignorant of many things that were happening. Since I came to be the only general and the only commander who never isolated himself from the mass of officers and who kept on flying right up to the last with all the pilots, even the merest instructor, it was easier for me to learn more closely how they live, what our

officers think, what our troops think.

I'll tell you a story that happened to me when I was at one of our air bases. I won't say the name so as not to jeopardize the officers, though I have had similar experiences. The incident of the man who approached me in Angola and told me, "Listen, search, search, they are offering you mutton dressed as lamb," is a result of my close relationship at all times with the officers of the line and with the pilots. But however that may be, in this specific case, I was at this air base, we had made a lot of flights and, afterwards, when we were in the pilots' bar, a young man with whom I had struck up some affinity said to me, "Listen, General, you've been flying for twenty-some-odd years. Don't you get tired of flying? I mean, while I am doing one flight, another guy is doing another, but as an instructor you have to fly with everybody".... So I said to this boy, "Look, kid, the problem is that I hold the opinion that a man thinks and acts as he lives, and I believe that by living closer to the sun I can better understand his problems, I can better understand life, this world of ours".... (Meaning, of course, the world of flying.) Then he answers me, mischievously, "Look, better be careful, or else in your desire to live closer to the sun you may stay up in the heavens for ever." Well, that gave me a good laugh. And at that point he said to me, "Why don't you look for a little house by the sea in order to get away from it all once in a while?"... And I replied, "Well, that's not so easy"; then he, smiling, said to me, "General, get your feet on the ground..., you think of nothing but the air.... Look, talk to Luis Orlando Dominguez or to Armando Acosta, they know how business is done...."

RM: *Luis Orlando Dominguez, isn't he the same man who was Secretary General of the Union of Communist Youth?*

GDP: The same. This man, without knowing what it is to fight against brigands, ...what an internationalist mission is, or what the horrors of war are, rose like scum.... He would give harangues calling for more effort and more sacrifice, and also would ask from the sidelines for more young men for Angola, and all the while he was one of the many who turned the country into their private estate. This was fully known to all the military, but I was so out of touch that when that boy told me of it, I thought he was exaggerating.

"[Luis Orlando Dominguez] would give harangues calling for more effort and more sacrifice, and also would ask from the sidelines for more young men for Angola, and all the while he was one of the many who turned the country into their private estate."

So, what happened to me? Well, we generals have a special restaurant to ourselves in Guanabo, at a place called Villa Guanabo, where the prices are still those of 1959. The place is frequented by generals, colonels with the duties of generals, and the members of the Central Committee. We have no problems because of queues in the street or anything like that. It was December, year's end, and there was no beer to be had, so I went there, bought a case of beer and, on the way back, said to myself, "Why don't I go by the place that young pilot talked about?" So I went by Celimar, and my mouth dropped open when I saw the mansion that Luis Orlando Domínguez had built. I asked the man on the [neighborhood watch] committee, "Who lives here?" He sees that I'm dressed in my uniform and says, "The scoundrel who is the head of...civil aviation lives there." And yet I said to him, "Well, but surely nobody knows this, and as soon as Fidel finds out, you'll see sparks fly." He said, "Listen, an expeditionary from *Granma* lives here by the name of Roque who is retired, and from the time that all the construction started, he knew what was happening and started to send letters to the leaders of the government."

At that point, I realized that all this was not unknown. This man even told me — and this is a shame — that when Fidel came through here, through Guanabo, he saw some poor wretch with a concrete pourer and a borrowed crane; he himself was laying the slab for his house. Well, it was confiscated and from then on Castro mentioned this event in nearly all his speeches. What a pity that he did not look down and see entire gangs from the MICON working to build Luis Orlando Domínguez's house.

Well, I know of innumerable cases like this one. You know, I got the information about this situation from a young pilot and when it checked out I was dumbfounded.... Forgive me if I have run on a bit in answer to this question, but I thought it necessary to give these examples so that it can be understood why the career officer class in Cuba does not believe in and has no faith in the leaders of the revolution.

RM: General, starting in 1980, the Territorial Troop Militias [TTMs] were created and these troops are in actuality controlled through the provincial secretariats of the Communist Party of Cuba. The speculation on this is that, rather than a military force, the TTMs are conceived of as a militia that has been created as a counterweight to the military. Is this view accurate, or do the military see it otherwise?

GDP: Well, I wouldn't say a rival force, because the TTMs can do very little against the military. The problem is that with the TTMs under the direction of the Party, the whole population is involved in the war, including women and children. Fidel Castro knows very well that this hinders any action by

the military, because the troops will never fire on the people. This is the same case as that of a criminal who shields himself with a child to prevent the police from firing on him. That's the comparison I draw. The basic objective of the Territorial Troop Militias, in my view, is to involve the entire population in war — women and children included. That serves as a brake on the military in the event of any action against the regime.

“The basic objective of the Territorial Troop Militias, in my view, is to involve the entire population in war — women and children included. That serves as a brake on the military in the event of any action against the regime.”

RM: *There is another aspect, not involving the people now, but the Soviets in relation to the military. The Soviets play a very important role within the military; indeed, this is possibly the institution within Cuba in which the Soviet presence is most widespread and most notable, so it would be interesting to learn how the officers regard their Soviet colleagues. Is there a cordial attitude, an antagonistic one or one of indifference? How does that relationship play itself out?*

GDP: I would classify relations between Cuban officers and their Soviet colleagues as indifferent and, at times, antagonistic. The thing is that the advisers who come to Cuba arrive with the notion that they are there for three years of vacation, rather than three years of work.

...And between fishing and hunting for sea snails, they haven't the slightest influence on what decisions the Cubans make. However, whenever any training program is carried out that involves any risk, they resolutely object, because what interests them is to get back to the Soviet Union with their noses clean — that is, that any specialist they advise never has any problems. In our specific case, flying, the advisers who were there wanted to get back with the fewest accidents, with their sea snails and their tans from the beach, and without any problem.

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I'll give you a specific instance of this: in the last year, we had an enormous number of catastrophic accidents in Cuba, deaths of young pilots, even of pilots with some experience, coming down in a tailspin because they couldn't control the aircraft at low speeds. I was instructed to carry out a special training program to correct this situation. I drew up the entire training program and devised the experimental exercise flights that the pilots had to perform. I considered this an elementary matter, something that I had no reason to refer to the Soviets. I started to implement this program with the young pilots first and with several instructors afterwards, and would show them the plane at the start of the spin and the actions to be taken by the pilot in such a situation.

When the Soviet advisers to the DAAFAR learned what I was doing, they raised a hue and cry, spoke with the chief of the DAAFAR, told him that it was crazy, and that it could not be permitted. The program was then ordered stopped. We had a very full discussion of this topic. They never managed to convince me, but it was the decision of the Soviets not to carry out this sort of training that was finally imposed.

This was a great disappointment, because the people of Cuba cannot imagine how they are being deceived by being made to believe that they are very well protected and that their pilots have high-level training. In truth, their training is the very worst that can be, basically because of the poor advice that the Soviets offer. This seems an odd thing, but that's the way it is.

“...[T]he people of Cuba cannot imagine how they are being deceived by being made to believe that they are very well protected and that their pilots have high-level training.”

RM: General, there are two things that follow from your remarks. If this is so, in what way is this applicable to places such as Ethiopia, Nicaragua and Angola?... The Cubans who go into combat on these internationalist missions can rely on the best equipment and the best training to avoid unnecessary deaths.

GDP: They send equipment that is not bad in some cases, for example, as regards types of aircraft, though they are fairly backward as compared with Western aircraft. But it isn't just a problem of equipment. Remember, weapons are only as good as the man handling them and his decision to fight with them and his training. The area in which there definitely is a lot of difference is in how to employ these weapons, how to utilize them, the methods of combat; specifically, in places such as Angola, we have serious differences with the Soviets on how to employ armaments, how to employ tactics, etc.

“...[I]n places such as Angola, we have serious differences with the Soviets on how to employ armaments, how to employ tactics, etc.”

RM: *General, regarding that point precisely.... You say that in the case of this training decision within Cuba the Soviet view won out over yours concerning the way to train the pilots so as to avoid accidents. In this case it was a matter which took place in Cuba. But in Angola, for instance, who makes the decisions?*

GDP: Well, there is a tripartite council made up of Soviet, Angolan, and Cuban commanders, where the decisions are discussed, etc. But in the long run the Soviets' decision wins out. Let me give you an example: the 1985 offensive. The Soviets suggested it be carried out in two directions: from Luena towards Cazombo, on the frontier with Zambia, and at the same time in the south from Cuito Cuanavale in the direction of Mabinga. The Cuban contingent was against this decision, because it considered that the offensive should not be divided into two fronts, that it should be carried out in one direction only. There were a lot of discussions and in the end the Soviets' view won out. The outcome was an immense defeat, although there was some success towards Cazombo (but this was a secondary direction). In the principal direction, towards Mabinga, it was a total failure. The [Angolan government] troops were annihilated, and the whole thing was the fault of poor guidance by the Soviet advisers.

“The [Angolan government] troops were annihilated, and the whole thing was the fault of poor guidance by the Soviet advisers.”

RM: *Another situation which had a huge impact on the people of Cuba was the case of Grenada in 1983. According to what is known, Colonel Tortolo was sent there when Maurice Bishop was already dead, apparently in order to take charge of the final defense. It is said that he gave the order to fight to the last man. What did the military think about all this?*

GDP: Tortolo is a typical case of a “favorite”. He was an officer with no combat background, but was very skillful nonetheless. He came to be another of the men in the confidence of the Cuban high command. This type of officer, as I have told you, greatly abounds in high circles.

I believe that what happened in Grenada is not hard to explain. Men fight to the last ditch and are prepared to die when they are convinced that they are giving up their lives for a just cause. When they are in combat to keep one

group in power, or to flatter the delusions of grandeur of others, they simply do not fight, and that is what happened on Grenada.

“Men fight to the last ditch and are prepared to die when they are convinced that they are giving up their lives for a just cause. When they are in combat to keep one group in power, or to flatter the delusions of grandeur of others, they simply do not fight, and that is what happened on Grenada.”

In general, the Cuban people were completely misled about what went on there. False information was broadcast to them; it was attempted by all means to change the view of what was happening. In the end, although nothing was published in the press and there was silence in this regard, all the people of Cuba knew that of all who went there not one wanted to fight. And one proof is that there were only two military men among the dead. The rest were laborers who were taken by surprise and were unable to take orders from the Cuban military men who were there.

RM: *General, if there were another military disaster, let's say in Nicaragua or in Angola...the men who choose to surrender, do you think they would be prepared to go back to Cuba to meet the same fate as befell Tortolo and his officers? What was said about Grenada?*

GDP: Well, not much was said. However, there is a lot of pressure among the military men who are abroad performing missions. They fear that something similar will befall them, that in an adverse situation they will be captured or wounded and afterwards have to face the humiliation of having been captured.

