

FOIA MARKER

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Collection/Record Group: Clinton Presidential Records

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Series/Staff Member: Joan Baggett; Tara Burns

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OA/ID Number: 4123

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Folder Title:

Cubans

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4

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7

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2

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

Clinton Library

DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. memo	Tara Burns to WAVES re: [Personally Identifiable Information] [partial] (1 page)	08/06/1993	b(6)
002. memo	Anthony Lake to President Clinton re: Photo Op with Mario Chanes De Armas (3 pages)	08/06/1993	P1/b(1)
003. notes	re: [Personally Identifiable Information] [partial] (1 page)	00/00/0000	b(6)
004. faxes	re: American Institute for Free Labor Development [Personally Identifiable Information] [partial] (2 pages)	08/06/1993	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
Political Affairs
Joan Baggett; Tara Burns
OA/Box Number: 4123

FOLDER TITLE:

Cubans

2016-0920-F

jm1887

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
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- b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

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MEMORANDUM

TO: WAVES
FR: TARA BURNS, ASST. TO JOAN BAGGETT
DT: 8/6
RE: CLEARANCE FOR ATTENDEES OF POTUS PHOTO OP THIS AFTERNOON

This is to confirm and add to the list of people attending the Photo op with the President this afternoon at 4:05. This is the complete list. Could you please clear the following people for 3:45 this afternoon through the South West gate (they will be in two different cars.)

^{Chanes}
Mario Chanes De Armas

(b)(6)

Caridad Chanes

(b)(6)

Belen Chanes De Lopez

(b)(6)

Javier A. Lopez

(b)(6)

William C. Doherty

(b)(6)

new addition
Lourdes Ristler

(b)(6)

Lane Kirland

(b)(6)

Al Cumming

(b)(6)

Senator Robert Graham
Congressman Robert Menendez

} N.W. Gate

new additions--drivers

George Mason Ivan Korolevich

(b)(6)

Stephanie
Van Reigersberg

[001]

Please call
me at 6257
if you have
any questions -
and could someone please
call me to confirm that
this is all set? Thank you!

→ w/ Sen. Graham through Northwest gate

August 5, 1993

Photo with
Mario Chanes, Former Political Prisoner in Cuba

DATE: August 6, 1993
LOCATION: Oval Office
TIME: 4:05 p.m.
FROM: Joan Baggett
Joe Velasquez

I. PURPOSE

Mario Chanes recently arrived in the U.S. after serving thirty years as a political prisoner in Cuba. He is the longest serving political prisoner in the 20th century. This is an opportunity for you to express your concern for international human rights and to demonstrate solidarity with Cubans and Cuban Americans.

II. BACKGROUND

Chanes was a former ally of Castro who opposed Castro's turn to Communism. He was arrested and placed in prison thirty years ago. He refused to accept "political education," and thus was known as a "plantado" or "firmly rooted" political prisoner. He is supported by the Cuban American Community, the AFL-CIO and the Florida Congressional Delegation.

Mr. Chanes' visit to Washington, D.C., is being sponsored by the AFL-CIO.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Mario Chanes' wife; his sister, Belen; Senator Bob Graham, Representative Robert Menendez and Jim Baker, AFL-CIO.

Staff: Joe Velasquez, Deputy Assistant to the President and
Deputy Director of Political Affairs.

IV. PRESS PLAN

Closed Press

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

* Participants will arrive at the White House, you will greet them and then a photo will be taken.

VI. REMARKS

None

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UNCLASSIFIED

BIOGRAPHY - MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS

Mario Chanes de Armas, age 67, was one of Fidel Castro's earliest and closest companions: he fought alongside Castro in the 1953 attack on the Moncada army barracks, for which he served 21 months in prison, and sailed with Castro on the Granma to launch Cuba's guerrilla war in 1956. He was captured again, and imprisoned by the Batista government until it fell on January 1, 1959.

In 1960, disillusioned with the course Castro was taking, he resumed his trade union work at a brewery (Chanes was a union activist from 1947 until 1953) and started speaking out against the regime. Arrested in 1961, he was sentenced at a closed trial to death by firing squad for participating in a plan to assassinate Fidel Castro, a charge he rejects. His sentence was commuted to 30 years in prison. His only son was born a few months after he was imprisoned, lived to the age of 24, and died before his father was released. Contrary to Cuban practice, Chanes was not allowed out to attend the funeral. In a particularly cruel twist, he was released in 1991 one day before the end of his 30-year sentence.

At the time of his release, Chanes was the longest-serving political prisoner in the western hemisphere. Until July 21, 1993, he and his wife were denied permission to leave Cuba, in violation of international and Cuban law. It is widely believed that it was Fidel Castro's personal decision to both keep him there so long, and to let him go.

Mario Chanes de Armas is the last of the original group of plantados historicos to depart Cuba. Plantados -- Cuban political prisoners who suffer constant abuse for rejecting "political re-education" and for refusing to wear the prison uniform worn by common criminals -- are among the bravest human rights heroes of our time.

ROBERT MENENDEZ
13TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
AND TRANSPORTATION

SUBCOMMITTEES:

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
WATER RESOURCES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS
INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

CAUCUSES

ARTS CAUCUS
HISPANIC CAUCUS
URBAN CAUCUS

MAJORITY WHIP AT LARGE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3013

MEMORANDUM

REPLY TO:
☐ 1831 LONGWORTH HOUSE O.B.
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3013

DISTRICT OFFICES:

- ☐ 911 BERGEN AVENUE
JERSEY CITY, NJ 07306
(201) 222-2828
- ☐ 854 AVENUE C
BAYONNE, NJ 07002
(201) 822-2900
- ☐ 275 HOBART STREET
PERTH AMBOY, NJ 08861
(908) 324-8212

TO: JOE VELAZQUEZ
FROM: CONGRESSMAN BOB MENENDEZ
DATE: 7/30/93
RE: MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

I am writing to respectfully request that the President take a few minutes to meet with and/or take a photo opportunity with Mr. Mario Chanes de Armas, the longest serving political prisoner, to my knowledge, in the 20th century.

Just over a week ago, Mr. Chanes arrived in the United States after having served 30 years in Castro's jails. By comparison, Mr. Nelson Mandela served 27 years in racist South Africa's jails.

Chanes' alleged crime was plotting to kill Fidel Castro and other former fellow revolutionaries. No evidence was ever presented, and Chanes to this day maintains his innocence of any crime. Out of principle, he refused "political re-education" and the garb of common criminals, for which he paid with beatings and many other instances of mistreatment and abuse -- as did his fellow plantados or "firmly rooted" political prisoners.

In 1953, at the age of 26, Mr. Chanes joined with Fidel Castro in the fateful July 26th attack on the Batista Dictatorship's Moncada Barracks at Santiago de Cuba. The attack signalled the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Batista's men captured and jailed Chanes for two years. Upon his release, he rejoined with Castro -- this time in Mexico. In 1956, he returned with Castro to Cuba on the "Granma" yacht.

Chanes remained Castro's friend and ally for years until Batista's defeat. Soon afterward, however, the relationship turned sour. Chanes opposed the Marxist-Leninist direction the Revolution took and he made what proved to be a fateful mistake: speaking his mind in opposition to the Castro regime's excesses.

I believe that the President and his National Security and State Department advisers would be well-advised to meet with Mr. Chanes. I suggest that the meeting occur during the period of August 5th through 8th, if possible. This is an excellent

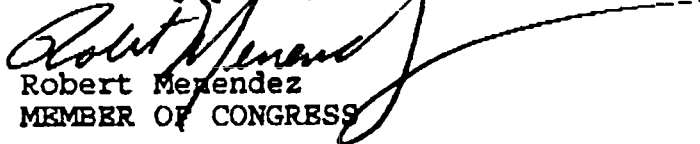
JUL-31-1993 08:22 FROM CONG. MENENDEZ, D.C. TO JACOB...
The President
Rep. Bob Menendez
Page 2

opportunity for the President to reiterate his principled advocacy of human rights throughout the world and Cuba. The meeting would be very well-received and appreciated in the Cuban-American community. Press coverage of course would be very beneficial.

