YESTERDAY, I said that while Bush was speaking to Congress, McCain was being honored at the Versailles Restaurant of Little Havana.

It was there that most of the fiercest enemies of the Cuban Revolution and their families took up residence, Batista’s followers, the big landowners, owners of apartment buildings and millionaires who tyrannized and plundered our people. The United States government has used them at will, to organize invaders and terrorists who have shed our people’s blood through almost 50 years. Later, illegal emigrants joined that stream, along with the Cuban Adjustment Act and the brutal blockade imposed on the people of Cuba.

It is incredible that, in this day and age, the Republican candidate, honored as a hero, is turned into an instrument of that Mafia. Nobody having an ounce of self-esteem would commit such a serious lapse in ethics.

Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Mario and Lincoln Díaz-Balart, Senator Mel Martínez, also of Cuban descent, Governor Charles Christ and independent Senator Joseph Lieberman have become the candidate’s linchpins in the attempt to win Florida and his main advisors for Latin America policy.

What can Latin Americans possibly hope for with such advisors?

Ros-Lehtinen described McCain as being "strong on national defense" and "also understanding the threat posed by the Castro regime".

McCain shone in his participation at a hearing on Cuba which he held on May 21, 2002, at the Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs, Foreign Trade and Tourism of the Science and Transportation Committee; there he reiterated that our country poses a threat to the United States because of its capacity to produce biological weapons, something James Carter demonstrated to be ridiculous.

As for the proposals to relax the travel to Cuba policy, in October of 2003 McCain introduced a motion to interrupt the debate on these topics.

Particularly interesting was the introduction in March 2005 of a bill entitled "Advance Democracy Act of 2005", authorizing funds, reinforcing subversion, establishing new structures and proposing additional mechanisms to exert pressure on Cuba.

Alluding to the light pirate planes downed on February 24, 1996, he declared: "If I were President of the United States, I would order an investigation on the downing of those brave men who were murdered under orders of Fidel and Raúl Castro, and I would indict them."

In another one of his capricious declarations he stated that "when freedom comes to Cuba, he would like to meet the Cubans who tortured some of his comrades during the Vietnam War". The nerve of that obsessive candidate!

Let’s move on to the crux of his thinking.

What kind of political education did he get? None. He was trained as a war pilot based on his physical attributes for flying an attack plane. What was his predominant trait? Family traditions and his strong political motivation.

In his memoirs, he writes: "My father rose to high command when communism had replaced fascism as the dominant threat to American security. He hated it fiercely and dedicated himself to its annihilation. He believed that we were locked on inescapably in a life-and-death struggle with the Soviets. One side or the other would ultimately win total victory, and sea power would prove critical to the outcome. He was outspoken on the subject."

"In 1965, violent clashes between warring factions, one of which was believed to be a Communist front, had brought the Dominican Republic to the verge of civil war. President Johnson ordered my father to command the amphibious assault on Operation Steel Pike 1, the invasion and military occupation of the Caribbean nation. The operation was controversial. Critics judged it, with good reason, to be an unlawful intervention in the affairs of a sovereign nation. My father, typically, was undeterred by domestic opposition.

"’Some people condemned this as an unwarranted intervention,’ he observed, ‘but the Communist were all set to move in and take over. People may not love you for being strong when you have to be, but they respect you for it and learn to behave themselves when you are.’

"His subsequent assignment at the United Nations, however, was regarded by the Navy as a dead end and was expected to be his last. He was a three-star admiral, and the prospects for a fourth star were remote. But two years later he was ordered to London to assume command of all U.S. naval forces in Europe. A fourth star came with the job... Within a year, he was given command of all U.S. forces in the Pacific, the largest operational military command in the world."

When McCain was returning from his training flight as a cadet, he passed through the occupied territory of Guantánamo.

"Guantánamo in those pre-Castro days was a wild place. Everyone went ashore and headed immediately for huge tents that had been set up on the base as temporary bars, where great quantities of strong Cuban beer and an even more potent rum punch were served to anyone who professed a thirst and could afford a nickel a drink."

"I was proud to graduate from the Naval Academy. But at that moment, relief was the emotion I felt most keenly. I had already been accepted for flight training in Pensacola. In those days, all you had to do was pass the physical to qualify for flight training, and I was eager to embark on the life of a carefree naval aviator."

"In October 1962, I was just returning to home port at Norfolk after completing a Mediterranean deployment aboard the *Enterprise*. My squadron had flown off the *Enterprise* and returned to Oceana Naval Air Station while the ship put in at Norfolk".

