



Miami Medical Team Foundation

First Trimester 2003

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Editorial

2003 is a year with big surprises for everybody. We are feeling that changes are going to occur in the world, and those changes can have an influence in Cuba. There is an opportunity to not only be prepared to help the people of Cuba, to shake off the strangling collar applied by the government, but to help all of those who are struggling to obtain a new democratic regime and respect for all.

The Miami Medical Team Foundation has been sending medications and all help possible to Independent pro Democracy Groups, but this year is imperative that our effort increases the humanitarian programs to these groups and try to reconstruct the civil Society.



Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet

Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet, leader of the pacific struggle in Cuba

Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet was imprisoned again in December of 2002, accused of "public disorder," after having completed a sentence of three years in prison a month before. He was arrested by the police, along with other dissidents when they had met to discuss the "Club of friends of Human Rights," which Biscet had begun to organize.

As of February, Dr. Biscet has been held at the Combinado del Este prison, in Havana, without having a trial.

Dr. Biscet is the founder and leader of the Lawton Foundation of Human rights, humanitarian and pacific organization - nonpartisan -, whose work is to defend all human rights, particularly the right to life.

He was born in Havana the July 20, 1961. From his adolescence, when he attended a military school, he soon became a dissident, collaborating with monitors of human rights.

In 1985 Biscet graduated as a doctor, and in 1986, working at the National Hospital in Havana, for the first time he manifested publicly against the abuses of the Cuban government. Because of his protests against long hours of work without pay as a doctor, he was forced to stop working for a year.

In 1987, he began to work at the "Daughters of Galicia" pediatric hospital. By this time, he was open and vocal about his protests against the Cuban regime.

In 1994 he participated in activities of the "Concilio Cubano," an association of various human rights groups in Cuba, that were strongly repressed by the authorities. That same year the political police filed him as a threat.

In 1996 he became a member of the Democratic Civic Association and offered his aid to the prisoners and their relatives, obtaining medicine for them.

Finally, in 1997, Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet founded in Havana the Lawton Foundation of Human rights, preaching a non-violent struggle for democracy in Cuba. Following the ideas of Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Biscet organized pacific classes of civil disobedience and public manifestations.

In January 1998, in the Plaza Civica Jose Martí (at the moment called the Plaza de la Revolucion), during the mass of the Pope John Paul II, Biscet and Rolando Muñoz Iyobre raised a banner proclaiming "Freedom for the political prisoners". In the middle of the multitude they were taken from the Plaza by foreign journalists who protected them from police repression.

On March 13, 1998, his wife, Elsa Morejón, received orders from the Communist Party and her administrators from the hospital where she worked to leave the house in which they lived for ten years. The pretext to evacuate them from house was the activities of her husband in defense of human rights.

By the end of March of that same year, unknown people made a "Acto de Repudio" in front of the house where Biscet, his wife and children had moved. This "Acto de Repudio" included personal threats of physical aggression. This was repeated on numerous occasions.

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In February 24, 1999, Dr. Biscet presented and distributed in a meeting of doctors in the pediatric hospital where he worked a document which he had written, titled "An Attitude That Concerns Us All," in which he made a plea to cease the use of the Rivanol to provoke abortions, a method in which the child is born alive, and is allowed to die. The government uses the placenta of such abortions for medicines used for foreign tourists. The members of the Communist Party in the meeting attacked Biscet. In addition, the government expelled him from the hospital and prohibited him from continuing his work as a doctor.

In the middle of 1999 he organized a hunger strike which lasted 40 days, for the cause of freedom for political prisoners, beginning in Tamarindo 34, in Havana, and it spread through the island, and was taken up by hundreds of Cuban oppositionists.

After that, Dr. Biscet organized several public manifestations and initiated marches that would take him to the east end of the island, visiting and meeting with those who had participated in the hunger strike. He was held by the police at every chance they could get, and in some occasions it was tortured, as he himself denounced opportunely.