“...[T]here is a lot of pressure among the military men who are abroad performing missions. They fear that something similar will befall them, that in an adverse situation they will be captured or wounded and afterwards have to face the humiliation of having been captured.”

Let me give you a concrete example, though I don't like to speak of this because my son is involved. In this case of the aircraft, after they made their emergency landing in Zaire, they burnt the aircraft and spent several days walking through the forest. They had only 4 rifles, which belonged to the crew. Later, they encountered some troops defending Zaire's frontier. They held their ground and told the Zairians that they were not going to give up

their weapons. From there, they went to a town called Popocabaca, on the frontier with Angola. They spoke with the mayor of the town and the police chief. Later on, a colonel showed up and told them that they had to surrender and turn over their weapons. At that point, thinking that if they surrendered their arms they would have serious problems when they returned to their base, they refused. They told the colonel that they were not going to surrender and that they would keep their arms, and threatened to fire at will, and that he would be responsible for [any] deaths.... So, the colonel relented.

The next day they got into some vehicles and went to the town of Kengue — which comes before you reach Kinshasa — where there was some media. They had stipulated that they would not surrender their weapons until after they had seen the press. After they arrived there, they made a contingent record of developments and surrendered their arms. Afterwards, when they got back to Angola, an investigation...commenced to see what the one who would not surrender the arms had said and who wavered. They were kept under investigation for nearly two months. But what is more, after this stance of theirs — so correct and gentlemanly and appropriate to honorable officers — they were dumped on the trash heap.

Everything is done with an eye to what the result will be after one reaches Cuba, how it will be viewed and what reprisals will be taken against one.

“Everything is done with an eye to what the result will be after one reaches Cuba, how it will be viewed and what reprisals will be taken against one.”

RM: *Have you any information on the present fate of Tortolo, whether he's still in Angola?*

GDP: He was in Angola the last time I was there, still a buck private, banished and enduring his chastisement in order later to rejoin — according to the Cuban government — society, but not the military.

RM: *So, at the end of his sojourn in Angola, he will cease to be in the military?*

GDP: He will cease to be in the military. Let me say here that most of the officers who have come back from over there are in Cuba roaming the streets without a job.

RM: *I would like your comments on the situation in Nicaragua. There is a core of some 3,000 Cubans, according to the figures given by military advisers, and several thousand civilian advisers.... What have you to say about this?*

GDP: Cuba has many advisers in Nicaragua from various branches of the economy, as well as from the military, approximately 300 or 400. Their roles there are varied. Their missions are not exactly the same as those of the troops in Angola, because the conditions are very different — both the population and the military have a different idiosyncrasy. The basic role of the Cubans there — and it strikes me that this has not really been realized here or elsewhere in the world — is to influence the Nicaraguan government and military to achieve a model for revolution and military like that of Cuba. In brief, to carry a chunk of Cuba over to Central America.

“The basic role of the Cubans [in Nicaragua]...is to influence the Nicaraguan government and military to achieve a model for revolution and military like that of Cuba.”

Let me explain this properly. Look at it this way: At the outset of the Cuban Revolution, being an island represented a great advantage for defense. However, as the years went by that characteristic became a hindrance to carrying the revolution over to the mainland. Look at all the failures when Cubans were sent to Venezuela,...Bolivia, etc. With the victory of the Sandinista Front in Nicaragua, Castro saw the chance he had been waiting years for, in a form that would create fewer problems for him within Cuba. He would not have to send Cuban troops to Nicaragua in the same manner in which they were sent in Angola and in Ethiopia. Thus, the “robot strategy” was created. Use Nicaraguans as cannon fodder, but instill the mentality of the Cuban communists.

Consider: Nicaragua is very backward. Most of the population is illiterate. In fact, there is no working class there because there are no industries, and therefore there is no influential sector of the population that might really start to think about socialism.... That is to say that the conditions for the creation of the “great Cuban robot” were there. I believe that this strategy was planned from the beginning and considerable advances have been made.

The first thing that Fidel Castro did, a few days after the Sandinista victory, was to invite all the Commandants to Cuba. At the same time, he opened the hospitals of Cuba to treat all the war-wounded and any military man who fell ill in Nicaragua. Alongside of this measure, he quickly opened up splendid schools on the Island of Youth and gave thousands of scholarships to Nicaraguan youths. The military schools and academies also quickly prepared to take in large contingents of Nicaraguan students, with the intent of training the future cadres of the Sandinista military, and so forth throughout the entire economy of Nicaragua, in the mentality of the Cubans.

To understand this a bit better: In 1980, barely six months after the

Sandinista victory, the first group of 30 aspiring pilots who were to study in Bulgaria arrived in Cuba. On the pretext of giving them a more general physical examination to determine precisely their aptitude for this career, a group of psychologists, analysts and political indoctrinators carried out intensive work to determine which of those boys had leadership qualities. This, in order to commence working on them ideologically and for the purpose of eventually replacing the top brass in the Air Force — which the team of analysts would decide on. For example, there is the case of Raul Benerio, who did not meet the requisites demanded for a “Cuban robot”.

To return to the presence of the Cuban military there, these men, in addition to their advisory functions, do a lot of intelligence work among the Nicaraguan military, to determine who precisely is a diehard pro-Cuban and who is not. In different ways, the attempt is made to replace those who are not. The government carries out all instructions without a murmur....

We have lost men in Nicaragua. Three of our helicopters have been brought down. One of these men, Mario Mier, who headed the crew, was performing his third internationalist mission. He went there first, then he went to Angola, where he took part in the Battle of Cangamba. He finally lost his life in Nicaragua, shot down in an MI-25.

The Cuban people are not prepared to accept another internationalist adventure. That is why an alternate plan is being implemented. The “Nicaraguan robot” — as it is called — is the least risky and most effective strategy of intervention. A man with the Cuban mentality fights, while Cuba appears not to be intervening directly.

“The Cuban people are not prepared to accept another internationalist adventure. ...The ‘Nicaraguan robot’ — as it is called — is the least risky and most effective strategy of intervention. A man with the Cuban mentality fights, while Cuba appears not to be intervening directly.”

Right from the time of the uprising against Somoza, the experiment was carried out with exiled Chileans, Argentines and Uruguayans who had trained militarily in Cuba. Although they were not Cubans by nationality, they definitely were trained in Cuba and they took part in the uprising against Somoza.

RM: ...*General, how true is the information that there are Nicaraguan MiGs in Cuba?*

GDP: No. The pilots, as I say, studied in Bulgaria. They were in Cuba for the reasons that I mentioned, but in Cuba there are no [Nicaraguan] MiGs and

there also are no Nicaraguan pilots.

RM: ...*General, there is a brief question that may be of great importance, and it is the fact that, when decisions are taken on dispatching Cuban troops or plans are made in this regard in any country, there are certain mechanisms for discussion, and there exist organizations that are consulted, etc. ...Are the staff officers of the Cuban armed forces consulted concerning the dispatching of Cuban troops on internationalist missions?*

GDP: They are not consulted. At least those of us who are staff officers of the DAAFAR, and we understand that the general staff officers are not, either. The decision is Fidel's. The order is given through his brother, the Minister of the Armed Forces. The Ministry of the Armed Forces starts to plan and to implement this order, it is then relayed to the DAAFAR and the attempt is made to implement it without consulting the command.

RM: ...*Last year saw the ouster of Ramiro Valdes as Minister of the Interior, the cause of which is unknown. Ramiro Valdes' brother, who was in Canada, defected last year... Have you any information about the reaction that Ramiro Valdes' leaving office produced among your brother officers in the military, and why he left office?*...

GDP: Initially, and predictably, it was thought that this was the result of the great corruption that exists in the Ministry of the Interior. But then afterwards, a few days after Ramiro Valdes was ousted, the "invisible press" — and, by the way, I was able to verify that it is not wrong — said the same thing as was being said in our military circles. Namely, that his removal had to do with a confrontation between him and Raul Castro. Ramiro Valdes had never acknowledged Raul's authority, until finally the day arrived when Raul told Fidel, "It's either him or me." That's what the "invisible press" says. It was verified later that his ouster was not because of the corruption present in the Ministry of the Interior, because Abrahantes and all the deputy ministers — who are up to their necks in corruption — remained in their same offices.

RM: *And how did the officers of the military react to this degree of corruption?*

GDP: Actually, the military see the Ministry of the Interior as a rival, because it really holds the power in Cuba. Socialist legality is a fairy tale. The same persecution and the perennial peril that the ordinary population

“...[T]he military see the Ministry of the Interior as a rival,

because it really holds the power in Cuba. Socialist legality is a fairy tale.”

suffers is suffered by the members of the military. Indeed, it is said, or averred, by the officers of the military that, for instance, a major at the Ministry of the Interior can be compared to a general of the military in terms of privileges, sinecures, manner of living and all the corruption involved. So, really, the Ministry of the Interior is not accepted by the military. Although it is attempted to give the appearance of great unity, it's a myth.

“...A major at the Ministry of the Interior can be compared to a general of the military in terms of privileges, sinecures, manner of living and all the corruption involved.”

RM: *General, in recent years it has been said that the ground was being prepared for Raul Castro to become a sort of Deputy Prime Minister in charge of administration, casting him in a more visible role on the civilian side of Cuban society.... Is there any unrest or discontent within the Armed Forces concerning Raul Castro's role?*

GDP: Yes, of course. Starting with the fact that Fidel's officials have spent more time recently on the problem of the external debt and foreign affairs. Raul Castro has taken a slightly bigger hand in the Cuban economy and is making visits throughout the various provinces. Recently, he has been paying a lot of attention to the intellectuals; he has even created special prizes for them. He's also encroaching farther into different areas of political life. However, like all those in power, and as second-in-command, he, too, has his whims and his favorites.

The officers of the military see a lot of things. We have colonels, lieutenant colonels, veterans of the war in Angola, who have nowhere to live. And let me give a specific example: Colonel Rene Suarez, who at the time of the Bay of Pigs was the mechanic for my aircraft, is in the Soviet Union simply because he has nowhere to live in Cuba. Nevertheless, in playing favorites, Raul Castro makes a present of a house to an artist who is the Cuban “Rambo”, 23 years of age...whose name is Luis Alberto Garcia. He's made a movie or two. One was a picture about Angola entitled *Algo Mas Que Sonar* [Something Else To Dream About]. The “invisible press” tells the whole story. The high- and middle-ranking officers cannot understand how a colonel and veterans of the war in Angola have nowhere to live, while the Cuban “Rambo”, a fictional, make-believe veteran, is given a house for doing a good job in a movie.