Additionally, I suggest that the President invite other guests, as appropriate: Mr. Chanes' wife; his sister, Belen; Congressmen or women interested in Cuba, such as Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, and Torricelli, Sen. Bill Bradley, Sen. Bob Graham, Sen. Connie Mack; Mr. Eusebio Penalver, President of the World Federation of Cuban Political prisoners, Mr. Ralph E. Fernandez, General Counsel for the World Federation of Former Cuban Political Prisoners; Jack Otero, Dept. Labor; Bill Dougherty, AFL-CIO; and, Jose Collado, AFL-CIO.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,


Robert Menendez
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

RM/ppp

*Thank you very much!
Rob & Joe!*



CUBA UPDATE

Mankind is composed of two sorts of men -- those who love and create,
and those who hate and destroy.

Jo   Mart  

July/August 1993

MARIO CHANES FINALLY FREE

On July 21, 1993, at the Miami International Airport, Mario Chanes received a hero's welcome. An AFL-CIO delegation including representatives from Washington, DC and the local labor leadership were among the hundreds of well wishers gathered at the airport.

The AFL-CIO's international campaign to gain the freedom of both Mario Chanes and Ernesto D  az, launched on February 21, 1991, can finally be declared a success. D  az was jailed for 23 years and released March 1991. Chanes completed a 30-year jail sentence, was released July 1991, but held a prisoner within the Island for two years. Their "crime" was to oppose the communist dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

Mario Chanes was born October 25, 1926, in Havana, Cuba. At age 21 he began his union activities with the successful organizing of the Commercial Workers' Union and its annexes in Havana. As a founding member of this union, he was issued his first membership card by the then CTC General Secretary, Angel Cofi  o.

Then a 26-year-old trade unionist, he set aside his goal of becoming a national labor leader and joined the pro-democracy struggle. He participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, to overthrow the Batista dictatorship and replace it with a democratic system. He was captured and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He served 21 months with Fidel Castro as his cell-mate. Both were released in 1955 under a general amnesty program issued by the Batista regime.

Chanes migrated to the United States, but five months later was asked by Castro to join him aboard the vessel "Granma" for the, now famous, voyage from Mexico to Cuba in December 1956.

By 1959, within months of Castro's triumph, Chanes became convinced that he intended to establish a Communist dictatorship. He immediately resigned his government position and went to work for a brewery in Havana, where he resumed his union activities.

On July 17, 1961, Chanes was arrested by Castro's security forces along with his brother Paco and eight other trade unionists. Convicted by a military tribunal, Chanes was sentenced to death by a firing squad and the others to 20 years in prison. Fortunately Castro was swayed by some friends and Chanes' sentence was commuted to 30 years.

In 1961, the "Plantado" rebelliousness surfaced in the prisons of Cuba. Chanes was one of the first political prisoners to become a "plantado." This word describes those prisoners who rejected indoctrination, resisted prison regulations, refused to wear prison uniforms, and who endured the harshest punishment. In retaliation, they were kept in tiny, filthy cells subjected to physical abuse by prison guards. Because of his defiant status in prison, when his son, who was born shortly after his imprisonment, died in October 1984, he was not allowed to attend the funeral. Chanes later stated, "my son would have been ashamed if I had succumbed to the wishes of my tormentors." He visited his son's grave immediately upon his release.

"The good news is that Mario Chanes finally can share his life with his family and enjoy the liberties for which he has paid such an enormous price," said AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland. "But for the citizens of Cuba, the brutal nightmare of the Castro dictatorship remains. The prisons are still filled with men and women whose only crime is their dissidence. Among them is Rafael Guti  rrez, President of the Trade Union of Cuban Workers (USTC)."

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SIEGFRIED, KIPNIS, RIVERA, LERNER & DE LA TORRE, P.A.

SUITE 1102

201 ALHAMBRA CIRCLE

CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134

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BOCA RATON, FLORIDA (407) 388-0200

HENRY PAUL JOHNSON

NAPLES, FLORIDA (813) 891-0133

MARIA VICTORIA ARIAS
JOHN P. CHRISTENSEN
HELIO DE LA TORRE
PETER M. EDWARDS
JAMES F. HARRINGTON
ALAN G. KIPNIS
ELISABETH D. KOZLOW
LISA A. LERNER
H. HUGH MCCONNELL
OSCAR R. RIVERA
STEVEN M. SIEGFRIED
DANIEL DAVIS, P.E.
FORENSIC CONSULTANT

FILE NO.

REPLY TO:

FAX TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: DAWN FRIEDKIN
FAX #: 1-202-456-2215
PHONE #: 1-202-456-2823

FROM: MARIA VICTORIA ARIAS
FAX #: (305) 443-3292
PHONE #: (305) 442-3334
FILE #:

RE: MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS

DATE: August 5, 1993
TIME: 3:42 pm
NUMBER OF PAGES TO FOLLOW:

MESSAGE: Thank you for calling me. Attached are the newspaper articles which appeared in the Miami Herald in July, 1993.

Perhaps (if possible) it would be wise to make a statement to the effect that this meeting was possible due to the efforts of the Cuban Democrats in New Jersey and Miami.

The information contained in this transmission is attorney privileged and confidential. It is intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copy of this communication is strictly prohibited.

'Fidel Castro is leading Cuba . . . to a holocaust,' Mario Chanes said.



MARIO CHANES / MARIO CHANES

FAMILY CIRCLE: Mario Chanes de Armas is greeted by sister Aleida, ex sisters Mercedes, top left, and Belen, top right, and wife, Caridad, share in the joy.

Castro foe jailed 30 years is hailed by Miami exiles

By ALFONSO CHAZOY
Miami Staff Writer

In Cuba, Fidel Castro has jailed thousands of people for political reasons. But only one — an old ally of Castro — was held for 30 of the 34 years the Cuban leader has been in power.

Mario Chanes de Armas, the longest-held political prisoner in Cuba, arrived Wednesday to an emotional and chaotic reception at Miami International Airport, two years and five days after he completed his prison sentence.

More than 350 wildly cheering exiles welcomed Chanes, shouting "Down With Castro!" and "Long Live Free Cuba!" They waved signs urging death to Castro.

A frail-looking, white-haired man in a dark suit, Chanes, 67, had little time to acknowledge the cheers and shouts. Airport security officers and family members whisked him off to a waiting car followed by a swarm of

camera crews and reporters.

Chanes' first words on U.S. soil were fighting words.

"Fidel Castro is leading Cuba to disaster, to a holocaust," Chanes said in an interview at his sister's West Dade home, where he will be staying. "Cuba under Castro is a total disaster. It is becoming the embarrassment of the world."

No dialogue with Castro, he urged. Punish him even more by keeping the U.S. trade embargo. Force Castro to resign through diplomatic pressure by the world's democracies.

Chanes' arrival closed a significant chapter in Cuban history. It was marked with fanfare not only in Miami but in Washington as well.

Sen. Connie Mack, R-Fla., had a U.S. flag flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of Chanes' arrival. Greg Williams, an aide to Mack, said the senator plans to present

PLEASE SEE CHANES, 18A

Cuban who served 30 years arrives — still defiant

CHANES, FROM 1A

Chanes with the flag as soon as they meet.

Chanes was the last of the so-called *plantado* prisoners whose release had been demanded worldwide by exiles and human rights activists.

Plantado, Spanish for standing firm, described stubborn prisoners who would not give in to prison regulations, who endured the harshest punishment, who never recanted their opposition to the government. In retaliation, the regime kept the *plantados* in small, filthy cells and in some cases guards beat them with hoses, sticks or bayonets.

