

Cuba Prisoner Talks—No Pact Yet, Only Hope

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By Ralph Chapman
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James B. Donovan, negotiating the release of 1,113 Cubans captured in the Bay of Pigs invasion last year, said yesterday that there has been some progress but no final agreement with the Castro regime.

Reached in Havana by telephone, Mr. Donovan, the Democratic candidate for U. S. Senator from New York, branded stories that the men have been freed and will be flown to this country as "no true." The rumor gained wide acceptance among Cuban refugees in Miami, Fla., and elsewhere, but the New York lawyer attributed this to the "wave of optimism" that always attends negotiations of this kind.

"I do feel that progress has been made," he said, "but no final agreement has been reached . . . I hope to remain here until I can bring them (the prisoners) out with me."

Mrs. Berta Barreto, an intermediary in the Havana negotiations, expressed optimism yesterday for an early agreement for the prisoners' release. United Press International quoted her as saying: "Perhaps Sunday or Monday an announcement will be issued. We are very optimistic, but until then nothing will be said."

Mr. Donovan talked with Premier Fidel Castro for more than seven hours on Friday at the Havana home of Mr. Barreto, whose son is one of the prisoners. Mrs. Barreto has been acting as liaison between the Castro government and the Cuban Families Committee for Liberation of Prisoners, which has headquarters in New York. Mr. Donovan is president of the committee as its general counsel.

Meeting Tomorrow

Another meeting between Mr. Donovan and Castro is scheduled for tomorrow.

that Castro and others to whom he has talked were "very courteous."

Soon after the invasion failed in April, 1961, the Castro government announced that it would release the prisoners upon payment of a \$62 million cash "indemnity." Later a group of 60 sick and wounded prisoners were released and permitted to come to the United States to help raise the money.

Each prisoner has an individual price tag and the remains of a few have taken advantage of this fact to ransom loved ones. Prices as high as \$100,000 have been reported paid.

Mr. Donovan, who arranged the release by the Russians of U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers in exchange for Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, convicted Soviet spy, is trying to get Castro to accept goods instead of cash. The Cuban leader was willing at one time to accept tractors and other machinery, but the deal fell through.

Now being offered are food, medicines and other similar items known to be in short supply in Cuba.

Large amount of such material have been pledged by a variety of groups and individuals in this country, but it is understood that the pledges are far from the equivalent of the cash demands. It is believed that Mr. Donovan has been dickering also for a smaller total payment and some sort of installment arrangement.

Guarded Hope

He first went to Havana at the beginning of last month and remained four days. Upon his return at that time, after a four-and-a-half-hour talk with Castro, he expressed guarded optimism.

Mr. Donovan left New York Tuesday for the current series of talks, although he was suffering severely from bursitis in his right shoulder. By the time