“The high- and middle-ranking officers cannot understand how a colonel and veterans of the war in Angola have nowhere to live, while the Cuban ‘Rambo’, a fictional, make-believe veteran, is given a house for doing a good job in a movie.”

RM: *To turn now to the subject of youth. The Cuban government has created the Committees of Prevention and Social Control, headed by Vilma Espin, in an effort to see whether it can regain the support of the youth. There is a lot of information that tells us that the generation born after the Revolution has serious disagreements with and objections to the type of life that is lived in Cuba, the lack of opportunities, etc. This has led to a situation of disaffection among the youth. How does that attitude affect the military?*

GDP: The youth of Cuba holds no love for the military. They have wearied; promises have now ceased to convince them. The youth of Cuba feels cheated, and resents continuing to be servile and to bend at the knee. Let me give you a concrete example: at a meeting held at the Ministry of the Armed Forces shortly before I came here, a special corps had to be created because 56,000 deserters have been caught in the last 3 years.

“The youth of Cuba feels cheated, and resents continuing to be servile and to bend at the knee.”

RM: *What is the corps called?*

GDP: Prevention, or the “Purple Berets”. It is a full corps with the special mission of catching deserters.

RM: *Who took part in that meeting; were they Army officers?*

GDP: The principal chiefs of the Ministry of the Armed Forces and the different areas of the military.

RM: *And who provided the figure of 56,000 caught?*

GDP: The Chief of Prevention, Colonel Mesa, gave the figure of 56,000 caught.... There are many who are caught once, desert again, and are caught again. There are also many who are never caught. That’s an extraordinary statistic; I believe it’s the highest in the world.

RM: *...General, in recent years it is said that there has been a revival of religious interest among various groups within Cuba, including the young. Fidel Castro,*

himself, in his book, Fidel and Religion, the interview which he gave Frei Betto, has awakened interest and curiosity regarding this aspect of life. Has this been talked about in the Armed Forces?...

GDP: Well, one proof of the revival of religious fervor in Cuba is the considerable increase each year in the faithful who make the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Saint Lazarus, in *El Rincon*, on December 17, Saint Lazarus's Day. The communist government responds by "invisible repression".

What is "invisible repression"? For instance, whenever any religious person comes to Cuba, like Frei Betto, and meets with Fidel and speaks to him about freedom of religion, he is taken to a church to demonstrate that there is no open repression and that nobody is prevented from going to a church.

But, let's look again at the example of the pilgrimages to the Shrine of Saint Lazarus. When December 17th arrives, the silent repression commences to operate. First, from the early hours, all city transport towards *El Rincon* and *Santiago de las Vegas* is cancelled. This creates a big problem for the faithful. Then, along with this step, a group of "journalists" with still and television cameras cover the activity. This is very odd, because no story ever shows up in any newspaper or television program afterwards. These are actually groups under the control of the government, the Ministry of the Interior, whose job is to determine who are the people who attend. The "Purple Berets" are also there, to ask young men to identify themselves, even though they may be dressed in civies.

Now, then, if you are an employee of the State and go on that pilgrimage, you lose your position or lose your job. They don't hinder you from going to Saint Lazarus, but you also don't want to lose your position or your job. There is no freedom of religion in Cuba.

"They don't hinder you from going to Saint Lazarus, but you also don't want to lose your position or your job. There is no freedom of religion in Cuba."

RM: *Let's move on to another topic that is also very current and has serious implications in Cuba. This is the question of AIDS, which is recognized to be a plague that threatens humanity. The main source of AIDS in Cuba are the Cuban troops in Africa.... There, AIDS is an epidemic of such magnitude that it has caused great alarm among world health authorities.... The Cuban military deploy large contingents of young men there at the age of greatest sexual activity. In Africa, it is not homosexual, but heterosexual contact, blood transfusions and the sharing of needles that are the three principal causes of AIDS. Is there any Ministry of the Armed Forces program to protect the troops*

and officers sent to Africa from AIDS? What have you to tell us on this subject, based on your own experience?

GDP: Well, no, there is no program, but they definitely do run tests on all personnel returning from Angola. Those who have been infected with AIDS are interned on an estate called *Los Cocos*. They say that it is a sanatorium, or a completely isolated hospital, but in actuality it is a jail. What has awakened most displeasure in the military is the fact of the isolation, because, in the final analysis, it's a sick person, not a convict. In a few cases, family members have been allowed to visit the building. They're taken there in a military vehicle with a guard escort. There was even a case where a patient, because of carelessness by the guards, had gone down to the corner to use the public telephone, and the guards, when they realized where he was, sent out large detachments with rifles to apprehend him, as if he were one of the most dangerous of criminals.

“Those who have been infected with AIDS are interned on an estate called *Los Cocos*. They say that it is a sanatorium, or a completely isolated hospital, but in actuality it is a jail.”

This has had a great influence on the military, because we believe that preventive and control measures are to be taken, but not by jailing. The thing exists. These are sick persons who are suffering from a mortal illness, but on the other hand, are they also to suffer the penalty of imprisonment? We believe that this is unfair and inhuman.

I cannot confirm this, but it is said in the “invisible press” that there was a military man who had AIDS, in an even more advanced state than the Cuban who caught it in New York, and who supposedly had acquired it in Cuba. They waited until he died and then spread the rumor that he was a homosexual, etc. Although this other man had died first, they did not make it public until the man who had acquired it in the U.S. had died.

RM: *We have had a lot of comment from people who left Cuba and who were greatly distressed by the treatment meted out to those who, in 1980, at the time of the Mariel exodus, asked to leave Cuba, namely the so-called “acts of repudiation”. Many people who were functionaries of the regime, who were even fully integrated within the Revolution, told us that this was something that caused them great uneasiness and distress. The government itself had to call a halt to this practice. What was said in the military, if anything, about the acts of repudiation?*

GDP: Quite a lot of time has passed since then, but I definitely recall that it

was said among the most honorable officers that the whole thing was a Roman circus. You may be in agreement with the Revolution, or you may want to leave the country, but your offspring, your children, are not to blame for whatever disagreement you may have with the Revolution. I recall

“You may be in agreement with the Revolution, or you may want to leave the country, but your offspring, your children, are not to blame for whatever disagreement you may have with the Revolution.”

macabre scenes of a crowd in the heat of passion assaulting a house by throwing stones and eggs at it. It looked like the Warsaw ghetto against the Jews. Inside such houses were small children, 3, 4, 5 years of age. Many of us, and we discussed it at the time, felt revolted by all that. Not by whether that person was or was not in agreement with the Revolution, but because of the exacerbation of passions among the people.... To persecute entire families and to engage in the kind of demonstrations that were made opposite their houses brought to mind the Warsaw ghetto.

“To persecute entire families and to engage in the kind of demonstrations that were made opposite their houses brought to mind the Warsaw ghetto.

RM: *Is there concern, or is there indifference, among the commanding officers regarding the future of Cuba? Whither Cuba? Do you believe that many or only a few of your colleagues share your points of view? What is your opinion on this?*

GDP: There is, of course, great concern in the military. And my own case is not that of the black sheep who fled the fold. I had the chance, as a pilot who had access to an aircraft, to make my own decision for myself and my family. But there are many military men who haven't got that chance and many who have discussed this situation with me. It is the view of all of them that Cuba is collapsing. The country has been led into a quagmire by the group that holds power in Cuba; ...it has been led into a dead-end street. That is the view held by many officers. One could talk at length on this subject. There are many examples of the reasons that have led to this conviction.

“It is the view of all of the [Cuban military] that Cuba is collapsing.”

RM: *Could you give us a few examples of the reasons that have led to this conviction?*

GDP: For example, the whims of the regime. At Varadero, there is an airport that has maybe one or two flights a day. It is in very good condition, has a runway 2,500 meters long and an air terminal which, for operations of that type, is good. It simply occurred to them, on a whim, to build a new airport about 15 kilometers from Varadero.

RM: *Whose whim?*

GDP: Fidel's and the Government's. It is absurd and risky to build a new airport, when the density of traffic is already such that flying operations are imperilled. They built an airport costing 40 million pesos, because they felt like it, on a whim. Then they talk about it being necessary "for the country to save", while on the other hand they're throwing away 40 million pesos.

"They built an airport costing 40 million pesos, because they felt like it, on a whim. Then they talk about it being necessary 'for the country to save'...."

Along the same lines, twelve Jack 18-T aircraft were purchased which in our slang, among military men, we call a "crock". These aircraft had already undergone major repairs. The Soviets sell them to us at 70,000 rubles per aircraft. An aircraft not worth even 2,000 rubles, at 70,000! That's millions of pesos squandered! That's how they can buy our sugar at a surcharge...they get it back afterwards by other means!

And this is just to scratch the surface, I could give you many more examples of how money is thrown away in our sector. For instance, scholarships to study abroad. The scholarships in the Soviet Union are to be used in order for the pilot engineers to study. [However], it is the sons of the principal chiefs and the principal leaders who are sent. These scholarships cost Cuba about 100,000 rubles, and just in one group that they sent there were 18 spoiled brats on conditional suspension because they would not study, because they were pampered, because of poor assimilation, and because of low marks. They were on conditional suspension and the Cuban representatives asked them to try not to send them back to Cuba, to try to pass them anyhow. If they were the sons of a mere Cuban laborer, they definitely would have been expelled.

RM: *You have written a very readable book AMANECER EN GIRON [Dawn at the Bay of Pigs], which relates what you were feeling, what you experienced, not only in that battle, but when you were doing your training. In that book, you give a very personal measure of those experiences. When you decided to flee Cuba, what did you feel at the time, what were you feeling as you*

were leaving in your aircraft, what were you thinking regarding the danger to your family, how were your spirits at that instant?

GDP: That decision was not easy at all. From what we have spoken about, you, and the people of Cuba, too, can more or less see the causes and conditions that gradually led me to see reality and make so drastic a decision. As I was telling you, there was a time when I thought about resigning. Later, some colleagues told me no, don't do it. In Cuba, a general is a person who has and who enjoys certain privileges. I knew that if I were to stay in Cuba, my livelihood would be assured, that simple. I am only 48 years of age, and when I reached 60 — retirement age — I could have retired without any difficulty, earning a comfortable salary. My family would never have problems. But there are times when one has to start to respect himself and respect the rights of others. There are times when not all the gold in the world can compensate for continuing to be a tool of those who oppress the people. That decision was not easy, and I was aware of that. What's more, I was aware that the propaganda machinery and the totally controlled media in Cuba were going to weave some kind of a yarn around me. But that really did not worry me. It never mattered to me, because I knew then and I know now that the people of Cuba know me. They know that I have no ambitions of any sort, that I made my decision in the utter conviction that I could not stay in Cuba even another minute.

