

Statement on the Events on the Night of June 12 to 13, 1970 by
Carlos Manuel Pelaez

1. At 19:00, on June 12, Professor Roett, Vanderbilt University, Department of Political Science, rang the doorbell at my apartment. He was invited in by my wife. I heard several men entering the apartment. As I entered the living room I saw armed men. I was asked by the man, who was holding Professor Roett by the arm, not to speak in English. This younger man was dressed in blue jeans, sports pullover, and brown shoes. His age was approximately 25 years. He said that I could only talk in Portuguese, and only to the older man to my right. This older man was apparently in command of the group. He was about 40 years old, strong but short, perhaps 5.7 and dressed in gray sports shirt, and gray trousers. Next to him there was a third young man, age perhaps 25, in gray shirt, gray trousers. The older man in command told me to get dressed and accompany them to Professor Roett's apartment for a brief chat. I told him I would not leave my apartment at that time, that we could talk where we were. All this time, Professor Roett stood with his arms closed in front of him, not saying anything. The man insisted that the talk had to be at Professor Roett's apartment. I asked him to identify himself, that I had noticed their weapons and would not accompany them. The man in command took off a 45 automatic pistol and placed it on my face saying, "Yes we are armed. Now do you want me to drag you in bermudas or do you prefer to dress up?" While he was talking I moved toward the kitchen with the hope of gaining access to the street through the back door. The man in command got in my way, and forced me against a wall. He kept on repeating that he was going to drag me out in bermudas. My wife interceded by telling him I would dress immediately. At that point, the man in command allowed me to gain access to my room, while Professor Roett was taken downstairs. An extra three men were already at the door. One of them was approximately 35, middle sized, with a tee shirt, and heavy-set. The other two I cannot recollect physically. They had been impatient about the delay, as it appeared to me from their statements. They went downstairs with Professor Roett. After Professor Roett left the apartment, my wife closed the door and kept the key. The man in command went over to the bookshelf and picked up a book by Celso Furtado. He then stated that Furtado's work was radical. I countered that my writing was very critical of Celso Furtado's work and gave him a reprint of one of my essays which he kept. I then stated that I was on an official mission of the United States Government under a contract with USAID. The man in command laughed and said, "We know all about you. You are Cuban." My wife appeared with my passport and he put it in his pocket.

I then went to the bedroom and began dressing when the younger man in the gray shirt, I would say very lightskinned mulato, entered the bedroom and watched me with a gun in his hand. The other two men were walking around the bedroom. Another man entered the apartment and walked toward the bathroom. He was plump, approximately 30 years old, and wore a red shirt. He was about 5 feet 8 inches tall and wore glasses. He talked to the man in command inside the bathroom but I overheard the conversation.

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Man in red shirt: "I don't think we are going to get anything out of this one."

Man in command: "Maybe not, but let's see, let's see."

The man in the red shirt picked up the telephone, dialed a number and stated flatly: "We got two. Now we will get the third one." He then asked my wife her name and her father's name, job and address. After I had returned to my home, my wife confirmed hearing the same conversation. My wife at that time panicked and asked the men how long were they going to hold me. The man in command said that it would only be for 45 minutes. He then noticed a large wooden "grinder" or container with a heavy wooden pounder, and started pounding the container with the pounder, stating how good it would be to pulp my head in there. I again requested their identification and they said it was none of my business. In the elevator I asked if I was being kidnapped. The man in command said: "You are not an ambassador." I went out with the young man in the gray shirt, the man in command, the man with the red shirt, and the young man in blue jeans.

2. My apartment is at Farme de Amoedo 121. The man in the gray shirt, the man in the red shirt, and I crossed the street. I shouted to my wife at the window to keep calm. The man in the blue jeans entered a dark green "rural", maybe 1967, parked on the sidewalk, and sat next to Professor Roett, in the back. As I looked back I saw the man with the tee shirt and one of the other men following us. At the small cafe located at the corner of Barão da Torre and Farme de Amoedo, the man in command stopped for coffee and a telephone call. I was placed in what turned out to be Professor Baer's car, in the back seat. A new, younger man, approximately 5'8", stout, in blue pullover stood outside and closed the lock of the back door. The rest of the men were making noise in the cafe. In the front of the car where I was sitting alone, there was a red Volkswagen full of men. One of the men exchanged conversation with the members of my car. After perhaps five minutes, the man in the gray shirt, the man in the blue pullover, and the man in the red shirt came over to the car I was in. I saw the rural with Professor Roett pass by us. The man with the gray shirt sat next to me and took out his automatic pistol. The man in blue sat at the front. The man in the red shirt drove the car. They exchanged words. "Where do we go? Just drive around. No, let's go to the base. Just drive around." We took Visconde de Pirajá at high speed and continued downtown by Av. Copacabana until Rua Bolivar where we turned right and headed to Joaquim Nabuco, turning right on through Av. Vieira Souto. At Bartolomeu Mitre the car turned right and sped to Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas in the direction of Tunnel Rebouças. We entered the Tunnel in heavy traffic. A yellow and black police wagon with plates 82-82 passed by us. The man in red shirt said, "82-82, that is Guanabara. Only a "prêto" would have painted it that color. How do they choose that color?" At the entrance of the Tunnel, the man in red shirt pointed to a blue Chevrolet stationwagon and remarked that they are very fast. He remarked that he had made

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the trip to São Paulo in one of them in approximately three and one half hours. According to this man, he had warned the roadblocks to open the road for them at all points. The man in the blue shirt asked me if I knew Rio very well. I answered affirmatively.

