Steve Marquardt’s translation:

**In Madrid, the released Cuban political prisoners recount their ordeal**
Le Monde | 20.08.2010 at 3:44 p.m. • Updated 23.03.2011 at 1:21 p.m.

Three more Cuban political prisoners arrived in Madrid, Tuesday, August 17, followed by two others on Thursday. In total, since July 12, twenty-five dissidents of the “Group of 75”, sentenced in April 2003 to sentences of 8 to 28 years in prison for their “counter-revolutionary” activities, were sent to Spain. Twenty-seven others still waited in Cuban jails. They would leave the island in the next three months according to Cuban Church, which negotiated these “liberations” with the government of Raul Castro and under the aegis of Spain.

“This is a forced exile”: for Efrén Fernández, one of the last dissidents to set foot in Madrid, words are important. “We are not set us free, we have been conducted directly from the prison to the aircraft for Spain. It is a strategy of the dictatorship to try to soften international criticism.”

Mr. Fernandez, a member of the Christian Liberation Movement (MCL) as were 42 of the 75 “Black Spring” detainees of 2003, participated in the Varela Project manifesto signed by 25 000 people, presented in May 2002 to the Cuban Parliament, and which called the recognition of freedom of expression and opinion, amnesty for political prisoners, economic freedom and free elections. “According to the Cuban Constitution of 1976, 10,000 signatures are enough to file a popular bill, but we never got an answer,” said Mr. Fernandez. In reality, the answer came but later, in April 2003, when he was sentenced to twelve years in prison. “I was accused of having a radio and a book about the Declaration of Human Rights. There, it is a crime to have this type of book, it is a counter-revolutionary crime!”

Imprisoned for “seven years and five months in the midst of huge rats and cockroaches, alongside murderers, rapists, pedophiles,” this father suffers today from serious skin and kidney problems. “I was covered in ticks and inflammations all over the body because of the inhumane conditions of hygiene in prison,” testifies Mr. Fernandez. The water used to wash ourselves and drink came out of a pipe stuck in hole in which we were deficating. We did not have medical care. The only time I was given antibiotics, because I had a high fever, I was overdosed. I stayed in a coma for three days. Today, I have a very weak immune system and I have a partial loss of vision.”

The dissident cannot calm the flow of words. After so many years in prison, he needs to confide, to recount the “cruelty” of the detention conditions in the high security Guanajay prison in Havana province. “ For a year and four months, I was locked in an isolation cell. It’s an attempt blow to [make you] lose your mind. I knew nothing of what was happening outside and I could see my family only four times.”

Visibly tired, his dark eyes wide as he remembers every detail of his detention, he has decided to start a new life in Madrid or elsewhere. But will continue to work for the MCL from exile, because the situation in Cuba is, according to him, far from improving: “Our expatriation does not mean that change in Cuba is happening. The proof of that I that since our liberation, repression increased. In recent weeks, detentions, beatings and all forms of pressure are put against peaceful opponents. It suffices to carry 10 kg of potatoes to be accused of smuggling.”

Regis Iglesias, spokesman for MCL, member of the Varela Project and also released on August 17, confirms it: “The repression intensified just before we were to begin to start out. Right now, in Banes, in the native village where Orlando Zapata was born (a prisoner deceased six months ago after eighty-six days of hunger strike), the mother of the latter, Reina Tamayo, every Sunday goes to visit the grave of her son with relatives and dissident companions but each time the political police transform it into a battlefield,” he says. Amnesty International has also called on the Cuban regime this Tuesday to stop harassing Ms. Tamayo, who “simply wants to pay homage to her son who died in tragic circumstances.”

Aged 41, Regis Iglesias, however, wants to see in the harassment of opponents by the authorities a reason to hope: “Such repression is a sign of weakness. If a government starts to repress a mother who is collecting at the grave of her son or a youth who is collecting signatures for proposed legislation, it is a strong signal of the decadence of the regime.”

Tried along with Efrén Fernandez and three other dissidents, Mr. Iglesias was sentenced to eighteen years in prison. Accused of possessing the “counter-revolutionary literature” and of “participating in a reception with the section chief of the US Interests Section in Havana,” he also lived “the horror” of Castro’s jails.