“I am only 48 years of age, and when I reached 60 —retirement age — I could have retired without any difficulty, earning a comfortable salary. My family would never have problems. But there are times when one has to start to respect himself and respect the rights of others. There are times when not all the gold in the world can compensate for continuing to be a tool of those who oppress the people.”

The instant in which I prepared to leave the house was not easy. I remember that I sent my family out to the car. I went back in, and I started to see all the little girl's toys there, her room, her clothes — everything I had achieved after so many years of hard work, not from favors, but by the sweat of my brow — and there was a moment there where I had a lump in my throat. I turned my back and shut the door. I went out to the garden and threw away the key to the house. From there, I headed for the airport.

All along the way, my thoughts were hounding me: “Think of it, you have everything here, you want for nothing...your livelihood is assured...you can even have a heart transplant if you need it.” But I thought that though my heart were to burst, I could not stay there another minute.

Afterwards, as we boarded the aircraft, I was greatly affected by the smallest, the little girl, who had never flown. When we took off, she said to me, very happily, "Daddy, look at how teensy the cars look." And at that point I said to myself, "She has no idea of the danger we are in right now."

Those were very dramatic moments, which one sometimes would like to erase from one's mind.

I knew the American people; I spent my final years of high school here, and, despite the whole propaganda campaign and the view that they try to show against it, I believed that here I would be able to speak freely and be able to say everything I felt. I knew that there were problems here just like those that any society has; there are criminals here as there are in Cuba. Cuba has one of the highest crime rates in the world. I believed that it would be here in the U.S. that I would be able to strip the veil from the reality of what is happening in Cuba.

"I believed that it would be here in the U.S. that I would be able to strip the veil from the reality of what is happening in Cuba."

RM: General, the day you left Cuba, Radio Martí asked two of the pilots who fought against you at the Bay of Pigs for some comments. Both of them praised your action very highly, and one of them said that it showed that the Cuban military contained a store of honor and uprightness, and they also not only wished you well but cordially welcomed you to the U.S. How does that strike you?

GDP: Actually, I am not surprised by the attitude taken by these two pilots. I think that, as military men, each of us performed our duty. We were on opposing sides. I believe that their performance was no less courageous because victory fell to our side. They behaved courageously, and I never ceased to feel the same respect for them as I felt at the beginning of the battle.

Let me give you an example: As I said before, I have-always acted in accordance with the dictates of my conscience. Maybe sometimes this has caused people to say I am an anarchist, but there are issues that are basic in the lives of men, and one does not make concessions to one's adversaries for that reason.

The day that the prisoners were taken to a hangar at the Air Base of *San Antonio de los Baños* for their return to the United States, I went to visit them in violation of the prohibition against doing so; not to ingratiate myself with them, nor to fraternize with them, but simply because I believed it my duty—and maybe the communists will label me too sentimental—to convey my condolences to the families of those who had fallen at the Bay of Pigs. I

spoke there with an expeditionary called Pique...we used to call him "Fat Pique". He was in the Air Force, and later he went to the U.S. I don't know what has become of him, even whether he's still alive. ...I said to him, "Pique, I would like it if some day when you have the chance you would give my condolences to the families of the pilots who fell at the Bay of Pigs."

I believe that all of this can be summarized in a few words. Colonel Jimenez de Sandoval, the Spaniard in command of the column that fought the troops of Cuba when Jose Martí died, delivered the funeral oration of the Apostle, and his words made a great impression on me. I think they have meaning for our day and that they say it all. He started by asking, "Is there anybody who is a relative or friend of him who, when alive, was Don Jose Martí?" He waited a moment, nobody came forward, and then he started his oration in the most beautiful manner by saying: "WHEN MEN OF GENTLEMANLY ESTATE DO BATTLE, HATREDS AND RANCORS ARE NO MORE."

RM:General, with that quotation, we have come to the end of our interview....



The second portion of Radio Martí's interview with General del Pino was conducted after Fidel Castro delivered his June 24 speech denouncing the defection. Castro also discussed at length the case of Luis Orlando Dominguez, the head of Cuba's Civil Aeronautics Agency, who was arrested on corruption charges on June 18.

RADIO MARTI: After our initial interview, Fidel Castro appeared on Cuban television, and spoke about the case of Luis Orlando Dominguez, and also about your reasons for leaving Cuba. Could you give us your views on this appearance by Fidel Castro? One of the things that comes to mind, corroborating what you indicated in our earlier talk, was Fidel Castro's own statement about the accusations of corruption made against Luis Orlando Dominguez. At that time, you said that Orlando was one of the privileged persons in Fidel Castro's immediate group. What is your reaction to what Fidel Castro said concerning Luis Orlando Dominguez?

GENERAL DEL PINO: The case of Luis Orlando Dominguez is not an isolated one. It is not an exception, it is the rule.

As to what Fidel Castro is doing, he knows that the disillusionment within the military has come about, not because of the failure of his economic model alone, but also because of the disgusting corruption which exists within the government elite. Fidel is very intelligent. He has a mastery of crowd psychology. Consider this carefully: I break with the regime on May 28th, while the news of the replacement of Luis Orlando appears on June 17th. Fidel waited until the investigation was ended so he could then deal with both subjects at the same time and try to associate Luis Orlando with me.

“[Fidel] knows that the disillusionment within the military has come about, not because of the failure of his economic model alone, but also because of the disgusting corruption which exists within the government elite.”

RM: *Fidel Castro knew that you were going to disclose the evidence of corruption against Luis Orlando Dominguez, who, as we all know, was part of Castro's own intimate circle. Do you believe that this action by Fidel Castro was because he anticipated what you were going to say?*

GDP: Of course it was. That was to be expected. Fidel knew that this was one of the things I had reported and complained about to the honest officials. Since January of this year, not only Luis Orlando's situation, but many others, which I shall explain later on, were known. But to continue with this case in particular, we note how Fidel in his speech spends 3 or 4 hours speaking of the case of Luis Orlando, knowing that this wounds the sensibilities of the people. He uses this disgusting event in order immediately to launch into his explanation of the causes and conditions that led to my break with his regime.

“[Fidel] uses this disgusting [Orlando Dominguez] event in order immediately to launch into his explanation of the causes and conditions that led to my break with his regime.”

RM: *It would be interesting if you would discuss what Castro himself said about your departure from Cuba, in order for the Cuban people to learn your version. What can you tell us about the alleged sale of personal property?*

GDP: He said that I was in need of money and that recently I was selling off my personal effects. I do not know who in Cuba will believe him on this: that

a general, with the privileges that he has, with the friendships and relationships that he has, would need money to obtain any material goods.

I believe that the most important feature here is to analyze how far his deification and self-worship can go. He suggests that I was in need of money and — without anything to base this on — says that it was to give my wife nice things. Even in the hypothetical case that I was selling off articles of mine, he still cannot conceive that I would be selling them off to give the proceeds to a friend, a relative or even a common cause. Because, as he will recall, in preparing for the assault on the Moncada Barracks, there were many who sold off their material goods. For instance, Montane sold his furniture, and some sold everything they had for this common cause. Why, then, could I not be selling off my goods to leave them to a common cause in Cuba? Anybody with half a brain will wonder, why does he need money? To amuse himself? It makes no sense.

RM: *Could you comment on what you think about the morale of your other colleagues back there?*

GDP: Knowing the character traits of Fidel Castro and knowing that he was going to act this way, I began last January to tell certain officers about the corruption that I was uncovering and detecting, in order that they should know for whom we were really working. Therefore, his speech does not worry me. Many of my colleagues think the same as I do and realize what the situation truly is. The problem is Fidel's self-worship. He cannot conceive that, within the very power structure, there are men such as myself who have opened our eyes and even have an embryonic plan for a National Salvation Front. When I say "we", I mean the military. Even certain civilians, within his same corrupt Ministry of the Interior, have stepped forward. He knows well who I am referring to.

“[Fidel] cannot conceive that, within the very power structure, there are men such as myself who have opened our eyes and even have an embryonic plan for a National Salvation Front.”

RM: *I assume, from the veiled manner in which you speak, that, for obvious reasons of discretion, you do not wish to be more explicit.... Another aspect of Fidel Castro's speech which we would like you to comment on is with regard to your having made a claim for compensation for a theater that was your family's. Could you shed some light on this?*

GDP: Yes, of course, with great pleasure. The *Teatro Milanes* was my father's and, before that, my grandfather's. It was taken over in the year

1964. At the time, my mother was not working, and was living off the businesses which my father owned — under the same nationalization laws. She began every legal action to be compensated for the theater, keeping the deeds and all the papers in good order, as my father had done. She appealed to every jurisdiction until ultimately, after about nine months, the State Finance Committee sent her a letter advising her that, quite simply, she was not going to be compensated for it. They gave her a variety of excuses, a variety of arguments, but the bottom line was that they were not going to pay her for it. In said letter, they told her that she had 30 days to file an appeal with the courts....

So, she went from Pinar del Rio, where she lives, to Havana to get me to help her to bring the claim in front of the courts. I took her to the group law office at 23rd and J Streets in Havana....

One by one, I went to all the institutions created by the Cuban government for this type of situation. I called upon Dr. Fontanals, and she told me that since my mother lived in Pinar del Rio and I lived in Havana, the claim should be in my name in order to avoid red tape. Such are the devilish mechanisms that the revolution has created with its bureaucracy. So I went with her, we filed my mother's claim, and then I signed it. I had no need for that money. I did this merely in order to do a favor for my mother, because she was in need of it and I wanted to help her out.

On previous occasions, she had said to me, "Why don't you speak to Fidel or Raul?" To which I replied, "Look, old dear, I don't like to use my position to make a request about a personal matter. I think you should go through all the motions and, if the thing is denied, we'll appeal to the courts." I even said to her, "Don't expect too much, because you know what the laws are like in Cuba." She wanted to take it to its final instance. On February 18, she even sent a letter to Raul Castro, informing him of all the irregularities she had been subjected to. So, I don't know whether the Ministry of the Armed Forces sends the President any reports, or they do not get along, I don't know. The fact is I can't understand it. According to Fidel Castro, he was ignorant of these facts, but this was known since 1964. And everybody knew it.

...It seems that the lawyer, in his pleadings, made use of my feat at the Bay of Pigs in order to try to win his case. He did nothing unlawful, but merely used the laws created by Castro's own government. But what's most interesting in this case is, even assuming that I actually needed the money from the theater and from the sale of my goods, I ask myself, "What's unlawful about that?"

RM: Speaking of this matter of the law. During our conversation, you remarked on socialist legality and the fact that the law is not applied equally in Cuba. Are there any facts that you could discuss with us, about the legal realities in cases in

which privilege is involved?