3. On the North side of Tunnel Rebouças, past Maracanã, they blindfolded me. The three men said that I would be only held briefly for questioning and if I inspired confidence I would go back home that night. I told the man in the gray shirt that I was in Brazil under an official visa of the Brazilian government. He said he had my passport, which I had seen on his front shirt. But that his order came from very high, that he only had orders, that maybe even the American Embassy had been asked to take me into custody. He took a set of dark glasses, with a handkerchief covering the glasses and put it on my face. As we proceeded, they would say, "Turn left, keep straight ahead, turn right, straight ahead, no right, no left, etc." The orders were followed, and not followed. In many points, the road was very bumpy. There were many buses. At one point, after approximately five minutes, we stopped very suddenly. The man in the red shirt shouted obscenity at the bus driver. The car jumped ahead and stopped again. The two front men got off the car and a lot of voices and shouting were heard outside. A voice was heard: "Don't hit me, I am a sick man." The other two front men returned and stated that they had taken the driver's license and made some derogatory remarks about bus drivers. All this time I was blindfolded. After approximately another 10 minutes we reached what they referred to as their base. The car went down, and I heard a metallic door close behind us. I was taken by the gray shirted man upstairs. There he removed my blindfold. The man in command was there and stated: "No, everybody in different places, take him downstairs."

4. We descended to a little terrace with no hand rail and for the first time I was able to see the house where we were. There was a vacant lot behind the house. The front of the house was not visible. The enclosed Diagram shows the plan of the house. The back part of the house, which was small in appearance from the knowledge only of the upper quarters, was built in the fashion of a prison with two parallel rows of cells. The construction was new. The cells were constructed of heavy iron bars and each had heavy iron doors. There were more cells on the left as one looked toward the back. Steps on a higher level led to the row of cells. Two rows of lamps were on the top. The back door was of heavy iron, and grass in the vacant lot behind could be seen. The installations seemed recently built. The paint was white and the bars and iron doors recently had been painted in gray. Downstairs I was first taken to a room near the garage, which I now saw had a gray metallic door. The man in the gray shirt came towards me and asked me to follow him. We went over to the row of cells and I was placed in the last cell on the right. I could see grass through the upper bars. The man in gray opened the door and ordered me in. He stated: "Stay there until the colonel arrives." He then closed the door and another man locked the bar in position together with a lock.

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5. The inside of the cell was totally dark. There was a pale of water, and a hole apparently for elementary human necessities. There was no furniture whatever. I stayed in the cell for some time when I heard an iron door nearby open up and somebody was shown inside. The door was subsequently closed. Occasionally, I could hear men leaving and arriving. Perhaps one half hour after my arrival a tall man in pullover shirt peeped through the opening of the bars on the door and yelled: "Tudo bem?" When I began complaining he shouted obscenities. I said flatly: "Tudo bem." He seemed satisfied and left. This happened at half hour intervals thereafter. A long time after I had been in the cell, a young man, with incipient beard, wearing a dirty blue pullover shirt kicked the door and yelled: "Acorde." When I did not answer, he inquired of me again. He finally opened the door and asked me to stand against the wall. He grabbed my shirt from the back, making it very tight, and placed a gun at the back of my neck ordering me to walk very slowly. We went upstairs. At the end of the stairs, my right arm was grabbed by a strong, heavily-built negro in yellow shirt, brown trousers, apparently 35 years old. He put so much pressure on my arm it hurt. He made me go to the end of an aisle. I entered a room where Professor Baer was sitting. The negro pushed me against the wall and searched me for concealed weapons. Then I was asked to enter the room and sit on a desk. My young captor came in (he was approximately 18) carrying a 32 revolver with ivory sides. He sat on a table opposite me, together with a strong, short, about 45 years old man. Now I could see Professor Roett who was sitting on the same desk where I was asked to sit. Diagram II shows the location where we were. The first door to the left facing the front part of the house opened and the man in command summoned Professor Roett. The door closed again and talk could be heard inside the room. Professor Baer asked the younger man if we could talk to each other and he answered we could not talk. I could hear parts of the interrogation of Professor Roett. He was being questioned about hearing remarks about the imminent kidnapping of the German ambassador. The man in the red shirt was making most of the interrogation. But then the sounds were muffled by the Negro conversing with other people outside on the terrace, although no other voices were heard. At that time the younger guard in the room asked for the hour and Professor Baer answered 12:30. The Negro kept on lecturing about the irrationality of the Communist China regime, about how the United States could not handle communism properly, etc. Nobody responded to his remarks. The door to the second room on the left opened and I could see a mattress with six men sleeping on it. One of them came out and went to take a shower in the bathroom. The Negro came back and entered the room where Professor Roett was being questioned. Some five minutes later, everybody came out and Professor Roett was asked to sit by me. I was asked to come in.