Plantado rebelliousness surfaced in the prisons of Cuba in 1961, the year Chanes was jailed on charges of plotting to kill Castro. He has always denied the charges.

Chanes' rejection of Castro was particularly galling for the Cuban leader. After all, Chanes had been one of Castro's longtime allies, in on the revolution from the ground floor.

He was with Castro during the attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953. The attack ended with the capture of Castro and some of his followers, including Chanes. He also sailed with Castro from Mexico to Cuba in 1956, when the revolutionaries relaunched the struggle against dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Within months of Castro's triumph Jan. 1, 1959, Chanes became disillusioned with Castro, who as a young, fiery attorney had initially captured the imagination of many Cubans by pledging loyalty to the ideals of Cuban independence hero Jose Marti, not to communism.

"We believed in a young lawyer whom we thought embodied the Marti goals," Chanes said in an interview in Havana shortly after being released July 16, 1991.

Chanes has not changed his mind about Cas-



KEOTER GARRIO / Miami Herald Staff

WELCOMED BY EXILES: Mario Chanes de Armas waves to crowd at Miami's airport.

'Any kind of dialogue or negotiation with Castro is a waste of time.'

MARIO CHANES

tro. He can't be trusted, he said during a 20-minute interview at his sister's house.

"Any kind of dialogue or negotiation with Castro is a waste of time," he said. "Castro is used to dictating, to ordering people around, to telling people what to do. No one can contradict him. He is a tyrant."

'Fidel Castro is leading Cuba . . . to a holocaust,' Mario Chanes said.



HESTER BARNES / MICHIGAN NEWS SERVICE

FAMILY CIRCLE: Mario Chanes de Armas is greeted by sister Aleida, as sisters Morococha, top left, and Balen, top right, and wife, Caridad, share in the joy.

Castro foe jailed 30 years is hailed by Miami exiles

By ALFONSO CHARDY
Herald Staff Writer

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PLEASE SEE CHANES, 18A



A. BREIGIAN HENRARIETY / Miami Herald

BUSY DAY: Mario Chanes started his day by visiting with former political prisoner Huber Matos, below. He then went shopping at Westchester Mall, above, where sister Belen Chanes (third from left), wife Caridad (fourth from left) and other well-wishers toasted him with Cuban coffee. The highlight of the day came when he visited his brother Francisco's grave at Vista Memorial Gardens.



Dream becomes reality for freed anti-Castro foe



His first full day of freedom began when a reporter rang the doorbell at his sister's West Dade home. The noise awoke Mario Chanes de Armas. It was 8:30.

Within minutes, Chanes and his wife, Caridad, were dressed. As Chanes' family-in-exile prepared a breakfast of fruit and cereal, he and Caridad walked out onto the small backyard in the bright morning sunlight.

And not for the last time Thursday, Cuba's longest-held political prisoner marveled.

This time, at the beauty of the grass.

"At first, I thought it was artificial," Chanes said as he and his wife strolled around his sister Belen's beautifully kept backyard.

PLEASE SEE CHANES, 2B



Dream becomes reality on Castro foe's first day of freedom

CHANCES, FROM 1B

"But it's real, like the freedom I'm enjoying. It's all reality now. No longer a dream."

Chances, 67, arrived from Cuba Wednesday, two years and five days after completing a 30-year prison sentence on charges of plotting to kill Fidel Castro. Until this week, Cuba had denied him permission to leave the country.

On Thursday, Chances was Cuban Miami's focus of attention. Everywhere he went he was greeted as a hero. People shook his hand. They patted his back; they kissed him. Total strangers cheered as he passed.

For everyone, Chances had time. A gracious person, he won friends quickly. He had a kind word for all — from top Cuban American leaders to ordinary exiles in the street.

"The worst thing about Cuba," Chances said at one point, addressing his words to a young photographer, "is that there are no options left for people like you."

After breakfast, surrounded by family and journalists, Chances reflected on events in Cuba. Now a fierce Castro foe, he at one time had backed the Cuban leader, joining him from the beginning of the Cuban revolution in 1953. He broke with Castro shortly after the triumph of the revolution in 1959.

Did he feel like he had wasted the best years of his life in jail, someone asked.

"Not at all," Chances shot back. "The waste of time was supporting Fidel Castro at the beginning. Opposing him and paying the price for my opposition was my duty and an honor. I feel fulfilled in life."

Would he do it all over again?

"Like that," he replied, snapping his fingers.

The doorbell rang. It was Huber Matos, a top exile leader, former fellow political prisoner and former fellow Castro supporter. The two men, who met in prison, embraced and talked for more than an hour in a glass-encased porch looking out on the lawn.

Matos told Chances about his exile organization, Cuba Independiente y Democrática, and its anti-Castro activities inside Cuba. He ended his visit by asking Chances to sign a joint statement that would be smuggled into Cuba, urging people to resist Castro. Chances implied that he would consider the proposal seriously.

A reporter from Radio Martí, the Voice of America's Cuba news service, was Chances' next visitor. Through the reporter, Chances sent a message to Cubans about Miami.

"Exiles love you," he said. "They are willing to sacrifice themselves to help you liberate Cuba. We are one people."

As the afternoon approached, Chances' sisters finally pried him from the telephone and visitors and took him for a ride about town.

The first stop: the Westchester Mall,

where Helen Chances' husband operates a men's clothing shop.

"Amazing," Chances said as he walked into the air-conditioned shopping center.

Immediately, Cuban exiles flocked to greet him.

"Welcome to freedom!" proclaimed Victor Asla.

On the way out, Chances paused at a little coffee shop where patrons treated him to café cubano, toasting his freedom.

Next came a long-awaited visit to his brother's grave at Vista Memorial Gardens.

Chances bowed his head and solemnly touched the wall of the mausoleum that held his brother's remains. The brothers were arrested together in 1961. Francisco was released from jail in 1984 and, in 1990, died of cancer in Miami.

Shortly before 6, Chances arrived for a two-hour interview at WAQI-AM Radio Mambi, Miami's most highly rated Spanish-language station, where he was once again greeted with cheers and applause.

Ironically, the last hour of the Mambi show was almost totally blacked out by a strong signal from Havana — a broadcast praising Castro and the Cuban revolution. Cuban signals often interfere with Miami radio broadcasts, but rarely is one station alone affected and for so long.

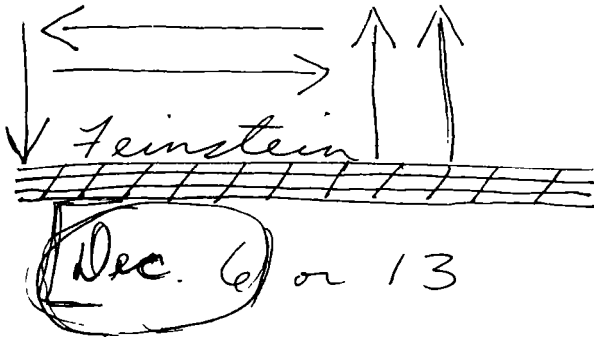
Said Chances, knowingly: "They must be afraid."

Joseph Burns, Dir - Andrew Frank
Rinaldo Bonachia - USIA

Cuban people admire your position towards Cuba very much.
This embargo is the best way - the most correct way.

- Marti - restore funding
- I strongly support the Torricelli bill.

How long before this pressure brings about change?



10:30

August 5, 1993

Photo with
Mario Chanes, Former Political Prisoner in Cuba

DATE: August 6, 1993
LOCATION: Oval Office
TIME: 4:05 p.m.
FROM: Joan Baggett
Joe Velasquez

I. PURPOSE

Mario Chanes recently arrived in the U.S. after serving thirty years as a political prisoner in Cuba. He is the longest serving political prisoner in the 20th century. This is an opportunity for you to express your concern for international human rights and to demonstrate solidarity with Cubans and Cuban Americans.