GDP: Before discussing any such cases, I think that, to back up a bit, those two points that Fidel brought up to discredit me — which were within the law, by the way — demonstrates the scorn for law and justice that exists in our country. If a chief of state goes before the television cameras and speaks like this, can you imagine what our courts are like, where the law is applied according to the situation? The laws are trampled on.

“...I think that...those two points that Fidel brought up to discredit me — which were within the law, by the way — demonstrates the scorn for law and justice that exists in our country.”

...I have many colleagues. One in particular, who was almost a lawyer, would say to me, “Look, del Pino, one becomes a puppet, because all proceedings are set up. What the decision is going to be is known before the proceedings start. The worst of it is to be there, defending some man for two or three hours, and knowing what the decision is going to be. The bench of judges are probably playing chess out of sight, and we are thinking that they are paying attention to us. It is all set up, I am taking part in a farce. There is neither law nor justice here.” A specific example of this would be the Stevenson case.

RM: *Teofilo Stevenson?*

GDP: The boxer. The Cuban people know only the part of the story where Stevenson was drunk and killed a man who was riding a bicycle. However, some months before killing that guy, Stevenson put a bomb in a man's automobile because of a personal problem. Unthinkable.

RM: *How is it possible that Stevenson got hold of a bomb? Is that easy to do in Cuba?*

GDP: Everybody in Cuba knows that Stevenson, the poor guy, hasn't got sufficient know-how and training in explosives to do something like that. So, somebody must have given it to him and Stevenson placed it in the automobile. Afterwards — apparently still angry and affected by a personal problem that he has with this individual — he took a belying pin and broke the glass in the car. When this individual came out the next morning and saw the condition of his automobile, he called the police, who came and found

the bomb installed in the automobile.

For this, namely attempted murder, [Stevenson] was penalized by being sent to Victoria de las Tunas to be a trainer. Of course, the people were not told anything about this officially, only we who had our sources knew about it.

“For this, namely attempted murder, [Stevenson] was penalized by being sent to Victoria de las Tunas to be a trainer.”

RM: *And how do you learn about such things?*

GDP: Because we would have our sources, through our colleagues at the Ministry of the Interior. The “invisible press” had already spread it all over Cuba. But in the circles in which I used to move, namely among officials and generals of the Ministry of the Interior, we would get a daily report on all the crimes committed in Cuba.

RM: *When did this incident with Stevenson take place? Do you remember the date?*

GDP: It was this very year.

RM: *And where did the incident take place?*

GDP: In Nuevo Vedado, in the city of Havana. [With Stevenson] they did not apply the law. First they put him on a farm belonging to the Ministry of the Interior, and then they tried to “throw in the towel” on him, by saying that he was mentally unbalanced.

RM: *So, the rule of law in Cuba is very relative. Whether or not the law is applied depends on the individual’s influence.*

GDP: I could give specific instances of persons who have raped minors and have been sentenced to as much as 25 years in prison, and then some gangster relative of theirs comes in through Barlovento in a yacht with \$10,000 in his hand, [pays a visit] to the CIMEX corporation— and when we have a chance, we can talk about this corporation, which is a front for the Ministry of the Interior to receive dollars for Cuba—and buys the freedom of these criminals.

RM: *Meaning that if an individual who has been sentenced for a crime has relatives with money, the legal system pardons him and lets him go free? Does*

that also include leaving the country?

GDP: Including leaving the country, which recently was being quoted at about \$10,000. When I was visiting Cayo Largo I personally saw several unlawful operations.

Aircraft would come in from Panama with relatives and they would turn over \$10,000 to the CIMEX corporation. Cayo Largo is a tourist facility closed to the people of Cuba. It is there for international tourism only and for the secret, unlawful operations of Castro's regime. Well, these aircraft would land there, suitcases full of money would be turned over, and the relatives would then board and fly on to the Bahamas.

"...aircraft would land [at Cayo Largo], suitcases full of money would be turned over, and the relatives would then board and fly on to the Bahamas."

RM: Cayo Piedra is near Cayo Largo. What is Cayo Piedra used for?

GDP: Fidel Castro basically gets around by air, and this island is equipped for his personal affairs. I believe that it is immoral and unlawful to have a private island. For anybody who has a map at hand or wants to know the coordinates properly, I can let them have them: Latitude 21 degrees 40 minutes north, longitude 81 degrees 48 minutes west.

RM: What facilities are there? A hotel? A house with a swimming-pool? ...boats? What is there?

GDP: It's a sophisticated facility with every type of game, heated pools.... The important thing is that it is there that he has certain dealings which he does not wish to be known in Cuba.

RM: Is the place for the exclusive use of Fidel Castro, for the new class, or is it also for foreign visitors?

GDP: It is solely for Fidel's use...or maybe for some guest from abroad who he wants to work on...wants to converse with...or use in his own interest. He'll take him there; there's more freedom....

But it's basically for him. Consider this, however, it's not just this island in particular, Fidel has mansions in Siboney, on 11th Street, in El Vedado, on 49th Street...the whole island. These mansions have Japanese bowling alleys, with heated pools made specially for him. You know that he has

trouble with his bronchi since that time he lost his voice, and since then they have the heated pool ready for him...with a movie theater, etc.

The people of Cuba don't know what a Japanese bowling alley is. ...All these games are there, in these mansions, and not just Fidel's, but in those of the generals of the Ministry of the Interior and of the principal officials of the Political Bureau...

“...All these games are there, in these mansions, and not just Fidel's, but in those of the generals of the Ministry of the Interior and of the principal officials of the Political Bureau....”

RM: *How did you learn about this business of Cayo Piedra?*

GDP: The fact is that,...unhappily for [Fidel], there are times when he has to rely on Air Force [helicopters] to get to these places. We, unfortunately, were the ones who had to transport him there. First, though, there was an auxiliary base there.

And listen to this...after we leave him there, our pilots, together with the bodyguards and staff of Fidel, have to start to make the rounds of all the little islets in the area. The problem is that the bodyguards sometimes make our pilots do things that a helicopter cannot do. We have had several accidents because of this. But after he arrives there, it is we pilots who must take him wherever he demands or requires.

RM: *According to what you told us, there is also an estate in Candelaria, called “La Deseada”....*

GDP: Yes, and we are not just talking about the islet, because he has special hunting properties at different spots in the country. Basically, there are two which I personally know of and which have been much talked about within the Air Force: south of Candelaria, right on the coast, about 8 kilometers from the El Frances road...is the “La Deseada” estate; somewhat more easterly, about ten kilometers away, is the “La Vibora” estate.

The people of Cuba don't know that both he and his brother Raul, whenever they go hunting on these estates, ask us to send them an AN-2 or a helicopter, for nothing more than to skim the mangroves and scare up the ducks so that they can shoot them. This is unthinkable; it's like something the Tsars of Russia might do. Even the Soviets don't do this. It's something worthy of the aristocracy of the last century, and yet it does happen. The worst of it is that I had the bitter task of having to go there to investigate an accident...that was caused by this.

“The people of Cuba don’t know that [Fidel] and his brother Raul, whenever they go hunting on these estates, ask us to send them an AN-2 or a helicopter, for nothing more than to skim the mangroves and scare up the ducks so that they can shoot them.”

RM: *What was the date of this investigation?*

GDP: It must be about four years ago now. It was one of the AN-2s that was around there, scaring up the ducks. Indeed, forgive me for this slight digression, birds have become a danger to aviation. All over the world, steps are being taken to prevent these fowl from jeopardizing the lives of pilots. But these men here, on the contrary, make pilots fly against ducks, severely endangering the pilots’ lives just for their pleasure..., for the sake of their hunt.

I recall that in the month of December a cold front had come in and there were winds of about 20 knots as the pilots were passing over the mangrove swamps. At the instant they scared up the ducks, the ducks collided with the aircraft, and the pilot, trying to avoid a bigger collision, made an abrupt turn and crashed to earth, killing the crew. Although the pilot survived, he came out of it incapacitated and half mad. Some members of the Ministry of the Interior also died — members of Fidel’s and Raul’s escort — who were there giving the pilots instructions as to what ducks to scare up, because they knew exactly where the Castro brothers were hunting.

“I recall that in the month of December a cold front had come in and there were winds of about 20 knots as the pilots were passing over the mangrove swamps. At the instant they scared up the ducks, the ducks collided with the aircraft, and the pilot, trying to avoid a bigger collision, made an abrupt turn and crashed to earth, killing the crew.”

RM: *Who were the ones that died? Do you remember their names?*

GDP: I don’t remember. After the accident report was made, it was thought that the “scarecrows” would be terminated.

RM: *What do you mean by “scarecrows”?*

GDP: In Military Unit 3688, the Transport Regiment, all in good fun, these pilots were dubbed “scarecrows”. It was sort of a pun, a joke.

RM: *Is there anything else you can tell us about these privileges enjoyed by the top brass of the regime?*

GDP: The fact is that there are so many that it would be difficult to relate them all. This case that I have just related, besides being unlawful and immoral, is criminal — sending somebody to his death like that just to satisfy a personal pleasure.

“This case that I have just related, besides being unlawful and immoral, is criminal — sending somebody to his death like that just to satisfy a personal pleasure.”

But the last straw was the building of a private clinic for [Castro] and his bodyguards at 34th and 45th Streets in the Kohly district, at a cost of 20 million pesos.

RM: *How do you know about this clinic, and when was it built?*

GDP: It's on the corner where my house is. I lived at 34th and 49th, and this clinic was across the street. I know everybody who works there, including the director.

RM: *What's the clinic called?*

GDP: They call it the Personal Security Clinic, but it's for the bodyguards. ...[Furthermore], some years ago Castro also built an enormous hospital in Siboney at a cost of 200 million pesos, with even a helicopter landing-pad, something that no hospital in Cuba had. It is called CIMEC, which stands for Medical-Surgical Research Center. No ordinary person in our country has access to this hospital.

“...[S]ome years ago Castro also built an enormous hospital in Siboney at a cost of 200 million pesos, with even a helicopter landing-pad, something that no hospital in Cuba had. ...No ordinary person in our country has access to this hospital.”

RM: *Was it there that they would take the wounded from Nicaragua, Angola and elsewhere?*

GDP: No, no. One has to come recommended by the elite or a relative of the Nicaraguan elite. I recall that the Nicaraguan Navy chief's wife was treated there.

RM: *An ordinary Cuban citizen cannot get into this hospital?*

GDP: No, no, no. I say that that is truly unlawful and immoral. And then they build a palace in Varadero at a cost of 2 million pesos for the exclusive use of Soviet cosmonauts whenever they come to Cuba.

“And then they build a palace in Varadero at a cost of 2 million pesos for the exclusive use of Soviet cosmonauts whenever they come to Cuba.”