"A few days after our return, we unexpectedly received orders to fly our planes back to the carrier. Our superiors explained the unusual order by informing us that a hurricane was headed our way."

"We flew all our planes back to the carrier within 24 hours and headed out to sea. In addition to our A-1s, the *Enterprise* carried long-range attack planes, which typically had a hard time managing carrier takeoffs and landings. We embarked on our mysterious deployment without them."

"Our air boss turned to a representative of the Marine squadron and said we didn’t have time to wait for all their planes to land; some of them would have to return to their base.

"I was quite puzzled by the apparent urgency of our mission, we’d been hustled back in one day, leaving some of our planes behind; the Marine squadron has been ordered to join us with only enough fuel to land or ditch. The mystery was solved a short while later when all pilots were assembled in the Enterprise’s ready room to listen to a broadcast of President Kennedy informing the nation that the Soviets were basing nuclear missiles in Cuba."

This time he was referring to the well-known October Missile Crisis of 1962, more than 45 years ago; it left him with the underlying desire to attack our country.

"The *Enterprise*, sailing at full speed under nuclear power, was the first U.S. carrier to reach waters off Cuba. For about five days, the pilots on the Enterprise believed we were going into action. We have never been in combat before, and despite the global confrontation a strike on Cuba portended, we were prepared and anxious to fly our first mission. The atmosphere aboard ship was fairly tense, but not overly so. Pilots and crew men alike adopted a cool-headed business-as-usual attitude toward the mission. Inwardly, of course, we were excited as hell, but we kept our composure and aped the standard image of a laconic, reserved and fearless American at war."

"After five days the tension eased, as it became apparent the crisis would be resolved peacefully. We weren’t disappointed to be denied our first combat experience, but our appetites were whetted and our imaginations fueled. We eagerly anticipated the occasion when we would have the chance to do what we were trained to do, and discover, at last, if we were brave enough for the job."

Further on, he describes the accident on the nuclear aircraft carrier, the *Forrestal*, in the Gulf of Tonkin. One hundred and thirty-four young Americans, many of them 18 and 19 years old, died in a huge effort to save the vessel. The carrier, peppered with perforations from the exploded bombs, had to sail to the United States to be reconstructed. It would be necessary to check what was published at the time and the approach taken on the subject.

McCain is then moved on to another conventional type of aircraft carrier in the same waters, with the same objective. Each one of the author’s self-definitions warrants close observation.

"On September 30, 1967, I reported for duty to the *Oriskany* and joined VA-163 –an A-4 attack squadron nicknamed ‘the Saints’. During the three years of Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing campaign of North Vietnam begun in 1965, no carrier’s pilots saw more action or suffered more losses than those on the *Oriskany*. When the Johnson administration halted Rolling Thunder in 1968, 38 pilots on the *Oriskany* had been either killed or captured. Sixty planes had been lost, including twenty-nine A-4s. The Saints suffered the highest casualty rate. In 1967, one-third of the squadron’s pilots were killed or captured. Every single one of the Saints’ original 15 A-4s had been destroyed. We had a reputation for aggressiveness, and for success. In the months before I joined the squadron, the Saints had destroyed all the bridges to the port city of Haiphong."

"Like all combat pilots, we had a studied, almost macabre indifference to death that masked a great sadness in the squadron, a sadness that grew more pervasive as our casualty list lengthened.

"We flew the next raid with greater determination to do as much damage as we could.

"I was just about to release my bombs when the tone sounded.

"I knew I was hit. My A-4, traveling at about 550 miles an hour, was violently spiraling to earth"

"I reacted automatically the moment I took the hit and saw that my wing was gone. I radioed, "I’m hit," reached up, and pulled the ejection seat handle."

"I struck part of the airplane, breaking my left arm, my right arm in three places, and my right knee, and I was briefly knocked unconscious by the force of the ejection. Witnesses said my chute had barely opened before I plunged into the shallow water of Truc Back Lake. I landed in the middle of the lake, in the middle of the city, in the middle of the day."

"My father wasn’t much of a believer in fighting wars by half measures. He regarded self-restraint as an admirable human quality, but when fighting wars he believed in taking all necessary measures to bring the conflict to a swift and successful conclusion. The Vietnam War was fought neither swiftly nor successfully, and I know this frustrated him greatly."

"In a speech he gave after he retired, he argued that "two deplorable decisions" had doomed the United States to failure in Vietnam: "The first was the public decision to forbid U.S. troops to enter North Vietnam and beat the enemy on his home ground...The second was...to forbid the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong until the last two weeks of the conflict..."