Transferred from Ariza prison in Cienfuegos, to Kilo 8 in Camagüey, then to and those in Santa Clara, Matanzas and Guanajay, this fan of the Rolling Stones, who stuck in each cell a photo of her favorite group, retained his pugnacity: “My intention was to stay in Cuba. I have changed my mind for family reasons, but I know that Cuba’s problems are solved by being on site. The diaspora like exile supports the fight for democracy, but always by supporting projects that come to Cuba itself, like the Varela Project.”

From Spain, he also will continue the struggle himself. And remain hopeful. “If the government is slow to implement reforms, he hopes there will be a strong internal crisis, a civic reaction. People will come out in the streets because the Cuban people no longer afraid.”

**A Madrid, des prisonniers politiques cubains libérés racontent leur calvaire**

LE MONDE | 20.08.2010 à 15h44 • Mis à jour le 23.03.2011 à 13h21

Trois nouveaux prisonniers politiques cubains sont arrivés à Madrid, mardi 17 août, suivis de deux autres, jeudi. Au total, depuis le 12 juillet, vingt-cinq dissidents du “groupe des 75”, condamnés en avril 2003 à des peines de 8 à 28 années de prison pour leurs activités “contre-révolutionnaires”, ont été envoyés en Espagne. Vingt-sept autres patientent encore dans les geôles cubaines. Ils devraient quitter l'île dans les trois prochains mois selon l'Eglise cubaine, qui a négocié avec le gouvernement de Raul Castro, et sous l'égide de l'Espagne, ces “libérations”.

“C'est un exil forcé” : pour Efrén Fernandez, l'un des derniers dissidents à avoir posé le pied à Madrid, les mots sont importants. “On ne nous a pas libérés, on nous a conduits directement de la prison à l'avion pour l'Espagne. C'est une stratégie de la dictature pour essayer d'adoucir les critiques internationales.”

Membre du Mouvement chrétien de libération (MCL), comme 42 des 75 détenus du “printemps noir” de 2003, M. Fernandez a participé au Projet Varela, manifeste signé par 25 000 personnes, présenté en mai 2002 au Parlement cubain, et qui demandait la reconnaissance des libertés d'expression et d'opinion, l'amnistie des prisonniers politiques, la liberté économique et des élections libres. “Selon la Constitution cubaine de 1976, 10 000 signatures suffisent à déposer un projet de loi populaire, mais nous n'avons jamais eu de réponse”, rappelle M. Fernandez. En réalité, la réponse est arrivée mais plus tard, en avril 2003, lorsqu'il est condamné à douze ans de prison. “On m'a accusé d'avoir une radio et un livre sur la déclaration des droits de l'homme. Là-bas, c'est un délit d'avoir ce type de livres, c'est un crime contre-révolutionnaire!”

Incarcéré durant “sept ans et cinq mois au milieu d'énormes rats et de cafards, aux côtés d'assassins, de violeurs, de pédophiles”, ce père de famille souffre aujourd'hui de graves problèmes dermatologiques et rénaux. “J'étais couvert de tiques et d'inflammations sur tout le corps du fait des conditions d'hygiène inhumaines en prison, témoigne M. Fernandez. L'eau qui servait à nous laver et à boire sortait d'un tuyau collé au trou dans lequel nous déféquions. Nous n'avions pas de soins médicaux. La seule fois où on m'a donné des antibiotiques, parce que j'avais une forte fièvre, on les a surdosés. Je suis resté trois jours dans le coma. Aujourd'hui, j'ai un système immunologique très faible et j'ai perdu une partie de la vue.”

Le dissident ne peut calmer le flot des mots. Après tant d'années emprisonné, il a besoin de se confier, de raconter la “cruauté” des conditions de détention dans la prison de haute sécurité de Guanajay, dans la province de La Havane. “Durant un an et quatre mois, j'ai été enfermé dans une cellule d'isolement. C'est un coup à perdre la tête. Je ne savais rien de ce qui se passait dehors et je n'ai pu voir ma famille qu'à quatre reprises.”

Visiblement fatigué, ses yeux noirs écarquillés pendant qu'il se souvient des moindres détails de sa détention, il est décidé à entamer une nouvelle vie, à Madrid ou ailleurs. Mais il continuera à travailler pour le MCL depuis l'exil, car la situation à Cuba est, selon lui, loin de s'améliorer : “Notre expatriation ne signifie pas qu'il se passe des changements à Cuba. La preuve en est que, depuis notre libération, la répression s'est accentuée. Ces dernières semaines, les détentions, les matraquages et toute forme de pression mettent à mal les opposants pacifiques. Il suffit qu'ils transportent 10 kg de pommes de terre pour qu'on les accuse de contrebande.”