RM: *When was this palace built?*

GDP: It was built around 1979, apparently in gratitude for the launch of the Cuban cosmonaut.... Another whim.

RM: *Is the palace actually used by the Soviet cosmonauts? From reports in the press, they don't go to Cuba all that often.*

GDP: Soviet cosmonauts go to Cuba sporadically. This palace stands opposite the International Hotel of Varadero, it's on the left; you only have to walk 400 meters along the beach to find the most sophisticated structure there — the Palace of the Cosmonauts — built at the expense of our people's passbooks.... Then they talk about planning the economy by taking so much from here and so much from there.

RM: *Besides being for the cosmonauts, is it used for other purposes, or is it kept for nothing but their use?*

GDP: It is also used once in a while by certain elites.... The houses around the palace, however, are for the elite, for the principal leaders, with every convenience, everything handy. And that's not counting ours, the one for the generals. I have to laugh when Fidel says that Cuba is in need of money, because we have a whole town just for us, with food at 1959 prices, and with all the facilities which nobody in Cuba has access to.

Another unusual thing, hard to believe, is cockfighting. Seeing such things, one asks, how is it possible to be so warped?

“I have to laugh when Fidel says that Cuba is in need of money, because we have a whole town just for us, with food at 1959 prices, and with all the facilities which nobody in Cuba has access to.”

RM: *Cockfighting is outlawed in Cuba, isn't it?*

GDP: Well, that's what the Cuban people think. Consider this: There's a property on the outskirts of Managua where the man in charge is Guillermo Garcia. They keep gamecocks there and cockfights are put on for the enjoyment of the elite and the occasional foreign guest, as part of the program. There was even a time, I recall, when we went there to see a cockfight, and Raul said, "By God, if we ever come up with an emblem for the military, like various countries do, we're going to put a gamecock on it." But it seems that he forgot this later, because he's just like his brother, things pop into his head and then he forgets them. Just as he does when it comes to the people of Cuba, with the young people not knowing what a bowling alley is, or a heated pool, or sophisticated games. The people know about cockfights from Mexican movies. But it is the elite that enjoys them.

RM: *So, these fights are outlawed for the people, but nonetheless are one more privilege for the new class...*

GDP: That part of Managua is the fiefdom of Guillermo Garcia. He has a lake there where he raises ducks, and, beyond that, he has thoroughbred horses.

Indeed, there was a very significant incident. On one occasion, General Calzadilla confronted Guillermo Garcia in a heated argument, because Garcia was disrespectful to the general. Calzadilla, who was already in a black mood because of everything that was going on there, couldn't take any more of it and ordered Garcia home.

RM: *When did this incident happen? ...Do you recall the date?*

GDP: This was about two years ago. Well, the upshot of it was that the only brigadier general who has been degraded in Cuba is Calzadilla. He was, of course, sent to Angola. As we have seen, Angola is a place of punishment. But what is most interesting about this case is that Calzadilla, who never had heart trouble, was found dead one morning in Luanda. His family were told afterwards that he had been having cardiac problems.

RM: *What do you know about the large population mobilizations? We have already seen that there are doubts about whether these mobilizations are motivated by a true concern on the part of the Cuban leadership about a possible invasion. But if that's not the explanation, what's the reason?*

GDP: The large mobilizations, or "marches of the combatant people", as

Fidel calls them, are his safety valve against imminent social explosions. The people of Cuba know this in part, but not thoroughly.

Fidel has work groups, and in one of his favorites was Luis Orlando. Within these groups there is a team of sociologists and psychologists who are constantly assessing and analyzing the internal situation of the country. As soon as there is a tad of dissatisfaction and discontent, this group immediately recommends "open the safety valve"....

"...[T]here is a team of sociologists and psychologists who are constantly assessing and analyzing the internal situation of the country. As soon as there is a tad of dissatisfaction and discontent, this group immediately recommends 'open the safety valve'...."

At this point, several variants are utilized, depending on the situation. For instance, if there occurs, as there did, the explosion of Mariel or of the Peruvian Embassy, they have these "marches of the combatant people", etc.

Otherwise, they create a threat of imminent invasion by the United States and mobilize large parts of the Territorial Troop Militias, confining the FAR to barracks.

The barrage of propaganda then starts: "This time the Americans really are coming"; air-raid shelters are opened; atom-bomb shelters are opened; they create work. In other words, all this is to distract the people's attention from the pressing problems that the population presents.

Otherwise, they make use of a case, as for instance, this SR-71 business. We, of course, by being in the military, see how the population is being deceived, how huge a swindle is being pulled. It must be realized that following the "October Missile Crisis", after Fidel Castro and the Soviets agreed to bring nuclear missiles to Cuba, an agreement was reached with the United States that no more missiles were to be brought in. From that time on, the U-2s, first, and then the SR-71s began to fly over Cuba to verify compliance with the agreement.

RM: *So, the military are perfectly aware that the flights are taking place and that it is not an extraordinary event and is rather routine?*

GDP: We all knew about them.

RM: *Why the special handling of them in 1986?*

GDP: Remember that, shortly before, Fidel Castro introduced every type of restrictive measure into Cuban society: he closed the peasants' markets; he

eliminated all small producers; and, as I said before, he even nationalized the beater of the guy who made milkshakes. He started this policy contrary to the Soviet Union's. Faced with displeasure and an imminent social explosion, he used one of the many SR-71 flights, which take place every 10-12 days. Castro utilized his ability to sway the masses and his ability to manipulate the crowds to mount a big show opposite the Interests Section of the U.S. He mobilized all the workplaces and compelled the people to organize there to demonstrate. So, everything is stage-managed and guided.

“Faced with displeasure and an imminent social explosion, [Fidel] used one of the many SR-71 flights, which take place every 10-12 days.”

RM: *Can you give us another example of the work of Fidel Castro's coordination team?*

GDP: There is one curious and very important fact. It would appear that this work group has decided that, no matter how much effort is expended, nothing will contain the people and that any moment there are going to be big social explosions. For the first time since 1959, the Cuban police have started to buy riot helicopters. This is very significant. The first one has already arrived, a Polish-made MI-2, and it has now been assembled at the Ciudad Libertad airport. It is painted the same color as the patrol cars in Havana, grey, with “POLICE” on it in big letters. This helicopter is equipped with paralyzing gasses, tear gasses, nets, different types of flares.... This is the most obvious indication that big riots are expected to take place any day.

“For the first time since 1959, the Cuban police have started to buy riot helicopters. ...This is the most obvious indication that big riots are expected to take place any day.”

Aside from the helicopter, a plan is being drawn up — within the party now — to create shock groups and groups within the police which are dubbed “revolutionary enforcement groups”.

RM: *What does that mean, “revolutionary enforcement group”?*

GDP: A most interesting phenomenon is now starting to be seen in Cuba. The Cubans, as we know, are looking for a way to demonstrate their discontent and combat the regime. At various facilities, basically at factories and construction sites, there are workers who were once known in Cuba as “turtle's pace” — it's like a go-slow strike. They go to work, sign in —

because if they don't they're reprimanded and may lose their jobs — and do all their tasks. But what they're supposed to do in one day, they take three or four days to do. What's the government doing about this? Creating groups run by the Union of Communist Youth (UJC) and by the Party to keep a constant eye on these foci of rebellion. Although they are rebelling passively, these are foci of rebellion nonetheless. The government groups set out to pressure them and reprimand them in order to get them to do the jobs within the time stipulated.

“The Cubans...are looking for a way to demonstrate their discontent and combat the regime.”

RM: *Is there any other example you could tell us of, concerning measures to handle the discontent of the people?*

GDP: As I said before, one of the things that has caused the most displeasure among the population, and in particular among the families and loved ones of the soldiers who die in Angola, is that the bodies are not returned. I gave you the example of my brother-in-law, who died in Guinea-Conakry. Since there is so much pressure caused by the people's displeasure, some time ago Raul Castro told one of his aides that there should be a plan to build some mausoleum or something so that when the pressure got very strong and could result in a social explosion, instead of a mobilization against an imperialist invasion, they could create a big show in Revolution Square in Havana, with bands and official mourning. In this way they could divert the attention of the masses and alleviate in part the growing displeasure of all the relatives....

RM: *You remarked previously that, on your visits to the Soviet Union, you had noted what the readjustment was, the Soviet version that they call “perestroika” [reform]. At the time, we did not go further into the difference between what the Soviet Union is doing and what is being done in Cuba. Is there any additional difference that you would like to share with us?*

GDP: We must first take a brief look back at the two great communist powers in the world: the Soviet Union and China. Let's take China first. The Chinese leaders who succeeded Mao Tse-tung have been able to effect important economic reforms because they belong to a new administration. I mean that they don't have their hands tied by all the errors, all the dogmatism, and all the difficulties which were created under the rule of Mao Tse-tung and which, naturally, belong to that earlier administration. The case of Gorbachev is similar. He hasn't got to deal with the atrophy and

errors committed during the long governance of Brezhnev. Andropov and Chernenko died very quickly and their time of governance of the Soviet Union was very brief. Gorbachev is in a similar case to that of the Chinese leaders: He hasn't got his hands tied by the errors, dogmatism and rigid programming in which the Soviet Union was sunk and which, after 70 years of socialism, led to the reintroduction of ration books in the principal cities, except Moscow. The economic situation in the USSR today is very bad due to the mistakes of past administrations. Gorbachev has started to undertake a process of adjustment, but in a direction totally contrary to that of Fidel Castro, with his tropical socialism. Gorbachev has legalized a variety of highly important economic reforms, which in Cuba are taboo.

“Gorbachev has started to undertake a process of adjustment, but in a direction totally contrary to that of Fidel Castro, with his tropical socialism.”

Why can't and why won't Fidel Castro make these reforms? Simply because the Fidel Castro of today is the same as the one who got up on television 28 years ago and said that the people of Cuba could survive on the malanga tuber alone. He is the same man who, 27 years ago, spoke on television of the big plans he had to drain the Zapata Marsh. He is the same man that wanted to construct communism parallel with socialism. He began to make telephones free, sports events free, 20 other things free, and to make all the economic mistakes that brought about a confrontation with Anibal Escalante and other old communist leaders who did not want to kowtow to him — leaders unlike Blas Roca and Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, who always submitted. Those who confronted him did so because they knew that it was a crazy policy and that it didn't have the smallest iota of Marxism in it. ... These individuals were banished to the Soviet Union. I recall that at the time there was a confrontation with the Soviets, because they were realizing that [Fidel] was mad. There was no way out for them there.

“Why can't and why won't Fidel Castro make these reforms? Simply because the Fidel Castro of today is the same as the one who got up on television 28 years ago and said that the people of Cuba could survive on the malanga tuber alone.”