In the last 18 months previous to his imprisonment, Biscet had been arrested 26 times, some for a few hours, others lasting up to 19 days. He was stopped a last time on November 3, 1999, a few days before the celebration of the Panamerican Summit in Havana. Fidel Castro had talked about Biscet on a television program, describing him as an "insane person". On November 29, Biscet was taken to a psychiatric hospital in Havana (well-known like Mazorra) so he could be examined. This place has been denounced in the past as a center of psychiatric torture.

In February 25, 2000, Biscet was sentenced to three years in prison, having been accused of holding the flag upside down, being publicly disorderly, and breaking the law. He was sentenced along with Fermin Scull Zulueta and Eduardo Diaz Fleitas.

Dr. Biscet said "As soon as I am taken to prison I will become a 'plantado' with the same dignity that characterized the Cuban political prison from the 60's. I make the government responsible for what might happen to me in prison."

In March 2000, Dr. Biscet was shut in the prison "Cuba Si", located in the Eastern province of Holguín, almost one thousand kilometers from the residence of his wife. There he fulfilled his sentence of three years of prison.

He was released in November 3, 2002, and was received at his mother's home by dozens of human rights activists, dissidents and neighbors. Now he is a political prisoner again.

The Miami Medical Team Foundation supports the pacific struggle of Dr. Biscet and asks for the solidarity of the Medical Associations in the United States and the rest of the world to demand the immediate release of Dr. Biscet, Cuban leader of the fight for Democracy.



Dr. Biscet is embraced by his mother. His wife Elsa is beside him when he arrive to his mother's home after being released from prison.

Activities of 2002:

Radio Broadcasting: "Medicine Update"

Radio Marti,
weekly radio program

Participants:

Dr. Heriberto Cabada
Dr. Sadilia García
Dr. Mirta Floris
Dr. Manuel Alzugaray
Dr. Enrique Cepero
Dr. Jorge Beato
Carlos Pérez
Armando Quirantes
Dr. Mariano Fondevilla
Dr. Omar Vento
Dr. Mario Soler
Maritza Lugo
Dr. Manuel Pérez Palacio
Dr. Díaz Arzon
Joe Rodríguez, RPT
Dr. Luis Serentill
Mario Roque Escobar
Palo Monzón
Amado Cantillo
Manuel Pila
Dr. Yasmín Zamorano
Dr. Carlos Guevara
Dr. Heriberto Cabada
Eusebio del Valle
Willy Braceras
Edgar Zomora, MD.
Dr. Ramón Rodríguez Torres
Dr. Virgilio Beato

From Pre-revolucionary Cuba



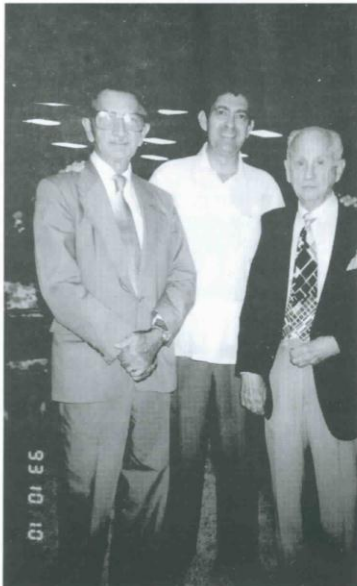
A pharmacy



Tope de Collantes Hospital



La Covadonga Clinic



Ridardo Madan, Dr. Manuel Alzugaray and Dr. Emilio (Millo) Ochoa

September 29, 2001

La Carreta Restaurant, located on 8th Street in Miami honored members of the MMTF to recognize the work for humanity of these distinguished members:

Dr. Emilio (Millo) Ochoa
Mr. Ricardo Madan
Mr. Carlos Aquino

The three of them are founder members with a broad history of work for democracy and justice. Mr. Madan has been responsible for logistics and Mr. Aquino was Chief Security for the MMTF. There were also 25 other recognitions for those involved in the humanitarian operations in El Salvador after the earthquake that took place in January 2001.

Dr. Manuel González passed away in 2002. Graduated at the University of Havana, and specialized in General Surgery in the United States, he was a veteran of the Korean War.