II. BACKGROUND

Chanes was a former ally of Castro who opposed Castro's turn to Communism. He was arrested and placed in prison thirty years ago. He refused to accept "political education," and thus was known as a "plantado" or "firmly rooted" political prisoner. He is supported by the Cuban American Community, the AFL-CIO and the Florida Congressional Delegation.

Mr. Chanes' visit to Washington, D.C., is being sponsored by the AFL-CIO.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Mario Chanes' wife; his sister, Belen; Senator Bob Graham, Representative Robert Menendez and Jim Baker, AFL-CIO.

Staff: Joe Velasquez, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Political Affairs.

IV. PRESS PLAN

Closed Press

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

* Participants will arrive at the White House, you will greet them and then a photo will be taken.

VI. REMARKS

None

ROBERT MENENDEZ
13TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
AND TRANSPORTATION

SUBCOMMITTEES:
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
WATER RESOURCES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEES:
WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS
INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

CAUCUSES

ARTS CAUCUS
HISPANIC CAUCUS
URBAN CAUCUS

MAJORITY WHIP AT LARGE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3013

MEMORANDUM

REPLY TO:
☐ 1831 LONGWORTH HOUSE O.B.
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3013

DISTRICT OFFICES:
☐ 911 BERGEN AVENUE
JERSEY CITY, NJ 07306
(201) 222-2828
☐ 854 AVENUE C
BAYDARE, NJ 07002
(201) 823-2900
☐ 275 HOBART STREET
PERTH AMBOY, NJ 08861
(908) 324-6212

TO: JOE VELAZQUEZ
FROM: CONGRESSMAN BOB MENENDEZ
DATE: 7/30/93
RE: MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

I am writing to respectfully request that the President take a few minutes to meet with and/or take a photo opportunity with Mr. Mario Chanes de Armas, the longest serving political prisoner, to my knowledge, in the 20th century.

Just over a week ago, Mr. Chanes arrived in the United States after having served 30 years in Castro's jails. By comparison, Mr. Nelson Mandela served 27 years in racist South Africa's jails.

Chanes' alleged crime was plotting to kill Fidel Castro and other former fellow revolutionaries. No evidence was ever presented, and Chanes to this day maintains his innocence of any crime. Out of principle, he refused "political re-education" and the garb of common criminals, for which he paid with beatings and many other instances of mistreatment and abuse -- as did his fellow plantados or "firmly rooted" political prisoners.

In 1953, at the age of 26, Mr. Chanes joined with Fidel Castro in the fateful July 26th attack on the Batista Dictatorship's Moncada Barracks at Santiago de Cuba. The attack signalled the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Batista's men captured and jailed Chanes for two years. Upon his release, he rejoined with Castro -- this time in Mexico. In 1956, he returned with Castro to Cuba on the "Granma" yacht.

Chanes remained Castro's friend and ally for years until Batista's defeat. Soon afterward, however, the relationship turned sour. Chanes opposed the Marxist-Leninist direction the Revolution took and he made what proved to be a fateful mistake: speaking his mind in opposition to the Castro regime's excesses.

I believe that the President and his National Security and State Department advisers would be well-advised to meet with Mr. Chanes. I suggest that the meeting occur during the period of August 5th through 8th, if possible. This is an excellent

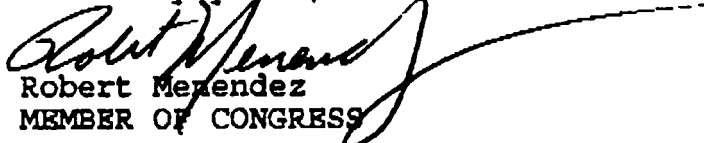
The President
Rep. Bob Menendez
Page 2

opportunity for the President to reiterate his principled advocacy of human rights throughout the world and Cuba. The meeting would be very well-received and appreciated in the Cuban-American community. Press coverage of course would be very beneficial.

Additionally, I suggest that the President invite other guests, as appropriate: Mr. Chanes' wife; his sister, Belen; Congressmen or women interested in Cuba, such as Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, and Torricelli, Sen. Bill Bradley, Sen. Bob Graham, Sen. Connie Mack; Mr. Eusebio Penalver, President of the World Federation of Cuban Political prisoners, Mr. Ralph E. Fernandez, General Counsel for the World Federation of Former Cuban Political Prisoners; Jack Otero, Dept. Labor; Bill Dougherty, AFL-CIO; and, Jose Collado, AFL-CIO.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,


Robert Menendez
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

RM/ppp

*Thank you for your
help, Joe!*



CUBA UPDATE

Mankind is composed of two sorts of men -- those who love and create,
and those who hate and destroy.
José Martí

July/August 1993

MARIO CHANES FINALLY FREE

On July 21, 1993, at the Miami International Airport, Mario Chanes received a hero's welcome. An AFL-CIO delegation including representatives from Washington, DC and the local labor leadership were among the hundreds of well wishers gathered at the airport.

The AFL-CIO's international campaign to gain the freedom of both Mario Chanes and Ernesto Díaz, launched on February 21, 1991, can finally be declared a success. Díaz was jailed for 23 years and released March 1991. Chanes completed a 30-year jail sentence, was released July 1991, but held a prisoner within the Island for two years. Their "crime" was to oppose the communist dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

Mario Chanes was born October 25, 1926, in Havana, Cuba. At age 21 he began his union activities with the successful organizing of the Commercial Workers' Union and its annexes in Havana. As a founding member of this union, he was issued his first membership card by the then CTC General Secretary, Angel Cofiño.

Then a 26-year-old trade unionist, he set aside his goal of becoming a national labor leader and joined the pro-democracy struggle. He participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, to overthrow the Batista dictatorship and replace it with a democratic system. He was captured and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He served 21 months with Fidel Castro as his cell-mate. Both were released in 1955 under a general amnesty program issued by the Batista regime.

Chanes migrated to the United States, but five months later was asked by Castro to join him aboard the vessel "Granma" for the, now famous, voyage from Mexico to Cuba in December 1956.

By 1959, within months of Castro's triumph, Chanes became convinced that he intended to establish a Communist dictatorship. He immediately resigned his government position and went to work for a brewery in Havana, where he resumed his union activities.

On July 17, 1961, Chanes was arrested by Castro's security forces along with his brother Paco and eight other trade unionists. Convicted by a military tribunal, Chanes was sentenced to death by a firing squad and the others to 20 years in prison. Fortunately Castro was swayed by some friends and Chanes' sentence was commuted to 30 years.

In 1961, the "Plantado" rebelliousness surfaced in the prisons of Cuba. Chanes was one of the first political prisoners to become a "plantado." This word describes those prisoners who rejected indoctrination, resisted prison regulations, refused to wear prison uniforms, and who endured the harshest punishment. In retaliation, they were kept in tiny, filthy cells subjected to physical abuse by prison guards. Because of his defiant status in prison, when his son, who was born shortly after his imprisonment, died in October 1984, he was not allowed to attend the funeral. Chanes later stated, "my son would have been ashamed if I had succumbed to the wishes of my tormentors." He visited his son's grave immediately upon his release.

"The good news is that Mario Chanes finally can share his life with his family and enjoy the liberties for which he has paid such an enormous price," said AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland. "But for the citizens of Cuba, the brutal nightmare of the Castro dictatorship remains. The prisons are still filled with men and women whose only crime is their dissidence. Among them is Rafael Gutiérrez, President of the Trade Union of Cuban Workers (UTC)."

LAW OFFICES
SIEGFRIED, KIPNIS, RIVERA, LERNER & DE LA TORRE, P.A.