Fidel is the same man that a few years later began to level the outskirts of Havana for the celebrated “Havana Belt”. Older people will remember this. Planes began coming and going...bringing in coffee seedlings from Mexico, until the seedlings were all over the place. Coffee planting was the order of the day; wherever a fence came down, coffee went in. Coffee was planted in

places where the soil had not even been tested, soil which might have been chemically good, but for other crops. Even on the airport runway — something that is forbidden — people were compelled to plant coffee. This Fidel Castro of today is the same as the one of that time.

RM: To clarify a bit, your position is that Cuba is following the same pattern in decision-making as has prevailed over the last 30 years. To make changes would imply acknowledging that those decisions were wrong and that Fidel would have to change his style of governance.

GDP: That's it in a nutshell. The problem is that [Fidel] is very compromised. For instance, when he committed the absurdity of the "Harvest of 10 Million", and, recently, when he said that now we were really going to construct socialism...we all wondered, "And what have we been doing up to now?" In the midst of this misfortune, our native humor crops up: "No, what this was, was 'sociolismo'" [socialist old boys' network], though it appears that "sociolismo" has not ended. On the contrary, it has developed further. It is this instability, these follies, that make him unable to adjust. He can't change his policy, and this means that he has to keep on applying his same patterns. This is how the country is going to sink, the nation is finally going to go under.

"...[W]hen [Fidel] said that now we were really going to construct socialism...we all wondered, 'And what have we been doing up to now?'"

RM: We would like to explore further the relations between the high military commanders and Fidel Castro and the Minister of Defense, Raul Castro. The people receive an image manipulated by the regime that presents a situation of total unanimity. Your words disclose that there are degrees of dissatisfaction, and we have received information that the officers have split into several groups. There is talk of "Raulist" officers, others are dubbed "anti-Raulist", and, finally, there is the division between the career officers and those who consider themselves politicians rather than soldiers. The war in Angola, Ethiopia and, now, in Nicaragua must have produced officers whose prestige rests on their military performance. Who are the officers with the most prestige within the military?

GDP: The officers who have the most prestige within the military and are most favorably viewed are Major-General Arnaldo Ochoa and Major-General Leopoldo Cintra Frias, and saying this will not create any problems for them. They not only participated at Sierra Maestra, but also in various

actions and missions outside of Cuba. Leopoldo Cintra Frias...was in Angola, in Ethiopia under Ochoa, and in Nicaragua. What's more he was a rebel in the guerrilla war in Venezuela.

The course of their careers, the sacrifice they've made all this time and their not being among this corrupt elite make them, in my view, the officers whom the troops consider to have the most prestige.

Of all the State organizations and those of the Ministry of the Interior, and I am not saying this because I am a military man, the military are the least corrupt. The unity of the military is proven by my case. As I said before, I'm not the black sheep that fled the fold. Many officers of the military think like me.

"Of all the State organizations and those of the Ministry of the Interior, and I am not saying this because I am a military man, the military are the least corrupt."

There is, however, a big conflict between the high- and middle-ranking officials of the Ministry of the Interior and the military. That is definitely clear.... They look on us with scorn, probably in response to the rejection we show them, although they do try to collaborate with us. However, they do vie with the high-ranking officers of the military. We have what is called the military shop. Let's say a refrigerator costs the ordinary Cuban in the street 1,200 pesos. In the military, it costs 595 pesos, or half. These are privileges to try to maintain obedience and loyalty among the military, but what does the Ministry of the Interior do? Well, it makes refrigerators 250 pesos at their shop. They also charge 130 pesos for a television set, while in the military they cost 200.

RM: *As they become more professional, the military acquire a certain autonomy as an institution. In other communist countries, one of the control mechanisms that the party has developed is that of the political commissars within the military. Another device that is used to prevent the most popular officers from creating personal loyalties among the troops is rotation of command. I suppose that the Ministry of the Interior also must have its surveillance and counter-intelligence mechanisms in the military. What mechanisms are used within the military...in the case of Cuba to meet this situation? Since there are other disaffected officers such as yourself, clearly the government must have taken some measures to forestall the possible consequences of such disaffection. Can you discuss these matters a little?*

GDP: In the first place... a new generation of officers from the last three or four years already exists. These are younger officers, born within the

revolution, after January of 1959. This generation knows that the whole thing is a sham. But many of them have selected military careers as a path, as a way to make a living. That generation no longer believes in Fidel nor in Raul, but it maintains discipline. It seems their loyalty is based on the fact that they have no chance of leaving the country. They don't have an aircraft at their disposal, and would have to leave some family member behind and so they resign themselves. Others simply coexist with the whole situation because they couldn't care less about the people and so "devil take the hindmost".

"...[A] new generation of officers from the last three or four years already exists. This generation knows that the whole thing is a sham."

Like the two generals I spoke of, and the occasional other general who has had a distinguished military career, it is forbidden to display photographs or to allude to such persons, in order to avoid any overshadowing. Just as Trujillo used to do in Santo Domingo, portraits of Fidel or of Raul are the only ones that can be displayed. This extends to all the State organizations, to every house. This is the cult of personality. Most of the senior generals, who enjoy these perquisites that we have, go along and are loyal for one reason or another. But under no pretext is it permitted for high-ranking officers to overshadow the Castro brothers.

RM: From the standpoint of a young officer who is studying for a military career and wants to get promoted, if that officer has studied only in Cuba, will that impair his career? There is the impression that for a military career it is essential to study in the Soviet Union. Is that so?

GDP: In the first place, the Cuban government is very worried at present about the young and specifically about the young officers, because the young in Cuba are thinking now about their situation. Of course they know the dangers they run, but the very fact that there are 56,000 deserters in three years says a lot about this situation. The government is putting a lot of emphasis on working with the young because they are losing their grip on them.

"The government is putting a lot of emphasis on working with the young because they are losing their grip on them."

In the Soviet Union, different courses are set up for the Cuban students to study different specialties, including many which are now on the way out,

but which are taught for different purposes. First, the sons of the elite are sent to the Soviet Union to study. There, they learn Russian, finish a course of studies, even though it might be in hot dogs. When they finish, they come back to Cuba and people say "So-and-so has arrived, he's come back a hot-dog engineer", and, later, if there's no opening for them in the military, one is found in some organization because they have an engineering diploma.

Let me give you a specific instance, with figures, so that you can see what a burden this is on the people of Cuba. Several of these scholarships have been established to teach navigation engineering for helicopters. This position is disappearing as computerization advances. Now, 50 scholarships were contracted in the last five years and navigator engineers were sent off to study. What the people of Cuba have no idea of is that this course of studies, which lasts five years, costs 226,300 rubles, which converts to 271,560 pesos. This is being spent on a career that will soon cease to exist.

RM: And does Cuba pay this, or is it part of the aid that the Soviet Union gives it?

GDP: No, no, Cuba pays it; it goes into the enormous external debt that Cuba has with the Soviet Union. The saddest aspect of the case is that it is an invented career that is going to disappear and is of no use in Cuba. That reminds me of another career, that of engineer in snow-thawing equipment, which in Cuba we dubbed "LUNAJON"; I mean it's absurd to send a man to study such equipment when there's no snow in Cuba. In this group, there were 18 who were on academic suspension but had powerful fathers and so the Cuban Embassy said to put them on conditional suspension, with an "OK, if you behave well...", but their assimilation is at rock-bottom. Apart from the fact that they come back warped, these people are alcoholics, they know nothing. But, of course, this way they avoid military service....

"The saddest aspect of the case is that it is an invented career that is going to disappear and is of no use in Cuba."

They don't have to go to war since, when they return to Cuba, there's no position to fit their specialty. If they remain in the military, they are assigned to operations, making maps, etc. — basically, an office job. However, this is the type of officer that is promoted fastest. First of all, because he studies in the Soviet Union, and because he's an engineer, although he may be an engineer in snow-thawing equipment. When I touch on this point, it's not in jest, it is a fact that we sent people to study that in the Soviet Union. It seems unheard of, but they were sent. Worse still, when they get back to Cuba, they

have privileges over everybody else.

RM: *Even with these cases of obvious privilege of the people you call "spoiled brats", there must be officers who keep the military running. There must always be people of this sort in any institution. To rise as a career soldier, what's the route?*

GDP: The man who has studied in the Soviet Union always has preference, even though they may not be as well trained as men who study in Cuba, as happens in aviation. He speaks the language, he deals with the Soviets, he has more facilities, and he always has larger possibilities than the man who studies in Cuba.

"The man who has studied in the Soviet Union always has preference, even though they may not be as well trained as men who study in Cuba, as happens in aviation."

RM: *General, returning to the methods of control of the military that have been put in place in the Soviet-bloc countries, does the practice of periodical rotation of command exist in Cuba in order to avoid local leaderships?*

GDP: Yes. Rotation exists. For instance, Cintras Frias was in Angola for five years and had quite a good mastery of Angolan affairs. His relations with the Angolans were quite good, and the officers and troops liked him, because he was not as corrupt as other officers. However, it seems that he was transferred for the sake of a new officer who had to start by learning everything.

RM: *Who is the new commanding officer of the troops in Angola?*

GDP: Fleitas. General Fleitas.

RM: *On these matters of surveillance and counter-intelligence, you were the second-in-command of the Air Force and had reached a high degree of dissatisfaction which, clearly, you shared with other colleagues. You managed to make your arrangements and escape. Your departure to some extent demonstrates either that there was no surveillance of Air Force men or else that in your particular case it was ineffective. Did you have an idea that there was some surveillance system against which you had to take precautions before leaving?*

GDP: Well, of course, that's logical. What bothers Castro the most is that for months I could gradually collect all this information on corruption; on the absurdities that are committed; the irregularities that are done, and pass it on to other officers. However, it is extremely difficult to coordinate any action within the military, because of the tremendous resources Castro devotes to counter-intelligence within the entire system.

“What bothers Castro the most is that for months I could gradually collect all this information on corruption; on the absurdities that are committed; the irregularities that are done, and pass it on to other officers.”

RM: *Who is the chief of military counter-intelligence?*

GDP: General Fernandez Gondin is there, but [Colome attends to it personally.

RM: *Returning to what we were speaking about, what did you do, then?*

GDP: Basically, as I gradually uncovered more and more [transgressions], I would communicate them to different officers, many of whom were left open-mouthed, and just to be on the safe side I would also tell counter-intelligence. Simply put, I was not saying anything that was not true. I told myself, “In this, my task must be one of convincing.” I could convince the men by speaking to them in two ways: either saying openly to them, “Look, this is no good, we’re going to take action against this”; or else really showing it them. So, that was what I did with tens of officers in different sectors.