Dr. González was an outstanding member of the Miami Medical Team in different campaigns in Central America.



Dr. Armando Zaldivar, (seated) member of the MMTF passed away. He worked as an internist in our group. He was very active during the Cuban rafter crisis. He also visited with the MMTF, Key West, Bahamas and Guantanamo on an annual basis to take care of the refugees. This picture was taken in Guantanamo Base in 1994.

Dr. Andrés Vargas Gomez, adviser to the MMT during many years, passed away in January of 2003 in the city of Miami.

Vargas Gomez, grandson of the *generalissimo* Maximo Gomez, was an outstanding patriot that fulfilled more than 20 years as a political prison in Communist Cuba.



III Projections:

The Miami Medical Team Foundation continues the help with medications to those in need in Cuba, donated through local independent Cuban organizations (non-government).

The medications are sent legally and distributed to patients that present a prescription from his/her doctor in the hospital or clinic. The prescription is kept for therecords. Also, the MMTF is coordinating the opening of independent medical libraries in the capital of provinces and secondary ones in other town and cities. The libraries will be privately funded by donations of MMTF, transported and maintained in Cuba.

In the near future, two clinics are going to be opened simultaneously, located in the province of Villa Clara. One of them will be in Santa Clara (capital of the province) and the second one will be in Placetas, a city located 35 kms east of Santa Clara on the main or general highway. These two cities have railroad or highway connections with the entire provinces of Villa Clara, Sancti Spiritus and Cienfuegos. The libraries will include medical textbooks and medical journals in Spanish and English.

February, 2003

Non-Profit Organization

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Miami Medical Team Foundation and Independent Medical Association

Both organizations have been working together in order to create a program that can be of benefit to Cuban doctors, nurses and dentists. The first national program will be the funding of medical libraries, starting in the capital of all provinces and expanding to cities and towns. These libraries will also have a general section with books for reading of all ages and we will try to also include children's section with comic books.

Recently, in a telephone conversation with Dr. Arturo Perez, the President of the Independent College in Cuba was very excited with the idea. He also informed us that they are publishing a journal of the organization. They have been publishing some of the medical reconstruction programs for the Health System of Cuban sent to them by the MMTF.

From Cuba MEDICALS NEWS

THERE IS NO INSULINE IN HAVANA PROVINCE PHARMACIES

GÜINES, December 31 (By José Izquierdo, *Grupo Decoro*) - Since November of last year the diabetics of several municipalities of Havana do not receive insulin, due to the deficiency of this indispensable medicine in the pharmacies.

The medicine is not available in Güines, San José de the Lajas, Jaruco, San Nicolás de Bari, Melena del Sur, Nueva Paz and Batabanó.

NO MOPS IN HOSPITALS TO CLEAN FLOORS

CIEGO DE ÁVILA, January 10 (Abel Escobar Ramírez, *CubaPress*) - Workers at the Morón general hospital, in the province of Ciego de Avila, have been forced to clean the floor of the hospital with cut up blankets, even though the administration has 50 mops stored away.

OPERATIONS SUSPENDED

LA HABANA, January 21 (Adrián Leiva Pérez, *Grupo Decoro* / www.cubanel.org) - Operations in hospitals in the capital in January have been suspended, because the Provincial Blood Bank did not meet the quotas deliveries to the hospitals.

At the moment they are only guaranteeing operations of urgency, in extreme critical cases where the life of the patient is in danger.

"The Adventures of the Miami Medical Team"

Published monthly in *Agenda Medica*. The work of the MMTF in comics like presentation has been a success and the people are following the adventure every month.



Visist the MMTF Web page for information
www.mmtf.org

A New Book of the MMTF

There is a new book been written, which takes the person on a trip around the world with the humanitarian work of the MMTF. There are two important parts to the book: Before the fall of communism and after. This book will tale you from the beginning of the MMT to events before the 80's, in the 90's and even to the dangers of bio-terrorism.

Miami Medical Team
Foundation