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JOHN P. CHRISTENSEN
HELIO DE LA TORRE
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JAMES F. HARRINGTON
ALAN G. KIPNIS
ELISABETH D. KOZLOW
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OSCAR R. RIVERA
STEVEN M. SIEGFRIED

DANIEL DAVIS, P.E.
FORENSIC CONSULTANT

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4800 NORTH FEDERAL HIGHWAY
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OF COUNSEL

KERRY A. GREENWALD
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA (407) 385-0200

HENRY PAUL JOHNSON
NAPLES, FLORIDA (813) 891-0133

FILE NO.
REPLY TO:

FAX TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: DAWN FRIEDKIN
FAX #: 1-202-456-2215
PHONE #: 1-202-456-2823

FROM: MARIA VICTORIA ARIAS
FAX #: (305) 443-3292
PHONE #: (305) 442-3334
FILE #:

RE: MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS

DATE: August 5, 1993
TIME: 3:42 pm
NUMBER OF PAGES TO FOLLOW:

MESSAGE: Thank you for calling me. Attached are the newspaper articles which appeared in the Miami Herald in July, 1993.

Perhaps (if possible) it would be wise to make a statement to the effect that this meeting was possible due to the efforts of the Cuban Democrats in New Jersey and Miami.

The information contained in this transmission is attorney privileged and confidential. It is intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copy of this communication is strictly prohibited.

'Fidel Castro is leading Cuba . . . to a holocaust,' Mario Chanes said.



HECTOR GARCIA / MICHIGAN HERALD

FAMILY CIRCLE: Mario Chanes de Armas is greeted by sister Alaida, as sisters Mercedes, top left, and Belen, top right, and wife, Carlidad, share in the joy.

Castro foe jailed 30 years is hailed by Miami exiles

By ALFONSO CHARDY
Miami Staff Writer

In Cuba, Fidel Castro has jailed thousands of people for political reasons. But only one — an old ally of Castro — was held for 30 of the 34 years the Cuban leader has been in power.

Mario Chanes de Armas, the longest-held political prisoner in Cuba, arrived Wednesday to an emotional and chaotic reception at Miami International Airport, two years and five days after he completed his prison sentence.

More than 350 wildly cheering exiles welcomed Chanes, shouting "Down With Castro!" and "Long Live Free Cuba!" They waved signs urging death to Castro.

A frail-looking, white-haired man in a dark suit, Chanes, 67, had little time to acknowledge the cheers and shouts. Airport security officers and family members whisked him off to a waiting car followed by a swarm of

camera crews and reporters.

Chanes' first words on U.S. soil were fighting words.

"Fidel Castro is leading Cuba to disaster, to a holocaust," Chanes said in an interview at his sister's West Dade home, where he will be staying. "Cuba under Castro is a total disaster. It is becoming the embarrassment of the world."

No dialogue with Castro, he urged. Punish him even more by keeping the U.S. trade embargo. Force Castro to resign through diplomatic pressure by the world's democracies.

Chanes' arrival closed a significant chapter in Cuban history. It was marked with fanfare not only in Miami but in Washington as well.

Sen. Connie Mack, R-Fla., had a U.S. flag flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of Chanes' arrival. Greg Williams, an aide to Mack, said the senator plans to present

PLEASE SEE CHANES, 16A

Cuban who served 30 years arrives — still defiant

CHANES, FROM 1A

Chanes with the flag as soon as they meet.

Chanes was the last of the so-called *plantado* prisoners whose release had been demanded worldwide by exiles and human rights activists.

Plantado, Spanish for standing firm, described stubborn prisoners who would not give in to prison regulations, who endured the harshest punishment, who never recanted their opposition to the government. In retaliation, the regime kept the *plantados* in small, filthy cells and in some cases guards beat them with hoses, sticks or bayonets.

Plantado rebelliousness surfaced in the prisons of Cuba in 1961, the year Chanes was jailed on charges of plotting to kill Castro. He has always denied the charges.

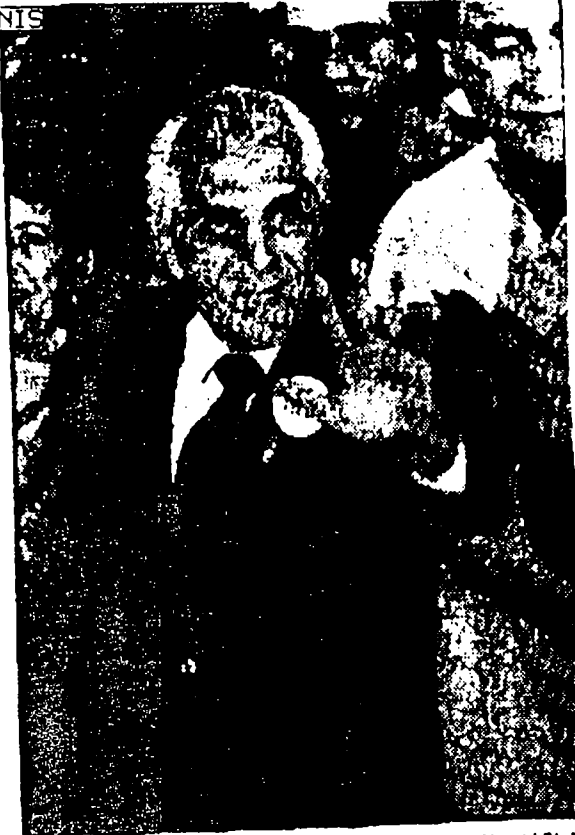
Chanes' rejection of Castro was particularly galling for the Cuban leader. After all, Chanes had been one of Castro's longtime allies, in on the revolution from the ground floor.

He was with Castro during the attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953. The attack ended with the capture of Castro and some of his followers, including Chanes. He also sailed with Castro from Mexico to Cuba in 1956, when the revolutionaries relaunched the struggle against dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Within months of Castro's triumph Jan. 1, 1959, Chanes became disillusioned with Castro, who as a young, fiery attorney had initially captured the imagination of many Cubans by pledging loyalty to the ideals of Cuban independence hero Jose Marti, not to communism.

"We believed in a young lawyer whom we thought embodied the Marti goals," Chanes said in an interview in Havana shortly after being released July 16, 1991.

Chanes has not changed his mind about Cas-



HECTOR GARRIDO / Miami Herald Staff

WELCOMED BY EXILES: Mario Chanes de Armas waves to crowd at Miami's airport.

'Any kind of dialogue or negotiation with Castro is a waste of time.'

MARIO CHANES

tro. He can't be trusted, he said during a 20-minute interview at his sister's house.

"Any kind of dialogue or negotiation with Castro is a waste of time," he said. "Castro is used to dictating, to ordering people around, to telling people what to do. No one can contradict him. He is a tyrant."

'Fidel Castro is leading Cuba . . . to a holocaust,' Mario Chanes said.



HECTOR BAEZ / Miami Herald Staff

FAMILY CIRCLE: Mario Chanes de Armas is greeted by sister Aleida, as sisters Mercedes, top left, and Balen, top right, and wife, Caridad, share in the joy.