RM: *When did you start to do this? From the middle of last year?*

GDP: From the latter part of last year, little by little. Starting in February, I went to the political officer of the DAAFAR himself. He must remember this, because I worked over him. I told him, “You know that So-and-so and Such-and-such have this, and Joe Blow has that.” So he showed surprise and told me, “No, that can’t be so.” And I retorted, “Well, as a matter of fact it can.” I did this in case this activity of mine was detected, so as to be able to say “But, I reported this to the political officer.” I mean, I opened the eyes of lots of officers and high commanders. At the same time, I told it to a lot of political workers. Little by little, a great feeling of hostility towards the regime was being created through the realization that we had become the pedestal for all these people, for the new oppression of the people of Cuba. I

carried out this work little by little, and that's what bothers Fidel the most, because they were unable to detect me. But, what's more, I worked with the truth only, and that is the most important point.

"I opened the eyes of lots of officers and high commanders."

RM: You were speaking of the political officer. That is the other tool that is used to control the military in communist countries. For some time, that activity was under the management of General Sixto Batista Santana. Afterwards, it was placed under the charge of Colonel Milian. Who now holds that position in the military? How is he viewed by the career officers? Are these political officers welcome, or is there an attitude of tolerance, of having to put up with it, among the career officers?

GDP: This is a bad situation that you can do nothing about. In that respect, we no longer know "how the dominoes are going to be shuffled", as we say. Because every time you shuffle the dominoes, somebody gets the double-9.

Take the case of Batista, for instance. He is inept. So, Raul Castro put in a nephew of Milian who died and was a member of the Political Bureau. This colonel had no combat experience, he had only worked in the party. The troops did not get along with him and refused to heed him. So, after a year and a bit, it was realized that this man was a failure. He is then sent to Angola to give him a bit of combat experience and a more or less acceptable image. Then Rogelio Acevedo was put in; he was a general who had fought against Batista. He was put in charge to change the image a bit; but the problem is not one of a change of image, it is that the political officers have no respect.

Do you know what they do with the political officers in Angola? Depending on whether or not they are on a combat mission, they are given a first- or second-grade medal. What the political officers do to get a medal is they get into a helicopter in Luando to transport food to, let's say, the bridge over the River Salazar, or the bridge over the River Hondo. They then tell the pilot to pass over an area where UNITA is present. The helicopter deviates from its path and merely passes over an area where there are rebels. When they come back, the pilot enters a combat mission for himself, because it was over enemy territory. Then the pilots, who see all this, say, "What rogues they are! They get into the backs of helicopters to go and drop food, and they make me deviate from my route in order to enter a combat mission for themselves." Then they say they fought in Angola and they are given a first-grade medal. All the political officers there do this. They are a bunch of scoundrels who are discredited in the eyes of the troops.

“What the political officers do to get a medal is they get into a helicopter in Luando to transport food to, let’s say, the bridge over the River Salazar.... They then tell the pilot to pass over an area where UNITA is present.... When they come back, the pilot enters a combat mission for himself, because it was over enemy territory.... All the political officers there do this. They are a bunch of scoundrels who are discredited in the eyes of the troops.”

RM: *You have said a couple of times that there have been 56,000 desertions. It might perhaps be interesting if you could expand on this a bit more for us. What is the definition of a deserter? The meeting that you mentioned where this figure was cited by Colonel Mesa, is that a periodical meeting, part of the system for supervising discipline?*

GDP: All units of the FAR have monthly “disciplinary meetings”, where the state of discipline of the specific unit is analyzed. For instance, in our case, the DAAFAR, and at the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces [MINFAR] level, there are meetings of the top brass for disciplinary purposes. An analysis is done there on infringers and deserters; an infringer is a man who is absent from his unit for a period of time).

RM: *Without leave?*

GDP: ...Without leave. After 15 days an infringer becomes a deserter, and the law stipulates a penalty of five years for deserters.

This situation of deserters is continuous; for instance, the Western Army reported 350 deserters in one day alone. The level of desertions is tremendously high. So what is being done? A daily report on the number of infringers and deserters a unit has is prepared. This report is then passed up the ladder until it finally reaches the high command. Consequently, the efficiency of the unit chief is measured by the contents of that report when it comes time to evaluate his commanding ability and the troop performance. Thus, this report becomes a doubled-edged sword; the situation is analagous to that of the teacher...who gives a bad student a passing grade for free. What happens here is that there is a skyrocketing number of deserters that go unreported by their unit chiefs for fear of reprisals and permanent notations on their service records or stronger actions against them.

“What happens here is that there is a skyrocketing number of deserters that go unreported by their unit chiefs for fear of

reprisals and permanent notations on their service records or stronger actions against them.”

RM: How can an individual become a deserter in such a tightly controlled society as Cuba...? Where does he eat...? Where does he sleep...? I recall that early in 1985 there was a Central Committee meeting where this problem was discussed and a family-education campaign was planned to avoid the protection of these deserters.

GDP: The relatives hide them, and not necessarily the parents, but cousins and other relatives too, because they are aware of what is happening within the military. The problem lies in the lack of control that prevails in spite of the many control groups like the vigilance committees and others, which gossip a lot and do nothing. Here is a good example which you are going to find unbelievable but that is an absolute truth.

There was a young man who deserted from the San Antonio Air Base two years ago, went into hiding at one of the explosives depots within the base grounds and managed to get a bed in there. At night he would leave dressed in civilian clothes and then return to sleep at the base. With a group of soldier friends he created a network which provided him food and clothes. He became sort of a mafia-type “godfather”. They went as far as to bring to him a young woman. It was not until her uncle, who believed her lost, recognized her in the street one night when she was being escorted by another soldier from the base to her hometown, that the deserter was tracked down and caught.

RM: You mentioned the repeat offenders and, quoting Colonel Mesa, said that there had been 56,000 in three years. What happens to such an individual when he is caught? ...Is he put back in his military unit? There seems to be no incarceration enforced, because the number of inmates would be tremendous. Additionally, we have been informed that there is a 50th Division in Oriente which gathers all the troops with discipline problems. Such units exist in many armies to group together the deserters and the undisciplined.

GDP: True. Such experiments have been in progress for many years. First, there was the creation of the “UMAP” in Camaguey....

RM:the UMAP. The Production Assistance Military Units.

GDP: That was when all the experiments began, with the methods everchanging. A prison named “El Pitirre” was set up for the military. The lives of those who survived the ordeals and tortures at “El Pitirre” were

spared only so that they could repeat to others what was happening in there. But it was to no avail, because the men still see no purpose in remaining in the military.

[The government] tries to find 10,000 solutions to every problem — but the problem is the system. This is Cuba's problem. And you cannot isolate the military from the chaos and despair that engulfs the Cuban people.

“[The government] tries to find 10,000 solutions to every problem — but the problem is the system. This is Cuba's problem. And you cannot isolate the military from the chaos and despair that engulfs the Cuban people.”

I will give you concrete examples of how this situation is reflected in everything — even training. Fraud is widespread to the extent that teachers at the Ministry of Education would reveal questions to the students prior to giving them a test. The same happens with the training of not only the soldiers, but the officers in the military. Training keeps getting simpler. From the parades in the Square and what *Verde Olivo* publishes, our people believe that the Cuban Armed Forces are thoroughly prepared. It is all a fraud. The fraud extends to the flight pilot, who fools the chief of the escadrille, who fools the chief of the squadron, who fools the chief of the brigade, who fools the Chief of Staff. It is a major lie, because they are part of a mock society. Do you realize that? One cannot be separated from the other; it is all intertwined. The same happens in other organisms the superiors are lied to, they are told that the goals have been met and it is not true.

“The fraud extends to the flight pilot, who fools the chief of the escadrille, who fools the chief of the squadron, who fools the chief of the brigade, who fools the Chief of Staff.”

RM: *Regarding the meetings on the discipline problem, is that only one aspect of the what the MINFAR does? ...Are there other purposes for the meetings of the high command? ...Do you periodically share information on the status of the military? Is the Angolan situation discussed among the different military commands or is that subject handled exclusively by a line of command which excludes the other officers?*

GDP: No; we handle it only at the DAAFAR chief's Military Council. For instance, each head of the military, in the MINFAR, the army, the DAAFAR, and the navy, has his Military Council, formed by the substitutes, where a yearly agenda is prepared, a program of work which includes fundamental

matters which are to be analyzed throughout the year. Monthly meetings are also held. There also exist various levels at which matters are analyzed within the large units. For instance, on a given month we at the DAAFAR analyze the perspective on the Angola situation. Later, after analyzing all our interests, the DAAFAR chief will take before the MINFAR what was determined following the analysis at such level.

RM: General, to end our interview, several sources have revealed that, although nothing was said officially, Raul Castro recently spent several weeks in Angola. He must have returned to Cuba precisely around the date of your defection. Has anything filtered out on the motive of such a trip.

GDP: Well, first, [it was] to finalize details on our planning in Angola — all the changes that must be made, the arrival of new weaponry, the preparations for the forthcoming summer offensive...; second, [it was] a political maneuver, so the people can see that he, too, goes to Angola...that he, too, can get a mosquito bite and catch paludism.

RM: There seems to be some confusion about this so-called "summer offensive"; supposedly it takes place around the end of April or early May because of climatic conditions. However, they keep announcing that the offensive is coming but recently the government of Angola denied it had any plans for such an offensive. One might think that the evaluation conducted on this offensive was negative for a second straight year, because last year Angola also received large quantities of Soviet equipment and there was no offensive. What caused this?

GDP: The conditions [in Angola] are very difficult to launch such an offensive. There are many problems inside the [Angolan army], as well as many problems with the Soviets and many problems of our own. You will recall I explained that the most inept officials or those who had to be punished were the ones sent to Angola. Therefore, there have been innumerable problems. To plan such an offensive requires a lot of logistics and coordination, and there are often clashes with the Soviet Union over these. There are also clashes with the personnel when we have to put it into operation. There are often clashes with the Angolans when implementing a series of things which we and the Soviets have tried to teach them. This is the result of the tremendous disorganization they have within their own military. This, in addition to the huge corruption that exists there — very often they take the troops' food money and divert resources. In summary, there are thousands of obstacles to overcome before an offensive of such magnitude can be carried out.

“The conditions [in Angola] are very difficult to launch such an offensive.... There are thousands of obstacles to overcome....”

RM: *Well, I believe that this gives us the answer to one of the topics in which the Cuban people are deeply interested, because if a military operation of such magnitude is undertaken it results in larger casualties and more sacrifices for the Cuban people. Is there anything else you might want to say?*

GDP: No. Only to thank you for having given me the opportunity to appear before you today.

RM: *On the contrary, General del Pino. We thank you for your patience throughout these lengthy conversations with us. Our listeners have heard from you information on topics which concern them deeply and which had not been divulged to the people of Cuba until today.*

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