"These two decisions combined to allow Hanoi to adopt whatever strategy they wished, knowing that there would be virtually no reprisal, no counterattack."

"When the North Vietnamese launched a major offensive in December 1971, at a time when U.S. forces in Vietnam had been reduced to 69,000 men, President Nixon finally directed my father to mine Haiphong and other northern ports immediately. The Nixon administration had dispensed with much of the micromanaging of the war that had so ill served the Johnson administration, particularly the absurd target restrictions imposed on American bomber pilots."

"Relations between military commanders and their civilian superiors improved when President Nixon and Defense Secretary Melvin Laird entered office. The new administration was clearly more interested in and supportive of the views of the generals and admirals who were prosecuting the war. My father had a good relationship with both Nixon and Laird, as well as with the President’s National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger."

He does not hide his feelings when speaking of the bombing victims. His words ooze intense hatred.

"Our situation improved even more in April 1972, when President Nixon resumed the bombing of North Vietnam and, on my father’s orders, the first bombs since March 1968 began falling on Hanoi. Operation Linebacker, as the campaign was called, brought B-52s, with their huge payload of bombs."

"The misery we had endured prior to 1972 was made all the worse by our fear that the United States was unprepared to do what was necessary to bring the war to a reasonably swift conclusion. We could never see over the horizon to the day when the war would end. Whether you supported the war or opposed it –and I met a few POWs who argued the latter position –no one believed the war should be prosecuted in the manner in which the Johnson administration had fought it."

"The B-52s terrorized Hanoi for eleven nights. Wave after wave they came. During the days, while the strategic bombers were refueled and rearmed, other aircraft took up the assault. The Vietnamese got the point."

"Our senior officers, knowing that this moment was imminent, had warned us not to demonstrate our emotions when the agreement was announced."

He oozes hatred of the Vietnamese. He was ready to exterminate them all.

"By the time the end did come, with the signing in Paris of the peace accords, my father had retired from active duty. No longer restrained by his role as a subordinate to civilian superiors, he dismissed the agreement. ‘In our anxiety to get out of the war, we signed a very bad deal.’"

These paragraphs reflect McCain’s most intimate thoughts. The worst comes when he yields to the idea of making a declaration against the war being waged by his country. He cannot help but mention that in his book. How does he do this?

"He (his father) had received a report that a heavily edited propaganda broadcast, purported to have been made by me, had been analyzed, and the voice compared to my taped interview with the French journalist. The two voices were judged to be the same. In the anguished days right after my confession, I had dreaded just such a discovery by my father.

"After I came home, he never mentioned to me that he had learned about my confession, and, although I told him about it, I never discussed it at length. I only recently learned that the tape I dreamed I heard playing over the loudspeaker in my cell had been real; it had been broadcast outside the prison and had come to the attention of my father.

"If I had known at the time my father had heard about my confession, I would have been distressed beyond imagination, and might not have recovered from the experience as quickly as I did. But in the years that have passed since the event, my regard for my father and for myself has matured. I understand better the nature of strong character.

"My father was a strong enough man not to judge too harshly the character of a son who had reached his limits and found that they were well short of the standards of the idealized heroes who had inspired us as boys."

I don’t criticize him for this. It would be heartless and inhuman. That’s not my aim. What we need to do now is to unmask a policy which is not an individual one, but one that is shared by many, since the objective truth will always be difficult to understand.

Has McCain ever thought about the anti-terrorist Five Cuban Heroes who were imprisoned in solitary cells just like the ones he says he hates, forced to appear before a jury from Little Havana for crimes they never committed, with three of them sentenced to one and even two life sentences, and the others to 19 and 15 years in prison?

Does he know that the United States authorities received information that could prevent death by terrorism of U.S. citizens?

Is he aware of the activities of Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, the men responsible for blowing up a Cuban airliner in mid-flight, killing its 73 occupants?

Why doesn’t he talk about that to the cadets at Annapolis?

The Cuban heroes are about to complete 10 years in prison. They have never murdered or tortured anyone. Don’t accuse them now of being in Vietnam torturing American pilots.

I know about your declarations at the school where you graduated as a cadet. I appreciate your noble wish to not answer me so as not to dignify me. The only sad mix-up –and it was not the intent of some news agencies that ran my first reflection on the subject– is that I asked for proof. You can’t prove something that didn’t happen. I asked for ethics.

I shall continue.



**Fidel Castro Ruz
February 12, 2008
7:26 p.m.**