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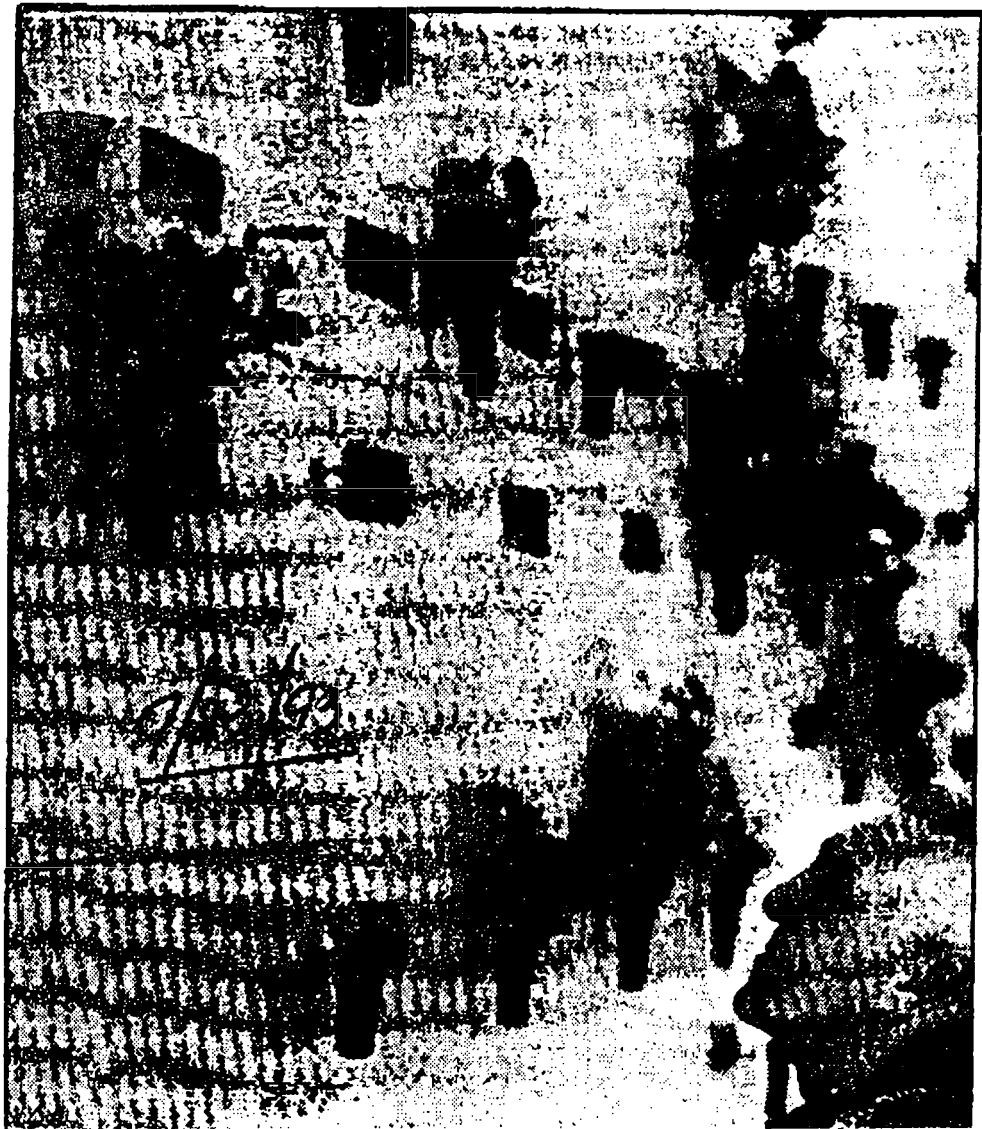
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PLEASE SEE CHANES, 16A



A. BRENNAN HIGGINS / Miami Herald

BUSY DAY: Mario Chanes started his day by visiting with former political prisoner Huber Matos, below. He then went shopping at Westchester Mall, above, where sister Belen Chanes (third from left), wife Caridad (fourth from left) and other well-wishers toasted him with Cuban coffee. The highlight of the day came when he visited his brother Francisco's grave at Vista Memorial Gardens.



Dream becomes reality for freed anti-Castro foe

Extended Page

Herald Staff Writer

His first full day of freedom began when a reporter rang the doorbell at his sister's West Dade home. The noise awoke Mario Chanes de Armas. It was 8:30.

Within minutes, Chanes and his wife, Caridad, were dressed. As Chanes' family-in-exile prepared a breakfast of fruit and cereal, he and Caridad walked out onto the small backyard in the bright morning sunlight.

And not for the last time Thursday, Cuba's longest-held political prisoner marveled.

This time, at the beauty of the grass.

"At first, I thought it was artificial," Chanes said as he and his wife strolled around his sister Belen's beautifully kept backyard.

PLEASE SEE CHANES, 2B



Dream becomes reality on Castro foe's first day of freedom

CHANCES, FROM 1B

"But it's real, like the freedom I'm enjoying. It's all reality now. No longer a dream."

Chances, 67, arrived from Cuba Wednesday, two years and five days after completing a 30-year prison sentence on charges of plotting to kill Fidel Castro. Until this week, Cuba had denied him permission to leave the country.

On Thursday, Chances was Cuban Miami's focus of attention. Everywhere he went he was greeted as a hero. People shook his hand. They patted his back; they kissed him. Total strangers cheered as he passed.

For everyone, Chances had time. A gracious person, he won friends quickly. He had a kind word for all — from top Cuban American leaders to ordinary exiles in the street.

"The worst thing about Cuba," Chances said at one point, addressing his words to a young photographer, "is that there are no options left for people like you."

After breakfast, surrounded by family and journalists, Chances reflected on events in Cuba. Now a fierce Castro foe, he at one time had backed the Cuban leader, joining him from the beginning of the Cuban revolution in 1953. He broke with Castro shortly after the triumph of the revolution in 1959.

Did he feel like he had wasted the best years of his life in jail, someone asked.

"Not at all," Chances shot back. "The waste of time was supporting Fidel Castro at the beginning. Opposing him and paying the price for my opposition was my duty and an honor. I feel fulfilled in life."

Would he do it all over again?

"Like that," he replied, snapping his fingers.

The doorbell rang. It was Huber Matos, a top exile leader, former fellow political prisoner and former fellow Castro supporter. The two men, who met in prison, embraced and talked for more than an hour in a glass-encased porch looking out on the lawn.

Matos told Chances about his exile organization, Cuba independiente y Democrática, and its anti-Castro activities inside Cuba. He ended his visit by asking Chances to sign a joint statement that would be smuggled into Cuba, urging people to resist Castro. Chances implied that he would consider the proposal seriously.

A reporter from Radio Marti, the Voice of America's Cuba news service, was Chances' next visitor. Through the reporter, Chances sent a message to Cubans about Miami.

"Exiles love you," he said. "They are willing to sacrifice themselves to help you liberate Cuba. We are one people."

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The first stop: the Westchester Mall,

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Said Chances, knowingly: "They must be afraid."

Withdrawal/Redaction Marker

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
003. notes	re: [Personally Identifiable Information] [partial] (1 page)	00/00/0000	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
Political Affairs
Joan Baggett; Tara Burns
OA/Box Number: 4123

FOLDER TITLE:

Cubans

2016-0920-F

jm1887

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
b(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
b(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

659-2201 get appt earlier

Daren Peters

Cassie/Margaret 6620 6493

kg. handing cars

Sen. Graham,

Al Cummey

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

staff rep on Intellg. Cmte
224-1731

Robert Menendez

Lane Kirkland

(Jim Baker)

(b)(6)

*get car info

637-5231

driver
George Mason

(b)(6)

1993 Linc. Town car
DC 591118

Chances w/ Bill Doherty
Joe?

[003]

- Can Graham bring his own photographs?
No

Landes: call
Marian
re: Miami
Harold

photo
4050

Ralph/Bob
4050
call photo
office.
sen. Graham
needs
x
ASAP
on before
6pm

MEMORANDUM
OF CALL

Previous editions usable

TO:

Joe V.

☐

YOU WERE CALLED BY--

☐

YOU WERE VISITED BY--

Marta Wolf

OF (Organization)

☐

PLEASE PHONE ►

☐

FTS

☐

AUTOVON

☐

WILL CALL AGAIN

☐

IS WAITING TO SEE YOU

☐

RETURNED YOUR CALL

☐

WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE

475167M License Plate Maryland
descript. of car, Maria Chavez
w/ Present at 4.