Regis Iglesias, porte-parole du MCL, membre du Projet Varela et lui aussi libéré le 17 août, le confirme : “La répression s'est intensifiée juste avant que nous commencions à sortir. En ce moment, à Banes, dans le village natal d'Orlando Zapata (un prisonnier décédé il y a six mois après quatre-vingt-six jours de grève de la faim), la mère de ce dernier, Reina Tamayo, va visiter tous les dimanches la tombe de son fils avec des proches et des compagnons de la dissidence mais, à chaque fois, la police politique transforme cela en champ de bataille”, souligne-t-il. Amnesty international a d'ailleurs appelé, mardi, le régime cubain à cesser de harceler Mme Tamayo, qui “veut simplement rendre hommage à son fils mort dans des circonstances tragiques”.

Agé de 41 ans, Regis Iglesias veut cependant voir dans ce harcèlement des opposants par le pouvoir une raison d'espérer : “Tant de répression est un signe de faiblesse. Si un gouvernement commence à réprimer une mère qui se recueille sur la tombe de son fils ou un jeune qui rassemble des signatures pour un projet légal, c'est un signal fort de la décadence du régime.”

Jugé en même temps qu'Efrén Fernandez et trois autres dissidents, M. Iglesias a été condamné à dix-huit ans de prison. Accusé de posséder de la “littérature contre-révolutionnaire” et de “participer à une réception avec le chef de section des intérêts des Etats-Unis à La Havane”, il a lui aussi vécu “l'horreur” des geôles castristes.

Transféré de la prison d'Ariza, à Cienfuegos, jusqu'à celle de Kilo 8, à Camagüey, puis à celles de Santa Clara, de Matanzas et de Guanajay, ce fan des Rolling Stones, qui collait dans chaque cellule une photo de son groupe fétiche, a conservé sa pugnacité : “Mon intention était de rester à Cuba. J'ai changé d'avis pour des raisons familiales, mais je sais que les problèmes de Cuba se résolvent en étant sur place. La diaspora comme l'exil soutiennent le combat pour la démocratie, mais toujours en appuyant des projets qui viennent de Cuba même, comme le Projet Varela.”

Depuis l'Espagne, il continuera lui aussi la lutte. Et garde espoir. “Si le gouvernement tarde à appliquer des réformes, espère-t-il, il y aura une crise interne très forte, une réaction civique. Les gens sortiront dans les rues car le peuple cubain n'a plus peur.”

(Intérim.) - Madrid , correspondance

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Imprisoned for “seven years and five months in the middle of huge rats and cockroaches, alongside murderers, rapists, pedophiles,” this father now suffering from serious skin and kidney problems. “I was covered in ticks and inflammation all over the body because of the inhumane conditions of hygiene in prison, testifies Mr. Fernandez. The water used to wash ourselves and drink out of a pipe stuck in hole in which we déféquions. We did not have medical care. The only time I was given antibiotics, because I had a high fever, was overdosed them. I stayed for three days in a coma. Aujourd ay, I have a very weak immune system and I lost a part of the view.”

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Regis Iglesias, spokesman MCL, member of the Varela Project and also released on August 17, says: “The repression intensified just before we started out Right now, in Banes, in the native village. Orlando Zapata (a prisoner died there six months after eighty-six days of hunger strike), the mother of the latter, Reina Tamayo, every Sunday will visit the grave of her son with relatives and companions of dissent but, each time, the political police transforms it into a battlefield, “he says. Amnesty International has also called on Tuesday the Cuban regime to stop harassing Ms. Tamayo, who “simply wants to honor her dead son in tragic circumstances.”

Aged 41, Regis Iglesias, however, wants to see in the harassment of opponents by the authorities a reason to hope. “So repression is a sign of weakness If a government starts to quell a mother who at the grave of his or a young son who is collecting signatures for a legal project is a strong signal of the decline of the regime.”

Tried along qu'Efrén Fernandez and three other dissidents, Mr. Iglesias was sentenced to eighteen years in prison. Accused of possessing the “cons-revolutionary literature” and “attend a reception with the section chief of the US Interests Section in Havana”, he too lived “the horror” of Castro's jails.

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