6. The Negro grabbed me again by my arm and took me into the interrogation room. There were only three desks, one filing cabinet, and a brand new chair where the Negro pushed me. The description of the arrangement is on Diagram III. The man in command began the questioning:

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Man in Command: "You told me in your apartment that you knew a Minister in Brazil who could state you were an internationally known scholar?"

Dr. Pelaez: "That is not correct. I did not say that."

Man in Amber Glasses: "What is your age?"

Dr. Pelaez: "29 years."

Man in Amber Glasses: "Where were you born?"

Dr. Pelaez: "Havana, Cuba."

Man in Amber Glasses: "What is your nationality?"

Dr. Pelaez: "I am an American citizen."

Man in Amber Glasses: "When did you become an American citizen?"

Dr. Pelaez: "In 1966."

Man in Amber Glasses: "So you left Cuba at 26 years of age."

Dr. Pelaez: "Incorrect. I left Cuba in 1961."

Man in Amber Glasses: "What do you do in Brazil?"

Dr. Pelaez: "I am under a contract with USAID, and under an official visa from the Brazilian Government."

Man in Amber Glasses: "Do you know any students at the Vargas Foundation?"

Dr. Pelaez: "Not many."

Man in Amber Glasses: "What professors do you know there? What is being said there?"

Dr. Pelaez: "I go there only briefly and I do not have many friends."

Man in Amber Glasses: "What other Americans do you know here? Do you know well Professor Roett and Professor Baer?"

Dr. Pelaez: "I am a colleague of Professors Roett and Baer. I know few other Americans in Brazil."

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Man in Amber Glasses: "What is your political affiliation, extreme right, moderate, extreme left?"

Dr. Pelaez: "I am apolitical. You can consider me conservative."

Man in Red Shirt quickly: "Have you heard anything about kidnapping recently?"

Dr. Pelaez: "Nothing."

Man in Red Shirt, standing up: "Think well, think well, you better think well."

Dr. Pelaez: "I have heard nothing."

Man in Amber Glasses: "We also kidnap. We are going to trade you for the life of the German Ambassador."

Dr. Pelaez laughing: "You are not going to do such a thing, for it would not accomplish anything."

Man in Red Shirt to Man in Amber Glasses: "I told you, he is also in the deal."

Man in Amber Glasses: "No he is not." And then: "Cubano, we are going to turn you over to Fidel Castro so that he can shoot you."

Man in Command: "Yeah, let's send him back to Cuba for shooting."

The Negro then stood up and took me outside, asked me to sit down, while the Man in Amber Glasses went outside and the Man in Command requested Professor Roett to go in again. The Man in Red Shirt started questioning Professor Roett as the door closed.

7. The young guard tells the other guard: "He is Cuban, he did it." Older guard: "Do you know Campo Grande?" Dr. Pelaez: "No, I don't." Another ten minutes and a young man probably 30, not seen before comes in and picks up my passport. He looks me over and asks the young guard: "Who do we have here?" The young guard said that they had a Cuban. The new man looked over the passport carefully and threw it on the table. The young guard looked at me and pointed the gun around the room. At this point I lost my control and told him: "I am an American citizen with a diplomatic visa. You are creating a serious diplomatic conflict." The young guard threw away the passport saying I was a "porcaria" and ordered me to shut up.

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8. Suddenly, the Man in the Red Shirt emerged with a piece of paper and asked Professor Baer to write his name, address, and employer. I was also told to do the same. We were then ordered into the interrogating room. I walked toward the window and saw a busy street with many buses but then the older guard shouted at me to get away from the window. We were blindfolded, taken downstairs and into Professor Baer's car. I could tell that the man in red shirt was driving and the young man in blue jeans was in the front. At Avenida Presidente Vargas, a few blocks off Avenida Rio Branco, the car stopped, we took off the blindfolds several blocks before. They came out of the car, shook hands and told us we were free to go home.

9. Professor Baer drove me to my home. When I checked the watch I read 1:30. My wife said she had contacted the Embassy. The marine had taken full information and gave her the telephone of the duty officer. The duty officer had taken full details and informed my wife he would provide the information to the American Consul for Political Affairs. Mr. Kohn, of the political office of the Embassy called my wife and informed her that the search for me and Professor Roett had started but that no police or security organization had provided information. He also left his home telephone. I called and woke up Mrs. Kohn who took information on the kidnap and release and told me she would inform her husband. Then Mr. Magalhães, who stated he was from the "army", called and took a full report over the telephone.

Rio de Janeiro, June 16, 1970

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