RECEIVED BY

DATE

TIME

63-110 NSN 7540-00-634-4018

STANDARD FORM 63 (Rev. 8-81)
Prescribed by GSA
FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

* U.S. GPO: 1990 - 262-080

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
004. faxes	re: American Institute for Free Labor Development [Personally Identifiable Information] [partial] (2 pages)	08/06/1993	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
Political Affairs
Joan Baggett; Tara Burns
OA/Box Number: 4123

FOLDER TITLE:

Cubans

2016-0920-F
jm1887

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR FREE LABOR DEVELOPMENT

1015 20TH STREET, NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20036

Telephone: (202) 778-6357

Telefax: (202) 452-8238

Cable: FREELAS

TELEFAX COVER SHEET

DATE: August 6, 1993

PLEASE DELIVER TO:

NAME: J. Velasquez **FAX NUMBER:** 456-7929
Deputy Assist. to the Pres.
f/political Affairs

OFFICE: The White House - Rm. 115

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET: 1

FROM: Maria Wolf

PHONE: 778/6362

REMARKS:

As requested, the information regarding the driver & vehicle transporting the Chanes' delegation to the White house this afternoon is as follows:

Driver: Ivan Korolevich,

(b)(6)

The vehicle, a light blue 1992 Ford van, has a Vehicle I.D. number as follows: IFBJS31H5NHA35411 (Maryland)

I am sending you the above data while I wait information on the actual license plate number for the vehicle.

[004]

AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR FREE LABOR DEVELOPMENT

1015 20TH STREET, NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20036

Telephone: (202) 659-6300

Telefax: (202) 872-0618

Cable:

TELEFAX COVER SHEET

DATE: August 6, 1993

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO:

NAME: JOE VELASQUEZ FAX NO.: 202-456-7929

OFFICE: DEPT. ASST. POL. AFFS. LOCATION: Washington, DC

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET: 1

FROM: Louise Kistler PHONE: 202-778-6387

REMARKS

AS PER YOUR REQUEST HERE IS THE INFORMATION YOU NEED:

MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS

(b)(6)

CARIDAD CHANES (MARIO'S WIFE)

(b)(6)

BELEN CHANES DE LOPEZ (MARIO'S SISTER)

(b)(6)

JAVIER A. LOPEZ (MARIO'S GREAT-GRAND CHILD)

(b)(6)

WILLIAM C. DOHERTY

(b)(6)

I SPOKE WITH BAKER AND HE WILL CHECK WITH LANE. BAKER WILL BE CALLING OR FAXING THE APPROPRIATE INFO TO YOU THIS MORNING. MIL GRACIAS!!

MEMORANDUM

TO: TRICIA
FR: TARA, JOAN BAGGETT'S OFFICE
DT: 8/6
RE: CARS TO BE CLEARED FOR AFTERNOON PHOTO OP W/ POTUS

The President is doing a photo op this afternoon at 4:05 with Mario Chanes De Armas, his family, Senator Graham, Congressman Menendez, and Lane Kirkland and William Doherty of the AFL-CIO.

Could you please clear in the following cars for the Southwest gate this afternoon at 3:45:

1) A light blue 1992 Ford van, driven by Ivan Korolevich, with Maryland plates: 475167M will be carrying the Chanes family and Mr. Doherty.

2) A 1993 Lincoln Town Car, driven by George Mason, with DC plates 591118 will be carrying Mr. Kirkland.

The photo op should be over by 4:20 or so, so I imagine clearing the cars for an hour would be plenty of time.

Also, Legislative should be sending you the necessary info on Sen. Graham and Rep. Menendez to have them cleared for the same time through the Northwest gate. Could you please confirm with me at 6257 when you know that we're all set (to calm my nerves!) Thanks so much for all of your help!

ROUTING SLIP

DATE: 8/5/93

FROM: Marcia Hale
Director of Scheduling & Advance

SUBJECT: *Photo. op w/ Mario Chanes de Armas.*

TO:

Rahm Emanuel

Mark Gearan

David Gergen

Alexis Herman

Nancy Hernreich

Anthony Lake

Bruce Lindsey

Mack McLarty

Regina Montoya

Roy Neel

Bernie Nussbaum

Joan Baggett

FOR YOUR:

Information ✓

Howard Paster

John Podesta

Jack Quinn

Carol Rasco

Bob Rubin

Eli Segal

George Stephanopolous

Ann Stock

Christine Varney

David Watkins

Maggie Williams

Anne Waller

Steve Richetti

Advice files

Action ✓

COMMENTS:

Schedule Proposal

August 6 time TBA

☒ Accept

☐ Regret

☐ Pending

93 AUG 5 4:45

TO:

Marcia L. Hale
Assistant to the President and Director
of Scheduling and Advance

FROM:

Joan N. Baggett, Assistant to the President and
Director of Political Affairs.
Joe Velasquez, Deputy Assistant to the President for
Political Affairs.
Steve Ricchetti, Deputy Assistant to the President for
Legislative Affairs, Senate.

REQUEST:

Photo opportunity with Mario Chanes de Armas.

PURPOSE:

Chanes recently arrived in the U.S. after serving thirty
years as a political prisoner in Cuba. This is an
opportunity for the President to express his concern
for international human rights and to demonstrate
solidarity with Cubans and Cuban Americans.

BACKGROUND:

Chanes was a former ally of Castro who opposed
Castro's turn to Communism. He was arrested and
placed in prison thirty years ago. He refused to accept
"political education," and thus was known as a
"plantado" or "firmly rooted" political prisoner. He is
supported by the Cuban American Community, the
AFL-CIO and the Florida Democratic Delegation.

PREVIOUS PARTICIPATION: None.

DATE AND TIME:

August 6, 1993

DURATION:

Ten minutes.

LOCATION:

Open.

PARTICIPANTS:

Mr. Chanes' wife; his sister, Belen; Representative
~~Florida Rep. Lehtinen~~, Senator Bob Graham,
Representative Robert Menendez and Bill Dougherty,
AFL-CIO.

OUTLINE OF EVENTS:	Meeting with NSC staff. Drop by with President for photo.
REMARKS REQUIRED:	Talking Points will be prepared by Joe Velasquez.
MEDIA COVERAGE:	Yes.
RECOMMENDED BY:	Joan N. Baggett, Assistant to the President and Director of Political Affairs.
CONTACT:	Joe Velasquez, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Political Affairs. ext. 6257

ROBERT MENENDEZ
13TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
AND TRANSPORTATION

SUBCOMMITTEES:
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
WATER RESOURCES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEES:
WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS
INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

CAUCUSES

ARTS CAUCUS
HISPANIC CAUCUS
URBAN CAUCUS

MAJORITY WHIP AT LARGE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3013

MEMORANDUM

REPLY TO:
☐ 1831 LONGWORTH HOUSE O.B.
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3013

DISTRICT OFFICES:

☐ 911 BERGEN AVENUE
JERSEY CITY, NJ 07306
(201) 222-2828

☐ 854 AVENUE C
BAYONNE, NJ 07002
(201) 823-2800

☐ 275 HOBART STREET
PERTH AMBOY, NJ 08861
(908) 324-8212

93 AUG 5

TO: JOE VELAZQUEZ
FROM: CONGRESSMAN BOB MENENDEZ
DATE: 7/30/93
RE: MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

I am writing to respectfully request that the President take a few minutes to meet with and/or take a photo opportunity with Mr. Mario Chanes de Armas, the longest serving political prisoner, to my knowledge, in the 20th century.

Just over a week ago, Mr. Chanes arrived in the United States after having served 30 years in Castro's jails. By comparison, Mr. Nelson Mandela served 27 years in racist South Africa's jails.

Chanes' alleged crime was plotting to kill Fidel Castro and other former fellow revolutionaries. No evidence was ever presented, and Chanes to this day maintains his innocence of any crime. Out of principle, he refused "political re-education" and the garb of common criminals, for which he paid with beatings and many other instances of mistreatment and abuse -- as did his fellow plantados or "firmly rooted" political prisoners.

In 1953, at the age of 26, Mr. Chanes joined with Fidel Castro in the fateful July 26th attack on the Batista Dictatorship's Moncada Barracks at Santiago de Cuba. The attack signalled the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Batista's men captured and jailed Chanes for two years. Upon his release, he rejoined with Castro -- this time in Mexico. In 1956, he returned with Castro to Cuba on the "Granma" yacht.

