

Judge Leonard more than once protested and begged the government to stop such a deplorable masquerade. She did that at the very beginning of the trial, on several occasions thereafter and until the very end. To no avail. (Official transcripts of the trial, pp. 22, 23, 111, 112, 625, 14644-14646).

The government was not interested in having a fair trial. During the jury selection process, the prosecution was very keen to exclude the majority of African American prospective jurors. It also excluded the three individuals who didn't manifest strong anti-Castro sentiments.

By that time Elian González has been rescued but he was very much in the minds of the jurors. As one of them said during voir dire: "I would be concerned about the reaction that might take place ... I don't want rioting and stuff like that to happen like what happened in the Elian case". Or in the words of another: "I would be a nervous wreck if you wanted to know the truth ... I would have actual fear for my own safety if I didn't come back with a verdict that was in agreement with the Cuban community".

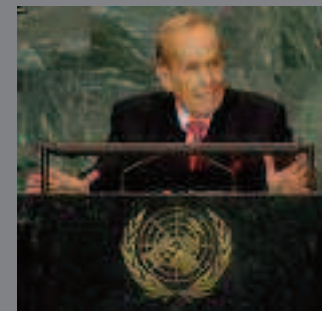
In that ambience of fear began the longest trial to date in American history. And the one that the big media "chose" to ignore.

<http://www.granma.cu/ingles/2009/septiembre/mar8/Cuban-Five2.html>

Provided by the Philadelphia
Committee to Free the Five

The Untold Story of the Cuban Five (Part 2) Justice in Wonderland

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*"Sentence first-verdict afterwards"
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,
Lewis Carroll*

Having been defeated on the issue of venue the outcome of the Cuban Five's trial was predetermined. It will go strictly in accordance with the Queen's prophecy.

The American media played a very important two-pronged role. Outside Miami it was, and it continues to be, how Attorney Leonard Weinglass so aptly described contrasting sharply with their role within Dade County, both offering an impressive show of discipline.

The local media not only intensively covered the case, but intervened actively in it, as if they were part of the prosecution. The Five were condemned by the media even before they were indicted.

Very early in the morning on Saturday September 12th 1998, each media outlet in Miami was talking breathlessly about the capture of some "terrible" Cuban agents "bent to destroy the United States" (the phrase that prosecutors love so much and will repeat time and again during the entire process). "Spies among us" was the headline that morning. At the same time, by the way, the Miami FBI chief was meeting with Lincoln Díaz-Balart and Ileana Ross Lehtinen, representatives of the old Batista gang in federal Congress.

An unprecedented propaganda campaign was launched against five individuals who could not defend themselves, due to the fact that they were completely isolated from the outside world, day and night, for a year and a half, in what is accurately described in prison jargon as the "hole".

A media circus has surrounded the Five since they were detained all the way until now. But only in Miami. Elsewhere in the United States the ordeal of the Five has only gotten silence. The rest of the country does not know much about this case and is kept in the dark, as if everybody accepted that Miami--that "very diverse, extremely heterogeneous community" as described by the D.A.--belongs to another planet.

That might have been a reasonable proposition, if it were not for some rather embarrassing facts recently discovered. Some of the media people involved in the Miami campaign--"journalists" and others--were paid by the US government, were in its payroll as employees of the radio and TV anti-Cuban propaganda machine that has cost many hundreds of millions of US tax payer's dollars.

Without knowing it, Americans were forced to be very generous, indeed. There is a long list of "journalists" from Miami who covered the entire trial of the Five and, at the same time, were receiving juicy federal checks (for more on the "work" of these journalist see: www.freethefive.org).

The Court of Appeals decision in 2005 provides also a good summary of the propaganda campaign before and during the trial. That was one of the reasons leading the panel "to vacate the convictions and order a new trial". Miami was not a place to have even the appearance of justice. As the judges said "the evidence submitted in support of the motions for change of venue was massive". (Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, No. 01-17176, 03-11087)

Let's clarify something. Here we are not talking about journalists in the sense Americans outside Miami may be thinking of. We are referring to Miami "journalists," something quite different.

Their role was not to report the news, but to create a climate guaranteeing conviction. They even called for public demonstrations outside the office of the defense counsel and harassed prospective jurors during the pretrial phase. The Court itself expressed concern about the "tremendous amount of requests for the voir questions in advance of them being asked, apparently destined to inform their listeners, including members of the venire, of the questions prior to the time they are posed to them by the Court".

We are talking about a bunch of individuals who harassed the jurors, following them, with cameras, through the streets, filming their car licenses and showing them on TV, tracking them inside the Court building, down to the jury room's door, during the entire seven months trial proceedings, all the way to the last day.