Chanes remained Castro's friend and ally for years until Batista's defeat. Soon afterward, however, the relationship turned sour. Chanes opposed the Marxist-Leninist direction the Revolution took and he made what proved to be a fateful mistake: speaking his mind in opposition to the Castro regime's excesses.

I believe that the President and his National Security and State Department advisers would be well-advised to meet with Mr. Chanes. I suggest that the meeting occur during the period of August 5th through 8th, if possible. This is an excellent

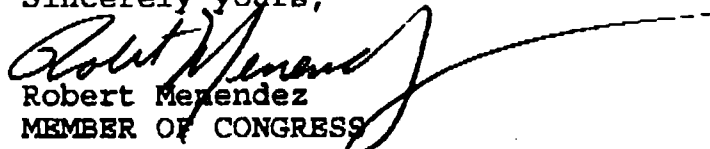
The President
Rep. Bob Menendez
Page 2

opportunity for the President to reiterate his principled advocacy of human rights throughout the world and Cuba. The meeting would be very well-received and appreciated in the Cuban-American community. Press coverage of course would be very beneficial.

Additionally, I suggest that the President invite other guests, as appropriate: Mr. Chanes' wife; his sister, Belen; Congressmen or women interested in Cuba, such as Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, and Torricelli, Sen. Bill Bradley, Sen. Bob Graham, Sen. Connie Mack; Mr. Eusebio Penalver, President of the World Federation of Cuban Political prisoners, Mr. Ralph E. Fernandez, General Counsel for the World Federation of Former Cuban Political Prisoners; Jack Otero, Dept. Labor; Bill Dougherty, AFL-CIO; and, Jose Collado, AFL-CIO.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,


Robert Menendez
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

RM/ppp

*Thank you for your
help, Joe!*



CUBA UPDATE

Mankind is composed of two sorts of men -- those who love and create,
and those who hate and destroy.

José Martí

July/August 1993

MARIO CHANES FINALLY FREE

On July 21, 1993, at the Miami International Airport, Mario Chanes received a hero's welcome. An AFL-CIO delegation including representatives from Washington, DC and the local labor leadership were among the hundreds of well wishers gathered at the airport.

The AFL-CIO's international campaign to gain the freedom of both Mario Chanes and Ernesto Díaz, launched on February 21, 1991, can finally be declared a success. Díaz was jailed for 23 years and released March 1991. Chanes completed a 30-year jail sentence, was released July 1991, but held a prisoner within the Island for two years. Their "crime" was to oppose the communist dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

Mario Chanes was born October 25, 1926, in Havana, Cuba. At age 21 he began his union activities with the successful organizing of the Commercial Workers' Union and its annexes in Havana. As a founding member of this union, he was issued his first membership card by the then CTC General Secretary, Angel Cofiño.

Then a 26-year-old trade unionist, he set aside his goal of becoming a national labor leader and joined the pro-democracy struggle. He participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, to overthrow the Batista dictatorship and replace it with a democratic system. He was captured and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He served 21 months with Fidel Castro as his cell-mate. Both were released in 1955 under a general amnesty program issued by the Batista regime.

Chanes migrated to the United States, but five months later was asked by Castro to join him aboard the vessel "Granma" for the, now famous, voyage from Mexico to Cuba in December 1956.

By 1959, within months of Castro's triumph, Chanes became convinced that he intended to establish a Communist dictatorship. He immediately resigned his government position and went to work for a brewery in Havana, where he resumed his union activities.

On July 17, 1961, Chanes was arrested by Castro's security forces along with his brother Paco and eight other trade unionists. Convicted by a military tribunal, Chanes was sentenced to death by a firing squad and the others to 20 years in prison. Fortunately Castro was swayed by some friends and Chanes' sentence was commuted to 30 years.

In 1961, the "Plantado" rebelliousness surfaced in the prisons of Cuba. Chanes was one of the first political prisoners to become a "plantado." This word describes those prisoners who rejected indoctrination, resisted prison regulations, refused to wear prison uniforms, and who endured the harshest punishment. In retaliation, they were kept in tiny, filthy cells subjected to physical abuse by prison guards. Because of his defiant status in prison, when his son, who was born shortly after his imprisonment, died in October 1984, he was not allowed to attend the funeral. Chanes later stated, "my son would have been ashamed if I had succumbed to the wishes of my tormentors." He visited his son's grave immediately upon his release.

"The good news is that Mario Chanes finally can share his life with his family and enjoy the liberties for which he has paid such an enormous price," said AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland. "But for the citizens of Cuba, the brutal nightmare of the Castro dictatorship remains. The prisons are still filled with men and women whose only crime is their dissidence. Among them is Rafael Gutiérrez, President of the Trade Union of Cuban Workers (USTC)."

Grace Prieto
6460 South West 20th Terrace
Miami, Florida 33155

August 31, 1993

Hon. Bill Clinton
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D. C. 20505

Dear Mr. President:

It is with deep regret that I am writing this letter to you. I had sincerely hoped that for the first time in many years the political environment for Cuban American Democrats would change. Unfortunately attitudes, contrary to your own, by high level staff members of your Administration are bringing back bad memories created by the Administration of former President Jimmy Carter, which the Republican Party has very successfully taken advantage of for their recruitment efforts of Cuban Americans to the ranks of their Party.

I am particularly referring, although it is not the sole source of concern, to the deportation of eight Cuban rafters by the Mexican government who accidentally arrived at Mexican shores during the third week in August. Seven others, including two children, had died prior to their arrival. On August 19, the Mexican government sent them back to Cuba, even though the refugees desperately begged not to be deported as they feared for their future in Cuba. Videos of this deportation were shown on major television stations. It was cruel and inhumane for Mexico to take this action, even for a nation that has always had good relations with the 34-year old tyranny.

The Cuban American community in Miami, California, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, and other cities throughout the United States, held public demonstrations before Mexican consulates, implemented a boycott of Mexican products and related businesses, sent letters to the Mexican government, wrote to members of your staff, some initiated a hunger strike, and political organizations and community leaders within the Cuban American community dedicated their time and efforts to persuade the Mexican authorities to request the return of all eight deported refugees to Mexico from the Cuban government. Finally, and ten days later, on August 29, these Cubans were returned to Mexico (it was a good political move for Castro's present agenda). Today these refugees are awaiting for their visas that will allow them to come to the United States, which was their originally intended destination.

There is still something this Administration can do in regards to this issue; that is to help these people come to the United States, and to let people know that it is being done.

-2-

While this ordeal was taking place, no statements or even mention of this issue was made by any staff member of your Administration. And, AGAIN, we, Cuban American political activists in the Democratic Party, many of whom worked extremely hard for your campaign, have been faced with frustration and embarrassment before this inconceivable lack of knowledge and interest by a Democratic Administration in our political affairs; a political Party that is so hard to stand up for in the Cuban American community.

I am addressing our concerns to you (because I know many feel the same way I do), since I honestly believe that the apathy of some members of your staff does not reflect your true feelings. I am sure that had you known about the above situation, you would have acted accordingly.

It is becoming very difficult, Mr. President, to continue to provide excuses for a political Party that continues to ignore our political situation and the political implications for Democrats in Florida. I am afraid our frustration has reached its limits as we find there is very little we can do any more to bring awareness within our Party.

The purpose of this letter is mainly to request that you check into this matter and take the necessary steps to change the insensitive attitudes of some members of your Administration and that they react in a politically wise manner in the future, and in doing so the respect that I know you have for all people will be better represented.

Sincerely,


Grace Prieto

/gp

cc: Hillary Clinton
Warren Christopher
Bruce Lindsay
Richard Feinberg
Alexander Watson
David Wilhelm
Fred Humphries
Terrie Brady
Joseph Geller